Supporting info for the paper:

Computational Alanine Scanning and Structural Analysis of the SARS-CoV-2 Spike Protein/Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme 2 Complex

Erik Laurini^{1,‡}, Domenico Marson^{1,‡}, Suzana Aulic¹, Maurizio Fermeglia¹, Sabrina Pricl^{1,2*}

¹Molecular Biology and Nanotechnology Laboratory (MolBNL@UniTS), DEA, University of Trieste, Trieste, Italy ²Department of General Biophysics, Faculty of Biology and Environmental Protection, University of Lodz, Lodz, Poland

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Table S1. Main intermolecular interactions between residues at the protein-protein interface detected during MD simulations of ACE2 in complex with the RBD of SARS-CoV-2 (COV-2). HB = hydrogen bond; SB = salt bridge; CI = contact interactions, including van der Waals/hydrophobic (vdW/h), polar (p), π/π and π /cation (π /c) interactions. In the HB column, s-s indicates side chainside chain interactions while s-b (or b-s) and b-b indicate side chain-backbone and backbonebackbone interactions, respectively. Intermolecular interactions reported in the original crystal structure¹ and maintained in the corresponding MD simulation of the viral protein/receptor complex are shown in regular fonts while those newly reported in this work are highlighted in bold.

Table S2. Main intramolecular interactions between residues at the protein-protein interface detected during MD simulations of ACE2 in complex with the RBD of SARS-CoV-2 (COV-2). HB = hydrogen bond; SB = salt bridge; CI = contact interactions, including van der Waals/hydrophobic (vdW/h), polar (p), π/π and π /cation (π /c) interactions. In the HB column, s-s indicates side chainside chain interactions while s-b (or b-s) and b-b indicate side chain-backbone and backbonebackbone interactions, respectively.

Table S3. Relative binding free energy and its components calculated by the combined computational alanine scanning mutagenesis – interaction entropy approach for the ACE2 residues effectively involved in the binding interface with the S-RBD of SARS-CoV-2 (see the SI Materials and Methods section for details). IE = interaction entropy. $\Delta\Delta G = \Delta G_{\text{WT}} - \Delta G_{\text{ALA}}$ (see text for details).

Table S4. Relative binding free energy and its components calculated by the combined computational alanine scanning mutagenesis – interaction entropy approach forthe S-RBD of SARS-CoV-2 residues effectively involved in the binding interface with ACE2 (see the SI Materials and Methods section for details). IE = interaction entropy. $\Delta\Delta G = \Delta G_{\text{WT}} - \Delta G_{\text{ALA}}$ (see text for details).

Figure S1. Root-mean-square deviation (RMSD) of the ACE2/S-RBD_{CoV-2} protein complex backbone atoms as a function of MD simulation time.

Extended Methods Section

The starting structure for the wild type ACE2 protein in complex with the SARS-CoV-2 S-protein receptor binding domain (S-RBD_{CoV-2}) (PDB ID 6M0J)¹ was obtained from the RCSB Protein Data Bank.2 All residues were protonated at their physiological state by the H++ server $(http://biophysics.cs.vt.edu/H++).$ ³ The force field parameters for the Zinc atom and its protein bounded residues were obtained with the MCPB.py tools⁴ provided within the AMBER19⁵ suite of programs and GAMESS-US⁶ software using the B3LYP/6-31G* level of theory.

The *tleap* software provided within AMBER19 was used to assign the ff14SB⁷ and GLYCAM06j-1⁸ forcefields to the starting protein/protein structure. The latter was next solvated in a box of TIP3PB 9 water molecules spanning at least 1.2 nm from each solute atoms. An appropriate number of Na⁺ and CI⁻ atoms were added to neutralize the system and mimic a physiological salt concentration (0.15 M).

While applying a weak restraint (10 kcal/mol) on the protein's backbone atoms, the simulation box was firstly energy minimized (3000 steps of steepest descent followed by 3000 steps of conjugated gradient algorithms), than heated to 150 K in 10 ps of canonical ensemble (NVT) molecular dynamics (MD), followed to another 50 ps MD simulation in the isothermal/isobaric ensemble (NPT, P = 1 atm, maintained by the Berendsen barostat¹⁰) to reach the target temperature of 300 K. The restraints were then gradually removed in 5 steps (-2 kcal/mol per step) of energy minimization (2000 steps of steepest descent followed by 2000 steps of conjugated gradient algorithms). The MD simulation was next carried out without restraints for further 10 ns in NPT conditions (*phase 1*); after this time interval, the MD data production run was further continued up to 1 μ s, during which pressure was maintained using the Monte Carlo barostat implemented in AMBER (*phase 2*). Along the entire MD trajectory, electrostatic interactions were computed by means of the particle mesh Ewald (PME)¹¹ algorithm temperature was regulated by the Langevin method¹² (collision frequency of 3 ps⁻¹). The SHAKE algorithm¹³ was applied to allow a 2 fs integration time step. All calculations were run with the *pmemd* module of AMBER19 running on the supercomputer Marconi100 (CINECA, Bologna, Italy) and on our CPU/GPU hybrid cluster. All images were produced by the UCSF Chimera software¹⁴ and on Prism 8 GraphPad Prism version 8.0.0 for Mac (GraphPad Software, San Diego, California USA, www.graphpad.com).

After the first 5 ns of the *phase 2* MD trajectory, 5 ns MD data were selected to calculate enthalpy and entropy contributions. Configurational sampling was preformed accordingly, with a time step of 10 fs; thus, a total of 500 000 snapshots, sufficient for the interaction entropy (IE) calculations, ¹⁵⁻

 17 were extracted from the relevant MD trajectory for the calculation of the protein/protein residuespecific interactions.

The free energy was calculated for each molecular species (protein/protein complex, ACE2, and S- RBD_{COV-2}) in the framework of the MM/PBSA ansatz,¹⁸ and the protein/protein binding free energy was computed as the difference:

$$
\Delta G = G_{\text{ACE2/S-RBDCOV-2}} - (G_{\text{ACE2}} + G_{\text{S-RBDCOV-2}}) = \Delta E_{\text{vdW}} + \Delta E_{\text{ELE}} + \Delta G_{\text{SOL}} - T\Delta S = \Delta H - T\Delta S \tag{1}
$$

in which ΔE_{vdW} and ΔE_{ELE} represent van der Waals and electrostatic molecular mechanics energies, and ΔG_{sol} includes the solvation free energy. The internal dielectric constant was set to the values of 2, 3 and 9 for nonpolar, polar, and charged residues, $15,19$ respectively. Lastly, the entropic contribution (T Δ S) was explicitly computed from the MD simulation by using the Interaction Entropy (IE) method.¹⁵⁻¹⁷ According to this approach, the entropic contribution to ΔG is determined from fluctuation of the interactions along the MD simulation, and IE is defined as:

$$
-T\Delta S = K T ln(e^{\beta \Delta E^{INT}})
$$
 (2)

The calculation of IE by equation (2) involves the natural log of an ensemble average of $e^{\beta \Delta E^{INT}}$, which can be extracted without extra computational cost by numerical integration along the MD trajectories, as follows:

$$
\langle e^{\beta \Delta E^{INT}} \rangle = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} e^{\beta \Delta E^{INT}}(t_i)
$$
 (3)

in which $\Delta E^{INT} = E^{INT} - \langle E^{INT} \rangle$ and the average interaction energy is obtained by:

$$
\langle E^{INT} \rangle = \frac{1}{T} \int_0^T E^{INT}(t) dt = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N E^{INT}(t_i)
$$
 (4)

The role of the protein/protein interface key residues was studied by performing computational alanine scanning (CAS) experiments.²⁰ Accordingly, the absolute binding free energy of each mutant receptor - in which each key residue was replaced by alanine by truncating the mutated residue at the C γ atom, and replacing it with a hydrogen - was calculated with the MM/PBSA method. Accordingly, the difference in the binding free energy between the wild-type (WT) protein and its alanine mutant (ALA) counterpart, ΔΔG, is given by:

$\Delta\Delta G = \Delta G_{\text{WILD-TYPE}} - \Delta G_{\text{ALA}}$ (5)

Thus, the CAS methodology allows for the estimation of the contribution of a given residue with respect to the overall protein−protein binding free energy; indeed, according to equation (5), a negative value of ΔΔG indicated a favorable contribution for the wild type residue in that position and vice versa.

At the structural level, the stability of the main protein/protein interface intermolecular and intramolecular interactions detected during the MD simulation time interval adopted for the energetic analysis was assessed along the entire duration of the MD run.

Force field parameters for the ACE2 Zn²⁺ binding site

```
Coordinate file for glutamic acid residue in Zn2+ binding site (mol2)
@<TRIPOS>MOLECULE
GU1
```


1 GU1 1 TEMP 0 **** **** 0 ROOT

@<TRIPOS>MOLECULE HD1 11

17 17 1 0 0

2MATT SMALL

@<TRIPOS>SUBSTRUCTURE

RESP Charge

@<TRIPOS>ATOM

5 3 16 1

BOND

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