

The Functional Configuration of Epistemic Argumentation: Reframing Toulmin's Layout of Arguments in a Multidisciplinary Perspective / A configuração funcional da argumentação epistêmica: uma releitura do layout de Toulmin em perspectiva multidisciplinar

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to discuss a reframing of Toulmin's layout of arguments, originally proposed in *The Uses of Argument* (TOULMIN, 2003 [1958]) and further developed in *An Introduction to Reasoning* (TOULMIN, RIEKE; JANIK, 1984 [1978]). In this approach, we conceive of the layout as: (i) a useful instrument for analyzing the functional configuration of epistemic argumentation and, thus, for evaluating consistency, a dimension of analysis pertaining to the justificatory facet of argumentation; (ii) a valid instrument for analyzing dissension and dialogism, fundamental elements of the communicative facet of argumentation, in terms of the functioning of *logos*, one of the rhetorical proofs involved in the process of achieving adherence. Hence, we reconceptualize the components of the layout – Claim, Data, Warrant, Backing, Qualifier and Rebuttal – and propose a notion of argumentative move compatible with our approach, which aims at achieving linguistic, discursive and cognitive coherence and at responding to the theoretical and analytical requirements involved in the consideration of the justificatory and communicative facets of argumentation.

KEYWORDS: Argumentation; Toulmin; Consistency; Adherence; Argumentative move

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é discutir uma releitura do layout de argumentos proposto originalmente por Stephen Toulmin (2006 [1958]) e desenvolvido posteriormente por Toulmin; Rieke; Janik (1984 [1978]) no sentido de enquadrá-lo como: (i) um instrumento útil para a análise da configuração funcional da argumentação epistêmica e, por conseguinte, para a avaliação da consistência da argumentação, o que está ligado à faceta justificatória de tal atividade; (ii) um instrumento válido para a análise do dissenso e do dialogismo, característicos da faceta comunicativa da argumentação, no que diz respeito ao funcionamento da prova retórica do logos, um dos principais fatores envolvidos no processo de conquista da adesão. Nesse sentido, procedemos a uma reconceptualização dos componentes do layout de argumentos – Alegação, Dados, Garantia, Base, Qualificador e Refutação – e propomos uma noção de movimento argumentativo compatível com a nossa abordagem, que busca ser linguística, discursiva e cognitivamente coerente, respondendo a requisitos teóricos e analíticos ligados tanto à faceta justificatória quanto comunicativa da argumentação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Argumentação; Toulmin; Consistência; Adesão; Movimento argumentativo

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Introduction

The academic reception of Stephen Toulmin's (2003 [1958])¹ layout of arguments – originally proposed in *The Uses of Argument* and developed, in detail, in *An Introduction to reasoning* (TOULMIN; RIEKE; JANIK, 1984 [1978]) – is controversial within the scope of argumentation studies, as Harada (2009) points out. There are significant divergences in the interpretation of his work, with serious consequences in terms of its application to the study of texts with an argumentative goal (AMOSSY, 2018).

There are researchers, such as Grácio (2010), who understand the model as monological and propositional, without any grounding in the enunciative and discursive reality that characterizes concrete argumentation; in this perspective, Toulmin's proposal is conceived of as a normative model that erases dissension and lacks the proper tools to deal with the multiple possibilities of perspectivation inherent to argumentation. There are other researchers, such as Freeman (2011), who understand that the model presupposes an Opponent/Antagonist in its own formulation, in such a way that it is simply not possible to affirm that the dimension of dissent or perspectivation is erased, since it assumes an Other and their possible objections and demands in the construal of a network of propositions, derived from utterances, oriented towards a given Claim – in opposition to others. Thus, the layout would not be an instrument restricted to the description of argumentation as product; it would also enable the description of fundamental aspects regarding argumentation as process.

In this paper, we aim to discuss a reframing of Stephen Toulmin's layout of arguments that enables consistent argumentative analysis from a linguistic, discursive and cognitive perspective. In this sense, our proposal is grounded on a closer dialogue with the second pattern of reception of the British philosopher's work – as observed in Freeman (2011) –, since we understand that the model provides an economic and cohesive set of categories that encompass a diversity of argumentative processes oriented to the defense of Claims, conceived of as possible responses to an epistemic problem. Therefore, we assume that the model should be conceptualized as:

(a) an instrument for analyzing the functional configuration (GONÇALVES-SEGUNDO, 2018) of epistemic argumentation – that is, for interpreting the role that propositions, derived from utterances and organized in a network, play to support a Claim. This

¹ TOULMIN, S. E. *The Uses of Argument*. Updated edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 [1958].

instrument must be articulated with a framework for macrostructural description – in other words, for mapping the geometry of the propositional network that supports a Claim – in order to account for the functioning of the justificatory facet of argumentation. Therefore, we distance ourselves from the view that characterizes the layout as essentially normative;

(b) a malleable instrument, which can be adapted by the analyst, to account for the dissent and the dialogism that characterizes the communicative facet of argumentation, without assuming that it can be used to fully explain the complexity of the referred activity. In other words, we understand that, while the layout covers some dimensions of argumentative analysis, it does not encompass other equally relevant aspects for the study of argumentation,² especially those of a rhetorical nature, such as *ethos* and *pathos*. In order to account for these aspects, we need to supplement it with other epistemological frameworks.

In the next sections, we will discuss our understanding of Toulmin's layout and the reframing we have been carrying out in order to apply it in terms of an approach that aims at achieving cognitive, linguistic and discursive coherence, considering the justificatory and communicative facets of argumentation (BERMEJO-LUQUE, 2011). We will interweave our discussion with the analysis of an excerpt from an opinion article, which will allow us to visualize, step by step, how this new proposal works.

1 Presentation of the Text under Analysis and Contextualization of the Epistemic Problem

As we announced, the theoretical discussion will be interwoven with the analysis of the initial excerpt of an opinion article. The text *Tal como são, os 'rolezinhos' atentam contra direitos coletivos* [As they are, 'rolezinhos' threaten collective rights] was written by Mauro

² In Gonçalves-Segundo (2018a), we briefly discuss the multidimensional model of argumentative analysis we have been developing. This model dialogues with distinct traditions in argumentation studies (Informal Logic, Pragma-dialectics, Rhetoric) and is grounded on a multidisciplinary framework, which includes discourse studies, linguistics and cognitive sciences. A paper that details this discussion and debates its foundations is currently in press (GONÇALVES-SEGUNDO, *in press a*). In these texts, we highlight five dimensions of analysis – functional configuration; macrostructure; schematization; socio-affective grounding; argumentative orientation – and three central functions of argumentation: conviction (to lead someone to believe and to adhere, in different degrees, to a given conception of reality), persuasion (to lead someone to decide on and/or to act according to a given project of changing reality), ideological preservation/discourse ratification (to take a stand in relation to alternative perspectives on the real). We understand that Toulmin's layout is useful for understanding the functional configuration of epistemic argumentation, for qualifying the macrostructural discussion (i.e. the debate on the ways of linking and organizing arguments to support a Claim) and for examining schematization (i.e. investigating types of arguments). Therefore, we do not impose on Toulmin's layout the responsibility for describing and explaining argumentation as a whole; nonetheless, we do not overlook its importance and applicability as an analytical tool.

Rodrigues Penteadó, Professor of Commercial Law at University of São Paulo (Brazil), and published in the *Tendências e Debates* [Trends and Debates] section of the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, on January 14, 2014.

This section constitutes a privileged space for opinion forming, since it is grounded on dissent: the newspaper publishes two opinion articles with different standpoints on a given issue. In this case, what was being discussed was the legitimacy of the injunctions that established fines for young people who participated in *rolezinhos*, that is, gatherings of teenagers in Brazilian shopping malls. At that time, such meetings were the subject of intense public debate, and the participants were construed as marginals, as protesters, or as ‘mere teenagers.’³ In a short time, they became a target of political polarization: discourses that opposed civilization and barbarism, the right to demonstrate and the right to property began to emerge to condemn or support the gatherings. Judicialization followed: shopping malls obtained court orders to prevent the entry of these young people, who organized the meetings through social networks, in order to, supposedly, guarantee peace, comfort, security and tranquility to their regulars. Injunctions were soon granted. It is exactly this judicialization that the following text thematizes. In this paper, we will focus on the first three paragraphs:

As they are, 'rolezinhos' threaten collective rights

Mauro Rodrigues Penteadó – January 14, 2014

Even though we sympathize with our humble youth who seek spaces to interact and give vent to their love and joy, it is not possible to support them in this recent wave of “rolezinhos” held in shopping malls and other private places with specific ends.

It is sad that there is a lack of leisure options for our young people from the poorest classes. However, these “rolezinhos,” as they are being arranged, threaten the individual and collective rights guaranteed by the Federal Constitution.

Not to mention the also constitutionally guaranteed rights to property and free enterprise (arts. 1, inc. IV, 5, "caput" and 170). This is why the injunctions granted by the Judiciary to shopping malls – which imposed fines to the participants – are correct.⁴

[...]

Source: <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidiano/147663-tais-como-sao-os-rolezinhos-atentam-contradireitos-coletivos.shtml>

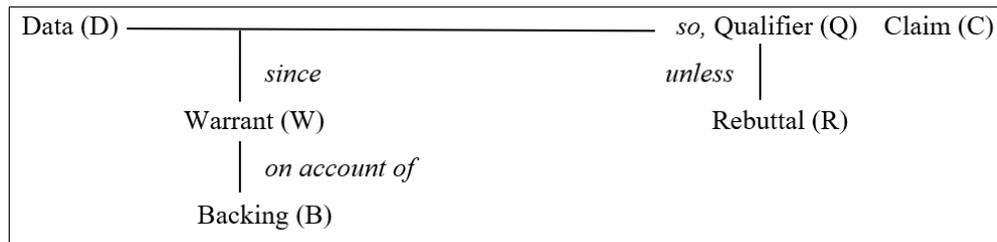
³ For a discursive analysis of the debate on *rolezinhos* in readers’ letters, see Gonçalves-Segundo (2016).

⁴ In the original: “Tal como são, os 'rolezinhos' atentam contra direitos coletivos / Mauro Rodrigues Penteadó – 14.01.2014 / Por mais que nos solidarizemos com nossa juventude humilde que busca espaços para se relacionar e dar vazão ao seu amor e alegria, não é possível apoiá-la nessa onda recente de "rolezinhos" marcados em shoppings centers e outros locais privados com destinação específica. / É triste a ausência de opção de lazer para nossos jovens de camadas mais pobres. No entanto, os "rolezinhos", tais como vêm sendo marcados, atentam contra os direitos individuais e coletivos assegurados pela Constituição Federal. / Isso sem falar no direito também constitucionalmente garantido à propriedade e à livre iniciativa (arts. 1º, inc. IV, 5º, "caput" e 170). Daí porque estão corretas as liminares concedidas pelo Judiciário aos shoppings – que estabeleceram multa aos participantes.”

2 Functional Configuration and Epistemic Problem: The Locus of Claims in Logical and Rhetorical Terms

Below, we show Toulmin's (2003 [1958])⁵ layout of arguments, which represents a network of propositions in defense of a Claim:

Figure 1. Stephen Toulmin's Layout of Arguments



Source: Toulmin (2003[1958])

First, inspired by Grácio (2010) and Plantin (2008 [2005]), we understand that argumentation is based on dissent and, therefore, on the possibility of there being different perspectives – or responses – about a given problem, which can be expressed through an argumentative question (GRÁCIO, 2010). Problems that focus on conceptions of reality, that is, perspectives related to ways of seeing and understanding the functioning of society, nature, human behavior, semiosis, among countless other possible objects of thematization, constitute *epistemic problems*. Epistemic problems are fueled by distinct discourses, in complex relations, which provide already consolidated representations that ground different responses to the problem, either explicitly or implicitly.

Therefore, a Claim is a possible response to this problem, a *point of dialogical tension* that is publicly⁶ focused by the orator in terms of linguistic, discursive and cognitive investment in its justification and – potentially, not necessarily – in the other's adherence to it.

It is precisely because a Claim is construed as being “in question,” entailing the existence of an underlying alternativity, that justification becomes relevant. The alternatives figure as Counter-Claims that can be locally focused by the Proponents/Protagonists themselves – in general, to refute them – or by the Opponents/Antagonists to rebut the answer sustained by

⁵ For reference, see footnote 1.

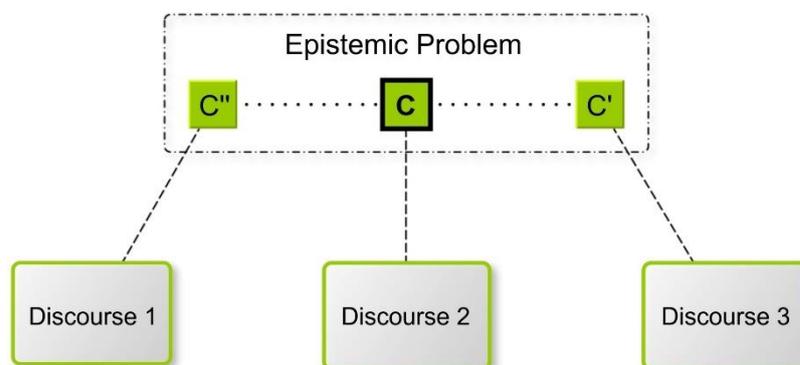
⁶ With this term, we cue our partial affiliation to the definition under discussion, but delimit that we are dealing with an argumentative activity effectively produced and oriented to an audience. Thus, we exclude internal deliberation from our reframing of Toulmin's layout.

another discursivity. Hence, we do not see argumentation as an activity oriented to general acceptance, neither to showing the “well-founded” reasons for adhering to a certain Claim, but as an activity aimed at legitimizing alternative conceptions of reality to endo and exogroups in different public spaces. Thus, we partially distance ourselves from Toulmin, Rieke, and Janik’s (1984 [1978], p.28) idealistic definition that Claims are “assertions put forward publicly for general acceptance. They contain the implications that there are underlying ‘reasons’ that could show them to be ‘well founded’ and therefore entitled to be generally accepted.”

As a result of the vision we are proposing, we understand that adherence needs to be seen in terms of a temporal dimension – since the acceptance of a Claim may be temporary or lasting – and a scalar dimension – as such acceptance may occur in different degrees, from the simple consideration that the Claim is plausible and possible to the fundamentalist incorporation that assumes it as an indisputable truth, a process that can ultimately lead to the suppression of the right – for some groups – to even raise the question and carry out the debate.

In Figure 2, we apply the discussion developed so far to the illustrative text authored by Penteadó:

Figure 2. Relations between Claims, Discourses, and Epistemic Problems



Epistemic problem (presupposes Claims in dialogical tension): the legitimacy of the injunctions that imposed fines for rolezinho participants in shopping malls.

Focused Claim (orientation of the argumentative move): the injunctions granted by the Judiciary, which imposed fines for rolezinho participants in shopping malls, are correct.

Unfocused Claims (alternative responses/standpoints regarding the epistemic problem): the injunctions granted by the Judiciary, which imposed fines for rolezinho participants in shopping malls, are wrong.⁷

Source: Own elaboration

⁷ Depending on the epistemic problem, there may be more than one unfocused Claim. In this case, we will restrict ourselves to only one alternative, due to the nature of the *Trends and Debates* section of the newspaper, which publishes a couple of texts with divergent Claims regarding a given question. In addition, as we will discuss further on, we do not wish to imply, by connecting each Claim to only one discourse, that the relation between these two instances is always one-to-one. The same Claim may be supported or disputed by various discourses, articulated in convergent or divergent relations.

The fact that there is a Claim in focus – precisely the one to which the network of propositions converges, thus being the target of the envisaged adherence, a property that is visually represented by a thicker line – does not mean, however, that the Proponent/Protagonist cannot dialogue with other Claims, either to recognize their soundness, even if partially, or to refute them. In these situations, what we see is a localized focus on another response to the epistemic question, with the aim of discussing it and, in general, of weakening it in terms of consistency.⁸ The dotted line that connects the Claims aims at showing their coexistence, in different degrees of focus, in the social debate about a given problem.

In addition, it is important to highlight, before moving on to the debate on how Claims are supported, that different discourses have distinct potentials for framing and approaching epistemic problems. On the one hand, there are epistemic problems that are simply not predicted in certain discursivities, in such a way that, in principle, they do not constrain the ways of addressing a particular issue – for example, medical discourse seems to have little relation to the debate on *rolezinhos*, differently from the many racial discourses. On the other hand, there are epistemic problems that are disputed by a multiplicity of (convergent and divergent) discourses, which may interact through different relations: overlap, complementation, competition, contradiction, among others. In the issue at hand, discourses related to legal, racial, socioeconomic and political fields, among others, are relevant, each with different framing and perspectivation potentials, thus fueling distinct responses and justifications regarding the problem. That is why, in Figure 2, we connected, with a dashed line, the various Claims to distinct discourses. In doing so, we could depict the aforementioned relations between these two instances.

That said, we move on to the discussion about Data/Grounds.

⁸ The notion of *consistency* is associated with the justificatory facet of argumentation and concerns the strength of an argumentative move in terms of the ways we chain propositions – derived from utterances – in defense of given Claims, considering the different forms of reasoning that mediate the process. Our view of consistency is strongly influenced by Informal Logic (JOHNSON; BLAIR, 2000), although it is not restricted to it. Regarding epistemic argumentation, we propose criteria based on our reframing of Toulmin's layout, akin to Slob (2006). Therefore, relevant criteria are (i) the acceptability of Data (section 3); (ii) the relevance of Warrants (section 4); (iii) the reliability of Backings (section 5); and (iv) the adequacy of the possible Refutations against this set (section 7). For reference: JOHNSON, R.; BLAIR, A. Informal Logic: An Overview. *Informal Logic*, v. 20, n. 2, pp.93-107, 2000. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22329/il.v20i2.2262>

3 Functional Configuration and Acceptability: Understanding Data/Grounds between the Logical and the Rhetorical

As we discussed, we define Claims as possible responses to epistemic problems, fueled by discourses and focused by orators in a public debate – conceived as constitutively dialogical (VOLOŠINOV, 1973),⁹ but subject to instantiation in the form of either a dialogue or a monologue. However, at that moment, we did not discuss one last property of Claims: to have this status, Claims must be supported by Data (or Grounds), commonly called arguments; otherwise, there is no argumentative activity, since, in these cases, the justificatory property is suppressed.

Drawing on this framing, we understand Data/Grounds as propositions, derived from utterances, that prototypically simulate the absence of local dialogical tension. On the one hand, this localized simulation is due to the linguistic or pictorial construal of this component, which constitutes the node from which a Claim will be supported; on the other hand, it is tied to local agreements with the audience about the plausibility or likelihood of the proposition – we will return to this point later.

This conception shows another partial divergence regarding Stephen Toulmin’s original formulation on this component of the layout. In Toulmin (2003 [1958], p.90),¹⁰ Data¹¹ are defined as “facts we appeal to as a foundation for the claim”; in other words, as “statements specifying particular facts about a situation” (TOULMIN; RIEKE; JANIK, 1984 [1978], p.37), accepted as true. For this reason, they are the starting points¹² for the support of a Claim.

From what we have already explained in the previous section, we believe one can infer that we understand this status of truth as a discursive effect. Therefore, we avoid treating Data as facts, but as linguistic and pictorial construals that simulate veracity in terms of a discursive regime legitimized by a given social group, as if that proposition were “out of the question.” This is in line with Langsdorf (2011, p.76, brackets ours), when she argues that “habits of behaving, believing, feeling, and thinking [underlie the] Data from which, and about which,

⁹ VOLOŠINOV, V. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik. Cambridge/Massachusetts/London: Harvard University Press, 1973.

¹⁰ For reference, see footnote 1.

¹¹ Although it does not impact our discussion, it is important to point out that Toulmin; Rieke; Janik (1984[1978]) uses the term *Grounds* instead of the original *Data* (TOULMIN, 2003 [1958]).

¹² We are not referring to its actual materialization in texts. Data need not precede nor follow Claims in textual ordering. There are multiples factors involved therein and they are not restricted to argumentative ones; contextual, cognitive and discursive factors (such as genre and its coercions) play relevant roles.

arguments are made.” The fact is that discourses underlie what we select and frame as Data; hence, when we involve ourselves with different spheres (or fields) (BAKHTIN, 1986),¹³ ¹⁴ learning to argue and arguing from the positions we assume in distinct social and discursive practices, through different genres, we are inculcating, through literacy, specific ways of collecting, selecting, construing and exposing Data, a process that is intimately associated with the discussion on Backings, to be carried out in section 5. Thus, the reduction of Data (or Grounds) to truth or factuality seems limiting to us, since it may lead to an unrealistic stiffening of the component and a concealment of the socio-historical and discursive processes that coerce its construal. That said, it can be seen that we assume an important departure from the original proposal in this aspect.

The idea of a starting point, however, is central to us. Data/Grounds is the component from which the acceptability of Claims is derived; therefore, it is necessary to have some form of agreement, albeit provisional,¹⁵ on its soundness or verisimilitude so that the debate can proceed. The repeated rejection of the Data raised by the participants in a debate halts the progress of argumentation and, therewith, the process of adhering or rejecting one of the alternative responses to the epistemic problem. Still, the judgment on the quality of the Data is a typical process of argumentation: in dialogues, we instantiate the assessment in the exchange of turns; in monologues, we anticipate potential criticism on the nature or on the application of the Data we present to ensure the consistency of the advanced Claim. It is from this process that emerges the different macrostructural patterns of the propositional network that constitutes a flux from the Data to the Claim. The main alternatives are:

(a) to seek, in support of the refuted or refutable Data, other Data to be coordinated to it, showing that the Claim is defensible if the original Data is combined with others (*cumulative coordinative macrostructure*);¹⁶

¹³ BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986.

¹⁴ We would like to anticipate that we draw on the works of the Bakhtin Circle to understand Toulmin’s (2003[1958]) notion of *field*, distancing ourselves from the debate that ties it to the concept of *logical type*.

¹⁵ We are emphasizing the idea of a provisional acceptance of Data, because we do not wish to imply that Data cannot be modalized. On the contrary: it happens often. In addition, it is possible to accept and defend certain Claims based on counterfactual Data – cued by conditionals –, whose “factuality” or “reality” we do not assume. Therefore, the simulated absence of dialogical tension, associated with the status of a piece of Data as fact – categorical modality (FAIRCLOUGH, 2003) – is just a prototype.

¹⁶ The definitions of the first three macrostructural types can be found in Eemeren; Houtlosser; Snoeck-Henkemans (2007). Pragma-Dialectics also proposes another one: the complementary coordinative pattern. As it involves the construal of Counter-Rebuttals, extrapolating, then, the debate on the organization of the Data network that supports a Claim, it will only be discussed in section 7. As for the embedded pattern, it is being proposed by us in

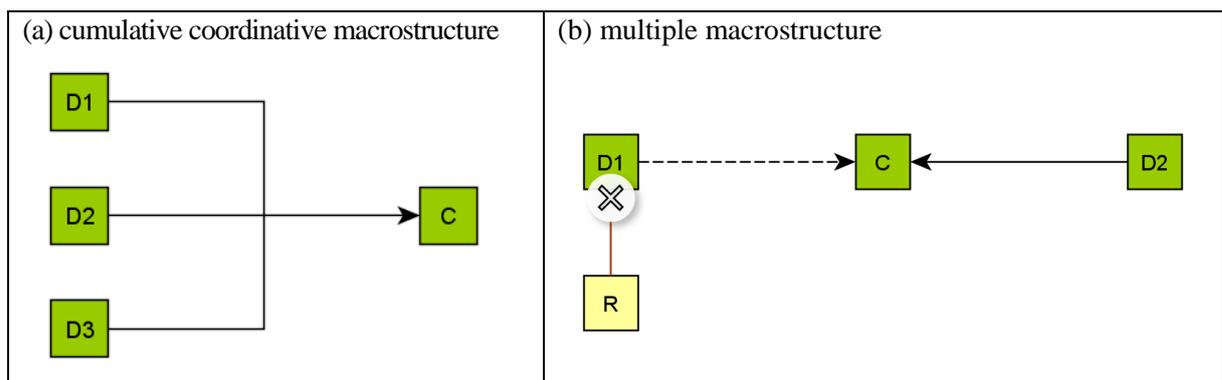
(b) to abandon this Data, seeking a different and independent one, which can transfer acceptability to the Claim (*multiple macrostructure*);

(c) to locally transform the Data into a Claim – a process that causes a new epistemic problem to emerge, albeit punctual and of secondary relevance in the argumentation as a whole –, for further defense and support through other Data (*subordinate macrostructure*);

(d) to support the validity of the Data through Backings,¹⁷ generally expressed by linguistic resources of evidentiality (BEDNAREK, 2006; MARÍN-ARRESE, 2011; GONÇALVES-SEGUNDO, *in press b*), which construes the source and the mode of access to the proposition, in a process aimed at reducing skepticism in relation to the Data and, thus, to the Claim (*embedded macrostructure*).

In Figure 3, we visually present the four macrostructural possibilities presented above:¹⁸

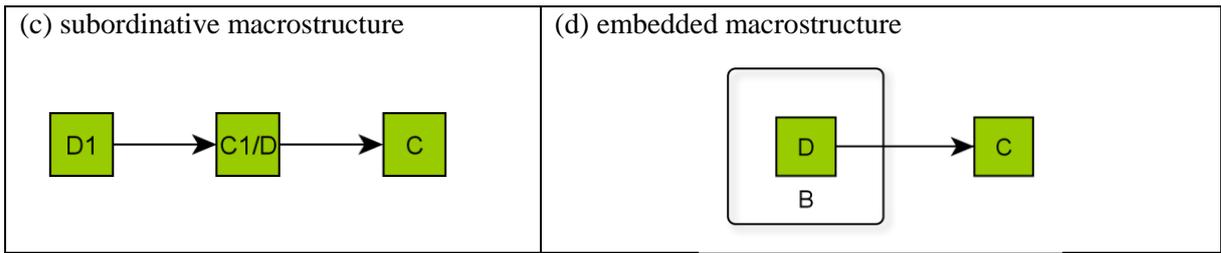
Figure 3. Macrostructural Patterns between Data and Claim



this paper. Finally, it is worth emphasizing that, although the three patterns are proposed by Pragma-Dialectics, the diagrams that follow are of our own elaboration.

¹⁷ In saying so, we are already pointing out that, in our reframing, Backings – which were restricted to scoping over Warrants in Toulmin's (2003 [1958]) original formulation – can also be applicable to other components, such as Data. This sort of extension is also admitted and defended by Langsdorf (2011). We will discuss this issue in detail in section 5.

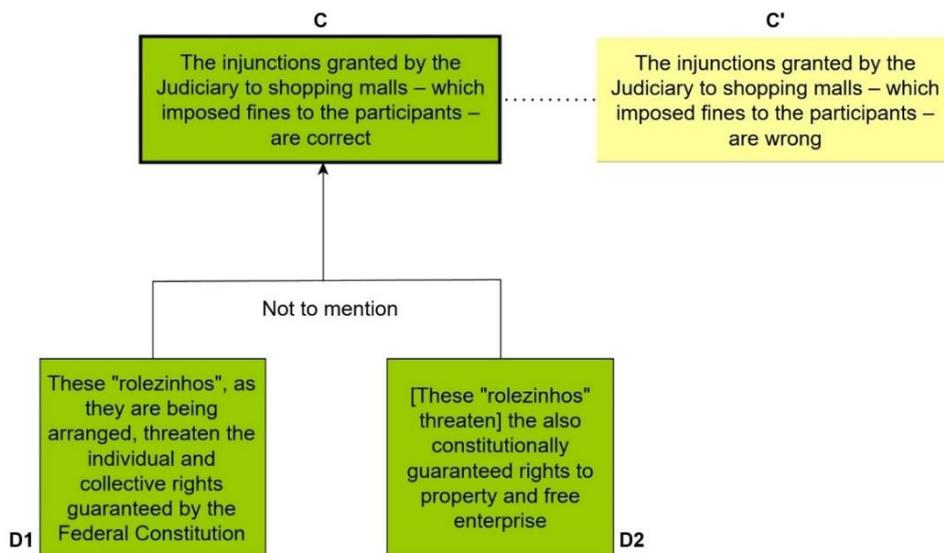
¹⁸ The components of the layout are diagrammed using rectangular or square shapes, and the orientation of the diagram can be horizontal or vertical, an option that derives from the optimization of the space on the page. The components are connected by directed edges – such as those that link the Data to the Claims – or not directed – such as those that link the Warrant to the edge that connects Data and Claims, as we will see in the next section. Directed edges show that the component attached to the tail/origin constitutes an argument for the component connected to the head/destination of the vector. That is why the tail of the vector is connected to the Data and the head to the Claim. Rebuttals are indicated by quadrilaterals and edges of another color to show that they are not linked to the Proponent's argumentative move, as we will discuss in section 7. The 'X' overlaps the component whose pertinence is challenged or refuted by the component connected to the tail of the vector. As a possible consequence, the Data's acceptability – situation (b) – can be weakened; that is why we represent the vector that connects D1 to A by a dashed edge. In situation (d), we want to highlight that D is construed as enunciatively grounded on evidential markings that indicate both its source and how it was accessed. In other terms, the diagram represents the Backing that frames the component.



Source: Own elaboration

Below, we show how two different pieces of Data are combined – in the text under analysis – to support the focused Claim that *the injunctions granted by the Judiciary to shopping malls – which imposed fines for the participants – are correct*. It is a case of cumulative coordinative macrostructure, cued by the construction *Not to mention*:¹⁹

Figure 4. Segment of the Argumentative Move (Data and Claims)



Source: Own elaboration

We, then, move on to the discussion about Warrants.

¹⁹ We believe it is still necessary to conduct investigations that systematize the articulation between connectives and macrostructural patterns in Brazilian Portuguese. In terms of the English language, there is the excellent book *Argumentative Indicators in Discourse: A Pragma-Dialectical Study*, coauthored by Eemeren; Houtlosser; Snoeck-Henkemans (2007).

4 Functional Configuration and Relevance: Framing Warrants between the Logical and the Rhetorical

In the previous section, we emphasized that the Data are the starting points for the defense of a Claim; however, even if there is agreement on their pertinence or validity, it is still necessary that the Data be considered relevant for the Claims to be consistent, a process that enhances adherence. The attribution of relevance is not an objective property; it is derived from the distinct discursivities and from the devices that regulate what can be considered valid or not. What guarantees relevance is, therefore, a discursive representation, in general, implicit, that is textually invoked by the Proponent/Protagonist when they connect certain Data to a given Claim and that constitutes a reasoning, a cognitive scheme that provides causal, analogical or symptomatic²⁰ relevance between them. In Toulmin's layout, this relevance-attributing component is called *Warrant* and it has been the subject of much controversy²¹ in the critical literature about *The uses of argument* and *An introduction to reasoning*.

Our formulation above cues a partial affiliation to the original definitions. In Toulmin, Rieke, and Janik (1984 [1978], p.45, emphasis in original, brackets ours), Warrants are understood as “*previously agreed general ways of arguing applied in [a] particular case,*” licensing the transition from Data to Claim. In our view, “previously agreed” should be interpreted as discursively pre-legitimated, that is, as a circulating representation that finds validity in a certain discourse, being “out of the question,” but not in others, which may not assume it. Therefore, Warrants are also subject to: (i) refutation; (ii) evidential support through Bases; (iii) justification through local conversion to Claims – with the consequent emergence of a secondary epistemic problem – and defense through Data.²² Such conception is in tune with the communicative and rhetorical facets of argumentation.

However, Warrants must also be thought of in terms of the justificatory facet of argumentation. Hitchcock (2017, p.90) clarifies, in order to qualify the controversy surrounding this obscure Toulminian notion, that Warrants must be understood as a “general inference-

²⁰ We refer to causal, analogical and symptomatic schemes because we assume, in line with Pragma-dialectics (EEMEREN; HOUTLOSSER; SNOECK-HENKEMANS, 2007), that these three categories adequately encompass the main schemes of internal arguments cataloged in multiple typologies. There are several competing typologies, of course, such as those by Perelman; Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) or by Walton; Macagno (2016), to name a more recent one. For initial reflections that associate the pragma-dialectical typology to cognitive processes in an embodied social perspective, see Gonçalves-Segundo (2018a). For a didactic view on schematization in Portuguese, see Fiorin (2015).

²¹ We recommend Pinto (2006) and Hitchcock (2017) for an extensive discussion on the issue.

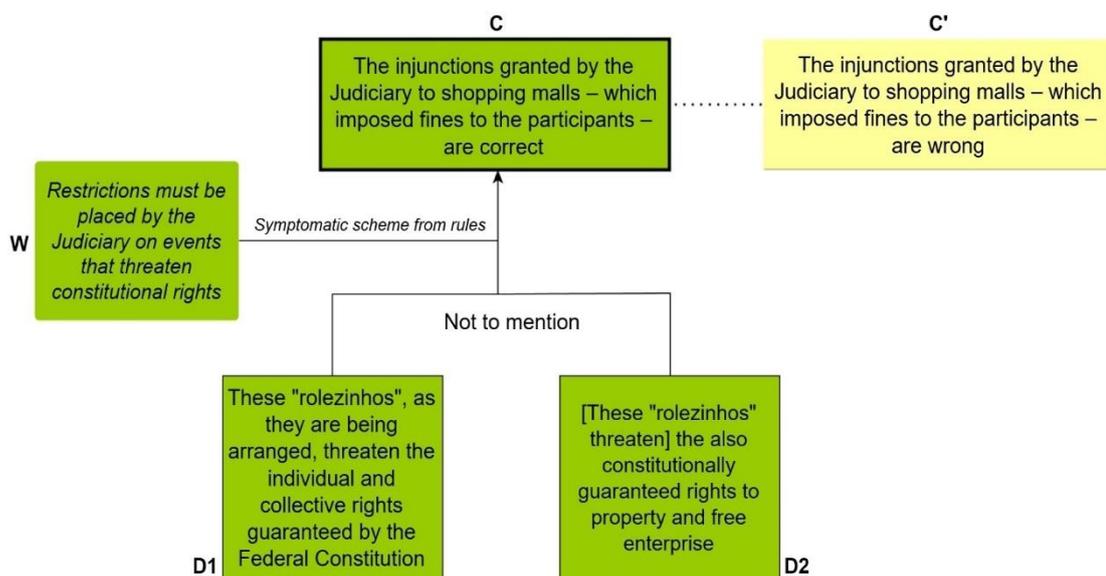
²² In this case, we give rise to another Warrant.

licensing rule”; we deem it possible, then, to see a connection with cognition, in terms of reasoning. From this point of view, Warrants may be conceptualized, on the one hand, as generalizations and, on the other hand, as cognitive procedures that authorize or license the application of this generalization to a specific case. Consequently, they can integrate speaker/writer’s knowledge schemas (frames) and can be recovered by readers/listeners from the already mentioned symptomatic, causal, or analogical relations between Data and Claim.

Due to being discursively pre-legitimized, Warrants tend to remain implicit; therefore, it is quite possible that different readers/listeners will apply distinct degrees of generality to the Warrant, sometimes diverging from the discursive representation that supports the Proponent/Protagonist’s argumentation. Warrants tends to be enunciated only when one anticipates a criticism regarding them or when one needs to defend them from a questioning conducted by another participant of the interaction.

Figure 5 summarizes what we have exposed, applying the relevant categories to the opinion article under analysis:

Figure 5. Segment of the Argumentative Move (Data, Warrant and Claims)



Source: Own elaboration

It is relevant to note that the Warrant²³ we propose has a high degree of generalization and abstraction. Given that it is not explicit, other Warrants could be legitimately invoked in the analytical activity: a specific one would be *participants of rolezinhos that violate constitutional rights should be fined*; an intermediary would be *participants of events that violate constitutional rights should be punished by law*. It is even possible that, in the development of argumentation, the confrontation between positions may be motivated by different readings of the Warrant's degree of abstraction. Regardless, however, the generalization would still be categorized as a *symptomatic argument from rules*. This rule – from what we have explained – is not, nevertheless, *ad hoc*, something that simply emerges inferentially during argumentation, but a discursively circulating representation that supports the relevance of a particular set of Data for the defense of the focused Claim.

Although Data, Warrant and Claim are the minimum necessary components for the emergence of an argumentative move, the Data and the Warrant's ability to legitimize the step towards the Claim and, thus, towards promoting consistency and/or adherence to this response to the epistemic problem is in function not only of the nature of these components and the discourses that sediment them, but also of the enunciated Backings, the anticipated or instantiated Rebuttals, the reality status of the Claim and the way the orators commit themselves both to the Claim and to the propositional content of the other components. In the next sections, we will discuss each of these last components, starting with the Backings.

5 Functional Configuration and Reliability: The Locus of Backings between the Logical and the Rhetorical

Yet again, as one could already see in the debate about the previous categories, the way we conceptualize the various components presents convergences and divergences in relation to

²³ We believe it is important to highlight that the edge that connects the Warrant to the Data→Claim edge is not directed. This is due to the fact that Warrants represent an inferential rule derived from a circulating discursive representation responsible for legitimizing the use of given pieces of Data to defend a Claim; they are not what was effectively enunciated to attribute consistency to a given response to the epistemic problem. Given this nature, added to the fact that they are usually implicit and consist in generalizations that can be abstracted to varying degrees, many researchers – such as Freeman (2011) and Hitchcock (2017) – choose not to diagram them, treating them qualitatively in the analysis or evaluation of arguments. We chose to diagram them in order to highlight its discursive grounding for critical analysis. We would also like to emphasize that Warrants will always be written in italics, to differentiate them from the other components in terms of their cognitive-discursive nature. The absence of a line of contour refers to the lack of linguistic materialization in the text.

the original formulations. This is no different in the discussion we will provide on Backings; in this case, however, the distances are more visible.

First, due to the discursive affiliation we assume in this reframing of the layout, which considers that argumentation is grounded on sociosemiotic ways of representing, acting and being (discourses, genres and styles, respectively) (FAIRCLOUGH, 2003), we cannot restrict the *field-dependence* of argumentative moves to Backings, Modalizations (or Qualifiers) and Rebuttals, even though Backings play a special role in this aspect, which we will discuss below. When we understand the vague notion of *field* elaborated by Toulmin in terms of spheres/fields of human activity (BAKHTIN, 1986),²⁴ thus covering networks of social practices articulated in function of a given social structure, it becomes unrealistic to discreetly separate what would constitute a universal order of argumentation (Data, Warrant and Claim) of what would constitute a socially variable order (Backing, Qualification and Rebuttal), unless we ignore that such components are elaborated by propositions derived from utterances (VOLOŠINOV, 1973)²⁵ and that the continuous assessment of arguments by speakers/writes and listeners/readers are constitutive of the argumentative activity.²⁶

This does not mean, however, that Backings do not play a special role in this regard, since, as mentioned previously, different genres and discourses do not indifferently validate all sources of information neither all modes of access to information. There is a “cultural training” (LANGSDORF, 2011, p.69), emergent from literacy practices (GEE, 2015), which enables us to instantiate authorized Backings to support Data, Warrants and Rebuttals, oriented not only to overcome possible attitudes of skepticism about our positions, but also to legitimize our role in the socio-discursive practice, which is related to the *present ethos* we construe (GALINARI, 2014). It is, therefore, in the relationship between Backings and argumentative legitimation that our position converges with Toulmin, Rieke, and Janik’s (1984 [1978]) conception. However, a new divergence occurs, for we conceive that Backings are not restricted to supporting only

²⁴ For reference, see footnote 13.

²⁵ For reference, see footnote 9.

²⁶ The debate about field-dependency in Toulmin’s work is far more complex than the above paragraph shows, but it is not the objective of this paper to dive deep into this discussion. Pineau (2013) stresses that, for the British philosopher, the assessment of arguments is always field-dependent. In this sense, not only the instantiated Backings, Qualifiers and Rebuttals would belong to this socially variable order, but also the textually materialized Data and Claims and the relevant implicit Warrant. Thus, for Pineau (2013), field-dependency is generalized in instantial terms. Data, Warrants and Claim would only be field-independent (or invariant) if conceived as an abstract minimal network of articulation. Hitchcock (2017), in turn, points out that Warrants may be field-dependent, but they can also be common-sense generalizations or have a purely formal nature. We recommend Pineau (2013) for a deep debate over this issue.

Warrants, but also other components, such as Data – an extension already proposed by Langsdorf (2011) – and Rebuttals,²⁷ and that they act as means of transferring reliability and authority to these components in function of an anticipation of resistance.

Finally, we believe it is relevant to point out that our understanding of Backing is restricted to the evidential domain and, therefore, to the enunciation of the sources of the propositions and of the ways through which the orator accesses them. For this reason, we defend that Backings do not constitute an autonomous component of the layout, but form, with the component under its scope, an embedded macrostructural relation, as shown in section 3. This proposal has three advantages: (i) we maintain systematicity in the diagramming, as we restrict the elaboration (or filling) of (autonomous) components to propositions; (ii) we guarantee the understanding that they are not mandatory components of the layout; and (iii) we avoid the possible overlap between Backings and Data, as Slob (2006) already discussed, if we kept attributing propositional status to the former.

Although the discussion about the relationship between evidentiality and argumentation, on the one hand, and between evidentiality and Backing, on the other, deserves papers dedicated to each of these themes, respectively, we cannot avoid mentioning, in this reduced space, some minimum parameters. Thus, based on Marín-Arrese (2011), van Dijk (2014) and Gonçalves-Segundo (*in press b*), we can broadly distinguish between five types of sources – *personal (first person singular)*, *shared (first person plural)*, *opaque (impersonal)*, *specific mediation (identified third person)* and *diffuse mediation (unidentified third person)* – and three categories of modes of access – *perception* (such as *seeing, hearing, noticing*, among others), *cognition* (such as *concluding, remembering, understanding*, among others) and *communication* (such as *alleging, saying, confirming, proving*, among others).

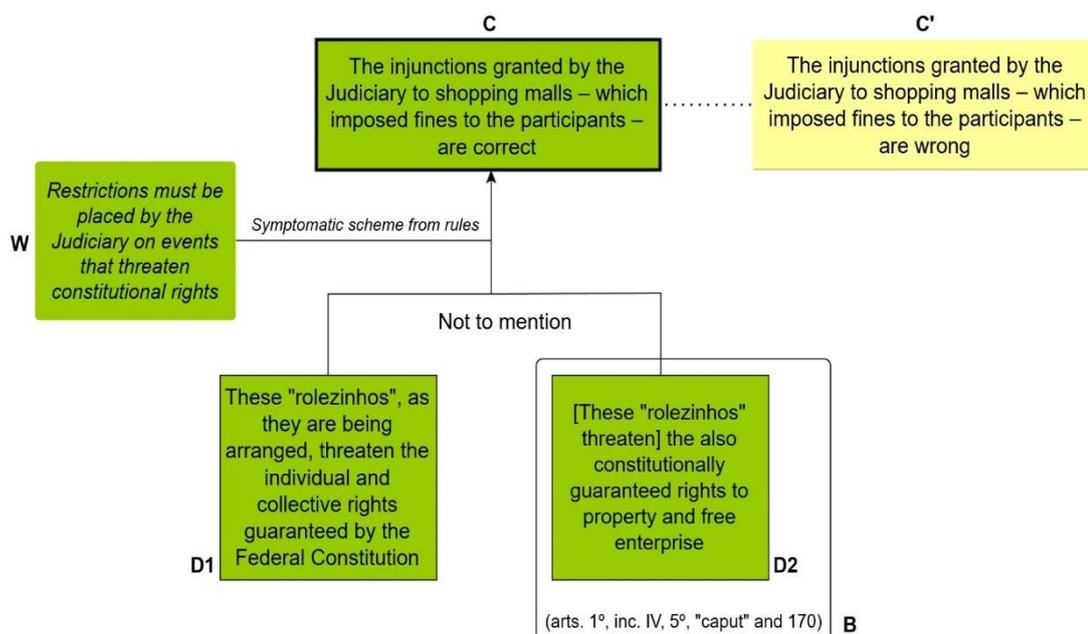
In concrete terms, we can exemplify the previous discussion by contrasting different discursive practices. In the legal field, in hearings, for instance, we expect personal and perceptive Backings to be instantiated by social actors in the role of witnesses (*I saw, I heard*, etc.), whereas in the academic field, in scientific papers, we generally expect communicative and mediated Backings with an identifiable source (*Author X stated p, Theory Y shows q*, etc.), a kind of linguistic-discursive construction that we learn in the process of academic literacy.

²⁷ It would also be possible to think of Backings for Claims. In these cases, however, there could be an overlap between the categories of Backing and Data, if we think in terms of external argumentative schemes (WALTON; MACAGNO, 2016), since the link between Backing/Data and Claim would be supported by some variant of the scheme from authority, testimony or experience (REBOUL, 2004 [1991]). It is beyond our objectives, in this paper, to discuss this particularity.

Hence, it is undeniable that the way of construing Backings is tied to fields; however, it is difficult to defend that the type and form of Claims, Warrants and Data are also not constrained by fields – and by the diverse discourses and genres that constitute each one of them. In this sense, it is only possible to speak of independence with respect to fields and socio-discursive practices if we consider Data, Claims and Warrants only in abstract terms, ungrounded from concrete argumentative interactions, either in the form of a dialogue or a monologue. Pineau (2013) shares a similar view, albeit not grounded on a linguistic and discursive perspective as we are.

That said, Figure 6 shows the Backing instantiated in the text under analysis. In this case, the Proponent/Protagonist seems to aim at increasing the reliability of his Data by directly construing the Brazilian Constitution as the source of his propositions, hence simulating objectivity, since this type of Backing acts as a means of discouraging evaluations that would characterize his standpoint as “ideological” or partial and of indicating that his stance derives from a strict compliance with the law. This construal may, then, point to the elaboration of a legalistic *ethos*.

Figure 6. Argumentative Move (Data, Warrant, Backing and Claims) Oriented to the Defense of the Focused Claim



Source: Own elaboration.

We move on, then, to the discussion on Qualification/Modalization.

6 Functional Configuration, Status of Reality and Commitment: Understanding Modalization Between the Logical and the Rhetorical

Unlike Toulmin (2003 [1958]),²⁸ who highlights the role of Qualification/Modalization regarding Claims, we understand that modality is constitutive of any and all propositions, signaling their status of reality with regard to the orator's conception (CHILTON, 2014). Naturally, this discussion concerns epistemic modality, precisely the one responsible for the flexibilization of authorial commitment in relation to the instantiated propositions, that ranges from the *real* (positive polarity) to the *unreal* (negative polarity), passing through the *certain*, the *probable*, the *possible*, the *conjectural*, the *uncertain*, the *improbable*, the *unimaginable*, among other possibilities.

As a property of propositions, modalization may be instantiated in any explicit component of an argumentative move – Data, Backings, Rebuttals, and also Warrants (when textualized). Still, even the typical, implicit Warrant, which acts as a generalization that licenses inferences, can lie in a zone of flexibility, indicating that, in a given discourse, a correlation is not seen as categorical, but as possible, probable or viable. This, of course, affects the consistency of the argumentation²⁹ and the type of adherence envisaged: is it an argumentation aimed at recognizing the plausibility of a given answer or at recognizing a given answer as the best or the only viable alternative in an epistemic problem? The degree of modalization applied to the various components can provide important evidences in this regard.

In spite of all that, we must recognize that Toulmin's emphasis is not unreasonable. Modalizing the Claim – and, therefore, one of the alternative conceptions of reality that responds to the epistemic problem – has some particularities, which we discuss below:

(a) modalization indicates how the orators assess the reasonableness of their Claims, considering, on the one hand, the (discursively construed) confidence in the Warrant's ability to link Data to Claim and, on the other hand, the possibility of Rebuttals, which refers to the dimension of *adequacy*, as indicated by Slob (2006) from a rereading of the sufficiency criterion of Informal Logic;

²⁸ For reference, see footnote 1.

²⁹ We do not wish to imply therewith that an argumentation is more consistent when the propositions are construed with a lower degree of flexibilization. Consistency may be even amplified by a modal closer to *irrealis*, depending on the construal of the argumentative move as a whole, if we consider the already mentioned factors: acceptability of Data, relevance of Warrants, reliability of Backings and adequacy of Rebuttals.

(b) modalization signals the degree of critical openness – projected by the orator – to which both the Claim and the underlying argumentation should be subjected; in other words, the closer the modal is to the extremes – *realis* or *irrealis* –, the lower the degree of dialogical openness is; therefore, the lower the degree of consideration of alternative perspectives is. This represents an effort to contract dialogism (MARTIN; WHITE, 2005) and to defocus alternative responses to epistemic problems. With this, the speaker signals that he/she is not so open to criticism and to the consideration of other discursivities.

Such a conception shows our partial adherence to the original Toulmin's (2003 [1958])³⁰ formulation. On the one hand, there is affiliation, insofar as we recognize modalization as a central category in the construal of argumentation, emphasizing its distinctive role with regard to the Claim; on the other hand, there is disaffiliation, as we do not ignore the role of modalization in the other components of the layout. The flexibility of the propositional status of reality can signal different orator's stances regarding tolerance or resistance to criticism or even justificatory experimentation. For this reason, we assume, in line with Verheij (2006), that Qualification/Modalization should not figure as an independent component of the layout, but should be approached qualitatively in the analysis of an argumentative practice.

In the case of the text under analysis, it is possible to observe the construal of utterances with a high degree of commitment, located at the *realis* pole – (i) *we sympathize with our humble youth who seek spaces to interact and give vent to their love and joy*; (ii) *It is sad that there is a lack of leisure options for our young people from the poorest classes*; (iii) *“rolezinhos,” as they are being arranged, violate the individual and collective rights guaranteed by the Federal Constitution. Constitution. Not to mention the right also constitutionally guaranteed to property and free enterprise*; (iv) *the injunctions granted by the Judiciary to shopping malls – which established a fine for the participants – are correct – or close to the *irrealis* pole – it is not possible to support them in this recent wave of “rolezinhos” held in shopping malls and other private places with specific destination*. As a result, we can infer that the writer projects an authorial voice that opens little space for pondering perspectives grounded on other discursivities, even though he inscribes them in the text, as we will discuss in the next section. His positions are categorical with regard to the alleged violations of constitutional rights carried out in the *rolezinhos*, as well as to the focused Claim, which allows

³⁰ For reference, see footnote 1.

us to infer an authorial stance that is not, in fact, open to the contradictory, a position that is marked by the contraction of dialogism within the text.

That said, the next section will discuss the space of other discursivities in argumentation: Rebuttals.

7 Functional Configuration, Adequacy and Contraction of the Dialogic Space: Understanding Rebuttals between the Logical and the Rhetorical

Finally, regarding Rebuttals, we also assume a considerable divergence from the original elaboration. In Toulmin (2003 [1958], p.153), Rebuttals were conceived of as “the sorts of exceptional circumstances which may in particular cases rebut the presumptions the warrant creates.”³¹ Such a definition seems, in fact, to erase dialogism, as Grácio (2010) denounces, insofar as it backgrounds the Rebuttal’s relation with other discursivities and with alternative responses to an epistemic problem. Based on this definition, Rebuttals would be, in fact, restricted to undermining or refuting a Claim with regard to its internal limitations, not encompassing the possibility of contrasting it with an alternative, a process that a discursively grounded approach cannot neglect. In addition, it is important to note that Rebuttals, unlike the other components of the layout, are not propositions aimed at supporting the Claim; on the contrary, their role is to show the fragility of the conclusion and to promote adherence towards the alternative. Therefore, its allocation in the layout requires a different approach.

Based on Walton (2013),³² we can divide Rebuttals in two categories: internal and external. The internal ones are akin to the original definition, as they are oriented towards limiting the applicability of a network of argument with respect to the consistency of the argumentative move and/or to the adherence to the focused Claim, whereas the external ones are tied to a dialogical conception, as they are understood as a set of propositions oriented to an alternative response and, thus, to a Counter-Claim. In both cases, however, we see that Rebuttals do not themselves integrate the argumentative move towards the Claim, in terms of the Proponent/Protagonist perspective. It is a proposition that opens an alternative argumentative move – which may or may not be developed to its full extent. Rebuttals may even be refuted, which constitutes what we call Counter-Rebuttal. In monologue texts – such

³¹ For reference, see footnote 1.

³² Walton’s (2013) proposal on what we could name, in general, Rebuttal is a lot ampler than the discussion we provide in this paper. We recommend the second chapter of the referred book for a detailed debate.

as the one under analysis –, this process tends to be verbally carried out through concessive constructions, marked by connectives such as *in spite of*, *although*, *even so*, among others. These constructions subtract strength from the arguments grounded on another discursivity in relation to the arguments advanced by the Protagonist/Proponent in defense of his/her Claim. It works, then, as a form of dialogic contraction (MARTIN; WHITE, 2005).

That said, we contend that Rebuttals present fundamental distinctions in relation to the other components of the layout because:

(a) they can be punctual and oriented not only to Warrants, as the original Toulmin's (2003 [1958])³³ definition may suggest. They can be applied to Data, Backings, Warrants, and even to the application of the Warrant to the problem at hand. Verheij (2006) defends a similar position, incorporating a refined logical framework to the discussion;

(b) they can form a full-fledged argumentative move, if the Antagonist/Opponent assesses as necessary or strategic to justify and legitimize this point of dissent. This can occur both in terms of internal confrontation with one of the responses to the epistemic problem (C) and in terms of support for a divergent response (C'). In the first case, an epistemic problem that is subsidiary to the focal issue emerges around a new point of dissent (be it the Data, the Warrant, or the Backings), in a process that necessarily leads to the formation of a subordinate macrostructure. In the second case, dissension over the original epistemic problem remains. Both processes incite the audience to entertain the distinct alternatives, recognizing or not the adequacy of the advanced criticism or the consistency of the new conception of reality. In some cases, we can even detect the activation of conductive reasoning (ZENKER, 2011).³⁴

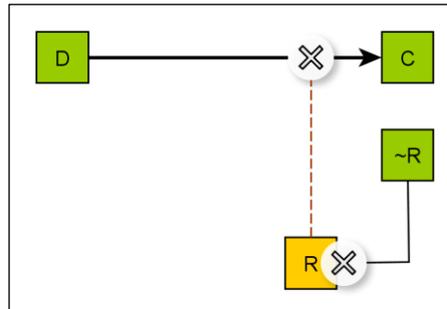
Finally, it is important to stress that Rebuttals themselves can be objects of refutation, which gives rise to Counter-Rebuttals. Counter-Rebuttals, unlike Rebuttals, strengthen the original Claim and, as a result, complement the focal argumentative move. The possibility of dealing, in our expanded layout, with Counter-Rebuttals is another sign that it is possible to incorporate dialogism in the analysis of the functional configuration of epistemic argumentation: the activities of anticipating and countering Rebuttals are indicative that the orator considers the discourse of others and contemplates alternativeness in their argumentation. Toulmin's layout is flexible enough to account for this reality, especially when

³³ For reference, see footnote 1.

³⁴ We call conductive the reasoning associated with weighing pros and cons for decision-making (in terms of practical argumentation) and for belief revision (in terms of epistemic argumentation). For details, see Zenker (2011).

we consider the contributions made in this paper. The incidence of Counter-Rebuttals gives rise to the complementary coordinative macrostructure (EEMEREN; HOUTLOSSER; SNOECK-HENKEMANS, 2007), which we present below:³⁵

Figure 7. Complementary Coordinative Macrostructure



Source: Own elaboration

Concessive constructions³⁶ are linguistic strategies that bring other discursivities to the text, opening, thus, a dialogical space. This dialogical space, however, is structured through dialogic contraction, since the propositions that form the clausal complex are evaluated from a hierarchy of values (PERELMAN; OLBRECHTS-TYTECA, 1969)³⁷ that attributes greater relevance to the Warrant grounded on the Proponent/Protagonist's discursive affiliation than to the Warrant grounded on another discursivity. In the text under analysis, the Warrant (W) *restrictions must be placed by the Judiciary on events that violate constitutional rights* is construed as more relevant to the epistemic problem under discussion than the Warrants W1' and W', respectively, *actions of a deprived group, worthy of sympathy, oriented to achieving what it lacks should not be limited* and *measures that hinder events worthy of support should not be applied*.

Through this process, the authorial voice ends up challenging the adequacy of the Opponent/Antagonist possible Rebuttals, construing them as insufficient to attribute

³⁵ The dashed edge signals that the Counter-Rebuttal (~R) reduced the Rebuttal's adequacy, i.e., its ability to subtract relevance from the Warrant that links the Data to the Claim. As a result, we drew the edge D→A with a thicker line in order to show the strengthening of the Claim's support, enabled by ~R.

³⁶ We are including in the concession category all instances of counter-expectancy (HALLIDAY; MATHIESSEN, 2014 [1985]; MARTIN; WHITE, 2005), whether the clause complex is subordinate or coordinate. What changes is that the proposition valued in a higher hierarchical position lies, in the first case, in the main clause, whereas, in the second case, under the scope of the coordinating conjunction.

³⁷ PERELMAN, C.; OLBRECHTS-TYTECA, L. *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*. Translated by J. Wilkinson and P. Weaver. Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969.

understand by *epistemic argumentative move* a network of propositions, derived from utterances, oriented at attributing consistency and promoting adherence to a Claim, that is, to a conception of reality that represents a possible response to an epistemic problem. Argumentative moves are composed of a focal Claim, as well as the network of Data, Warrants and Backings oriented to it. At the very least, an argumentative move must contain a Claim, (a piece of) Data and a Warrant – just as Toulmin (2003 [1958])⁴⁰ had previously proposed.⁴¹

Different argumentative moves can be combined through *integration* or *complementation*.⁴² In *integration*, the result is the strengthening of the focal Claim, in general carried out by a convergence of subsidiary moves that combine subordinate and cumulative coordinative macrostructures. In *complementation*, dissension is explicit, since alternative conceptions of reality are *defended* and/or *challenged*.

In the first case – *defense* –, we observe the construal of at least two parallel argumentative moves, each one with its own macrostructure, bound by their origin in the same epistemic problem. In the Protagonist/Proponent perspective, this alternative argumentative move can be considered an External Refutation.

In the second case – *challenge* –, a set of propositions is oriented towards undermining or attacking:

(a) the consistency of the focal argumentative move (Internal Refutation of the Protagonist/Proponent's focal move, typically performed by an Antagonist/Opponent in dialogues);

(b) the adequacy of the criticism over the focal argumentative move (Counter-Rebuttals that reject the Internal Refutations of the Protagonist/Proponent's move); or

(c) the consistency of the alternative move (Counter-Rebuttals that reject the External Refutation – i.e. Rebuttals that reject the Antagonist/Opponent's argumentative move –, a process typically carried out by concessions in monologue texts), as we could observe in the opinion article analyzed.

Figure 9, which closes the section, portrays our current view of the functional configuration of epistemic argumentation:⁴³

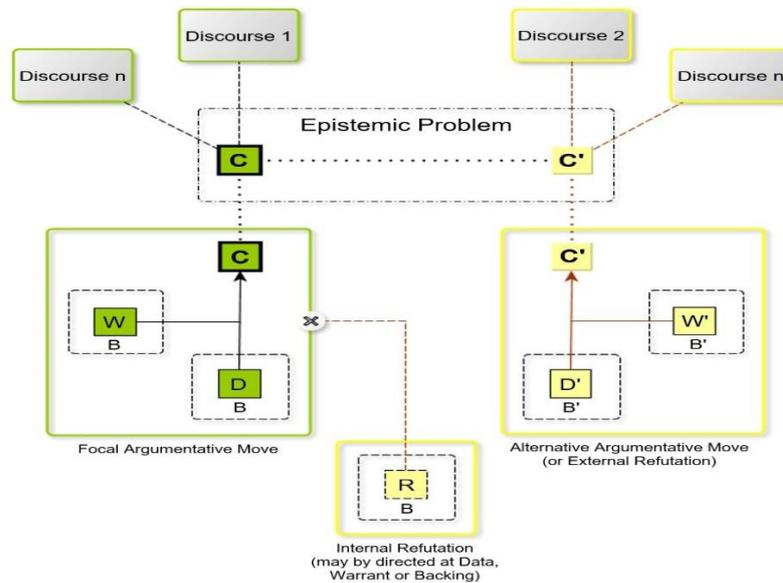
⁴⁰ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁴¹ See footnote 26.

⁴² Certainly, there are different ways – with their respective particularities – of combining argumentative moves, whether in dialogues or monologue texts. It is, once more, another important avenue of research.

⁴³ The contours of the nodes representing both Backings and Internal Refutation were drawn with dashed lines in order to emphasize that they do not constitute the set of minimum components necessary for the constitution of an

Figure 9. Functional Configuration of Epistemic Argumentation (Focal Move; Alternative Move (or External Refutation); Punctual Internal Refutation)



Source: Own elaboration

Final Remarks

Our objective, in this paper, was to discuss a reframing of the layout of arguments proposed by Stephen Toulmin (2003[1958])⁴⁴ and further developed in Toulmin, Rieke, and Janik (1984[1978]) as a useful tool for analyzing the functional configuration of epistemic argumentative moves. In doing so, we aimed at being discursive, linguistic and cognitively coherent and at considering, in a lesser or greater degree, the justificatory (in informal logic terms) and communicative (in rhetorical terms) facets of argumentation in the discussion of each of the components.

The first step was to place Claims within the scope of epistemic problems, conceiving them to be responses to these problems – which can be expressed in the form of argumentative questions, as Grácio (2010) and Plantin (2008) state – and highlighting their relationship with discourse. We reviewed the notion of Data and discussed distinct macrostructural patterns, showing how this dimension needs to be integrated into the analysis of functional configuration. In the sequence, we examined the cognitive and discursive nature of Warrants, defining them, on the one hand, by drawing on Hitchcock (2017), as rules that license inferences and assume

argumentative move, as defined in this section. We would also like to stress that Internal Refutations may be instantiated as fully developed argumentative moves, even though we have not represented this possibility in Figure 9 to avoid overloading the diagram and, thus, impairing understanding.

⁴⁴ For reference, see footnote 1.

the form of generalizations, with possible different degrees of abstraction; and, on the other hand, as interdiscursive representations, internalized by orators through their affiliation to given discursivities. Therefore, what we did was to assign a socio-cognitive status to this component.

Subsequently, we proceeded to a more radical revision of the notion of Backing: on the one hand, we reduced it to an evidentiary function, in order to avoid any overlap with the notion of Data; on the other hand, we expanded its possibilities of incidence to not only Warrants, but also to Data and Rebuttals, an expansion that had already been initiated by Langsdorf (2011). Regarding Qualification/Modalization, we did not represent it as an independent component of the layout, since we assume that epistemic modality is constitutive of any propositional component, even though we have emphasized its dialogical role, in terms of critical openness, in regard to the Claim. Afterwards, we related Rebuttals to alternative discourses and, inspired by Walton (2013), subdivided the component in terms of its internal or external function regarding the argumentative move initially focused; then, we debated their specificities. Finally, we examined the role of Counter-Rebuttals in the argumentative activity and in the combination of argumentative moves.

By doing so, we hope to have contributed to the continuous qualified debate on Toulmin's (2003[1958])⁴⁵ layout of arguments, without bowing to the past and hiding its limitations, but also without reproducing condemnations that deprive it of validity or that despise the importance of analyzing the network of propositions that support Claims. Arguing does involve justification and communication; therefore, consistency and adherence. The consideration of the dimensions of functional configuration and macrostructure are fundamental – but not sufficient – to promote an increasingly accurate knowledge about how argumentative activity and argumentative practices function and to raise awareness among social actors about the mechanisms that underlie argumentation, especially in a time when the polarized public debate seems to obscure the opportunities for thoughtful and dialogued argumentative exchanges. Therefore, the path seems to lie in placing traditions in dialogue and not in sharpening the boundaries between perspectives on such an object.

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⁴⁵ For reference, see footnote 1.

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