

# The discourse and coordination among advocacy coalitions: the case of Belo Monte

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to analyze the use of discourse to solve issues related to coordination between advocacy coalitions in processes of gradual and transformative institutional change related to public policies.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Theoretical background is based on the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), new discursive institutionalism and critical discourse analysis theories. The research examines shorthand notes of public hearings held in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate between 1999 and 2012, carrying out a case study on Belo Monte hydroelectric power plant. The speech extracts were categorized according to the modes of operation of ideology and typical strategies of symbolic construction proposed by Thompson (1995).

**Findings** – The results suggest that the discourse can be an instrument of internal coordination and between coalitions that share beliefs about a policy, as in the case of Belo Monte. Potentially existing coalitions define their identities and set positions on controversial issues, aligning interests and expectations. In the case studied, the modes of operation of ideology verified as instruments of the coalitions were dissimulation, reification, fragmentation, unification and legitimization.

**Research limitations/implications** – The paper represents a unique analysis of the modes of operation of ideology (Thompson, 1999) in the case of Belo Monte. In addition, the paper aims to contribute to the New Discursive Institutionalism and to the ACF when it uses the critical discourse analysis to articulate a method to analyze the use of the Discourse by the coalitions. In fact, such an approach integrating the ACF, the New Discursive Institutionalism and the critical discourse analysis is something original. Finally, it also addresses a gap in ACF: issues related to advocacy coalition coordination.

**Practical implications** – Attentive readers linked to organizations working on infrastructure and environmental policies can benefit from the results by envisaging the deliberate manipulation of typical symbolic construction strategies and general modes of operation of ideology.

**Social implications** – The study sheds light on the daily and behind-the-scenes disputes among stakeholders who are interested in a certain public policy. It may draw attention to the access and professional use of the shorthand notes of the hearings held at the National Congress.

**Originality/value** – This paper aims to fill a gap pointed out by Jenkins-Smith *et al.* (2014) regarding problems of coordination of advocacy coalitions. In addition, it innovates by using critical discourse analysis as a methodological reference in ACF empirical studies. In addition, this work continues a trajectory of two other previously published studies dealing with the same phenomenon: a theoretical essay and a case study.

**Keywords** Critical discourse analysis, Advocacy coalition framework, Belo monte hydroelectric power plant

**Paper type** Research paper



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## Introduction

This article seeks to contribute to the studies about the performance of advocacy coalitions in processes of gradual and transformative institutional change. The study is based on the premise that a public policy is structured by institutions that provide stability and cooperation and is guided by the beliefs and values of hegemonic coalitions (Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt, Weible, & Sabatier, 2014; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Weible, Sabatier & McQueen, 2009). However, not all of the policy's stakeholders will be satisfied with the status quo and may bring about institutional change in a dispute over hegemony. The dispute among coalitions involves coordination problems (ambiguities regarding their identities, preferences, and expectations) that can be resolved using discourse (Vieira and Gomes, 2014).

Vieira and Gomes (2014) proposed a theoretical model to examine the disputes among coalitions based on three stages:

- (1) identifying and characterizing stakeholders;
- (2) identifying advocacy coalitions according to the advocacy coalition framework (ACF); and
- (3) identifying strategies for coalitions' gradual and transformative institutional change.

In addition, the discourse has a central role under the new discursive institutionalism approach, since the transformative power of ideas and discourses has a causal influence on political reality, resulting in change or continuity of institutions (Schmidt, 2008).

Against this background, Vieira (2017) conducted a case study on the hydroelectric power plant of Belo Monte (Belo Monte HPP). The study identified stakeholders, advocacy coalitions, and institutional change strategies, but did not address the issue of coordination. In Vieira and Gomes's (2014, p.14) approach, the discourse (based on critical discourse analysis – CDA) is the element used to integrate the ACF and the analysis of gradual and transformative institutional change, since the processes of interpretation and communication of beliefs and values are central, as are the processes of interpretation of institutions.

Thus, the question guiding this study is, how do political coalitions establish coordination both internally and among themselves, in processes of gradual and transformative institutional change? Specifically, how did the technocratic and materialistic political coalitions coordinate their actions in favor of the Belo Monte HPP and how did the idealistic political coalition confront them?

The enterprise concretizes the policy for the energy sector in Brazil by exploiting large hydropower projects in the form of public-private partnerships in the Amazon. It was observed that changes in the institutions were a result not only of confrontation strategies (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010) but also of mutual learning among coalitions, such as the incorporation of social and environmental considerations by the hegemonic coalition in the project's design, making it a power plant operating without impoundment.

Within the scope of the CDA, the ideological discourse is a tool to represent events, build social relations, structuring, reaffirmation and contestation of hegemonies (de Melo Resende and Ramalho, 2013). The case study exposed the fact that the strategies of gradual and transformative institutional change are not exclusive to actors and coalitions in an unfavorable situation in the institutional context. As Thompson (1995) and Ramalho and de Melo Resende (2011) argue, even hegemonic groups struggle to maintain their unstable balance of power.

This work is particularly important as it seeks to meet the research agenda of the coordination of political coalitions, proposed by Jenkins-Smith *et al.* (2014) in an article assessing the trajectory of the ACF. In addition, this case study of Belo Monte HPP brings a unique analysis using the modes of operation of ideology (Thompson, 1995), contributing to the new discursive institutionalism and the ACF when adopting the CDA as an original method to examine how coalitions use the discourse.

**The advocacy coalitions in the case of Belo Monte hydroelectric power plant**

In his study on Belo Monte HPP, Vieira (2017) detailed the work of 84 stakeholders grouped into three political advocacy coalitions: technocratic (hegemonic), materialistic, and idealistic. In addition, Vieira (2017) analyzed the coalition’s strategies of institutional change, noting that these strategies resulted from both the confrontation and the mutual learning among the coalitions, as observed in Table I. The strategies of the hegemonic coalition are based on the convenient interpretation of an ambiguous rule regarding consultations of indigenous peoples (article 231 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution). The strategies also consisted of the introduction of norms that stimulated the participation of private capital in the generation and purchase of electric power; restructured the Brazilian electric sector system (Eletrobras); and created new guidelines for the electricity market. On the other hand, the idealistic political coalition was marked by the judicialization, based on a specific interpretation of article 231 of the Constitution. This approach delayed the process and expanded the debate about the power plant, raising public awareness and warning politicians who were part of the materialistic political coalition. The idealistic coalition’s pressure resulted in a change in the plant’s design and the elaboration of compensation instruments, such as the *Plano de Desenvolvimento Sustentável da Região de Belo Monte* (sustainable development plan of Belo Monte region) and the *Plano de Inserção Regional* (a

	Technocratic political coalition	Materialistic political coalition	Idealistic political coalition
<i>Configuration and classification according to Gomes, Liddle, and Gomes (2010)</i>	Stakeholders: collaborators, agenda setting agents, regulators, and controllers. Coalition formed by agencies of the federal government	Stakeholders: collaborators and legitimizing agents. Coalition formed by business people and local politicians, national large constructing companies and potential foreign clients and suppliers	Stakeholders: controllers and legitimizing agents. Coalition formed by the Brazilian Federal Public Ministry, nonprofit organizations, social movements and players involved in knowledge production
<i>Strategies of institutional change</i>	<i>Conversion:</i> convenient interpretation of article 231 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution on hearings with indigenous peoples. <i>Displacement:</i> Introduction of Laws 8987/95, 9074/95, 9648/98, 10847/04, and 10848/04, and Provisional Measure 2152-2/2001 and of CNPE Resolutions 02/2001 and 06/2008	<i>Layering:</i> the Decree 1785/05 approved by the Chamber of Deputies and the PDS 343/05 approved by the Senate. Both legislations authorized the implementation of Belo Monte enterprise	<i>Conversion:</i> convenient interpretation of article 231 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution on hearings with the native population. <i>Layering:</i> activities around the creation of a complementary law to regulate article 231 of the Federal Constitution

**Table I.**  
Identification and characteristics of the advocacy coalitions of the Belo Monte HPP

plan of activities for local development). This pressure also influenced the content of the Decree 1785/2005 and Decree PDS 343/2005, which authorized the establishment of the plant conditioned to studies of anthropological nature concerning the indigenous communities affected. Nevertheless, Resolution 06/2008 of the *Conselho Nacional de Política Energética* (Brazilian national energy policy council) (CNPE) determined that Belo Monte HPP is the only enterprise allowed to operate in the Xingu River.

The beliefs of the coalitions' political core, detailed by [Vieira \(2017\) \(Table II\)](#), were used to establish the characteristics of the coalitions.

### Institutions and discourse: background of the analysis on the coordination of advocacy coalitions

Based on the phenomenological approach, the relationship between agents and their environment is defined based on the intersubjectivity, i.e. the characteristics of the context are a social construction supported by interactions and interpretations. For Crubelatte *et al.* (2004) reality is socially constructed from the interactions among agents when they establish the meanings of their particular world. In this sense, institutions provide stability and consolidate meanings of social behavior (Scott, 1995). In addition, Peci, Vieira, and Clegg (2006) define institutions as reference models that regulate the image of reality and define places, identities, and meanings. [Vieira and Gomes \(2014\)](#) suggest that institutionalization is a form of disseminating hegemonic actions and meanings. Thus, specific versions or interpretations of the meanings of the “surrounding world” (Crubelatte *et al.*, 2004) prevail in the way institutions are formed.

As for public policies, there are many agents with different perspectives that are aligned regarding different measures. As mentioned before, according to the ACF, public policies are

Beliefs shared by the political core	Idealistic political coalition	Technocratic and materialistic political coalitions
Hydroelectric use of the Xingu River	The use will result in irreparable damage to the environment	The restrictions to the project minimize its impacts
Beneficiaries	Foreign electric-intensive industries	Local population, the population from the North region of Brazil and Center-South areas of the country, as well as the electric-intensive industries
Enterprises in the Amazon	The Amazon is a sanctuary, and it must not be subject to interventions of this kind	The Amazon is a rich source and must be explored, with attention to environmental protection
Electricity supply and demand in the country	It is necessary to modernize the existing energy system	It is necessary to expand energy supply
The use of the Waters of the Xingu River	The river must remain preserved	The river must be used to produce maximum energy potential
Brazilian energy mix	Alternative and renewable energy sources must be a priority	Balance the use of renewable energy sources and the maximum production
Measures for regional development	These measures are not effective and are used as a strategy to legitimize the works in the region	The measures can benefit the local population
Participatory decision making and social accountability	Ensure wide social participation as a key feature of the policy	Emphasis on the participation of the government and selected groups of civil society

Source: [Vieira \(2017\)](#)

**Table II.** Beliefs of the political core shared by the coalitions in the case of Belo Monte

representations of beliefs and values (Jenkins-Smith *et al.*, 2014), and the advocacy coalitions arise from this sharing of subjectivities, seeking the hegemony that grants the dominance in defining the institutions that will regulate public policies.

In the new historical institutionalism, according to Hall and Taylor (1996) and when adopting the calculating perspective, the agents' behavior is guided predominantly by strategic calculation. The state is a set of institutions capable of structuring the nature and outcome of the conflicts among the agents grouped in coalitions. From this perspective, institutions are relatively predictable regarding their present and future behavior. On the other hand, from a cultural perspective, "behavior" is not merely strategic but limited by worldviews. Although goal-oriented, there are adaptations to familiar patterns of behavior to achieve the established goals. Therefore, interpretation of subjectivities takes on a central role, and institutions are the moral and cognitive models that enable both action and interpretation.

The new discursive institutionalism does not clearly distinguish such perspectives. When emphasizing both ideas and discourse, this approach considers the adoption, interpretation, appropriateness and utilitarian calculation, all at once because discourse and institutions are understood as the same thing. An institution may be the materialization of the hegemonic discourse, but discourse can also be an instrument against a given institution in the counter-hegemonic struggle. For Schmidt (2008) and Bell (2011), the institutions constrain the agents, but the agents may confront institutions. Therefore, institutions are constitutive (because they determine a context in which one thinks, speaks and acts) and are constituted (because they are the result of interactive processes among agents).

It is possible to consider that the new discursive institutionalism carries nuances both of the new historical institutionalism, regarding its calculating dimension and the new institutionalism of rational choice when it attributes to the agent the preferences, the ability to maximize them, and the use of discourse as a deliberate and strategic form of action. Institutions are, therefore, a resource to serve the hegemonic coalition. The new discursive institutionalism also carries nuances both of the new historical institutionalism, in its cultural dimension, and the new sociological institutionalism when the institutions materialize discourses and provide patterns of signification, schemes and reference categories. However, the new discursive institutionalism is different from the other perspectives because it understands that institutions are not durable and when it attributes more significant weight to the agency regarding the structure. Institutional change is understood as a common phenomenon, caused by both exogenous events and the agents' daily actions, through either rupture or incremental processes (Thelen, 2009).

Therefore, when looking at the ACF from the perspective of the new discursive institutionalism, the advocacy coalitions are in a constant struggle for hegemony trying to impose, through their discourses, beliefs, and values in the processes of changing public policies. According to Schmidt (2008), the discourse is about interactive processes by which the ideas are transmitted. It is not only about ideas, but also about the context (where, when, how, and why it is said). For the author, the transformative power of ideas and discourses has a causal influence on political reality and can lead to institutional change. As in the ACF, the new discursive institutionalism shows three levels of the concept of ideas – public philosophies, programs and policy solutions. A discourse can articulate not only different levels of ideas, but also forms of ideas, such as narratives, stories, scenarios, and collective memories, which guide political thinking and decisions. The discourse can also be coordinative (when linked to the construction of policies) or communicative (policy necessity) (Schmidt, 2008, 2011).

Political agents are engaged continuously in the attribution of meanings to perceived stimuli and responses, and discourse is the intentional expression of their understanding in a context. When observing the logic of the adaptation, the discourse forms a reference identity to be followed and, after interpreted, it will generate a response from the agent that can be expressed as a new discourse, reproducing or questioning the reference institution. On the other hand, according to the logic of consequences, discourse is also the manifestation of preferences and the objectification of alternatives and their consequences (March, 2009). The discourse translates into concrete actions and is eventually manifested in programs, projects, norms, or protocols. Moreover, under the institutionalist approach, it can be understood as the institution itself, formal or informal, or as an understanding of what the institution is.

Saraiva, Pimenta and Corrêa (2004) analyze the role of the discursive matrix characterizing it as an instrument of power for cooperation. Thus, the:

discourse as an interactive process is what enables agents to change institutions, because the deliberative nature of discourse allows them to conceive of and talk about institutions as objects at a distance, and to dissociate themselves from them even as they continue to use them (Schmidt, 2008, p. 316).

We used the CDA to better understand the discourse's role in the coordination processes. The CDA is based on the perception of a problem from the power relations; the asymmetric distribution of material and symbolic resources in social practices; and naturalization of particular discourses as universal (Ramalho and de Melo Resende, 2011). A dominant coalition lives an unstable balance and must disseminate its ideology to support its position. As noted by Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier (1993), a particular public policy is the translation of the beliefs and values of a dominant coalition, i.e. public policy is, to a certain extent, the expression of the coalition's ideology.

Thompson (1995) presents five modes of operation of ideology linked to the typical strategies of symbolic construction, as shown in Table III. It is through these modes of operation that political coalitions coordinate their identities, preferences, and expectations: positioning themselves on controversial issues, structuring and contesting social relations in disputes over hegemony.

## Method

The analysis of the discourse of the members of each coalition identified by Vieira (2017), was conducted by using shorthand notes of public hearings held by congressional committees of the Brazilian National Congress, which are public documents made available on the websites of the two legislative houses in the country. Adopting the same time horizon of the reference study by Vieira (2017), the analyzed hearings represent different moments between the years 1999 and 2012.

Access to the data was based on the indication of the Coordination of Relations, Research, and Information of the Chamber of Deputies, the office that provided links to find the statements made in plenary, and the hearings held by the commissions related to the enterprise of the case study. The data was organized using specialized software, which was also used to structure the categories of analysis. The corpus was formed exclusively by hearings attended by representatives from the three identified coalitions.

The following public hearings were analyzed: commission of consumer, environment and minorities defense (August 05, 1999); commission of Amazon and regional development of the Chamber of Deputies (June 06, 2001); committee on mines and energy (April 10, 2002); commission of Amazon, national integration and regional development (October 10, 2008);

General modes of operation of ideology	Ideology and discourse	
		Typical strategies of symbolic construction
<i>Legitimation</i> : relationships of domination are represented as legitimate		<i>Rationalization</i> : a chain of reasoning seeks to justify a set of relationships <i>Universalization</i> : specific interests are presented as general interests <i>Narrativization</i> : demands for legitimation are included in past history that legitimates the present <i>Displacement</i> : contextual displacement of terms and expressions <i>Euphemization</i> : positive valuation of institutions, actions, or relationships <i>Trope</i> : synecdoche, metonymy, metaphor <i>Standardization</i> : a standard reference proposed as a shared foundation <i>Symbolization of unity</i> : construction of symbols of the unit and collective identification <i>Differentiation</i> : emphasis on characteristics that disunite and prevent the establishment of a collective challenge <i>Expurgation of the other</i> : symbolic construction of an enemy <i>Naturalization</i> : social and historical creation treated as a natural phenomenon <i>Eternalization</i> : social and historical phenomena presented as permanent <i>Nominalization/Passivization</i> : focus the attention on specific themes at the expense of others, deleting actors and agency
<i>Dissimulation</i> : relationships of domination are concealed, denied, or obscured		
<i>Unification</i> : collective symbolic construction of identity		
<i>Fragmentation</i> : segmentation of individuals and groups that can represent a threat to the dominant group		
<i>Reification</i> : turning a transitory situation into a permanent and natural situation		

**Table III.**

General modes of operation of ideology

Source: Ramalho and de Melo Resende (2011)

commission on human rights and minorities of the Chamber of Deputies (April 07, 2010); temporary subcommittee to monitor the execution of the works of the Belo Monte power plant (December 07, 2010); temporary subcommittee to monitor the execution of the works of Belo Monte power plant in the Senate (March 15, 2012). The key players were then identified as representing the many stakeholders grouped in the coalitions, and at the same time, a database was structured with the sections of the discourses submitted to the categorization according to the model of Thompson (1995). The analyzed data correspond to the transcription of 1,294 min of speech.

According to de Melo Resende and Ramalho (2013), the CDA focuses on the ideological effects of texts on social relations, in their actions and interactions, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values, and identities. Discourse analysis can be focused on:

- the discourse per se;
- a view of language as constructive (creating) and constructed;
- the discourse as a form of action; or
- the discourse's rhetorical organization.

Thus, both the text and the interpretation of the context need to be analyzed. Therefore, the players' behavior was described to establish a version of the world before competitive

versions, as indicated by Gill (2002). In this approach, each categorization is justified with brief explanations. In the excerpts of the speeches presented in this article, the lines representing the strategies and modes of operation of ideology were boldfaced and identified with numbers, to facilitate the reader's comprehension.

### **Positioning and coordination of coalitions on controversial issues in Belo Monte**

Analyzing the belief system of coalitions and the history of Belo Monte HPP, some issues stood out as the most controversial and guided the framing of the problem of coalition coordination: feasibility of the project, beneficiaries and social participation.

On these issues, the technocratic political coalition argues that it has extensive knowledge of the region and the project, and can improve the enterprise's technical, financial, social, and environmental viability. The coalition also believes that the plant is of great value to the country, to the State of Pará, and the region affected. The key argument of the coalition is the *Plano de Inserção Regional* (the plan of activities for local development). The plan consists of measures to reduce impacts and offer compensation, ensuring viability, broad participation through public hearings and benefits to the local population. The idealistic political coalition, however, opposes the plan. The members of the coalition are distrustful and consider such actions a way of buying legitimacy for the power plant. They question the plant's capacity of generating energy consistently, as well as criticizing the quality and impartiality of the studies of environmental impact. In addition, the idealistic coalition argues that the entrepreneurs are not able to control the plant's impacts. The coalition denies that the historical process of discussion about Belo Monte HPP has been democratic, arguing that its beneficiaries will be a restricted group of big companies. In turn, the materialistic political coalition argues favorably for the enterprise because it believes that the project was much discussed and studied. The materialistic coalition, however, has doubts about the real beneficiaries – which is the topic farthest from the hegemonic coalition.

The next section presents the coalitions' discourse strategies. It is important to emphasize that all the general modes of operation of ideology were used in the coalitions' coordinative and communicative discourses, except the materialistic political coalition that did not resort to reification and the idealistic political coalition that did not use dissimulation, according to the corpus analyzed in this research. The expectation is that a coalition in counter-hegemonic struggle does not use dissimulation as a resource since this would mean concealing, denying or obscuring relationships of domination. It should also be noted that coalitions interested in the power plant use the same typical symbolic construction strategies. Due to the limitation of space, this article only presents parts of the discourses considered emblematic and representative.

### **Discourse strategies of the technocratic political coalition**

The Minister of Mines and Energy, Edson Lobão, spoke at a hearing held at the commission of Amazon, national integration and regional development:

*This will be the best hydroelectric power plant in Brazil, one of the best in the world<sup>1</sup>. It will produce 11,180 megawatts of power and will cost the same as the hydroelectric power plants Santo Antônio or Jirau<sup>2</sup> – one of these two will produce 3,400 megawatts. Nature is prodigious<sup>3</sup>. It (the HPP) will be auctioned next year (October 15, 2008).*

The discourse explores the strategy of naturalization regarding the use of the river to generate electric power. It justifies the construction of the plant, arguing that it will be the best hydroelectric plant in Brazil and among the best in the world. The argument compares Belo Monte HPP to other HPP with smaller capacity and similar costs. Therefore, the use of



dissimulation is observed through the strategy of euphemization (1 and 2) and the use of the mode reification through the strategies of naturalization and passivization (3).

The Deputy Fernando Ferro spoke at a hearing held by the commission on mines and energy. Mocking opposing groups, the deputy minimizes their importance by calling them crazy and insane. Ironically, he tries to show compassion and affection for his opponents. The mode used was the fragmentation, through the strategy of differentiation (1) and dissimulation using the strategy of euphemization (2), when he tries to attribute a positive meaning to his relationship with the opposition group:

*I welcome all the agents involved, one may call them ecochatos (eco-annoying) or ecoloucos (eco-crazy). I understand some of them are desperate, but even those ecoloucos may contribute somehow<sup>1</sup>. It takes a democratic spirit to recognize that in the insanity and despair of some acts there is some truth that we must seize to mature together<sup>2</sup>. No one owns the truth, however much we want to look like we do (April 10, 2002).*

The Secretary of Ministry of Mines and Energy (MME), Benedito Carraro, uses the strategy of universalization when arguing that the institutional bidding model organized by Aneel (Brazilian electricity regulatory agency) serves the interests of all. His speech leads to the understanding that the interests of some are in fact the interests of all (1 and 2):

*In short, all possible alternatives will be studied, and of course, always taking into account the cost-benefit analysis. The final decision about the best use, what is the best choice for the Brazilian society when it comes to addressing this challenge, will be decided by society<sup>1</sup>. Of course, any kind of use will present a risk, but the cost-benefit analysis prevails. The decision is to be made by us all. We either take advantage of the wealth we have, always working together with these agencies, or we will prevent the development of Brazil<sup>2</sup> (August 05, 1999).*

At the same hearing, Afonso Henrique Santos, from Aneel, adopts the mode of legitimation through the strategy of narrativization, using the history of other HPPs:

*A country that must develop needs a lot of hydroelectric power plants. They are a great development vector. All we need to do is to look at the whole history of Rio Grande, Tietê, Paranapanema, and even now what is happening in the Tocantins-Araguaia Basin<sup>1</sup>. Of course there are big impacts, but it (the HPP) is essential (August 05, 1999).*

The then president of the company Eletronorte José Antônio Muniz Lopes, in a hearing held in the Chamber of Deputies, seems to know well who the members of the technocratic coalition are. Exalting the characteristics of the State of Pará, he adopts the mode of unification through the strategy of symbolization of unity (1 and 2). He also uses dissimulation through the strategy of euphemization (3):

*(The State of) Pará will be the engine of the twenty-first century<sup>1</sup>, like São Paulo at the end of the twentieth century. This (enterprise) will ensure the operation of the Brazilian hydroelectric industry for several years [. . .]. We have, in that state, water, wood, and purple soil as good as that of the (State of) Paraná, as well as a hard-working people<sup>2</sup>. Roads are being paved. In addition, we have, Tucuruí, and many were in doubt about it (Tucuruí HPP). What is the Belo Monte hydroelectric complex? It is the best hydroelectric power plant in the world<sup>3</sup>. It represents to Xingu River what Tucuruí represents to the Tocantins (river), both (HPPs) are relevant for the country (June 06, 2001).*

### **Discourse strategies of the idealistic political coalition**

In an audience held by the commission on human rights and minorities of the Chamber of Deputies, the leader of the *Movimento Xingu Vivo Para Sempre* (environmentalist movement) creates “an enemy,” presenting the idea of an enemy against the people:

This country, mainly the Amazon, *is being handed over by the government to these transnational companies<sup>1</sup>, which are destroying our lives<sup>2</sup>*, destroying our natural resources, and ultimately *putting an end to the dignity of this people<sup>3</sup>* (April 07, 2010).

In Antônia Melo's speech, it is possible to observe the use of fragmentation through the strategy of expurgation of the other, characterizing the enemy (1 and 2): government and others interested in building the plant cause suffering and attack the dignity of the people. The speaker uses the strategy of trope (synecdoche), since the social groups opposed to the enterprise are portrayed as a totality, that is, "the people" (3). Melo's speech adopts the model of unification through the strategy of symbolization of unity (1), delimiting the group of those who suffer with the implementation of HPPs. Moreover, she uses trope (metaphor) to expose the domination – instead of using it to dissimulate this kind of relationship:

*It is clear and evident, dear friends living this pain and struggle together<sup>1</sup>, that these projects treat us as trash<sup>2</sup>, as disposable beings<sup>3</sup>*. Our friends here have just emphasized that the government only listens to one side and needs to listen to the other. [...] The government did not have the courage or, at least, the intelligence to send interlocutors to talk to the communities. *They send people of the worst quality<sup>3</sup>* (April 07, 2010).

In another hearing, organized by the temporary subcommittee to monitor the execution of the works of the Belo Monte power plant, the Federal Attorney-in-Chief in the State of Pará, Dr. Ubiratan Cazetta, uses the strategy of narrativization to de-legitimize Belo Monte (1), and uses trope (metaphor) (2) to dissimulate the process of granting the license to implement the plant's construction site:

*We cannot reproduce in Belo Monte all the mistakes of the past<sup>1</sup>*, and some of them are clear, (such as) if we anticipate the implantation of the construction site without the effective adoption of measures to respond (to the impacts of the works); *is the case of preparing the road before putting the truck on the street. Building the road after putting the truck, on top of the holes, is much worse<sup>2</sup>* (December 07, 2010).

In the same hearing, the coalition's identity is exposed by one of its members, José Roberto: it is not just about the people suffering in the North Region of Brazil, from the Amazon. It is also about the people who never had a voice, who have always been ignored, but who are always fighting. In this case, we can see the symbolization of unit (1) and the eternalization (2) to report a recurrent situation in the past and present (reification). However, after reporting, he suggests a change of position that will provoke a reaction, referring to a new pattern of behavior that will form the fighting identity of the coalition. Therefore, it is possible to observe the strategy of standardization (3) in favor of unification:

*Of course, as always, we were ignored. As always, they have passed over us<sup>1</sup>. The people have never had a voice in this country, much less in the Amazon, we want to make it clear that we will fight until the end so that we will not be harmed<sup>2</sup>*. As for the mitigating measures, if the dam really is built, we will have to negotiate a lot, and you can tell that there will be a lot of mobilization, a lot of protest and a lot of fighting, because *we are not willing to accept such robbery, let alone the daily massacre<sup>3</sup>* we are subjected to (June 06, 2001).

### Discourse strategies of the political materialistic coalition

Deputy Anivaldo Vale exposes the position of the materialistic political coalition in an audience of the commission of Amazon and regional development of the Chamber of Deputies: in exchange for resources and benefits, they support Belo Monte. Initially, the Deputy establishes the identity of the coalition around those who are from and fight for Pará and the Amazon, differentiating them from the rest of Brazilian society. He then uses the

strategy of differentiation to obtain fragmentation (1 and 3). He also resorts to trope (metaphor) (2) to disqualify the current royalties' policy:

When discussing sustainable development and the use of natural resources in the Amazon, we want benefits. For example, *we have water resources, as you have shown, in the State of Pará. So the rest of Brazilian society has to pay for the use of this resource*<sup>1</sup>. We have to change this royalty model because its form is so misleading that it only seeks to correct the environmental impacts on the part of the upstream, where the lake is. What about the part downstream, where the fish have gone, where there is silting, where navigation is sometimes compromised, and where poverty is? Does it not participate in the process? *I see the royalties more as an evil compensation, because it looks like a charity*<sup>2</sup>. I am giving you this, you remain silent and this is your participation. No. What we have to change is the model. Let's tax energy on the end of the chain. *Those who used the energy in their industry and generated employment, generated wealth, brought money to the region – a region that has the conditions to develop tourism, farming, the industrial part and give income opportunity to this society that complains so much about these projects*<sup>3</sup> (June 06, 2001).

At the same hearing, the Secretary for Energy Affairs of the State of Pará, Nicias Ribeiro, established a connection with the president of Norte Energia S.A., representative of the dominant coalition. The idea was to present a shared identity between the two coalitions through the symbolization of unity (1). In addition, the secretary used rationalization (2) to legitimize his action in search of more resources for Altamira.

Now, of course – *and I ask permission from our dear friend [ . . . ] Carlos Nascimento*<sup>1</sup> – a city like Altamira, with 50,000 inhabitants, had and has a hospital that reasonably attended to its demand. [ . . . ] *It is important that we make an evaluation. Altamira had 50 thousand inhabitants, and today, by the calculations of the institutes that say they can count, make projections, already exceeds 100 thousand. So, this hospital that served the population cannot meet this new demand. There is no way*<sup>2</sup>! (March 15, 2012).

Deputy Antônio Feijão expressed his solidarity with the representative of the technocratic coalition in a hearing held by the commission of Amazon and regional development of the Chamber of Deputies and made use of the strategy of trope (metaphor) (1), arguing that the lack of investments in the electricity sector affected the country. He then makes use of differentiation and the expurgation of the other (2) to obtain fragmentation between those interested in the best for the country and those who only prevent the common interest on behalf of development. He again uses metaphor (3) to classify negatively the category of Attorneys of the Republic:

Almost two decades ago, an image marked my life in the Amazon: the scene of Dr. José Antônio Muniz, in Altamira, in the Xingu, with an Indian next to him, holding a machete close to his face. *If we look at his face, we will see that the episode did not leave any scar, but if we look at the commercial balance of this country, we will find that there was the biggest scar: the resources wasted to compensate the recent blackout. This is the great scar that Brazil has today*<sup>1</sup>. [ . . . ] Therefore, at that time, the ideological demagoguery, *the fad around the environment, this anthropological syndrome over the native population, generated all this stress in the country that today allows a shyster that acts like a baby to command the destinies of a nation*<sup>2</sup>. I do not know in this country a single law that would punish an Attorney-General, or arrest him. I do not know of an Attorney-General who has been at least questioned for the damage he has caused the nation when making a unilateral decision, specific, signed by his own pen, from his *conscience and hand*<sup>3</sup> (June 06, 2001).

Deputy Josué Bengtson also criticizes the work of the idealistic political coalition that seeks to prevent the continuity of feasibility studies of the Belo Monte power plant. He uses narrativization (1) referring to a specific moment in the history of the country to delegitimize Federal Public Ministry's actions. He defines his group as the one that fights for the interests

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of the State of Pará. It is possible to observe the strategy of the symbolization of unity with the construction of collective identification (2):

The approaches made by the colleagues that preceded me are also pertinent, but I want to focus on one detail: *the legal authoritarianism we are facing in Brazil. We left an authoritarianism that we do not want back, and today we are experiencing a true legal dictatorship, not only in the case of Belo Monte<sup>1</sup>. We, who are from Pará and are part of committees that have always defended the interests of that State, we remember the case of the Tocantins-Araguaia waterway, similar to that of Belo Monte. With the prohibition of the studies, the same decision was made<sup>2</sup>* (June 06, 2001).

Finally, Deputy Anivaldo Vale uses the mode of unification through the strategy of standardization (3) when he places Belo Monte as the grounds shared by the two coalitions that are defending the interests of the country. Therefore, he also uses the universalization (3).

I will not discuss what is being done in Pará, but it is an assault on the intelligence of the Brazilian people. [...] *The Belo Monte plant, Dr. José Antônio, is no longer a project of ELETRONORTE alone. It (the enterprise) extrapolated the business of ELETRONORTE and today it concerns the people of Pará and the Brazilian people. We are all called to join forces with you and with ELETRONORTE, to put into practice what is good. This is good for Brazilian society and especially for the people from Pará<sup>3</sup>* (June 06, 2001).

### Conclusion and recommendations for future research

It is important to reflect on the contributions of the discourse-focused approach and understand the coalitions' behavior. One of the assumptions of the model, according to [Weible et al. \(2009\)](#), is the perspective that policies and programs are expressions of beliefs. Therefore, the intention was to expose how the structure of beliefs is articulated through language. A belief system is the result of a social construction marked by sharing subjectivities, i.e. it is a process that exposes the intersubjectivity among members of coalitions. The proposal in this study is that the structuring of a belief system, from the CDA's point of view, acts in the same way as the ideology. Therefore, existing coalitions instrumentalize this system: "they are constructions of practices from particular perspectives [...] which "iron out" the contradictions, dilemmas, and antagonisms of practices in ways which accord with the interests and projects of domination" ([Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999](#), p. 26).

On the other hand, the strategies adopted by the three coalitions reflect the polarization around the issue, as they all used the mode of fragmentation through the strategies of expurgation of the other, and the mode of unification, through the strategy of symbolization of unity. The coalitions delimit who they are, not only reinforcing their core beliefs but also denying different beliefs. This phenomenon may represent, in the future, a methodological contribution to the empirical application of the ACF, since the symbolic creation of an enemy and the simultaneous construction of collective identification symbols help to verify the initial proposition of the researcher on political coalitions potentially existing in a subsystem. Another relevant aspect is the typical strategies related to legitimation. In this study, we observed that the idealistic political coalition used the strategies of narrativization, rationalization and universalization. Therefore, these strategies may serve not only the hegemonic coalition as a way of legitimizing relations of domination but also to a coalition in the counter-hegemonic struggle, to question the legitimacy of such relations.

Based on the propositions of [Vieira and Gomes's \(2014\)](#) integrative theoretical model and revisiting the case study conducted by [Vieira \(2017\)](#) on Belo Monte, we analyzed the discourse as an instrument of coordination both among the coalitions and internal to a

specific coalition. This study presented how the coalitions favorable to the power plant tried to join a common identity and accused the same adversaries. It was also possible to note coherence in their discourses on controversial issues and the alignment of interests and expectations. Both (technocratic and materialistic) coalitions declared to be open to dialogue, but criticize the idealistic political coalition for seeking, in a supposedly arbitrary way, the prohibition of the work by judicializing the process. In the dialogue among partner coalitions, there is concern over guaranteeing the execution of the construction works and, in this sense, one exploits the other's greed for more benefits and resources to guarantee support to deal with the institutions, according to the strategies indicated in [Table I](#). The idealistic political coalition also reinforces its identity, values and interests using unification as a mode of operation of ideology. It uses fragmentation to explicitly oppose the other coalitions, as well as legitimation strategies, in this case, to subvert the logic presented by the other groups, questioning their legitimacy and hegemony. In addition, the idealistic coalition uses reification in a tone of denouncing, questioning the lack of representation of the people of the Amazon.

Finally, the relationship between the modes of operation of ideology and the strategies of gradual and transformative institutional change is a topic to be studied in the future. Future research may focus on verifying whether the characterization of the stakeholders interferes in the selection of the typical strategies of symbolic construction. In addition, it is important to remind that [Thompson \(1995\)](#) does not consider that the categories are exhaustive. Regarding CDA as a method in empirical studies supported by the new discursive institutionalism, it is suggested to examine more closely the articulation between the discourse and the social practices of the players analyzed herein. It is worth emphasizing the importance of applying the integrative model of [Vieira and Gomes \(2014\)](#) empirically, in other contexts, such as public policies on health, safety or education.

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