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Title: A dual lens approach to exploring informal communication's influence on learning in a political party

Abstract

Purpose - to explore and discuss the extent of influence of informal communication on learning in a European social democracy political party through a dual lens approach combining information behaviour and organisational learning perspectives.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper presents results from an in depth qualitative study, whereby data was collected through semi-structured and episodic narrative interviews. Template analysis was used.

Findings – Informal conversations were identified as intrinsic to the work of the political party. They did influence learning at individual and group levels, and there was a degree of diffusion within the organisation, although the latter was found to depend on opportunity, individual self-efficacy, level of involvement in the party, and perceptions of who has influence. The dual lens approach facilitated greater levels of granularity of analysis at individual and group levels of learning.

Research implications/limitations – The paper highlights the benefits of using a dual lens approach to add depth to the interpretation of the research findings. Due to the small number of participants further research is needed to verify and extend the results, and support a greater degree of transferability.

Originality/Value – The information behaviour and organisational research theory that underpin the research have not been used together in this way before, and the context for the phenomenon being researched, a traditional political party struggling against the rise of populism in the 21st century, is both contemporary and understudied in each of the theory areas.

Keywords Informal communication**,** Information behaviour, Organisational learning, Information seeking, Knowledge sharing, Political parties

Paper Type Research paper

Introduction: The aim of this paper is to explore and discuss the extent of influence of informal communication on learning in a European social democracy political party as revealed in a small-scale qualitative case study of the party. The rationale for the research question - "how does informal communication influence learning in a political party" - was threefold. Firstly, the mixed fortunes experienced by traditional left of centre parties in the new millennium, often featuring loss of support in favour of protest and populist parties (Keating and McCrone, 2015; Gallagher, 2011), has shown the need for such parties to rapidly increase their rate of learning (Gallagher, 2011). Without this, it becomes difficult for these parties to provide relevant

responses to the electorate and continue to have a voice in government while maintaining their integrity of purpose. Marcella et al (1999, p.171) notes “The need for relevant, accurate and timely information to support decision making has grown along with democratic governance and an increasing complexity of government both nationally and supranationally”. Secondly, the phenomenon of informal communication was chosen due to its “critical role in transporting information” (Subramanian and Mehta, 2013, p.247). It plays a vital role in situated learning, being based on “shared understanding and language, trust, occupational membership as well as situational opportunity and privacy” (Waring and Bishop, 2010). Information seeking behaviour by parliamentarians does feature in the research literature (Baxter et al, 2016; Galtrud and Byström, 2020; Marcella, et al,1999; Marcella et al, 2007; Mostert and Ocholla, 2005; Orton et al, 2000; Walgrave and Dejaeghere, 2017), and often included reference to the need for more studies in this arena. Further research has been conducted by Baxter and Marcella (2017) into voter online behaviour during the Scottish referendum. This leads to the third part of the rationale for the study in this paper, which is that information behaviour among rank and file party members, especially in terms of informal, synchronous conversation, remains relatively understudied both in information behaviour research and in the knowledge management area of organisational learning. The theoretical underpinnings of these academic areas offer valuable perspectives for application in the research design. This then suggested the value of taking a dual lens approach. In this case, the areas of information behaviour and organisational learning were identified as valuable in the development of the research framework. Both areas have something to say about informal communication and both have something to say about learning.

The information behaviourist Wilson (1999, p.251), in the context of developing information behaviour models, noted that little “attention has been devoted to the phenomenon of informal transfer of information between individuals” particularly in the context of communication. The organisational learning theorist Elkjaer (2005), in his discussion on the role of social learning, stresses the importance of informality, conversation, the sharing of individuals’ experiences, and perceptions in the process of sense-making. Our “greatest source of learning comes from conversations” (Gargiulo, 2005, p. 55).

Debowski (2005) sees organisational learning as something that occurs at individual, group, and organisational level. Ford (2015, p.11) makes the link between information, knowledge, and learning in his description of information as being “a meaningful pattern of stimuli, which can be converted into knowledge” by the process of learning. Learning is a “continuous process of inquiry and reflection” (Dewey, 2010) and information behaviour forms a vital part of this process.

Key factors affecting capacity and opportunity for organisational learning are vision, goals and values, organisational structure and culture, leadership style, information flow, mechanisms for feedback, and the extent to which these factors are holistically

applied at individual, group, and organisational levels (Debowski, 2006; Maden, 2011; Senge, 1990; Argyris and Schön, 1978; Balogun and Hope Hailey, 2015).

Furthermore, as shown in the next section, consideration of context, story-telling and narrative, stress and risk reduction, self-efficacy, and cognitive and affective factors, are found in both information behaviour and organisational learning research. Help, hindrances, barriers, and constraints to information seeking are found in information models by Dervin (2005) and Wilson (1997; revisited in 2016), while barriers to effective dissemination of learning at all levels in an organisation are considered in several discussions on promoting effective organisational learning (Becker, 2007; Shockley-Zalabak, 2012; Levina and Orlikowski, 2009).

Jashapara (2005) states that knowledge management, the disciplinary home of organisational learning, needs to “adopt an integrated, interdisciplinary and strategic perspective”, while the information behaviourist Dervin (2003) calls for greater inter-disciplinarity in human and user studies. Views such as these thus confirm the desirability of using such a dual perspective approach.

The remainder of the article includes further discussion on the theoretical underpinning of the research, followed by an explanation of the methodology, a discussion of the findings and, finally, conclusions are drawn.

Theoretical underpinning of the research

This section begins with a brief description of the nature of informal communication, followed by an exploration of aspects of information behaviour, including views on informal communication, learning and knowledge acquisition, motivation and influencing factors. The same approach is then taken with organisational learning literature.

Informal communication has been described in several ways: as “voluntary talk”, “not solely work or task focused”, “social glue” (Fay, 2011, p. 213), and a “web of conversations” (Coiera, 2000, p. 278). It is unplanned, off the record, acting beyond role expectation (Baugut and Reinemann, 2013), is interstitial, includes unconscious choices, can be mood driven, and can often tell a story (McNely, 2011).

Information behaviour can be conceptualised “as including how people need, seek, manage, give, and use information in different contexts” (Fisher, Erdelez and McKechnie, 2005, p. xix). Information seeking is considered by Case et al (2016) to be a conscious effort, such as Wilson’s (1997) active and ongoing search styles, as distinct from information behaviour, which includes this as well as subconscious or unintentional behaviour, such as glimpsing or serendipitous encountering (Foster and Ford, 2003; Rioux, 2005). R. S. Taylor (1968, cited in Case et al, 2016) identified four stages of information need, moving from the unexpressed or visceral need, to a more conscious level, though still ambiguous, to a more formalised statement of information need before engaging with a source, to a compromised information

need, “restated into language used by the source” (Case et al, 2016, p. 84), reflecting Taylor’s seminal work on question negotiation (1968, cited in Case et al, 2016). Wilson’s (1997) passive attention and passive search styles provide the additional nuance of a process of moving from the subconscious to the early stages of a more focused approach to information seeking. He identifies “information behaviour is a part of human communication behaviour” (Wilson, 1999, p. 263), incorporating multiple exchanges between two or more people giving and receiving feedback including information and knowledge. Thus, information seeking, serendipitous information encountering and knowledge sharing all contribute to information behaviour.

Information behaviour research has shown that people often prefer personal or informal sources to the formal (Case et al, 2016; Dervin, 2005; Hepworth, 2004, Marcella et al, 1999), arguably due to those positive attributes identified in Hepworth’s (2004) research into informal learning among carers, of accessibility, being knowledgeable, having good listening skills, a good manner, and being proactive and responsive. Conversations, and the stories and memories that emerge from them, contribute to the larger narrative. They are key opportunities for sense-making, where knowledge gaps reveal themselves through direct questions or expressions of confusion and uncertainty, or through affective states of stress and anxiety (Dervin, 2005). While informal and unofficial contacts were found to be popular among parliamentarians (Marcella et al, 1999; Orton et al, 2000), Galtrud and Byström (2020) found that elite politicians had less access to informal sources at their level of performance, than they did when working at local and constituency levels. Such elite politicians including party leaders (Walgrave and Dejaeghere, 2017) and ministers (Marcella et al, 1999; Marcella et al, 2007) find themselves in the position of having little prior knowledge of the areas in which they need to make decisions, while remaining under close public scrutiny. They rely on intermediaries, including research assistants, and gatekeepers, as preliminary analysers, but also, as a checking process, go to the original sources, which are now reduced in quantity (Galtrud and Byström, 2020).

Further observations have been made about the lack of information skills of both elite politicians and their staffers (Galtrud and Byström, 2020, citing Taylor, 1991; Marcella et al, 1999, Marcella et al, 2007; Walgrave and Dejaeghere, 2017). This has potential implications in terms of how information behaviour contributes to learning within a political party. Marcella et al (2007), in their research into information seeking behaviour of users of the European Parliamentary Documentation Centre, found that users were “uncritical and pragmatic in use of the most readily available information, sacrificing quality in favour of ease of access” (Marcella et al, 2007, p. 920) and failed to distinguish the reliability of information found via official published information as opposed to that found on sources such as a pressure group website. While both sources are arguably partisan, it is important to understand the difference in nature of the bias. Orton et al (2000) also notes that

information behaviour of Members of Parliament was a reactive response resulting in "rushed, unsystematic and uncritical" (Orton et al, 2000, p. 216) information seeking. In conclusion, Orton et al (2000, p. 216) notes "there is no other professional equivalent where a body of individuals, from diverse backgrounds and with widely varying qualifications, is expected to carry out demanding new duties with no professional or educational preparation specifically for the tasks involved".Combining the views of Ford (2015), that learning involves turning information into knowledge, and Bateson (1972, p.272), that information can be described as the "difference that makes a difference", it can be inferred that learning is also about the difference that makes a difference. Hepworth (2004) refers to the amount of knowledge an individual has at a particular point in time and how this changes as the individual interacts with various sources, including other people, and experiences these differences, which make a difference. He also considers existing, new, and longer term changed behaviour as outcomes in informal learning. In updating this model, Walton and Hepworth (2011) add a new 'meta-cognitive' component, which includes evaluation and reflection.

Motivation to engage in information behaviour includes a need to acquire knowledge to meet a particular goal, to reduce a perceived knowledge gap (Dervin, 2005), to meet an information need (Case et al, 2016), to complete, clarify, change or verify the view of a situation (Todd, 2005), to reduce uncertainty (Kuhlthau, 2004, Belkin, 2005, Csikszentmihalyi, 2013), to satisfy curiosity (Savolainen, 2014), to reduce risk or buffer stress (Wilson, 1997; Fay 2011), and to increase a sense of self-efficacy (Wilson, 1997, Savolainen, 2012; Robson and Robinson, 2013; Walgrave and Dejaeghere, 2017). Orton et al (2000, p. 216) observes that the "triggers for information seeking amongst MPs are, in many instances, unpredictable, emanating frequently from consitutuents' demands and from issues receiving attention in the media". Information needs arise from physiological, affective, and cognitive needs (Savolainen, 1995, 2012, 2014 and 2015; Wilson, 1981 and 1997; Hepworth, 2004), and within given contexts (Dervin, 2005; Wilson, 2005; Fisher et al, 2005). Other variables impacting on human information behaviour include roles and tasks, status, years of experience, and areas of specialisation (Leckie, 2005; Wilson, 2005; Walton and Hepworth, 2011) with information overload being identified as a key barrier to information seeking (Galtrud and Byström, 2020; Marcella et al, 1999; Marcella et al, 2007; Orton et al (2000); Wilson, 1997; Savolainen, 1998, 2012 and 2014; Walgrave and Dejaeghere, 2017). Strategies used by elite politicians to deal with information overload included the use of organisational procedures applied by staffers to organise and categorise information coming in, heuristics from "mostly informal practices" (Walgrave and Dejaeghere, 2017, p.233) and confidence that the elite politicians would make the right information choices for their decision-making, and even where errors are made, that they would be able to rectify these easily (Walgrave and Dejaeghere, 2017). This sense of self-efficacy could reflect the level of experience of the politicians, but is also notable given the lack of information seeking skills referred to earlier in the paper. Efficacy in the sense of working with

information that will give the politicians a good chance of success was identified as one of the heuristic factors for selecting information (Walgrave and Dejaeghere, 2017). A key heuristic though was that of ideology, where politicians would select information that benefits the party's ideology (Galtrud and Byström, 2020; Walgrave and Dejaeghere, 2017). Galtrud and Byström (2020) in their application of Chatman's 1999 work on her theory of life in the round, found that their research subjects information use was primarily determined by 'insiders', those who define which information is "worth paying attention to" (Galtrud and Byström, 2020, p. 411). However more nebulous environment scanning was found to create a more open minded approach to information and lead to accessing a bigger range of sources. Citing Chatman (1999), Galtrud and Byström (2020) noted boundaries were unlikely to be crossed, unless the information was perceived, by the politicians or more collectively, as critical, relevant or that their 'small world' is not functioning effectively. Orton et al (2000) identifies a degree of such boundary crossing being requested from staffers in certain cross-party activities.

Organisational learning is about processes of learning within organisations (Dibella and Nevis, 1998), process in practice (Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2005), and developing social capital and knowledge leadership at individual, group, organisational, and leadership levels (Debowski, 2006). It relies on individuals sharing their accumulated prior knowledge and diffusing this throughout the organisation in order to increase organisational memory (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). Knowledge is a process, which is ongoing and social, (Jashapara, 2005) and a conversation (Allee, 2003). The more diverse the knowledge-base is, the greater the organisation's absorptive capacity (Jashapara, 2005) and its ability to respond to external information in new and innovative ways (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). "Learning increases the collective intelligence of the whole" (Gargiulo, 2005, p.25).

Informal communication is a key part of developing organisational learning values (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2011), fostering a sense of identity and self-esteem, and facilitating opportunities to "collect and pass along information" (Allee, 2003, p.115). Knowledge exchange in informal communication extends past set agendas (Cheuk, 2007) and can make up for weaknesses of formal communication (Fay, 2011; Chen et al, 2013). It is a valuable sense-making activity as people try to identify and help each other understand uncertainties and ambiguities (Waring and Bishop, 2010; Fay, 2011) in the workplace. Informal communication fosters critical reflection, emotional support, and contribution to problem solving. It helps structure social interaction, and fosters social cohesion (Johnson et al, 1994), encouraging follow-up communication and strengthening cultural and professional values, identity and norms, as well as providing a safe and trusting environment in which to challenge these (Waring and Bishop, 2010; Yuan et al, 2013).

Dewey's (2010) identification of inquiry and reflection as the cornerstone of learning is strongly absorbed in organisational learning thinking. Inquiries start with the senses and bring about new experiences, which are not always identified

consciously. However, for learning to take place, those experiences need to be turned into acknowledged and conscious experiences (Elkjaer, 2005). Learning seeks out patterns of logic while surfacing and challenging assumptions and beliefs (Allee, 2003), which feeds into new knowledge (Adams, 2015). As with informal communication, learning can be planned or unplanned. It is a state of attention (Allee, 2003). Learning that occurs through more informal, less managed and more situated activities fosters intrinsic knowledge sharing, which naturally occurs through socialisation and participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Argyris and Schön's (1996) pioneering work on organisational learning fundamentals remains relevant and highly regarded (Cauldwell, 2012a; Lipshitz, 2000; Bartunek, 2014). Their single and double-loop learning concepts distinguish between norm driven identification and correction of errors from deeper questioning of those norms. Double-loop learning requires the challenging of 'values-in-use' and 'espoused values', including degree of correspondence between the two, at individual, group, and organisational levels (Argyris and Schön, 1996).

Motivation for learning through informal channels includes needing to find common ground, a shared sense of identity and increasing self-esteem (Chatman, 1999 cited in Galtrud and Byström, 2020; Allee, 2003; Fay, 2011), to reduce risk and know something which more strongly enables successful functioning within the organisation (Subramanian and Mehta, 2013). Learning through informal channels is predicated on trust, privacy, and a sense of psychological safety (Waring and Bishop, 2010), fostering an atmosphere where mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning (Argyris and Schön, 1996). Trust is vital "to enable effective collaboration, along with willingness to give as well as receive information and to give credit appropriately for the information received" (Becker, 2007, p. 43). It reduces knowledge hoarding, allowing narratives and stories to emerge, thus facilitating learning and knowledge exchange (Jashapara, 2005).

Organisational learning is affected by power dynamics in everyday practice (Levina and Orlikowski, 2009); attitudes, values, skills, and behaviour of colleagues and managers (Becker, 2007); confidence of elite politicians to select the information that will best assist with decision making (Walgrave and Dejaeghere, 2017; Galtrud and Byström, 2020); perceptions of what is expected from the organisational culture and environment (Shockley-Zalabak, 2012), and fallibility of knowledge in the way people perceive, remember and apply beliefs about what they think they know (Audi, 2011). Cognitive and affective factors, as in information behaviour, are important considerations which impact on organisational learning (DeFilippi and Ornstein, 2005; Vince and Gabriel, 2011; Israelidis, 2015). Willingness to engage in knowledge sharing is affected by how people compare their own knowledge and competence with those they communicate with, considering factors such as who they think is most likely to have the best information in a given setting (Shockley-Zalabak, 2012). "Emotions both conscious and unconscious, which are individually felt and collectively produced and performed, are interwoven with politics and power in

organizations" (Vince and Gabriel, 2011, p. 337), thus impacting on learning within the organisation.

"Diffusion of lessons learned throughout an organisation can be fraught with all sorts of difficulties" (Argyris and Schön, 1996, p. 3). Key factors in overcoming this are the role of influencers and their spheres of influence. They are the organisation's knowledge brokers, who can be found in any role or position (Swan, 2014). They are identifiable by their knowledge and communication skills. They have the ability to influence immediate colleagues, can speed up or slow down change, and change people's opinions (Farmer, 2008). Informal communication is their predominant modus operandi. Awareness of who they are, is vital for enabling change (Farmer, 2008), due to their often extensive networks and capacity for diffusion of knowledge through different levels and sections of an organisation. Orton et al (2000) observed that Members of Parliament, who already had lengthy experience in the political arena, were able to develop and thus draw on more relationships, intelligence networks and media links.

Methodology

The influence of informal communication on learning in a political party was explored through a case study of a social democratic party in an EU country between 2017 and 2019. The country is not named to maintain anonymity. A case study approach facilitates the investigation of "a contemporary phenomenon in depth and with its real-world context" (Yin, 2014, p. 16) and provides the opportunity "to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation – again because of the lessons it might provide about the social processes related to some theoretical interest" (Yin, 2014, p. 52). Here the phenomenon was informal communication and the dual areas of theoretical interest were information behaviour and organisational learning. The data collection involved a series of interviews with each of the five participants, i.e. party members, who came forward as a result of a purposive and snowball sampling method (Guest et al, 2012). While the sample was relatively small, Bryman (2016) observes that in-depth, rich, and detailed research can be conducted on just one or two cases. Other researchers concur. For example, Crouch and McKenzie (2006) argue that small samples are appropriate with labour-intensive research and in-depth interviewing, especially where reflection on experiences is being reported and the researcher needs to be responsive to cues throughout the interview, and where "respondents' experience is analysed with the uncovering of its thematic dimensions in view" (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006, p. 488). Galtrud and Byström (2020) notes that research in the area has tended to have smaller numbers, in part due to the busy schedules of the target groups. This was a difficulty here too in that parliamentarians were less inclined to respond, or initially agreed until their diaries prevented them from participating further. Members of Parliament "generally regarded themselves as too busy to participate", (Marcella et al, 2007, p. 923) even with research aims being potentially advantageous to the members. Finding participants with sufficiently different characteristics, even with rank and file

members, to ensure variation in the responses, was a slow process due to the required time commitment from the participants for the data collection. The participants were three women and two men in different age groups (20's, 40's, retired) with different roles and levels of involvement. Roles included a full-time, paid research role based in the parliament; a full-time, paid supervisory role working with party area representatives; and a part-time voluntary role as chair of a university branch of the party. Two members were less involved, acting only in voluntary roles, although they both previously held significant, paid roles in the party. One of these was retired and the other occasionally represented the party at EU level meetings in Brussels.

The research had elements of ethnography in that it was a "study of social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within groups" (Reeves, p. 337) but through the eyes of the participants rather than the researcher. Hence, data was not collected through observation. Observation could also have reduced the very attraction of informal conversation as a private, safe psychological space (Waring and Bishop, 2010), where there is considerable possibility of sensitive and confidential content, and the rapid nature of conversational interactions is difficult to observe. Without knowing enough about the context of the conversations, they could have been difficult to follow, hence the use of interviews instead (Flick, 2014).

A pre-interview (see Appendix 1 for interview guide) with each participant explored their views on the nature of informal communication and lead to the use of the term 'informal conversation' as being more helpful for the participants in selecting examples to explore in their final interview. The first (see Appendix 1 for interview guide) of the two in-depth interviews was semi-structured and explored personal and organisational learning contexts.

Questions on learning and updating were asked at the start of the interview to put participants at ease and establish their perceived approaches to learning and information behaviour, including discovering their preferred sources. Questions relating to personal values and personal goals, and how they connect with party goals, allowed further exploration of Argyris and Schön's (1996) 'values-in-use' versus 'espoused values' and fed into the psychological and motivational factors identified in both information behaviour (Wilson, 1997; Savolainen, 1995, 2012, 2014 and 2015) and organisational learning literature (DeFilippi and Ornstein, 2005; Vince and Gabriel, 2011). Participants were asked about roles and responsibilities (Hepworth, 2004; Elkjaer, 2005; Leckie, 2005), their own sense of what they can personally achieve, i.e. self-efficacy (Wilson, 1997; Savolainen, 2012; Allee, 2003), and how much influence they feel they can have in an organisation (Shockley-Zalabak, 2012). Influence was explored further as this was identified as a crucial element in effective diffusion of learning, following on from knowledge sharing within the smaller groups and networks engaged in informal conversation (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Farmer, 2008; Levina and Orlikowski, 2009). Questions about the organisation's culture and leadership style were included to further gain a sense of

the wider context of the organisation and the impact of these factors on opportunities for learning (Debowski, 2006; Balogun and Hope-Hailey, 2015). Understanding context is seen as vital to understanding behaviour in both information behaviour (Wilson, 1981 and 1997; Dervin, 2005, Fisher et al, 2005) and organisational learning (Debowski, 2006; Shockley-Zalabak, 20012) research. Both areas also identified the importance of narratives and stories (Dervin, 2005; Gargiulo, 2005), particularly in the context of informal communication.

The second in-depth, episodic narrative interview (see Appendix 2 for interview guide) focused on the micro-contexts of specific informal conversations as identified by the participants for exploration. Participants were initially asked a stream of consciousness question about examples of information conversations that had taken place during the intervening fortnight from the first interview, to gain a sense of the broader range of opportunities and discussions that occurred overall. The interview then moved on to focus on specific examples in more depth and became more narrative in nature, with prompts to ensure coverage of aspects, again informed by the dual lens approach, but in the particularised context of specific conversations. These aspects, similarly to the first interview but at a more granular group and individual level, included the individual contexts of the conversations and emerging cognitive and affective goals. Additionally participants were asked about impact of affective factors on the conversations, learning outcomes including opportunities and barriers (Dervin, 2005; Shockley and Zalabak, 2012), and follow-up actions (Wilson, 1997; Savolainen, 2014).

The interviews then moved away from the specific examples, to asking participants to recall earlier examples of an idea emerging from an informal conversation that came to have a crucial influence on the party and its direction. The final question was on reflexivity, asking whether awareness of what would be covered in the second interview affected the participants' thinking.

Template analysis was used as it "allows the researcher to identify some themes in advance; it is well suited to studies which have particular theoretical or applied concerns that need to be incorporated into the analysis" (King and Horrocks, 2010, p. 168).

This research, thus, involved the seeking of multiple perspectives in particularised settings (Yin, 2005; Stake, 2010) where "social constructions of reality" (Gorman and Clayton, 2005, p.4) are created, and concerned rich, deep data and contextual understanding rather than generalisation (Bryman, 2016). Transferability of findings to similar settings may be possible if the contexts are sufficiently similar or if there is a sufficient level of thick description (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Stake, 2010; Pickard, 2013; Bryman, 2016), although Bryman (2016) is mindfully cautious about assuming transferability in qualitative research where findings reflect more of a contextual uniqueness. Yin's specific concept of 'analytic generalization' refers to case study research as "an opportunity to shed empirical light about some theoretical concepts

or principles" (Yin, 2014, p.40), "corroborating, modifying, rejecting, or otherwise advancing theoretical concepts" (Yin, 2014, p. 41) which, in this instance, involved applying a dual lens approach to explore how informal communication influences learning in a political party.

Findings

This section begins by examining participant perceptions of the nature of informal conversation. The themes which emerged at the analysis stage are then identified and discussed before proceeding to the more detailed reporting. During the course of the research, it became clear that further work would be needed, including a more longitudinal approach and larger sample size, to have sufficient data to enable a viable reflection on learning at organisational level of the political party. However, the findings at group and individual level, from Debowski's (2005) triple level approach, were more substantial with capacity for linking back to previous research. The organisational level findings are therefore presented in terms of organisation context, which could be established from the interviews, and responses relating to leadership and influence, as these aspects prove significant throughout the research, and contribute to the conclusion. This is then followed by findings at group and then at individual level. Although the group section begins with findings from the first interview, most of this section is from the group related findings in the second set of interviews. The section on the individual level again begins with findings from the first interview, which is then followed by the individual related findings from the second interview, with the latter making the greater contribution. Additional information about the findings can be found in Hanlon (2019).

Perceptions of Informal Communication

The term 'informal conversation' was preferred to that of 'informal communication' as participants found the former easier to relate to and it enabled them to more easily identify examples for exploration in their second interviews. Informal conversation, as interpreted by the participants, resulted in the identification of mainly synchronous rather than asynchronous communication. Informal conversations, as experienced by them, would occur anywhere, including while travelling, anytime, at any occasion, with a wide range of people and networks, for a wide range of reasons, in addition to those found in the literature. This strongly reflects the extent to which public visibility is a key factor in the participants' work in the party. Difficulties in distinguishing between formal and informal elements of the conversations were also a feature of the participants' experiences when they were selecting which conversations they wanted to share in the second interviews.

Emergent Themes

Themes from the pre-interview and the first interview, allowing for consideration at individual, group, and organisational levels, emerged as:

- Staying informed: individual learning and updating, and current topics of concern
- Personal factors: individual responsibilities and tasks, personal goals and motivation for joining and working for the party
- Organisational factors: perceived goals of the party, leadership style, and understanding party culture, including narratives and stories
- Interactions and influence: including perceptions of who has most influence, qualities for achieving this, and participant's own capacity to influence.

Emergent themes from the second interview on the specific examples of informal conversations were initially identified topics, emerging goals, affective factors, follow-up, and participant reflexivity. However, at the stage of interpretation, it was found that there was scope for much greater levels of granularity, including increased application of theory, leading to a revision of themes, as follows, according to the relevant aspects of the dual lens underpinning theory approach:

- Context (featuring in both of the dual lens aspects): circumstances leading to the conversation, purpose, time and place, communicators, and topics.
- Communication exchange: initial and subsequent queries, knowledge shared, style of information behaviour (Wilson, 1997), motivation, mood, emotion and attitude. Motivation (featuring in both of the dual lens aspects) was analysed according to goals and cognitive and affective needs, including stress coping, risk reduction and self-efficacy drivers.
- Outcomes: new learning, emergent opportunities, support, challenges and barriers (to information behaviour and organisational learning); and evaluation of information seeking behaviours (influenced by information behaviourists: Todd, 2006; Savolainen, 2014, and Hepworth, 2004).
- Follow-up (featuring in both of the dual lens aspects): unlikely, possible, probable or actual; through conversation or by searching non-human resources.

. These four overarching themes were later worked into a new model for Human Information Communication, detailed in Hanlon (2019) and Hanlon and McLeod (2020).

Organisational Context

Party goals were focused on providing good public services, supporting bargaining rights, creating a 'just society' and an economy based on equality of opportunity, reducing the wealth gap between the poorest and richest, and opposing populism. In terms of party values, tensions between ideology and pragmatics were identified, with ongoing debates about where on this continuum the party needed to position itself without losing its integrity and core ethos.

Therefore, ongoing concerns for the party included internal party reflection on identity, values, direction and learning from past mistakes, and how the party could improve messaging and increase membership. Concerns relating to external issues included, at international level, immigration and the impact of BREXIT, while national

issues centred on hospital waiting lists, shortage of housing and the future of work and its changing nature. Local issues were area specific and regarded as the easiest for achieving visible change once they reach local MPs' and councillors' attention. Populism was seen as a concern at all levels.

Participants reported an increase of membership, particularly to the youth wing of the party. They also noted the experience of the young in work, in that the nature of work is changing for them and traditional structures for representing their rights are declining. Motivation for joining sometimes came from family traditions of political allegiance, or from the perception that the party was relevant and attentive to issues of concern. New members were only likely to stay if they could see the party identifying with 'issues they care about', such as equality, economic fairness and social housing. A 'good social aspect', facilitating more informal interaction, was also perceived as important for maintaining membership.

The participants struggled to find stories, legends and iconic figures in the party narrative that were perceived as currently relevant. This underpinned the afore-mentioned concerns with re-evaluating party identity and values. There was a sense that new stories and narratives needed to be developed in the process of renewal, reinvention, and rebuilding of the party. Three participants mentioned a drift to over-formality in messaging style, appearing too slick, which they believed reduced the message of relevance and integrity of purpose. In changing this, it was felt that the party needed to return to its 'authentic voice', a challenge in today's climate of branding, where 'authentic' could become harnessed to political branding, in a way that still compromises the party presentation (Banet-Weiser, 2012) in the way that participants were concerned about.

Leadership and Influence

There were varied opinions about leadership style. There was a sense that until recently the party leadership had been too centralised. The older participants believed this still to be the case. Marcella et al (1999) notes the impact of increased centralisation on society and the pressures this creates for elite politicians in their information seeking behaviour. However, the younger participants felt that the leadership style was becoming more devolved and democratic. This was evidenced at the annual conference, according to one participant, in that members were invited to critique suggested changes being made to the party constitution. Their observations apparently did contribute to revising the changes. This participant stated that anyone could have a leadership role, and that anyone in the core leadership team could be accessed at any time, formally or informally. Desirable leadership characteristics identified by participants included being visible, accessible, collaborative, willing to engage in consensus building, and having sound judgement, integrity, and experience.

The leadership qualities overlapped with those qualities that participants identified as being important for influence, vital to the effective diffusion of learning through the organisation (Argyris and Schön, 1996; Debowski, 2006). These included being good at communication, able to network effectively (Orton et al, 2000), being open about learning from mistakes and sharing lessons learned, being reflective and self-critical, willing to get to know people, being hard-working and persistent, and polite while maintaining strong convictions. Participant perceptions of influence, as expressed in the first interview, closely mirrored the perceptions of self-efficacy that surfaced in the second interview. Confidence as a strategy in information seeking by elite politicians (Walgrave and Dejaeghere, 2017) reflects the relationship between sense of self-efficacy and influence in the context of decision making. The likelihood of learning acquired during the informal conversations being diffused throughout the organisation were shown to depend on who the participants' immediate links (Orton et al, 2000) were, how confident they were that they would be listened to, and the nature of the opportunities for communicating or applying new knowledge.

With the political party engaging in critical self-examination and review of party identity, communication and leadership styles, and focus, effective learning at individual, group, and organisational levels were needed as never before. There was a sense that the basic party goals aligned with those of the participants and new members, while some existing members continued to question the appropriate positioning of the party on the ideology/pragmatic continuum. Leadership appeared, from the findings, to be moving to being more interactive and devolved, which arguably fosters more opportunities for organisational learning. However, this needs further exploration. Nonetheless, capacity to influence remains vital in the process of diffusion of learning from group and individual levels to the wider reaches of the party.

Group Level Findings

In the first interview, participants were asked about whom and with which groups they tended to have informal conversations. These were, as expected with the nature of the organisation, very wide ranging, bringing in all levels of the party as well as other similar minded parties, the team at the president's office, and former members and colleagues; personal friends, neighbours and family members; sister party members, policy groups and other staff at EU parliamentary levels; freelance workers, employees, employers, voluntary organisations, trade unions, students and universities; and, of course, members of the electorate.

In the second set of interviews, before proceeding to the in-depth narratives of the specific examples, participants identified a broad range of situations where they had engaged in informal conversations in the intervening fortnight. These included social situations such as family conversations and meeting with friends in bars, cafés and restaurants; life events such as weddings, birthdays, and funerals, especially if these involved a party member; personal and work social media encounters; random

phone calls to other party members; before and after formal party meetings and events; and in passing as in the renowned ‘water-cooler’ moments (Bishop and Waring, 2010).

From a learning point of view, informal conversations with family and friends, at life events or on personal social media accounts, provided opportunities to explore a more generic range of viewpoints and discover more information about concerns on the ground. However, participants did observe that their family and social circles often included people with the same or similar political viewpoints and, where this was not the case, people might engage in debate but, more often than not, would avoid politics to avoid conflict or causing offence. All the different types of encounters were seen as potential opportunities for honing debating skills on different topics, while also occurring as opportunities for rumour and gossip without necessarily providing information or new knowledge that would progress learning in the party as a whole.

The specific examples of informal conversations identified for further discussion by the participants are shown in Tables I and II, which document contextual details of the circumstances (how come?) and purpose (why?), times and places (when and where?), communicators (who?) and topics (what?) of the conversations. Some of the examples involve more than one conversation within the same or similar set of circumstances. An example which occurred several years previously is also included. It emerged from the question in the second of the two interviews on whether participants could recall examples from the past of an informal conversation that subsequently proved particularly influential in the party’s direction. Only one participant was able to recall such an occasion. However, it formed a crucial part of the background to part of the first example, demonstrating a successful, influential long-term outcome from an informal conversation. These two related examples, from the present and the past are shown together in Table I.

INSERT TABLE I HERE

The contextual information about the remaining examples is shown in Table II.

INSERT TABLE II HERE

The next part of the findings at group level is based on the communication exchanges themselves, focusing on information seeking and knowledge sharing behaviour, underpinning goals and motivation, and prevailing mood, emotions, and attitudes. The information behaviour aspects within the exchange are included in the group section rather than the individual section because they occurred in a group setting. Where appropriate, the relevant specific conversations are referenced by the example letter (A-E), apart from the prequel example associated with A.

The initial inquiries fell into two groups, the generic and the specific. The generic queries could be applied in any context, with examples such as ‘how’s it going?’,

'what are people talking about', 'what is the latest news?' or even 'do you have family there?' These queries served as openers to conversation, and could be said to be a form of passive attention (Wilson, 1997), until the conversation took a more focused turn with the attention on questions seeking to obtain an overall sense of which topics the conversation was moving towards. These included questions such as 'how did the whole thing [the newly passed law] start?', 'what do you think about the war in Syria?' and 'what do you all think about the book?", thus beginning the shift towards a conscious passive search approach to information seeking (Taylor, 1968 as cited in Case et al, 2016; Wilson, 1997). The goals of these generic queries included getting the conversations started, putting people at ease, testing the 'temperature' on certain issues and gaining a general sense of how party values were playing out. The queries eventually became more pointed, reflecting their cognitive and affective drivers, leading to a fully focused, active search (Wilson, 1997) approach, as demonstrated in Table III. Although each conversation generated several queries, for ease and flow and arguably for question negotiation (Taylor, 1968 as cited in Case et al, 2016), only one query is shown per example, in order to demonstrate the corresponding goals and the cognitive and affective motivation that led to the queries.

INSERT TABLE III HERE

The generic queries tended to attract equally general responses with some gossip, opinion, and a range of issues of concern. This then lead to the formulation of more specific queries (Table III), which attracted a considerable degree of knowledge sharing, and stronger expression of emotion and attitude, as shown in Tables IV and V, Again, although considerably more knowledge was shared, only that related to the queries identified in Table III is shown, with corresponding detail on cognitive and affective motivation, and details on the prevailing mood in the conversations.

INSERT TABLE IV HERE

The mood was primarily positive and specific queries triggered open knowledge sharing, with motivation from a cognitive perspective often being about clarification and augmenting existing knowledge with more recent and up to date information. Motivation from an affective perspective was mainly related to showing solidarity and support, however encouragement for calm reflection and pride in one's achievements also featured.

Example E reflected a much more emotionally charged mood reflecting the theme of the conversation.

INSERT TABLE V HERE

Personal experience, often painful, concerning and stressful, was shared in this last example. The emotions in this conversation were intense, with the distress and sense of being overwhelmed only being mitigated by the sharing of the knowledge

that strategies have been used in other countries to tackle the issues and that the government is working at cross party level to develop policies for tackling racism and hate crime. The individual outcomes for the participants are explored in the second part of the next section.

Individual Level Findings

Starting with the responses from the first set of interviews, participants all said that their motivation for joining the party was that they found it sympathetic to their concerns. University was found to be the catalyst for all the participants, however, it should be noted that this is not necessarily the case for other members, active or otherwise (from viewing councillors' and MPs' websites). The participants either joined during their time as students or after graduation. They were motivated by their desire to bring about change, influence policy, and be involved in the shaping of their country 'to work towards having a more economically and socially progressive and equal' country. Participants did, however, express frustration at having to attend to short-term goals and with the slow pace of progress.

Responsibilities and work tasks, for the participants with more active roles, were wide-ranging, involving organising events, conferences, campaigns, public and in-house talks, meetings and debates; ensuring good communication between the party and its members, assisting in policy formulation, conducting research on legislative issues, and managing social media and website content.

In terms of information seeking from sources other than conversations, all participants mentioned online newspapers. All but one mentioned television, conventional and streamed, and radio programmes. Two of the older participants mentioned reading national and international broadsheet newspapers online and in hard copy. In-house bulletins and reports were used by the participant based at parliament.

All participants used social media for gleaning party developments and debates, observing and sharing opinions, and accessing and sharing online articles, while remaining mindful of the contacts being more likely of a similar political persuasion. Facebook and personal WhatsApp environments were used by all the participants, including an informal WhatsApp group for rank and file members, seen as a bridge from the informal to the formal, exploring current issues and honing debating skills. Twitter was used more for observing public debates and the stances taken by each of the national political parties.

In terms of what participants perceived as the most effective way to acquire knowledge and learn, the responses varied across the sample. They included learning by doing, structured learning with an instructor, interactive online learning, dipping in and out of social media content, learning from online videos, informal face to face discussions in small groups, and, finally, by reading and taking notes.

The next part of the findings focuses on outcomes and follow-up resulting from the informal conversations. These themes are included at individual rather than group level, because they represent reflections and actions by individuals after the group had met. In this case study, only the participants in the case study sample were asked about this, but there is scope for developing this aspect of the methodology when applying it to future research, to explore reflections by all the communicators in the conversations. The learning identified by the participants on reflection after the informal conversations had taken place, is shown in Table VI.

INSERT TABLE VI HERE

The support and opportunities for learning identified by the participants included opportunities to reconnect with other parliamentarians, finding common ground and similarity of goals, having a greater sense of self-efficacy and pride, and finding the online debates to be dynamic with thoughtful and well-articulated arguments. The participant reporting on the book club conversation, experienced comfort and reassurance regarding the sense of feeling overwhelmed and distressed by the level of racism in the country, due to learning that other party members were equally affected as well as being equally committed to working towards improvement and greater levels of equality justice.

None of the participants experienced barriers to learning during the conversations as they experienced the informal conversations as having reduced earlier barriers, reduced the inclination to disaffection (in one case), and increased the participants' sense of self-efficacy. They did add observations that if a question was asked the wrong way, people might hold back on giving their true opinions and concerns. Information overload, as identified in the literature (Marcella et al, 2007; Walgrave and Dejaegher, 2017; Galtrud and Byström, 2020) and the dangers of the restrictions of echo chambers, corresponding to Walgrave and Dejaegher's (2017) heuristics strategies and Galtrud and Byström's (2020) findings about seeking information that was beneficial to politicians' ideologies, were mentioned several times in both interviews. One of the participants with concerns in this area, bearing in mind Marcella et al's (2007) observations of lack of information skills among elite politicians and their staffers, did have qualifications in library and information skills. Further barriers to learning were identified in the first interview: laziness, lack of motivation or persistence, resentment of having to learn content that goes against personal principles, mood or inclination, and distractions through, for example, 'checking my email'.

In terms of information seeking styles (Wilson, 1997) participants generally began with a passive attention approach. However, by the end of the conversations, they were all engaging in active searching. All participants indicated ongoing (Wilson, 1997) and further expansion of their research (Savolainen, 2014), but at different levels of intensity as reflected in their follow-up behaviour. Filling in knowledge gaps, reducing uncertainty (Dervin, 2005; Kuhlthau, 2004), receiving clarification and

verification of information (Todd, 2005), reducing stress and mitigating risk (Wilson, 1997), and having positive affective experiences (Savolainen, 2014) were all positive learning outcomes from participants' information seeking behaviour. A further contributory factor was that all the participants found their communicators to have positive source attributes (Hepworth, 2004) of accessibility, knowledgeability, reliability, relevance and, in some cases, high levels of experience.

Regarding follow-up, responses fell into three categories:

- Actual: the talk promised in the prequel to A happened, and started the process that led to the equal opportunities legislation success being celebrated in A. The information received about vacant seats and the situation in the participant's home constituency in B contributed to the participant eventually standing for election in the latter constituency. Discussions on motion topics during breaks at the party's annual conference informed subsequent voting. The participant in C followed up the conversations on the day out with the area representative, by telephoning the latter after the discussed public event took place, to learn that it was successful, creating demand for a further event on a different topic. The participant in E discussed the book club conversation with their partner that evening.
- Probable: the participant in E said they planned to share what was learned at the book club regarding experiences of racism, both individually and at constituency level, with a leading parliamentarian with a view to contributing to the hate crime policy for legislation that was being worked on at the time. The participant in D, the social media debate, being a regular viewer and contributor, would continue to track and contribute to the arguments, as well as read and share related articles.
- Possible: all participants said they would continue to track the issues raised in the informal conversations both through further conversations and through the full range of media channels.

The difference in level of follow-up action was closely related to the nature of the participants' tasks, roles and responsibilities, and general level of involvement with party activism.

Conclusion

The contribution of informal conversations to organisational learning replicated that reported in the wider literature. Furthermore, in the case of the political party under study, such conversations were found to be so intrinsic to the work of the political party that the times, places, people, networks, and occasions were found to be more wide ranging and varied than discovered in the literature. In answering the research question of "how does informal communication influence learning in a political party", the findings confirmed that informal conversations did influence learning at individual and group level, and that that there was a degree of diffusion to other parts of the

organisation resulting from the follow-up activities, including ongoing information seeking. However, the short time lapse between the two interviews did mean that the occurrence and impact of follow-up activities could not be fully evaluated. This would need to be taken into account in future research in this area. However, it was possible to observe that the extent of the follow-up activities and likelihood of their occurrence corresponded to the level of involvement the participants had in the party. Influence, perceptions of influence, and more devolved, democratic style of leadership were identified as vital for effective diffusion of learning from group and individual level, through to full organisational level. All encounters were perceived as opportunities for learning. No barriers to learning were experienced during the conversations. There was only support, encouragement, and the experience of increasing self-confidence and sense of self-efficacy, particularly with regards to next steps. High levels of trust and regard for fellow communicators were a clear feature of the explored specific conversations. While trust and regard for fellow communicators are seen in the organisational learning literature as important factors in enabling knowledge sharing, it could also be argued that these are qualities emerging from a group that could be regarded as 'insiders' as identified by Galtrud and Byström (2020) in applying Chatman's 'small worlds' theory. Conversations in these contexts could therefore result in ignoring information that could still be critical to organisational learning. Cross-party activity was mentioned by the participants, but not explored in depth. However, this is a valid area for further research to explore how those engaged with this kind of activity share their information with their party colleagues. Previous research of parliamentarians, suggests differences between the information seeking and knowledge sharing that occurs among elite politicians having to make decisions based on little prior knowledge, compared with that of rank and file party members. The latter, as part of their motivation, sought to improve their knowledge on a range of areas, for example, positions on secession, that were not necessarily required for decision taking in the immediate future. Certain issues, particularly the challenge of remaining relevant during a time that is seeing the rise of populist politics, were perceived as permeating throughout the organisation resulting in greater than usual reflection on values and relevance, applying all aspects of Argyris and Schön's (1996) single and double loop concepts. However, an emergent question is whether opportunities for double loop learning are hampered by the ideology heuristic as applied in Informal practices (Walgrave and Dejaeghere, 2017) in political parties. A further issue that appears to compromise the application of organisational learning theory to practice in this context in the light of the lack of information skills identified by earlier researchers of parliamentarians and their staffers.

The dual lens approach, nevertheless, proved invaluable. The application of the work of information behaviour theorists enabled a deeper and more granular approach to analysing information behaviour and learning, particularly at group and individual level in informal conversations. This was further underpinned by the discovery of themes in common between the two theory areas, such as the

importance of cognitive and affective factors, context, and identifying support and barriers to information seeking and learning. Organisational learning theory, in turn, enabled further understanding of organisational and personal/individual learning contexts, although the research did not reveal as much information of learning at organisational level as initially anticipated. The research, being qualitative in nature, allowed a high level of particularisation and in-depth exploration with the small but highly differentiated sample of participants. However, without further research with a larger sample in the same party, and comparative studies across parties or with sister parties in other countries, the results cannot, at this stage, be generalised. A longitudinal approach, would allow further exploration, in particular, of post-conversation follow-up actions, and further research into the occurrence of diffusion throughout the organisation, thus discovering more about how people become key influencers, with this having been shown to be a vital aspect of diffusion to organisational level.

In addition to political parties, there is scope to examine similar themes in other volunteer organisations such as charities, pressure groups and trade unions, with which political parties interact and where there are possibilities to explore commonalities and differences between activist groups.

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Appendix 1: Preliminary and First Main Interview Guides (Hanlon, 2019)

Preliminary Interview:

1. What do you think of as informal conversation?

2. What modes of informal conversation do you think you are most likely to be used for informal communication?

3. For the research you will be asked to describe some of the informal conversations you have had within a given period. This is not only going to be about content, but also about people and about the atmosphere and mood surrounding the communication exchange.

   Some of the modes you describe above will lend themselves to easy recall when we meet again. Which ones do you think will be more difficult?

4. They are, nonetheless, also potential sources of interest for exploration for this research. Knowing what works best for you, how do you think you might be able to enhance your recall of these more difficult modes of communication?

First Main interview

1. What are your current roles and responsibilities in the party?

2. What are your main tasks, as part of these roles and responsibilities?

3. Tell me about how you came to be doing this work.

4. What would you say are your main personal goals which motivate your work here?

5. What do you perceive as the main goals of the party?

6. What key words (no more than five words) do you think could best help a newcomer or outsider understand the culture of this political party?

7. Organisations quite often have stories, legends or sayings, which help to explain the visions and aspirations of the organisation, and become embedded in its cultural narrative. Are you able to give any examples of such a story? (New question added after pilot)

8. How would you describe the leadership style of your party?

9. What would you say are the current discussion topics in your party?

10. How do you keep yourself up to date in order to be able to be effective in your role?

11. With whom would you discuss those topics mentioned earlier? (may need to prompt that they can be inside or outside the organisation)

12. Tell me about the nature of these different groups? And how do you come to interact?

13. With these groups and the individuals in them, whom would you perceive as those which most influence the direction of the party?

14. How and in what ways might they do this? Are there other groups (perhaps outside groups) who influence the party's direction?

15. What is your own sense of what you can achieve in the organisation and the degree of influence that you have?

16. What do you think is the most important quality one needs to have to be influential in your party?

Appendix 2: Second Interview Guide (Hanlon, 2019)

1. What are the examples that come to mind of informal conversation that you experienced since our last meeting? [Topic, where, when, how many people, how long the exchanges lasted]

2. Is there one (maybe two) that particularly stands out – in terms of significance and being able to track what happened since, that we can look at in more detail?

3. What led to this occurrence?

4. Who initiated the exchange? Who else was there? How did they contribute to the exchange?

5. What groups are the participants connected with (that might be interested in or affected by the content of the informal conversation)

6. Were you aware of conscious goals that motivated the initiation of this informal conversation (perhaps from different participants)? If so, what did you perceive these to be?

7. Did any other goals emerge perhaps as the informal conversation progressed? What did you perceive them to be?

8. Tell me about your feelings, mood, sense of well-being you had (a) before the exchange (b) during the exchange and (c) after the exchange. Were you aware of how you might be expressing these senses? Were you aware of your feelings and mood impacting on the others in the group?

9. Tell me what you picked up about the feelings, mood and sense of well-being of the other participants (a) before if possible, (b) during and (c) afterwards, if possible. How were these expressed (tone, NVC, language, conversational style). How did this impact on you?

10. What was the outcome from or follow up to the conversation?

11. Did anything else happen subsequently that could be directly attributed to this informal conversation?

12. Is there likely to be any further action or follow up in the future? What would this be?

13. So how did you benefit from the informal conversation (if you did)? What new knowledge did you gain (if any)? Has this helped you in achieving any or your own goals?

14. How do you think the exchange could potentially benefit the party as a whole? To what extent do you think the exchange contributed to the organisation meetings its goals? Have new insights emerged from the exchange?

15. Do you have any examples of where an idea that came through an informal conversation came to have a crucial influence on the party and its direction?

16. So thinking about the detailed example and the other examples you gave me, were you conscious of thinking about these differently because you knew that we were going to have this interview?