**Supplementary Material**

**Dealing with the Facts of Life: The Management of Intra-Party Factionalism in the Iberian Radical Left Parties**

Pedro Lourenço, Tiago Conceição and Carlos Jalali (University of Aveiro)

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**A- List of interviews**

One of the interviewees was an important member of IU and Podemos during the period under analysis. For this reason, this interviewee is listed in both parties (IU6, P6).

***PCP (Portuguese Communist Party)***

PCP1 – Former MP, Central Committee (CC) member, 5 March 2020

PCP2 – MP, CC member, 5 March 2020

PCP3 – Trade union organiser, CC member, 29 February 2020

PCP4 – Former MP, MEP and CC member, 26 February 2020

PCP5 – Former MP, CC member, 24 February 2020

PCP6 – Regional leader, board member, 3 March 2020

PCP7 – Local elite, former CC member, 3 March 2020

***BE (Left Bloc)***

BE1 – Organisation Office, major faction, 26 February 2020

BE2 – Board member, major faction, 27 February 2020

BE3 – MP and board member, major faction, 27 February 2020

BE4 – Former MP, board member, major faction, 27 February 2020

BE5 – Former board member, minor faction, 3 March 2020

BE6 – MP and board member, major faction, 28 February 2020

BE7 – Former MP and board member, minor faction, 28 February 2020

***IU (United Left)***

IU1 – Local elite, minor faction, 22 September 2020

IU2 – Organisation Office, major faction, 10 March 2020

IU3 – MP and regional elite, regional faction, 15 September 2020

IU4 – MP assistant, major faction, 4 September 2020

IU5 – Former Organisation Office and board member, regional faction, 16 September 2020

IU6 – Former regional MP, minor faction, 21 September 2020

IU7 – Former MP assistant, non-aligned, 8 September 2020

***Podemos***

P1 – MEP assistant, minor faction, 26 October 2020

P2 – Former regional leader, major faction, 14 September 2020

P3 – Former regional leader, major faction, 11 September 2020

P4 – Former board member, major faction, 4 September 2020

P5 – Former local MP, minor faction, 29 October 2020

P6 – Former MP, major faction, 21 September 2020

**B- Interview method report**

Due to the reserved nature of most intra-party dynamics, there are few more effective ways of obtaining reliable information about them than talking to the actors involved. For this reason, interviews with elites are particularly useful to gain knowledge about the ‘internal workings’ of political parties and their organisations (Ellinas 2021: 6), as well as other ‘hidden elements of political action’ (Tansey 2007: 767). In this section, we report and discuss our empirical strategy and interview process to provide greater transparency to our research and confidence in the quality and reliability of the data collected, as recommended by Erik Bleich and Robert Pekkanen (2013). We report on how interviewees were selected, how access to them was obtained, and how the interviews were conducted and analysed, while reflecting on some of the challenges of our data collection process. As Antonis Ellinas (2021) argues, interview-based research should reflect more about the interview process and how data is collected.

**Sampling frame**

The selection of interviewees followed a non-probability sampling strategy, with the aim of identifying political actors with direct knowledge of the political processes under study, as proposed by Oisín Tansey (2007). We sought to identify a set of party actors directly involved in the leadership of the respective parties and their main factions, and in the internal management processes that took place during the period in question (2010–2019) – for example, executive board members, factional leaders or people with key organisational responsibilities.

While in most cases these cadres are publicly known for their important role in the party’s internal life – and were thus easily identifiable by the authors’ research (following a ‘purposive sampling’ – Tansey 2007) – in others, their names emerged during the interviews or from exploratory conversations held with some party elites (‘chain referral sampling’). These latter names were then assessed by the authors to ensure that they were relevant for the research.

For the most part, interviewees were senior members of well-established factions within each party[[1]](#footnote-2) - formal (IU, BE) or informal (Podemos) - or of their regional leaderships (especially relevant in Spanish RLPs). In the case of the PCP, where no relevant factions were identified during the 2010s, we sought testimonies from respondents with diverse backgrounds and responsibilities within the party – from its central leadership and experience in elected office to those responsible for the party’s organisation at regional level. In general, the list of interviewees includes current and former members of the RLPs’ national leadership, its main factions, party officials, MPs, regional leaders and senior political advisors.

Special care was also taken to ensure the ‘representativeness’ of the sample (Bleich and Pekkanen 2013: 86–87). Namely by interviewing members of different factions within each party – major or minor, linked to the leadership and its internal opposition – to obtain distinct perspectives on the same facts and a critical view on the collected testimonies, also allowing cross-referencing and positional triangulation. In some cases, interviewees occupied positions of leadership and internal opposition in different periods, enriching the data collected and allowing a comparison of the different strategies and approaches followed over time.

In line with other work based on elite interviews to study RLPs (e.g., Bale and Dunphy 2011, Keith 2018), we set the initial goal of obtaining a minimum number of five interviews for each party.

**Access**

Party elites, especially those who still hold positions of responsibility, are usually very busy and receive many requests to participate in similar academic studies. Thus, to gain access to the interviewees, we first tried to contact them through party intermediaries and only then directly. This strategy resulted from the advice of colleagues more experienced in interviewing party elites (see also Ellinas 2021: 9–10) and proved to be very valuable, as most intermediated contacts resulted in positive responses to our interview requests - even in the case of traditionally more difficult-to-access parties, such as the PCP.

These ‘intermediaries’ were officials or elected representatives of the respective RLPs, whom the authors knew and who agreed to do this intermediation when requested. These initial contacts were then followed by a formal email invitation with further information about the study and the interview. When this route could not be followed, we sought direct contacts of party cadres through public sources or other party members, and sent an interview request by email or text message.

In these written requests, we informed potential respondents that the study aimed to ‘understand the role of the party leadership in the management of intra-party dynamics in four left-wing parties in Portugal and Spain’, without explicitly mentioning the issue of ‘factionalism’. As this is a sensitive topic for many, and can affect the external image of the party, the ‘official’ topic of the interview had to be more ‘palatable’. Therefore, the choice of words and the framing of the research was important above all not to alienate potential respondents or put them in a defensive attitude during the interview, following the methodological recommendations of Koen Damhuis and Léonie de Jonge (2022: 4–5) and Ellinas (2021: 10). Interviewees were also assured of anonymity and complete confidentiality of the interviews, and asked about the day, time and place where the interview should take place.

Paradoxically, one of the factors that seems to have facilitated access to many of the interviewees was the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent massification of online video meeting tools. Many of our interview requests were accepted during this period, with party elites agreeing to have them conducted online and recorded (via Zoom). This also made the authors’ work much easier logistically, for example in terms of travel, costs and time spent collecting the interviews.

In total, between February and October 2020, 53 requests for interviews were made, with 26 completed – a rate of almost 50%. This rate was significantly higher for invitations made through party intermediaries. We stopped sending new invitations when we felt a ‘point of saturation’ was reached and new interviews revealed ‘no new information about’ the processes under study (Bleich and Pekkanen 2013: 91). The interview period was longer than initially planned due to the onset of the pandemic. This forced some interviews scheduled for March and April 2020 to be postponed, and a second round of interviews during the pandemic phase took place in September and October 2020.

**Conducting the interviews**

In total, 26 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with RLP cadres. These took place either in person (n = 14) or via Zoom (n = 12), and were digitally recorded with the written or verbal consent of the respondents. Interviews lasted between 24 and 148 minutes (mean = 79; standard deviation = 31; median = 75) and were carried out in Portuguese or Spanish. When face-to-face, they were held in locations chosen by the interviewees, such as the party headquarters, in parliament or in public cafés.

Most interviews were conducted with two of the authors present, allowing one to lead the interview and the other to take handwritten notes. However, five had to be carried out individually due to overlapping interview schedules. This did not prove problematic for their conduction or subsequent analysis, as the interviewees consented to their recording.

**Evaluation**

Our original data consists of the full transcription of the 26 interviews and their thematic organisation. After transcription, two of the authors used the NVivo12 software to organise excerpts from all the interviews according to the topics convered – for example, ‘factional dynamics’, ‘mechanisms used to manage factionalism’ – to more easily access the information in the interviews. To reduce the risks of errors, this organisation was done in two stages. First, each of these two authors used NVivo autonomously to organise all of the interviews. Then, the two authors compared their assessments and compiled a final NVivo file, to ensure that there were no errors and inconsistencies.

Subsequently, the content of each interview was triangulated with information from other sources, to enable cross-validation of the results. Two main forms of triangulation were used to ensure data validity: *positional* and *data* triangulation (see Ellinas 2021: 13–14).

‘Positional’ triangulation was ensured by collecting ‘balanced information from a wide variety of perspectives’ (Bleich and Pekkanen 2013: 90). Testimonies were obtained from elites with distinct positions within each party and belonging to different internal factions – often allies or adversaries at different times. When their narratives coincided, we could be confident that their account constituted an approximation of reality. Where they diverged or presented contradictory perspectives, we sought to confirm them with additional evidence or, where this was not possible, to make it explicit in the text, allowing the reader to identify them.

Statements obtained were also triangulated with information gathered from academic, documentary and media sources (‘data’ triangulation). The available secondary literature often provided privileged information about the events and dynamics studied, allowing us to accumulate evidence from additional sources. This is the case of several journalistic reports that covered internal conflicts in these RLPs, for example, using internal party sources. Or scientific literature that has also used interviews with party elites to learn more about their internal life.

Finally, the different interviews have been referenced throughout the text and several direct quotes from the interviewees are used. In some cases, this serves to substantiate our claims, while in others it allows us to better illustrate a particular idea or political process.

**Ethical challenges**

Unlike some studies with far-right actors (e.g., Damhuis and de Jonge 2022; Ellinas 2021), no significant ethical challenges were encountered while conducting this study. None of the political processes under study have legal or judicial relevance, nor was the personal safety of the authors ever at risk. As noted above, in-person interviews took place in safe and predominantly institutional settings and were always conducted with great courtesy by the interviewees. The anonymity of the interviewees is justified by the fact that many still hold relevant positions in their respective parties. Their identity was not revealed in any of the interviews – not even when their statements were used to confront another interviewee’s statement – and are known only to the authors. We should also note that one of the authors is a member of one of the RLPs studied (more specifically, of the Bloco de Esquerda). However, he is a grassroots member of the party and has had no involvement in any of the internal processes assessed.

**C- References**

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1. These factions are mentioned in the section dedicated to each RLP. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)