


Civil Society and Social Innovation in Public Arenas in Brazil: Trajectory and Experience of the Movement Against Electoral Corruption (MCCE)

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Abstract In recent decades, the Brazilian Movement Against Electoral Corruption (MCCE) has been promoting social innovation in the public sphere, which led to mobilization towards the creation of two popular initiatives in Brazil: the “Law Against Vote-Buying” (Law 9840/1999) and the “Clean Record Law” (Complementary Law 135/2010). This paper explores how the collectives of MCCE engage in social innovation in the public arena of electoral corruption in Brazil. The analysis shows social innovation as a driving force of social change promoted by the association of a multitude of actor networks both in the long term and at the interface of macro and micro scales of social reality. Therefore, social innovation in the Brazilian electoral corruption arena occurs simultaneously as a process and an outcome produced by the collective actions of different public groups that can reflect, organize and reform a cause, manage trial situations and create new solutions for this public problem.

Keywords Collective action · Electoral corruption · Social innovation · Public arena · Brazilian Movement Against Electoral Corruption (MCCE)

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Introduction

Corruption has become a major concern in the agenda setting of public policies in Brazil. There is a consensus that corruption is endemic in the country and creates obstacles for its development. Corruption in politics is a well-discussed topic in the current agenda. In the last few decades, various corruption scandals within Brazilian politics have been covered in detail by the media. However, this issue is not recent. One of the most iconic episodes of political corruption occurred in the early 1990s when former President Fernando Collor de Mello was impeached due to corruption charges that the politician faced during his mandate. Another major corruption scandal in Brazil was the “*Mensalão*” (Big Monthly Allowance), which occurred between 2005 and 2006. The case went to the Supreme Court (STF) between 2013 and 2014 and was widely covered by the Brazilian press. Since 2014, operation “Lava Jato” (Car Wash) has been investigating a major money laundering and embezzlement scheme involving directors and managers from Petrobras and firms that are major donors to electoral campaigns in the country and to politicians of all political parties. As a result of these processes, the country is experiencing a severe crisis of legitimacy in politics. There has been a great distrust among Brazilian citizens concerning politicians, state and public administration.

Within the broader universe of corruption, misconduct during elections is a central issue. Vote-buying and the abuse of economic power in electoral campaigns occur frequently, especially in rural areas. The most common practices of electoral corruption are the use of a government apparatus to benefit a particular political candidate, campaign financing that favours private companies, and vote-buying (Melo 2008).

To address the problem of electoral corruption, the Brazilian Movement Against Electoral Corruption (MCCE)—created in 2002—has since been working to improve education, monitoring and social control of electoral practices across the country. The movement is now represented nationally by the National Committee and the Executive Secretariat and locally by 329 committees that have voluntarily organized in all regions of the country (Fig. 1). The National Committee has the support of 55 civil society organizations, of which the most important are cited below in Fig. 2.

Through a description and analysis of the MCCE case, this paper aims to better understand this “experience of public problems” (Cefaï 2009) practiced by civil society actors. In accordance with Dewey’s (1927) conceptualization of the democratic state, this paper argues that the public recognition of the consequences (or problems) of associative life and collective actions that are used to respond to these problems are the foundations of modern democracies (Andion et al. 2017). In other words, the construction of public interests and their publicization by different public groups are the roots of states. This process of building public interest occurs especially through collective action at different levels or, more specifically, through public arenas. In this sense, civil society and political society are autonomous but also depend on each other, reinforcing the importance of the former for the development of the second, as Gramsci and his successors have argued (Cohen and Arato 1994).¹ However, Dewey’s conceptualization goes beyond this, highlighting and exploring how these relations are produced and their importance for the foundation and strengthening of a democratic state and government.

Our assumption is that, as Dewey (1927) and his followers have argued, systematic and continuous research about the conditions that affect associative life and its dissemination is crucial to producing a greater understanding of the formation of the public, ways of coping with public problems and how to solve them. The study of civil society and its practice in the public sphere can offer important lessons on public action and on the progress and limits of the experiences of social innovation promoted by these actors in public arenas (Andion et al. 2017).

Retracing the MCCE trajectory and following its actor–network, the objective is to better understand the configuration of the public problem (electoral corruption), its public and the social innovations promoted to answer to

this problem. In this sense, the research questions are as follows: (1) How has the public arena of electoral corruption been configured over time? Who are its main spokespeople? What are the statements, controversial issues and worldviews about this public problem? (2) How does the MCCE trajectory influence this arena? What type of “social innovations” emerge as a response to this public problem? (3) What characterizes the MCCE collective action and what is its incidence in the public arena of electoral corruption? What we can learn from this experience in terms of the social innovation promoted by civil society actors in public arenas?

To address these questions, this paper consists of four sections. First, we provide an overview of the theoretical, analytical and methodological framework. Second, we present the results of the cartography of controversies in the public arena of electoral corruption, in which we discuss the configuration of this public problem in the country. Furthermore, we describe and analyse the “field of experience” (Cefaï 2014) of MCCE, its trajectory and their most recent actions by examining their incidence in the electoral corruption arena. Finally, the conclusion discusses lessons that have been drawn from the case of MCCE about the social innovation process promoted by civil society actors in public arenas as well as its scope and limits.

Analytical and Methodological Framework

This study is part of broader research that we have been developing since 2013, which aims to understand how civil society initiatives promote social innovation in local and national public arenas in Brazil as well as their advances and limits.²

Beginning from a pragmatic perspective (Barthé et al. 2013), the analytical framework proposes a dialogue between the literature of the actor–network theory (ANT) (Callon and Latour 1981; Law 1999; Latour 1994, 2000, 2012, 2014) and the Sociology of Public Problems (SPP) (Cefaï 2002, 2007, 2009, 2012, 2014; Chateauraynaud 2011; Cefaï and Terzi 2012; Quéré and Terzi 2015). These approaches emphasize the analysis of real experiences in addressing public problems. Collective action from civil society is not the result of the aggregation of rational actions (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Olson 1999), as argued in the rational paradigm, nor a by-product of identities and collective causes, as argued in the New

¹ The focus here is not on defining the concept of civil society nor on discussing its relationship with the state, whose debates go beyond the scope of this article. For a discussion on the origin and evolution of the concept of civil society, see Alves (2004). On the relationship between civil society and its state in Brazil, see Lavallo and Szwago (2015).

² To understand more about the analytical and methodological framework built in this research, see Andion et al. 2017. This article explores and bridge debates about civil society theory/research, social innovation theory/research and pragmatic sociology by explaining how the theoretical assumptions of this research were conceived.

Fig. 1 MCCE Committees.
Source: MCCE 2014

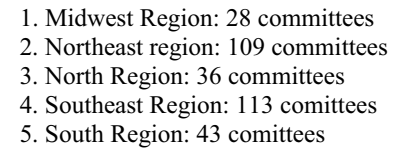


Fig. 2 Civil Society Organizations supporting MCCE. *Source:* MCCE 2014



Social Movements paradigm (Touraine 2001). The pragmatist paradigm argues that collective action is instead interpreted as a process (always provisional) of coordination that emerges from the encounter and dispute of diverse modes of engagement.

In this sense, the pragmatist approach allows the researcher to go beyond a dichotomous view that is present in the debate on social innovation between “neo-evolutionist” and “institutional” approaches (Pol and Ville 2009; Cajaiibe-Santana 2014; Lévesque 2014; Andion et al.

2017) or between “technocratic” and “democratic” paradigms (Montgomery 2016) as summarized in Table 1.

In summary, Pragmatic French Sociology offers a new lens with which to understand the trajectory of social innovation processes in different public arenas, emphasizing the ability of ordinary actors to identify and interpret public problems, mobilize locally and build responses and innovative solutions to face them (Cefaï 2009). They propose an alternative approach to the interface between macro- and microlevels of social change by relating the

Table 1 Summary of dominant theoretical schools in the field of social innovation *Source:* Andion et al. 2017

Schools/ characteristics	Neo-Schumpeterian/neo-evolutionist	Institutional/regulation
Some main authors	Geoff Mulgan, Robin Murray e Julie Caulier-Grice	Benoit Lévesque, Juan-Luis Klein Denis Harrisson, Marie-Bouchard Frank Moulaert
Epistemology and paradigm of inspiration	Utilitarian/ Functionalist/Technocratic Emphasis on agents and their potential for action and to promote change	Dialectic/Neo-Marxist Democratic Emphasis on the transformation of development models and the construction of new democratic spaces and practices
What is Social Innovation?	New idea that attempts to answer a social need	Changes in the cultural and institutional patterns
How does social innovation occur?	It occurs through cycles, including: diagnosis of the problem, proposition of new solutions, prototyping and testing, support, dissemination and systemic change	Process that demands collaboration and negotiation between a plurality of actors and logics
Strategies and instruments	Design thinking, crowdfunding management, art and design techniques, creative advertising techniques	Strengthening social and solidary economy, participatory governance, co-production of services and co-creation of public policies
Principal subjects	Social entrepreneur Enterprises Organizations	Organizations Institutions Networks
Social innovation and social change	Social change as a result of the social innovation cycle	Social change as transforming ways to produce and consume and in development models

observation of specific situations to more general considerations regarding macro social processes (Barthe et al. 2013). The structural level is a result of performances in which actors develop locally and occur through a process in which the public reflects and acts on its “problematic situations” (Cefaï and Terzi 2012) and assume a leading role in promoting social change.

It thus becomes possible to analyse social innovation from a non-normative perspective. This means considering the political dimension of social innovation and its interface with the public sphere, aspects that are rarely discussed in the traditional corpus of literature on social innovation (Rana et al. 2014; Montgomery 2016). A less functionalist/normative and more pragmatic approach allows for a focus on the experience, presenting a realistic understanding of the social innovation phenomenon and its impact (or lack thereof) on the broader processes of social transformation. Social innovation is thus viewed as a change promoted by the mobilization and engagement of multiple public groups to solve problematic situations following Dewey’s (1927) tradition in his classic work: *The Public and Its Problems*.

In addition to starting from another interpretation on social innovation, this study is based on an analytical and methodological framework outlined in a previous work

(see Andion et al. 2017), whose key assumptions and concepts will be discussed below.

Social Innovation is Embedded in a Long Trajectory of Configuration of Public Problems

The current literature on social innovation mostly argues that the social innovation process promoted by civil society actors are characterized as individual or collective initiatives that are disruptive towards the *status quo* and create new solutions to social problems. However, the literature does not often question the process itself and how it emerges or relate this process to its social and historical context.

Pragmatist authors, in turn, stress the importance of reconnecting the micro-sociological analysis with an examination of the macro-structural dimension. Although they refer to this scale of analysis in different ways—either as “socio-technical ecology” (Latour and Weibel 2005), “public culture” (Cefaï 2009) or “field of cause” (Chateauraynaud 2011)—the authors agree on the importance of considering this level in the research.

The collective action of civil society can be a catalytic vector and an accelerator of this “public culture”. In the other hand, this “public culture” can also influence social innovations (accelerating or limiting them) (Quére and

Terzi 2015). Social innovations do not occur in a vacuum or manifest from scratch. They are embedded in a field of cause, in arguments, meanings and practices built upon the public problem over time. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the lengthy trajectory of public problems that is built upon different public arenas (whether the media, science, politics or rule of law). This approach becomes more evident over time through the processes of conversion, translation and/or stabilization (Latour 2012), to which the public problem is subjected. In addition, it becomes more clear who the main spokesperson of the public problem is and what main statements, viewpoints, themes of controversy and the stabilization or “black boxes” are that emerge over time.

The analysis of this “dynamic of change” is a way to view the forms of expression and the extent to which discussions are produced by the collective mobilization of civil society (Chateauraynaud 2011). The authors of ANT, such as Venturini (2010a, b) and Latour (2014), propose a cartography of controversies to uncover the dynamic of change of collective action. Chateauraynaud (2011) develops the framework of “sociological ballistics”, in which the author indicates that the expression and scope of a question in the public space are always products of “political work” that are marked by uncertainty and unpredictability. To capture the dynamics, the author proposes a “pragmatic of social transformation” in which it is important to consider: (1) the anchoring of the actors in their environment, (2) the contingent events and (3) the protagonists that act in “force fields” with pre-established social frameworks, with which they evaluate the set possibilities for change.

These findings have shown that the trajectory of a public problem and the solutions given are not linear. Scholars suggest that successive initiatives of social innovation would lead to a systemic change in an evolutionary fashion (Murray et al. 2010). From another perspective, pragmatic sociology shows that the public trajectory is permeated with unforeseen disruptions and setbacks that should be considered by researchers. Inspired by Gusfield (1981), scholars demonstrate that public problems (objects of social innovation) are products of symbolic constructions (Cefaï 2014). Once public problems emerge, they become the object of dispute and controversy, generating mobilization. They are interpreted and studied and could be stabilized, and their solutions then become institutionalized. All this occurs in different “force fields” in which power relations and interests are placed in dispute. Therefore, understanding this dynamic appears essential to a more realistic interpretation of social innovation in public arenas as well as its scope and limits. However, this is not sufficient in itself, and this aspect is discussed below.

Social Innovation Emerges in “Fields of Experience” About Problematic Situations

In addition to considering the “force fields” in which social and political innovation are inserted, the authors studied insist on the idea of locating the global field (Latour 2012). This means that public problems cannot be understood without taking into account their “fields of experience” (Cefaï 2014, p. 25). These “fields of experience” constitute what is lived and felt by the actors who are directly involved with the “problematic situations”. As stated by Cefaï (2014), the visible parts of the iceberg—the official investigations, scientific experiments, media reports, and rules and conventions that are considered at the macro scale—are underpinned by the “politics of everyday life”.

Therefore, it is necessary to combine the cartography of controversies and arguments with the use of qualitative methods of the systematic observation of experiences such as ethnography. Here, the challenge is to follow the experience of the actors by trying to understand the processes of emergence and dissemination of social innovation, consequences and the limiting of these processes. This means, as stated by (Quéré and Terzi 2015, p. 2), to put into practice empirical studies that allow for the observation and description of the experiences of “public inquiry” as precisely as possible.

The notion of “public inquiry” is denoted by Dewey (1927) and is drawn from the concept of social inquiry. This research capacity, which is not unique to experts, refers to the condition of “the public” to understand the consequences of problematic situations as well as to name, identify, interpret, build knowledge and propose solutions for them. In this sense, ordinary citizens are capable of “cognitive attitude” (Cefaï 2014, p. 24) and adopt methods to cope with public problems. The systematic observation of these “fields of experience” allows them to design an experimental approach to political practice based on a participatory conception of democracy and assuming its character of indeterminacy (Quéré and Terzi 2015). It is not always the case that the experience of facing a public problem and the solution assigned to it produces a transformation. This necessitates relating social innovation processes to the broader notion of social change.

Reconnecting Social Innovation and Social Change Processes is Important for Understanding Their Consequences

The interrelationship between micro and macrolevels provides a new understanding of social innovation processes and their scope and limits. Therefore, the pragmatist approach seeks to analyse the “the institution of power” (Cefaï 2009) of collective action with a reflexive and

consequentialist perspective and explains how the dynamics of confrontation for certain public problems are produced in different arenas (spatial and temporal). The dynamics of confrontation provide a better understanding of how civil society produces its “criticism capacity” (Chateauraynaud 2011), repertoires of argumentation and political action. The aim is not to explain the process to better control it from a functional point of view; the goal is to understand the dynamics by which the public does or does not redefine the horizons of possibility (Cefaï 2009) for different fields of causes.

Pragmatist scholars advocate the existence of a plurality of forms of engagement and justification (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006) that should be considered in the analysis. It is important to account for the “trial situations” (Chateauraynaud 2011) or the moments of “controversy” (Venturini 2010a, b) in which benchmarks and certainties are questioned and put in check, giving space to new meanings of justice.

The most recent studies eschew an optimistic view of the American philosophical pragmatists of the early twentieth century. Chateauraynaud (2011), Cefaï (2014), Quéré and Terzi (2015) insist that democratization and political order are not guaranteed, but they are the result of a process and do not occur under pre-defined conditions. In this sense, it is essential to better understand the processes of “problematization” and “publicization” that facilitate the establishment of public inquiry in the confrontation of problematic situations.

Quéré and Terzi (2015) state that “public inquiry” requires questioning natural attitudes. In this sense, the process of “problematization” that occurs in challenging situations should be highlighted in the analysis. Through criticism, references of certainty are questioned, and it is possible to promote more lasting social innovation, i.e., create new repertoires of arguments and practices as well as new audiences. Observing how “public inquiry” is produced or what limits it and its consequences is an effective way to understand dynamics, limits and the extent of social innovation processes in public arenas.

The MCCE case study was built upon these assumptions and some key conceptions summarized in Table 2 below. The results as well as the research design and methods applied at each level of analysis are presented in following section.

Cartography of Controversies in the Public Arena of Electoral Corruption in Brazil

Public arenas are an important locus of observation of social innovations. They can be defined as spaces of confrontation between different positions on a public problem

that strive to interpret and stabilize it. The public can be composed of individual, organizational and institutional actors who undertake a collective effort to define and manage problematic situations. An arena is a patchwork of ways to judge, see the world and exist (Cefaï 2009). In these places, the actors face daily trials through which they define what is real, right, fair and legitimate. Such trials (*épreuves*) simultaneously transform the situation verified (putting into question what is taken for granted) and the subjects submitted to it (their positions and identities) (Barthe et al. 2013).

Therefore, we interpret social innovation in public arenas as a process that results from actions and interactions from different “actor–network”. The person who innovates is never an isolated individual—innovation is a product of interactions among various actants. Thus, the investigator’s role is to follow, uncover and describe the assemblages that produce effects in the network. However, no network is stable because it resets all the time, as well as shifting roles and identities assumed by those who compose it, which makes the researcher’s task more challenging and complex over time.

Venturini (2010a, b), a former student of Bruno Latour, was one author who advanced most with regard to the construction of a methodological framework to retrace the networks through the “mapping of controversies”. He defines the cartography of controversies as an exercise to elaborate handmade devices to observe and describe a social debate. Created and applied by Bruno Latour in the 1990s in his work related to ANT on technical and scientific matters, the use of the methodology has expanded in recent years and has been applied in other areas such as political sociology and public policy (Chateauraynaud 2011). Venturini (2010a) affirms that despite several universities adopting this methodology around the world, there are few publications on this framework. This author also states that there is no single method or recipe with which to map controversies. A researcher may create his or her own path by considering some methodological elements, as synthesized in Table 3.

While taking into account the implications of the cartography of controversies, we employ a method to map controversies in the Brazilian public arena of electoral corruption to understand how this public issue is configured and assumes significance over time. Exploratory mapping in three fields—political, scientific and legal—was carried out (Latour 2014). The debate between these fields produced a narrative about the trajectory of the public problem of electoral corruption in Brazil for four decades: the late 1980s (1988–1989); the 1990s (1990–1999); the 2000s (2000–2009) and the early 2010s (2010–2014).

In the political field, we examined articles from the *Folha de S. Paulo*[®] newspaper. *Folha* is the largest

Table 2 Key concepts of pragmatic sociology and their contribution to the study of social innovations *Source:* Elaborated by authors based on citations above

	Definitions	Contribution to the study of social innovations
Actor–network and actant	For Latour (2012), the actor is the one who acts, leaves a trace, produces an effect in the world, and may refer to individuals, institutions, objects, animals, symbols, etc. The “actant” (actor–network) takes its form and acquires attributes in relation to other actants (Law 1999)	To focus on the description and analysis of assemblages involving different actants in the social innovation processes
Networks	Set of associations between various heterogeneous elements, individuals and collectives, humans and non-humans. The network also acts as the actor (properties are contained in each other) and produces cooperative intelligence (distributed cognition) (Lévesque 2014)	To observe the role of “actants” and the “network” within social innovation processes. The person who innovates is never an isolated individual, and the innovation results from interactions among several actants in the network
Translation	The combination of distinct interests in a single subject, which involves interactions between many human and non-human elements (Latour 2012)	To consider the translation influence in the emergence and circulation of social innovation. It comprehends its role in the stabilization of controversies to establish commitments
Black Boxes	The network may become irreversible when controversies are stabilized by the translation process. Once there is no contestation, the innovation becomes a “thing”—it naturalizes or turns into a black box. However, this process is temporary, and it is always possible that the black box opens again and therefore generates new controversies (Latour 2012)	The black boxes can be considered results of social innovation processes and their opening/questioning as generating new dynamics of social change (criticism recovery)
Controversies	The controversies are defined as “situations in which the actors disagree (or agree to disagree)” (Venturini 2010a, p. 4), and they precede the commitments. However, Lascoumes and Le Galès (2007) state that a problem only becomes public when it turns into an object of attention and dispute	The cartography of controversies can be useful for public debate analysis for public problems, which helps to explain the “ballistics” of its trajectory or configuration
Trajectory and configurations of a public problem	Cefaï (2014) states that the emergence, stabilization and institutionalization of public problems result from a balance of forces and conflicts of interest that occur at different levels: in politics, the scientific community, governments and media. There must be an understanding of the “fields of experience” about problematic situations by the public	To describe and analyse the trajectory and different scenes in which public problems emerge, are identified, interpreted and borne by the public
Problematization	According to Cefaï (2014), this refers to how audiences identify, characterize, analyse, question, build alternatives and seek to solve a problematic situation when experiencing a trial situation	To understand the role of problematization in social innovation processes or their absence as an obstacle to manifest and disseminate social innovation
Publicization	This refers to the process of considering audiences or the public, which are not separate and are closely related to the step of problematization (Cefaï 2014)	To explore the emergence of the public as well as “spokespersons” or “owners” of the problems and their influence on social innovation dynamics
Trial situations	These are strong or critical moments that impose a change of perspective on the players’ views or status quo questioning (Chateauraynaud 2011)	To better understand the trial situations and moments that provoke questions, examination and discussion and its role in social innovation dynamics
Public Inquiry	This refers to the condition of “the public” to understand the consequences of problematic situations—how to identify, interpret, build knowledge and propose solutions for them	To consider the justification and critique produced by the actors themselves. As stated by Cefaï (2009:16) “a pragmatist procedure follows the experiences and perspectives of the actors”

circulation newspaper in Brazil, and its digital archive is easily accessible online (Collection Folha®). The time-frame of the newspaper mapping begins in 1988, which marks the moment of the democratic opening of Brazil. The method employed to search through the news was to enter the keyword “electoral corruption” between the

periods of 01/01/1988 and 09/11/2014. In total, 80 articles were found in the chosen news outlet.

In the scientific field, the mapping was done through a search of articles published in the social sciences on Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO®), Library Search Elton Bryson Stephens Company (EBSCO®); and

Table 3 Characteristics and elements to consider in the cartography of controversies *Source:* Elaborated by authors based on Venturini (2010a, b); Latour (2012, 2014)

Characteristics	Elements to consider
Observations and descriptions come before theorization and analysis (“let the data speak for itself”)	This does not mean that the researcher cannot use theories or analyses that allow for an understanding of social complexity. However, observation of the social component being built is more important
No philosophy or specific procedures are imposed. This invites researchers to use all observation instruments at hand without restriction. Surprise and creativity must inspire the research protocols	Although the focus is observation and describing the innovation process, it is important to clarify the ways to access the data and the scope of the researched object. In addition, the research techniques need to be clarified to be coherent and observe feasibility. It is important not to be limited to only one theory or method
Neither theory nor methodology can offer researchers an objective point of view. This can be achieved by multiplying the points of observation	Aims to take into consideration different dimensions of the analysed phenomenon, different spatial and time levels of analysis, as well as different discourses: political, scientific and rhetoric
Actors can build theories and interpret social phenomena as much as social scientists	Respects and listens to the perspective of the researched subjects more than the researcher assumptions
Not every debate is permeated by controversies. Not every disagreement is a controversy, and not every controversy is a good object for analysis	Seeks to identify and analyse the controversies, which are characterized by (1) involving several types of actors, humans and non-humans; (2) demonstrating the ‘social’ aspect in its dynamic and reflecting its instability; (3) being the object of debate and dispute; (4) not being too broad; (4) involving public debate

the Annals of the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Administration (Anpad®). The researched period was from 1988 to 2014 and considered only articles published in Brazil, utilizing the keyword “electoral corruption”; 12 scientific papers were identified.

In the legal field, the main laws governing the matter in the country³ were considered. Thus, like the political and scientific mappings, the legal documents were treated per decade.

This resulted in an inventory of the public (individuals, organizations, institutions) that mobilized around “electoral corruption” in the political, scientific and legal fields in each decade. Aside from mapping the network actors, their statements were analysed to identify themes of controversies and worldviews (cosmoses), i.e., the meaning they attach to the public problem (Venturini 2010a; Latour 2012). It was observed that the issue of “electoral corruption” is being redefined over time and is assuming new contours through translation. Some compromises or “black boxes” were highlighted, showing that the “public interest”, as Latour (2012) states, is built collectively. The results are presented and contrasted above by comparing the analyses of the arena configuration in two decades to

summarize the trajectory of the public arena of electoral corruption in Brazil,⁴ the late 1980s (1988 and 1989) and the early 2010s (2010–2014), to highlight the changes that took place in these period.

The Electoral Corruption Public Arena in the 1980s: Accusations and Corruption Scandals in the Wake of the Constitution of 1988

The landscape of the public arena in the 1980s involves scenarios in which politicians promote scandals and make complaints about the electoral corruption practices of other politicians. They use these complaints as strategies to damage the images of their opponents and as an instrument of power in a struggle.

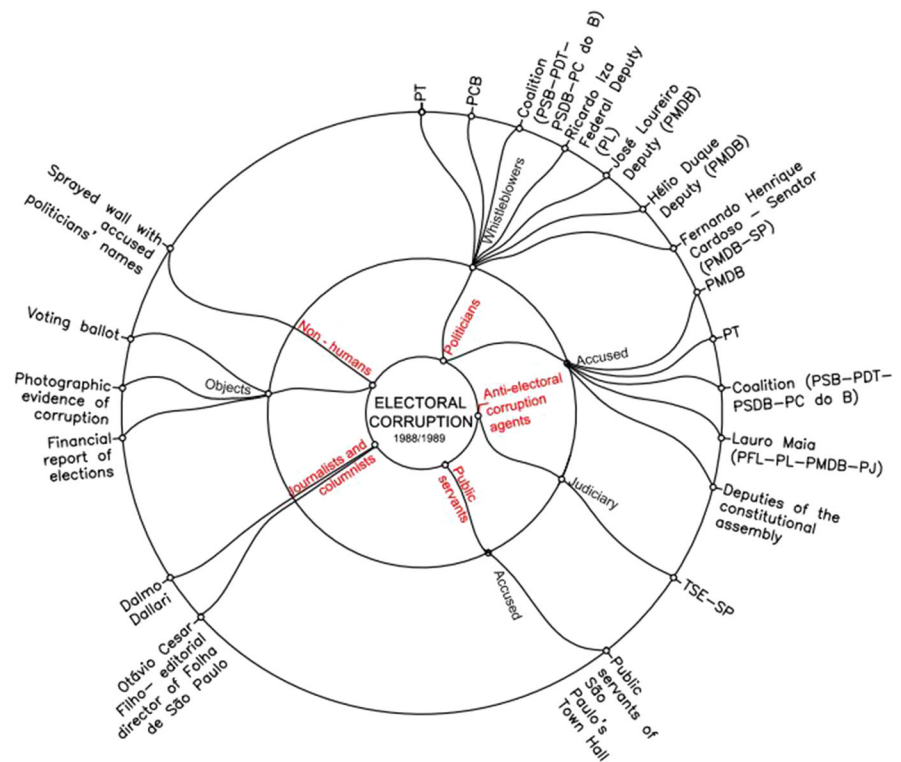
As expressed in Fig. 3, politicians and their parties stand out as spokespersons in the debate. Political whistle-blowers and accused individuals were mapped. In addition to these actors, the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) appears in an article and journalists/commentators in two articles. Furthermore, non-humans (objects) are used as evidence in the disputes (as a *dossier* of corrupt acts, photographs and voting ballots that identify the who individuals voted for use as proof of political support).

In terms of the debate content, the main topics of controversy revolve around criminal charges and scandals. According to Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), these are characterized by private discussion in which accusations are exchanged between people.

³ The previous regulation of the Constitution of 1988 was also analysed as an attempt to understand the different amendments enacted over time. Legal references from the 1990s were considered, such as the Law of Ineligibility, Complementary Law 64/1990, the Elections Act (Law 9504/1997) and the Law on Political Parties (Law 9096/1995). Laws created by popular initiative in the 2000 s were examined. The recent proposals for political reform were also accounted for, particularly the People’s Initiative Bill 6316/2013.

⁴ To access the entire analyses, see Moraes (2014).

Fig. 3 Actor–network of electoral corruption (1988–1989). *Source:* Moraes 2014



Based on Lascombes and Le Galès (2007), the plethora of scandals and accusations seems to draw attention to the problem of electoral corruption, which became “public” in the late 1980s. However, it also shows a categorization of the problem since there is no debate and explicit concern about causes of electoral corruption, nor discussions about strategies and instruments to combat it. Moreover, the diversity of public groups discussing the problem is restricted to government officials, and civil society actors appear to be absent in the debate of this decade.

The understanding of the public problem is related to a “palliative vision”, which is more emphasized in the symptoms of electoral corruption. The complaint of some cases of electoral corruption dominates the debate, and there is no discussion of its causes.

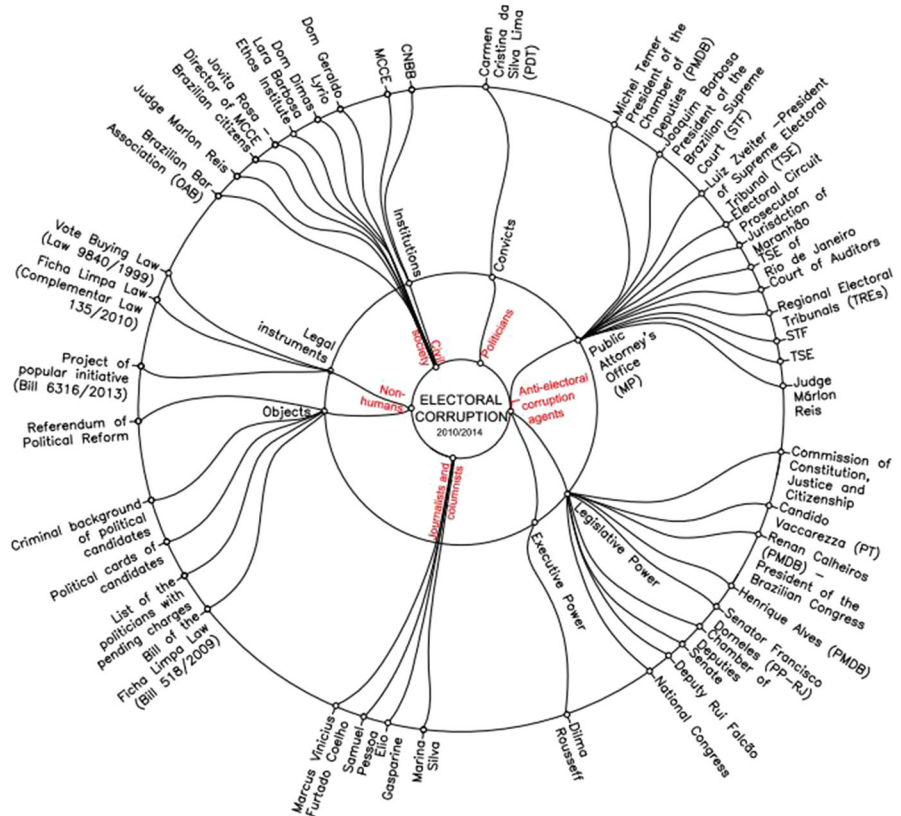
The Electoral Corruption Public Arena Currently: What has Changed?

The analysis shows that the configuration of the problem of electoral corruption in Brazil occurs mainly from the mid-1990s, when the process of the formation of a plural “public arena” began to occur. Various individual, organizational and institutional actors and different objects are linked in a network in which they offer a collective effort of identification, definition, and control of the public issue (Cefai and Terzi 2012).

In the 1990s and 2000s, new audiences started to mobilize around the problem of electoral corruption and dispute the construction of meanings of what the public problem consists. Controversies leave the private domain, which are linked to particular cases, and become debated and interpreted in the broader public (process of publicization), thereby giving rise to new worldviews about the subject of electoral corruption. In the 2010s, there has been significant expansion of the public that engages in this arena, making the engagement more plural, as seen in Fig. 4. This plurality is reflected in disputes over the representation of the problem, and its categorization becomes more detailed. Gradually, the arena has expanded, and the public problem takes on new contours.

The “palliative view” of electoral corruption, prevalent in the 1980s and based on a more moralistic interpretation (Avritzer and Filgueiras 2011), shares space with other visions of the public problem. Initially, a “punitive” representation emerges that aims to penalize acts and protagonists of electoral corruption and focuses on the criminalization of electoral corruption as a solution. The “prevention of the problem” also emerges as a relevant worldview (linked to themes such as accountability, social control and political mobilization to combat electoral corruption). More recently, the “need for structural changes” emerges as a “hot topic” in the electoral and political system, in which it focuses on the most radical causes of

Fig. 4 Actor–network of electoral corruption (2010s).
Source: Moraes 2014



the problem, including those related to campaign financing or political reform.

Analysing the controversies in the 2010s, the “palliative view” of public problems loses ground since there is no reference to scandals and complaints. A “punitive conception” was present, but its expression is less prevalent in the debate compared to past decades (only one newspaper article refers to this view).

The “preventive conception”—characterized by a concern to discuss the causes and propose solutions to the problem—seems more vivid in recent years. In addition to the ineffectiveness of laws and punishment systems, the financing of election campaigns became a central theme of dispute. These include a discussion about the consequences of corporate campaign donations and the lack of transparency in the delivery of electoral campaign accountability reports.

Transparency and accountability are also important areas of debate in both the academic and political fields. The publicization of a list of politicians on a “rap sheet” is encouraged. In addition, civil society organizations and social movements disseminate data regarding how much companies spent in electoral campaigns. Interestingly, the disclosure of this information becomes a recurring practice in the different elections, and such lists become important objects of “proof” and, therefore, the candidate’s

legitimacy. Discussions about the importance of social control and civic participation to reinforce the application of the rule of law are also present in the debates.

Moreover, it is evident that the new solutions proposed and implemented in the 2000s became institutionalized in 2010. The new popular initiatives became “black boxes” (Latour 2012), thereby creating important changes and consequences in the legal and institutional framework to fight electoral corruption.

We can conclude that the public problem configuration occurs in a public arena (Cefaï 2014) that was built in a long-term process from 1980 to 2010. These processes involve the emergence and establishment of social movements fighting electoral corruption, the creation of new institutions promoting public accountability and control, such as the Public Attorney’s Office (MP), and the development of a strong public opinion and discussion about this problem and its consequences.

“Electoral corruption” as public problem appears and is constructed from symbolic and discursive processes that develop alongside the public through a “public inquiry” dynamic (Dewey 1927). The public arena grows and consolidates over time via propagation and bifurcation processes similar to a projectile (Chateauraynaud 2011), in which we observe the following: 1) The emergence of the electoral corruption cause in the 1980s (through expression

and symbolization); 2) Controversies, accusations and criticism in the 1990s; 3) Mobilization with the designation of responsibilities and publicizing the problem; and 4) regulation, with the theme gaining space in the political agenda (routinization) in 2000 and 2010. Today, other “black boxes” are opened that allow space for new and major controversies, as was done for the complaints made by the Lava Jato Operation (Car Wash Operation) that show the consequences of campaign financing by Brazilian companies in the political system and culminate in the episode of the President Rousseff impeachment.

We observe that the public arena of electoral corruption expands and diversifies considerably in this period with the extension of the actor–network that are spokespersons who mobilize around the public problem. In the period analysed, several “black boxes” emerge that constitute social innovations resulting from associations, stabilizations and agreements (Latour 2012). However, other new and important controversies were opened, leading to greater complexity in the arena. The question of what electoral corruption is and how to face it remains a matter of dispute.

Cefaï (2002) affirms that collective action in public arenas not only detects public problems (identifying a gap between what is expected and the reality) but also creates an interpretation of it: attributing causes, defining responsibilities, influencing the action and proposing solutions. However, what was the role of civil society, and specifically of MCCE, in this process? To answer this question, the MCCE experience and trajectory are described and analysed below in an attempt to understand its incidence in the public arena of electoral corruption.

MCCE Trajectory and Experience

To describe the “field of experience” of MCCE as closely as possible, different research strategies were used. First, the research involved a long period of fieldwork between August 2013 and October 2014 by employing triangulation of different research strategies: (1) Direct observation of MCCE scenes, events and activities (participation in campaigns, seminars and visits); (2) Online monitoring of news about the MCCE and other topics published on their site and from other internet sources during the research period; (3) Document-based analysis of references already published about the movement (Assunção and Assunção 2010; Reis et al. 2010; Reis 2006, 2013, 2014), and news about the experience (from 1988 to 2014); (4) Six interviews with founders, directors, technicians and other members of the movement were conducted.

The triangulation of these methods makes it possible to portray and analyse the MCCE case from a descriptive, interpretative and qualitative perspective (Godoy 2006). As

a result, a narrative was created that retraces the MCCE’s trajectory based on a document-based analysis and testimonials of different participants (Moraes 2014). This trajectory was designed to account for the different moments of trial or controversies (Chateauraynaud 2011) faced by the actor–network of the movement.

The Roots of the Movement (1985–1988)

The creation of the MCCE has roots in the Constitutional Assembly in 1985 and 1986. During the process of writing the Federal Constitution (FC) that was approved in 1988, the legislators included the ability for citizens to propose popular amendments. Thus, a group formed by members of the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB) and the Commission for Peace and Justice of the Archdiocese of São Paulo (CPJ/SP) decided to collect signatures to propose specific devices in the Constitution to strengthening participative democracy. After collecting 50,000 signatures from the public, the request was accepted by the National Constitutional Assembly. Based on this initiative, Article 14 of FC/88 creates mechanisms that favour of civil society participation in the public sphere that did not exist before, such as laws proposed by popular initiatives, plebiscites, public policy councils and referenda. One of the most important names of the group that mobilized for approval of Article 14 of FC/88 was Francisco Whitaker Ferreira,⁵ an activist with strong ties to the Catholic Church.

Mobilization to Create a Law Against Vote-Buying (1989–1999)

Article 14 of FC/88 was not used until 1996, almost 10 years after its creation, when the Catholic Church held a campaign with the slogan “Faith and Politics”. The aim was to promote a debate about the similarities between Christianity and politics. Materials were produced to support debates in the parishes, and one of these materials was related to the problems faced during elections. After the campaign, there was a need to take concrete action based on the outcomes of these discussions. The Brazilian Commission for Justice and Peace (CJP/BR) then decided to conduct a popular study to identify the major problems in the Brazilian elections.

The CJP/BR received support from Cândido Mendes University to prepare the questionnaires and used the capillarity of the Fraternity Campaign to reach a wide

⁵ Francisco “Chico” Whitaker Ferreira (born in 1931) is a Brazilian architect, politician and social activist. As a Catholic, Whitaker was inspired by Liberation Theology. Whitaker registered in the Workers’ Party (PT) in 1988 and was elected as a member of the City Council in São Paulo. He was one of the World Social Forum creators. In 2006, Whitaker left PT.

range of people. CJP/BR posed the idea of “electoral corruption” as a public problem in Brazil since the majority of the respondents reported two main problems: vote-buying and electoral use of the administrative machine. The co-creation of solutions to these two problems directed the collective mobilization thereafter.

With the results of the survey, members of CJP/BR started a broad mobilization to put Article 14 of FC/88 into practice. The aim was to pass the first popular initiative law in Brazil against vote-buying. Three jurists from São Paulo, Ceará and Minas Gerais were invited to write the text of the law.

Once the draft bill was ready, major mobilization was undertaken by CJP/BR in parishes across the country. The effort was led by 30 local committees and resulted in 500,000 signatures in support of the project by April 1999. In this same year, a scandal involving city officers in São Paulo received significant attention in the national media—“Máfia dos Fiscais”⁶ (Mafia of Inspectors)—and the scandal alerted the public about corruption.

Francisco Whitaker used this opportunity to call the Globo TV Network in São Paulo and inform them of the signatures collected in support of a popular initiative project to fight electoral corruption. This resulted in a call for signatures on one of the most watched television news shows in Brazil, “Jornal Nacional” (National News). One of the leading journalists of TV Globo, Chico Pinheiro, announced nationwide that anyone who wanted to help the group gather signatures should call the CJP/SP. After this, the number of signatures quickly doubled to 1 million, and they were taken to the National Congress.

After 36 days, the bill was submitted and approved by Congress, sanctioned by the President and became Law 9840/1999, the first law based on popular initiative in Brazil, which was nicknamed the “Law Against Vote-Buying”. The new law means that politicians could have their positions revoked if there was proof that they were involved in vote-buying or took advantage of governmental institutions, facilities or resources of any sort in electoral campaigns.

⁶ The “Mafia of Inspectors” scandal emerged in 1998 in São Paulo. An entrepreneur was renovating a house in a traditional neighbourhood (Vila Madalena), where she intended to establish a gym. The city officers threatened her, saying they would not permit work on the house if she did not agree to pay R\$ 30,000 for them to “ignore” some irregularities that they allegedly found in the construction. The entrepreneur brought this issue to the Public Ministry to prove that the officers were extorting citizens. The case led to a five-year prison sentence for the chief officer of the local public administration.

Institutionalization, Network Formation and Mobilization to Create the Clean Record Law (2000–2010)

In 2002, Francisco Whitaker was invited by the Archbishop of Alto Parnaíba Diocese (in Maranhão), to speak about Law 9.840/99. During this event, he met the Electoral Judge Márlon Reis.⁷ In the same year, Márlon and Whitaker agreed to gather the 30 committees that had been working to support Law 9840/99. The idea was to create a network to investigate allegations of vote-buying and to prevent Law 9.840/99 from being changed. This movement was called the Brazilian Movement Against Electoral Corruption (MCCE).

In 2007, Márlon Reis met Bishop Dimas Lara Barbosa.⁸ Barbosa was the auxiliary bishop of Rio de Janeiro, where the militia and drug dealers had significant influence during the elections. Against this backdrop, the Church initiated mobilization called “Free Elections”. The campaign aimed to forbid people who had been sentenced for a crime from being elected. In the same year, Bishop Barbosa presented an initial draft of the bill that would create the “Ficha Limpa” Law (Clean Record Law)⁹ to Márlon and MCCE.

With the contribution of several local committees, MCCE wrote the draft bill and, in April 2008, launched the “Clean Record” campaign. The campaign collected 1.3 million signatures to support the project. The Clean Record Campaign was greatly benefited by an alliance with the global activist organization AVAAZ,¹⁰ which specialized in online petitions. During the campaign, the head of the AVAAZ Brazilian office, Graziela Tanaka,¹¹ approached MCCE to propose collaboration. Through its online platform and active online mobilization, AVAAZ collected 400,000 signatures to support the bill. These signatures served solely as a form of political pressure, given that

⁷ Márlon Reis (born in 1969) is a lawyer and an ex-Electoral Judge in the Brazilian State of Maranhão. He is a founding member of the MCCE and is also the founder and president of the National Association of Electoral Judges, Prosecutors and Attorneys (ABRAMPPE). In 2009, he was named one of Brazil’s 100 most influential people by *Época* Magazine.

⁸ Dom Dimas Lara Barbosa (born in 1956) is the Archbishop of Campo Grande. In 2014, he was the General Secretary of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB).

⁹ “Lei da Ficha Limpa” (Clean Record Law) (LC 135/2012) forbids the election of politicians who had been sentenced for a crime in a collective decision, when politicians are deposed by the Brazilian Electoral Justice or for those who waived an elected position to avoid the impeachment process.

¹⁰ <http://www.avaaz.org>. It is estimated that at the time of the campaign, AVAAZ increased its number of members in Brazil from 150,000 to 600,000.

¹¹ Graziela Tanaka (born in 1980) was the campaign coordinator for AVAAZ in Brazil during the mobilization to support the Clean Record Law.

online petitions were not considered a valid form of legal support in the process of popular law approval.

On 29 September 2009, the bill for the Clean Record Law was submitted to the National Congress, together with 1.3 million valid signatures. The bill was considered and approved by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, and it was sanctioned by the President on 4 June 2010, becoming Complementary Law No. 135/2010. However, the law was challenged in the Electoral Supreme Court about whether it should be valid for the 2010 elections.

On 23 March 2011, the Federal Supreme Court decided in a 6–5 vote that the law would not be valid for the 2010 elections, and the decision directly benefited several candidates whose eligibility had been questioned according to the new law. The Clean Record law was applied for the first time in 2012 after being submitted again to the Federal Supreme Court to decide on its constitutionality and receive final approval in its full text. According to data released by the Electoral Supreme Court, more than 1300 candidates were barred from the 2012 elections for not complying with the terms of the new law.

Spread of the Movement Network and Agenda (2011–2015)

As noted by Reis (2013), the punishment for vote-buying and the ineligibility of candidates who did not comply with the requirements of the Clean Record Law were not sufficient to make the Brazilian Electoral System more effective. Electoral fraud had become more sophisticated in comparison with what was seen in the 1990s. Currently, other practices are in place to circumvent the law, such as the use of eligible people as candidates while corrupt politicians continue operating behind the scenes.

In this context, the MCCE, the OAB, the CNBB and various other organizations decided at the beginning of 2013 to start the process of drafting a new popular initiative bill called “Clean Elections”. The idea of the project was to restrict corporate financing for political campaigns, to establish a voting system in which citizens vote for a party and then for a candidate among those presented by the elected party and to lift restrictions on freedom of expression during the political campaigns.

A study led by OAB throughout Brazil and released on 6 August 2013, showed that 85% of Brazilians approved of a political reform that would be valid for the 2014 elections (IBOPE 2014). Based on this research and taking advantage of the “window of opportunity” created by popular demonstrations in 2013,¹² MCCE decided to mobilize a

campaign for a new law based on popular initiative supporting a proposal for a political reform.

During this campaign, MCCE engaged in a major campaign on the internet to mobilize civil society to collect signatures. The website,¹³ one of the channels of the campaign, offered brochures, forms to collect signatures, information guides and the complete draft of the bill. The aim was to provide tools with which disseminate information about the bill and obtain citizens’ approval and engagement with the proposal. The website offers an online petition for Brazilian citizens to show their support via the internet.

In August 2013, MCCE invited AVAAZ to be a partner to increase the online reach of the campaign. The AVAAZ petition managed to obtain 135,000 signatures after 24 h of campaigning. In February 2014, the online petition reached 171,000 signatures in total, but the campaign was interrupted some months later.

This is because the MCCE adhered to the “National Plenary of Social Movements”—formed by more than 100 civil organizations that fight corruption—and promoted major mobilization around the creation of a new popular law project registered as PL 6.316/2013, which was called the Political Reform.

All of this process means that fighting electoral corruption is a central cause in the Brazilian political agenda today. What is different is that the public and civil society have appropriated the public problem. For example, in August 2013, Senator Romero Jucá proposed a bill entitled “Electoral Mini-Reform” that disregarded aspects proposed in the civil society agenda-setting. According to Jucá, this reform aimed to reduce overall political campaign spending to provide transparency in the election process and equal conditions for candidates to compete. President Dilma Rousseff sanctioned the Electoral Mini-Reform on December 2013 with five vetoes. The MCCE members criticized the reform: they argued that it was a strategy that did not address the causes of electoral corruption.

Aligned with the campaign promoted by MCCE, in the Federal Supreme Court, the OAB questioned the constitutionality of corporate contributions that finance political campaigns. As a result of this process, corporate financing was considered unconstitutional in September 2015.

¹² 2013 was marked by several riots and demonstrations involving Brazilians expressing their dissatisfaction with national politics. The movement involved 438 Brazilian cities, mobilizing approximately 2

Footnote 12 continued

million people. These demonstrations became one of the most important mobilizations in the country, together with those that led to the impeachment of the former president Fernando Collor in 1992.

¹³ <http://www.eleicoeslimpas.org.br>

MCCE Incidence in Public Arena of Electoral Corruption: Lessons from the Experience

The trajectory and experience of MCCE, which was narrated above and summarized in Table 4 below, provides evidence of its influence in the public arena of electoral corruption in Brazil. Since the process of drafting the Brazilian Federal Constitution from 1986 to 1988, when the mechanisms of popular participation were created, organizations linked to the Catholic Church, led by the CNBB, played a key role in promoting social innovation in the public sphere, even in the period before the creation of the movement.

As demonstrated in the examination of the public arena, from the mid-1990s, these religious organizations promoted debates on the practices associated with the public problem of electoral corruption, confirming what several studies on civil society in Brazil already indicated (Gohn 2007). The slogan “see, judge and act” of the Fraternity Campaign was a starter action that launched the discussion on electoral corruption in the Catholic community.

The repertoire of the progressive Catholic Church, based on the Theology of Liberation, is remarkable and essential for the “problematization” and “publicization” of the public problem of electoral corruption.

The debate in the public arena seems to have intensified—the debates occurred in the Bishops Assembly and during mass in the local churches. A survey of the entire Catholic community contributed to advancing the discussion. Thus, these MCCE actor–networks work as an “epistemic community” (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2007), spotlighting the public problem and generating public information and knowledge about the issue.

The actor–network therefore produces a process of “public inquiry” (Cefaï 2014, Quéré and Terzi 2015) that focuses on the definition of the public problem, its interpretation and how it is addressed in the public arena, which is possible through a process that occurs “in vivo” through Church work throughout Brazil. This then promotes a learning process for the problem, raising “vote-buying” as an issue to be addressed first.

Looking more closely at the social innovations created, especially since the 1990s, one can have some important considerations about its emergence and dissemination that are linked to the theoretical and analytical framework presented in this paper. First, we observed that such social innovations, especially the Vote-Buying Law and Clean Record Law, significantly changed the legal and institutional framework of the public arena in Brazil. However, these social innovations were not restricted to the laws and their effects (outcomes) and are even more visible if we observe the process.

Analysing the course of history, it is possible to observe that many incremental social innovations were produced throughout a “public inquiry” process. The multiple actors managed to address the overarching questions about electoral corruption in Brazil: How does one design a popular initiative bill? How does one obtain the number of signatures required for its approval? How does one ensure its approval in Congress? How does one ensure the implementation of the law after it passes? In seeking answers to these “problematic situations”, the actor–network analysed concluded that the answers were learning, creating new answers and thus “expanding the horizon of the possible” (Cefaï 2009). In this sense, it can be concluded that social innovation in the public arena is configured as a process of “experimentation”, which involves trials and errors, advances and setbacks.

Another noteworthy aspect is that these social innovations are the result of a connection, a network with no clear boundaries in which multiple actor–networks, actants and their expertise take part (in different moments and distinct levels of importance). In fact, the MCCE is formed by a constellation of collectives and can be described as a social networking movement, as understood by Scherer-Warren (2012).

However, after the analysis of the trajectory and observing the MCCE experience, it is hard to tell who is in and who is out of this context. This is because the experience of the organization, more than a wired network, refers to streams, movements and agencies (Latour 2012) that are difficult to follow. More than creating a fixed representation, it can be stressed that this network consists of different individuals and groups, human and non-human, and different forms of a compromise that produce cooperative intelligence (distributed cognition), which allows one to create and disseminate learning (Lévesque 2014).

Religious leaders, lawyers, judges, former prosecutors, cyber-activists, politicians, researchers, activists, opinion polls, bills, petitions together help to create new rules and conventions; they are part of politics (Cefaï 2009). This role is not reserved only for experts and elected officials. These collectives, formed by ordinary people and objects, combine their expertise and skills and thus produce new answers/solutions to the “public problem” of electoral corruption, which undermines the institutional and cultural framework.

Therefore, social innovation is not configured here as works of a “single enlightened inventor” but as a collective and procedural co-construction. They seem to be a result of the associations between these collectives (human and non-human) (Latour 2012). This is also expressed in MCCE leadership roles that, unlike traditional movements, are quite diffuse, making it difficult to identify its main interlocutors.

Table 4 Trajectory of MCCE: a synthesis *Source:* Elaborated by the authors

Trials/moments of proof	Marks	Outcomes/social innovation
1985–1988 The roots of the movement	Publicization of electoral corruption Participation in the Constituent Assembly Proposal of specific institutional framework devices in the Federal Constitution that ensured civil society involvement in the public sphere	Creation of Article 14 of the Federal Constitution (1988)
1989–1999 Mobilization to create a Law Against Vote-Buying	Fraternity Campaign in 1996 Research in the parishes of Brazil about the elections' major problems Creation of Bill 1517/1999 (Vote-Buying Law Project) Mobilization to approve a Popular Initiative Law By the end of 1998, the mobilization by signatures stagnated (500,000 subscribers), and the organizers considered quitting The Mafia of Inspectors scandal gave the new campaign a second wind, and the campaign reached 1 million signatures in 1999	Law no. 9840 - September 1999, "Law Against Vote-Buying"
2000–2009 Institutionalization and network formation	Accusations and scandals in cases of elected politicians involved in crimes Clean Record Bill 518/2009 Project written by members of CNBB with support of judges and prosecutors Collecting signatures for approval of a new popular initiative law Media and community mobilization Utilization of social networks and AVAAZ platform on the internet In September 2009, 1.3 million signatures were filed in Congress There was resistance in the Chamber of Deputies and Senate in approving the law. Politicians mobilization (calls) and presence in the sessions was undertaken to approve the law	Clean Record Law (Complementary Law 135/2010) enacted by President Lula in 2010 and considered constitutional by the Supreme Federal Court in 2012
2010–2015 Spread of the network and of the agenda of the movement	In the 2010s, political reform became a hot spot in the public arena of electoral corruption Direct Action of Unconstitutionality (ADI) was filed by the OAB in Supreme Federal Court in 2014 The <i>Clean Election Campaign</i> did not continue A new popular law project was created and registered as PL 6.316/2013 known as Political Reform Political Reform was approved by Chamber of Deputies in 2014 without taking into account the agenda of civil society	Political reform in the political agenda Popular mobilizations against corruption that began in 2013 and continue to the present day Corporate financing is considered unconstitutional by Supreme Federal Court in September 2015

Moreover, these social innovations do not result from a linear and progressive course. They emerge after processes of “translation” that involve ups and downs, advances and setbacks (Latour 2012, 2014). As reported in history, the actor–network linked to MCCE experienced many obstacles to the point of questioning their own “repertoire” as had occurred with the crisis that started due to the stagnation in the process of collecting signatures for Law 9840 in the 1990s.

The MCCE network seems to change (compose and recompose) throughout its history as it promotes social change (Mische 1994). It is noteworthy that the forms of organization and mobilization of MCCE changed over time from face-to-face mobilization through church work to a more networked and organized mobilization, with the expansion of organizations linked to the movement until it reached the net-activism more recently. These changes seem to reflect the changes in the setting of the “public

problem” as discussed above, which acquires a new design, expanding the understanding of its complexity.

New repertoires of action are adopted in the history of MCCE. The organizational forms of collective action within civil society were transformed with the mediation of the internet. The new generations of actor–networks are connected and constitute a “socio-technical public” (Latour 1994). That is, advertising the causes, debates and struggles move from radio and television to “digital” public arenas (Cefaï 2009). In the mobilization promoted by MCCE, the mass media (particularly television) played an important role at the end of the 1990s in the campaign for “Lei de Compra de Votos”. By the end of the 2000s, the internet became a public space for discussing and fighting electoral corruption, where the actor–network utilizes net-activism tools (Di Felice 2012).

The variation of the mobilization and innovation intensity is not “progressive” (as a result of well-planned and previously defined strategies). Collective action occurs in a fluid and uncertain environment that also seems to contribute to its success or failure (Cefaï 2009; Chateauraynaud 2011). Events like the “Mafia dos Fiscais” (Mafia of Inspectors) or the support of a journalist from the largest media group in the country, Globo, made all the difference in the history of the promotion of social innovation. Thus, as stated by Cefaï (2009), the collective action at times seems to ride on a wave of sympathy that boosts the action. At other times, it seems to stop and lose strength. Thus, the fortuity also plays a role in promoting social innovation (Akrich et al. 2002).

The action of the MCCE actor–network is included in the broader public arena of the electoral corruption. It is from the establishment of this public arena as “space of confrontation for divergent positions” (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2007: 75) that the “framework of experience or relevance” is built (Cefaï 2014), in which the action of MCCE is justified and becomes legitimate. According to the authors, this is the space with which to produce a “problematization” of the dilemma of electoral corruption, a delimitation of its constitutive dimensions, and the definition of causes, responsible parts and routes for change. This framework has influenced and is influenced by the actions of MCCE. According to Cefaï (2009: 36), “collective action finds support in this public culture shared by its members, which offers options to take positions, provides the standing points at the battle arenas and suggests good expressive forms”.

Finally, the analysis of the trajectory and experience of the MCCE provides evidence of a collective learning process; MCCE can be seen as a “collective action laboratory” in the arena of electoral corruption (Cefaï 2009). As explored in “MCCE Trajectory and Experience” section, in managing trial situations, different actants

assembled in this network (clergy, lawyers, judges, former prosecutors, cyber-activists, politicians, researchers, activists, opinion polls, bills, petitions, etc.) promote and diffuse their knowledge. The legacy left by the actor–network is a base for advances of their actions, therefore creating a process of “experimentation” of answers and solutions to public problems, which are systematic and widespread and provide new lessons learned. The promoted social innovations go beyond the “black boxes” that were generated (like the legal provisions) and involve a process of “public inquiry” that seems to be fuelled by the dynamics of the movement.

Final Considerations

Considering the analysis above, it is possible to say that there is a clear influence of MCCE in the public arena of electoral corruption. When interpreting the macro scale (the public arena) and its relationship with the microexperience (MCCE and its actor–network), we observed that the emergence of MCCE was crucial for the transformation of the public problem landscape of electoral corruption in Brazil in recent decades.

It is possible to state that the actor–network of the MCCE subverts the technical, legal, institutional and political environments of the electoral corruption arena. While trying to find solutions to “problematic situations”, the MCCE transformed itself and the social reality.

In this sense, some of the findings of this study transcend the specific case study and can contribute to better understanding the process of “democratic invention” (Lefort 1981) and the forms of mobilization and interaction between the actor–network of civil society in the public sphere, producing new “grammars of the possible” (Cefaï 2009), which is a key aspect of public action today.

The MCCE case analysis presents a new perspective about social innovation, linking it to the dynamics of social change that was promoted by the mobilization of different public groups attempting to solve public problems. Social innovation here is generated at the same time as a process and an outcome (Ayob et al. 2016). The pragmatic approach reconciles creative acting with social regularity and makes it possible to observe multiple paths of collective’s emergence and the long processes through which the establishment comes to change. This analysis can be useful for comprehending the capacity of collectives and society to reinvent themselves (Castoriadis 1975; Andion 2014) or to create rules and conventions and new social practices, thereby becoming more creative and more autonomous politically.

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