



Article

The Secular Liturgy in the Digital Age: The Hybridization of the Political Rally and Public Relations Strategy

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Abstract

This study examines how political public relations strategists perceive and manage the structural tension between the embodied ritual of in-person militancy and the demands of media spectacle in a digitized campaign environment. Although frequently dismissed as obsolete in the era of digital mediatization, the electoral rally embodies a productive paradox: its physical rituality generates precisely the emotional content demanded by television and algorithmic platforms. Guided by the COREQ reporting criteria, a qualitative interpretivist study was conducted based on 19 in-depth semi-structured interviews with Portuguese political consultants and campaign directors, analysed through NVivo-assisted thematic analysis. Three analytical axes were identified: (1) the Paradox of Fabricated Authenticity, whereby media scenography instrumentalizes physical co-presence to generate platform-ready emotion; (2) the Catharsis of the Tribe, whereby the rally functions as a secular liturgy reinforcing militant identity and cohesion; and (3) the Leader as Media Sorcerer, operating a rhetorical duplicity that fuses epideictic communion with deliberative soundbite logic. The findings reveal a broad spectrum of professional perceptions, demonstrating that contemporary PR strategists do not uniformly abandon physical rituals. Instead, they act as “paradox managers”, constantly navigating the structural tension between traditionalist demands for organic militant communion and pragmatic requirements for fabricated digital spectacle.

Keywords: political public relations; electoral rally; secular liturgy; charismatic authority; strategic communication; media events; mediatization

1. Introduction

Amid audience fragmentation and the ubiquity of digital communication, the traditional electoral rally faces an ontological crisis (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999; Chadwick 2017). Frequently labelled by mainstream literature as an obsolete relic or reduced to a mere “media window” choreographed for algorithmic and television consumption, the persistence of the rally in the modern campaign cycle presents a profound sociological paradox (Alexander 2010; Nielsen 2012). Far from having decreed the “death of the rally”, the digital transition has complexified its function. Anchored in the theoretical matrix of Political Public Relations (PR) (Strömbäck and Kioussis 2011), recent studies suggest that physical campaign events have not disappeared; instead, they have undergone a hybridization process, transforming into authentic content creation studios for subsequent distribution and engagement on digital platforms (Cervi et al. 2023). This trajectory resonates

Academic Editor: Andreas Pickel

Received: 14 March 2026

Revised: 23 April 2026

Accepted: 27 April 2026

Published: 30 April 2026

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with the media events paradigm (Dayan and Katz 1992), wherein ceremonial broadcasts interrupt everyday life to produce collective participation—though, as this paper argues, the contemporary hybridized rally inverts this logic by generating live ritual emotion in situ for subsequent media export.

However, this purely instrumental and media-centric vision fails to capture the sociological essence that mobilizes the masses. To understand the resilience of the rally, it must be rescued from its merely promotional dimension and reconceptualized as a Sacred Ritual of Communion. Summoning Émile Durkheim's ([1912] 1995) dichotomy between the *sacred* and the *profane*, the rally operates as a *secular liturgy* where the profane struggle for votes is elevated to an identity celebration. It is in this physical space of sharing—pure *action* in the sense of Arendt ([1958] 2001)—that the political leader manages to manufacture and consolidate *charismatic authority* (Weber [1919] 1973), transmuting the aggregated crowd into a unified political tribe. The digital space requires this ritualistic aura of human warmth and emotion, which is impossible to generate artificially, to feed its persuasion dynamics.

Although Sociology and Political Science frequently intersect on this topic, a substantial gap remains in the Public Relations literature. The overwhelming majority of investigations evaluate the rally from the perspective of its effects on the electorate or its media representation (Aalberg et al. 2012; Kalla and Broockman 2018). Little to no attention has been given to the phenomenology and strategic perception of the PR professionals and political consultants themselves, who orchestrate this physical–digital nexus.

To bridge this gap, the present article aims to explore how PR professionals and political consultants perceive and manage the ontological evolution of the electoral rally in a digitized ecosystem. To guide this empirical exploration, the following Research Questions (RQs) were formulated:

1. RQ1: How do political communication strategists operationalize the tension between physical presence (ritual) and contemporary media demands (spectacle) in the design of electoral rallies?
2. RQ2: In what ways does the management of these in-person rituals contribute to the construction and media legitimation of the political leader's Charismatic Authority?

By answering these questions through a qualitative study with 19 campaign strategists, this work challenges the instrumental paradigm of Public Relations. The study offers two fundamental contributions: (1) theoretically, it reconceptualizes the physical political event as the primordial generator of the emotion demanded by platformization; (2) empirically and professionally, it provides communication strategists with an analytical framework to understand legitimation rituals as secular liturgies capable of enhancing *charismatic authority* in the hybrid media ecosystem.

Furthermore, the Portuguese context serves as a highly pertinent laboratory for this empirical investigation. As a consolidated multi-party democracy characterized by historically strong ideological roots and robust grassroots militancy—now rapidly transitioning into a highly mediatized and digitally driven political environment—Portugal exemplifies the structural friction between traditional in-person mobilization and the demands of modern algorithmic campaigning. Analysing this specific ecosystem offers broader insights into how European political institutions negotiate the tension between physical rituality and digital spectacle.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Redefinition of Political Public Relations: From Transaction to Legitimation

Contemporary literature in political communication has been largely dominated by the political marketing paradigm, which tends to conceptualize the voter as a consumer

and the vote as a short-term transaction embedded in market logic (Lees-Marshment 2014; Scammell 2014). However, this instrumental vision proves insufficient to explain the resilience of long-term relational phenomena, such as party loyalty and militancy.

In this context, an epistemological rescue of the foundational paradigm of Political Public Relations is required, effecting a structural transition from the transactional logic of the “market” to the deliberative logic of the “polis” (Porto Simões 1993). Grounded in critical and sociological European perspectives (Bentele and Nothhaft 2010; Ihlen et al. 2009), PR transcends the mere ephemeral management of reputation or the utilitarian maximization of corporate image and assumes itself fundamentally as a continuous process of meaning negotiation focused on the “architecture of legitimacy”. Under this conceptual aegis, the voter rejects the condition of civic consumer to reassume their role as a deliberative participant, while the party organization acts to secure its social license to operate and its viability as an institutional actor within the public sphere (Habermas [1962] 1989; Strömbäck and Kioussis 2011). It is, therefore, in this complex relational intersection that the electoral rally demands to be re-examined: as a foundational ontological device for the discursive and performative production of political legitimation.

2.2. *The Ontology of Action and the Duplicity of Discourse*

To understand the ontology of communication in a campaign environment, it is fundamental to summon Arendt’s ([1958] 2001) theory of Action. Arendt postulates that political action is the only exclusively human activity, irrevocably requiring plurality and the physical presence of peers. Politics loses its essence if not accompanied by discourse; it is through words spoken in the public space that leaders reveal themselves and materialize their will.

The efficacy of this discursive action was analysed through the New Rhetoric of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca ([1958] 2007), which recalls that politics operates predominantly in the domain of the plausible, requiring value-based persuasion. The political rally therefore constitutes a singular rhetorical hybridism: although situated within an electoral campaign (oriented towards the future vote and the deliberative genre), the event is, in its essence, dominated by the epideictic genre. Through epideictic discourse, the leader seeks primarily to celebrate the shared values and identity of the community, creating a predisposition for action.

This analytical distinction is not arbitrary. Physical co-presence enables forms of embodied, collective engagement—shared chanting, synchronized movement, sensory immersion in a common atmosphere—that are constitutively ritualistic in Durkheim’s sense: they require the gathering of bodies in a common space to produce collective effervescence. Media demands, by contrast, impose the logic of spectacle: a visual and affective display optimized for the absent viewer, whether on television or a digital platform. The Durkheimian sacred inheres in co-presence; the media spectacle is projected outward. The paper’s central argument, however, is that these two logics are not oppositional but co-constitutive in contemporary rally design: the spectacle requires the authentic emotional surplus generated by ritual co-presence, while the ritual is increasingly choreographed with spectacle logic in mind.

2.3. *The Rally as a Secular Liturgy and the Manufacture of Charismatic Authority*

The challenge of modern democratic campaigns lies in mobilizing citizens who, as (de Tocqueville [1835–1840] 2005) observed, tend toward individualistic withdrawal from collective political life. Sociological accounts of crowd dynamics—most influentially Le Bon’s ([1895] 2008) analysis of collective psychology in mass gatherings—suggest that physical co-presence remains a powerful counterforce to this atomization. The electoral

rally addresses this challenge by creating a bounded social space in which collective identity is performed and felt.

The conceptual centrepiece for understanding this space is Durkheim's ([1912] 1995) distinction between the sacred and the profane, together with his theory of collective effervescence. For Durkheim, rituals do not simply express pre-existing solidarity: they produce it. In collective ritual, the assembled group's energy is projected onto shared symbols—flags, leaders, slogans—which become the material vessels of collective identity. This paper proposes that the contemporary electoral rally functions as a secular liturgy: a regularized, professionally orchestrated ritual practice that generates Durkheimian collective effervescence in the absence of religious framing. More precisely, a political event qualifies as a secular liturgy when it fulfils three analytical criteria: (a) it establishes a bounded, symbolically demarcated space that separates the everyday (electoral uncertainty, individual isolation) from the exceptional (partisan solidarity, collective purpose); (b) it enacts prescribed ritual behaviours—chants, synchronized movement, collective gestures—that generate felt solidarity among participants; and (c) it provides affective recharging that reinforces the political tribe's identity against an adversary. These criteria distinguish secular liturgies from ordinary party meetings or purely media-facing events.

The rally-as-secular-liturgy bears a productive analytical relationship with the media events paradigm of Dayan and Katz (1992), who define media events as pre-planned ceremonial broadcasts that interrupt ordinary programming to produce collective national viewing. Electoral rallies share the ritual grammar of media events—organized around narratives of contest, collective renewal, and symbolic coronation—but the contemporary hybridized rally inverts the directionality: rather than being designed for broadcast from the outset, it generates live symbolic and emotional content in situ, which is subsequently harvested for television and digital platforms. This inversion has been facilitated by what mediatization scholars describe as the deep reshaping of political practice by media logics (Hjarvard 2013; Couldry and Hepp 2017). Non-deterministic accounts of mediatization emphasize that media logics do not displace prior communicative forms but reshape them, producing hybrid arrangements in which the live ritual and the mediated spectacle become mutually constitutive.

Beyond collective identity production, the rally serves a second critical function: the legitimation of individual leadership. Here, Weber's ([1919] 1973) concept of charismatic authority provides the essential analytical lens—though it requires specification beyond its general invocation. Three analytically distinct aspects of Weber's charisma are operative in the rally context: (a) the crisis orientation—charismatic authority emerges and is sustained by conditions of collective threat or challenge, which generate the emotional urgency that renders extraordinary leadership credible; (b) the follower recognition mechanism—charisma is not an intrinsic property of the leader but a quality that followers project onto them, making the assembled crowd simultaneously the witness and the co-producer of legitimate authority; and (c) the performance of the extraordinary—charismatic leaders must repeatedly demonstrate capacities exceeding ordinary expectations, a dimension elaborated in Alexander's (2010) theory of political performance. The rally is the par excellence site for enacting all three aspects: it stages a collective threat (the adversary, the political crisis), convenes the recognizing community, and provides the platform for performative display.

Supporting these primary conceptual anchors, several additional theoretical resources illuminate the phenomenological dimensions of the rally experience. The concept of the *numinous*—Otto's ([1917] 1992) term for the quality of awe, fascination, and tremendous mystery characteristic of encounters with the sacred—helps explain why the rally generates an emotional register that purely informational communication cannot replicate. The cyclical temporality described by Eliade ([1957] 1992) and the festive disruption

of ordinary time analysed by Caillois ([1939] 1988) illuminate how the rally establishes an experiential break from everyday political routine. The Wagnerian concept of *gesamtkunstwerk*—the total work of art, fusing scenography, lighting, music, and oratory into a unified aesthetic experience (Wagner [1849] 2003)—captures the professional aspiration toward total sensory environment management. These resources occupy supporting analytical roles; the primary theoretical work is done by Durkheim’s ritual theory, Weber’s charismatic authority, and the Dayan & Katz media events paradigm, in dialogue with non-deterministic mediatization theory.

2.4. Summary and Research Questions

The foregoing framework positions the contemporary electoral rally as a hybrid institutional form operating simultaneously at three levels: as a Durkheimian secular liturgy that produces collective effervescence and partisan solidarity; as a Weberian stage for the performance and follower recognition of charismatic authority; and as a reverse media event in the sense of Dayan & Katz, generating live ritual content for subsequent mediated distribution. The non-deterministic mediatization perspective (Hjarvard 2013) explains why this form has persisted and hybridized rather than been displaced by digital communication. This framework guides the following empirical investigation:

RQ1: How do political communication strategists operationalize the tension between physical presence (ritual) and contemporary media demands (spectacle) in the design of electoral rallies?

RQ2: In what ways does the management of these in-person rituals contribute to the construction and media legitimation of the political leader’s Charismatic Authority?

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Study Design

This study adopted a qualitative, interpretivist approach based on in-depth semi-structured interviews, aiming to explore professionals’ perceptions of the evolution of the political rally. To ensure methodological replicability, the study followed the COREQ (Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research) checklist guidelines by Tong et al. (2007).

3.2. Participants and Selection

The sample was constituted through a purposive sampling method, aiming to recruit key informants with profound knowledge of the phenomenon under study. The final panel included 19 participants ($n = 19$) across the following professional typologies: five party-appointed communication professionals (one per major parliamentary party); 14 independent political communication consultants operating in Portugal, several with prior experience in party structures; and one academic specialist in political communication with experience in consulting. During the recruitment phase, two refusals were registered, totalling 21 initial invitations. Initial contact was established via a formal interview request. Table 1 provides an overview of participant characteristics.

Table 1. Anonymised participant characteristics ($n = 19$).

Code	Typology	Affiliation/Context	Ideological Family
P01	Professional Consultant	Portuguese specialist	Independent
P02	Professional Consultant	Portuguese specialist	Independent
P03	Professional Consultant	Spanish specialist	Independent
P04	Party professional	PCP—Partido Comunista Português	Left
P05	Professional Consultant	Spanish specialist	Independent
P06	Professional Consultant	Portuguese specialist	Independent

P07	Professional Consultant	Portuguese consultant	Independent
P08	Professional Consultant	American consultant	Independent
P09	Professional Consultant	Portuguese specialist	Independent
P10	Professional Consultant	Portuguese consultant	Independent
P11	Professional Consultant	Portuguese consultant	Independent
P12	Party professional	CDS-PP—Centro Democrático Social	Right
P13	Party professional	PS—Partido Socialista	Centre-left
P14	Party professional	BE—Bloco de Esquerda	Left
P15	Professional Consultant	Communication consultant	Independent
P16	Professional Consultant	Communication consultant	Independent
P17	Professional Consultant	Communication consultant	Independent
P18	Professional Consultant	Portuguese academic	Independent
P19	Party professional	PSD—Partido Social Democrata	Centre-right

Participants are coded P01–P19 to preserve anonymity in accordance with data availability restrictions. Saturation was assessed iteratively during data collection. After the fourteenth interview, no substantively new analytical dimensions emerged; the remaining five interviews served to confirm and deepen patterns already identified, providing sufficient confidence that the primary conceptual dimensions of the phenomenon had been captured within this national context.

3.3. Research Team and Reflexivity

The interviews were conducted exclusively by the primary author of the study, a male Ph.D. candidate in Communication Sciences at the time of data collection. Prior to the study's commencement, no personal or professional relationship existed between the researcher and the participants, mitigating potential social desirability biases or shared assumptions. Participants were formally informed about the academic objectives of the research.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection took place in person, set in the consultants' workplaces or the respective parties' headquarters, ensuring the informant's comfort and naturalness within their professional ecosystem. No non-participant individuals were present during the sessions. A semi-structured interview guide was used, which underwent a pilot test prior to data collection. The guide addressed nine thematic areas: (a) the evolution of the rally as a communicative action from 1974 to its contemporary form; (b) the differences introduced by digital media in the rally's design and function; (c) the publics of the rally and for whom the event is designed; (d) the strategic objectives of the rally within an electoral campaign; (e) the charismatic protagonist of the rally—leader or party; (f) the degree of participant involvement and the distinction between active participation and passive attendance; (g) scenic and scenographic elements and their communicative functions; (h) the argumentative and representational dimensions of the rally's discourse; and (i) the future of the rally in an increasingly digitized campaign environment.

The interviews lasted between 90 and 120 min. With the formal and written consent of all intervenients, the sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The member checking technique was applied, with transcriptions returned to participants for final validation.

3.5. Data Analysis

The analytical corpus was processed using NVivo 15 qualitative analysis software. Researcher triangulation was employed: primary coding was executed by the main author and subsequently submitted for a quality check by a second independent researcher. The

thematic analysis adopted an abductive approach, proceeding in three stages. In the first stage, a concept-driven coding grid was constructed prior to data collection, structured around the study's core theoretical sensitizing concepts. After data collection, a floating reading of all transcripts was conducted, and the grid was adjusted in response to emergent patterns—what Schreier (2012) terms a data-driven complementation of the initial framework. This produced a pilot coding grid of 10 thematic categories: (1) evolution of the rally; (2) publics of the rally; (3) objectives of the rally; (4) charismatic entity; (5) degree of participant involvement; (6) emotions of the rally; (7) importance of scenography; (8) discourse; (9) influence of digital media; and (10) future of the rally. In the second stage, all 19 transcripts were systematically coded against this grid, generating a total of 5288 units of record distributed across the 10 categories. The three analytical axes reported in Section 4 were derived through selective coding focused on categories most directly relevant to the study's research questions: scenography and emotions (Axis 1 and 2) and discourse (Axis 3), which together accounted for 3132 units of record. In the third stage, a second independent researcher reviewed a stratified sample of coded transcripts against the coding grid, confirming the consistency of the framework. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus.

4. Results

The thematic analysis of the collected data identified three fundamental axes that illustrate communication strategists' perception of the political rally's ontological evolution.

4.1. *The Paradox of Fabricated Authenticity: Television Logic and Scenography*

Empirical evidence demonstrates that PR professionals harbour no illusions regarding the primary purpose of the contemporary rally: it is, in essence, an event designed for the absent audience. The analysis of the scenography category (1041 units of record) revealed that the space's architecture obeys a strict "television logic". For the interviewed strategists, the event's success is measured by the ability to create an irreproachable "media window" for newscasts. As one consultant highlights:

The modern rally is, above all, a television event. The stage was lowered in height for a very specific technical reason: framing. In the past, the speaker was isolated high up; today, we want the medium shot to catch the leader and the compact human mass right behind him. If there are empty chairs, the image of strength dies immediately on the screen. The scenographer now works together with the television director to ensure there are no "holes" in the image. (P17, political communication consultant)

The ritual dimensions of the event are explicitly instrumentalized for this mediated effect. As a specialist elaborated, all scenic elements serve the conversion of the physical event into something emotionally charged:

All the scenic elements contribute to the ritual dimension of the rally: the mobilisation, the creation of an atmosphere, the conferral of an aesthetic cut to the political moment, which makes it possible for it to be converted into something deeply emotional. (P09, specialist in political communication)

However, the analysis revealed what can be defined as the Paradox of Fabricated Authenticity. If the rally is a rigidly controlled studio, the efficacy of that transmission depends on capturing a human emotion that cannot be simulated artificially. Television and algorithms demand the "spectacle of spontaneity". The physical event becomes the emotional raw material, as one party strategist summarized:

“we need to show the genuine strength and energy of the room; television needs that warmth to validate what the leader is saying” (P13, party communication professional).

The television-centric design is described by most participants as the default operating frame of contemporary rallies, not as an occasional choice. One consultant stated the point in categorical terms:

Rallies are entirely conceived for television. There is no rally designed with the logic of pleasing the print media. Any candidate nowadays, from the podium where they speak, is entitled to three or four television screens, so they can see exactly when each television network is broadcasting live. They know they are live. (P06, political communication consultant)

This mediated orientation extends to a series of fine-grained technical adjustments—lighting rigs, minimum stage heights, podium distances—that are explicitly negotiated against the requirements of the broadcast frame, even by parties whose stated aesthetic aims at proximity. As one party professional explained:

If a rally has a thousand attendees, it can be viewed by two million. Therefore, a segment of the rally is planned specifically for the speeches that will be broadcast on television. We are also aware that, out of five speakers, only one or two will be selected, and out of those fifteen minutes, only a single one-minute soundbite will be chosen. (P14, party communication professional)

Within this dominant logic, strategists deploy a repertoire of techniques for manufacturing the image of a packed, energetic venue. Participants repeatedly described the strategic use of flags, chair arrangement, and camera-angle negotiation as tools to fabricate visual abundance:

The illusion of a full room: if you have a room that holds 50 people and 10 people waving flags, those ten are covering a great number of others with their movement. A tight camera shot provides the sensation of a packed venue. (P06, political communication consultant)

Scenography appropriates physical presence to project a narrative of invincibility outward. Critically, the data also document the risks of this manufacturing logic: participants cited cases in which background imagery was read as politically inappropriate by media audiences or social media, producing unintended crises—evidence that the fabrication of authenticity is a structurally precarious operation.

“Politics is symbolic and various symbols are used to create meaning”, one specialist noted, “but nothing can be wrong in the scenography, because it can become the target of attack” (P08, academic specialist).

This vulnerability confirms that the authenticity effect depends on a concealment of its own construction—a paradox intrinsic to the form.

4.2. *The Catharsis of the Tribe: Communion and the Liturgy of Presence*

If the rally is projected for television, its efficacy depends intimately on what occurs in the closed physical space. The analysis of the emotions category (543 units of record) unequivocally demonstrated that “communion” was the most frequently cited affect among strategists (166 units of record), followed by “celebration” (101 units), “belief” (70), and “enthusiasm” (72). The in-person event acts as a secular liturgy—meeting the three criteria identified in Section 2.3—where the individual dilutes into the mass and the political tribe celebrates its own existence. Consultants emphasize that the rally serves a vital purpose of purifying the militancy, isolating it from the hostile external environment:

People do not go there just to hear programmatic proposals; they go to feel they are part of something bigger. It is a moment of collective catharsis. Those chants, the percussion, the sea of flags... it is the moment when the militant feels alive, purified, and part of a unified tribe facing the adversary. (P09, specialist in political communication)

The embodied, synchronized nature of this communion was described in terms that map directly onto Durkheimian collective effervescence. One consultant framed it in terms accessible to any Portuguese audience:

You shout the slogan, you clap, you wave the flag — it is like a football match. When you are in the stadium and your team scores, what does everyone do? They all do the same thing. These group dynamics are nothing extraordinary; they have been happening for thousands of years. (P02, political communication consultant)

The grassroots participation is not a mere aesthetic prop, but the physical proof of the party's vitality. By participating in the ritual, militants generate the "human warmth" that validates the leader's authority. A party professional summarized this dynamic: "militants attend the event to recharge batteries and feel they are not alone in the political struggle" (P12, party communication professional). PR management structurally organizes the "sacred" to ensure collective catharsis.

This ritual effervescence is not left to chance: participants described a detailed choreography of rhythm, music, and spatial cues designed to drive the audience through successive emotional states. Several consultants referred to the structured temporal architecture of the event as a deliberate "progression towards ecstasy":

The rally is a progression towards ecstasy. That is why you have the music accompanying the candidate's entrance. Before the rally, there is music to draw the crowd in; then an announcer who heralds the candidate, with people surgically positioned. You have flag-waving leaders, just as you have leaders for clapping and cheering. Everything is staged to create a ripple effect — in all parties. (P06, political communication consultant)

The same ritual grammar is mobilized, with different aesthetic codes, by ideologically distant formations. A left-party professional described how warm-up music, symbolic rallying cries, and speaker sequencing combine to produce a shared, embodied moment of collective identity:

The more classical approach is for everyone to feel that it is a moment of celebration. It warms the crowd up; it is a moment of celebration, everyone is there because there is a common motive, and that is palpable. The bands we invite are politically committed; they are part of the rally, not an external element of it. The slogan on the backdrop is also the rallying cry of the rally. (P14, party communication professional)

Participants also underlined the importance of spatial arrangements that collapse the distance between leader and militant. Whereas mainstream parties tend to use distance, crescendo, and elevation to frame the leader's apotheosis, smaller or more grassroots formations actively invert these cues:

We always attempt to keep the stage as small as possible; we avoid large stages and always try to ensure the speaker is as close to the audience as possible. In our summer rallies we set up in the main squares, on the ground, feet on the ground, eye to eye. If someone stands up and offers a handshake, they are right there; there is no stage, no distance. (P14, party communication professional)

Whether enacted through the centralized crescendo of mainstream parties or the proximity-driven arrangement of smaller formations, the rally is consistently described as a bounded, rhythmically ordered space where the partisan collective performs its own existence.

4.3. The Leader as a “Media Sorcerer”: The Duplicity of Discourse

The third analytical axis focuses on the ritual’s epicentre: the discourse. The analysis of the discourse category (1548 units of record) reveals that the political leader acts as a Weberian “sorcerer”, operating a complex rhetorical duplicity. The leader must simultaneously satisfy two ontologically distinct audiences: the faithful in the pavilion and the undecided voters at home. To galvanize the “tribe”, the discourse resorts to epideictic values—glory, hope, collective identity. However, to serve television logic, it must produce the deliberative and pragmatic soundbite. This tension requires rigorous preparation:

The leader has to deliver the perfect soundbite. He knows that the strong phrase, the one that will open the prime-time news, has to be said with a specific cadence, pausing for the room’s applause. It is a theatrical performance: he galvanizes the room so that the room’s noise convinces those watching at home. (P17, political consultant)

Authority is built on the ability to transmute the crowd’s abstract energy into a concrete message. Success is gauged when

“the speaker manages to perfectly synchronize the strategic message with the room’s ovation” (P15, political consultant).

The discourse is a ritualistic script where charisma is packaged for media distribution.

This discursive duplicity—addressing the room and the absent viewer at once—surfaces explicitly in strategists’ own accounts of how a rally speech is engineered. One consultant emphasized the primacy of the headline-generating function:

The political speech at rallies is the politician’s commitment to the people, stating what they promise and what they critique; but ultimately, it is about generating the headlines for the evening news bulletin and the news of the following day. It is also to provide a talking point so that matters continue to be discussed. (P06, political communication consultant)

A party professional made the dual-audience logic explicit, distinguishing the fuller internal narrative directed at the militants from the compressed external narrative built for broadcast:

The speech by the coordinator possesses two dimensions: firstly, for the people present, the complete narrative; secondly, for the people watching at home, a segment of the narrative—the central theme of that day. The rally is demonstrative, not argumentative: we present arguments to build a fortress that solidifies an initial thesis; the rally is not a debate. (P14, party communication professional)

Under this logic, the discursive frame of the rally is structurally one-way: the audience, in the room and at home, is positioned as ratifier rather than interlocutor. Several consultants acknowledged the high predictability that follows from this architecture, noting that, across a multi-week campaign, the speech becomes an almost ritual script whose core novelty resides less in content than in rhythmic placement of the soundbite within the applause of the room.

The data also revealed a significant variation in the charismatic entity of this discourse. While the dominant pattern attributes charismatic authority to the individual leader (170 of 204 units of record in the charismatic entity category), a contrasting pattern emerged among representatives of left-wing parties, for whom the party collective, rather than the leader, constitutes the primary source of charismatic legitimacy:

In a party like ours, ideas are supposed to be consensualized among us. It is not expected that someone, in the middle of a rally, will think of something new and extraordinary to

say on the spot. The speaker is a vehicle for a shared idea. (P14, party communication professional)

This variation—in which the rally stages the charisma of the collective rather than the individual—represents an important qualifier to the dominant media sorcerer framing and suggests that the theatrical logic of the rally adapts to organizational and ideological context.

4.4. Qualifying and Divergent Perspectives

Rigorous qualitative reporting requires an explicit acknowledgment of perspectives that qualify or diverge from the dominant analytical patterns. The three axes reported above reflect the modal position across the sample, but the data also contain a consistent minority line of interpretation that disputes the secular liturgy framing on at least three distinct grounds: the nature of audience participation, the institutional preconditions of ritual efficacy, and the normative status of the rally as a democratic device. Taken together, these divergent perspectives do not falsify the three axes; rather, they delimit their scope of application.

The first and most direct challenge concerns the active participation criterion identified in Section 2.3. One consultant (P03) departed from the dominant communion framing to describe rally attendees not as active co-producers of collective effervescence, but as essentially passive spectators of a staged event. A second consultant articulated this position with particular force, rejecting any reading of the audience as liturgical co-celebrant:

I do not wish to be cruel, but they are expected to be puppets. They are spectators. It is a transaction where all parties know their respective roles: politicians expect people to attend, to applaud when they are meant to applaud, to wave when they are meant to wave, and to leave when they are meant to leave. (P06, political communication consultant)

This consultant also challenged the affective intensity that the secular liturgy thesis attributes to contemporary rallies, reporting a professional disenchantment that maps onto a broader institutional decline:

Nowadays, I confess, I do not know. I do not witness—neither amongst the attending public nor the campaign staff—that sense of exaltation. I think the absolute pinnacle you get is the campaign staff saying, “today went well”. There is an attempt to create a celebratory atmosphere, but it is almost an obligatory pilgrimage. (P06, political communication consultant)

Framed in these terms, the rally ceases to operate as a Durkheimian ritual and becomes a residual institutional routine—“a theatrical play where everyone knows their role” (P06)—sustained because campaigns, like advertising, cannot easily deviate from an established script.

A second line of divergence concerned the future viability of the rally format. Although the dominant position across the three participant typologies (118 units of record) held that the rally has a future, a significant minority (35 units) questioned this. The same consultant was particularly blunt:

The problem you have is that this has been dynamited from the start. There is no identity, no interest, no motivation among politicians themselves to treat a rally as the pinnacle of a campaign. Manifestly, rallies in their current form add no value. Until the day someone has the courage to do without them, then we shall see just how useless they ultimately are. (P06, political communication consultant)

A related scepticism concerned the capacity of digital mobilization to erode the conditions that make the rally function. Several participants noted that declining political engagement—manifested in reduced party membership and falling turnout—was directly

undermining the mobilizational infrastructure on which the rally's ritual efficacy depends. As one consultant observed (P10), independent and non-party candidates had recently managed to mobilize without the rally format at all, suggesting that the secular liturgy logic may be more dependent on institutional party loyalty than on any intrinsic property of the live event.

A third line of qualification came from within the organizational logic of smaller, grassroots-oriented parties. Here, the divergence is not a rejection of the rally as ritual but an alternative model of what that ritual is for. A party professional offered an explicit critique of the large-scale, leader-centric rally as a "show of force" optimized for the evening news, and described a more dialogic, distributed counter-model:

The concept of being closer to the people is more important to us. Sometimes we forego one large rally in favour of four smaller ones, which allow us a more direct interaction with the people, answering immediate questions, being eye-to-eye with them. We have already had rallies via Skype, bloggers asking questions live, and summer rallies where anyone can stand up and intervene. We believe the path of the classical rally has been exhausted. (P14, party communication professional)

This position qualifies, rather than rejects, the secular liturgy thesis: the rally remains a symbolic assembly of the partisan collective, but its preferred grammar is dialogic and distributed rather than centripetal and apothetic. It also complicates the "leader as media sorcerer" framing by foregrounding an organizational logic in which the central charismatic entity is the plural, embodied presence of the activist community itself.

Finally, several participants qualified the fabricated authenticity argument by noting that the rally's ritual efficacy requires a genuine social condition:

"the rally, even if not spontaneous, has to be genuine. People have to be genuinely convinced it is worth travelling to a specific place" (P01).

This suggests that the fabrication can succeed only within bounds set by actual political engagement—a finding that introduces an important conditionality into the three axes described above. The divergent perspectives reported here thus operate as boundary conditions of the secular liturgy framework: the framework holds most strongly where partisan loyalty, leader-centric organizational culture, and a functioning broadcast ecology are co-present, and weakens where any of these preconditions is eroded.

5. Discussion

The present study sought to understand how PR professionals and political consultants manage the ontological evolution of the electoral rally in a digitized ecosystem. Within the specific context of Portuguese political campaigning, the results provide rich exploratory evidence that strategists have procedurally enacted a profound hybridization of the rally. This hybridization effectively instrumentalizes the human component.

First, the "Paradox of Fabricated Authenticity" demonstrates that political PR operates within a two-dimensional staging logic. The rigorous planning of scenography aims to capture the spontaneity of the militant mass. This finding challenges purely technodeterminist approaches, demonstrating that the algorithm requires "human warmth" to generate effective persuasion—a dynamic consistent with the non-deterministic mediation account of Hjarvard (2013) and Couldry and Hepp (2017), in which media logics reshape rather than replace prior communicative forms. The structural precarity of this operation—documented in the divergent cases where backfire occurred—underscores that the rally's mediated effectiveness is contingent, not guaranteed. The digital ecosystem feeds directly on the physical event, but only when the physical functions as intended.

Second, the centrality of "communion" in strategists' accounts forces a sociological reconceptualization of PR practice. By planning the rally as a cathartic space for the

“tribe”, strategists act as architects of a Secular Liturgy—fulfilling the three criteria proposed in Section 2.3. The data confirm that managing the sacred is an irreplaceable functional premise for sustaining campaign energy. The communion data also resonate with the media events paradigm (Dayan and Katz 1992): the rally shares the ritual grammar of ceremonial broadcast but inverts its directionality, generating the emotional content of a media event through live ritual. The sceptical minority position—that attendees are spectators rather than participants—represents an important competing interpretation that future research should address.

Then, the perception of the leader as a discursive pivot intersects Arendt’s ([1958] 2001) theory of *action* with the three aspects of Weber’s ([1919] 1973) charismatic authority specified in Section 2.3. The left-wing party variant—in which the party collective rather than the individual leader constitutes the charismatic entity—reveals that the media sorcerer framing is not universal; it reflects a specific organizational logic (leader-centric parties) that does not apply equally across the ideological spectrum. Within the Portuguese context examined here, political communication operates as the strategic management of power rituals—a framing that warrants comparative validation across different political systems and media environments.

Finally, the empirical evidence gathered from the interviews reveals that campaign strategists do not perceive the evolution of the rally as a linear or consensual process. Instead, a clear strategic spectrum emerges. At one end of this spectrum, we find a “traditionalist” perspective, epitomized by participants such as P14, who argue for the enduring power of physical co-presence. For these professionals, the rally is a “secular liturgy” that cannot be substituted: *‘The rallies in the Aula Magna, for example [...] Those still work... trying to use one hammer to do various jobs is what is a disaster’* (see Appendix A). In this view, the event’s success is measured by internal militant cohesion and the physical validation of leadership. Conversely, at the other end of the spectrum, a “mediatized pragmatic” view prevails among strategists who see the physical event merely as a functional “content factory”. These participants emphasize that the rally’s primary audience is no longer the “militant in the room” but the “spectator on the screen”. For this group, the emotionality of the crowd is a tool for algorithmic amplification rather than an end in itself. This internal friction among practitioners—between those prioritizing the ritual and those prioritizing the spectacle—demonstrates that the hybridization of the rally is a contested terrain where Public Relations professionals must manage the paradox of manufacturing authenticity for digital consumption while preserving the appearance of organic political communion.

These findings carry normative implications that merit explicit acknowledgment. The strategic engineering of collective catharsis and the deliberate packaging of charismatic authority for algorithmic distribution are not analytically neutral professional practices. By designing events that prioritize affective mobilization and tribal solidarity over programmatic deliberation, campaign professionals mediate the citizen–politics relationship in ways that sit in tension with the deliberative democratic ideals that underpin liberal governance (Habermas [1962] 1989). The data do not permit conclusions about whether these practices measurably increase political polarization or crowd out policy deliberation. What the evidence does suggest is that the PR professional’s emergent role as ritual designer deserves sustained normative attention, and that the tension between charismatic legitimation and deliberative ideals is a productive site for further theoretical development.

6. Conclusions

This article argues that the political rally in the digital age has not moved towards obsolescence, but towards a complex state of hybridization. However, contrary to a

monolithic interpretation of this change, our findings reveal a spectrum of approaches among campaign strategists. By bridging the gap between theory and results, this study demonstrates that the contemporary rally operates as a structural tension between the “Secular Liturgy” of physical mobilization and the “Fabricated Authenticity” of digital mediatization.

The main theoretical contribution of this work lies in identifying that PR professionals in the political field do not act simply as event managers. They must simultaneously satisfy the traditionalists (who demand the physical ritual of the “tribe”) and the pragmatists (who demand high-definition, algorithm-ready content). The enduring relevance of the rally is thus explained by its unique ability to solve a modern campaign dilemma: providing the raw, emotional “authenticity” that digital platforms require but cannot generate on their own. As the interview data indicates, specifically through the contrasting voices of participants like P14, the future of the rally depends on this delicate balance between being a real place of political encounter and a meticulously designed television set.

Despite the analytical contribution, the study presents limitations that future research should address. The geographic context, circumscribed to the Portuguese political landscape—which, although representative of Western European post-revolutionary democracies, possesses its own specificities in terms of party culture, media system, and mobilizational tradition—and the sample size ($n = 19$) permit only analytical generalization; the findings are exploratory for other contexts and hypothesis-generating rather than definitively confirmatory. The qualitative, practitioner-focused design entails an additional structural limitation: relying exclusively on consultant testimony introduces the risk of self-justifying professional narratives, in which strategists may overstate their agency, understate contingency, or frame ethically ambiguous practices in professionally convenient terms. The data also suggest that the secular liturgy logic may be conditional on levels of political engagement; in contexts of declining party loyalty, the ritual infrastructure that makes the rally work may be unavailable. The absence of perspectives from rank-and-file militants, party members, or ordinary voters—whose experience of the rally may differ substantially from the strategist’s design intentions—means the study can speak to professional strategy but cannot adjudicate participant reception or actual democratic effects. Triangulation with complementary data sources—rally footage analysis, social media performance metrics, or audience reception studies—would substantially strengthen future iterations of this research programme.

Future research should prioritize international comparative analyses to assess whether secular liturgy dynamics differ across distinct multi-party systems, media systems, and party cultures, intersecting strategists’ production perspectives with reception metrics on digital platforms. The three analytical criteria proposed here for identifying a secular liturgy provide a provisional framework that such comparative work could refine or challenge.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. Formal separate ethical review was waived, as the research was conducted and validated within the framework of a doctoral thesis. The research protocol, including data collection and anonymity safeguards, underwent strict scientific and ethical scrutiny and was formally approved by the Scientific Council and the appointed Academic Jury of ISCTE-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved.

Data Availability Statement: Two full anonymised interview transcripts are included as Appendix A of this article, in direct response to peer-review requests for greater transparency regarding the empirical base. The remaining transcripts are available on request from the corresponding author and are not publicly disseminated in full, in order to preserve the anonymity of the interviewed political strategists, several of whom operate in identifiable professional contexts within a small national market. Where participants made statements that could have indirectly identified them—references to specific clients, confidential campaign episodes, or traceable personal trajectories—such fragments were removed or generalized prior to inclusion in Appendix A.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

PR Public Relations

Appendix A. Full Interview Transcripts

The two anonymized transcripts reproduced below are included in direct response to peer-review requests for greater empirical transparency. Both interviews were conducted face-to-face in the participants' professional settings, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were originally produced in European Portuguese and have been translated into English by the author for the purposes of this publication; wherever a Portuguese-specific idiom, institutional label, or cultural reference required clarification, a brief explanatory note is provided in square brackets. Participant codes (P06 and P14) correspond to the identifiers used in Section 4 and in Table 1; references to individual clients, confidential campaign episodes, or traceable biographical details were removed or generalized prior to inclusion. Names of publicly known political figures, parties, institutions, and historical events discussed by participants have been preserved, as these pertain to public political life and do not compromise participant anonymity.

Appendix A.1. Interview 1—Participant P06 (Political Communication Consultant)

Interviewer: Tell me what the political rally means to you. #00:00:51.8#

P06: I have followed political rallies from various perspectives. In my youth, as a supporter, I was the boy holding the flag and travelling in the campaign vehicles. My perception of the backstage workings of the rallies was virtually non-existent. Later, I worked as a journalist for 10 years and covered several campaigns. As a communications consultant, I have worked on several electoral campaigns for the PSD [Social Democratic Party], encompassing both presidential and legislative elections.

I would highlight three campaigns that featured some degree of innovation and distinctiveness: Jorge Sampaio's presidential re-election campaign in 2001, António Guterres's legislative re-election campaign in 1999, and José Manuel Durão Barroso's election campaign in 2002.

Regarding the rallies in Jorge Sampaio's campaign, apart from Lisbon and Porto—where they maintained the traditional dynamic of mobilising coaches, distributing flags, and, so to speak, preparing the population—the campaign adopted an intimist approach. It was clearly a *one-man show*. The rally venues were noticeably smaller, which is advantageous from a communication perspective; while failing to fill a pavilion in Lisbon or Porto is highly embarrassing, it is not as dramatic if one fails to do so in Castelo Branco. However, they selected small venues in smaller cities. Everything was highly concentrated, and the stage was entirely focused on Jorge Sampaio. There was a dimly lit spotlight, and Sampaio spoke almost as if he were delivering a lecture. This was innovative at

the time, as no one in Portugal had done this previously. It created an atmosphere of intimacy, which garnered him considerable goodwill from the electorate.

As for Guterres, the rallies were thoroughly prepared. The PS [Socialist Party] machine organises itself well, even more so than the PCP [Portuguese Communist Party]. The latter has the reputation of being a formidable campaign machine, yet it has not deviated from the same register for 30 years, always employing the exact same model, which concludes with everyone singing ‘The Internationale’ together. Guterres innovated by realising that engaging the electorate was just as important as engaging the journalists. In 1999, when Internet access was still difficult, Guterres’s campaign hired a passenger coach and adapted it. It featured several workstations with laptops and an Internet connection, allowing the journalists covering the campaign to file their reports three or four times a day if necessary. This was highly convenient for the journalists, who were providing almost constant updates. #00:06:40.6#

Interviewer: Did this influence media coverage? #00:06:42.5#

P06: Yes, because journalists adopt a counter-power stance, but they also appreciate being pampered. Returning to the comparison, in 40 years the PSD has not yet learned this, whereas the PS learned it very rapidly. I speak freely on this matter, as I have never voted for the PS in my life. The PS may dislike the media—as, as a rule, any politician does—but it utilises and benefits from it. It provides all the requisite conditions for journalists to carry out their work. Even in such a simple setting as Guterres’s campaign, the Prime Minister [Guterres was the incumbent PM at the time] would sit with us at the hotel bar, chat for half an hour, and then leave. He established empathy with the journalists. This was reflected in our work and in the way we conducted ourselves. When we had to be critical, we were; when we did not have to be, we were not. However, when we were hesitating over whether to be critical or not, perhaps we held back because they were actually being quite pleasant.

Conversely, the PSD consistently views journalists as enemies and as targets to be taken down. Durão Barroso rehearsed an attempt at rapprochement during the 2001 campaign, but it went so poorly that he retreated, and the media remained perpetually against him. I am convinced that had Durão Barroso’s campaign lasted another 15 days, he would have risked losing. He began the campaign with the prospect of an absolute majority and ended up winning by a mere 1.5 percentage points over Ferro Rodrigues. A little longer, and the entire effort would have derailed. #00:08:58.8#

Interviewer: Are journalists an important audience at political rallies? #00:08:58.3#

P06: The journalist is not the central element of the rally. If you will, the rally can be compared to a theatrical play. When you go to the theatre, you arrive and everything is set up. You watch the play; at the interval you have 10 min to have a cigarette, and when the performance concludes, you applaud, and *end of story*. It is somewhat similar to a rally. You have the campaign staff who arrive at the venue several hours in advance; they conduct all the sound and lighting checks, and determine which songs best suit the occasion (often decided the day before or on the very day by the campaign staff). #00:10:16.8#

Interviewer: And do the songs serve a specific function? #00:10:20.2#

P06: Above all, they are meant to galvanise the audience. [José] Sócrates did this with the *Gladiator* soundtrack; [Pedro] Santana [Lopes] did it with the ‘menino guerreiro’ [warrior boy] song, with the well-known consequences that followed. The PSD, under Durão Barroso, wanted to tap into the party’s history, so their rallies always featured the traditional party anthem. #00:10:51.7#

Interviewer: You mentioned revisiting the party’s history. I ask you, when a party is not in power, is there a need to look back to its founding origins? #00:11:02.5#

P06: Yes. If you look at it, Francisco [Pinto] Balsemão, who is member number one of the PSD, has not had direct political involvement in a government for over 30 years.

Nevertheless, there is no PSD leader who does not want Balsemão present, providing support, or conveying a message. I recall that when Santana [Lopes] was dismissed by [President] Sampaio and faced elections, he wanted to produce a billboard depicting the party's history through its leaders; it featured Balsemão, [Aníbal] Cavaco [Silva], himself, and Durão Barroso, among others. The billboard was never released because Cavaco stated he did not want his face associated with it, which somewhat stifled the initiative. All parties thrive on their history, their past myths, their reference points. It provides a certain aura of credibility if a candidate states that he is not alone, because standing behind him are all those who have publicly represented the party. #00:12:36.3#

Interviewer: And is that important in a political rally? #00:12:36.3#

P06: For the general public, no. However, for those attending out of party allegiance, it can make a difference. #00:12:55.1#

Interviewer: And for whom is the rally organised? For the general public or for the party base? #00:12:57.7#

P06: I believe it is a mixture. Those who attend out of party activism do not need to be convinced. Unless things go so poorly that they jump ship before becoming associated with it. But the rally is a mixture. It is akin to half the world attempting to deceive the other half. Nowadays, people no longer attend rallies as they did during the 1980s, when the revolution [the 1974 Carnation Revolution] was still a very recent memory, people were not adequately informed, and perhaps there were individuals who attended the rallies of the PS, the CDS [Democratic and Social Centre], the PSD, or the PCP, simply to ascertain which message they identified with. But at that time, genuine politics was practised. Today, politics has ceased to be the noblest of activities, transforming into a web of unachievable promises and intentions. I believe the upcoming campaign will be highly interesting, in terms of rallies as well. Across any of the parties... Because people no longer buy into promises of not raising taxes or increasing salaries. #00:14:53.8#

Interviewer: Do you believe the political rally has kept pace with this evolution in politics? #00:14:55.9#

P06: The rally has followed the evolution of politics in a negative trajectory. In the past, one would have the pure, unadulterated rally, and nothing more. You had the candidate, the number two... in legislative elections, you would have the head of the district list, the local leader, and the candidate for Prime Minister delivering speeches. People attended to listen to the politicians. Nowadays, there is no rally of any significant scale that is not coupled with some *pimba* singer [Note: *Pimba* is a genre of popular Portuguese music often associated with rural festivities], because people are not naturally motivated to attend. Take the recent example of the European Elections, which managed to pass by almost unnoticed. Blame lies on all sides and with everyone. Starting with the media regulatory authority, which decided to interpret the law to the letter, leading to a new paradigm in how the media covers rallies. Furthermore, in a country with low literacy rates [or low reading habits], where people do not read newspapers and do not listen to the radio (except when commuting to work and switching from TSF [news radio] to Rádio Comercial to listen to *O Homem que Mordeu o Cão* [a popular comedy segment]), there is a lack of awareness of day-to-day politics. I follow politics quite closely due to my profession, and I confess that I had to try to keep track of the political messaging during the European elections. It did not appear on television, or it appeared very marginally. And that marginal coverage was the *fait divers* of Nuno Melo [a right-wing politician] giving away a bottle of champagne... it is the sideshow rather than the news itself. #00:17:22.5#

Interviewer: And is people's decreasing willingness to attend rallies related to this? #00:17:26.0#

P06: It is related to general apathy. Any electoral event now experiences massive abstention rates. One day we will have to change the law to mandate compulsory voting, or

stipulate that after failing to vote three times, individuals lose that right, which I believe is tragic. Fifty years ago, the right to vote belonged to a privileged few. In 1976 we had the first democratic elections... and even then, there was an abstention rate... it was low, but we could only wish for such an abstention rate today. Progressively, there is a disconnect, and I believe everyone is to blame. However, we must identify the root causes upstream, rather than addressing the symptoms downstream. #00:18:29.9#

Interviewer: And who attends rallies nowadays? #00:18:31.1#

P06: They are for the party members. For those following the campaigns. For journalists to be able to broadcast events. And for a handful of simpletons who go there to listen to Ágata [a popular Portuguese singer] or whoever else is performing. #00:18:59.0#

Interviewer: Is there also the objective of agenda-setting? #00:18:59.5#

P06: That is important and is part of the process. Every campaign features candidates attempting to set the political agenda; some succeed, whilst others are left trailing in their wake. And the following day it shifts because someone decides to bring a new issue to the table. During the 2001 re-election campaign, two controversies enveloped Sampaio. The first occurred when he—who made a point of stating that during the campaign he was acting as a candidate and not as the incumbent President—disrupted this logic because Portuguese soldiers died in the Bosnian War. This troubled him enormously, as he had to adopt the persona of the President and cast off the mantle of the candidate. It was rather amusing because, as the incumbent President, he was entitled to a police escort; however, what he actually had was civilians riding motorcycles resembling those of the GNR [National Republican Guard], halting traffic whenever the entourage passed by. The second incident, which is paradigmatic of campaigns, rallies, and political activity as a whole, was the opening of the TVI evening news bulletin. It did not feature the campaign news that had dominated the day, but rather Marco kicking Gisela in the *Big Brother* reality television show. That led the news broadcast that day, and everyone went frantic. Political activity dominates the agenda, and suddenly, the lead story on the news is a young man kicking a woman. What occurs at rallies and in campaigns is a grand staging. Everyone knows they have a role to fulfil, and everyone wants to execute that role to the best of their abilities. It relates to the theatrical dimension I mentioned earlier. Another example, in Braga, during Guterres's re-election campaign... over a 15-day campaign, it is difficult for a candidate to constantly have novel things to say. Sometimes the campaign strategy revolves around the lead candidate, at other times around the head of the list for the locality where the rally is being held, aiming to elevate the profile of the future MP [Member of Parliament], minister, or secretary of state. We were in Braga, and the PS had executed everything flawlessly: impeccable lighting, the general public separated from the journalists, journalists kept off the stage area, and so forth. I was seated preparing my work, and behind me sat a typical Northern family, spanning from grandfather to grandson—about 10 people—all highly enthusiastic and chanting for the PS. We were midway through the campaign, and Guterres's speech was invariably the same: in the first five minutes he discusses this topic, in the next ten minutes he addresses that one; it varied only very slightly. I turned around and said to them, "You are all very enthusiastic, but you will see that he is deceiving you here." The elderly gentleman retorted that no one could deceive him, so I outlined the precise order in which the candidate would address the topics, and so, it unfolded. Those individuals, who were so galvanised at the outset, ended up waving their flags without any emotion whatsoever. I must have disappointed that entire family. #00:24:18.8#

Interviewer: Is there a predictability to the discourse in rallies? #00:24:23.1#

P06: If you follow the campaign daily, yes. Highly predictable. You cannot concoct 15 novelties a day. And there is an even more shocking aspect: the electoral manifesto is an amalgamation of lines and sentences, assembled by three unfortunate individuals who

are tasked with doing it, and nobody reads it; if need be, not even the candidate reads it—they have someone who reads it for them and assures them it is perfectly fine. #00:25:04.0#

Interviewer: Is there no connection at the rally between what is said and the electoral manifesto? #00:25:05.9#

P06: There is supposed to be. But nobody will... Imagine a politician includes in their electoral manifesto that the country is in a difficult situation, that they cannot promise the impossible, that they will try their utmost, but that they will probably have to increase the tax burden on the Portuguese people. This might indeed be in a political manifesto so that, if they are held accountable, they can point out it is written there. However, the candidate who states at a rally, during a campaign, that they cannot promise not to raise taxes is finished. Once again, it is the logic of theatre and staging. People also buy into an illusion. #00:26:05.0#

Interviewer: Does the rally sell an illusion? #00:26:05.6#

P06: It does. It is somewhat akin to that Greek mythological figure [Sisyphus] who is condemned for all eternity to push a boulder up a mountain, only to stumble when almost reaching the summit, returning to the bottom and spending eternity repeating the process. The relationship that politicians establish with the people—the electoral campaign and the rally being its ultimate paradigm, where supposedly the people feel closer to the politician and can ask for more favours and blessings—is a departure from everyday life. In your daily routine, you see the Prime Minister driving past at high speed and you wave goodbye or say “boo, go away”. If you know he is at the EDP [Energias de Portugal] headquarters, you might even go there, but you are kept at the door because the security guard blocks your entrance. At a rally, however, the Prime Minister might be having coffee before his speech, and if you approach him, there certainly will not be security guards preventing you from speaking to him. During the campaign period, you are granted this access; it is part of the staging and the supposed proximity that politicians seek when they claim, “I am one of you.” #00:28:04.3#

Interviewer: And what role does the rally play in this campaign staging? #00:28:06.8#

P06: The rally serves two objectives: an internal one and an external one. It serves an internal objective in the sense of demonstrating to the party faithful that they are capable and that they are in the right, because they can gather 500 people. It is a show of force. Even if the rally takes place in Beja [in the south] and they have brought three coaches from Bragança [in the far north]. Even if this show of force is a staging and part of a theatrical performance. #00:28:48.3#

Interviewer: And is it important to do so? #00:28:49.4#

P06: It is. In a country that does not read, does not listen to the radio, and is preoccupied with watching soap operas or the most idiotic programme on television, with a bit of luck they might catch the news, and for 30 s they might see an image of a candidate speaking, followed by the staging of flags and the crowd. Perhaps you manage to capture people’s attention. #00:29:33.7#

Interviewer: Is the rally conceived with this in mind? #00:29:34.0#

P06: Rallies are entirely conceived for television. There is no rally designed with the logic of pleasing the print media. Any candidate nowadays, from the podium where they speak, is entitled to three or four television screens, so they can see exactly when each television network is broadcasting live. They know they are live. Even if they have to reiterate the message they delivered at the beginning. #00:30:20.4#

Interviewer: Does the rally alter when there is a live broadcast? #00:30:22.0#

P06: The rally alters when there is a live broadcast. It changes distinctly. The message of the day must be conveyed at that precise moment. You have two politicians who are exceptionally skilled at managing rallies on live television: Paulo Portas and Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. And Pedro Santana Lopes possesses a positive trait: he can spend 40 min

galvanising the audience and 40 min generating news. It makes no difference; he highlights those five minutes, and if he has not stated it just now, you know he will say it in the following two minutes. This is because Santana Lopes, at least until he became Prime Minister, was always an individual who came across well in the mass media. Even if an event went somewhat unnoticed, the media would always salvage the footage and produce the news piece. #00:31:38.1#

Interviewer: You were speaking about Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and Paulo Portas... #00:31:43.8#

P06: They are two examples of how they know how to orchestrate the theatrical play to their advantage. They see when they are live and they deliver the message. #00:31:57.3#

Interviewer: What is important to orchestrate? #00:32:02.8#

P06: It depends on the candidate's personality. Campaign machines are ruthless, and there are always a few "idiots"—those who come up with ideas—who determine the theme of the week. However, sometimes the planning does not proceed as intended, because on the day they had planned to dedicate to one theme, an important issue arises in another area. Not everyone possesses the ability to switch gears. There are some who are completely rigid, speaking only on the planned theme and disregarding what everyone else is discussing. Either the candidate has sufficient charisma to impose their agenda—meaning that instead of one topic, you end up with two, with the candidate addressing one issue and a secondary figure addressing the topic of the day—or they lack that strength and simply look rather foolish. #00:33:57.6#

Interviewer: Who is the main protagonist at the rally? #00:33:57.6#

P06: It is invariably the candidate or leader. Because, supposedly, everything is orchestrated so that the candidate represents the apotheosis. If there are 20 people speaking, the final one is the candidate. There is a crescendo anticipating the candidate, which is nowadays somewhat circumvented by the musical element. Now, you always have some fool singing. #00:34:43.2#

Interviewer: Before or after the speech? #00:34:43.6#

P06: Some do it before, others after. If you do it before, you guarantee a full house, but the candidate has to speak immediately following the band. In that case, the warm-up is achieved with the little song. Alternatively, there is the complete inversion: everyone speaks, and when the candidate finishes, you have the musical performance. If you went to see the musical act, you do the maths, arrive at the time the performance is supposed to start, and you still catch some tedious speech, which is of no interest to you because you only went there to listen to Ágata. Alternatively, you place the music at the beginning and risk having a half-empty hall with only those who stayed because they have nothing better to do or because it is a small town and it ends up being a different way to spend the evening. Then you have the landmines [or pitfalls] set by the media themselves, which are deliberate. I recall one occasion, during Durão Barroso's campaign in Porto, with a full rally; for safety reasons pertaining to the venue itself, a wing of the venue was cordoned off. You had three or four people ensuring no one entered that area. At that particular rally, there were no scenography tricks, such as reserving chairs for guests (which take up the space of 300 standing people... if the pavilion holds 1500, you already have a fifth of the space filled) or dividing the pavilion in half with a curtain. Because, quite apart from whether the television network supports a candidate or not... with a tight camera shot, three people look like thirty... and then you also have the flags... #00:38:53.4#

Interviewer: Is this coordinated with the media? #00:38:53.4#

P06: No. What is coordinated is their location, where they can film, and where they can move around. Sometimes, the timing of the live broadcast. #00:39:04.0#

Interviewer: Since we are discussing scenography, what role does it play? #00:39:05.7#

P06: It is crucial because we are staging rallies for television. It is what I was recounting about Durão Barroso... A television channel, at the Porto rally, does a live broadcast, and the camera is pointed precisely at the area where a security cordon was located, naturally containing very few people. Afterwards, the journalist reports that there was a lukewarm atmosphere, with few attendees. They only had to widen the camera shot to see that the filmed area was restricted, and where the audience was actually located, everyone was packed together and not a single additional person could fit. However, they opted to frame it that way with the intention of undermining the man. But you have scenographic tricks like the chairs, dividing the room in half, or the stage itself, which can be manipulated by placing people around it. Placing the speaker amongst the audience is a relatively recent phenomenon; I believe it began in the 2001 campaign with Durão Barroso, in Guarda or Viseu, where Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa spoke with the youngsters from the JSD [Social Democratic Youth] sitting on the floor, with him in the centre surrounded by everyone. He spoke from the middle, adopting the logic of being "one of you". #00:42:12.1#

Interviewer: Must the stage have its own symbolism? #00:42:13.8#

P06: The stage always possesses its own symbolism. You have the standard template of erecting banners displaying the candidate's name or a call to vote, but the stage can be utilised to foster proximity or to create distance. For instance, if you have an elevated stage with the rest of the people down below, it creates a sense of distance; it is a theatrical play where I am watching the actor perform before their audience. Personally, I advocate more for proximity, but it depends on the candidate. There are tricks to mitigate this distance, but ultimately it depends on whether the candidate desires it or not. Some candidates do not mind being amidst the people and consider going up on stage a nuisance, so they try to navigate it differently. Others welcome the distance. Nowadays, campaign dinners [or rally dinners] have largely resolved these issues. If a candidate likes to be close to the people, their table is placed in the centre of the pavilion, and to reach it, they must converse with five hundred party members before sitting down. To avoid the 'crackpots' [or eccentrics], the adjacent tables are arranged by the campaign structure to ensure they are not close to the candidate; these tables are organised to prevent the "Dona Maria" who receives a €300 pension from suddenly approaching. #00:45:10.9#

Interviewer: Is that purely logistical, or is there a symbolism in approaching the centre? #00:45:10.9#

P06: It is a mixture. If you are in the centre, the effort of walking to the stage forces you to spend 10 min walking past two-thirds of the attendees, who perceive a sense of proximity. Alternatively, you can place the 'Jota' kids [youth wing members] on the stage or on the access ramps. We communicate unity by demonstrating that the people on the stage are no different from those in the audience, the only circumstance being that there was no space left inside, so they had to go up on stage. When you opt for this, you must ensure that there was a shortage of tables and they *had* to go onto the stage. I have witnessed campaigns where the hall was deliberately filled with tables in impossible locations, where the candidate could not be seen, only heard; tables meant for eight people were set up to accommodate only six. This creates the illusion of a massive turnout... "this guy came here, and the tables beside the stage, which no one thought would be occupied, are being used." This is deliberate. It is primarily deliberate for the sake of the media. Rallies nowadays are produced for television. It is the external dimension I mentioned earlier. #00:47:50.0#

Interviewer: And are the time and location also planned with this in mind? #00:47:50.5#

P06: The time of the rally is always scheduled for the evening news bulletin. Except for those minor rallies... Guterres would even improvise rallies in some little village for ten people (to exaggerate slightly). He did it because it was genuine to him; he would be

so besieged by people that he would climb onto a car, spout five minutes of nonsense—it was a mini-rally—get into the car, and leave. It is like the tradition of being carried on shoulders... when the campaign momentum builds, you have unrealistic scenarios and idiotic traditions, such as being carried on shoulders in the Bulhão [a traditional market in Porto], because supposedly anyone carried on shoulders in the Bulhão becomes Prime Minister, so everyone does it... but only one actually becomes Prime Minister. #00:49:01.7#

Interviewer: And do campaign rallies also build to a crescendo? #00:49:02.4#

P06: The fundamental idea is that they build to a crescendo. That is why we have the warm-up phase, the galvanisation phase, and subsequently the satiation phase. However, the candidate does not always fulfil these three phases. Ideally, yes, because you can experience highs and lows within the rally. In an ideal scenario, you would have the warm-up, exaltation, and satisfaction phases fulfilled by each of the speakers, but it must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. There are candidates who will reliably breeze through the three phases effortlessly, and you do not even concern yourself with the president of the local party branch or the band that performed. However, when there is a shortcoming in one of these elements, it is best to have something to compensate for those deficiencies. When there is not, it is highly problematic... Imagine... the traditional rally model involves two people speaking, then the candidate speaks, and at the end, there may or may not be a musical performance. If you have... well, I recall a case—I cannot disclose the name—but I recently prepared a rally where the person who was supposed to speak for five minutes to galvanise the crowd ended up galvanising himself and spoke for 10 or 15 min. After the seventh minute, I was already shouting, “silence this chap.” It is not his stage, he is not the one who should take centre stage, because the candidate has to speak next. And the worst possible thing occurred: the sound technicians gradually began to turn up the music, and the individual on stage turned around and declared that they were attempting to silence him, but that he still had a few things to say... and off he went for another 10 min of talking. By the time the candidate reaches the stage to speak, the room has cooled down and grown weary from the other chap’s 20 min of tedious rambling. It makes it far more difficult, and you require a truly exceptional orator. #00:53:07.7#

Interviewer: Is the rally a progression towards ecstasy? #00:53:14.2#

P06: The rally is a progression towards ecstasy. That is why you have the music accompanying the candidate’s entrance. Prior to the rally, you have music to attract the crowd, as in 1999 with Guterres’s use of Vangelis. It began with Vangelis; when the other candidates spoke, there was no Vangelis, and when it was time for Guterres’s entrance, there was an announcer who heralded Guterres’s arrival for 30 s, with people surgically positioned... #00:54:16.0#

Interviewer: Are the people waving flags surgically positioned? #00:54:21.2#

P06: No, but you have flag-waving leaders, just as you have leaders for clapping and cheering. Everything is staged to create a ripple effect. In all parties. #00:54:46.0#

Interviewer: Even in the PCP [Portuguese Communist Party]? #00:54:46.0#

P06: I would say... especially in the PCP, but I do not know [laughs]. What I know of PCP campaigns is merely what I observe, as I have never worked on one. However, I concede that it is a technique employed by everyone: you have crowd leaders, and then you have the candidate’s assistance, who pauses at the precise moments to await the applause or the booing. #00:55:19.0#

Interviewer: And what role do the flags play? #00:55:28.0#

P06: The illusion of a full room. If you have a room that holds 50 people, and you have 10 people waving flags, those 10 are covering I-do-not-know-how-many with their movement. And there you have it... a tight camera shot provides the sensation of a packed venue. #00:55:54.2#

Interviewer: And do colours serve any function in the rally? #00:55:54.2#

P06: Colours serve a function and are selected for that purpose. You have colours that are more closely identified with one party or another, but then you have ruptures. Just recently, in the European Elections, the PSD and the CDS used blue, and so did the PS. Under António José Seguro, the PS adopted the colour green, associated with hope. There are colours you are supposedly not meant to use, such as dark colours, like black. They must be bold colours that energise. #00:56:44.7#

Interviewer: Is dynamism in colour important at the rally? #00:56:45.4#

P06: Dynamism in colour is important because it generates a momentum of victory. #00:56:56.9#

Interviewer: And does the colour have to be uniform? #00:56:56.9#

P06: Thirty years ago, it was preferable that it should be. Nowadays, with LEDs and all that technology, the PS even manages to have a single LED panel where the colour transitions from red to an almost white pink, featuring various gradient tones. #00:57:31.7#

Interviewer: What level of engagement is expected from the people at the rally? #00:57:30.5#

P06: I do not wish to be cruel, but they are expected to be puppets. #00:57:44.6#

Interviewer: Are they part of the spectacle? #00:57:47.4#

P06: They are. It is somewhat of a quid pro quo that you establish. Politicians expect people to attend, they expect them to applaud when they are meant to applaud, to wave when they are meant to wave, and to leave when they are meant to leave. Especially that last part, because there is nothing worse than the nuisance who lingers at the end to try and speak with the Prime Minister or the candidate, just to tell him that his dog is ill. It is a transaction where all parties know their respective roles and what provides its *raison d'être*. #00:58:30.5#

Interviewer: Do you consider them participants or spectators? #00:58:31.4#

P06: They are spectators. The person who attends the rally, not the individual who is part of the campaign structure. #00:58:42.3#

Interviewer: And what emotions does the rally generate? #00:58:43.5#

P06: Nowadays, I confess I do not know. I have my political opinions; since I became eligible to vote, I have always voted. I have had the opportunity, in various capacities, to work on campaigns for the parties I vote for. I hold no illusions about these things, and I maintain my professional stance, but I confess to you that I do not witness—neither amongst the attending public nor the campaign staff—that sense of exaltation. I think the absolute pinnacle you get is the campaign staff saying, “today went well.” #00:59:58.6#

Interviewer: But do you consider it a moment of celebration? #00:59:58.6#

P06: I believe there is an attempt to create a celebratory atmosphere, but it is almost an obligatory pilgrimage. That is to say, if one day a candidate were to declare that, as of today, rallies are abolished—just as there was a candidate who declared they would not use billboards [outdoor advertising]... #01:00:27.8#

Interviewer: Is the rally here to stay, or will something replace it? #01:00:35.5#

P06: I believe there must be a revolution—not downstream, but upstream; in other words, there needs to be a revolution in the very manner in which politics is conducted and electoral campaigns are run. We are light-years behind what is done abroad... #01:01:06.1#

Interviewer: But abroad, the rally has experienced a renaissance... #01:01:10.4#

P06: Yes, because a different kind of proximity has been forged compared to what you have here today. Here, you have the artificiality of a proximity that does not truly exist. Whereas at rallies 40 years ago you had people attending out of party allegiance and because they wished to be informed—they had a genuine interest and passion—today they attend... In Lisbon and Porto, even during the *arruadas* [Note: *Arruadas* are traditional Portuguese street walkabouts or canvassing parades], apart from the campaign staff, a

handful of people, and journalists (and those who are herded along because they happen to be on the street), it is a miserable picture. Rallies in a small town serve as a means for people to gather and do something different; the following day, they will attend the opponent's rally. #01:02:19.5#

Interviewer: Does that continue to occur in smaller cities? #01:02:18.1#

P06: I believe so. Furthermore, you have it coupled with some random band. Which is rather absurd, because you could see that same band for free elsewhere. #01:02:32.6#

Interviewer: Do people pay to attend the rally? #01:02:36.8#

P06: If it takes the format of a rally dinner, yes. However, there are also many individuals who purchase 20 or 30 tickets to distribute... that also happens. The objective is to fill the room, and people do not go there for the food. It is the 'roast meat circuit' [Note: A colloquialism for the free-food and entertainment appeal of rural campaigning]. #01:02:51.2#

Interviewer: This heavily resembles a rock band's tour, does it not? #01:02:58.4#

P06: But in that instance, at least you have fans. Here... perhaps we need to rethink the way politics is conducted and how campaigns are executed. #01:03:17.9#

Interviewer: Can the rally be effective if there is this revolution in how politics is conducted? #01:03:20.2#

P06: I believe the rally could function if there were a revolution in the way politics is conducted. Because the rally is the method we have to connect with the public; it is the culmination of what you have been preparing for all week, all month, all year, the entire four years, or whatever the timeframe. As a politician, you prepared for that moment. As a voter, you prepared to hear what the politician has to say. Then we would evaluate what he did or did not do, said or did not say, and so forth. The problem you face is that this is doomed from the outset. It lacks identity, interest, and the very motivation of politicians to view a rally as the absolute pinnacle of a campaign (even if it is repeated 20 times throughout the campaign), a moment where one might decide that the individual who is undecided and does not know who to vote for is actually convinced by my words... The original concept of the rally was precisely that: to enlighten the populace, to facilitate that connection and proximity. Today, you have people attending for the roast meat, people attending to see Ágata, party activists who go because they must, and those who simply have nothing better to do. #01:04:58.2#

Interviewer: What should a rally resemble in an ideal scenario? #01:05:01.4#

P06: In an ideal scenario, as a candidate, you would allow members of the public to ask you questions regarding what you intend to do and why you intend to do it. Although, if that model were to proceed, the 50 people who stepped forward to ask questions would coincidentally all be party members and perhaps even part of the campaign structure. And we would be back to the staging scenario. Therefore, rallies nowadays exist merely because they must exist. It is akin to attending Mass and not concluding the service with the final blessing. If you leave Mass without the blessing... #01:06:11.7#

Interviewer: Do you believe the rally resembles a political Mass? #01:06:15.6#

P06: I would hesitate to draw that parallel... not least because the party members are not even there out of faith. The party activists themselves are there either because they are paid to accompany the campaign, or because their friends are there and it is a way for everyone to gather. The icing on the cake is the leader of the local party structure, whom they happen to know and who is invited to become a minister or secretary of state, and they are there to say, 'do not forget me, as I was part of your campaign,' with the expectation that they might subsequently be brought into office [a clear exercise in patronage]. I do not think it has entirely been reduced to this; there are people who may attend out of genuine party allegiance, people who may be there out of conviction. But are they the

determining factor? In some cases, perhaps yes, but in the vast majority of cases, no. Manifestly, rallies, in their current form, add no value. #01:07:52.0#

Interviewer: Could we do without them? #01:07:52.7#

P06: Until the day someone has the courage to do without them, then we shall see just how useless rallies ultimately are. #01:08:03.4#

Interviewer: Unless someone emerges who can achieve that proximity? In that case, could the rally be an asset? #01:08:04.2#

P06: Yes, you could even conduct an entire campaign without rallies, or a campaign where the candidate goes from café to café. Example: Alberto João Jardim at Chão da Lagoa [Note: A massive annual party festival in Madeira]. What he does during visits to the little taverns, engaging with everyone present... yet, in the end, they still put the man on a stage to speak at a rally. If he has already spoken with everyone, why does he need the rally? #01:08:50.6#

Interviewer: That is a good question: why is there a rally and a grand finale? #01:08:51.1#

P06: It is tying everything together. However, as with everything in politics nowadays, it is a ritual. It is a staging, a theatrical play where everyone knows their role and everyone fulfils their role. But we cannot deviate from this script, and it is somewhat like advertising... we *could*, but it would not be the same. #01:09:34.0#

Interviewer: Have digital media brought anything to the rally? Could we have a virtual rally? #01:09:37.3#

P06: I am the utmost sceptic regarding social media and place little faith in it. I believe it is a waste of time and a means that vacant individuals have found to entertain themselves and project the illusion of a full life. And you observe this on politicians' pages. You have some minor party official [or flunky] posting things saying, "today I went to lunch, whatever," but how does that enrich political debate? #01:10:31.4#

Interviewer: But do you think rallies are conceived taking this reality into account? #01:10:31.4#

P06: Perhaps for Twitter. You might have an advisor who is 'tweeting' what the candidate says, but then you have to imagine that at nine or ten in the evening, there is someone on Twitter thinking, "oh, brilliant..." #01:10:55.8#

Interviewer: And what about the people who attend, those who share and take photographs? #01:10:57.8#

P06: It might be conceived with that in mind, but what value is added by the person taking a photograph and posting a selfie saying they are with António José Seguro or Pedro Passos Coelho? If they were to bump into them on the beach in Vilamoura, they would probably do the exact same thing. The context is "look at me, I am here next to the politician," rather than "look at me, I am at a rally." #01:11:34.9#

Interviewer: And could there be a virtual rally? #01:11:37.8#

P06: And what would it add? But then again, the real one we have nowadays adds nothing either. #01:11:45.5#

Interviewer: What is the function of the speech at a rally? #01:11:47.4#

P06: The speech is a way for those who write them to remain employed. [laughs] #01:12:06.2#

Interviewer: Are they written by the famous speechwriters? #01:12:06.2#

P06: In the vast majority of cases, they are written by speechwriters. #01:12:07.9#

Interviewer: Are they prepared in advance? #01:12:09.4#

P06: They are. However, there are also candidates who write them themselves. I have worked with candidates who crafted their own messages. The political speech at rallies is the politician's commitment to the people, stating what they promise and what they

critique; but ultimately, it is about generating the headlines for the evening news bulletin and the news of the following day. #01:12:49.7#

Interviewer: Is it to persuade those at home to vote for them? #01:12:49.7#

P06: Also, but above all, it is to provide a talking point so that matters continue to be discussed, which is not always a straightforward process. In the European Elections, we had half a million speeches, and what message did you retain? We end up having the political speech at the rally because it is part of the process, but if he were to arrive there and simply say, "I am very fond of you all, vote for me"... #01:13:39.5#

Interviewer: So, what does the rally speech convey? #01:13:41.6#

P06: It depends on the campaign. If you are running a presidential campaign, it is focused on the candidate's persona. In legislative elections, it reflects the party and the candidate, compounded by the current state of the country and your own status: whether you are the challenger or the incumbent defending the seat. However, I hold the view that parties do not win elections; rather, it is the incumbent government that loses them. #01:14:21.8#

Interviewer: Are there differences in invoking the founding figures depending on whether you are a challenger or the incumbent? #01:14:24.7#

P06: There are. Normally, the one who evokes the past is the one seeking to conquer power. That reinforcement can be significant. Especially... consider the case of Santana [Lopes], who was not a challenger but had been dismissed [as Prime Minister]; he felt he required that reinforcement because he was being undermined from all sides, including from within his own party. He wanted to demonstrate to the few who still stood by him that he had a legacy behind him. #01:15:04.2#

Interviewer: And what types of arguments are employed? #01:15:16.6#

P06: I believe ideology accounts for zero nowadays. In general terms, nothing distinguishes a PSD from a PS. Even more so the CDS, which, by virtue of having been in government these past few years, in the upcoming elections, if they run separately, they are cornered; if they run together [in coalition], they will be measured by the PSD's yardstick. #01:15:58.2#

Interviewer: If you are the counter-power [the opposition], do you focus on more abstract ideas? #01:16:04.9#

P06: If you are the incumbent, and if you believe you have done a good job, you focus on your governance successes [achievements in office]. You state that you have travelled a certain path and cannot allow room for whoever comes next to ruin it. If you are the opposition and wish to take power, you will focus on the message that these past four years have been horrendous. And over four years, you have arguments to sustain one narrative and the other; not everything is bad, nor is everything good. Nowadays, people no longer buy into the easy promise. #01:17:01.6#

Interviewer: And what about the idea of promising a better future than what we currently have? #01:17:01.6#

P06: That is ethereal [abstract]. I can turn around and say, "believe that tomorrow we will be better off." I do not explain how, I do not explain why, I do not state that VAT [Value Added Tax] will rise to 30% and therefore you will pay... nowadays, promises to come wrapped in a halo of attempted credibility and pragmatism. Nobody believes anymore that tomorrow we will all be driving Porsches; but, if necessary, 20 years ago you even had a President of the Republic promising things that fall strictly within the Government's remit, yet he claimed he would do them anyway... Nowadays, people possess greater awareness and no longer fall for the easy promise. The game is maintained because everyone is more pragmatic, even those seeking to conquer power. That is why things are framed in a rounded manner, like a protective dome. If you will, you make a commitment to the voter, and the voter to you. You state that tomorrow we will all live better after the

elections, and you say nothing more. It is the concept of change. Obama also employed the logic of change, but he dissected it... what did you take away from his first campaign? He was going to close Guantanamo, yet it is still there. All this is to say that nowadays all parties do what is realistically possible. As a voter, my capacity to believe what the politician is promising me is highly diminished. If the politician tells me that tomorrow I will be driving a Porsche, I do not believe it. However, if he tells me that tomorrow we will all be better off because he knows the way, it is sufficiently abstract for me to give him the benefit of the doubt and think that, while I do not know how he will get there, he might actually be capable of doing so. #01:19:51.5#

Interviewer: And what about the incumbent? #01:19:54.9#

P06: In that case, they can reverse the logic. "You know that over four years we have endured sacrifices," and over three or four years there is not a single Portuguese citizen who has not made some sort of sacrifice. Any politician can arrive at the next elections and state that we all made sacrifices to reach this point. And that applies to everyone, because everyone made sacrifices over the last three years. If I am the incumbent, I state that we made sacrifices to get here, navigating a long and difficult path, but we can now see the light at the end of the tunnel, and I justify this with the work I have accomplished. The challenger will argue that the path was difficult and arduous, that they would have managed the sacrifices differently, that a different path is required and they possess the solution, that this is not the way forward. *End of story.* At a rally, you do not have anyone questioning or asking what the path actually is. What remains is the impression that "these chaps even criticised them because the others robbed the elderly and the poor, and they claim the path is different and that they would do it differently." The lingering message is that there is an alternative method and a different path. And at that point, either you possess some common sense, follow political activity, and conclude that in these specific cases there was no alternative solution and this is pure demagoguery; or you lack that insight because you cannot or are not interested, and you merely think that instead of the €100 you used to have, you now only have €20, and perhaps with these new chaps you would still have the €100 or even €150. #01:22:50.0#

Interviewer: Is it reduced to a matter of belief? #01:22:51.0#

P06: It is a matter of belief. Therein lies an entire religious ceremonial and a belief in what is said and done. But then you have the flip side of the coin: you can have packed pavilions and full rallies, yet when voting day arrives, it is a brilliant beach day, and everyone heads to the seaside. #01:23:28.6#

Interviewer: What contribution does the rally make to the vote? #01:23:33.2#

P06: I would be very cruel and say "zero". Unless it is to mobilise the troops [the grassroots base]; however, those who support the candidate are already convinced. They will vote for the candidate because they know him, or they are a friend of a friend, or because he greeted them during the campaign, or because they have been promised an office with a view of the Tagus River [Note: a metaphor for a high-level government appointment]. To say it is not out of belief? There will certainly be someone who believes that that person will revolutionise, will enact change, and will deliver. #01:24:43.3#

Interviewer: Final question: who is the adversary at the rally? #01:24:51.4#

P06: There does not necessarily have to be an adversary. If you conduct a rally based on an intimist logic, you have no adversary. You always have an external enemy... it varies depending on the ideology (assuming ideologies still function). If you look at the more left-wing parties, the enemy is invariably the Government, the wealthy, the privileged, the bosses, and so forth... If you turn to the more traditional parties, the enemy is your most direct opponent. If it is a presidential election, it is the opposing candidate; if it is a legislative election, it is the opposing political party. You can then personalise the attacks, although that is not done extensively. You had the tales and rumours regarding [José]

Sócrates, the smear campaign [negative campaigning]... there are other paths you can take in an electoral campaign where you personalise the discourse and elevate it to the level of political combat. Or you can resort to comments like “other laps”—as Santana [Lopes] said, “he likes other laps” [Note: a notorious insinuation regarding a political opponent’s private life]—meaning you personalise it and thereby raise the stakes if you wish to spice things up. That worked very effectively with Sócrates, because from the moment you personalize

Appendix A.2. Interview 2—Participant P14 (Party Communication Professional, Bloco de Esquerda)

Interviewer: Tell me a little about your experience in Political Communication.

P14: I have been a party member of the Bloco de Esquerda [Left Bloc] for several years now. Today, I belong to the political committee. In 2009, I joined the Bloco de Esquerda’s production team, that is, the team that devises and executes all of the Bloco de Esquerda’s external communication, outside of television channels and our internet portal. We have our own internet portal, Esquerda.net. It serves to host our news and the news we wish to highlight. And we also utilise the standard mass media circuit. However, regarding more traditional campaign materials [Note: The Portuguese term ‘propaganda’ is used here neutrally to mean political advertising/campaign materials] (leaflets, newspapers, posters, billboards, and subsequently the entire campaign), this is the responsibility of a team—which is small, as the Bloco de Esquerda is small—namely the production team. This team coordinates directly with the party’s Political Committee, which is the body holding the political legitimacy to make decisions regarding the directions indicated by the National Board—this is how it works statutorily. In 2009, I joined this team, worked throughout the three campaigns that took place that year (legislative, local, and European elections), and later I was also part of a Bloco de Esquerda group that assisted Manuel Alegre’s presidential campaign. Following that, I was away from the communications field for some time, and two years ago I began coordinating the Bloc’s production team. With this team, we have already conducted two electoral campaigns: the European and the local elections. #00:03:00.4#

Interviewer: Bearing in mind the theme of our conversation, I would like to start by asking how you view the evolution of the political rally? #00:03:05.7#

P14: Rallies are one of the tools we utilise when planning not only campaigns but also our day-to-day activities. We interpret the rally as a space where we can present, before an audience that can be highly variable, a panel of speakers who offer their perspectives on various issues. I have not studied, nor am I familiar with, the history of the rally or its evolution. I can say that, on our side, we employ different types of events that could be termed rallies. In other words, the typology of the rally is highly diffuse. We hold public sessions for small audiences on specific topics throughout the year. Consider the issue of rents for the elderly: we launched a campaign in Lisbon and Porto, where there was a higher prevalence of such rentals, wherein Bloco de Esquerda leaders would visit the parish councils to conduct information sessions for the elderly. These involved rooms with 80 to 200 people at most. One could call this an information session; indeed, we did clarify people’s doubts regarding the application of the law, but we were also conducting Bloco de Esquerda political communication, obviously. It was a Bloc initiative, it was advertised as belonging to the Bloc, it featured posters, leaflets, all the standard campaign materials; and it was a Bloco de Esquerda leader addressing the people, explaining the law to them, and, simultaneously, providing a critical analysis of that law. A less restrictive definition of a rally could encompass these public sessions that we conduct. Every week, Catarina Martins and João Semedo [party co-leaders] travel across the country

conducting sessions to enlighten the public on specific topics or on politics in general. That happens quite frequently. That could fit within the concept of a rally.

Then we have other, more classical rally sessions that occur during electoral campaigns, where Bloco de Esquerda candidates or leaders take to the podium to offer their views on a range of issues. It is normal and desirable that each speaker does not deliver the same speech as the previous one, as that would be monotonous and tedious. Thus, it is normal that the speakers—either because they have studied a particular area more thoroughly or because they are more interested in it—will obviously speak on that subject; or they will coordinate the rally's content amongst themselves, stipulating that a particular topic is assigned to a specific person. They may address other matters—it is normal to do so—but they should focus slightly more on a specific issue. Therefore, the rally is supposed to be a dynamic interaction between the various speakers so that the final narrative is more engaging than a mere summation of disjointed narratives. That holds more interest. There is a general idea of the desired outcome for a rally, but it is planned in such a way that this narrative is recounted in segments. #00:07:16.4#

Interviewer: Who conducts this planning? Is it done internally? #00:07:16.4#

P14: It is done internally. It is conducted by the campaign management, because these more traditional rallies are organised by the campaign management for each respective election, which coordinates the themes it considers most important for each specific location. And that varies: if we are talking about a local election, the theme will be more local, where the local candidate and the various local candidates, or a local campaign representative, will speak on these more localised topics, while the national representative—in this case, the coordinator or co-coordinator of the Bloco de Esquerda—will address national issues. However, this narrative is constructed so that the rally possesses that dynamic. #00:08:11.7#

The objective of this narrative is twofold. Firstly, to cover the maximum number of topics within a short timeframe, because 'Fidel Castro-style' speeches... the times no longer permit it. People no longer have the interest to stand and listen for two hours. Depending on the rally, we are aware that the timings are different. The example I can give you regarding this is that we, occasionally... we have done a few... I cannot say "occasionally" because I do not know if we will do it again, but we have held rallies in Largo de Camões [a central square in Lisbon]. Rallies entirely open to the public, without chairs, normally associated with a campaign we want to draw attention to—for instance, we did this regarding the Iraq War (because the Iraq War was escalating, so we held a rally about it). However, a rally for passers-by, for people who just happen to be there, is a rally where the speeches... and we had a few bands along the way, providing entertainment, which is also politically engaged entertainment. In other words, we were not just inviting anyone to play; they were bands that were there making a political intervention, they were part of the rally, not an external element of it. The bands chosen to perform in different locations are always an integral part of the rally; they are invited to do so because they are politically committed. #00:10:05.7#

Interviewer: And what do we want that music and those bands to bring to the rally? #00:10:05.7#

P14: We do not attempt to predispose the audience's sentiments based on the band that is playing. We do not attempt that. We try to ensure that [the bands] are not overly melancholic, because it sets a sadder tone, but we do not approach it from that perspective. What we consistently do is work with musicians who have some form of political intervention, either conveyed through their lyrics or through their life choices—to us, it is the same. #00:10:47.0#

Interviewer: There is an identification of the musician with what is... #00:10:48.1#

P14: It can happen. For instance, just recently in the European Elections we had Carlos Mendes. He is a thoroughly engaged artist, and his lyrics reflect that. That aligns with the perspective you are suggesting. However, we also had JP Simões, who sings in English, a somewhat calmer and more melancholic type of music, and he plays solo. His songs do not possess that classical political dimension, of *'música de intervenção'* [Note: Portuguese political protest music], but JP Simões's trajectory is one of someone who has always been an activist for many causes. Due to his background, JP Simões was invited to join us. #00:11:38.4#

Interviewer: And what role does the music play? #00:11:44.9#

P14: The role of music is twofold. In the more traditional campaign rallies, people are interested in the music, but it is not their primary focus. That is to say, we have observed that if we make the mistake of scheduling the music at the end of the speeches, many people leave, because they did not go there for the music. They did not go to listen to music; they went to listen to the political addresses. And at the end, when the political speeches conclude, once it is clear that the narrative has finished, people leave, because listening to a concert is nice, but one can do that at any other time; one can go to a festival or a concert. This does not occur if we place the music at the beginning, or intersperse it, or integrate it... We produced, for example, a show at the Rivoli [Theatre], during the Porto local elections, which was entirely composed of artists who joined the Bloc's candidacy in Porto. It drew over a thousand people to the Rivoli; it was filled to absolute capacity, a massive event, featuring Capicua, Ana Deus... featuring all the small or large projects from Porto that stepped forward to perform there, and we interspersed this with the political speeches. In other words, there was not the classical block of speeches followed by the block of music; rather, one succeeded the other. And it all depends on what that rally is intended to be, how it is conceived. Therefore, the most classical approach is for everyone to feel that it is a moment of celebration. It warms the crowd up; it is a moment of celebration, everyone is here because there is a common motive, and that is palpable. It sets the tone, sometimes. And then you have all the speeches. The reverse can happen, which is interspersing various elements; it all depends on how the rally is constructed and what its objective is. Regarding the duration of the speeches, returning to that point, for an open-air rally, aimed at passers-by—where we want to catch them as they walk past because there is a specific issue in a specific place, because there is a hot topic we want to address and therefore we hold a rally about that hot topic—in those rallies we know that the speech durations must be significantly shorter, because someone walking through Largo de Camões does not want to listen to what is being said there for more than four minutes. If there is a 15-min speech, or two consecutive 15-min speeches, no one will stay, or only the people who would normally attend the rally will remain. If we want to reach other people, and we are attempting to conduct that type of rally, we must be mindful of the speech durations, reduce them slightly, intersperse them with music, and manage the rally in that manner. The Bloc has something else, which to my knowledge we are the only ones to do, something we initiated prior to 2009, called Summer Rallies. These take place during the bathing season [summer holidays], completely outside of the campaign period, every summer. It is stronger, with greater intensity—meaning a higher number of such initiatives—when we are in a campaign period, obviously, but this year we will conduct five. We invariably go to standard seaside locations and erect a minimal structure: an outdoor screen, two totems, and a balloon to make it visually appealing, a few chairs, and a podium. And we are at the same level as the people, with no raised stage, nothing—that is, on the ground, feet on the ground, eye to eye. If someone stands up and offers a handshake, they are right there; there is no stage, no distance, it is at the exact same level. #00:16:03.6#

Interviewer: And in the other rallies, do you always use a stage? #00:16:08.8#

P14: It is not mandatory. It depends on the venue. We always attempt to keep the stage as small as possible; we avoid large stages and always try to ensure the speaker is as close to the audience as possible. That subsequently presents technical problems, because the image we want broadcast on the evening news requires it to be at a certain height. The people right at the front cannot see the speaker, so there is a minimum height requirement. For the speaker to deliver their address, there must be lighting, and that requires a lighting rig that must be positioned slightly away from the podium, which dictates a minimum distance of a few metres between one element and the other. However, taking all these logistical constraints into account, our policy is to bring the stages as close as logistics permit, so that the interlocutor delivering the message and those receiving it are as close as possible. To create the absolute minimum distance possible. And the place where we manage to do this best is what we call the Summer Rallies, these itinerant rallies that we conduct during the summer, live and direct. Imagine, in the main square of Monte Gordo [Note: a popular beach town in the Algarve], which holds thousands of people in the summer, we set up a structure for one evening and there are three or four speeches from the Bloc directed straight at the people, and anyone can stand up and make a comment. And sometimes they do. #00:17:53.8#

Interviewer: Can anyone intervene and deliver a speech? #00:17:51.9#

P14: Normally, we do not do it that way. Because that does not always foster a very conducive environment. Either we allocate a specific time for questions—and that sometimes happens—or... interruptions during the rally are disruptive to other people because there was a line of thought they were following. Therefore, the demonstrative style is preferable at the rally. Because we are addressing not merely one individual, but a large collective. However, less than a month ago, we invited an MEP [Member of the European Parliament] from Podemos to join us for a conversation at the Alcântara viewpoint [in Lisbon]. That conversation, which was essentially a rally, was conducted in this open-air format, with chairs in the street, but everyone could ask questions. We had a computer online receiving questions via email and monitoring the Bloc's Facebook page so we could put questions to the Podemos MEP (the Spanish party that achieved an excellent result in the elections) directly and live. #00:19:22.6#

Interviewer: Is this type of interaction something you also explore in electoral rallies? #00:19:27.0#

P14: We have been attempting to do so. We typically have a video team, and we usually play videos during the rally's warm-up—short videos of... imagine an aberrant quote from a government minister or a banker; imagine [Fernando] Ulrich [a prominent Portuguese banker] saying “endure, endure,” or the owner of BPN [Banco Português de Negócios] saying that, poor him, he had tried to do so well but had completely fallen flat... these are people who stole millions... or Ricardo Salgado [former head of Banco Espírito Santo]... capturing those moments and creating a satirical video. Or the videos we call “A-B-C” [“B-A-BÁ”], which are animations where we use a stop-motion system to draw a concept, and we broadcast these videos at the rallies. #00:20:49.1#

Interviewer: And what is the purpose? #00:20:51.5#

P14: It is also for warming up the crowd. In other words, the waiting period is already a political component of the rally. It is supposed to be an event in itself. Until the scheduled time for the rally to begin, the people who arrive early are entitled to, or have something to watch, that is interesting or amusing. That is part of our utilisation of digital media; that is, we make use of it. Furthermore, we have this format we have experimented with once or twice. We have hosted some live “blog combats” [live Q&A sessions with bloggers]—that is, inviting bloggers for an open conversation where they write on various blogs, and the Bloc leader responds to the different bloggers and their questions in an open forum. In these sessions of two hundred people, I would still call it a rally. I do not

know what your definition [of a rally] is, but it does not have very rigidly defined boundaries. So, we did this: a blog combat, having various bloggers ask questions to a Bloc leader—I believe it was still Francisco Louçã at the time—and he responded. They wrote whatever they wished, and members of the public audience also asked questions. We try to do that. We try to do it as much as possible. We have also held a rally via Skype. Imagine you have a party leader who is in Brussels, or in a location where it is important for them to be there rather than here; we establish a direct connection via Skype, and that person intervenes live in the rally. #00:23:09.4#

Interviewer: In other words, the rally exists in a physical space, and the person is broadcast via videoconference... #00:23:07.9#

P14: Yes. Meaning, I might be in a hall or a square being filmed, but we are broadcasting their speech to hundreds of people who are at the traditional rally. Additionally, many of the rallies we conduct are filmed and streamed live online. Many people can watch those rallies. The Podemos one I mentioned to you, there were people in Latin America watching the rally live. Providing live commentary, asking questions. Someone in Brazil was asking questions directly to the Podemos MEP who was live in Portugal. The question he posted on Facebook, while watching the stream, was posed to the MEP. #00:24:14.9#

Interviewer: Has the rally transcended the physical space it occupies? #00:24:34.4#

P14: We certainly do that, yes. We attempt to do it whenever it is important, whenever it is necessary. In other words, we do not utilise these tools simply for aesthetic purposes. It is necessary when it is instrumental for a specific issue. Consider this Podemos rally: we knew there was an international appetite to understand the phenomenon, and we were the first party, the first group of people, the first organisation in Portugal to host someone from Podemos (since then, there has been another), but we were the only ones to host a Podemos MEP (and it was Marisa Matias who debated with her during that event). We decided that, considering the Podemos phenomenon, it could not be a traditional rally; it made no sense. Podemos is fundamentally about assemblies, about the Podemos “circles” [grassroots assemblies]. Therefore, conducting an event where someone simply recited the party line would have been utterly tedious and completely contrary to the logic of the phenomenon; it would have been attempting to squeeze something novel into a pre-existing mould. That did not make sense to us. So, we adapted the format. That is what I was telling you: we plan rallies so that they serve as the exact tool required for that moment. We try to do this to the fullest extent. We have had speeches via Skype, but sometimes a live connection is not possible. In those instances, we film a speech from someone, who then also participates in the rally via video. That is, the person is far away—imagine Miguel Portas when he visited Palestine; we held a rally about Palestine and he recorded a video because he did not have the opportunity to be live for us to connect with him, nor did he have time to return to recount what he was witnessing. Therefore, the best method was to take the video and broadcast it. #00:26:39.9#

Interviewer: The speaker does not have to be live... #00:26:41.9#

P14: Exactly. #00:27:10.9#

Interviewer: And regarding live broadcasting? #00:27:10.9#

P14: We conduct a portion of the live broadcasting of certain rallies ourselves, or for our own reporting team. Now, we are highly aware that if a rally has a thousand attendees, it can be viewed by two million. Therefore, a segment of the rally is planned specifically for the speeches that will be broadcast on television. We are also aware that out of five speakers, only one or two will be selected, and out of those fifteen minutes, only a single one-minute soundbite will be chosen. Nevertheless, we stage the rally so that it appears well on television. We ensure that we have an adequate lighting system, an adequate sound system, and we manage the distances you mentioned earlier as one of the

constraints; this is all logistics to ensure that the press is in the right location, positioned correctly to capture the proper angle for the impending speech. The larger parties even possess the financial resources to... the PS [Socialist Party] does this at rallies... and the PSD [Social Democratic Party] as well, I mean... I am not entirely certain about the PSD... but I know the PS does... the PS sometimes prohibits journalists from filming the rally, and they themselves supply the rally footage. In other words, they own the cameras, they operate a production control room [*régie*] with their own cameras, and they select the angle, they select the image, and all the television networks broadcast the identical image because all the networks are drawing from the same source. "We provide all the images, but they are our images. You cannot record your own." The PS does this. They possess such substantial funding that they can construct the spectacle that is the rally in a manner that allows this spectacle to be transmitted into people's homes exactly as they intend. I do not know if this is positive or negative; it disrupts a certain spontaneity and prevents journalists from exploring certain aspects, but it offers the advantage of strictly controlling what is disseminated. It serves that purpose. We do not do that. What we attempt to do is provide the best technical resources, so that people watching the rally at home can comprehend what is being said and who is speaking—who the individual is, the party. #00:29:40.3#

Interviewer: Are there specific moments allocated for the live broadcast? #00:29:48.7#

P14: Rarely. It is highly difficult. What we normally do is have our press officers speak with the journalists and say, "Today the primary theme is this, and the leader covering it will be so-and-so" — normally the coordinator. "This specific leader will cover the main theme; this will be it, all other topics are more circumstantial, the primary theme we are exploring today at the rally is this one. This is the core of what we are going to say today." Consequently, the journalists are on alert, and when the moment arrives where that specific segment is the most engaging, that is what they cover. #00:30:32.6#

Interviewer: And does the speaker know? #00:30:32.6#

P14: That they are going live? Normally, no. When that occurs, it is through the most basic system, with the press officer giving them a signal [raising an arm]; however, in a room with five hundred people, it is difficult for the person speaking to be aware of it. But normally, every speaker is prepared to go live at any given moment. Moreover, they are already live for the people in front of them. #00:31:02.7#

Interviewer: I would like to go back a little. We discussed the stage and the music but tell me a bit about the venue. What does it symbolise? #00:31:23.7#

P14: It depends on the underlying concept: "what purpose does this rally serve, and how is it conceived and directed?" Sometimes, it is simply the only venue available in a city. That possibility exists. If we are holding a rally in Beja, it might be the case that there is only one hall available to host that rally. Or it may happen that we wish to conduct an open-air rally in a location that is emblematic of the city. That happens to us frequently. In Largo de Camões, we have held events in Largo de São Domingos, where Jews were burned during the Inquisition [Note: Referring to the Lisbon massacre of 1506], and the location is meant to convey the idea of tolerance and respect for religions and creeds, so we hold it there for that very reason. Holding a rally in Largo do Carmo [Note: The focal point of the 1974 Carnation Revolution] possesses its own distinct symbolism. We have also done that, when we wish to invoke that specific ideal. Therefore, rallies... the location of the rally depends on several factors: firstly, what is the theme? If the theme is central to what we are trying to convey, that might dictate a different choice of venue; secondly, the number of people we anticipate for that rally. If it is a very small event of a hundred people, perhaps it is not worth taking it to the streets. It becomes an empty rally. It can simply be held at the parish council, in whatever parish council auditorium is available. It is always instrumental. If we wish to organise something for thousands of people, we might

want to use the Aula Magna [Note: The grand auditorium of the University of Lisbon, historically significant for student and political movements]. It all depends. It always hinges on what the rally is intended to achieve. When we organise events with certain factions of the PS, with independents, regarding the issue of austerity, we go to the Aula Magna, which has already hosted many such rallies and therefore carries that gravitas: people know it is at the Aula Magna. #00:34:26.4#

Interviewer: Is there a traditional value in holding it at the Aula Magna? #00:34:28.3#

P14: Exactly! #00:34:28.3#

Interviewer: And what is the criterion for it being indoor or outdoor? #00:34:28.3#

P14: It relates to the number of people, the weather conditions... If the electoral campaign takes place in November, the number of outdoor experiences is significantly lower. If it is in June... in the campaign we just ran in May, we figured we could already conduct some events outdoors. In Braga, we held it outdoors. In Coimbra, we held it outdoors. And then we have to erect a tent over it, because if we head to the North, we must have a canopy [Note: 'tenda'/'renda' conceptualised as canopy/tent] over the rally to ensure that if it rains—as it did in Coimbra—the attendees do not get wet. But these are purely logistical considerations. #00:35:15.6#

Interviewer: And are there choices related to the value [or significance] of the venue? #00:35:24.4#

P14: There always are, but sometimes, due to weather conditions or because a hall does not exist... holding a rally in Largo do Carmo is appealing, but the space is very limited. Therefore, if it is a theme or a rally intended to draw a large crowd, no matter how much symbolism Largo do Carmo holds, it cannot be held there. The symbolism, the logistics, and the weather criteria... it all depends. #00:36:00.8#

Interviewer: And what about the attire at rallies? #00:36:08.1#

P14: Sometimes there are rallies with a specific symbolism that dictates everyone should wear a t-shirt related to a particular issue, some message on the clothing, or a carnation on the lapel (if the rally relates to the 25th of April [Carnation Revolution] or Freedom, a carnation on the lapel is used). We do that. If it relates to mourning, it might happen that everyone is dressed in black. We occasionally adapt that. Normally, however, what we do is exercise caution regarding the television aspect. Because there is clothing that is impossible to view on television; stripes and similar patterns are impossible [Note: Due to the moiré effect on cameras]. That is banned from the attire of the speakers, because it is simply impossible for anyone to distinguish anything amidst all the stripes on television. #00:37:02.7#

Interviewer: And is there any further symbolism in the attire? Such as short sleeves, rolled-up sleeves, open shirts, or ties... #00:37:13.7#

P14: We do not have explicit guidelines. What we do have is a tacit agreement that wearing a tie makes no sense for us. Thus, we have an understanding within the Bloc that no one in the party wears a tie, except in highly exceptional circumstances; they do not wear them in Parliament, they do not wear them outside Parliament, and they do not wear them at rallies. There is no specific instruction for each venue, unless we have devised a particular symbolism. It has happened, I cannot recall precisely right now... but during the abortion [referendum] campaign it happened... right now I cannot remember anything in particular... carnations on the lapel several times... there must have been others... I just cannot remember them. #00:38:12.8#

Interviewer: And the flags? What role do they play? #00:38:00.0#

P14: Flags generate the impression of presence and movement. That is what they serve for. They fill the space, they provide presence, they provide movement, they add colour to the idea. The Bloc is a left-wing party; therefore, it would tend to have red flags; however, our concept is that the Bloc must be available for all struggles, from the

perspective that all the various struggles existing in society must be represented here. Consequently, our flags are not exclusively red. We have some red ones, but we have blue, purple, yellow, and green flags of all colours; which creates a beautiful effect, because having thousands of multi-coloured flags conveys the idea of a multitude, of diverse people standing together. It relates to the idea that we are all united for the broader struggle. That is our core identity [identity matrix]. It stems from a critique of a faction of the left, of a more Stalinist conception of what the party and the people are, and all those ideological logics... all those ideological issues and the critique that there was a segment of the left claiming the labour issue was paramount and all others would be addressed later, after the socialist revolution—that makes no sense to us. We believe there are multiple parallel struggles that intersect, gaining momentum at certain times and waning at others, and we must be available to embrace them all. They are part of a whole. There is a centrality to the labour question, simply because it dictates how the entirety of society is organised, it impacts the organisational structure of the whole society, but we do not subjugate all other visions—LGBT issues, civil rights issues, international rights issues—none of that is subjugated to the centrality of a single primary struggle. Therefore, our flags represent that as well. They feature multiple colours rather than a single one to symbolise it. #00:40:41.0#

Interviewer: Are there other elements where this identity is expressed at the rally? #00:41:00.5#

P14: Yes. For instance, at the European Elections rally we held in Largo de São Domingos, the Bloc's electoral list for the European Parliament was composed of half independents. It consisted of half women and half independents. The PS only presented a gender-balanced [parity] list afterwards. In other words, we were the first to present a gender-balanced list wherein fifty percent were not members of the Bloco de Esquerda. Some were from the 3D Manifesto [a civic movement], others were strictly independent. We attempted to compose that list with the concept of a rainbow; not a rainbow where anything goes, but rather, these are the individuals who matter on the ground, the people who are actively engaged in the struggle right there. We had students, precarious workers, we had an activist for the Palestinian people (Shahd Wadi), we had a wheelchair user (Jorge Falcato) who went up on stage... and our slogan for the European Elections was "De Pé" [Standing Up / Standing Firm]. #00:42:21.3#

Interviewer: There is even that photograph from the rally, of Jorge delivering his speech with the slogan beside him. #00:42:21.3#

P14: Exactly. And Falcato, who could not physically stand up, shouted "Standing up!" multiple times, for that very reason. Because his message was that he was also standing up, he also possessed that strength. In his own way, because he stands firm [resists]. Being in a wheelchair does not preclude him from doing so. And the ability to feature these individuals who are activists in their respective fields, which is not artificial—these people were on our lists because they maintained their independence, but they were the grassroots activists. #00:42:55.7#

Interviewer: Is the selection of speakers designed to showcase this plurality? #00:42:55.7#

P14: Certainly. There is no doubt about that. Every member of the list delivered a speech over the course of the campaign. Not at every rally, obviously, as that would be impossible. #00:43:12.4#

Interviewer: Is there a horizontal distribution of importance? #00:43:12.4#

P14: Yes. There is the lead candidate, obviously, not least because we did not have the capacity to elect more than the first or second person on the list (in fact, we only elected Marisa [Matias]). Therefore, we must focus... she would be the one concluding the rallies. It was Marisa concluding the rallies, alongside the coordinator or co-coordinator of the

Bloco de Esquerda. In other words, they delivered the closing speeches. But throughout the rally, those diverse struggles were represented in different locations. Shahd Wadi, for instance, spoke in Coimbra, where she studied, where she completed her doctoral thesis; it was the location closest to her and which symbolised the struggle she has been engaged in, it is where she has worked... she does it in Coimbra and that makes sense. There would be other individuals speaking in different locations (Lisbon or Porto), but she does it in Coimbra, so it makes sense. And therefore, she spoke in Coimbra. Imagine someone involved in the struggle against the Via do Infante—against the tolls on the Via do Infante [Note: A controversial tolled motorway in the Algarve]—that person speaks in that specific location, because they symbolise that struggle. We attempt to do this. #00:44:26.5#

Interviewer: The symbolic weight is expressed in the rally... What other symbols express the Bloc's identity? #00:44:26.5#

P14: It is not exactly a symbol, but... there are invariably both women and men speaking at every Bloco de Esquerda rally. We do not believe a rally is superior merely because only females or only males speak. That concept must be entirely eradicated from our mindset. We do not always achieve strict equality with gender-balanced [parity] speeches—two men and two women, or similar—but what we never do is feature exclusively male speeches or exclusively female speeches. We do not do that. And it relates to a symbolism, or rather, it is a concept of how we interpret politics and the political space; if it is open to men and women, that must also be represented at the rally. It must be visible, and it is: if there is no woman available to speak at that location, then there cannot be an extra man either; it does not make sense. There are no men or women who speak better simply by virtue of being men or women; what matters is truly maintaining a perspective of parity in this regard. And we do it for other reasons. If we are at a march for LGBT rights, they are the primary speakers; the individuals engaged in that struggle, the activists for that cause, are the ones who speak. #00:46:28.6#

Interviewer: Regarding symbols such as the Bloc's logo, rallying cries... what role do they play in the rally? #00:46:36.0#

P14: We attempt to construct the campaign to facilitate that. That is, the Bloco de Esquerda symbol is always present (either alone or stating 'Bloc, a trustworthy left'), which always appears on the left with everything else aligned opposite, but we also have our portal, which we try to establish as our home on the 'net' (esquerda.net). Therefore, 'esquerda.net' normally appears behind the speakers, rather than bloco.org or Bloco de Esquerda. Since the logo is already sufficiently identifying, and it is—everyone recognises the brand... from the perspective of pure brand logic... as everyone already recognises the brand, placing the 'star with a head' [Note: The Bloco de Esquerda logo] is sufficient for identification; 'esquerda.net' is what we attempt to convey to those merely looking at the image. Other symbols we utilise, for example in the European elections campaign, the slogan "De pé!" [Standing up!] appeared on the backdrop screens and on the front of the podium, but it was also the rallying cry of the rallies—one would hear 'De pé! tututu, De pé! tututu'—and this provides breathing room [momentum] for the speeches. It carries that symbolism: when someone punctuates a sentence they are delivering, a concept of combating austerity where they state we must stand firm [resist], then the campaign slogan that embodies that combat is utilised to tie everything together. #00:48:25.5#

Interviewer: And regarding the timing, is it planned? #00:48:39.8#

P14: It is also planned instrumentally. That is, it depends on the location and what is being done. But the time and the day of the week are planned. We do not attempt to hold rallies on a Wednesday afternoon—it is impossible, it does not happen—people are working, they are unavailable to attend. And on weekdays we can hold them in the evening, but as early as possible, because people have to work the following day. However, holding a rally on a Saturday afternoon when the sun is shining brightly and going to the beach is

highly desirable, is shooting oneself in the foot. It is not worthwhile. Therefore, just as we determine the venue, we also determine the time the event takes place. Summer rallies are held at night, normally, in the hour following dinner. Because people are on holiday, we can even hold the rally on a Wednesday. Because after dinner, everyone goes for a stroll along the seafront promenade [*paredão*]; and it is precisely on that promenade where we are stationed, within the cities and towns, we are on that promenade and people encounter us while taking their stroll. #00:49:52.6#

Interviewer: Is it designed for serendipitous encounters with a rally? #00:49:59.3#

P14: Exactly. 'I was not expecting this, I did not know what was happening. Let me see what this is,' because there is a gathered crowd of people. And the fact is that people stay for an hour, or two hours, watching a live political party rally. And there are people who are not from the Bloc who stay to watch the rally and approach us at the end; they thank us profusely, they say we are entirely right, or that we are wrong, or someone approaches us at the end of any given rally. This happens to us frequently, although during a campaign it is more difficult because the following day we already have to be doing something else, in some other location, and we have to leave immediately. However, it happens at rallies where we have more time; we stay back for a long while talking to people... and people wait. People who have finished their coffee and want to go home, yet there are queues... in other words, a person is talking to someone who wants clarification or who disagrees with a position we hold, and we remain there talking to them and providing arguments. And then there is a queue of people wanting to do the same... #00:50:55.5#

Interviewer: What you are telling me runs contrary to the idea that rallies have been losing people's interest... #00:51:00.8#

P14: It depends. The concept of a political party is not very fashionable... a group of people who gather around an idea, interpreting their idea as the best one, and this superior idea forming a vanguard to advance it... that is the classical idea of a party... and that they invent their own internal democracy to convey this idea; that would be the standard definition of a party, contesting the balance of power for the sake of that idea... that is not very fashionable. This does not mean people lack (and they indeed possess) opinions on matters. They want to discuss them with the interlocutors they see on television or with individuals who hold a certain view. They want to debate it. The problem is that if we ask people to come and discuss this idea with us, they do not come because they feel they should not. But if we try, even within a rally, which is more demonstrative than argumentative... because the speech is always demonstrative; since we present arguments to build a fortress to solidify an initial thesis, we do not open it up for discussion... the rally is not a debate. They are arguments constituting a demonstration. That is precisely what a demonstration is: we present a set of arguments that consolidate a particular thesis; that is what everyone does at a rally. "So-and-so should not have enacted this law. Why should they not have done it... because of this, this, and this..." but it is always demonstrative, other people do not ask us questions. It is a more demonstrative style. It is not a debate. That is why the rally must be as close to the people as possible, responding to them as accurately as possible. And the idea of holding massive rallies, with thousands of people (the PCP does it, the PS sometimes does it, the CGTP [General Confederation of the Portuguese Workers] does it) is a staging to demonstrate the strength of the masses. But the concept of being closer to the people is more important to us. Sometimes we forego one large rally in favour of four smaller ones, which allow us a more direct interaction with the people, answering immediate questions, being eye-to-eye with them... #00:54:16.1#

Interviewer: Does the party's own ideological matrix [or core] also help in that regard? #00:54:16.1#

P14: Certainly. It relates entirely to that. It is a critique of the idea of the ‘people’ as a monolith and the idea of the ‘party’ as a monolith, where there is only one idea and one mode of thought... it is a critique of the notion that the thought cultivated within the party, after much refinement, is inherently correct... perhaps it is not. And what we attempt to do, and it is genuinely true (today we are reaping the consequences of what has been happening within the Bloc, which you have certainly followed... when there is not a highly dominant central idea, there are people who sometimes wish to diverge from the main idea), what we attempt to do is ensure the idea we propose is discussed and presented to the maximum number of people possible, not as a party line for them to adopt, but rather from the perspective of subjecting our idea to maximum criticism. The ultimate objective is that the final idea we present is the best possible one, because if it survived all the criticism, it might be the best—well, at least in theory, it emerges reinforced. Instead of a group of people determining a political line that is subsequently transmitted to everyone—which is the more classical rally, with the more classical conception of the people and the party—there is a critique of that idea, which means that smaller parties, which allow for better interaction with the people listening to the rally, responding immediately to the problems being raised there, are more appealing to us. It allows us to have an idea that emerges reinforced at the end of the process. #00:56:08.4#

Interviewer: Do you think the concept of Social Media platforms facilitates this aspect you are discussing? #00:56:19.2#

P14: It facilitates it greatly, and we try to incorporate these tools to achieve this objective. It is possible... well, there have already been demonstrations in *Second Life* (a platform that existed a few years ago); there were actually demonstrations held there. #00:56:43.5#

Interviewer: Could there be a virtual rally? #00:56:43.5#

P14: Virtual rallies did exist. There were virtual rallies in *Second Life*. There were several, and you will be able to find plenty of material on the subject. I believe one pertained to animal rights and another to the LGBT community, but people would register on *Second Life* to attend a rally scheduled for a specific time on a specific day, and there would be one speaker, or two, or three, or four, at the *Second Life* rally. It is something that, since *Second Life* has died out, I do not know if it is possible to replicate on Facebook... Twitter is a different matter... there is no longer a platform that facilitates that, where people meet in a virtual world in that manner. Facebook is very different for doing that. But what we are observing, and trying to study, is how to use the platforms in ways that people actually use them; we are there, speaking to people on those terms. For instance, yesterday we discussed Snapchat, which currently is not being used by anyone [in politics] (unlike Instagram), but it is what the younger kids are using. And the question is: does Snapchat interest us as a communication tool? How does it interest us? How are people using it and how can we use it? How do people communicate with it so that it makes sense for us, whose function is to communicate... because a party with an idea must communicate it (the famous saying that the tree nobody saw fall, did not fall [If a tree falls in a forest...]), if we cannot convey the idea, if we lack a communication plan for it, if we do not know where people are talking, we do not exist. And that is why we conduct this study. We incorporate it into campaigns and try to be as audacious as possible. Podemos, for example, built its manifesto via the Internet, through online voting. What is curious about the Podemos manifesto is that it does not argue points; it is solely composed of measures. It is interesting because it was created on a wiki system; they do not argue, they merely present measures, because argumentation would challenge the principles of certain measures. There are even measures in the manifesto that are contradictory, which is peculiar, but the wiki system allows for that... it has that disadvantage embedded within it. Now, the more traditional parties possess genuine pearls of wisdom... I am not certain

that either of these poles is entirely correct... communication must be more dynamic... even at a rally. This idea of going out into the streets and holding rallies where the people are, and having them attend because they are passing by... and initially, no one wants to sit on the chairs... it is the party activists who sit on the chairs, wave the flags, do all those things... #01:01:17.2#

Interviewer: The question I put to you is: for whom is a campaign rally organised? #01:01:17.2#

P14: A typical campaign rally is organised for the party activists [or party faithful]. It is organised for the activists who are present there. And the various speeches comprising the narrative are directed at them; that is to say, the overall narrative provides them with a set of arguments, equips them with tools, exposes inconsistencies in the opponents' arguments, or fortifies our own positions. That is a typical campaign rally. Then there is the speech by the coordinator or spokesperson, who addresses not only the people present but also everyone watching at home. It possesses these two dimensions: firstly, for the people present, the complete narrative; secondly, for the people watching at home, a segment of the narrative, the central theme of that day. It is both... which is why there is the spectacle element where there must be flags... it is essentially the party faithful who know they must wave flags and applaud; they are part of the rally experience, because the footage of that rally will appear on that evening's news bulletin. Therefore, a portion is orchestrated for that [television] audience. Another portion is intended for the people actually there, and that is the broader narrative of the rally. These are the classical ones. Then there are other rallies, which are the shows of force—the classical rally comprising thousands of people, which is different... as they are almost demonstrations [protests]. What the CGTP [General Confederation of the Portuguese Workers] organises at the end of May Day, where they have (or would like to have, as it is not always the case) the entire lawn of the Fonte Luminosa [a major landmark in Lisbon] filled, is a show of force. It is a rally that is not necessarily for those people... it is for those people in terms of providing arguments, but I do not know if you have ever been there... the acoustics are extremely poor. You can barely hear; they distribute speakers, but the acoustics are dreadful. In Terreiro do Paço [Praça do Comércio, Lisbon's main square], the rallies held there were shows of force; even the "Que se lixe a Troika" [Screw the Troika—an anti-austerity civic movement] rally, which filled the Terreiro do Paço square, was a highly curious rally: it featured a minuscule stage with a minuscule sound system, and consequently, the majority of the square did not even realise a rally was taking place—there were people in the square at the end of the demonstration who merely noticed that "way in the back" there was a stage. #01:03:47.5#

Interviewer: And despite the fact that people cannot hear, is it a failure? #01:03:58.3#

P14: No, because that rally was addressing the audience at home, and the demonstration was addressing the demonstration itself. The individuals present were already immersed in their activist experience, in their experience of the struggle; their political intervention was already accomplished, they did not require further arguments... they took to the streets, and *that* was the argument. They already possessed the arguments necessary to take to the streets. #01:04:16.6#

Interviewer: Which is distinct from a campaign rally? #01:04:18.8#

P14: It is, because a campaign rally encompasses those two visions. One is to convey the idea of the day to the audience at home, which progressively builds the campaign's narrative. Which is a longer narrative, developed over several days. And the shorter narrative of that specific rally is exclusively for the 200, 300, or 400 people present at that rally. And that one is focused on providing arguments, imparting strength, demonstrating that the party is united (or that it is not united, which can also happen). #01:04:49.7#

Interviewer: And are they also shows of force? #01:04:51.4#

P14: They are shows of force, but not on the scale of what a rally with hundreds of thousands of people can be. It is a demonstration that the party is alive and active, that it possesses strength. But it is not the same thing as the others. #01:05:15.9#

Interviewer: And who attends those rallies? #01:05:15.9#

P14: The people who attend campaign rallies are party activists. That happens across all parties. It is rare to see a passer-by who saw a poster and decided to attend the rally. It is rare for someone to attend a rally because they would like to hear different opinions; nowadays, that is rare. In fact, the larger parties organise excursions to their rallies. They host a pig roast [Note: 'porco no espeto', a traditional free-food draw at Portuguese rural rallies] all afternoon, the parish council makes a coach available, and they herd 40 elderly people onto it to go and watch the rally. Those people are activists [or party faithful] in the sense that they are there, they wave the flag, they receive the promotional hat, and they go home. #01:05:58.8#

Interviewer: Is it manufactured? #01:05:58.8#

P14: Yes. In that rally, there is a core group of individuals who are genuine party activists, and the narrative is indeed for them; but ultimately, what matters to the party is the five minutes on the evening news. Those events are entirely orchestrated for the five minutes on the news and are always a show of force. In smaller parties, such as the Bloco de Esquerda, since we lack the logistical and financial capacity to mount spectacles of that magnitude, what we attempt to do is foster a proximity that allows us to deliver a different discourse, to adopt a different logic. Furthermore, we believe the path of the classical rally has been exhausted. That is why it is increasingly difficult, even for those larger parties, to achieve massive rallies. It is highly difficult. Increasingly, it requires a greater financial effort, because it is increasingly difficult to capture even one more person to attend a rally. That type of rally is exhausted. Others—smaller, with a greater capacity for discussion, closer to the people—I am certain are not. #01:07:05.9#

Interviewer: You were telling me that people engage with this other type of rally... #01:07:09.0#

P14: These Summer rallies I am telling you about are an amusing example of this. If you wish to attend one, or if you happen to be there, you can drop by to observe. It is a minimal structure, with seventy chairs—which is the maximum we can fit inside a van—and initially, a few people start to speak... there are two or three party activists, or four or five, or ten, who are genuine activists from that specific location. Because these are seaside resort towns, they are not places where we have a strong grassroots presence [implantation], so there are few [activists] who sit on the chairs; and it is only a while after the speeches begin that people start to sit down. "Since I am here listening to this chap for half an hour, I will take a seat." And they sit down... and then there are concentric rows forming around it, with people who are there for five minutes or just watching for ten, or they stay for an hour... They stay there to see what it is about, but these rallies are not for party activists. And, therefore, we are convinced that we must hold rallies for non-activists as well... but we cannot simply cease holding rallies for party activists. It is like social media: whenever a new platform emerges... you have to be on that platform, but you can never neglect the previous one... always one more... you cannot abandon traditional campaign newspapers because they have an audience (the people on public transport)... a small party cannot forgo billboards [outdoor advertising]. While a large party commands so much space on the evening news that billboards do not make as massive a difference, a small party lacks that capability, so it must invest in conveying an idea that is absent from the evening news. They [the major parties] possess such a vast media hegemony [communicational hegemony] that it forces us to utilise other tools. Different rallies, subverting their logic, is something we attempt to do because it is the means to pierce that communicational hegemony. #01:09:32.5#

Interviewer: Returning to the rally, who is its protagonist? The party or the leader? #01:09:35.9#

P14: It is rarely the leader. That is, it can be if there is a rally featuring someone who embodies that concept. For instance, when we brought the president of Syriza [Alexis Tsipras] to a rally in Porto, where we filled a hall with a thousand people... it was not broadcast on television, but the Bloco de Esquerda filling a hall with a thousand people is, despite everything, an achievement... we do not always manage it. Our rallies average 400 or 500 people, depending on the location. Now, having over a thousand people in one place to see a foreign politician is atypical. It is because it is Syriza, because he will probably be the next Prime Minister of Greece, breaking with the European *status quo*. Indeed, Podemos, Syriza, and Sinn Féin were the great surprises on the left; aside from the extreme right, they were the significant signs of the combat against austerity in a desert of everything else. Everything else is austerity. There is a bloc of defence against austerity within those three parties. The Bloc [Bloco de Esquerda] had a poor result, and the PCP had a medium result, in the sense that they gained 35 thousand votes... but that is not quite... The Bloco de Esquerda lost 200 thousand votes in those elections... Taking that into account, one cannot say it was an extraordinary result; it was a much better result than ours, but... ours is the one that was poor, not theirs that was good. Taking that into account, at a rally where the leader of Syriza is going to speak, he is the centre of the rally, that is a fact. Normally, the rally is... those watching at home have the experience of “that gentleman spoke”, and thus the centre of the rally might be the coordinator or the lead candidate; but for the person attending the rally, the experience is entirely different. They have an experience where the centre is the idea—the various ideas we propose and the counterpoint to the ideas of others. Because that is precisely it... if the MP who deals with issues pertaining to violence against women speaks, she provides us with a set of arguments from someone who studies that subject regarding the issue of the public crime of rape; she provides us with weapons to discuss that in our workplace, in our school. Then someone else comes to speak about the issue of Iraq... “The problem in Iraq is this... whatever... we should do this, we should not do that...” And therefore... it is a much more social experience, much more communal amongst all those people. Hence, the centre of the rally depends on who is watching and from where. #01:12:47.1#

Interviewer: And is that speech tailored for those present or for those watching the broadcast? Is it conceived in that sense? #01:12:57.5#

P14: It is... the main speech, the one that will be broadcast on the evening news, or that we anticipate will be broadcast, is designed for both internal and external audiences. It has an internal and an external component. The speeches of the other speakers are always for the people attending the rally, and it depends on the audience. In rallies where we do not have as many party activists, the objective is not to provide a set of arguments for the activists to discuss matters elsewhere. The objective is to dismantle clichés, dismantle common myths, dismantle what people think every day from watching television... what they think they think... #01:13:36.3#

Interviewer: Is there a function of standardising the discourse? #01:13:38.6#

P14: [Hesitation] It might not be standardising the discourse... I have no problem with that; it could be the part about providing a set of arguments for the activists... the portion containing arguments for the activists does indeed standardise the discourse. Because it is normal that someone studying a topic within the party can assist others in comprehending the various dimensions of the problem and the solution we are presenting. That is normal and it standardises the discourse. Someone who knows more about the environment will know less about Palestine... and they learn. It allows for the standardisation of the discourse from that perspective. However, in those rallies where we have fewer activists and more people who are not from the party—in that more casual rally—

the discourse must be oriented differently. It must strike at the root of what constitutes the official narrative [official communication] and attempt to dismantle it, to conduct a critical analysis of that official narrative. It could be regarding a specific topic, for example, the Bank of Portugal stating that BES [Note: Banco Espírito Santo, a major Portuguese bank that collapsed during the financial crisis] is solid. This could be a speech at a rally for the general public: how can the Bank of Portugal claim that Banco Espírito Santo is solid, and to expound upon that. If it were for the party activists, it would be expounded upon from one perspective, which is more ideological; if it is for non-activists, it is from another perspective, which is more open and, taking into account the arguments provided by the Bank of Portugal and those provided by BES, attempts to dismantle them using the available statistics or data... #01:15:26.5#

Interviewer: Are the arguments more ideological during campaigns, given that rallies are more geared towards party activists? #01:15:28.5#

P14: In certain parts of the rally, yes. The arguments are ideological from the perspective of the struggle and confrontation between the various campaigns... #01:15:49.2#

Interviewer: And what types of arguments are presented? #01:15:52.1#

P14: A good rally must encompass several types of arguments. It cannot dispense with a phase of galvanisation, generating enthusiasm for the campaign effort, for the capacity for growth, for the expectations regarding the results. It must do this. And the various rallies throughout the campaign must manage those expectations. The final rally tends to be the most important... or the one prior to the final one. Because that relates to the campaign and the people watching at home. At midnight on the final day of campaigning, the electoral campaign concludes; and that means the final rally, the one on Friday night, is not broadcast on Saturday. Therefore, it vanishes. The final rally serves essentially to galvanise the party and for the live television broadcasts—the 8:00 PM broadcasts on the free-to-air [terrestrial] networks and for the subsequent live broadcasts on cable television. It serves that purpose, for people to fraternise there, to say it was a great campaign, a massive effort, that they succeeded and it was important... but it does not reach Saturday, nor Sunday... it exhausts itself [expires]. The Thursday rally is the rally that shapes the final day of campaigning. It is the one that will feature in the midday news bulletins and that sometimes still reaches the Friday evening news. For this reason, sometimes the Thursday rally is more important from the perspective of external communication than the Friday one, which is typically the grand campaign rally. It depends on the stage of the campaign we are in; the campaign launch must always be a major rally. It might be something other than a rally, but if it is a rally, it must be strong, it must be large, it must demonstrate a strong kick-off right from the start, something powerful. The first one must be very strong, then... I do not know how other parties manage this, but you might go to other locations where you are less strong, a city that might be important but where mobilisation is more difficult for some reason. Those are left more or less for the beginning of the campaign, and then there is a crescendo in the campaign rallies during the final week, which is the official campaign week; there is a crescendo towards the locations where the rally can be better, where there is a greater capacity for mobilisation, where there is a greater capacity to communicate with the people. #01:18:54.4#

Interviewer: Is it a progression towards a climax? #01:18:55.3#

P14: Certainly. That is the idea. It involves managing the campaign timeframe in such a way that there is a perspective of a crescendo, of improvement and continuation, of progression. #01:19:11.3#

Interviewer: And is that designed with television in mind? #01:19:09.1#

P14: A portion is designed for television, of course. That is to say, no party can afford to neglect the television aspect. And despite all the Social Media, television is what matters most. For everyone. And I used to be more certain that this would change. I do not think

it will change. The power of television is colossal compared to all other mass media. To give you an example, during the March 12th demonstration, the first ‘Geração à Rasca’ [Note: ‘Desperate Generation’—a massive 2011 youth anti-austerity protest] demonstration, the first major one, the television networks made a mistake—or rather, the television directors made a mistake. For the first time, an event was beginning to gain traction on social media; the Facebook algorithm at the time was different and allowed you to invite people *en masse* (the invitations for that demonstration reached far more people; it is harder to invite thousands now), it began to spread, and the television networks began to pay attention to the phenomenon, following the print media. When the television commentators saw that the phenomenon was already gaining some magnitude and there were already interviews in the newspapers, they decided to attack it. The problem was that when they decided to attack it, they had to discuss it. And in order not to make what they were doing entirely ridiculous, they always had to include someone who defended or was associated with the demonstration; this provided airtime to a very large group of people who were appearing on television for the first time discussing ordinary matters, saying “I refuse to continue being a precarious worker, to remain unemployed, I will have to emigrate, this is a disgrace,” and on the other side, commentators would appear saying “it is a disgrace, but things will change slightly”... and this allowed the concept of the demonstration to appear on television for the first time. It was television that made the demonstration. Facebook provided the spark, but their [the television networks’] attempt to dismantle and attack it allowed it to appear on television and massified it. Subsequently, for other demonstrations, this approach changed on the part of the television networks. They no longer attack them. If an event gains significant traction on social media, on blogs (which have died out in the meantime), then they simply report that there will be a demonstration tomorrow. All the concepts began to shift because the television channels realised that they were the ones creating the demonstrations. The grand trick for doing everything still, the grand communication, all still resides in television. #01:23:22.7#

Interviewer: Has the impact of social media been felt more acutely in the print media? #01:23:33.0#

P14: Precisely. Print media is effectively dead. Television is extremely potent; radio is very potent and has reinvented itself because of social media. Television is also attempting to do so. Any party must plan the campaign, the rallies, everything... bearing television in mind. Social media, posters, billboards belong to a second or third tier of communication that reaches hundreds of thousands, or millions by the end of the campaign, but television reaches millions every single day, and therefore television remains the centre. I do not know if other parties have “trolls”; we do not operate “trolls” on the Internet... I know the PS has considered it; I do not know how they are implementing it... other parties abroad do it, corporations do it... States do it. They have “trolls” working on the Internet; we do not... we do not have people on social media, with fake or real profiles, propagating a specific idea or denigrating another, engaging in that guerrilla combat [or guerrilla communication], which can be organised or not. What we do—we do not have professional “trolls”, we do not have people receiving money to do this with several fake profiles—but what we do know is that on social media there is a highly intense debate regarding various matters at all times, and it is not solely about the primary theme broadcast on the evening news. #01:25:37.3#

Interviewer: How does that influence the rally? #01:25:38.0#

P14: The issue is also at the level of the experience of the people attending the rally. The individuals present at the rally must feel that, on the following day, they have something to share regarding the rally’s sub-themes. It might even be on the very day. It frequently happens that people take a photograph and comment, “this speech... whatever,” or they pair a quote with a photograph, or “João Semedo said this, Catarina Martins said

that, Francisco Louçã said whatever else”—this occurs frequently. And then they share it, there are ‘likes’... there are ‘likes’ from the chap standing right next to them participating in the same rally. Or... we do not take *selfies*; we have not done so yet—*selfies* were the great obsession of the recent European Elections—but there were occurrences of that nature. There are party leaders who turn around, take a photograph, and immediately garner I-do-not-know-how-many thousand ‘likes’. #01:26:37.7#

Interviewer: And is that planned? #01:26:40.7#

P14: Not from the perspective of the rally itself, but it is planned from the perspective of the campaign. Our internet portal maintains a profile on Facebook, another on Twitter, and on Instagram, and it might photograph a rally, post it, and state, “speech happening now... and whatever else,” and that disseminates, but it disseminates beyond the rally. It does not intervene in the rally itself. #01:27:06.2#

Interviewer: Do you consider that there is a boundary between the rally within the physical space and the experience of the rally outside of that space? #01:27:11.3#

P14: Yes... uhh [hesitation]... There might not be a definitive boundary, but the question is, “how do we enable the people who are outside the physical space to intervene within the space?”. And we have some experiences—which we have already discussed—of how that occurs. Currently, what is easier to facilitate is for people outside the physical space to observe what is happening inside the space. The vector is not biunivocal [Note: bi-directional/symmetrical]; that is, it has one velocity in one direction and a different velocity in the other. The people who are at the rally, subsequently, equipped with that idea, take a photograph right there on site, or at home they share an article on the subject or the video of the rally speech on social media. #01:27:51.9#

Interviewer: And are there key messages designed with this in mind for the rally? #01:27:52.6#

P14: Yes, that can happen. For instance, the slogan “De pé!” [Standing up!]... this... oh... [hesitation]... well... the “De pé!” rally, that idea, that slogan, was something that did not go viral on social media (for that, it would have needed a massive number of clicks, ‘likes’, and shares), but within the Bloco de Esquerda community, it spread extensively. There were many people declaring “De pé!” and posting it on their Facebook pages. Furthermore, there was a group of journalists covering the campaign who posted on Facebook, “on Sunday we will vote standing up!”—journalists who were following the campaign. Well, just to provide you with an example... #01:28:38.5#

Interviewer: You spoke of a celebration earlier. In this regard, I ask you: what level of engagement is expected from the people at the rally? #01:29:02.0#

P14: The rally is a spectacle. It is staged for those two levels we discussed: the people who are physically there and the people who are at home. All the people present are summoned to listen to those ideas, to interpret them, and to judge them. Because there might be moments where, for the sake of the television spectacle, there will be applause; but in our rallies, the applause occurs genuinely. There is no ‘warm-up act’ [or animator/cheerleader] designated to clap. That does not exist. We do not do it because it is entirely artificial, and that artificiality is noticeable. People sense it, they recognise it. #01:29:52.9#

Interviewer: Do other parties do it? #01:29:52.9#

P14: Not to my direct knowledge. The experience I have with other parties’ rallies... I do not know enough to assert that. But that is not... we do not do it. We do not think in that manner. We believe that people who are appreciating the speaker will do so [applaud] organically. There are very intriguing speakers. Miguel Portas, for example, elicited tremendous applause. Fernando Rosas elicits tremendous applause. Francisco Louçã, on the other hand, elicits far less applause, yet people enjoy listening to Francisco Louçã much more, because there is normally a segment in Francisco Louçã’s speech where he is explicating an idea, and the people become so engrossed in the idea he is explaining that

they stop [applauding]. And this disrupts the spectacle for the people watching at home. It is curious. Those two worlds do not intersect. There are other, more galvanising parts where everyone applauds, because the intonation of the person speaking indicates that they are asking for applause, or the phrase is exceptionally good and people applaud. However, there is a segment that receives less applause than the previous speaker, even though people might be enjoying that speech far more. This relates to the more explanatory portion of the speech. There are people who are too absorbed in what the gentleman is saying, and they do not applaud because that is not the purpose. They are listening to the argument; they are reflecting upon it. They are engaged in the experience of the rally. #01:31:36.0#

Interviewer: Are there two levels? #01:31:40.6#

P14: Depending on the speaker, they manage that portion. The way intonation is applied to this or that word completely alters what the audience perceives, and everyone knows that is the moment to applaud. Everyone feels it. "Because whatever..." —bang, applause... that is the typical pattern. It is part of what is expected by the people attending a rally and what they themselves anticipate. Because it relates to the approval of an idea, or the concept that we are together doing something, or the interaction with the speaker. #01:32:33.1#

Interviewer: When you speak of being together, is there a sense of communion at the rally? #01:32:35.5#

P14: Yes, it has that sense of communion. That community is united by a set of ideas, and that is expressed at the rally. The strongest ideas, the most emphatic speakers, are those who make people feel that it is a very good idea and even a good spectacle. #01:32:55.6#

Interviewer: Is it a belief that those ideas will be implemented? #01:32:56.7#

P14: Certainly. Or that we will fight for them. In our case, it is not so much that we want to implement them immediately... we do, we do not give up on that; our heritage is to fight for ideas that can be realised, but we do not expect them to happen right now... that would be strange. #01:33:18.2#

Interviewer: Is it an idealisation? #01:33:25.8#

P14: Yes. #01:33:25.8#

Interviewer: And is the rally a space of exaggeration? #01:33:25.8#

P14: There is a hyperbolisation of speeches. It has to be that way. The most emphatic speeches are always exaggerated. On the speaker's part, there is exaggeration... more in form than in content. That is, I do not see any of our leaders telling untruths or lies to stir some spirit... especially because it is being broadcast on television and the next second someone would be debunking it. What can happen is that, from the perspective of performance, of the role they are playing there, they are very emphatic. The form is very emphatic. #01:34:18.3#

Interviewer: And is that assimilated by the people? #01:34:18.3#

P14: Yes. There is constant feedback. A speaker who fails to galvanise the people, despite trying, begins to fade. This happens with everyone, doesn't it? Or someone who starts to excite the people a lot must be able to manage the speech. They have created a peak of enthusiasm in the speech (only in form), they have galvanised the people; now, how do they lead them to the next point of their idea? You cannot maintain an eternal crescendo; that doesn't exist. If a peak is created, they must then know how to manage the speech, and that is very difficult. Standing on a podium in front of a thousand people, managing to have that discernment [insight], is something very difficult. #01:35:10.1#

Interviewer: And is the speech prepared for that management? Or is it more spontaneous? #01:35:12.8#

P14: It depends on the speaker. It depends on the objective of the speech. And it depends on their experience. Someone who is younger or less experienced in delivering a speech might have that speech prepared from start to finish. That is, having a group of people write a speech and that person reads it. That is possible. It mostly happens that the person writes the speech and gives it to a group of people to help them... #01:35:50.9#

Interviewer: The famous speechwriters? #01:35:50.9#

P14: It's the other way around. They write it themselves and submit it for evaluation by more experienced individuals. There is no ghostwriter. We have some assistance from the press officers, who help identify parts that might be more important, or an idea that should be better explained, but basically, they are a "quality control". The term is not exactly right, but it is about verifying if what one wants to express is being well expressed, if there would be another way to express it, or if there is an example that would make sense to include, or if a sentence is redundant. That exists. #01:36:41.5#

Interviewer: But those who are a bit more experienced... #01:36:43.8#

P14: The more experienced ones have the ability to go up to the podium without notes (that happens in the Bloc), knowing the focus of their speech while considering the overall narrative of the rally, managing to bring it to a successful conclusion within their time. It is a matter of experience. I personally would be unable to do it, but there are others who take notes, have a sequence for their notes; others go up to the podium with no notes at all and manage, in the five minutes they have for the speech, to cover the entire debate. #01:37:29.0#

Interviewer: The more experience they have, the more spontaneous it is? #01:37:29.0#

P14: It can be more spontaneous. Then there are other people who have another capability: within a very fixed and written script, to feign spontaneity. That is also possible. It relates to theatrical skills [dramatic flair] even, because there is a theatrical element that occurs in politics, in the rally, in the response... there is always this more scenographic part. This relates to the person's capability to do it or not. Some are more gifted for it. #01:37:57.5#

Interviewer: What values are expressed in the speaker's address at the rally? #01:38:12.4#

P14: The speaker is the vehicle for an idea. In a party like the Bloc, ideas are supposed to be reached by consensus among us; unless it is an independent speaking, the idea is a Bloc idea. It is a party idea that has already undergone significant maturation [development] to be presented. It is not supposed that someone, in the middle of a rally, comes up with something unprecedented and new to say at that moment. They have to discuss it with others; they have to ensure the idea is good. They have to study the idea to be able to present it, or to be able to counter-argue an opponent's idea. Therefore, they are shared ideas, and the speaker is a vehicle for that shared idea. The values are the values of the proposal that the Bloc has to present; they are the values of the community, of people who are members or sympathisers of the Bloc who consider that proposal to be good. The speaker standardises the discourse, helping people discover all the issues surrounding a specific problem. This depends on the speaker, but the speaker is this vehicle, much more so than the value being to sell the idea that "so-and-so is a good guy". That is less appealing to us than the idea that it is a good idea. It is normal that some speakers are better at doing it and more experienced. #01:39:58.7#

Interviewer: Is the speaker the revealer of the party's values? #01:40:09.0#

P14: Yes, they must be. They must be so and appear to be so. There are these two dimensions. That is, Bloc MPs or leaders must live by the sword they profess. They are expected to have that commitment, to have the right attitudes. There would not be, there is not, a Bloc MP who is racist. That is impossible. Nor a racist Bloc leader. They would not become a Bloc leader. Therefore, [the speaker] is the mirror of the community. They

are its revealer, both in what they say—because what they say must have already matured and they cannot decide for themselves... the commitment required to have a party involves reaching consensus on joint ideas, which is far more important than the individual idea; it is always more important. There is always a better idea when that idea has passed the test of many people debating it, than having the idea of one guy alone. At least, we believe it is so.

The concept of primaries, for example, is a bizarre idea because it bypasses this. Someone who is an excellent orator, who appears to be more than they actually are, might even be a bad person; but as long as they seem like a good person and speak very well, they can be elected without having reached consensus on the idea with their entire party, causing an even greater disconnect between a ruling leadership... it seems direct, but it implies less maturation of the idea and less debate, because that person can be a great speaker and because of that win a party... instead of a large group of people, its activists, being involved in an intense debate, which takes time, to reach a better idea. It implies a lot of reflection and hard work. It implies significant internal criticism, a lot of people stating that a certain decision was right or wrong. #01:42:41.9#

Interviewer: And against whom do we speak at the rally? #01:42:49.7#

P14: The adversary is important in any political discourse. Defining the adversaries and counter-posing new proposals to their ideas, or stating that the adversary's idea is wrong. This adversary is identified by people who... well, giving current examples... anyone who defends austerity as the way out of the crisis is an adversary identified at the rallies. Anyone who appropriates what is a public good for private use is an adversary who can be identified at the rally. What is normally done at a rally is to identify them, name them—it could be an entity such as the Government... the adversary can be the Government... it is necessary to identify them, name them as such, and then describe them. It is necessary to state why they are or are not an adversary. #01:44:19.8#

Interviewer: Is the adversary the personification of something? #01:44:19.8#

P14: Of a policy. It is an ideological matter. We do not have adversaries who are not ideological. That is, we do not hold grudges against people. It makes no sense in politics. Politics is about choices. One of the great tricks of austerity was having reduced the scope of choices. Saying that all choices are reduced to technical choices, hiding the fact that technical criteria are political criteria; that is the trick. Austerity allows for that... that it is technical and the domain of choices is shortened. Faced with narrower choices, how do we expand the realm of the possible? That happens when we name the adversary, when we say that specific possibility... that there are other possibilities beyond the one being named as unique. You have to limit the adversary; they are the ones who expose the idea of that possibility. You limit, identify, and open the scope of possibilities with proposals. We always try to do that. Criticism alone is not enough to create hope in other ideas. That is why we try to do this in everything we do. Building a bridge for everyone to see that other possibilities exist beyond that one. This always implies defining an adversary based on their ideas, on their policy, and not on the person they are. The adversary is not themselves... then there are people who have ideas that are so fixed, so much their own, that they personify the idea itself. Nowadays, [Pedro] Passos Coelho is austerity. We know that. [Angela] Merkel is austerity in Europe. Identifying who chose to carry out a policy is, in fact, a critique of that policy. #01:46:55.2#

Interviewer: To conclude, I wanted to ask you if the rally is here to stay... #01:46:58.8#

P14: I believe so. It is like radio and newspapers. It will undergo many transformations. The concept of rallies like those where we see Hitler speaking to compartmentalised, airtight masses... I am not certain that type of rally has much of a future. I think that kind of rally may have died. But the rallies like those we see in Madrid's squares, at the Puerta del Sol [Note: Focal point of the 15-M movement/Spanish 'Indignados'], which are

rallies... there is a group of people speaking to others and even having some interactivity with them... some say yes, others are against the idea, others ask to repeat... there is already a dialectical movement between the person delivering the speech and the people watching the rally... #01:48:00.4#

Interviewer: Are the people participants? #01:48:00.4#

P14: Directly. They are always participants. In any rally, they are participants. Even those at home... and nowadays it is even easier to see it, because if they share on social networks, if they agree... well, anyone who receives a message is a participant in what happened at that moment. At least I think so. If we see the person at home as external, as a non-participant in the rally, we are not prepared to give them the experience we want to give them when they receive that message. We have to plan things so that they are a participant. The more we can bring that closer together, the better. Other parties have different ideas, for example... the idea of the podium being as high as possible and having the leader as distant as possible has an ideology behind it; it is not random. Ours tells us that we have to be as close as possible to the people and that they have to be the maximum participants in it. The rally is going to change a lot. It has changed a lot; it will change a lot... the monolithic idea of the mass rally may not disappear, but it will become less relevant. While all the ideas of interactive mass rallies might gain ground... The *Occupy* rallies, for example, as policy prohibited the installation of sound systems, they conducted the rally by spreading it through the crowd. A person would say “dear friends” and there would be ten people around them who would shout “dear friends,” and so on, in waves [Note: Known as the ‘Human Microphone’]. A bit like a game of *Chinese whispers*. They did that because they were not allowed to use sound systems, but it is still a rally. It is exactly a rally. #01:49:57.2#

Interviewer: Would it be possible to do that in an electoral campaign? #01:49:57.2#

P14: We have a sound system; we don’t need it. But we’ve done similar things in terms of interaction. This thing where we receive questions or they make interjections... the closer we are to the people, the faster we receive feedback on what we are saying. We try to explore all forms for that to happen. Not neglecting the people who can’t do it because they are watching through television. Our effort has been to increasingly approximate interaction, to make it a multidimensional experience, which is not just someone receiving a message that some “enlightened” person tells them. We consider that to be totally wrong, outdated, and the rally in that perspective might disappear. If so, its soul passes on; it’s not a problem either. #01:50:50.2#

Interviewer: Would a campaign without rallies be possible? #01:50:52.7#

P14: No. I don’t think so. It would be bizarre. It would imply contact with the population through *arruadas* [Note: Traditional Portuguese street walkabouts/canvassing parades]... which are rallies in their own way by being shows of force, but there is no dialogue, no argumentation. Or only through television. Manuela Ferreira Leite [Note: Former leader of the PSD] tried a campaign of that type, with small information sessions; it was a complete disaster. The party didn’t understand her idea and the people didn’t understand her idea, because really that direct exposure to the people was missing. Trying to speak to people only through television is very bad; it’s being far from them, we don’t know them, nor do we know who they are. #01:51:41.1#

Interviewer: So why is a rally held? What makes it so different? #01:51:41.1#

P14: It’s because the person who gives us that message is present. They are with us at that moment. They are in front of the people. The PSD and the CDS, in the European campaign, held highly controlled rallies, with security at the entrance and only those with a party card entered—because they can’t be near people; they can’t. The policy they are carrying out is so aggressive towards people that it doesn’t allow them to be in front of normal people. On the contrary, our rallies try to do exactly the opposite. We understand

that the saturation of a political narrative [message] that reduces the realm of the possible causes a lack of interest in politics, mainly party politics. So we have to make the effort to go to the people, with all those who are available to participate. #01:53:00.0#

Interviewer: And what is that contact like that you speak of? Is it lost when we watch at home? #01:53:04.0#

P14: The immediacy is lost. The sentiment of the audience, which is so important, is lost. Being in front of an audience... the idea I was telling you about rehearsed applause... rehearsing applause causes this to be lost, for example. The feedback between the audience and the person speaking turns a rally into an experience that is not a ready-made, programmed package. It's not a television programme in which there's a guy who orders people to clap, everything is thought out, the timings are thought out... On the other hand, the rally is something that is happening in front of you. It is a public, political intervention that is happening in front of you, about which what you transmit and the person who is speaking to you transmits has a direct interaction, in the moment and in the second; there are no barriers, there is nothing. That makes it a unique experience, as it is the only space where this happens. #01:54:13.5#

Interviewer: Do the speaker and the audience become one? #01:54:16.6#

P14: I don't know if they become one. There are good speakers who probably manage to do that, whose entire speech can be followed by the audience at the right moments and then the audience feels part of a wave, that everyone is feeling the same thing at the same moment. Excellent orators do that. Other people will not manage to do it. #01:54:47.2#

Interviewer: Do the lead speakers [headliners] manage it? #01:54:47.2#

P14: If they do it well, yes. They can do it. There are exceptional tribunes. Within the Bloc, Luís Fazenda is someone who has an excellent ability to do that for the people in the audience. Francisco Louçã is on another level. Catarina Martins does it optimally. They are people who can connect within the Bloc. There were other times of another type of rally... the speeches and rallies that Álvaro Cunhal [Note: Historical leader of the PCP] held, depending also on the audience, have changed... they could no longer be applied in the same way. But at the same time, Carlos Mendes—we were with him in these rallies... they held information sessions for a thousand people... they were the rallies of the time... the small rallies of the time were for a thousand people... in which there was a musical part with the musicians, in which they did three a day, one in the morning, one in the afternoon and one at night... and they travelled the country with leaders of the PCP and other political forces, in which he and Fernando Tordo played; it was a speech at a rally and then there was a debate with the people. Those were already rallies and were rallies totally different from the other mass rallies. They already existed at the time. The point is that all formats coexist, some more in vogue at the moment, but it doesn't mean that other formats for the same thing don't exist, coinciding at the same time. I think they exist. I'm not sure if the classics have much life for now; it may be that in some time they gain a new life. I think the closer they are, the better. The rallies in the Aula Magna, for example, with several political families together are exceptional, and they are even more classic. Those still work... there are various formats that suit various audiences and always trying to use one hammer to do various jobs is what is a disaster. #01:57:14.2#

Interviewer: It seems we are going to continue having rallies for much longer. #01:57:14.2#

P14: We are going to continue holding rallies for much longer. #01:57:14.2#

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