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Digging Deeper: Unraveling the Influence of Social Movements
on Lithium Mining Projects
A Case Study of Protests in Cáceres, Extremadura, Spain

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Abstract (English)

The EU is promoting lithium extraction in Europe in order to secure the production of lithium-ion batteries in terms of industrial policy. No lithium mine is currently in operation, but various projects are being planned. In some places, social movements are emerging that are resisting such lithium mining projects. In some cases, they succeed in achieving design changes to the projects or even the withdrawal of mining licenses. In other cases, local resistance does not seem to be able to exert any influence. The literature on the impact of social movements on mining projects suggests that their influence is strongly context-bound.

This thesis examines how social movements can influence change in mining projects. This is examined through a case study of social movement resistance to a lithium mining project in Cáceres, Extremadura, Spain. After five years, local resistance led to a new project proposal for the planned lithium mine. This new project is advertised with less environmental damage and more economic profits for the region.

Using the theoretical approach of political opportunity structures, this thesis examines the influence of the opposition to the lithium mining project. This approach focuses on the context in which protest actors operate and how they perceive and seize political opportunities in this context. In the case studied, it was primarily political structures, local governments, alliances with allied groups, economic conditions and the perception of the mining project as a threat that contributed to the influence of the protests.

Thus, this case study contributes to understanding the impact of social movements on lithium mining projects emerging in the context of the green energy transition in the EU and mining projects in general.

Abstract (Deutsch)

Die EU fördert den Lithiumabbau in Europa, um die Produktion von Lithium-Ionen-Batterien industriepolitisch abzusichern. Bisher ist noch keine Lithiummine in Betrieb, aber mehrere Projekte sind in Planung. An verschiedenen Orten entstehen soziale Bewegungen, die sich gegen solche Lithiumabbauprojekte wehren. Proteste in Serbien führten dazu, dass die Bergbaulizenzen für eine geplante Lithiummine zurückgezogen wurden. In Spanien wurde ein Projekt, gegen das protestiert wurde, grundlegend verändert. In Portugal konnte der lokale Widerstand ein weit fortgeschrittenes Projekt bisher nicht beeinflussen.

Die Literatur über den Einfluss sozialer Bewegungen auf Bergbauprojekte legt nahe, dass dieser stark kontextabhängig ist.

In dieser Arbeit wird untersucht, wie sich soziale Bewegungen auf Bergbauprojekte auswirken können. Dies wird anhand einer Fallstudie über den Widerstand einer sozialen Bewegung gegen ein Lithiumminenprojekt in Cáceres, Extremadura, Spanien, analysiert. Dort führte der lokale Widerstand nach fünf Jahren zu einem neuen Projektvorschlag für die geplante Lithiummine. Dieses modifizierte Projekt wird mit weniger Umweltschäden und mehr wirtschaftlichem Nutzen für die Region beworben.

Mit Hilfe des theoretischen Ansatzes der politischen Gelegenheitsstrukturen wird in dieser Arbeit der Einfluss des Widerstandes gegen das Lithiumminenprojekt aufgezeigt. Dieser Ansatz betrachtet den Kontext, in dem sich Protestakteur*innen bewegen und wie sie in diesem Kontext politische Gelegenheiten wahrnehmen und aufgreifen. Im untersuchten Fall waren es vor allem politische Strukturen, lokale Regierungen, Allianzen mit verbündeten Gruppen, ökonomische Rahmenbedingungen sowie die Wahrnehmung des Minenprojekts als Bedrohung, die den Einfluss der sozialen Bewegungen bedingten.

Diese Fallstudie trägt zum Verständnis des Einflusses sozialer Bewegungen auf Lithiumminenprojekte in der EU im Kontext der grünen Energiewende und auf Bergbauprojekte im Allgemeinen bei.

Content

Acknowledgement.....	2
Abstract (English).....	3
Abstract (Deutsch).....	4
List of Tables	7
List of Figures.....	7
List of Abbreviations	8
1. Introduction.....	9
2. State of Research	15
3. Theoretical Approach	19
3.1 Social Movements and Political Opportunities.....	19
3.1.1 Defining Opportunities and Threats	20
3.1.2 Expanding Opportunities	22
3.1.3 More Stable Political Opportunities.....	23
3.1.4 Application and Limitations of the Political Opportunity Approach.....	25
3.2 State Actors within the Political Opportunity Structure	27
3.3 Theoretical Synthesis and Operationalization.....	28
4. Methodological Approach	32
4.1 Ontological, Epistemological Considerations regarding my Methodology	32
4.2 Single Case Study	32
4.2.1 Qualification of a Single Case Study.....	33
4.2.2 Research Interest and the Decision for a Single Case Study.....	34
4.2.3 Data Selection and Collection	34
4.2.4 Guided Interviews Method	38
4.2.5 Handling the Interview Data	40
4.3 Reflections on my Empirical Research.....	40
4.4 Qualitative Content Analysis	42
5. Context of the Case: Lithium Mining in Valdeflores, Extremadura, Spain.....	46

5.1 Lithium Mining in the European Union	46
5.2 The Political Economy of Extremadura in relation to (Lithium) Mining	48
5.3 Legal Context of Mining in Extremadura, Spain	49
5.4 Legal Context of Lithium Mining in Extremadura.....	51
5.5 Opposition in Cáceres against Lithium Mining Project Plan	53
6. Analysis: Seizure of Political Opportunities	61
6.1 Constant Allies.....	62
6.2 Political Parties as Influential Allies during the Project Plans of an Open Pit Mine	65
6.2.1 Onset of PSOE and PP Opposition to the Mining Project Plan	65
6.2.2 Support of the Cáceres City Council for the PSMC	68
6.3 Litigations and the Use of the Urban Plan of Cáceres City Against the Mining Project	71
6.4 The Perception of the Mining Projects as a Threat.....	73
6.5 The Mining Company as Opponent.....	75
6.6 The Structure of the State and its Influences on the PSMC's Influence.....	79
6.6.1 State Actors' Strength	79
6.6.2 State Actors' Prevailing Strategies	81
6.7 Further Results: the Role of Lithium	82
6.7.1 Market Pricing.....	83
6.7.2 Lithium Mining and the Green Energy Transition	84
7. Summary.....	85
8. Conclusion	89
Bibliography.....	95
Appendix.....	105
Coding tree.....	105
Deductive categories	105
Inductive categories.....	108
Interview guidelines	110
Articles referenced in the analysis	134

List of Tables

Table 1 – Theoretical Operationalization.....	29
Table 2 – List of Interviews	36
Table 3 – Deductive Categories	43
Table 4 – Political Opportunities (inductive codes)	45
Table 5 – Inductive categories	45

List of Figures

Figure 1 – Example for Interview Guidelines.....	39
Figure 2 – Structure of the Gross Value Addition in Extremadura, 2022	48
Figure 3 – Key Events related to the Conflict in Cáceres	53
Figure 5 – City Council of Cáceres 2015-2019 (own illustration).....	54
Figure 4 – PSMC's Illustration of the Valdeflores Open Pit Mine and its Risks.....	55
Figure 6 – Plaza Mayor, Cáceres, 4.2.2018	56
Figure 7 – City Council of Cáceres 2019-2023 (own illustration).....	58
Figure 8 – Potential Locations of the Entrance to the Underground Lithium Mine in Valdeflores	59
Figure 9 – Lithium Price Trend	84

List of Abbreviations

- ACIMA – Association for Environmental Communication and Information
- ACTYVA – Cooperative Society of Associated Work, Services, Consumers and Users, Agricultural and Social Welfare
- Adenex – Association for the Defense of Nature and Resources in Extremadura
- CEO – Chief Executive Officer
- CT-P – Cáceres Tú-Podemos
- EAPN – European Network for the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Spanish State
- EC – European Commission
- EeA – Ecologistas en Acción
- EITInnoEnergy – European Institute of Innovation & Technology, Innovative Energy
- EPData – Europa Press Data
- EU – European Union
- ENE – Extremadura New Energies
- ICEX – Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade
- IEA – International Energy Agency
- IL – Infinity Lithium
- IRENA – International Renewable Energy Agency
- MITECO – Ministry of Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge
- MINLEX - Study on the Legal framework for mineral extraction and permitting procedures for exploration and exploitation in the EU
- MinPol – Minerals Policy
- NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
- PP – Partido Popular
- PREMIA – Business Project of Regional Interest
- PSMC – Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres
- PSOE – Partido Socialista Obrero Español
- SEO Birdlife – Spanish Society of Ornithology
- SIGEO – Geological Mining Information System of Extremadura
- TEL – Tecnología Extremeña del Litio
- UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- UP – Unidas Podemos

1. Introduction

“Lithium and rare earths are already replacing gas and oil at the heart of our economy. By 2030, our demand for those rare earth metals will increase fivefold. And this is a good sign, because it shows that our European Green Deal is moving fast. The not so good news is – one country dominates the market. *So we have to avoid falling into the same dependency as with oil and gas.* [...] [S]ecuring supplies is only a first step. The processing of these metals is just as critical. Today, China controls the global processing industry. Almost 90 % of rare earths and 60 % of lithium are processed in China. We will identify strategic projects all along the supply chain, from extraction to refining, from processing to recycling. And we will build up strategic reserves where supply is at risk. This is why today I am announcing a European Critical Raw Materials Act” (von der Leyen, 2022 [emphasis in original]).

This statement was made by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, in her 2022 State of the European Union speech. The above quote shows the connection between the European Union's strategy to mitigate the climate crisis and its promotion of lithium mining within the EU.

The European Union has committed to the European Green Deal to mitigate climate change. Its objective is to bring the European Union in line with its climate goals, including becoming carbon neutral by 2050 (European Commission, 2022). Central to this objective is the so-called Green Energy Transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, as the production and use of energy accounts for more than 75% of the European Union's (EU) greenhouse gas emissions (European Commission, 2021). However, clean energy technologies – from wind turbines and solar panels, to electric vehicles and batteries – require a wide range of minerals and metals (International Energy Agency, 2024). Driven by the decarbonization of economies, the sectors of these minerals and metals are facing a growing global demand (International Energy Agency, 2023b). This also applies to the demand for lithium, a mineral that is primarily required for batteries in electric vehicles and energy storage. Global demand for lithium has tripled from 2017 to 2022 (International Energy Agency, 2023b) and is predicted to grow more than tenfold by 2050 under the International Energy Agency's (IEA) “Net Zero Emissions by 2050 scenario” (International Energy Agency, 2023a). In the EU, lithium demand is expected to even increase 12-fold by 2030 and 21-fold by 2050 (European Commission, 2024).

Against the background of its resource needs for the green energy transition, the EU is taking several measures to ensure a sustainable and affordable energy supply (European Commission, 2021). With regard to the mineral lithium, two EU measures are particularly noteworthy:

First, the European Commission has classified the value chains of batteries to be strategic for EU industry. This means that the EU is strengthening its industrial policy strategy to support the establishment of battery value chains in the EU (onshoring) (European Commission, 2019). In this way, the EU aims to become less dependent on imports from third countries and to build a globally integrated, sustainable, and competitive industrial base. For this onshoring of battery value chains, the EU is promoting the extraction of battery minerals such as lithium on its territory (European Commission, 2019).

The second policy is related to the quote from Ursula von der Leyen at the beginning of the introduction. In December 2023, the European Commission adopted the Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA). It specifies measures for materials that are identified as critical due to the risk of supply shortages and their impact on the EU economy and its climate goals (European Commission, 2024). Lithium has been listed as a critical material since 2020 (Draft Law on Critical Raw Materials Resilience, 2020). The CRMA includes a target to extract at least 10 percent of critical raw materials within the EU (European Commission, 2023). However, mining is associated with pollution, and social and ecological conflicts in the regions of the mining sites, as a broad strand of research on mining conflicts shows. (e.g. Bridge, 2004; Conde, 2017; Dietz & Engels, 2018). In the context of such conflicts, in some cases social movements emerge and mobilize against mining projects (Conde, 2017). Such social movements can have an impact and contribute to the modification of mining project plans or even lead to the cancellation of projects (e.g. Bebbington et al., 2008; de Mattos Neto & da Silva Rebelo, 2018; Savirani & Wardhani, 2022).

It is likely that more mining conflicts will arise within the EU as the CRMA seeks to increase the extraction of critical raw materials within the EU's territory. This can already be observed in the emergence of lithium mining projects in Europe, which are being opposed by social movements. These oppositions vary in their influence on the mining project plans. In Portugal, protests in the Região Norte could not prevent the continuation of the permitting process for the Mina do Barroso, one of the most advanced lithium mining projects in Europe (Bayley, 2023). In contrast, protests against Rio Tinto company's lithium mining project in the Jadar Valley, in Serbia, resulted in the revocation of Rio Tinto's lithium exploration licenses by the Serbian government (Ivancic & Steblev, 2022).

In the context of social movements opposing emerging lithium mining projects in Europe, my research interest arose in how and under what conditions social movements can influence mining projects, such as cancellations or changes in the project design.

In the literature on resistance to mining projects, it is assumed that the mere existence of a social movement opposing a project can contribute to changes in the project (Conde & Le Billon, 2017). Research also shows that the success of social movements in contributing to changes in mining projects is strongly linked to the conditions in which the protests are embedded (Cezne, 2019; Wagner & Walter, 2021). For example, the support of political actors, such as local governments, can play an important role in the success of anti-mining protests – at least in states where they are equipped with legal instruments that exert political influence (Bornschier & Vogt, 2020; Dietz, 2019; Holden & Jacobson, 2006).

In order to theoretically reflect that the context in which a social movement is embedded is key to its influence, I use the political opportunity approach in my thesis. Political opportunities are exogenous factors that stimulate contention. In general, this perspective highlights that the organization of the polity in which the movement itself and other relevant actors are positioned (Meyer, 2004, p. 128), as well as other exogenous factors have an impact on social movement mobilization, claims, alliances, political strategies and tactics as well as the social movements' prospects to affect institutional politics and policy (Meyer, 2004, p. 126).

There are different approaches to political opportunities. The approach I adopt is based primarily on Sidney Tarrow (2022). Following Tarrow (2022), I view a political opportunity as “the [perceived]¹ probability that social protest actions will lead to success in achieving a desired outcome” (Goldstone and Tilly 2001, p. 182, in: Tarrow, 2022, p. 143). It is common to distinguish between more volatile and more stable types of political opportunities. More volatile political opportunities can emerge, shift, and be expanded through social movement action but can also quickly disappear. A typical example would be opposition parties allying with a protest movement against a policy of the incumbent government. More stable political opportunities are related to the overall structure of a state that controls the territory in which a social movement operates (Tarrow, 2011, p. 175). This includes the state's ability to impose itself, its (de-)centralization, and its prevailing strategies (e.g., institutionalized opportunities for civil society to engage in a state's politics). Social movements can influence and seize political opportunities through collective action, thereby expanding the opportunities of their own and cognate groups (Tarrow, 2022, pp. 150-152). In addition to opportunities, the perception of threats serves as a source of contention, particularly when contentious actors perceive their claims as a prospectus. Consequently, mining project plans must be perceived as a threat in order to be contested.

Based on existing literature on both the influence of social movements on mining projects and the political opportunity approach, I developed the overarching research question: **“How and under what conditions can social movements influence changes in mining projects, such as cancellations or changes in the project design?”**. This question includes the context in which social movements are embedded – the political opportunity structure – and their perceptions of the available opportunities that contribute to social movements influence on changes in mining projects.

To answer my research question, I defined three sub-questions:

1. What institutions and actors are relevant to changes in mining projects?

1 The word “perceived” cannot be found in Goldstone and Tilly (2001, p. 182). Tarrow (2022) adds this word without comment in his citation.

2. What strategies of social movements can contribute to enabling changes in mining projects?
3. What obstacles can hinder social movements from influencing changes in mining projects?

To answer these research questions, I investigated the influence of social movements on mining projects by analyzing the opposition of the Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres (PSMC) to a lithium mining project in Extremadura, Spain. The PSMC emerged in 2017 to oppose a plan for an open pit mining project, which was associated with the destruction of the natural recreation area of Cáceres and environmental pollution. In 2022, the mining company announced that it would propose a new underground mining project that would preserve most of the natural recreation area of Cáceres, be less harmful to the environment, and bring more economic benefits to the region. (Osusky, 2022). The company stated that the new project was a response to the demands of the community of Cáceres (Extremadura New Energies, 2024b). Nevertheless, the PSMC continues its opposition. However, with the change of the proposal from an open pit to an underground mining project, also the context of this opposition has changed. Before the new project proposal, the municipal government of the city of Cáceres supported the protests, also in front of the regional government of Extremadura², which is responsible for the regulation and administration of mining projects in Cáceres. When the underground mining project was proposed, the municipal government of Cáceres stopped to oppose the plan of the lithium mine. In addition, the Junta de Extremadura stepped up its efforts to boost the economy by promoting lithium mining. In August 2022, it issued a decree on lithium, called Decreto-ley 5/2022, that declared projects for the extraction of the mineral to be of regional interest and obliged its processing in Extremadura, Spain. The Junta de Extremadura justified its decree with economic interests, the importance of lithium for the European Union's goal of climate neutrality (Diario Oficial de Extremadura 2022, pp. 43904-43905) and the need to establish resilient European-based battery value chains to reduce dependence on non-EU countries (Diario Oficial de Extremadura, 2022, p. 43905). So far, the decree has not been applied because the Spanish state has filed a lawsuit against it (elDiarioex, 2023).

In order to understand how and under what conditions the PSMC was able to influence the aforementioned changes in the mining project, I conducted a single case study. It is a qualitative research approach based on a comprehensive research design that aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the studied case (Hering & Jungmann, 2022, p. 677) and to extend and generalize theories (analytical

2 The regional government of Extremadura (Junta de Extremadura) is generally supportive of lithium mining because of the economic benefits that it could bring to the region. Extremadura's efforts to boost its economy through mining must be seen in the context that the region is the economically weakest in Spain (Adecco Group Institute, 2023). 36.9% of the population is at risk of poverty and social exclusion (EAPN Extremadura, 2023). However, the Junta de Extremadura has promised to support any decision made by the Cáceres city government regarding the lithium mining plan next to the city.

generalizations) (Yin, 2018, p. 25). It serves to understand cases in which "the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clear" (Yin 2018, p. 17). In terms of my research, this meant understanding the relationship between the context in which a social movement is embedded and its influence on changes in a mining project. Therefore, my research focused on the events leading up to the change in the lithium mining project from an open pit to an underground mine. The research period includes some time after the modification to the underground mining project was proposed in order to show the changes in the context and the obstacles to the influence of social movements.

For the case study, I spent a month in Cáceres, Extremadura, where I conducted interviews with PSMC activists, politicians, members of NGOs, an environmental lawyer, and the Chief Executive Operator (CEO) of the operating mining company. The interviews were based on guidelines (Helfferich, 2009) that were informed by my preliminary research on the case, the state of research on the influence of social movements on mining projects, and my theoretical approach. The transcripts of these interviews constitute my data base. I conducted a qualitative content analysis as suggested by Mayring (2022) using deductively built codes which I based on my theoretical approach.³ I extended these categories inductively on passages that my approach could not explain. I used the software MaxQDA to analyze my data.

The application of my question to the specific case sheds light on the influence of social movements on mining in the context of lithium mining in Spain. It is relevant to do a case study on this because, as I have suggested above, this phenomenon will become more relevant in the European Union. Moreover, the topic is under researched. At the time of the submission of this thesis, one paper has been published on lithium mining in Extremadura, which examines the role of different political scales (EU, national, regional, local) in the emergence of a lithium mining sector in Extremadura (Noever, 2023). Other work on lithium mining in Europe has so far focused on Portugal (Araújo et al., 2022; Dorn, 2021; Dunlap & Riquito, 2023; L. Silva & Sareen, 2023) and Serbia (Djukanovic, 2022).

Before presenting the content of my thesis, I will explain why my research is relevant to Development Studies, the field in which this thesis is submitted. Development Studies critically reflect on global inequalities. They are based on theories and approaches to social, political, economic and cultural developments from an international perspective (see Departement of Development Studies, 2024). The relevance of my thesis to Development Studies is threefold:

³ The categories of the analysis can be deductively assigned to the text or inductively derived from the analyzed text (e.g. transcriptions of interviews).

First, the emergence of the lithium mining sector can be linked to the climate crisis and the geopolitics of the European Union, which are linked to the global political economy. The EU's approach to the climate crisis is based on reducing the EU's carbon emissions rather than reducing the resource-intensive way of life⁴ that prevails in the EU (Bolger et al., 2021, p. 2) and perpetuates global inequalities. To date, the EU obtains 78 percent of its lithium from Chile, where social and environmental conflicts over lithium mining have been ongoing for years. For geopolitical reasons, the EU is now bringing the conflicts it previously externalized to other regions in the EU. This makes the emergence of a lithium mining sector in the EU to an international political economy issue relevant to Development Studies.

Second, Development Studies critically reflect on global inequalities. Mining in poor countries and exporting resources to other countries as a growth and development strategy is a common global practice (Engels & Dietz, 2017a, p. 2). Thus, resources in poor regions are exploited and exported to other regions. Although projects are planned in different regions of Europe, conflicts over lithium mining have so far taken place in rural, economically weak regions of Europe, such as Portugal, Serbia, and southwestern Spain. This suggests that resource extraction in economically weak regions may continue as a growth strategy in Europe that perpetuates inequalities (del Marmol & Vaccaro, 2020).

Third, social movements are part of civil society. They can hold the state accountable and constitute grassroots mechanisms for promoting democracy. Thereby, they influence changes in mining projects (Bebbington et al., 2008). They seek to influence political and economic actors. In doing so, they can participate in political, social, cultural and economic developments. Although I am researching this influence of social movements on changes in mining projects, such as changes in project design or cancellations in Spain, the findings will be applicable beyond the EU. This makes my thesis relevant to Development Studies.

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 2 summarizes the current state of the research which contributes to the understanding of the influence of social movements on mining projects and protests in Extremadura, Spain. In Chapter 3 I explain my theoretical approach to political opportunities. I also address the adjustments I have made to the concept of the state in the approach. I conclude the chapter with the operationalization of my theoretical approach. In the fourth chapter I set out my methodological approach. I conclude with reflections on my research process. The fifth chapter is the context

4

The organization Earth Overshoot Day quantified this inequality for the year 2022. The biocapacity consumption of humanity is 1.7 times faster than the planet can regenerate. However, there is a huge inequality between different countries. If everyone lived like the average Austrian, we would need the biocapacities of 3.8 planets. In contrast, if everyone would live like the average Bangladeshi, we would only need the biocapacities of 0.6 planets (Earth Overshoot Day, 2024).

chapter of this thesis. It elaborates on several aspects mentioned in the introduction: lithium mining in the European Union and the relationship between the political economy of Extremadura and the promotion of lithium. Moreover, the chapter is divided into subsections that explore the legal context of lithium mining in Extremadura and Spain, and the legal framework that shapes the influence of social movements on mining projects. Finally, the last subsection examines the development of protests in Cáceres against the lithium mining project near the city. In Chapter 6 I present and discuss the findings of my analysis. The subsections of this chapter are structured along the key findings that explain how and under what conditions the social movement in my case study was able to influence changes in the lithium mining project, as well as the limits of this influence. The seventh chapter is a brief summary of my thesis. In the final chapter, I conclude by answering my research question, which I have structured according to my sub-questions.

2. State of Research

In the following, I present the state of research relevant to the influence of social movements on changes in mining projects and disputes over lithium mining in Europe.

Reviewing the state of scientific research on the topic of this thesis, the influence of social movements on mining projects is conditioned by various factors. Large-scale analyses of environmental justice mobilizations investigating possibilities to influence mining and other energy projects show different aspects of influence on contested mining and other energy projects. The chances of a social movement to hinder a project are related to the project type. Analyzing 278 low carbon energy and 371 fossil fuel cases, Temper et al. (2020) found that renewables projects are more likely to be temporarily suspended than cancelled. Studies further found that, the better organized a company is, the more likely its projects will be implemented (Conde & Le Billon, 2017; Özkaynak et al., 2021). When well-known and -connected international companies with headquarters in Australia, Canada, Switzerland and the UK are involved in conflicts, both the local governments and the involved companies tend to be more responsive by trying to compensate for losses and keep the operations going (Özkaynak et al., 2021). Reversely, junior mining firms are more likely to lack experience or resources to mitigate conflicts (Dougherty, 2011).

Also, the timing of protests' emergence was found highly influential. Preventive mobilization against proposed energy projects is more likely to achieve the cancellation of the project than is mobilization occurring after the start of implementation of projects or of reparations on existing projects (Özkaynak et al., 2021; Scheidel et al., 2020). This is related to lower costs for state and corporate entities of changes or cancellation of projects that have not started yet as well as the longer timeframe for negotiations and creating alternatives (Scheidel et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the type of mobilization matters, since grassroots mobilizations and breadth of coalition partners are likely to have a positive influence on the outcome of a social movement's objective (Hess et al., 2022; Mix, 2011). Protesters who were using more than ten different mobilization forms, achieved cancellation of the opposed projects more than twice as frequently as protesters who used less than five protest action types. This might be the case because protests using many strategies are more open to different participants, create more pressure on opponents and can be more flexible in changing protest strategies if needed (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011). Scheidel et al. (2020) found that combining strategies of preventive mobilization, protest diversification, and litigation significantly increases the success rate of environmental protests. Sovacool et al. (2022) carried out an analysis of 130 cases of social opposition to energy infrastructure in seven regions of the world, combined with a literature review, and found no cross-cutting insights into the success of social movements in opposing energy projects. However, they acknowledge that social mobilization can be effective, but find that the success rates and outcomes of movement tactics vary across cases and regions. However, the existence of protests and their intensity seem to matter, as shown by McAdam and Boudet (2012) in a comparative study on resistance to environmentally risky energy projects. The authors conclude that the sheer existence of resistance as key causal condition for changes in energy projects as well as the absence of contention was sufficient to explain the 90 percent rate of approval of the non-contested projects, while only one out of ten projects with higher mobilization values were implemented.

Examining the likelihood of resistance to mining projects, Conde and Billon (2017) find that dependence on mining companies, political marginalization and trust in institutions tend to reduce protests. The role of the state and of local governments is important for mining conflicts (Engels & Dietz, 2017b). If government actors support the social movement (Hess & Satcher, 2019; McAdam & Boudet, 2012; Zachrisson & Beland Lindahl, 2019) as well as when intergovernmental conflicts appear, social movements will be more likely to succeed in stopping a project (McAdam & Boudet, 2012). However, the broader literature on the outcomes of social movements stresses the crucial role of incumbent parties in the government (see review by Amenta et al., 2018). Incumbent parties possess the key resources to repress or support social movements, which go beyond agenda-setting and include policy change and even cooptation into government (Hutter 2018, p. 10-11). Simultaneously, a study of Hutter and Vliegenhart (2018) on Spain, France, Netherlands and Switzerland highlights that parties in parliament respond to social movements differently and more often when they are in the opposition. In their study,

the political orientation of parties did not affect their reaction to the activities of social movements significantly.⁵

Marta Conde's review (2017) of more than 200 articles, books and reports on how and why communities resist mining as well as shifts in resistance calls "[l]iterature on the state's response and role in shaping mining expansion and resistance [...] sporadic and unstructured" (Conde, 2017, p. 87). Similarly, Bornschier and Vogt (2020, p. 35) note a lack of empirical work on the interaction between institutionalized and protest arenas. I mention those research gaps, because the state structure is important as far as the influence of anti-mining movements on the national, regional and local scale is concerned. States differ in legislations, executive power, policies towards mining industries et cetera, as does the executive power of a regional and municipal government. The degree of centralization of a state affects the influence of local politics on mining projects. In decentralized systems, where local governments have the institutional competences and the electoral incentives to respond to local grievances, they get important mitigators for mining companies and can contribute to make mining projects more socially sustainable (Bornschier & Vogt, 2020) or facilitate their cancellation (Holden & Jacobson, 2006). This can be seen worldwide. For example, Latin American mining studies found local governments' support of anti-mining struggles to be relevant (Silva et al., 2018). Latin American local governments support local consultations against mining projects (Dietz, 2019; Walter & Urkidi, 2017), and drive institutional changes forward in some cases (Walter & Wagner, 2021). Similar findings on local governments supporting anti-mining movements to achieve their goals were gathered by studies from Indonesia (Savirani & Wardhani, 2022) and the Philippines (Holden & Jacobson, 2006). Engels (2017, 2018) shows how, in Burkina Faso, shifting political-institutional conditions on the national scale in 2014 have fostered the eruption of protests against gold-mining on the local scale.

Location matters for the success rate of protests against mining projects not only due to different state structures, but to overall national, regional and local conditions. In some countries or regions social movements account for higher rates of changes and cancellations of mining projects (Oh et al., 2020). In Argentina social movements were able to contribute to cancellations or suspensions of about half of the public large-scale mining conflicts (1997-2018) (Wagner & Walter, 2021), while, in their worldwide analysis, Scheidel et al. (2020) found a cancellation rate of 17 percent of the opposed projects.

In most cases it is a combination of different factors enabling and disabling social movements' influence on changes in mining projects. Case studies in different regions draw a picture on how the contexts in which anti-mining movements are embedded affect their influence (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Hess

⁵ Earlier literature on social movements suggested that left-wing parties are more likely to ally to challengers (Tarrow, 1998, p. 80). Of course, if a political party is likely to ally depends mostly on a social movement's goals.

& Satcher, 2019; Özkaynak et al., 2021; Scheidel et al., 2020, 2020; Temper et al., 2018). Analyses on framing and conditions for influences of anti-mining movements show how the influence of anti-mining struggles is shaped by national and international discursive opportunities (Prause, 2019; Szabo et al., 2023), counter-frames of the opponents and their framing strategies (Deonandan, 2015; Prause, 2019). Latin American studies on impacts of anti-mining movements further point to multi-scalar networks, connecting various mining struggles that benefit the contentious goals (i.e. Benites & Ubillús, 2022 on Peru; Walter & Urkidi, 2017 in general).

However, contention's success is a complex matter, as shown by Walter and Wagner (2021), by describing different political opportunity structures enabling social movements to contribute to the high cancellation rate of mining projects and institutional reforms in Argentina. They name a multi-scalar environmental justice network acting on local, provincial, and national scales as well as a large bottom-up, diverse, and interconnected network of actors and strategies, e.g. putting legislation no longer applied back into practice. Relevant actors included the Catholic Church, helping to put mining struggles on the public agenda, and in many cases local governments aligning with social movements – from the beginning or as a reaction to pressure by social mobilization. The study of Wagner and Walter (2021) shows how different opportunity structures come into play, making social movements more or less likely to achieve their goals.

It is always a combination of conditions enabling and hindering anti-mining struggles which is region- and case-specific as is also shown by Eric Cezne's analysis (2019) on struggles against one mining corporation in different regions. Specifically on lithium, this is shown by Felix Dorn (2021) comparing two Argentinian cases on lithium extraction projects out of which one was prevented by a close-by community taking collective action against it, including networking with NGOs, lawyers and transregional actors. In the other case a transnational lithium corporation could successfully implement a lithium mine, as there were less NGOs present and a strategical proceeding of the corporation advertising the economic benefits for the close-by community.

Concluding on the state of research on lithium in the regional area in which my case is located, the study by Carla Noever Castelos (2023) on lithium mining in Extremadura is very insightful. Noever examines the role of the state in the expansion of the emerging lithium frontier in Extremadura, Spain. Noever analyzes the multi-complexity of policy level actors towards Lithium extraction in Extremadura, Spain: The EU, Spain and Extremadura are – to different extents – in favor of lithium extraction. The position of Cáceres city's government is more complex and changed with the project design. In her analysis Noever (2023) shows that it is a complex web of actors and institutions constituting the state, including contradictory positions.

Noever (2023) sheds light on the emerging lithium frontier in the European Union. So far publications on protests against the lithium mining projects have examined only cases in Portugal (Araújo et al., 2022; Dorn, 2021; Dunlap & Riquito, 2023; L. Silva & Sareen, 2023) in the EU and protests against a project in Serbia which is supported by the EU (Djukanovic, 2022). As elaborated in the introduction, the EU's onshoring plans are aiming to allocate more lithium mines in its region (European Commission 2019) and projects are announced in Germany, Finland, (the UK), France, Ireland, Austria, and the Czech Republic (Maier, 2022). Since in the EU, public acceptance of mining industries in the EU compared with other economic sectors is low (European Federation of Geologists, 2024), one can imagine that protests against such mines will occur.

Given the influence of social movements on mining projects, they can be expected to play a key role in shaping the emerging lithium mining sector in Europe (Riofrancos, 2023, p. 36). My research contributes to the understanding of how and under what conditions social movements can influence such mining projects. This is relevant for understanding the influence of social movements on the implementation of EU energy transition projects.

3. Theoretical Approach

In the following, I present my theoretical approach. I begin with a brief definition of social movements and how their influence can be measured. I then introduce the political opportunity perspective, which focuses on the context in which social movements are embedded to explain contentious action. I then introduce my approach to political opportunities, which is the basis of this thesis. It is based primarily on Tarrow (2011, 2022), but includes adjustments to the concept of the state. The chapter concludes with a synthesis and operationalization of the theory to my research.

3.1 Social Movements and Political Opportunities

Social movements can be defined in many different ways. For this thesis, I use a working definition by Steklenburg and Klandermans (2009), which conceives social movements as “interlocking networks of groups, social networks and individuals, and the connection between them [...] [as] a shared collective identity that tries to prevent or promote societal change by non-institutionalized tactics” (van Steklenburg & Klandermans, 2008, pp. 20–21). Non-institutionalized tactics (e.g. protests) are used because social movements do not have a direct access to political decisions, but (try to) influence politics by protest (Schorr, 2012, p. 42). They are associated with important social and political changes, such as the American antislavery movement, the Spanish democratization movement, or the feminist movement. Still, one might ask how to trace social or political change – at least to a certain degree – to a social movement's action?

Indeed, measuring the influence of social movements on politics is a complex task due to the fact that their political agency is not institutionalized and that political processes are influenced by numerous actors and factors (Kern, 2008, p.175). The academic literature on theorizing the general influence of social movements on social change is relatively limited (Kern, 2008, p. 175) and recent. Until the 1960s, research on social movements concentrated on the "why" of mobilization, that is, on what drives mobilization. What they did not or could not easily explain was why comparable economic and structural conditions led to different or no outcomes of contention. The political opportunity approach was developed to address this issue (Tarrow, 2022, pp. 144–145).

Political opportunities are exogenous factors that stimulate contention. The political opportunity perspective highlights that the polity's organization in which the movement itself and other relevant actors are positioned (Meyer, 2004, p. 128), as well as other

"exogenous factors enhance or inhibit a social movement's prospects for (a) mobilizing, (b) advancing particular claims rather than others, (c) cultivating some alliances rather than others, (d) employing particular political strategies and tactics rather than others, and (e) affecting mainstream institutional politics and policy" (Meyer, 2004, p. 126)

Political opportunities (structures) are approached in different ways. Most common is the division into two approaches, that follow McAdam et al. (1996, p. 3). One approach contains detailed, historical studies of single movements (i.e. Costain, 1992; McAdam, 1999; Tarrow, 1989). Scholars using this approach use it mostly as a set of (independent) variables to describe the dynamics of a single movement's political environment (Gamson & Meyer, 1996, p. 274). The other approach is based to a greater extent on cross-national research, comparing similar movements in different national contexts (i.e. Joppke, 1991; Kriesi et al., 1995), using political opportunity structures to explain "intervening variables such as institutional structures or rules of representation" (Gamson & Meyer, 1996, p. 275). Gamson & Meyer (1996, p. 274) also identify a third approach through which scholars are utilizing the concept of political opportunities. This approach involves investigating the enduring impact of movements on policy and culture, while also considering structural opportunities. However, despite the recognition of this aspect, only a limited number of scholars explicitly incorporate the term "political opportunities" into their research.

3.1.1 Defining Opportunities and Threats

The political opportunity approach by Sidney Tarrow (1996; 1998; 2011; 2022) sets the theoretical framework for my master's thesis. Tarrow follows a definition of Charles Tilly and Jack Goldstone, according to which opportunities are conceived as "the [perceived]⁶ probability that social protest actions

6 The word "perceived" cannot be found in Goldstone and Tilly (2001: 182). Tarrow (2022) adds this word without commentation in his citation.

will lead to success in achieving a desired outcome” (Goldstone and Tilly 2001, p. 182. In: Tarrow, 2022, p. 143). Opportunities increase through changes in political and economic resources that “weaken a state’s ability to reward its followers or opponents or to pursue a coherent policy, or that shift domestic or outside support away from the regime” (Goldstone & Tilly, 2001, pp. 182–183).

Contention increases also when people gain access to resources (i.e. provided supporters), that convince them to be able to end perceived injustices and find opportunities to use (Tarrow, 2022, p. 140). Since it is about the perception of opportunities, communication and social movements learning to use these are important mechanisms for the mobilization of collective action (Tarrow, 2022, p. 144).

Contention can increase as well when people feel threatened by costs, when they are conflictive to their interests, their values, or their sense of justice (Tarrow, 2022, p. 140). Again, based on Goldstone and Tilly (2001, p. 183), Tarrow defines threats as

“[related] to the risks and costs of action or inaction rather than to the prospect of success. Threats are often seen only as the ‘flip side’ of opportunities, but they are actually analytically distinct. A group may decide to bear very high costs for protest if it believes the chances of success are high, but the same group may decide to avoid even modest costs if it believes the chances of succeeding are low” (Tarrow, 2022, p. 143).

People’s decision on whether to engage in collective action or not is shaped by a combination of opportunities and threats. The perception of actors of having a chance to succeed is very important to stimulate contention (Tarrow, 2022, p. 143).

Opportunities vary between movements due to different conditions. Tarrow (1996, 2022) distinguishes between more stable and volatile opportunities. Stable opportunities are institutionalized. Volatile opportunities open, are constructed, expand, shift, decline, and close. However, they can also persist for a longer period of time. Tarrow (2022) identifies four mechanisms as the most salient signals of volatile opportunities: increasing access, shifting alignments, divided elites, and influential allies (Tarrow, 2022, p. 144). I will briefly introduce the key elements of these most salient signals of opportunities:

(1) *Increasing access* refers to the assumption that people might not attack their opponents when they are too powerful and therefore opportunities are closed (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145). When contentious actors get more access to power, incentives to protests can emerge (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145). Following Eisinger (1973) the relationship between protest and political opportunity is seen as curvilinear (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145). The curvilinear model of Peter Eisinger (1973) is based on research on protests in the US. It assumes that in extremely closed (repressive) systems, contention will be minimized because of the fear of repression, while in extremely opened (responsive) systems there is less contention as protesters turn to more institutionalized channels. Therefore protest occurs mostly in a “mixed system because the pace of change does not keep up with expectations, *even though change is occurring*” (Eisinger, 1973, p. 15, emphasis in original).

(2) *Shifting alignments* create opportunities when political alignments are shifting and are therefore instable. This is especially likely to happen when new coalitions are present and opposition parties create uncertainty among the supporters of such coalitions (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145). In liberal democracies, this is indicated by electoral instability (Tarrow, 1996, p. 55).

(3) *Divided elites* can stimulate outbreaks of contention by giving incentives to resource-poor groups to take the opportunity of protest when elites are weaker than usually. It also can encourage opportunistic politicians (conceived as part of the elite) that are out of power to represent claims of a social movement, because then they might be perceived as the “tribunes of the people” (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145).

(4) The fourth mechanism of influence to the emergence of contentious politics are *influential allies* (Tarrow, 2022, pp. 145–146). They provide resources and support to contentious actors. Thereby they create opportunities for the social movement (Tarrow, 2022, p. 151). This process is reciprocal. Social movement also create opportunities for their allies – and others, as it will be elaborated in the next section on “expanding opportunities”.

The above-mentioned four mechanisms of opportunities can be connected, intersect with each other differently and are depending on their specific context (Tarrow, 2022, p. 146). For example, *divided elites* may lead to an alliance? of parts of an elite with a social movement and turn out as *influential allies*. Elites might make policy changes or reforms, when challengers from outside the polity provide them political incentives within which they can advance their policies or careers (Tarrow, 2022, p. 152). Tarrow (2022; 2011) does not specify his term “elites”, but the way he uses it, indicates that elites are policy makers since it is the aim of social movements to influence policy priorities of elites. This can be reached through allyship or pressure of protests on the polity (Tarrow, 2022, p. 152).

3.1.2 Expanding Opportunities

Social movements’ contention creates opportunities for themselves and other actors. Collective action will result in an encounter between the contentious actors and their antagonists. This creates new possibilities of collective action which then produce new opportunities for different groups (Tarrow, 2022, p. 150).

Tarrow distinguishes between three general forms of opportunities that are created as a secondary effect: (1) *expansion of a group’s own opportunities* (2) opportunities’ expansion for *cognate groups*, and (3) the triggering of *countermovements*.

(1) Emerging protest might expand opportunities in this situation, by e.g. mobilizing elite allies. Expanding opportunities can initiate broad cycles of contention, since these are most likely to begin in moments of widely distributed resources (Tarrow 2022, p. 150). Tarrow (2011) refers to a study by William

Gamson (1990) on social movements in the history of the United States, which found movements seeking increased access more successful than movements that were seeking new advantages over their opponents. Increased access, e.g. through elite allies in the government, can provide a “durable opportunity structure” (Tarrow, 2011, p. 167).

(2) Tarrow calls the expansion of opportunities for others “[o]ne of the most remarkable characteristics of contentious politics” (Tarrow, 2022, p. 151). Protesting groups raise issues to the agenda to which other people relate. They demonstrate the utility of collective action and create opportunities for others to support, copy or innovate upon. Others making similar claims can use the protesters’ claims to highlight the importance of their objectives (Tarrow, 2022, p. 151), e.g. NGOs or other movements. Parties or politicians making similar claims – no matter if for opportunistic, ideological or more reliable reasons – can also benefit from the social movement’s actions (Hutter et al., 2018, p. 6). By setting political incentives that get political parties (or others) to ally themselves with them, social movements reversely expand their own opportunities.

(3) However, social movements – especially those that offend influential groups – can trigger counter-movements. Counter-movements can often be violent as the people engaging in counter-movements often feel threatened by the claims of the social movement that they oppose. Movements opposing each other can lead to “opportunity spirals” (Tarrow, 2022, p. 152) in which the movements mobilize against each other, e.g. “pro-choice” versus “pro-life” movements on abortion rights.

3.1.3 More Stable Political Opportunities

The overall structure of a regime in which protests take place has a great impact on the political opportunity structure. It sets the framework within which protests take place.

In contrast to the previously introduced volatile opportunities and threats, Tarrow (2011) names two sets of more stable opportunities and threats conditioning contentious politics: (1) a state’s strength, centralization, and decentralization; (2) a state’s prevailing strategies toward challengers. Together they form the overall structure of a regime (Tarrow, 2011, p. 175).⁷

Tarrow (2011) bases his theoretical thoughts on a study on new social movements and political opportunities in Western Europe realized by Hanspeter Kriesi, Ruud Koopmans, Jan Willem Duyvendak and Marco G. Giugni (1992) in the 1970s and 1980s. Kriesi et al. (1992) categorize states into a typology of

⁷ I use Tarrow’s (2011) elaborations on the state and its prevailing strategies, because they include detailed theoretical thoughts on states in western democracies, which are not included in the 2022’s version. Tarrow (2022) abandons this distinction without commenting on it. This might be because of his shifting focus towards non-democratic regimes.

four different types of states along the axes strength (high or low enforcement capacities) and prevailing strategies (inclusive or exclusive). They distinguish between strong and weak states, which are defined along the lines of their enforcement capacities and their prevailing strategies, which refer to the state's openness to input from non-state actors. In strong states institutional structure is more coherent internally and less fragmented than in weak states (Kriesi et al. 1992, p. 225).

(1) State strength affects the political opportunity structure. For example, social movements with elite allies who control the executive are more likely to succeed in strong states, while in weak states the control of the executive by allies does not have such an impact because the state cannot impose itself either way (Kriesi et al., 1995, p. 214). Furthermore, the degree of a state's centralization is important to the impact of social movements. Hence, a social movement's influence on a state actor depends on the state actor's power, which again depends on the state's (de-)centralization. In decentralized states a social movement's influence on the regional and local scale is more important than in central states, where local and regional state actors have fewer possibilities to change policies (Bornschieer & Vogt, 2020).

Tarrow adds to his concept of state strength that the same state can be weak or strong, depending on historical periods and the location of protests within a country (Tarrow 2011, p. 177).

(2) Tarrow (2011, p. 177) builds on Kriesi et al.'s (1992) categories of prevailing strategies of the state. An inclusive strategy that responds to and absorbs protest demands, or an exclusive strategy that marginalizes protest demands (Kriesi et al. 1992, p.225). Exclusive prevailing strategies of a state may encourage protests in democratic states because protesters have fewer other opportunities to participate in the state's politics. Inclusive prevailing strategies with institutional openings lead to the absorption of protests, since they increase the willingness and possibilities of movement actors to engage in institutionalized ways, thus reducing the potential for contention (Kriesi et al., 1995). Tarrow (2011) annotates that inclusive and exclusive prevailing strategies of the state can depend on the protests' origins and claims (e.g. middle class versus marginalized people) (Tarrow 2011, p. 177).

Tarrow further weakens the stability of these types of political opportunities by noting that a state's strength and its prevailing strategies are related to exogenous factors, such as elections or shifts in public opinion and support for the state. They are thereby relative categories (Tarrow 2011, pp. 177-178). Consequently, he conceives state strength and prevailing strategies as more or less stable structures that are less definite as Kriesi et al. (1992) imply.

A combination of state strength, its prevailing strategies, historical and spatial factors, war and citizenship form together form the overall structure of a regime (Tarrow, 2011, p. 179). Again, Tarrow refers to Tilly (2006, p. 19-21) who classifies regimes along the two main axes governmental capacity and

democracy. Governmental capacity refers to the “degree to which governmental actions affect distributions of populations, activities, and resources within the government’s jurisdiction, relative to some standard of quality and efficiency” (Tarrow, 2011, p. 179). Democracy refers to whether subjects of the government’s authority “have broad, equal rights to influence governmental affairs and to receive protection from arbitrary governmental action” (Tarrow, 2011, p. 179). Tarrow (2011; 2022) divides into low- and high-capacity; democratic and undemocratic regimes. Capacity refers to the ability of the state to impose itself over its state area. High-capacity democratic regimes enable social movements by their legalization (e.g. rights of association, assembly and speech), resulting in a huge concentration of social movements. Low-capacity regimes tend to control contention close to their operating bases (government location) but control the rest of the state area less stringent. High-capacity undemocratic regimes use repression against civil society organization and dissent, resulting in fewer actors willing to protest, and to more radicalization potential of social movements (Tarrow, 2011, p. 179).

3.1.4 Application and Limitations of the Political Opportunity Approach

Being an approach with a relatively broad focus and various theoretical applications, the concept of political opportunity structures has been criticized as “in danger of becoming sponge that soaks up every aspect of the social movement environment — political institutions and culture, crises of various sorts, political alliances, and policy shifts” (Gamson & Meyer, 1996, p. 275). Meyer (2004, p. 134) criticizes that many scholars add political opportunities that fit their analyses, but then their empirical causality is not further investigated.

To advance understanding and programmatic building of knowledge, McAdam et al. (1996) advise researchers therefore to be “explicit about *which* dependent variable we are seeking to explain and *which* dimensions of *political* opportunity are germane to that explanation” (1996, p. 31, emphasis in original). However, in a macroanalysis of political opportunities, Jeff Goodwin (2012) finds the role of political opportunities regarding the emergence of protests only significant in two thirds of the cases he analyzed. Cases for which political opportunities were not important include several powerful movements, e.g. protest against the Vietnam War, the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 (Goodwin, 2012, p. 282-283). He argues that political opportunities are less important than claimed (Goodwin, 2012, p.283). However, his findings do not completely deny the influence of political opportunities. In particular, two types of political opportunities emerge as important factors in the prospects of social movements to achieve their goals: elites allying with social movements and conflicts within elites. (Goodwin, 2012, p. 288).⁸

⁸ We will see later why this finding is important.

Another point of critique is brought forward by Jasper (2012), who is problematizing the focus on structures in the political opportunity structures approach, resulting in a lack of attention to the protest movements' active role (agency) in shaping the protest arenas in which the contention takes place. I would argue that the validity of Jasper's critique is depending on how one is using which kind of theoretical approach. My thesis is mostly based on Sidney Tarrow's approach as employed in his newest edition of Sidney Tarrow "Power in Movement" (2022).⁹ This is the fourth edition of this book that has been revised and updated. It was re-organized strongly towards a more international focus and works with much more and updated empirical evidence on political opportunities role for social movements than the first edition (Tarrow, 1994). By basing his arguments on different empirical examples, Tarrow takes up on criticism on the lack of empirical evidence (as brought forward by Meyer, 2004).

In response to Jasper's (2012) criticism that the political opportunity approach overlooks the agency of social movements as actors that influence the structure in which they act, I would argue that, according to Tarrow (1994, 1998, 2011, 2022), opportunities only exist if they are perceived by social movements. Further movement's agency is taken into account by Tarrow (1994, 1998, 2011, 2022) by analyzing how social movements take up on political opportunities, create and expand opportunities for themselves and others (see "expanding opportunities").

However, each theory is like a unique pair of glasses, emphasizing some aspects more than others (Lund, 2021). The political opportunity structures approach provides a systematic theoretical framework for understanding the political opportunities provided by the structure in which it is embedded and how a social movement perceives and influences them. Other aspects are less central to the theoretical approach. Political opportunity approaches are one of the three main strands of social movement theory. The other two are framing and resource mobilization. Framing processes can also be used to explain the outcomes of social movements. Resource mobilization approaches can explain first-hand how contentious actions were mobilized, which is the prerequisite for social movements to influence anything. By selecting the political opportunity approach, the focus of the research to this thesis lays on exogenous factors that condition the prospects of social movement. This directs my research question about "how" a social movement can influence something toward the perception of opportunities offered by the political opportunity structure.

9 Sometimes, I am citing the 3rd edition of the book (Tarrow, 2011). This is due to the elaborations on western democracies that have been replaced by more international applicable ones by Tarrow (2022).

3.2 State Actors within the Political Opportunity Structure

Theoretical approaches to political opportunities are developed on the basis of social movements that address the state at the national level e.g. to include more civil rights (e.g. Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi et al., 1992; McAdam, 1999; Tarrow, 2022). Even though Tarrow (2022) includes opportunities to social movements in the form of policy elites as influential allies, for his political opportunity explanations, he conceives the state predominantly as an opponent. This might be appropriate to analyze nation-wide movements that address the state to implement changes in its politics. However, to analyze conflicts on mining projects, I suggest taking the plurality of state actors' possible standing to social movements as a starting point right instead of conceiving the state as an opponent. The term "state actors" refers to individuals or entities that hold official positions within the government apparatus and exercise authority or influence over public policy and decision-making processes. State actors can include elected officials, government agencies, bureaucrats, and other institutions of governance at various levels, such as local, regional, or national governments.

My decision is based on the state of research on social movements' influence on mining projects (see "State of Research"). There, it was shown that political parties and local governments allying with social movements contribute significantly to movements' success (Amenta et al., 2010; Bornschier & Vogt, 2020; Dietz, 2019; Holden & Jacobson, 2006; Hutter et al., 2018). Drawing up on this, my approach towards the state sheds light on the complexity of different positions among state actors. Social movements are perceived as actors that try to influence the state's policies and its actors. State actors can be allies or opponents. Local politicians might enforce different interests than regional or national politicians. Further, their political standing might vary due to their party membership, or if they are an opposition or an incumbent party. Social movements can try to pressure and/or ally with state actors, and thereby enforce their claims (see influential allies and divided elites). Pressure through social movements' collective action can give incentives for state actors' political re-positioning, not least because of their fear of losing the support of the public (Amenta et al., 2010, p. 197). This is in line with Tarrow's (2022) assumption that it is most likely that parties and interest groups take advantage of the opportunities created when a range of social movements is challenging a system, because repressing or isolating gets more difficult when there is a higher amount of challengers existing (Tarrow, 2022, p. 152).

Moreover, the extension from the concept of the state as opponent to the concept of state actors can also be seen as consistent with Tarrow's (2022) approach. Tarrow's (2022) most salient signals of opportunities include the availability of influential allies and/or divided elites, both of which can be state actors. This shows that it is appropriate to assume state actors with ambiguous, diverse, and sometimes

conflicting interests rather than to conceive of the state as a unitary actor. Also, the state of research shows that a social movement's prospects to achieve its goals is related to the availability of supportive state actors. In democratic systems, the availability of political parties in the parliament allying with a social movement's claims is key to the outcomes of contention (Hutter et al., 2018). In line with this, I follow Hutter et al. (2018) who introduce political parties as a part of the political alliance and conflict structure in which social movements are embedded (Hutter et al., 2018, p. 6). They explicate that political parties and their availability as influential allies are shaped by the institutional structure, most importantly, by the electoral system. This determines the number and orientation of the parties available as possible allies of social movements (Hutter et al., 2018, p. 6).¹⁰ Further, the significance of social movements influence on state actors on different governmental level is shaped by the degree of a state's (de-)centralization (see "More Stable Political Opportunities").

3.3 Theoretical Synthesis and Operationalization

The state of research indicates that social movements' success in contributing to changes in mining projects is less connected to their strategies (Sovacool, 2022) but more to the conditions in which the protests are embedded (Cezne, 2019; Wagner & Walter, 2021).

I utilize the political opportunity approach to address this. This entails explicating the impact of social movements on changes in mining projects by focusing on the context in which social movements are embedded – the political opportunity structure – and their perception of possible opportunities provided by that structure that contributes to reaching their goals. My understanding of political opportunities is derived from Sidney Tarrow (2022). Social movements can influence and seize upon political opportunities by taking collective action, thereby expanding the opportunities of their own, cognate groups and of counter-movements. Since counter-movements are barely existent to anti-mining movements, I adapted this category by searching for expansion of opportunities for anti-mining movements' opponents.

Political opportunities can be divided into volatile and more stable opportunities. Volatile opportunities can be very dynamic, open, close fast, expand, shift, and/or decrease fast. Tarrow (2022) identifies four key indicators of volatile opportunities: increasing access, divided elites, shifting alignments, and influential allies (Tarrow, 2022, p. 175-176). He also identifies more stable opportunities related to the state in which a social movement is active. These are described as state strength and a state's prevailing strategies, which form the overall structure of a regime. These more stable kinds of opportunities can

¹⁰ Hutter et al. (2018) are here referring to the conception of political parties in the political process approach. They are following Tarrow among other scholars.

also shift and be context-dependent. However, they are more institutionalized, which makes them less dynamic.

In addition to opportunities, the perception of threats serves as a source of contention, particularly when contentious actors perceive their claims as a prospectus. Consequently, mining project plans must be perceived as a threat to be contested.

Theoretical approaches to political opportunities are predominantly developed on the basis of social movements that address the state at the national level. These include, for example, the inclusion of more civil rights (e.g., Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi et al., 1992; McAdam, 1999; Tarrow, 2022). The state is primarily conceptualized as an opponent, although opportunities to win over political elites as influential allies are included in the approach (as in Tarrow, 2022). Instead of conceiving the state as an opponent, I will take the plurality of state actors' possible standing to social movements as a starting point right away. State actors can be opponents, allies, or ambiguous actors to social movements contention on mining projects and its outcomes.

To conclude, I will follow the advice of McAdam et al. (1996) and be explicit about my research variables and what is germane to explicate my research question. My research interest is on how and under what conditions social movements can influence changes in mining projects, such as cancellations or changes in the project design. To investigate this, I employ the political opportunity approach which I have adapted by considering mining companies as opponents in the opportunity structure and by adjusting the state conception. I identify the most salient signals of opportunities according to Tarrow (2022) and other political opportunities, which I then compare with empirical evidence on other mining protest cases. I inquire into the expansion of such opportunities and the context in which they are embedded.

Some scholars have criticized lacking empirical evidence for the observed opportunities (Meyer, 2004). Hence, it is important to contextualize observed political opportunities appropriately by making reference to the state of research.

The following chart presents a synthesis of the operationalization of the introduced theoretical approach to examine the influence of social movements on changes in mining projects.

Table 1 – Theoretical Operationalization

Category	Description / Sub-Category	Operationalization
Changes in mining projects	Modifications in the project design or cancellations of mining projects	Modifications in the mining project design that are announced as changes by the company. This can be, i.e. changes from an open pit mine to an underground mine, or cancellations of mining projects. Not including the proposal of documents that are in line with

		the course of the mining project, as announced.
Political opportunities and constraints		
Increasing Access	(Perceived) possibility to contribute to change the status quo by collective action because opponents are weak	Incentives for collective action resulting in augmentation of protests because of weak opponents (e.g. local political parties are perceiving the mining company as untrustworthy.)
Shifting alignments	Shifts in political actors positioning & electoral instability	Political parties forming an alliance with a social movement to oppose a mining project in proximity to elections when there is a possibility of change in the composition of the next government.
Divided policy elites	Divisions in opinion between political parties	Political parties' support or opposition to a mining project and/or to contentious actions on it at a point in time. This includes differences between different governmental levels (i.e. different positions within one political party on the regional and local level).
Influential allies	... that are supporting a movement's claims	Influential allies supporting the protests against the mining project officially, e.g. political parties positioning themselves in the public as supporters.
	... that are providing resources to a movement	Influential allies providing resources for a social movement, e.g. financial support, NGOs helping to organize protests.
Mining companies as opponents to anti-mining movements	Mining companies' influencing the structure that is providing political opportunities that can be perceived by anti-mining movements	Mining companies' deficiencies that open opportunities for collective action, e.g. mining companies breaking the law discrediting the mining companies' trustworthiness. Mining companies attempting to reduce the political opportunity structure for social movements to oppose them by pursuing efforts to maintain or initiate their mining projects and mitigate conflicts. These efforts may include exchanging with state actors, making concessions to protests, or compensating for losses.
Further volatile opportunities	Opportunities perceived by social movements	Volatile opportunities that are not pre-defined in the table but influenced a social movement's impact to contribute to changes in a mining project it opposed.

Threats	Mining projects perceived as threats	A mining project is perceived as a threat when its potential negative impacts are perceived to outweigh the eventual benefits that may arise from it.
Expanding opportunities		
... of the group	Opportunities created due to collective action	Social movements creation of opportunities for themselves through collective action, e.g. winning influential allies or changing political parties' opinions due to pressure from protests.
... for cognate groups	Opportunities created due to collective action for cognate groups	The creation of political opportunities for cognate groups as a result of the actions of a social movement Cognate groups can be defined as, for example, political parties, NGOs, or other social movements.
... for counter-movements	Triggering pro-mining movements ¹¹	In case of existence of countermovements: Opportunities that were created by a social movement's collective action which are triggering and/or strengthening pro-mining movements.
Institutional structure in democratic systems (stable sets of the political opportunity structure)		
State strength & (De)centralization of the state	Contextualizing the social movement's struggle within a multi-scalar state and beyond	Power relations between different policy level that can have an impact on mining projects and social movements impact on them (e.g. state's (de)centralization level influencing the impact of policy actors on different policy scales) legislation governing mining operations and its execution by the authorities as this is operational basis for mining projects and delineating the scope for public interference
Prevailing strategies	State actors' strategies towards the protests on different governmental levels	The manner in which state actors respond to protests, whether inclusive or exclusive, at different governmental levels, and the potential for differences in time span and governmental levels

¹¹ From an empirical point of view, the emergence of pro-mining movements is unlikely.

4. Methodological Approach

In this chapter I present the methodological approach of my thesis, starting with the presuppositions (ontology and epistemology) of my methodological approach. The methods of my research are based on a qualitative methodology. I have conducted a single case study of contentious actions against a lithium mining project in Extremadura, Spain. After introducing the qualifications of single case studies, I explain why I chose to conduct such a study and what data I selected and collected. The data base of this thesis are transcripts of interviews I conducted during a field stay. I explain my interview methods, followed by reflections on my research. The chapter ends with a presentation of my method of analysis: qualitative content analysis, including elaborations on my coding in the analysis.

4.1 Ontological, Epistemological Considerations regarding my Methodology

The term methodology refers to the study of the principles and procedures as well as the methods that are considered legitimate to be used to gain knowledge about a research topic. Moreover, it refers to the understanding of the world (ontology) and the conceptions on what can be known about the world (epistemology). Ontologically and epistemologically, my work follows a critical realist approach. Critical realism consists of an ontological realism as “a belief in the existence of a reality that is independent of the knowledge of it” (Buch-Hansen & Nielsen, 2020, p. 39) and an epistemological relativism “[which is] recognizing that knowledge is always socially produced and fallible” (Buch-Hansen & Nielsen 2020, p. 40). However, the notion of justificatory rationality in critical realism refers to the fact that “[people] can have rational grounds for choosing among competing theories and statements about [the world]” (Buch-Hansen & Nielsen, 2020, p. 40). With the critical realist approach, the materiality of the exploitation (of resources, people, regions) is considered as real, even though the production of knowledge about it is socially produced and fallible.

The methods of my research are based on a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research aims to understand societal, political and social phenomena, discourses and structures within their specific contexts (Dannecker & Englert, 2014, p. 9). An important criterion of quality of qualitative research is triangulation (Dannecker & Englert, 2014, p. 11). I will collect data on multiple levels (data triangulation) by interviewing several persons. By triangulating data sources, the researcher can efficiently achieve maximum theoretical gain with the same methods (Flick, 2011, p. 13).

In the following, I will present my methodological approach and the methods I used.

4.2 Single Case Study

My master’s thesis is based on a single case study. Single-case studies analyze a phenomenon by examining a single case.

4.2.1 Qualification of a Single Case Study

The qualification of a single case study does not lie in a specific survey or evaluation strategy, but rather in a comprehensive research design that aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the case under study (Hering & Jungmann, 2019, p. 677). Case studies are sometimes criticized for not producing generalizable findings and for not revealing statistical regularities. However, Robert Yin (2018) emphasizes that the purpose of conducting case study research is “to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalizations) and not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalizations)” (Yin, 2018, p. 25). Yin (2018) suggests a twofold manner to define the scope of a case study. First, it is an empirical research method that serves to “investigate a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin 2018, p. 17). Therefore, the separation of a particular phenomenon from its contextual environment can be fluid and therefore often difficult – or impossible¹² – to achieve. Second,

“[a] case study

- copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
- benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide design, data collection, and analysis,
- and as another result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (Yin 2018, p. 18).

Case study research designs can be approached in two different ways: While a linear approach is based on a fairly fixed way of sampling and evaluation, an iterative approach narrows down the case during the theorizing process (Hering & Jungmann 2019, p. 681). My research methodology employed an iterative-cyclical approach. An iterative approach helps to maintain a theoretical openness to factors that were not included before the collection of the empirical data (Strübing, 2014, pp. 589–590).

This meant the following for my research practice: Upon sighting my data, I considered whether my research question remained pertinent and concluded that it did not require any adjustments. My research methodology entailed initially formulating a theoretical idea, which I then adapted, developed, and documented in light of the empirical data collected. During the process of writing my master’s thesis, I underwent three iterations of adapting my theoretical approach to align with the data and findings. In essence, I proceeded in an iterative and cyclical manner, moving from the theory to the empirical material, back to the theory, and so on.

12 This is not only depending on the case, but also on the epistemological and ontological approach of the research.

4.2.2 Research Interest and the Decision for a Single Case Study

I examined the influence of social movements on changes in mining projects through a case study of the opposition of the Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres (PSMC) to a lithium mining project in the Valdeflores Valley, Extremadura, Spain. Initially proposed as an open pit mine, significant opposition led to its redesign as an underground mine in 2022. However, the social movement's demands to abandon the mining project have not been met. In fact, since the project was changed, political support for the protests has decreased, making the lithium mine more likely to be realized. It was in this context that my research interest in the influence of social movements on changes in mining projects emerged.

The lithium mining project on I' l a' researching is part of the context of EU policies that aim to establish lithium mining on the territory of the EU. These policies are likely to increase the number of lithium mining projects in the European Union (see Chapter 1).

The direction of this influence is not yet clear, as the state of research shows that the influence of social movements on changes in mining protests can vary significantly from case to case due to different conditions. Given the scarcity of academic literature on lithium mining in the EU and Spain in particular (see Chapter 2), I decided to conduct a single case study to gain insights into the conditions that contribute to the influence of social movements on mining projects for a case that forms part of the emerging lithium mining sector in the EU.

4.2.3 Data Selection and Collection

I narrowed down my case study to the phenomenon of "the influence of social movements on changes in mining projects" by researching the protests in Cáceres, Extremadura. I used the political opportunity approach (Tarrow, 2022) as a theoretical lens and read the literature on the influence of social movements on mining projects. This led to my operational research question: "How and under what conditions can social movements influence changes in mining projects, such as cancellations or changes in the project design?". I decided to conduct an explanatory case study to investigate this question. An explanatory case study aims to explain how or why a condition came to be, e.g., how or why a sequence of events did (not) occur (Yin, 2018, p. 323). This type of case study is appropriate for dealing with operational processes that unfold over time (Yin, 2018, p. 12), which in my case is the protest actions in Cáceres and their influence on the mining project that was being opposed.

I have defined the time frame of my case study from the beginning of the project in 2016 to the elections on May 28, 2023. This time frame includes the emergence of the protests, how the project was put on hold, and the broad support of most political parties for the protests, as well as the decline in support after the project change. I end with the elections in May 2023, after which the city government

changed. The period that begins after that is no less scientifically interesting, but was excluded because, first, it is an ongoing period that could perhaps be considered in its emergent phase, and second, I could not include the further events in my interviews since my research stay in Cáceres ended on May 20, 2023.

The data that can be used for a case study are diverse and should be adapted to the research Interest (Hering & Jungmann, 2019, p. 684). A grant from the University of Vienna which finances short-term research stays gave me the opportunity to spend a month in Cáceres, Extremadura, to collect data. Before going to Cáceres, I prepared my data collection by gathering background knowledge in order to gain a better understanding of my case. Aglaja Przyborsky and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (2021, p. 47) claim that the first step in qualitative, empirical work should be to understand the research field and the research object, It is often necessary to make observations in order to decide how and what data to collect. This way of dealing with a case study is also in line with an iterative approach, as one adjusts the research design to match the theoretical approach with the empirical research (Hering & Jungmann 2019, p. 681). Therefore, I began with an overview of the chronological sequence of events in Cáceres. I reviewed different media articles about the lithium mining project and the protests against it and sorted them into Excel spreadsheets. I read social media content on Facebook and Telegram created by the social movement Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres (PSMC). I analyzed government documents related to the lithium mine and statements made by actors in the lithium mining industry operating in Cáceres. I combined this with a review of empirical and theoretical literature relevant to my research topic.

In addition to knowing the research field, one needs access to it. How this can be achieved depends on the research field (Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2019, p. 61). I requested interviews by email in advance, and fortunately the social movement in Cáceres, called Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres (PSMC), responded kindly and assured me that they would send someone to meet me. This was also important to me because I did not want to do research on a movement that might not be in accordance with them.

During my time in Cáceres, I attended events announced on the PSMC's telegram channel, where I spoke with PSMC members and sympathizers of their protests. In this way, I met members of the PSMC who helped me get more interviews with PSMC members.

I also spoke with people on the streets of Cáceres to understand my research field better.

My analysis is based on interviews because I am investigating conditions related to the past and other unobservable aspects, such as the relationship between the social movement and the municipal

government, NGOs, and/or the lithium mining company. In addition, I wanted to give a voice to the activists of the PSMC and to other actors, and to actively include their perspectives into my research.

Where my interview data lacked information, I supplemented it with media articles to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the chronology of the contentious actions and the handling of the mining project by political parties with whom I did not conduct interviews. I have listed these media articles in the Appendix.

I contacted several potential interviewees in advance, some of them several times. Those who did not respond, I tried to contact on site during my stay in Cáceres. I planned to conduct interviews with all of the political parties represented in the Cáceres City Council. However, two of the four political parties did not respond to multiple requests for interviews. I was only able to speak with them spontaneously and off the record by visiting their campaign stands. I was promised an interview at both campaign stands, but in the end it did not happen.

The Interviews listed below are the data base for my master's thesis. I decided to include these ten interviews because I felt a theoretical saturation in relation to the perspectives of PSMC activists, NGO members, and left-wing politicians. I felt this theoretical saturation because of repetitions of information within the interviews. I did not feel this in relation to the perspectives of right-wing political parties, but I did not manage to conduct any interviews.

Nine of ten interviews were conducted in Spanish.

Table 2 – List of Interviews

Date / Interviewee¹³	Information on the interviewee
29.04.2023: Interview with M. A. Lopez Lax [Lawyer for the NGOs ACIMA & Adenex]	Attorney specialized in mining law. She works for the environmental NGOs ACIMA and Adenex. ACIMA stands for Association for Environmental Communication and Information and Adenex stands Association for the Defense of Nature and Resources in Extremadura. Lopez Lax was involved in the foundation process of the Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres (PSMC).

¹³ The reasons why some interviewees are anonymized, and others are not, are explained in Section 4.2.5.

01.05.2023: Interview with a spokesperson of Ecologistas en Acción (EeA) and an activist of EeA and the PSMC	Spokesperson of EeA is officially a board member of Ecologistas en Acción (a NGO dedicated to environmental justice). Since Ecologistas en Acción is a grassroots organization, this does not affect her voting rights. The interview was conducted together with an activist from Ecologistas en Acción and Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres. Both interviewees were involved in the foundation of the PSMC.
04.05.2023: Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023]	Partido Socialista Obrero España (PSOE) politician in the opposition (2015-2019) Councilman of Patrimony and Urbanism of Cáceres City (2019-2023) for the PSOE. He is responsible among other things for the handling of the Urban Plan of Cáceres City that is relevant to the lithium mine.
05.05.2023: Interview with top candidate for Cáceres Viva [former spokesperson of PSMC]	The interviewee ran for election to the city council 2023 for the regionalist political party Cáceres Viva. She was campaigning on stopping the lithium mining project. Before her candidature, she was a very engaged spokesperson in the PSMC. She resigned from this position to run as candidate for Cáceres Viva.
10.05.2023: Interview with two PSMC activists (spokesperson B + activist C)	One of the interviewees (spokesperson B of the PSMC) is one of the approximately 10 spokespersons. She frequently speaks in public on behalf of the PSMC, e.g. in the city parliament and at public interventions.
11.05.2023: Interview with R. Jiménez Serrano [CEO of Extremadura New Energies]	Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Extremadura New Energies (ENE) the lithium mining company which proposed the underground mine, since May 2022.
15.05.2023: Interview with spokesperson A of the PSMC	The interviewee is one of the approximately 10 spokespersons. She frequently gives press interviews.
15.05.2023: Interview with activist D of the PSMC	The activist gives lectures and information sessions for the PSMC, does press work on content creation (e.g. writing speeches on behalf of the PSMC for the plenary session of the city government).

17.05.2023: Interview with M. C. López Balset [Chairperson of UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres]	Member of the City Council of Cáceres for Unidas Podemos in Cáceres City and its spokesperson and top candidate in the 2019 and 2023 elections. Unidas Podemos are the only party in the City Council that opposes also the underground mining project.
18.05.2023: Interview with R. Martín [City Councilor of Unidas Podemos (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres]	Member of the City Council of Cáceres for Unidas Podemos in Cáceres City. At the time of interview (in the 2019-2023 legislative term), one of three Councilors of Unidas Podemos Cáceres in the City Parliament. He belongs to Izquierda Unida.

(Table 2: List of Interviews)

4.2.4 Guided Interviews Method

For the analysis of my master's thesis, I conducted ten guided interviews. Guided interviews are recommended for research that requires specific thematic material that interviewees may not discuss independently (Helfferich, 2009, p. 179). My guidelines were informed by the political opportunity approach, existing research, and the fieldwork I conducted. The interview guidelines, which should include clear, concise questions organized by topic and type (Helfferich, 2009, p. 180), help prepare for the interview, but should not be reviewed until the end of the interview, if at all. Interviewers must remain open to unforeseen but relevant information and maintain flexibility, encouraging respondents to share freely rather than strictly following the guide (Helfferich, 2009, p. 180).

I developed the interview guides using Cornelia Helfferich's SPSS procedure, which stands for the four-step process: Sammeln (collecting), Prüfen (proving), Sortieren (sorting), and Subsumieren (subsuming) (Helfferich, 2009, pp. 182-189). This method helps visualize and make explicit the researcher's theoretical knowledge and implicit expectations regarding the interviewees' narratives (Helfferich, 2009, p. 182).

In the first step, all potentially interesting questions and topics are collected without evaluating their relevance. In the second step, the list is refined by eliminating or reformulating questions to focus only on those essential to the research and conducive to narrative responses (Helfferich, 2009, pp. 182-185). The objective is to avoid questions that simply confirm known facts or seek straightforward answers, instead encouraging the interviewee to share unexpected narratives.

By the third step, questions and keywords are organized into two to four groups based on time dimensions or research interests (Helfferich, 2009, p. 185). The final step is to design the interview guide, of which an example is presented (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Example for Interview Guidelines

Leading question or narrative prompt	Memo	Specific question at an appropriate point, possibly at the end	Maintenance/Guidance Questions
<u>Project changes</u> What were the reasons to change your project from open pit to underground mining?	- Acceptance of Cáceres inhabitants - Extremadura New Energy's CEO said this in an interview with a German newspaper - restrictions due to the concession law - protests	Was the proposition of the underground mining project related to the civil society's opposition against the open-pit mining project? If so, to what extent?	- What made the change to an underground mine possible? Why didn't you initially propose an underground mine? - Or was the decision mainly taken because of the problems with the Plan del Urbanismo?
<u>Exchange with the civil society</u> In what ways do you exchange with the inhabitants and the civil society of Cáceres?	- Information tables - Exchange with NGOs? - Exchange with PSMC?	Are you or did you try to get in contact with the different groups opposing your project ? If so: How and since when?	- What ways do you use to inform the inhabitants on your project? - Is your project more accepted by the citizens of Cáceres since the proposition of the underground mine?
<u>Handling/Willingness to make concessions</u> How is the public opinion going to affect your further project planning ? Did the protests of Cáceres civil society influence your project handling in some way?	prevention	Would you make concessions regarding your project to get the social acceptance of the society of Cáceres or/and groups that are at the moment opposing your project?	- Do you try to convince the groups that are opposing your project to change their mind? - Did you expect such big protests against your project? - Do you have experience with protests? - How did you react when the first protests appeared? - How do you get more social acceptance for your project?
<u>Politics</u> Did the proposition of the underground mining project change your relation to local and/or regional politics ?	- City Council - Junta - Parties → exchange - Ciudadanos are now in favor	Do you consider the civil society's opposition as an important factor influencing the political parties' opinion towards your project?	- To what extent do you exchange with the political parties in Cáceres? - How is your relationship with the City Council of Cáceres? Did it change with the proposition of the new project? - How is your relationship with the Junta de Extremadura? Did it change with the proposition of the new project?
Question about relevant points not mentioned		Is there anything you would like to add as an important factor for the changes in your project, we have not yet talked about?	
<u>Ending question – Probability of realization of the mine</u> Would you consider the actual underground mine project as likely to be realized ?	- Plan del Urbanismo nicht mehr relevant? Junta de Extremadura Corte /tribunal de justicia		- Will protests influence this? - How eventual is it that an extraction license is approved by 2024?

I organized the interview guides as follows: The first column contains a narrative prompt that is broad enough to encompass the topics of each group of questions. The second column lists key topics as reminders, the third contains an optional question, and the fourth provides guiding questions to maintain the narrative flow. Each interview guide begins with an open-ended question to initiate narrative flow. This structure allowed both the interviewee and me to accommodate with the interview situation. The interviews ended with a question to ensure that all relevant aspects were covered according to the interviewee and to create a smooth transition out of the interview. Based on findings I made while being in Cáceres, I adjusted my interview guidelines during my research stay.

The interviews were transcribed using specialized software. All actual words spoken were included in the transcript. The transcripts do not include sounds that are not words, such as "eh" or "hmm".

4.2.5 Handling the Interview Data

In order to protect privacy of interviewees, interview transcripts may be anonymized. The requirements for anonymization depend on the sensitivity and risk of re-identification of the research data in question as well as the form of the available consent forms of the subjects (Meyermann & Porzelt, 2014, p. 6). I formally anonymized the transcripts of the interviews that I conducted with activists to safeguard their privacy and because their personal identity had no significance for their statements.

Prior to each interview, I obtained written consent from each interviewee, which permitted me to utilize and cite the interview content for my research. This consent form included an abstract of my research and the intended use of the interviews as well as the interviewee's rights to revoke the consent form. As suggested by Meyermann and Porzelt (2014, p. 14), the consent form included the option of a permission to cite the interviewee by name. This was signed by all interviewees that I cited by name. All activists allowed me to use the transcripts non-anonymized. The consent form was signed by both sides, and I gave a copy to the interviewees.

4.3 Reflections on my Empirical Research

Qualitative research is based on the researcher as a central instrument of knowledge (Flick, 1995, p. 154). A researcher is not a neutral entity interacting with other subjects in the research field. Rather, the researcher takes a position in the research field that is conditioned by cultural and social norms and influences access to information (Flick, 1995, p. 154).

Acknowledging and reflecting that the researcher is part of the production of knowledge is part of a qualitative research approach (Flick et al., 2008, p. 23).

I situate myself as a young white female researcher interested in qualitative approaches to climate justice. This influences my perspectives, although I kept a professional distance from my personal perspectives in order to remain professional and remind myself of my role as a researcher. This is important because spending time in a research field carries a risk for the researcher of becoming too familiar with the research field (Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2021, p. 64) (often called "going native"). Becoming personally involved can be in conflict with research objectives (Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2021, p. 64). Having a professional distance from the research field and reflecting on one's position in the field helps to recognize phenomena that people who are heavily involved in the field might overlook because they consider it "normal" (Flick, 1995, p. 154).

During my stay in the city of Cáceres, I found how important it was to reflect on my role as a researcher. I met several people who were very welcoming, helpful, and sympathetic to my research and to me. Many of them were from PSMC and other groups opposed to the open pit and underground mining project, others were just opposed to the open pit but more open to the underground mine. Hence, many people gave me access to their knowledge, and were very kind to me. Some estimated that my research could help their opposition. It can be pressuring to feel such expectations and feeling the responsibility of not writing anything that could harm their protests' goals. I reflected on this by keeping a journal during my stay and by talking with another researcher I met during my time in Cáceres. This helped me to distance myself from my research area. Focusing on my research question also helped me, especially in the analysis. I focused on the conditions and the social movement's ability to take advantage of the political opportunities offered by those conditions, leaving out interpretations that I could not measure with my data (or any other available data). I also designed my research question to minimize the possibility of harming a social movement. Incorporating these considerations into my research question was important for me to feel comfortable with my research. This, in turn, was important to my ability to maintain a professional detachment, because answering my research question did not get me as emotionally involved as a question that I might have struggled with.

Another challenge I faced was conducting the interviews in Spanish. This is not my native language, and it bothered me at times during the interviews because I could not ask my questions as precisely as I could in German or English. To mitigate this language barrier, I prepared extensively and to design relatively extensive interview guides that I would review just before the interviews to help me remember certain formulas. In most cases, I prepared the guidelines in both English and Spanish. I asked my interviewees whether they preferred English or Spanish. Although only the interview with the CEO of the mining company was conducted in English, this was helpful. This was especially the case, as this interview was the most difficult to guide, because the CEO was good at dodging my critical questions and promoting his mining project. In retrospect, I would have liked to have insisted more strongly on my questions.

The last thing I would like to point out is that I take into account that my data is biased in terms of interviews with political parties. I only managed to get interviews with left-wing political parties. As already mentioned (see "data selection and collection"), I tried to change this several times by approaching the other political parties of the Cáceres City Council. I have tried to compensate this lack of data by referring to media articles. However, I take into account that they are much less extensive than the interviews. Also, these media articles are selected by my considerations of important events and not, as in the interviews, by the interviewee's choice of what to emphasize.

4.4 Qualitative Content Analysis

I analyzed my data using qualitative content analysis based on Philipp Mayring (2022), who has been developing and revising his approach since the 1980s. The method proposes a systematic way to analyze qualitative data along clearly defined categories. By following the same rules in the process of category building and analysis, qualitative content analysis aims to be intersubjectively comprehensible (Mayring, 2021, p. 49). The categories of the analysis can be deductively assigned to the text or inductively derived from the analyzed text (e.g. transcriptions of interviews). A combination of both methods is possible (Mayring, 2022, p. 107). The application of the techniques to the textual material follows theoretical considerations that must be made explicit (Mayring, 2022, p. 30). In general, it is important to code category building, to read and interpret the interviews (or other texts) being analyzed in their communicative context.

In a first step, I chose a deductive category building based on the theoretical approach presented earlier. In a second step, I extended my categories inductively to explain passages that the deductive categories could not explain.

My codes were deduced from my theoretical operationalization (see also Table xx). I followed the deductive coding steps below, which I based on Mayring (2022, p. 106).

Building deductive categories derived from the research question

1. Define categories as nominal and divided into major and minor categories.
2. Create a coding guide with clear, theory-based definitions for each category
3. Finding anchor examples for each category in my analyzed text
4. Adaptation: Formulate rules for deciding how to code unclear passages; adjust and reformulate categories as needed
5. Generate a coding guideline from the category definitions, anchor examples and coding rules and test it by coding several interview transcriptions.
6. Revision: Once the category assignment was stabilized, I tested my coding method by coding passages a second time to see if the results were similar.
7. Re-coding of the entire analyzed text

This process resulted in the following code tree.¹⁴

¹⁴ The detailed version of the code tree with anchor examples and coding decision rules can be found in the appendix.

Table 3 – Deductive Categories

Deductive categories	
Code name	Code description
Volatile opportunities (most salient signals after Tarrow, 2022)	
Shifting alignments	<i>Shifting Alignments</i> create opportunities when political alignments are shifting and are therefore instable. Especially when new coalitions are present and opposition parties create uncertainty among the supporters of such coalitions “challengers [can be encouraged] to try to exercise marginal power, and may even induce elites to compete for support from outside the polity “ (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145). In liberal democracy, this is indicated by electoral instability (Tarrow, 1996, p. 55).
Divided elites	<i>Divided Elites</i> can stimulate outbreaks of contention by giving incentives to resource-poor groups to take the opportunity of protest when elites are weaker than usually. It also can encourage the parts of the elite that are out of power to represent claims of a social movement, because then they might be perceived as the “tribunes of the people” (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145).
Influential allies	<i>Influential allies</i> (Tarrow, 2022, pp. 145–146) provide resources and support to contentious actors. The code includes the relation of these allies to the social movement.
Increasing access	<i>Increasing access</i> refers to the assumption that people might not attack their opponents who are too powerful and therefore opportunities are closed. When contentious actors get more access to power, incentives to protests can emerge (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145).
Expanding opportunities through collective action¹⁵	
... for the social movement	Opportunities can emerge for a social movement due to its collective action, e.g. mobilized elite allies after emerging protests. Expanding opportunities can initiate broad cycles of contention, since these are mostly likely to begin in moments of widely distributed resources (Tarrow 2022, p. 150).
... for cognate groups	Protest groups can create opportunities for cognate groups. They demonstrate the utility of collective action and create opportunities for other to support, copy or innovate upon. Here, opportunities that may affect changes in the mining project are of interest. Cognate groups to look for can be e.g. political parties, NGOs, and other protest groups.

¹⁵ Tarrow’s expanding opportunities include a third category, which is on triggering countermovements (Tarrow, 2022, p. 152). In the analyzed case for this thesis were not counter-movements were present.

Perception of threats	
Threats are “[relating] to the risks and costs of action or inaction rather than to the prospect of success. Threats are often seen only as the “flip side” of opportunities, but they are actually analytically distinct. A group may decide to bear very high costs for protest if it believes the chances of success are high, but the same group may decide to avoid even modest costs if it believes the chances of succeeding are low” (Tarrow, 2022, p. 143)	
More stable opportunities – the role of state actors	
Prevailing strategies at different political scales	The prevailing strategies of political actors’ dealing with protests can vary between inclusive strategies, which respond to and absorb protest demands, and exclusive strategies, which marginalize protest demands (Kriesi et al. 1992, p. 225). In terms of theoretical adaptation to a multi-scalar state, this is considered at different political scales.
Institutional structures’ impacts on the social movements’ influence	Information on the scope of influence of the social movement, conditioned by institutional structures such as the type of democracy, the strength of the state to impose itself, the impact of its degree of (de)centralization, and the mining law and its implementation.
Mining company as opponent	
Mining company's impact on political opportunities for the SM	The impact of the mining company on the political opportunity structure that influenced the social movement's influence on changes in the mining project (e.g., cancellation of the project or adjustments in the project design).

In the process of deductive coding, codes emerged that could not be reflected by my theoretical approach, and I responded in line with my iterative approach by adjusting my theoretical approach and building deductive categories again by following steps 1-7.

I also built inductive categories by coding passages of text that helped answer my research question but could not be explained deductively with my theory. Inductive category building is done step by step, moving to higher levels of abstraction that define the degree of generalization of a category. One can move from paraphrasing a text passage (low level of abstraction) to finding categories that describe a more generalizable phenomenon that fits different interview passages (high level of abstraction). In addition, two codes emerged that I refer to as volatile opportunities that do not belong to the predefined most salient signals of opportunities (Tarrow, 2022). To create these codes, I used an inductive coding procedure, as described below, again following Mayring’s suggestions (2022, pp. 70-71, 107)

1. I paraphrased the content of text passages that I found as relevant to my research question and that my deductive categories failed to capture.
2. Defining higher-level abstractions that summarize the content of relevant passages. Paraphrased passages that were above the level of abstraction remained.
3. Repeating the reduction in a second step. Check whether these abstractions still represent the original material.
4. Finding anchor examples and possibly coding rules, as explained in deductive category building.

The following codes emerged from this process:

Table 4 – Political Opportunities (inductive codes)

Code related to the political opportunity approach, built with an inductive procedure	
Code name	Code description
Volatile opportunities	
Litigations on the mining project hindering its implementation	Litigations on the mining project and their ability to stop the proceeding of the mining project and thereby hindering its implementation

Table 5 – Inductive Categories

Inductive categories	
Code name	Code description
Matter of lithium for the energy transition as obstacle	Political justification on the necessity of lithium extraction to reach carbon neutrality
Lithium price	Rise in the price of lithium and the resulting increase in the profitability of lithium mines as an enabling factor for changes in mining projects

I used the software MaxQDA to code my data. During the coding process, I added notes to passages that seemed important to the analysis.

The analysis was based on reviewing all coded passages and identifying significant passages to answer my research question.

5. Context of the Case: Lithium Mining in Valdeflores, Extremadura, Spain

In this chapter, I explain the context of the opposition of the social movement called Plataforma Salvemos La Montaña de Cáceres (PSMC) to the lithium mining project proposed in the Valdeflores Valley, Extremadura, Spain. This context includes elaborations on lithium demand and mining of the mineral in the European Union, the political economy of Extremadura, the legal context of mining in Spain, the legal context of lithium mining in Extremadura, Spain. The chapter ends with elaborations on the dispute in Cáceres over the plans of a lithium mining project, next to the city.

For the sake of clarity, I will briefly list the main actors and institutions that appear in this chapter (in alphabetical order):

- **City Council of Cáceres:** municipal government of Cáceres City
- **Ciudadanos:** political party of the middle / center-right, in Cáceres. The only party represented in the Cáceres City Council that has supported the lithium mining project in all of its phases.
- **European Commission:** institution of the European Union which issues geopolitical strategies for the EU such as identifying batteries value chains as strategic
- **Junta de Extremadura:** regional government of the Autonomous Community of Extremadura
- **Partido Popular (PP):** center-right political party, governed Cáceres from 2015 to 2019
- **Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres (PSMC):** social movement which has opposed the lithium mining project plans in the Valdeflores Valley since 2017
- **Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE):** center-left political party, governed Cáceres 2019-2023 and governed Extremadura 2015-2019 & 2019-2023
- **Tecnología Extremeña del Litio (TEL):** mining company venture that strives to operate the mine in the Valdeflores Valley
 - o Consisted of the **Australian company Infinity Lithium (IL)** (former: Plymouth Minerals) (75%) and Valoriza Minería (25%), from 2016 to 2022
 - o Consists of **Extremadura New Energies (Spanish sub-company of IL)** (75%) and Valoriza Minería (25%), since 2022
- **Unidas Podemos (UP)** (in Cáceres predecessor of **Cáceres-Tú Podemos [CT-P]**, 2015-2019): far left political party alliance

5.1 Lithium Mining in the European Union

The EU envisages a shift from fossil to renewable energy sources, based on a secure and affordable energy supply (European Commission, 2021). A key aspect is the electrification of energy, which implies

the need for batteries to store energy. Certain minerals are needed to make batteries. Lithium is currently one of the most important minerals needed for the production of batteries. Demand for lithium has tripled from 2017 to 2022 (International Energy Agency, 2023b) and is predicted to grow more than tenfold by 2050 under the International Energy Agency's (IEA) Net Zero Emissions by 2050 Scenario (International Energy Agency, 2023a). In the EU, lithium demand is expected to even increase 12-fold by 2030 and 21-fold by 2050 (European Commission, 2024).

Lithium is predominately extracted in Australia (46.9%), Chile (30.0%), China (14.6%) and Argentina (4.7%) (IRENA, 2023), while the EU receives Lithium mostly from Chile (78%) (Draft Law on Critical Raw Materials Resilience, 2020).

With global demand for batteries growing rapidly, the European Commission has identified batteries as a strategic value chain. The EU is therefore strengthening its industrial policy strategy to support the establishment of battery value chains in the EU (onshoring) (European Commission, 2019). In doing so, the EU aims to be less dependent on imports from third countries and to build a globally integrated, sustainable and competitive industrial base (European Commission, 2019). In order to onshore battery value chains, the EU is promoting the extraction of battery minerals, including lithium, on its territory (European Commission, 2019).

In 2022, the European Commission proposed the Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) (European Commission, 2024). It proposes measures for materials identified as critical because of the risk of supply shortages and their impact on the EU economy and its climate goals (European Commission, 2024). Lithium has been listed as a critical material since 2020 (Draft Law on Critical Raw Materials Resilience, 2020). The final proposal of the CRMA includes a target to source at least 10 percent of critical raw materials within the EU (European Commission, 2023).

So far, there is no lithium mine in operation in Europe. However, efforts are underway to establish other lithium mines in Germany, Finland, the United Kingdom, France, Ireland, Austria, Serbia, Spain, and the Czech Republic (Maier, 2022). It's too early to assess the impact of the establishment of a lithium mining sector in Europe, as there is no mine in operation. However, global case studies show that lithium mining can cause social and environmental conflict, which has led to social movements mobilizing against mining projects (projects (i.e. Araújo et al., 2022; Dorn, 2021; Radhuber, 2015). Several anti-lithium mining movements have already emerged in Europe, with varying degrees of success. In Portugal, protests in the Região Norte could not prevent the continuation of the permitting process for the Mina do Barroso, one of the most advanced lithium mining projects in Europe (Ivancic & Steblev, 2022). In contrast, protests against Rio Tinto's lithium mining project in the Jadar Valley in Serbia resulted in the revocation of Rio Tinto's lithium exploration licenses by the Serbian government (Ivancic & Steblev,

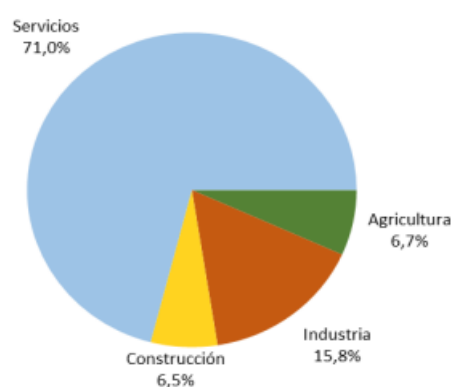
2022). However, social movements will probably play a key role in shaping the design of the lithium mining sector in Europe (Riofrancos, 2023, p. 36).

In this thesis, I investigated protests against a proposed lithium mining project in Valdeflores, Extremadura, Spain. It is one of two contested lithium mining project plans in Extremadura. The project would be located near the city of Cáceres. In Cáceres, a social movement called Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres (PSMC) has been mobilizing against this lithium mining project since 2017. An open pit mine was planned until 2022. In September 2022, a new project plan was proposed, including an underground mine and a new battery refinery (Osusky, 2022).

5.2 The Political Economy of Extremadura in relation to (Lithium) Mining

Extremadura is an autonomous community in the southwest of Spain, bordering Portugal. Its regional government is called Junta de Extremadura. Covering 8.2 percent of Spain, it is one of the largest states, but also one of the least populated, with less than 1.1 million inhabitants. 92.1 percent of its land is used for agriculture or forestry (Instituto de Estadística de Extremadura, 2024). Extremadura is the economically weakest region of Spain with an average salary of 1,487 euros net per month, which is 335 euros below the Spanish average salary (Adecco Group Institute, 2023). The unemployment rate is 16.3 percent, above the Spanish average of 11.8 percent (EPData, 2024). The risk of poverty and social exclusion is the highest in Spain, with 36.9% of the population (EAPN Extremadura, 2023). The economy is dominated by the service sector, which accounts for 71 percent of the gross value of the regional economy (Junta de Extremadura, 2023a, p. 37).

Figure 2 – Structure of the Gross Value Addition in Extremadura, 2022



(Junta de Extremadura, 2023a, p. 37)¹⁶

¹⁶ The economy sectors contribute the following percentages to the Gross Value of the economy in Extremadura: 71.0% Services, 6.7 % Agriculture, 15.8% Industry, 6.5% Construction

As a region with a relatively low average wage and a high risk of poverty, the economy of the state is taking measures to increase capital accumulation and is receiving support to do so. Extremadura is an EU convergence region and receives the highest level of regional financial aid as an incentive to attract (foreign) investors (ICEX, 2024). Initiatives of the Spanish State and the Junta de Extremadura launch campaigns to attract industry to the region (ICEX, 2024; Invest In Extremadura, 2024). This includes the mining sector (SIGEO, 2024), which so far has not played a significant role in the economy of Extremadura, although it had 165 mining operations registered and 2,189 workers in 2021 (SIGEO, 2022).

Extremadura has one of the largest lithium reserves in Europe and the highest in Spain (IEA, 2022) and tries to attract lithium mining. In 2022¹⁷, there were 14 open dossiers related to lithium mining, but no exploitation concession had been granted (Junta de Extremadura, 2022).

Carla Noever (2023, p. 5) emphasizes that the regional interests in attracting the lithium mining industry to Extremadura as well as the protests against it must be understood against the background of the economic peripheralization of Extremadura. Being a region that exports 70 percent of its produced energy, the criticism of a "colonialization" of Extremadura in favor of the industrialized centers of Spain is related to this and is a context in which the expansion of the lithium industry in Extremadura must be understood (Noever, 2023, p.5).

5.3 Legal Context of Mining in Extremadura, Spain

The Spanish mining law defines governance of the mining sector and therefore the influence of social movements on mining activities. Mining activities are regulated by Law 22/1973. This law, passed in 1973, is pre-constitutional and dates from the late developmentalist Francoist period. This period is characterized by the pursuit of an economic growth strategy, including massive industrialization and efforts to establish trade relations with foreign countries. Natural resources are public property, and exploration for possible mining sites and extraction require permits.

The Ministry of Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge (MITECO) regulates the mining sector, but the Statute of Autonomy and Royal Decree 1136/1984 delegates the regulation and administration competences of mining to the autonomous communities.¹⁸ Accordingly, the Junta de Extremadura is responsible for mining in Extremadura. Since there is no specific mining law for Extremadura, only the pre-constitutional Spanish mining law applies. However, a reform process of the Spanish Mining Code is underway, initiated by MITECO in 2022. While environmental NGOs see this as overdue (Ecologistas

17 This was the most recent number to be found. The Junta de Extremadura did not answer a request on the most recent number.

18 Spain is consisting of 17 autonomous communities.

en Acción, 2019, p. 27), the mining sector questions the need to implement new regulations, as the mining sector has achieved legal certainty on Law 22/1973 and “a stable framework for the regulation of the mining regime” (de Elena, 2022). Earlier in 2022, a reform proposal for the mining law, developed by an environmental NGO, was presented by the left-wing alliance Unidas Podemos (UP), the junior partner in the coalition with the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) in the central government. It was rejected by the Spanish Congress, including the PSOE (Noever, 2022, p. 8).

Views on Spanish mining law and its favorability to the mining sector vary. The MINLEX¹⁹ Country Report on Spain’s legal framework for mineral extraction and licensing procedures for exploration and exploitation criticizes the multi-authorization system which requires mining, environmental, cultural, land planning, and other permits from different administrations with different time frames and schedules (MinPol, 2019, p. 3) and that the environmental permits issued by the autonomous environmental authorities “rarely seem to meet the deadlines, with no administrative consequences” (MinPol, 2019, p. 3).

The MINLEX report (MinPol, 2019) further criticizes autonomous governments and municipalities for banning mining projects, stating that “[s]ome Autonomic Governments and Municipalities have used the land use planning under their direct control and without clear limits (this competence is constitutionally in their hands) to ban mining from their regions” (MinPol, 2019, p.3).

In contrast to the MINLEX report, a report by the environmental NGO Ecologistas en Acción (2019) criticizes Spanish legislation as mining-friendly and insufficiently inclusive of environmental and social interests (Ecologistas en Acción 2019, pp. 24-26). The report illustrates how public participation is hindered, as authorizations for mining activities only need to be published on the government's official publication website. In addition, it is often necessary for the public to (subsequently) insist on receiving the relevant documentation. Environmental information on the mining concessions in question is often difficult to access or inaccessible to the public (Ecologistas en Acción 2019, pp. 26-27).

Another criticism made in the report by Ecologistas en Acción is that, by law, mining companies only need to have three thousand euros in capital to obtain a mining exploration license. This has led to speculation and financialization with such licenses (Ecologistas en Acción 2019, p. 14), including a huge increase in the exploration and licensing of new mining projects, which can be characterized by unsustainable business practices focused on speculation instead of economic production (Ecologistas en

19 MINLEX is the abbreviation for “Legal framework for mineral extraction and permitting procedures for exploration and exploitation in the EU”.

Acción 2019, p. 9). Operating mining companies often lack experience and aim to resell the licenses they obtain in order to speculate with them (Eisenmann, 2022).

5.4 Legal Context of Lithium Mining in Extremadura

In August 2022, the Junta de Extremadura issued a decree on lithium, called Decreto-ley 5/2022, declaring projects for the extraction of the mineral to be of regional interest and obliging its processing in Extremadura, Spain. It is justified with economic interests, the importance of lithium for the European Union's goal of climate neutrality (Diario Oficial de Extremadura 2022, p. 43904-43905), the establishment of resilient European-based value chains of critical raw materials (such as lithium) to reduce dependence on non-EU countries - a geopolitical goal of the EU (Diario Oficial de Extremadura, 2022, p. 43905). With regard to protests against lithium mining, the position of the Junta de Extremadura becomes quite clear, as the decree explicitly includes several passages problematizing protests, including the following:

“[...] the European population is rather reticent about mining operations, which is why the NIMBY syndrome (“yes, but not here”) often occurs. The population should be made more aware of the positive effects of socially and environmentally conscious extraction of raw materials for local communities. It is also clear that local ownership, i.e. the involvement of the population in various aspects, financial or otherwise, can prevent the emergence of opposition to these activities and prevent them from being carried out” (Diario Oficial de Extremadura, 2022, p. 43906, translation SD)²⁰

"NIMBY" is short for "Not in my backyard," a phrase used to frame local opposition to energy infrastructure as a selfish action that does not recognize the necessity of energy infrastructure-related projects (Hess et al., 2022, pp. 663–664).

However, at least for the time period analyzed in this thesis, the decree does not apply, as the Spanish government successfully filed a lawsuit against it, claiming that the decree exceeds the powers of the Junta and that the regional processing obligations for lithium extracted in Extremadura violate free market competition (elDiarioex, 2023).²¹

In November 2022, the Junta de Extremadura extended the Decree 05/2022. It facilitates lithium mining projects as "Business Projects of Autonomous Interest" (PREMIA) that have a significant impact on employment in Extremadura or the regional productive network (Boletín Oficial del Estado, 2022, p.

²⁰ Original citation: “[...], la población europea se muestra bastante reticente con respecto a las explotaciones mineras, por lo que suele darse el síndrome NIMBY (“sí, pero aquí no”). Debería sensibilizarse en mayor medida a la población sobre los efectos positivos para las comunidades locales de una extracción de materias primas con conciencia social y ambiental. También está claro que la apropiación local, es decir, la participación de la población en distinto aspectos, financieros o de otro tipo, puede evitar que surja una oposición a estas actividades que impidan su realización”. (Diario Oficial de Extremadura, 2022, p. 43906).

²¹ In October, 2023 the Junta announced that it would amend the Decree 05/2022 to comply with the Spanish law (Junta de Extremadura, 2023b). However, this is beyond the investigation time of this thesis.

170494). PREMIA projects are priority projects that receive priority treatment in regional administrative procedures, have shorter approval times and receive subsidies for employment purposes. Although mining projects are generally not included in PREMIA projects, lithium projects are an explicit exception.

In assessing the mining policy of the Junta de Extremadura, Carla Noever Castelos (2023) describes the Junta as a promoter of the private lithium mining sector, which shapes the conflicts around lithium in the region.

Regarding the legal context of contested actions against mining activities, they can take place without predictions of direct repression. Spain is a free democracy where the Constitution provides for freedom of assembly and the authorities usually respect this right. Existing restrictions relate to unauthorized protests near important buildings and infrastructure (Freedom House, 2022).²²

²² Existing restrictions relate to unauthorized protests near important buildings and infrastructure. Freedom of expression is limited to not "glorifying terrorism". This law is sometimes used in a questionable manner against contentious actions related to the independence movement in Catalonia, but usually not against other citizen protests (Freedom House, 2022).

5.5 Opposition in Cáceres against Lithium Mining Project Plan

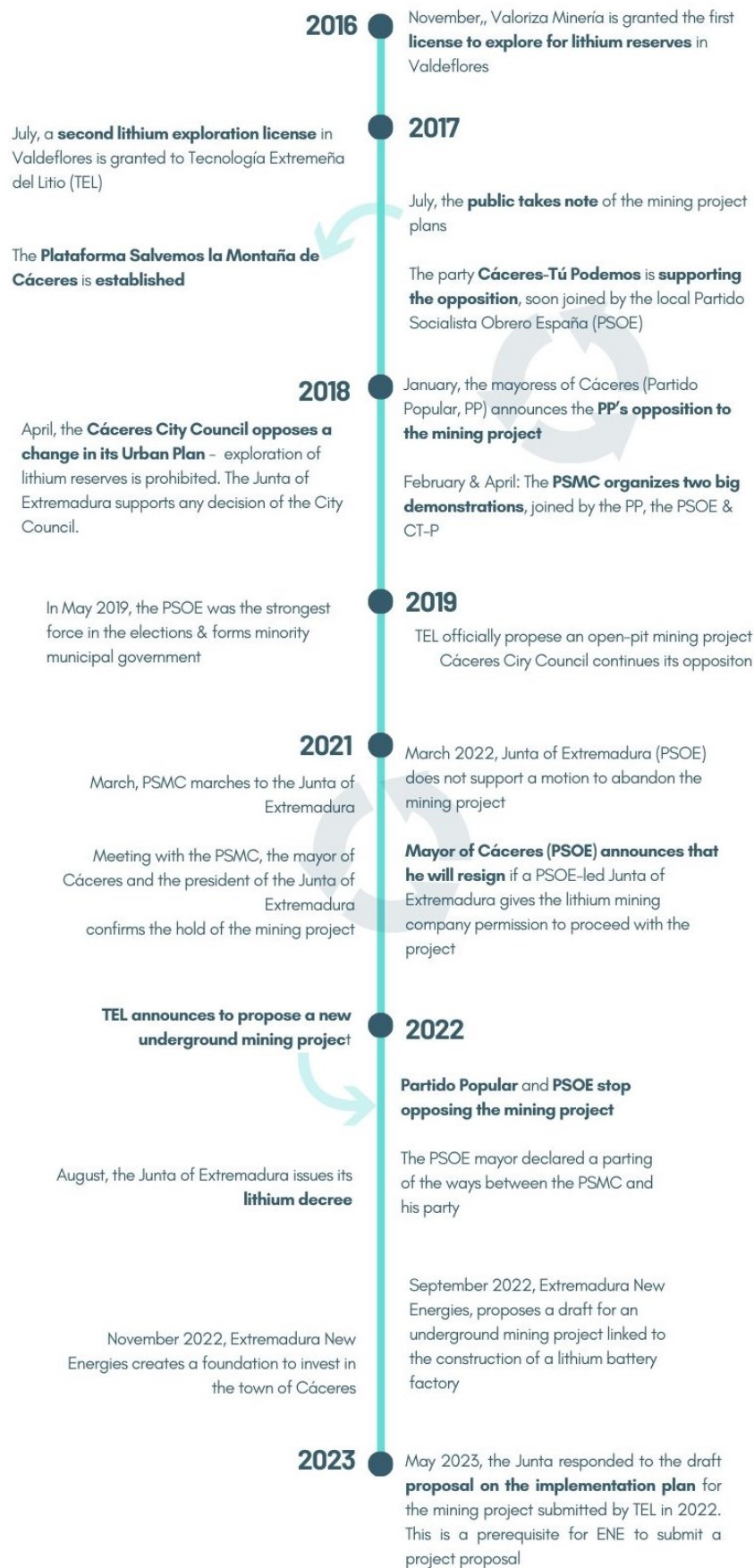


Figure 3 – Key Events related to the Conflict in Cáceres

The graphic presents the key events related to the conflict in Cáceres over the lithium mining project plan.

Cáceres, a town with 96,000 inhabitants and a university, is the capital of the Cáceres region in Extremadura,. The city center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, making tourism an important source of income for the city. Next to the city is the Valdeflores Valley, a local recreation area.

In November 2016, the Spanish company Valoriza Minería was granted a license to explore for lithium reserves in Valdeflores (Junta de Extremadura, 2016). The area granted for lithium exploration is located 2 km from the city of Cáceres.

In July 2017, a second exploration license in Valdeflores was granted to Tecnología Extremeña del Litio (Junta de Extremadura, 2017), a joint venture between the Australian company Plymouth minerals (later renamed to Infinity Lithium) (75%) and Valoriza Minería (25%).

Although mining permits must be published on the official information website of the regional government (Boletín Oficial), the public only became aware of the mining project with the second exploration license in June 2017. In that month, workers of the lithium companies were already carrying out exploratory drilling and cutting down trees. Some of this work was carried out outside the approved area, on the private property of a local resident. A rapidly growing protest movement against the mining activities emerged. Soon, a platform was formed to organize contentious actions against the mining project, called the Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres (PSMC) (Spanish for: Let's Save the Mountain of Cáceres) (Wandler, 2021).

The next page shows social media content from the Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres that illustrates the open pit mining project and the threats associated with it, including the distance from different locations in Cáceres.

At the time, the town was governed by minority government the center-right Partido Popular party, which was responsible for issuing the lithium exploration licenses. In contrast, the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and Cáceres Tú-Podemos parties had already joined the opposition to the lithium mine in 2017 (Muñoz Rubio, 2018).

Figure 4 – City Council of Cáceres 2015-2019 (own illustration)



Figure 5 – PSMC's Illustration of the Valdeflores Open Pit Mine and its Risks



(Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres, 20.2.2018)

While in December 2017 the Partido Popular called for patience in waiting for a mining project proposal (Bermejo Trigo, 2017), a month later it joined the opposition to the project at the local and the regional levels, leaving only Ciudadanos in favor of the project (Muñoz Rubio, 2018).

At the beginning of 2018, the Partido Popular, the PSOE and Cáceres Tú-Podemos (now Unidas Podemos) participated in two large demonstrations that were organized by the Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres with 2,000 participants on February 4, 2018 (Benito, 2018) and 3,000 participants on April 10, 2018 (Lorenzo, 2018).

In April, after the second demonstration, the Cáceres City Council rejected a change to the city's urban plan that would have been necessary to allow the exploration and subsequent extraction of the lithium mine (Núñez, 2018). This was possible because the mineral exploration license granted to the lithium company included an area belonging to the city of Cáceres, where it is illegal to conduct test drilling for mineral exploration (Núñez, 2018). The decision of the city council was supported by the Junta de Extremadura, which reiterated that it would not go against the will of the community and that the final decision on the mine rested with the City Council of Cáceres. (Muñoz Rubio, 2018).

Figure 6 – Plaza Mayor, Cáceres, 4.2.2018 ²³



The support of the local political parties, with the exception the party of Ciudadanos lasted several years. In the campaigns for the 2019 elections in Cáceres, PSOE and PP, the two parties with the best prospects to be the next party to govern the city, both included a clear rejection of the lithium mine

²³ Picture retrieved from: <https://www.elsaltodiario.com/saltamos-extremadura/extremadura-saqueada-homenaje-del-40-aniversario-lejos-de-casa>

(Núñez, 2019). In May 2019, the PSOE was the strongest force in the elections and from then on it formed the minority municipal government. The PSOE has taken several measures to support the opposition to the lithium mining project, such as fining the company for exceeding its rights when it opened the ground in Valdeflores in 2017 and requiring it to restore it.

The opposition continued when a lithium mining project in the Valdeflores Valley was formally proposed by the lithium mining venture TEL, in 2019. The project, linked to the two exploration licenses was planned as a conventional open pit bulk mine, with drilling and blasting followed by trucks and shovels for a period of 19 years (Mining Technology, 2019). Its establishment was supported by EIT InnoEnergy, a "knowledge and innovation community" co-founded by the European Union through the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (European Institute of Innovation & Technology, 2024)

The relationship between the Ciudadanos party and the lithium industry was discussed in the news in September 2020, when Cayetano Polo became head of institutional relations for Infinity Lithium, just two months after leaving the party and resigning as spokesperson leader of Ciudadanos Extremadura (Soriano, 2020).

When the PSMC presented a petition against the mining project in the Valdeflores valley to the EU Parliament in 2020, it was supported by members of the EU Parliament from the Greens, PP, UP and Vox. The Commission's Directorate General for Growth, Peter Handley, assured that mining projects in the EU will not be realized if there is no social acceptance for them (Mateos, 2020).²⁴

TEL acted on the legal side to enforce the continuation of its project but lost the litigations. The license, which was originally granted in 2017, had to be reissued due to an procedural error by the Junta, was regranted to the mining company in 2020. However, there was no prospect of a permit for the lithium mining area within the boundaries of the city of Cáceres, where the main lithium reserves are located (Fernández & Ángeles, 2021).

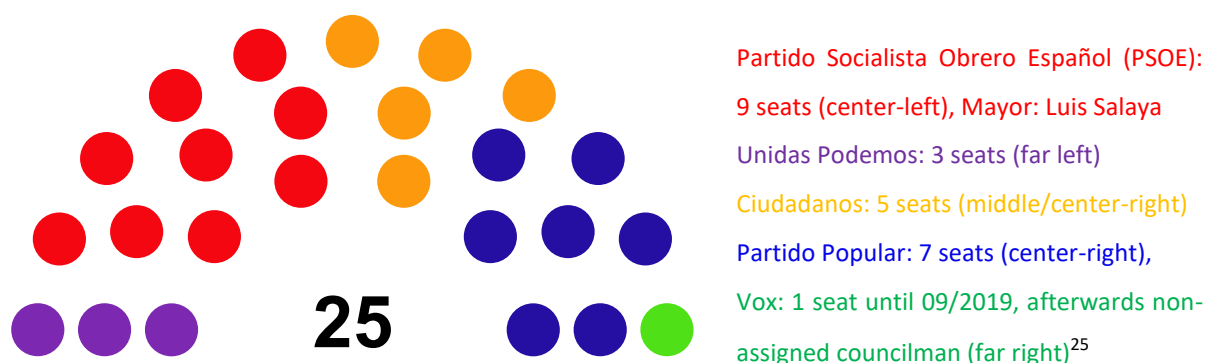
In February 2021, the PP, PSOE, UP and the non-assigned city councilor reiterated their opposition to the project and their will to protect the nature around the Valdeflores Valley in a joint motion. They

24 However, the European Union has no direct competences and cannot authorize mining projects. Consequently, its position for the case in Cáceres is only of symbolical matter. However, as Carla Noever (2023) highlights in her analysis on lithium extraction in Extremadura, Spain, the EU is important for local mining struggles, as it co-defines regulatory frameworks for mining projects and raw material consumption in the EU. It creates financing mechanism and supports research and extraction of raw materials (European Commission, 2019). In the case of Cáceres, EIT InnoEnergy a "Knowledge and Innovation Community" that was co-founded by the European Union through the European Institute of Innovation & Technology supported the lithium mining project since its initiation (EITInnoEnergy, 2020).

called on the Junta de Extremadura and the Spanish government to take technical and legal measures to reject the lithium mining project and protect the nature (Licerán et al., 2021).

In March 2021, the PSOE Extremadura did not support a motion by the UP to reject the plans for the mining project in Cáceres. The PP and UP voted in favor. The Junta emphasized its rejection due to legal concerns about the form of the motion, which could lead to a lawsuit by the mining company. The Junta assured that it would not intervene in the city's urban planning, which would guarantee the project's survival. The PSOE mayor, Luis Salaya, announced that he would resign if a PSOE-led Junta de Extremadura gave the lithium mining company permission to proceed with the project in order to assure its support. He insisted that there was no internal conflict within the PSOE, and he was so sure of the junta's promise that he was willing to put his job on the line (Bermejo, 2021; Montero, 2021). The PSMC responded to the Junta's vote against the motion by marching to the Parliament of the Junta de Extremadura in Mérida (Montero, 2021). This resulted in a meeting with the president of the Junta Extremadura, Vara, (PSOE), the mayor of Cáceres, Salaya (PSOE) and the PSMC. There Salaya reiterated his opposition to the lithium mining project (Cáceres City Council, 2021).

Figure 7 – City Council of Cáceres 2019-2023 (own illustration)



In April 2021, the Junta rejected a renewed application for lithium exploration and mining, citing the prohibition of mineral extraction under the Cáceres Municipal Planning Law. Infinity Lithium froze its shares shortly thereafter (Fernández & Ángeles, 2021).

The PSMC maintained a constant opposition to the project by organizing protests actions against it. The legal situation made it unlikely for the lithium mining project to proceed. The Junta reiterated several times that it would not go against the Cáceres City Council's decision. In addition, a new Spanish law on sustainable land and urban use planning (LOTUS) allowed the Junta to declare a project of regional

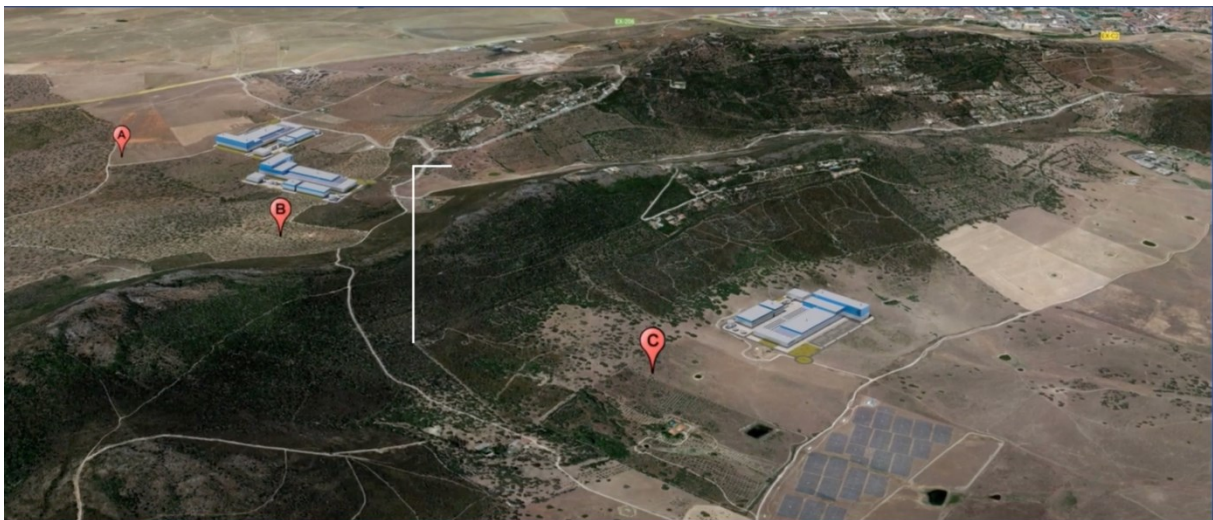
²⁵ Three months after the inauguration of the City Council (2019-2023), the only representative of Vox in the City Council of Cáceres, Teófilo Amores, left the party in September 2019 and kept his seat as a non-attached councilman in the municipal corporation (efe, 2019).

interest (PREMIA) only if it had a social character and if the project promoter was a public administration (Fernández & Ángeles, 2021).

In May 2022, the conditions of the lithium mining project plans in the Valdeflores Valley underwent a significant change. This was due to the announcement by Extremadura New Energies (ENE), a Spanish subsidiary of the Australian company Infinity Lithium (IL), that it would present a new underground mining project. The mining company has claimed that this project will be enhanced in several ways. One of these is that lithium extraction will be done underground, which will result in the air not being polluted with dust. It is claimed that no noticeable vibrations of the earth will result from the mining operations. Only the factory site will be visible, and the landscape of Valdeflores will be conserved (Extremadura New Energies, 2024a). The mining company states on its website that the new project was developed in response to the demands of the community of Cáceres (Extremadura New Energies, 2024b).

In Figure xx, the mining company has presented three potential locations for the factory (A, B, and C). These site proposals are related to the possible entrances for the underground mine.

Figure 8 – Potential Locations of the Entrance to the Underground Lithium Mine in Valdeflores



(Extremadura New Energies, 2024a)

Moreover, a battery refinery is planned that will process the lithium, which will be extracted in Valdeflores. This would create economic profits for the region (Osusky, 2022).

However, the PSMC never asked for a change in the project, but only for the abandonment of the mining plans at Valdeflores. Furthermore, the new underground mining project was accompanied by a significant decline in political support for the PSMC. All local political parties in the Cáceres City Council, except for Unidas Podemos, stopped officially supporting the opposition to the lithium mining project. The reason given was that they needed more details about the project and its environmental impact in

order to take a political position on it. The PSOE mayor declared a parting of the ways between the PSMC and his party (Mateos, 2022). At the end of August 2022, the Junta de Extremadura increased the political pressure for the realization of the mining project in the Valdeflores Valley. On August 30, 2022, they issued the Decree 5/2022 on lithium and made lithium mining projects PREMIA projects (see Section 5.4).

In September 2022, Extremadura New Energies, a Spanish subsidiary of the Australian Infinity Lithium, presented a new draft proposal for an underground mining project linked to the construction of a lithium battery factory. This draft includes proposals for the design of the mining project, such as three options for possible entrances to the underground lithium mine. In addition, ENE announced to the Junta de Extremadura that it was abandoning the open pit mining project proposal (Gonzalez, 2022).

In November 2022, Extremadura New Energies created a foundation to invest in the town of Cáceres. They donate to the basketball club, a film festival, paracycling, and a church youth organization (Extremadura New Energies, 2022). The actions of the PSMC also remain contentious against the underground mining project. They organize contentious actions against events related to the mining project and the ENE Foundation and continue to inform the public about the threats of the mining projects to the city of Cáceres (Telegram Channel Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres, 2024).

During the 2023 elections, the mining project was not an important issue in the political confrontation between the local parties. In fact, the Plataforma tried to get the representatives of the political parties represented in the City Council to a moderated discussion on the issue, but only received the confirmation of Unidas Podemos (Telegram Channel Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña, 2024).

The PSMC also opposed the underground mining project. They have organized contentious actions against events related to the mining project and the ENE Foundation, and continue to inform the public about the dangers of the mining project to the city of Cáceres (Telegram Channel Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña, 2024)

In May 2023, the Junta responded to the draft proposal on the implementation plan for the mining project submitted by TEL in 2022. This is a prerequisite for ENE to submit a legally binding project proposal (Extremadura New Energies, 2023).

On May 28, 2023, the end of the study period of this thesis, the urban plan of the city of Cáceres remained unchanged.

In the elections on May 28, 2023, the PSOE lost the majority in the city parliament with 10 seats (+1)²⁶. The Partido Popular gained 11 seats (+4) Unidas Podemos (-1) and Vox (+1) also gained seats. Ciudadanos no longer won any seats (-5).

6. Analysis: Seizure of Political Opportunities

In the following, I will present and discuss the analysis of my Master's thesis. As already elaborated on under my theoretical approach, it is hard to measure social movements' outcomes. I focused on the opportunities that were provided by the structure in which the PSMC is embedded, that can be related to the hold and the change in the mining project in Valdeflores and to obstacles that hindered the PSMC's influence on changes in the mining project.

As elaborated in the context chapter, the open pit mining project in Valdeflores, Extremadura, Spain was replaced by an underground mining project in 2022. However, at the end of the investigation time of this thesis the future of this underground mining project and if it will be realized is not yet decided on. To answer my research question "How and under what conditions can a social movement influence changes in a mining project, such as cancellations or changes in the project design?", I centralized the conditions that led to the abandonment of the open pit mining project and the PSMC's impact on it, because to understand how the PSMC influenced changes in the mining project is my main research objective. However, the change in conditions since the proposal of the underground mining project show how the political opportunity structure conditions a social movement's opportunities to influence changes in mining projects.

The analysis is structured as follows. The section on constant allies describes the role of influential allies who supported the protests throughout the period of my research. This is followed by a section on the support of political parties during the protests against the open pit mining project. Next, the use of litigation against the mining project and the use of the Cáceres Urban Plan are examined. The perception of the two projects as threats is then discussed. This is followed by an explanation of the role of the mining company as an opponent. Next, the influence of state actors on the political opportunity structure in Cáceres is examined. The analysis concludes with an explanation of the role of lithium as the mineral to be mined in Valdeflores.

26 The exclamation marks tell the difference of seats of each party compared to the elections' results in 2019.

6.1 Constant Allies

In the following, I will analyze and discuss the role of influential allies (Tarrow, 2022, p. 151) who supported the PSMC in its opposition to both mining project proposals. These constant allies can be distinguished from other allies who only supported PSMC at certain times.

During my time in Cáceres, I learned of two primary ways in which protesters became involved in the early stages of opposition to the mining project's plans. Some people claimed that it was people who live around the proposed mining site who were the first to become aware of the mining project. They noticed the workers from the mining company in June 2017. As a result, they gathered and began to inform the public (Interview with former spokesperson of the PSMC, candidate for Cáceres Viva, § 4; Spokesperson B, in: Interview with two activists of the PSMC, § 43).

Other people told me that in June 2017, the opposition party Cáceres-Tú-Podemos (CT-P) (since 2019 known as Unidas Podemos [UP]) became aware of the mining project through the minutes of a municipal government meeting with the Junta de Extremadura. They reacted by alerting various environmental NGOs and neighbors (Spokesperson of EeA, In: Interview with two EeA activists, § 10; Interview with Consuelo López Balset [UP], § 52).

However, there was consensus among the interviewees that the opposition to the mining project plan continued with the emergence of a coalition of NGOs, neighbors of the mining project area, CT-P, and other individuals opposed to the project (Interview with Consuelo López Balset [UP], § 52;; EeA Spokesperson, In: Interview with two EeA activists, § 10; Activist C, In: Interview with Spokesperson B + Activist C of the PSMC, § 40). The following groups were involved in the emergence of protests and beyond:

- **ACIMA** – Association for Environmental Communication and Information, a specialized organization dedicated to advocating for legal rights to the environment.
- **ACTYVA** – Cooperative with the goal of fostering economic growth in Extremadura through horticultural production, food handicrafts, social and educational innovation, and health and environmental benefits. The cooperative leases a piece of land where an open pit mine was previously planned.
- **Adenex** – Association for the Defense of Nature and Resources in Extremadura, defining itself as a scientific, cultural, independent, and non-party entity.
- **Amigos de la Ribera del Marco** – Association promoting the conservation and decontamination of the riverbank of Cáceres, and the environmental and historical conservation of the area.
- **Cáceres Tú-Podemos (CT-P)** – is a far-left political party that originated from the 15-M protest movement. It is the predecessor of Unidas Podemos in Cáceres.

- **Ecologistas en Acción (EeA)** – Confederation of more than 300 ecological groups. These groups advocate for a social ecologism, criticizing the increasingly globalized model of production and consumption, which they believe is causing environmental and other social problems.
- **SEO Birdlife** – Spanish Ornithological Society with the objectives of conservation and studying birds and their habitats.
- **Neighbor associations** from the region around Valdeflores.

Consequently, at the outset of the protests, numerous influential allies were already present. Until the conclusion of the investigation, all of the aforementioned parties remained allied with the PSMC's claims. They provided a favorable opportunity structure for the emergence of the protests and beyond it. The Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres (PSMC) was founded out of meetings of the aforementioned groups and further individuals who opposed the mining project plans (Interview with Consuelo López Balset [UP], § 52; Spokesperson of EeA, In: Interview with two activists of EeA, § 10; Activist C, in: Interview with Spokesperson B + Activist C of the PSMC, § 40). Some members of the listed groups participated in the organization of PSMC, while others provided support without integrating into the organization. (Spokesperson of EeA, In: Interview with two activists of EeA, § 29). Politicians were only permitted to act as supporters and but as members of the PSMC (Activist of EeA + PSMC, in: Interview with two activists of Ecologistas en Acción, § 98).

The NGOs provided support in litigation processes. ACIMA, Adenex and Ecologistas en Acción filed and financed lawsuits against the mining project plan²⁷ (Interview with Lawyer for the NGOs ACIMA & Adenex, § 169). The court expenses were partially covered by a sponsorship from an international brand, LUSH, which the groups organized (Interview with Lawyer for the NGOs ACIMA & Adenex, § 169). The NGO advocates did not charge anything from the PSMC (Interview with activist D of the PSMC, § 99). Moreover, environmental NGOs provided support to the PSMC by offering insights on the establishment of an organizational structure and protest strategies. The NGOs also offered guidance on the potential of civil society to oppose mining projects and social movements. ACIMA held courses on public participation and legal instruments to strengthen public participation. (Interview with Lawyer for the NGOs ACIMA & Adenex, § 161). Ecologistas en Acción (EeA) held a series of lectures on social movements' organization, which were attended by individuals engaged in the PSMC (Spokesperson of EeA). The support of the NGOs contributed to the development of the PSMC's organizational structures (Spokesperson B, in: Interview with Spokesperson B + Activist C of the PSMC, § 328). This resulted in the rapid growth of a protest movement that was equipped with knowledge about collective action

27 I will elaborate on the significance of the litigation processes under 6.3 "Litigations and the Use of the Urban Plan of Cáceres City against the Mining Project".

and organization. In the interviews, PSOE and Unidas Podemos councilors asserted that the anti-mining demonstrators' ability to organize a visible protest that rapidly gained momentum against the mine exerted pressure on local political parties to take a position on the mining project plans (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 2; Interview with R. Martín [City Councilor of Unidas Podemos (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 3).

The NGOs and neighbor associations collaborated with the PSMC since its initial phase until the end of the investigation time, participating in its protests and organizing events related to the opposition of the mining project (Spokesperson of EeA, in: Interview with two EeA activists, § 55).

Furthermore, the political party Unidas Podemos (formerly CT-P) is the sole party represented in the city council of Cáceres that has continued to ally with the PSMC. The party disseminates information from the City Council regarding the mining project to the PSMC (Interview with M. C. López Balset [Chairperson of UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 50).

Unidas Podemos provided further support to the PSMC in order to generate attention to their protests at the EU level. Two European Union (EU) deputies of Unidas Podemos, María Eugenia Rodríguez Palos and Sira Rigo, traveled to Cáceres to discuss the mining project within the EU Parliament (Interview with M. C. López Balset [Chairperson of UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 87). The PSMC was able to present its petition within the EU Parliament due to the influence of its allies. María Eugenia Rodríguez Palos, a member of the European Parliament representing Unidas Podemos, who is also involved with Ecologistas en Acción, facilitated the presentation of the PSMC's petition against the open pit mining project in Valdeflores to the EU Parliament (Interview with M. C. López Balset [Chairperson of UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], §§87, 89). In this meeting, EU deputies from various political parties expressed support for the PSMC's concerns (The Greens, PP, UP, Vox) and requested further information on the project of the Junta de Extremadura (Mateos, 2020). The representative of the Commission's Directorate General for Growth, Peter Handley, emphasized that the mining project needed to be endorsed by the affected community, municipal, regional, and national governments. All quotes from members of the European Parliament supported the concerns of the PSMC (Mateos, 2020). Handley underscored the role of the city council in Cáceres in determining the fate of the mining project, which served as the foundation for the hold of the mining project plan in 2020. This strengthened the legitimacy of the City Council as a decision-making body. Whether the request for more information from the Junta de Extremadura had an impact on the Junta's decision not to exert pressure on the implementation of the mining project cannot be measured, however it probably did not encourage the Junta to do so.

Consequently, the opposition of the PSMC and its associated groups was extended as a result of resources provided by Unidas Podemos. This illustrates the importance of the role of influential allies in expanding the opportunities for the PSMC to enforce their claims. Conversely, the members of Unidas

Podemos could innovate upon the claims of the PSMC's protests which served their agenda which is critical of mining. In general, the constant allies could benefit from the actions of the PSMC. By organizing a large opposition to the mining project plans in Valdeflores, the PSMC expanded the opportunities for its allies and related groups who share the common goal of protecting the Valdeflores area. The protest actions of the PSMC demonstrated the importance of their demands.

6.2 Political Parties as Influential Allies during the Project Plans of an Open Pit Mine

The PSMC was never affiliated with any political party but sought alliances with all the political parties represented in the Cáceres City Council. Until the end of the research period for this thesis, active politicians were not allowed to be members of the PSMC or to participate in its decision-making (Activist of EeA + PSMC, in: Interview with two activists of Ecologistas en Acción, § 98).

As mentioned above, Unidas Podemos (formerly CT-P) has always been a supporter and remained so until the end of the research period of this thesis. This does not apply to the other political parties represented in the Cáceres City Council or the Junta de Extremadura. The PP and the PSOE Cáceres allied with the PSMC for a period of time and opposed the open pit mine. The following sections analyze and discuss the onset of political party support for the PSMC and its course up to the changes in the mining project in relation to the PSMC's seizure of political opportunities.

6.2.1 Onset of PSOE and PP Opposition to the Mining Project Plan

The Partido Popular was governing the city of Cáceres when the mining company obtained two licenses from the Junta de Extremadura, in 2016 and 2017, to study the concentration of lithium in the soil of the Valdeflores Valley. The PP was informed of these licenses by the Junta and granted the mining company the necessary work permits to begin the study of the lithium reserves. According to the Chairperson of Unidas Podemos in Cáceres, none of this was discussed, nor was it mentioned in any meeting of the City Council of Cáceres (Interview with M. C. López Basset [Chairperson of UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 52). The PP was initially open to the plans for the open pit mine (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 2). The local PSOE had no position on it. In 2017, when only the CT-P (now UP) opposed the plans for the mining project, the PSMC met with representatives of the PP and PSOE, the two largest local parties, to convince them to announce their opposition to the mining plans. Ciudadanos, the third largest party, refused to meet with the PSMC because it was clearly in favor of the project (Activist C, in: Interview with Spokesperson B + Activist C of the PSMC, § 86). Around the turn of the year from 2017 to 2018, the PSOE announced its opposition to the plans for the mining project. The PP followed in January 2018.

In order to understand how social movements can influence changes in mining projects, it is interesting to see how the announcements of the two main parties were related to the PSMC's actions. Using the

political opportunity approach, I identified four factors that were influential: *divided elites, influential allies, shifting alignments* and *expansion of opportunities*.

First, the positions of the political parties in the Cáceres City Council were divided when the protests emerged. Tarrow (2022, p. 145) presents such divided elites as one of the most salient signals of political opportunities. The CT-P (later UP), which had supported the PSMC from its very beginning, and for a short time the PSOE in Cáceres, could present themselves as "tribunes of the people" (Tarrow, 2022, p.145), defending the city, in contrast to the other parties in the city council. The fact that these parties had already taken a stand against the mining project exerted pressure on the governing PP to position itself against the mining project (Interview with M. C. López Balset [Chairperson of UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 31).

Second, in a statement released at the time, the former PP mayor of Cáceres, Elena Nevado, indicated that the PP's decision was based on a study prepared by the city council on the advantages and disadvantages of the mining project (Nevado [PP], in: Muñoz Rubio, 2018). This study was based on a motion to study the development and possible consequences of the mine proposed by the CT-P, which was approved despite the fact that the PP had opposed it (Lopez Balset [CT-P], in: Muñoz Rubio, 2018). Consequently, the CT-P had an impact on the production of knowledge that influenced the PP to change its position. This demonstrates the usefulness of opposition parties as *influential allies* in setting the political agenda. The politicians I interviewed claimed that the PP's shift in opinion, not to wait for a mining project proposal, was related to the protests (Interview with M. C. López Balset [Chairperson of UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 31; Interview with Councilman of Urban Planning and Patrimony [PSOE], § 2).

Third, José Ramon Bello (PSOE), who was in the opposition at the time, claimed that the demonstrations put pressure on his and other parties because they came a year before the elections. He said:

"When the possibility of a lithium mine first appeared, the platform was very smart and acted very fast. I think that was brilliant. For its part, it acted very fast and called very fast mobilizations, specifically a demonstration very close to the elections. It was one year... less... months to the previous elections, those of 2019" (Interview with Councilman of Urban Planning and Patrimony [PSOE], § 2, translation SD).²⁸

Following J.R. Bello's statement above, the 2019 elections offered a window of opportunity for the PSMC. Upcoming elections can provide opportunities for social movements, when there is a possibility of change in the composition of the next government, as it was the case in Cáceres. Tarrow (2022)

28 Original quotation: "Cuando aparece por primera vez la posibilidad de mina de litio, la plataforma fue muy inteligente y actuó muy rápido. Creo que eso fue brillante, por su parte actuó muy rápido y convocó muy rápido movilizaciones, concretamente una manifestación muy cerca de las elecciones. Faltaría un año menos, meses para las elecciones anteriores, las de 2019" (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 2).

describes this as one of the most salient signals of opportunities (*shifting alignments*) (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145). In 2018, PSMC's protests could seize this political opportunity and pressure local political parties to take a position on the lithium mine's project plans. This was enhanced due to the situation of divided elites, as explained above. Regarding the position of the local PSOE, J.R. Bello states:

“In 2018, if I remember correctly already, there was positioning [of the PSOE] [...]. And further, here we have a question that now, sure, with time, I see it differently. Very quickly, we took sides. Why? Because we saw that the platform [Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres] was bringing together the support of quite a lot of people.” (Interview with Councilman of Urban Planning and Patrimony [PSOE], § 2, translation SD).²⁹

Lastly, in the above quote, Bello claims that the PSMC was responsible for the local PSOE's quick reaction in opposing the plans for the open pit mine. He also suggested that the rapid mobilization of the PSMC could also have had an impact on the Partido Popular (Interview with Councilman of Urban Planning and Patrimony [PSOE], § 2). The two local UP (formerly CT-P) politicians I interviewed saw a clear connection between the PSMC's ability to mobilize many citizens and the Partido Popular's decision to oppose the plans for the open pit mine. They explained this with the fear of losing public support (Interview with M. C. López Balset [Chairperson of UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 2; § 60; Interview with R. Martín [City Councilor of Unidas Podemos (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 3). The PSMC expanded its own opportunities by using the opportunity of the 2019 elections and divided elites to gain influential allies. Political parties willing to ally could likewise benefit from the PSMC's actions (*expansion of opportunities*). Social movements can demonstrate the need for collective action and create opportunities for others to support, copy, or innovate on their claims. Those with similar claims can use the protesters' claims to emphasize the importance of their goals (Tarrow, 2022, p. 151). By participating in the PSMC protests, the PP, PSOE, and CT-P were able to demonstrate the legitimacy of their claims against the mining project and their standing with a large number of people. Hence, political opportunities were expanded for the PSMC and the parties supporting the protests.

Also, political parties positioning against the mining project for fear of losing voters is in line with Amenta et al. (2010), who find that the ability of social movements to influence political positioning accelerates when parties fear losing public support (Amenta et al., 2010, p. 197).

Moreover, the pressure on local politics created by the PSMC may even have influenced the weakening of the Ciudadanos party's political position on the mining project. At least, J.R. Bello links the PSMC's

29 Original quotation: “En 2018 si no recuerdo mal ya, hubo posicionamiento porque nosotros ya en la oposición tuvimos que votar sobre la modificación del Plan General para hacer posible la extracción. Conforme el proyecto original. Aquí esa primera manifestación, fueron fuimos todos los grupos políticos y además aquí hay una cuestión clara que ahora, con el tiempo, la veo de otra manera. Muy rápido, tomamos partido. ¿Por qué? Porque vimos que la plataforma estaba aglutinando un sentir de bastante gente.” (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 2).

rapid mobilization and the size of the demonstrations to a change in Ciudadanos' rhetoric in the Cáceres City Council:

“The only political party that supported the modification of the plan was Ciudadanos. Interestingly, Ciudadanos modified their message. They began by saying “yes” to the mine, it has to be done. It is necessary to bring progress to Cáceres? Yes. And then. On the different occasions when we have debated this issue again. It has been “yes” to study the project” (Interview with Councilman of Urban Planning and Patrimony [PSOE], § 2, translation SD).³⁰

Nevertheless, the Ciudadanos party remained in favor of the plans for the mining project and did not vote politically for anything that would have hindered the plan for the mining project in Valdeflores. Though their political vote did not really matter as long as the PP and the PSOE voted against the project, since the two parties united 19 out of 25 seats in the City Council.

6.2.2 Support of the Cáceres City Council for the PSMC

The local Partido Popular's support for the opposition to the lithium mine greatly expanded the political opportunities for the PSMC. It guaranteed that a majority of the members of the Cáceres City Council would oppose the changes to the city's urban plan that would have been necessary to allow the mining company to operate in Valdeflores. This, in turn, is in line with Amenta et al. (2018), who consider the influence of incumbent parties in government to be crucial. In 2018, with eleven of the 25 seats in the city council, the PP was an important ally in maintaining the urban plan of Cáceres. The PP, in favor of the mining project, together with Ciudadanos (4 seats), could have changed the urban plan and allowed the exploration and extraction of lithium reserves.

During the 2019 electoral campaigns, the local PP and the local PSOE even competed for the position of being the more trustworthy party to oppose the mining project in Valdeflores (see Section 5.5). As a result, the PSMC was able to rely on a political opportunity structure with local political parties as committed, influential allies that ensured the preservation of the Cáceres Urban Plan. Since the Junta de Extremadura promised to respect the vote of the city council, this was enough to keep the mining project plan and further research on the lithium content of the soil on hold.

The presence of the mining project plans in the local electoral campaigns in Cáceres, 2019, also shows how the shifting alignments provided a favorable political opportunity structure, as the issue of the mine was now in the political consciousness. The importance of this becomes clear when one considers

30 Original quotation: “El único partido político que apoyó. lo, la modificación del plan fue ciudadanos. Curiosamente ciudadano modificó su mensaje, empezó diciendo sí a la mina, hay que hacerla, ¿hay que traer progreso a Cáceres? Sí y luego. En las diferentes ocasiones que hemos vuelto a debatir este tema. Ha sido sí a qué se estudia el proyecto, por qué vamos a decir que nos vamos a estudiarlo y ese partido y ya no existe ese partido ahora mismo tiene una representación en el ayuntamiento” (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 2).

that in 2016 an exploration license was granted to the mining company Venture TEL, which was neither discussed in the city council (Interview with M. C. López Baset [Chairperson of UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 52), nor was it noticed by the public.

In May 2019, the PSOE won the municipal elections in the city of Cáceres and in the autonomous community of Extremadura. The PSOE municipal government continued its alliance with the PSMC. According to José Ramón Bello (PSOE), Councilman for Urban Planning and Patrimony (2019-2023), there has been always a "very good dialogue" and numerous meetings between the municipal government and the PSMC (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 120, translation SD). This good relationship was conceived also by members of the PSMC (Spokesperson B, in: Interview with two PSMC activists, § 124).

The local PSOE informed the PSMC about the current political processes related to the mining project at the local and regional level (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 136). Therefore, the PSMC was provided with information to mobilize against the open pit mining project that went beyond the publicly available information. The PSMC and the PSOE worked together to achieve the abandonment of the open pit project plan (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 148). The PSOE-led municipal government of Cáceres took legal action against the mining company. The company was fined 26,500 euros for extracting probes where extraction was not allowed and was ordered to restore the area (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 4). As an influential ally (Tarrow, 2022, pp. 145-146), the municipal government provided resources that helped challenge the mining company as an opponent. Commenting on the cooperation between the PSMC and the PSOE government of Cáceres, J.R. Bello said:

"They [the PSMC] have done a great job. They have been fundamental to overthrow the first fundamental project, not only in the street, but also because of the way of exercising responsibly that claim and above all, for being present, working, making allegations, being on top of us so that we did not miss any deadline and being present in the trials" (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 148, translation SD).³¹

This quote shows that the PSMC used the political opportunities offered by the city council as an influential ally and helped to ensure that the resources of the municipal government were used to challenge the plans of the ongoing mining projects.

³¹ "Han hecho un gran trabajo. Han sido fundamentales para tumbar el primer proyecto fundamental, no solo por la calle, sino por la forma de ejercer de manera responsable esa reivindicación y sobre todo, por personarse, trabajar, hacer alegaciones, estar encima nuestra para que no se nos pasara ningún plazo y personarse en los juicios" (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 148).

Another political opportunity emerged, when the PSOE Extremadura refused to support a motion by the UP to abandon the mining project, arguing that they had legal concerns about the motion. Nevertheless, the motion was supported by the PP and the UP of Extremadura, creating a situation of divided elites (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145). The UP and the PP of Extremadura presented themselves as “tribunes of the people”, who opposed the mining project by the voting for the motion, in contrast to the PSOE government of Extremadura.

In response to the PSOE Extremadura's lack of support for the motion, Salaya (PSOE mayor of Cáceres) declared that there was no possibility that the project would be implemented by the Junta during their administration, or else he would resign. However, both the local and regional PSOE asserted that the Junta would not interfere in municipal decisions regarding the proposed mine, emphasizing that there was no conflict, but rather legal concerns regarding the motion proposed by the UP (Bermejo, 2021; Montero, 2021). Still, the regional PSOE's vote against the motion indicated the PSOE Extremadura's reluctance to engage in a legal dispute with the mining company. The Junta's reaction underscored the importance of the local PSOE and the Cáceres municipal government's opposition to the mining project.

In addition, the UP's motion shows how influential allies provide political opportunities. The PSMC seized the political opportunity presented by the UP's request and initiated a march to the Parliament of Extremadura in Mérida to protest against the Junta's lack of support for the motion. This resulted in a meeting five days later between the PSMC, the mayor of Cáceres, Luis Salaya (PSOE Cáceres), and the president of the Junta de Extremadura, Fernández Vara (PSOE Extremadura). In this meeting, Salaya emphasized that his PSOE, the PP, UP and an independent member of the City Council's parties supported the opposition on the mining project plan (Cáceres City Council, 2021). Thus, the vast majority of the political parties in Cáceres formed a united front against the mining project and joined the protests. This also allowed them to present themselves as “tribunes of the people” (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145) against the mining company's project supporting the PSMC's claims.

The Cáceres City Council ceased to be an influential ally of the PSMC when the option of an underground mining project was communicated by the mining company venture TEL. The close contact between the PSOE and the PSMC stopped, because the PSMC wanted to reject any mining project in Valdeflores. In contrast, the PSOE was open to the proposal of the new mining project (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 120; 122). In line with this, three weeks after the announcement of the underground mining project, the mayor, Luis Salaya (PSOE), said in an interview on June 8, 2022:

"If what the company says is true and the open pit mine is dismissed, it could be a beneficial project for the city, but we have to analyze it; if the platform's position is to oppose the project without seeing it and without going beyond it, our paths separate here" (Luis Salaya, In: Mateos, 2022, translation SD).

Similarly, the other political parties in the city council distanced themselves from the demands of the Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres, with the exception of the left-wing alliance Unidas Podemos (Interview with M. C. López Balset [Chairperson of UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 31). With the UP holding only 3 of the 25 seats in the Cáceres City Council, its only remaining ally, the political opportunity of the City Council as an influential ally vanished.

Nevertheless, the abandonment of the open pit mining project is in line with the state of research on state actors allying protests. According to different studies, government actors supporting a social movement's opposition on a mining project makes the projects more likely to get abandoned (e.g. Dietz, 2019; Hess & Satcher, 2019; McAdam & Boudet, 2012; Zachrisson & Beland Lindahl, 2019). During the open pit mining plan phase, PSMC was able to count on the support of the PP and UP in the Cáceres City Council and the Parliament of Extremadura, as well as the PSOE Cáceres, which supported the PSMC in its opposition to the mining company and the Junta de Extremadura.

6.3 Litigations and the Use of the Urban Plan of Cáceres City Against the Mining Project

PSMC's contentious actions have been accompanied by litigation filed by PSMC and its influential allies. These litigations provided opportunities on which the PSMC took up on.

In 2018, ACIMA filed a lawsuit against both of the mining company's both lithium exploration permits, arguing that the legally required public objection period had not been met. This was found to be true in both cases. As a result, the mining company was forced to reissue its permits for the proposed mining area (interview with NGO lawyer ACIMA & Adenex, § 31). This gave the protesters time to mobilize against the project in their emergence phase and beyond. Subsequently, it was determined that the 2017 permit for the two grids of the Urban Plan of Cáceres granted to the mining company was invalid because it included a plan to extract soil for the purpose of researching the concentration of lithium in the Cáceres urban area. The urban plan of Cáceres prohibits mineral extraction within the city limits. As a result, the City Council has indefinitely suspended the mining research permits, as the continuation of such work would require an adaptation of the Cáceres Urban Plan. Without this use of the Urban Plan to put a hold on the project, the subsequent possibility for halting the project would have been at the stage of the concession award by the Junta (Interview with R. Martín [City Councilor of Unidas Podemos (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 48). It is unclear whether the City Council would have recognized the illegality of any of the mining permits issued in the absence of litigation.

M. A. Lopez Lax, lawyer for the NGOs ACIMA and Adenex, emphasized that in Extremadura mining laws are sometimes not applied if they are not enforced (Interview with lawyer for NGO ACIMA & Adenex,

§ 289). She is a lawyer specialized in territorial, urban and environmental law, with a license since 1971. Consequently, her assessment is based on more than five decades of professional experience. Moreover, the state of research on the influence of social movements on mining projects indicates that social movements can, on occasion, exert influence on mining projects by putting unenforced laws into practice (Walter & Wagner, 2021).

The PSMC and its allies have filed other lawsuits against the proposal of the open pit mining project and its related licenses in Valdeflores. The lawyer M. A. Lopez Lax (ACIMA) filed the case against the two grids of the Urban Plan of Cáceres license issued in 2017 without incurring legal fees. The PSMC filed the case against the 45 grids license issued in 2016 (Interview with M. A. Lopez Lax [lawyer for the NGOs ACIMA & Adenex], § 169). However, since the two grids license encompassed the main lithium reserves to be mined, the modification of the urban plan was enough to put the project on hold. The mining company attempted to challenge the ban on lithium mining in the area covered by its original permit but was unsuccessful; it appealed the decision to a second court (Interview with M. A. Lopez Lax [lawyer for the NGOs ACIMA & Adenex], pos. 47). The outcome of this matter remained undecided at the end of the research period for my thesis (interview with M. A. Lopez Lax [lawyer for the NGOs ACIMA & Adenex], pos. 47). The PSOE municipal government fined the mining company 26,500 euros and required it to restore the areas where the ground had been opened (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; Cáceres City Councilor for Urbanism and Heritage 2019-2023], § 4).

In 2022, the mining project was still on hold due to legal uncertainties regarding the area of the proposed open pit mine within the city limits of Cáceres. Ultimately, the company itself withdrew the open pit mining project in front of the Junta in 2022. The draft of this project, which was presented to the Junta, also included elements of the Urban Plan of the City of Cáceres, but in an underground form. The role of the Urban Plan in the underground mining project has changed with this new project in two ways. First, J.R. Bello has indicated that it is indeed possible to modify the plan for a project that meets all environmental and other standards (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 8). Second, it is not allowed to extract minerals from the surface of the city. However, this does not necessarily mean that underground mining is prohibited, as Bello argues (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 4). However, the interpretation of the Urban Plan law remains undetermined by the end of the investigation of this thesis (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 4). It is possible that this interpretation is also a question of the political will of the local parties in Cáceres to see the project through or not.

In conclusion, the legal processes were opportunities perceived by the PSMC to extend the time frame for mobilizing for the PSMC at the beginning of the protests. The litigation over the open pit mine was not decisive in stopping the mining project, as the mining company withdrew its project before it was

decided on. The lawsuits filed on the licenses themselves were not decisive, as it was the local parties' refusal to change the urban plan that provided the legal basis for stopping the open pit project. However, if the company had not withdrawn the project, the litigation could have stopped the open pit plans at some point.

The underground mine project had not been proposed at the end of the investigation period of this thesis, so there have been no legal battles over the new project. The political interpretation of the Urban Plan has yet to be determined, but it may provide an opportunity for the PSMC and its allies to file a lawsuit against the mining project, at least if the Urban Plan of the City of Cáceres is not changed by the City Council. Another possibility for litigation against the new project was presented by environmental lawyer Lopez Lax, who questioned the legality of using the results of the concentration of lithium in the soil, obtained through illegal mining in 2017. These results are necessary to justify the appropriateness of opening a mine (Interview with M. A. Lopez Lax [Lawyer for the NGOs ACIMA & Adenex], § 53).

6.4 The Perception of the Mining Projects as a Threat

When individuals perceive costs to be in conflict with their interests, values, or sense of justice, contention may increase (Tarrow, 2022, p. 140). In order to comprehend the influence of social movements on mining projects, it is essential to understand how mining projects are perceived as threats. This is significant because a mining project that is not perceived as a threat is unlikely to be contested. The following paragraph outlines the reasons why those involved in the opposition to the open pit mining project perceived the possibility of lithium mining in the Valdeflores Valley as a threat.

The PSMC mobilized on the basis of the perceived threats, among other things through information sheets (a PSMC information sheet can be found in Chapter 5.5, Figure 4). They raised the perceived threats in meetings with the local political parties, PSOE and PP, in order to convince them to officially oppose the mining project (Activist C, in: Interview with Spokesperson B + Activist C of the PSMC, § 86).

The protesters, their NGO allies, and the politicians with whom I conducted interviews perceived the open pit mining project as a threat to the quality of life in the city of Cáceres. These threats included, among others, air pollution and health risks resulting from open pit mining activities (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 4; Interview with spokesperson A of the PSMC, § 26), and water scarcity (Interview with M. A. Lopez Lax [Lawyer for the NGOs ACIMA & Adenex], § 259). Furthermore, the proximity of the mine to the city of Cáceres and the loss of the nearest natural recreation area were perceived as reasons why people felt threatened by the open pit mining project (Interview with activist D of the PSMC, § 159; Interview with M. A. Lopez Lax [Lawyer for the NGOs ACIMA & Adenex], § 21; Interview with Spokesperson A of the PSMC,

§ 28; EeA Spokesperson, in: Interview with two EeA activists, § 135; Interview with top candidate for Cáceres Viva [former spokesperson of PSMC], § 4).

The potential damage to the tourism sector of the UNESCO-protected city of Cáceres was also identified as a major concern. This sector is of great economic importance for the city (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 4; Interview with spokesperson A of the PSMC, § 26). In addition, members of UP and EeA, as well as some PSMC protesters with whom I spoke, raised concerns about the general practice of mining, regardless of the location (Interview with two EeA activists, § 65).

A threat provides an opportunity for an increase in contentious action, particularly when the challengers perceive that the threat they seek to change can be influenced by their contentious action (Tarrow, 2022, p. 143). Thus, assuming that the protesters perceived the changes in the mining as achievable through their opposition, this perception was proven to be right a posteriori. Therefore, the perception of the possibility of an open pit lithium mine as a threat gave the PSMC the opportunity to unite a large number of protesters in early 2018, including political parties (local and regional PP, local PSOE, local and regional UP, Non Adscritos). The two large demonstrations organized by the PSMC took place at the beginning of 2018. They united 2,000 to 3,000 demonstrators, a level of participation that was higher than usual for demonstrations in Cáceres (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 2; Interview with R. Martín [City Councillor of Unidas Podemos (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 3). The political opportunity structure remained fairly stable as long as the lithium mine was planned as an open pit.

After the underground mining project became public, PSMC continued to perceive the underground mining project as a threat and continued its contentious actions. The PSMC protesters, the UP politicians, and the environmental NGOs did not significantly alter the threat perception of the two mining project proposals. They perceived the underground mining project as detrimental to the protection of the environment and as having a similarly negative impact on the quality of life in Cáceres. They found the presentation of the project to be a whitewash and the promises of minimal environmental impact and no negative effects on the city of Cáceres to be implausible (Activist of EeA + PSMC, in: Interview with two EeA activists, §§ 134, 177-187; Interview with spokesperson A of the PSMC, § 226). Furthermore, the interviewees emphasized that a final project proposal has not yet been presented, which makes it difficult to determine the extent to which the underground mining project would have a low environmental impact, as claimed by the lithium mining company (Interview with top candidate for Cáceres Viva [former spokesperson of PSMC], § 28; Interview with two EeA activists, §§134, 177-187). They also emphasized the inevitability of environmental damage caused by mining projects, which makes the mining company's claims implausible (Interview with two EeA activists, §§ 134-145;

Interview with R. Martín [City Councilor of Unidas Podemos (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 11). According to the interviewees, there was no significant decrease in the number of people involved in the organizational core of the PSMC after the change in the mining project (Interview with two EeA activists, §§ 172-173). The PSMC did not organize a demonstration as large as the one in the Plaza Mayor of Cáceres in 2018. This makes it difficult to measure how, or if, the public support for the PSMC changed with the change in the project. J.R. Bello said there was a significant decrease in support (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 32), while the PSMC members and their allies denied this (Interview with two EeA activists, §§ 172-173) or stated that the decrease in support was related to factors of exhaustion of the people to maintain interest in the mining issue over so many years (Interview with top candidate for Cáceres Viva [former spokesperson of PSMC], § 67). However, the change in the mining project meant a change in the threat, which affected the political opportunity structure for the PSMC. The PSMC could not convince the PP and the PSOE that the underground mine posed the same degree of threat to the city as the open pit mine. This is a significant obstacle to the PSMC's ability to influence the plans for the lithium mining project, since the local parties in the city council are the ones who have the power to change the urban plan of Cáceres.

However, the perception of a mining project as a threat does not only depend on the design of a mining project; it is also influenced by the way in which a mining company presents its project and its benefits to the affected community (Dorn, 2021). I will discuss the role of the mining company in the political opportunity structure in Cáceres in the next section.

6.5 The Mining Company as Opponent

In order to answer my research question, it is necessary to consider the role of the mining company as an opponent in two ways. Firstly, it is important to comprehend how the mining company influenced the political opportunity structure, and thereby the social movement's opportunities to influence changes in the mining project. Secondly, it is essential to examine how or if the social movement could influence the mining company to change its project.

A comparison between the open pit mining project and the underground mining project suggests that the mining company has intensified its efforts to realize its project since its proposal of an underground mine. The mining company has implemented several adjustments that serve the economy of Extremadura more than an open pit mine would have. The open pit mining project in Valdeflores was proposed by the mining company venture TEL, which consisted of 75% of the Australian company Infinity Lithium (IL) and 25% of a Spanish company. This meant that it would have had to pay less taxes in Spain than a

solely Spanish company venture. In contrast, the mining company venture which is involved in the underground mining project consists of two Spanish companies, one of which is a subsidiary of IL.

Apart from the creation of jobs, the open pit mine would have had no other benefits for the region around the city of Cáceres. Moreover, the number of jobs that would be created was deemed implausible by politicians, given that the number of jobs promised by the mining company fluctuated from 100 to 200 during the initial phase without explanation. This was not regarded as credible by the mayor at the time, Nevado (PP) (Statement of Elena Nevado, 2018, in: Rubio, 2018). Furthermore, at the outset, the mining company approached the Junta de Extremadura to gain approval for the project (Rubio, 2018). At least the PSOE Cáceres was approached, when they had already publicly declared to oppose the open pit mining project plan (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 3).

The following quote from Elena Nevado, the mayor at the time (PP), illustrates her negative perception of the mining company:

"[...] [t]hese people from the mine are coming to take the wealth and as mayor I cannot allow this. We are not talking about an industry that is going to transform us, but a project of exploitation and speculation [...]" (Statement of Elena Nevado, 2018, In: Rubio, 2018, translation SD)³².

She posited that the opposition to the mining project would be driven by its exploitative nature, leaving no benefits for Cáceres city. Similarly, J.R. Bello stated that the local PSOE had a meeting with the mining company when they were already publicly opposing the mining project. This meeting reaffirmed the PSOE's position that the project was "very aggressive" and that they could not support it (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 3).

The mining company attempted to challenge the city council's opposition through litigation but was unsuccessful. J.R. Bello summarizes his impression of the mining company's conduct during the open pit mining project proposal, as follows:

"They had a very bad sales problem, they are very bad salesmen, they are terrible salesmen, it seems that they wanted the project to be rejected. Sometimes I get that feeling because they didn't work hard" (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 34)³³

The local political parties' unfavorable impression of the mining company and its project contributed to the PSMC's goal of convincing local politicians to oppose the project by not changing the Urban Plan

³² Estos de la mina vienen a llevarse la riqueza y como alcaldesa no puedo permitir esto. No estamos hablando de una industria que vaya a transformarnos sino de un proyecto de explotación y especulación. [...] «si mañana viene una gran empresa, si me garantizan que habrá una industria de fabricación de coches potente en Cáceres, les regalo hasta el suelo y modifico lo que tenga que modificar, pero así, no». (Elena Nevado, in: Rubio, 2018).

³³ Ellos tenían un problema de venta malísimo, son malísimos vendedores, penosos vendedores son, parece que tenían ganas que les rechazaran el proyecto. A veces me da esa sensación porque no se lo curraron (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 34).

of Cáceres city. Ciudadanos, the only party that did not oppose the project, had dubious close contacts with the mining company, as evidenced by the hiring of Cayetano Polo, former Ciudadanos spokesperson and member of the Cáceres City Council. A move that was criticized in the media (Soriano, 2020).

In conclusion, the mining company did not make much effort to promote the advantages of its open pit mining project to local political parties and did not provide many benefits to the city of Cáceres.³⁴

This weak position of the mining company as an opponent provided the PSMC with opportunities to organize large protests in the early 2018. This can be explained by Tarrow's (2022) salient signal of opportunity "increasing access" which refers to the assumption that people may not attack their opponents when they are too powerful and therefore opportunities are closed (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145).

In February 2022, Extremadura New Energies, a Spanish subsidiary of Infinity Lithium, was established. In March 2022, Ramón Jiménez Serrano was appointed as CEO. Serrano is an experienced CEO who had previously served as the CEO of a company with 18,000 employees that is engaged in the green energy sector for a period of five years. In May 2022, the plan for an underground mining project was announced by TEL, the mining company venture that had proposed the open pit project. However, Extremadura New Energies replaced Infinity Lithium in TEL. This resulted in the underground mine being subject to full taxation in Spain. Furthermore, the underground mining project plan was accompanied by a positive image campaign. J.R. Bello commented on the changes in the mining company, as follows:

"Now they have a better image campaign, they have sponsored city sports teams in basketball, that is to say, they have sponsored the Film Festival. That is why there have been two related protests. They are making agreements with groups, they have signed an agreement with the company Alter Nelson to manufacture together green hydrogen to move the vehicles they want to use at the mine. They are being more intelligent in this campaign to tell people that this project is good, that we are here to help, that in quotation marks, that in the end everyone sells their product, but before they didn't do it" (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 34)³⁵

The mining company established a foundation with the objective of benefitting the city of Cáceres and the surrounding region. In addition to the donations previously mentioned by Bello, the foundation has made contributions to research on multiple sclerosis, anti-bullying initiatives in schools, educational programs for Sinti and Roma, a Paralympic cycling cup, and the provision of clothing for cofrades of the church of Cáceres. The CEO of the operating company in Cáceres, Extremadura New Energies,

³⁴ There are no credible opinion polls on the public perception of the mining project.

³⁵ Ahora sí tienen una campaña de imagen mejor, han patrocinado equipos deportivos de la ciudad al baloncesto, o sea, están han patrocinado el Festival de Cine. Por eso ha habido dos protestas relacionadas. Están haciendo convenios con colectivos, han firmado un convenio con con la empresa Alter Nelson para fabricar juntos hidrógeno verde para para mover los vehículos que ellos quieren destinar a la mina sea Están siendo más inteligentes en esa campaña de contar a la gente que este proyecto es bueno, que estamos aquí para ayudar, que entre comillas, que aquí al final cada uno vende su producto, pero antes no lo hacían (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 34).

asserted that the implementation of an ESG policy strategy (Environmental, Social, and Governance Strategy) would enable the company to act responsibly and to reinvest profits in the city (Interview with R. Jiménez Serrano, CEO of Extremadura New Energies, §§ 17, 19). Moreover, a battery production enterprise is planned to be constructed in Extremadura that will process the lithium of Valdeflores. This would benefit the region economically. The reconfiguration of the project entails an acceleration in the efforts of the mining company to realize their project. The open pit mining project was criticized by the local politics for not being beneficial to Cáceres at all. In relation to the underground project, donations are made, and more jobs are in prospect because of the planned battery fabrication.

It remains to be seen whether the mining project will be realized. According to the CEO, they also met with politicians to discuss the project and to request further requirements to be included in their project proposal (Interview with R. Jiménez Serrano [CEO of Extremadura New Energies], §§ 11, 47, 49). About the meetings with political parties the CEO stated that they met with all parties, apart from Unidas Podemos. About these meetings, he stated:

“Some of them, in principle, were against the project. Once we have explained them the project, they have understood that the project has changed a lot. And all of them what has said is there is technical people in the Junta that has to analyze your project and if you comply with the environmental issues, the safety issues and the and the health issues. We cannot say no, you are going to bring money. You are going to create job position” (Interview with R. Jiménez Serrano [CEO of Extremadura New Energies], § 47).

In light of the Junta's efforts to facilitate lithium extraction in Extremadura and the change in local politics in Cáceres, the plan for an underground mine appears to have a greater prospect of implementation than the open pit mining project. The new project proposal has influenced the political opportunity structure for the PSMC. The project is perceived as potentially beneficial for the city of Cáceres by local politicians. As a result, the PSMC has lost important influential allies who guaranteed the hold of the project.

The alterations to the mining project have created a paradoxical situation for the PSMC's opposition to the mining project. On the one hand, opposition to the project contributed to the abandonment of the open pit mine, which can be considered a significant achievement. On the other hand, it led to the proposal of a new project accompanied by a positive image campaign that decreased the opportunities for the PSMC to mobilize against lithium mining in Valdeflores.

The second question concerns the influence of the PSMC on the lithium mining project change in general. At least, the CEO of the mining company posited that the local opposition was leading to the decision to proceed with another project that was more likely to be accepted by the public (Interview with R. Jiménez Serrano, CEO of Extremadura New Energies, §§ 7, 64). The non-acceptance of the public has been represented by the PSMC since 2017. Consequently, the decision to propose a new project was made after five years of facing local opposition in Cáceres with no foreseeable change in this

opposition. The CEO stated in the interview that he believes social movements can influence changes in mining projects in terms of making them more sustainable and ecological. Nevertheless, no underground mining project was proposed at the end of the investigation period of this thesis. Consequently, the question of the PSMC influence on the underground mining project depends on future developments.

6.6 The Structure of the State and its Influences on the PSMC's Influence

The overall structure of a regime in which protests take place has a great impact on the political opportunity structure. It sets the framework within which protests take place (Kriesi et al., 1992; Soule & Olzak, 2004). Spain is a free democracy in which social movements are enabled by the state's legalization (e.g., rights of association, assembly, and speech). The state can impose itself. Government authorities administer and regulate mining projects that are carried out within the territory of Spain. Hence, the Spanish state can be classified as a high-capacity democratic regime, according to Tarrow's (2011, p. 179) classification of regimes.

In Cáceres, the PSMC's protest actions could be carried out without significant hindrance. Citizens can therefore engage in protest on mining projects without fearing repression by the state (For further information, see Chapter 5). This is an important precondition, as protesters did not have to fear repression if they participated in collective actions. Consequently, the perception of threat (Tarrow, 2022, p. 143) was centered on the mining project's harms and not on threats that could arise from participating in protests. This is in contrast to undemocratic regimes, where protesters must consider whether the threat of repression that accompanies protest is worth the prospect of influencing change.

6.6.1 State Actors' Strength

In Spain, the Autonomous Communities are responsible for managing and regulating mining projects. Therefore, the Autonomous Communities are important institutions regarding the design and changes of mining projects that can be addressed by anti-mining movements.

The legislation in each Autonomous Community is different, which in turn affects the opportunities for social movements to influence changes in mining projects.

Therefore, more stable sets of opportunities that social movements can perceive are structured by the executive powers of the Autonomous Community Law related to mining. In the case study for this thesis, the municipality of Cáceres City also had the legal right and practical possibility to exercise control over the plans for the mining project in Valdeflores. This was due to the inclusion of the lithium reserves within the boundaries of the city of Cáceres, as defined in its urban plan. The extraction of minerals is not allowed within the city limits, even for sampling purposes.

The Junta could have tried to impose itself over the Cáceres City Council, however it did not do this.

It could have classified the open pit mining project as a PIR (project of regional interest) (Interview with M. C. López Baset [president of the UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], pos. 113). The project of regional interest is an instrument of direct intervention in territorial planning that can facilitate the immediate execution of infrastructure works, services, facilities and installations that are declared to be of regional interest due to their particular public utility or social interest (Junta de Extremadura, 2024).

The Junta's reticence on the open pit mining project may be due to strategic considerations related to its democratic majority.

The population of the city of Cáceres represents approximately 9% of the population of Extremadura. This provides the municipality with economic and political leverage in Extremadura.

As an UNESCO World Heritage Site, the tourism sector of Cáceres is an important economic sector that was feared to be affected by an open pit mine by both political parties that governed the city during the time when an open pit mine was planned (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], § 4; Nevado [PP], in: Muñoz Rubio, 2018).

For the PSOE-governed junta, a decision like promoting the lithium mining plans could have had a negative impact on the electoral prospects of the regional and local PSOE. This risk of losing voters was exacerbated by the stance of the regional PP, a political rival of the PSOE government, against the mining project ahead of the 2019 regional and local elections. Hence, the political opportunity structure was beneficial due to the electoral instability at the local and regional level, which was reinforced by the 2019 regional and local elections in Spain. Moreover, the Junta's promotion of the Valdeflores open pit lithium mine plan could have led to a conflict between the PSOE in Cáceres and the PSOE in Extremadura, potentially undermining the party's internal cohesion.

In Cáceres, the federal state structure provided more stable opportunities to influence policy. In the first place, it gave power to the local politicians, because they could decide on their urban plan. This made them influential allies in the first place. In addition, the Junta did not try to bypass the city council, which could be related to the political leverage of the city of Cáceres, given its size relative to other electoral districts in Extremadura.

This is consistent with research on the influence of anti-mining movements in decentralized systems, where local governments have the institutional competencies and electoral incentives to respond to local grievances. They can serve as important mitigators for mining companies and contribute to the social sustainability of mining projects (Bornschier & Vogt, 2020) or even facilitate the cancellation of mining projects (Holden & Jacobson, 2006). The influence of a federal system on the importance of

electoral incentives can be illustrated by considering a scenario in which the Spanish state is responsible for the management and implementation of mining projects. While Cáceres represents 9 percent of the population of Extremadura, it represents only 0.2 percent of the population of Spain.

However, the Junta supporting the municipal government in its decisions also shows the relativity of state strength in democracies, as it is influenced by exogenous factors, such as public opinion or elections (Tarrow 2011, pp. 177-178).

6.6.2 State Actors' Prevailing Strategies

A state's prevailing strategies toward contentious actors influence the structure that provides opportunities for social movements to engage in the political process. In Extremadura, there are several institutionalized public participation mechanisms that provide political opportunities for social movements to engage in politics to influence changes in mining projects. PSMC seized several of these opportunities. The Junta must provide the public with an opportunity to submit comments when new permits related to mining projects are submitted (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023]: 20). The PSMC took up this opportunity and mobilized 35,000 submissions against the open pit mining project in 2019, which the Junta was obliged to address. One submission was filed by the city council of Cáceres itself (Cáceres City Council, 2019). Furthermore, the city councils are equipped with sectoral councils in Extremadura in which the public can engage and contribute to political debates. In Cáceres, the PSMC and several environmental NGOs are represented in the Sectoral Council for the Environment, where the environmental impact of the lithium mining plans in Valdeflores is discussed. (Interview with M. C. López Balset [Chairperson of UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 76). The PSMC has also participated in plenary sessions of the city council on several occasions, as this is a citizen's right. However, political decisions are made in the commissions, which are not publicly accessible. In the plenary sessions, the political decisions that were discussed in the commissions are voted on (Interview with M. C. López Balset [Chairperson of UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres]: §§27, 29). Hence, the PSMC has taken advantage of institutionalized mechanisms of public participation, although their function is predominantly symbolic. The opportunities for public participation have no direct legal consequences, apart from the obligation of governments to take them into account.

As a result, the prevailing strategy of the state in relation to mining projects in Extremadura is not inclusive per se. It is up to the respective governments to decide to what extent the demands of the public will be included in the policy on mining projects. The PSMC's demands for the prevention of the open pit mining project have been largely incorporated by the municipal government of Cáceres. This

is in contrast to the dissociation of the Cáceres City Council from the PSMC's demands to prevent the underground mining project in Valdeflores.

The Junta de Extremadura even attempted to legally alter its prevailing strategies in terms of protests against lithium mining projects. The Lithium Decree 5/2022 and its extensions problematize NIMBY (not in my backyard) protests as problematic and hindering the implementation of lithium mining projects. This represents a delegitimization of protests on lithium mining projects. The Junta also included lithium mining projects in the PREMIA framework. This reduces the time for the public to file complaints against lithium mining projects from one month to two weeks. In addition, the prioritization of PREMIA projects in the Junta's administrative processes reduces the overall time available for social movements to act against mining projects. A reduction in mobilization time is typically associated with a reduction in the success of anti-mining protests (Scheidel et al., 2020).

However, at the end of the investigation period of this thesis, the decree was not legally valid due to the intervention of the Spanish state (see Chapter 5). The national state interfered because the decree included an obligation to process all lithium mined in Extremadura within the region. The Spanish state claimed that this was against the free competition of the market (elDiarioex, 2023).

This shows that the degree of decentralization and the divergent interests of state actors at different levels of governance collectively shape the political opportunity structure within which a social movement is situated.

However, in a high-capacity democratic regime such as Spain, protests can take place without protesters having to fear repression. The rights to freedom of assembly and speech provide a favorable opportunity structure for the emergence of social movements in the first place. Although the prevailing strategies are not particularly conducive to social movements influencing changes in mining projects, protesters should not fear repression or harm to their lives. These are important conditions under which the anti-mining protests in Cáceres could and did take place.

6.7 Further Results: the Role of Lithium

In the course of the research for my master's thesis, I repeatedly asked myself the question of whether and, if so, to what extent the resistance of the PSMC is relevant to the fact that lithium, and not something else, would be mined in Valdeflores. I concluded that the market price was important because

market fluctuations in the price of lithium allowed changes in the design of the mining project. In addition, the "need"³⁶ for lithium for the green energy transition is used to justify the project.

6.7.1 Market Pricing

When asked about the potential impact of changes to his company's mining project, the CEO of Extremadura New Energies responded as follows:

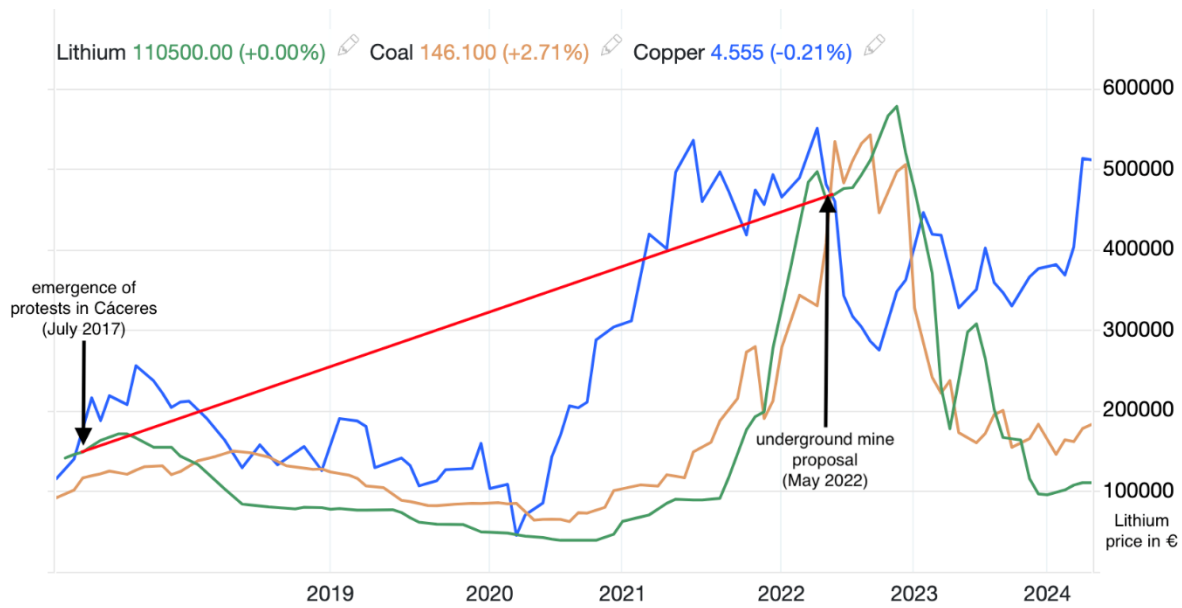
"The protest has had to implement such measures. But what has allowed us to implement, is the increase of the price. Without the increase of the price, we couldn't have implemented the measures" (Interview with R. Jiménez Serrano [CEO of Extremadura New Energies], Pos. 62)

As a result, the profitability of a mine influences a company's willingness and ability to implement changes that make the mine more socially and environmentally sustainable, if they are associated with higher costs. In the case of the Valdeflores project, the market price of lithium has influenced the scope for change at the project. Without the increase in the price of lithium, the project would not have been viable as an underground mine due to the higher costs involved. When the initial license was granted in 2016, lithium was valued at approximately 6,000 euros per tonne. By July 2017, this had risen to approximately 11,000 euros per tonne. In May 2022, when the underground mine was proposed, the mineral was worth approximately 46,000 euros per tonne. This is illustrated in the chart below. In the graph, I have included copper, which is also a highly valuable resource for the green energy transition, with accelerating demand. I have also included coal, a classic fossil fuel. The comparison shows that lithium and coal had similar price fluctuations during the study period of this thesis (2017-2023). Thus, it is unlikely that price fluctuations have only been caused by burgeoning demand of materials needed for the green energy transition. I concluded that non-renewable-mineral-specific market fluctuations were the main cause of the price changes. Consequently, the increase in market value is not a characteristic of lithium in particular. However, an achievable price is to some extent related to market availability of the mineral in question. Rising demand for lithium could lead to a different price, making more costly mining projects with less environmental impact profitable.

However, more research would be needed to address the more specific effects of the green energy transition on the market price of the resources needed for it.

³⁶ I put "need" in exclamation marks because this need is constructed by a particular vision of the energy transition.

Figure 9 – Lithium Price Trend



(own illustration, based on: Trading Economics, 2024)

6.7.2 Lithium Mining and the Green Energy Transition

Another finding of my research was that the need for lithium for the green energy transition is used as a justification for the mine in Valdeflores. In our interview, J.R. Bello (PSOE Cáceres) said that:

“We cannot have a regional discourse that, I assume, that speaks of depopulation as a problem of the demographic challenge, of the need to decarbonize, of the commitment to renewable energies, clean and sustainable energy, creation of wealth associated with this sector, but to be diametrically opposed to a project that, I see, complies with environmental standards. Because if it is not so, under no circumstances, would the No be defended” (Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023], Pos. 10)

Similarly, the Junta stated in its Decree 5/2022 that protests hinder the transition to green energy (Diario Oficial de Extremadura, 2022, p. 43906).

This could be an obstacle to the permanent suspension of the Valdeflores mining project, and is consistent with the analysis of 278 low-carbon energy and 371 fossil fuel cases by Temper et al. (2020), which found that renewable energy projects are more likely to be temporarily suspended than canceled compared to fossil fuel projects. However, it remains to be seen whether the justification of the need for resources for the green energy transition will have an impact on PSMC's influence on project changes.

When the open pit mine was proposed, the need for lithium for the green energy transition did not seem to have much impact on the process of abandoning the project. Local politicians did not use the green transition argument and the Junta remained neutral. However, the open pit mining project was supported by EIT InnoEnergy, an agency co-founded by the European Union. Support for the

Valdeflores mining project was justified by its importance for the European Battery Alliance. EIT InnoEnergy "aims to accelerate transactions between financial institutions and industrial projects in the lithium-ion battery value chain". Regarding the open pit mining project, EIT InnoEnergy CEO Diego Pavía said in 2020:

"EIT InnoEnergy strives to push Infinity Lithium's project in Spain to completion and further in order to support the development of a sustainable and regional lithium-ion battery supply chain in Europe. Our support will bring the project towards the final phase of its development and allow European customers, including battery and automakers, to source lithium chemicals in the EU" (Pavía, in: EITInnoEnergy, 2020).

The project that Pavía promised to support in the quote above was technically rejected. Therefore, the promise was technically not fulfilled. However, Extremadura New Energies, the subsidiary of Infinity Lithium that wants to operate the underground mine, is also supported by EIT InnoEnergy. The EU's support for EIT InnoEnergy did not seem to make a difference in the abandonment of the open pit project. The EU parliamentarians to whom the PSMC presented its petition and Handley, the representative of the Commission's Directorate-General for Growth, assured that without public acceptance of the mining project in Cáceres, it would not be realized. The testimony of a representative of the Raw Materials Act regarding the need for lithium did not change these statements (Mateos, 2020).

However, according to the state of research on the influence of mining project companies on the realization processes of projects, the more professional a company is, the more successful it will eventually be (Conde & Le Billon, 2017; Özkaynak et al., 2021). The support of an agency such as EITInnoEnergy for Extremadura New Energies may contribute to the professionalization of Extremadura New Energies. It remains to be seen whether and to what extent the European Union and its green energy transition policies will influence the lithium mining project in Valdeflores, Extremadura.

7. Summary

In the following I will summarize the content of my thesis.

My research interest in the influence of social movements on changes in mining projects arose from the EU's efforts to promote onshore lithium mining in the territory of the EU and a social movement in Cáceres opposing a lithium mining project plan in Extremadura, Spain (see Chapter 1). The mining project opposed by the social movement was changed from an open pit to an underground mine five years after the social movement PSMC emerged. According to the mining company's website, the project change is a response to the opposition in Cáceres (see Section 5.5).

In Chapter 2 ("State of Research"), I showed that social movements can indeed influence changes in mining projects. However, it is difficult to link specific tactics to protest outcomes (see Chapter 2). In most cases, it is a combination of factors that enable or hinder social movements to influence changes in mining projects. Nevertheless, the context in which a social movement is embedded has a significant

impact on its prospects of achieving its goals (see Chapter 2). Furthermore, I have shown that the phenomenon of the emergence of lithium mining projects and the influence of protests on them in the EU is under-researched (see chapter 2).

The state of research presented is consistent with the theoretical approach chosen for this thesis, the political opportunity approach. It emphasizes that the prospects of social movements are conditioned by exogenous factors, i.e. political opportunities provided by the structure (see Section 3.1.2). Nonetheless, social movements can seize political opportunities and expand their own and others' opportunities (see Section 3.1.2). Among several different approaches to political opportunity, I have chosen to base mine primarily on Tarrow (2022) because he grounds his theoretical development in empirical observations (see Section 3.1.4). In addition to political opportunities, the approach suggests that contentious actors' threat perceptions influence contention, including contentious actors' perceptions of their ability to influence change through contention (see Section 3.1.1). Tarrow (2022) conceptualizes four most salient signals of opportunities (see Section 3.1.1), which I have introduced, to examine whether they are also relevant to my case. In addition to more volatile opportunities, the approach includes "more stable political opportunities" (see Section 3.1.3) related to the structure of the state in which a social movement takes action.

After introducing my theoretical approach, I discussed its limitations and presented an adaptation of Tarrow's (2022) state concept, which conceives of the state as an opponent. Instead, I propose to analyze different state actors (see Section 3.2). This adaptation is justified by the state of research that has shown the importance of state actors that ally with social movements at different levels of government (e.g. local and regional governments). I concluded the theory chapter by synthesizing and operationalizing the theoretical approach for it to fit my purposes. This meant including mining companies as opponents that influence the political opportunity structure (see Section 3.3).

Based on the state of research on the influence of social movements on mining projects and the political opportunity approach, I developed the overarching research question: **"How and under what conditions can social movements influence changes in mining projects, such as cancellations or changes in the project design?"**.

Given the emerging relevance of lithium in the EU and the scarcity of academic literature on lithium mining, especially in Spain (see Chapter 2), I decided to conduct a single case study on the protests at the lithium mine in Extremadura, Spain (see Section 4.2). The state of research shows that the impact of social movements can vary substantially from case to case, not least because of different conditions (see Chapter 2). Understanding how social movements can influence changes in mining projects in the

context of a lithium mining project in Extremadura, Spain is relevant because it contributes to understanding the influence of civil society in the emergence of a lithium mining sector in the EU.

The data I analyzed through a qualitative content analysis was based on transcripts of interviews I conducted. This choice was made because I am investigating conditions related to the past and other unobservable aspects, such as the relationship between the social movement and the municipal government (see Section 4.2.3). In addition, the interviews allowed me to include the perspectives of PSMC activists and other actors. The interview guides were informed by my theoretical approach, the state of the research presented in the second chapter, and the information on the case that I gathered before and during my stay in Cáceres (see Section 4.2.4). My research process was reflected in a subchapter (see Section 4.3). The analysis was based on qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2022) and primarily on deductive category building that reflected my theoretical approach, which I enriched with inductive codes (see Section 3.3).

As mentioned above, the context in which a social movement is embedded is highly relevant to its prospects. I researched the context of the opposition to the lithium mining protests and its conditions, which I presented in the context chapter (see Chapter 5). I explained the EU's efforts to extract lithium on its territory in the context of the green energy transition and EU geopolitics (see Section 5.1). Furthermore, the political economy of Extremadura was contextualized with the promotion of lithium mining as an economic driver by the Junta de Extremadura and its contribution to the Green Energy Transition (see Sections 5.2. & 5.4.). Furthermore, the role of the Junta de Extremadura in the conflict in Cáceres, due to its regulatory and administrative rights granted by the Spanish Mining Law, and the legal context in Extremadura and Spain that conditions the possibilities for social movements to engage in mining projects (see Sections 5.3 & 5.4) was explained.

All of the research activities summarized form the basis of my analysis, the results of which I present and discuss in Chapter 6. Its subchapters are structured along my key findings, which explain how and under what conditions the social movement in my case study was able to influence changes in the lithium mining project, and along the limits of this influence.

The first two sections 6.1 and 6.2 show the great importance of influential allies (Tarrow, 2022, p. 151). They can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of permanent influential allies who supported the PSMC in its opposition to both mining project proposals (see Section 6.1). They include NGOs, a political party, and neighborhood associations. They have provided opportunities for the PSMC by supporting it in its formation phase and beyond, e.g. by filing and supporting lawsuits or giving the PSMC access to the European Parliament. The other group of influential allies that provided opportunities for the PSMC opposition were political parties that allied with the opposition until the

announcement of the underground mining project (see Section 6.2). The PSMC seized the opportunity to win over many political parties as influential allies, which ensured that the project was held up by the city's urban plan. The PSMC was able to quickly organize a large mobilization within the city, expanding its opportunities as well as those of its political allies, who saw their position supported by large demonstrations. Since these demonstrations, the Junta de Extremadura has supported the Cáceres City Council in all of its decisions regarding the mining project but has not opposed the project.

Another finding I made related to the influence of allies was achieved through inductive coding. I found that litigation delayed the project, giving the PSMC time to mobilize (see Section 6.3). This effect of litigation is consistent with other studies (see Chapter 2). In addition, the city council's use of the urban plan to block the mining project was key to the opposition (see Section 6.3). The use of urban plans is cited by the MINLEX report as a common tool to block mining projects in Spain (see Section 5.3).

I further found that the perception of the mining project as a threat was an important precondition for mobilizing activists and influential allies (see Section 6.4). However, the approach of the mining company as an important actor influences the threat perception of potential contentious actors, because it is the main representative of its project and can implement measures that change its project (see Section 6.5).

The analysis has also shown how the political opportunities of the PSMC have been influenced by the structure of the Spanish state, including its degree of decentralization, and the prevailing strategies of state actors (Tarrow, 2011, pp. 175-179). It can be concluded that the Spanish state provided a stable structure of opportunities for the right to demonstrate (see Section 6.6). The decentralized system allowed the political parties allied with the PSMC to be as influential as they were (see Section 6.6.1). However, more participatory options that go beyond the symbolic could increase the influence of social movements in Extremadura, since the inclusion of the PSMC's demands was primarily linked to the goodwill of local political parties (see Section 6.6.2).

The analysis ends with the role of lithium in the changes in the mining project. According to the CEO of one of the current mining companies in the case, the price of lithium allowed more money to be spent on the project, making it less environmentally damaging and more beneficial to the region. Therefore, market fluctuations in the price of lithium influenced the opportunities to implement changes in the mining project in the first place (see Section 6.7.1). The PSMC's claim to cancel the lithium mining project may be hindered by the argument of the regional government and the local PSOE that the lithium mine is necessary for the Green Energy Transition. Therefore, the fact that lithium is a mineral related to the energy transition is relevant, at least in terms of arguments to justify the necessity of the lithium mining project (see Section 6.7.2).

In the next chapter, I will conclude my findings and answer my research question.

8. Conclusion

This thesis sheds light on how social movements can influence change in mining projects, and that the prospects for influencing such change are closely linked to the context in which a social movement is embedded.

The starting point of this thesis was the policy of the EU to geopolitically secure its Green Energy Transition by onshoring lithium mining projects. So far, there is no project running in the EU that extracts lithium, but lithium mining projects are planned all over Europe. Whether these projects are realized and how they are designed will depend, inter alia, on the involvement of social movements. Such movements may press for the abandonment of projects or for projects that are as environmentally friendly as possible and that bring benefits to the mining regions.

Given my research interest in the emerging relevance of lithium mining in the EU, the influence of social movements on related projects, and the scarcity of academic literature on lithium mining, especially in Spain (see Chapter 2), I decided to conduct a single case study of the PSMC's opposition to a lithium mining project in Cáceres, Extremadura, Spain and its influence on changes in the mining project plan. It was shown that political parties and a network of NGOs were important influential allies supporting the opposition to an open pit lithium mine. The social movement PSMC has taken advantage of the opportunities provided by the influential allies, has engaged in litigation, and has organized contentious actions against the plan for a lithium mining project near the city since 2017. The demands for the abandonment of the mining project can be associated with the proposal of an underground project that is claimed to have less environmental damage and more economic benefits for the region. However, since this project change, important political allies have distanced themselves from the PSMC. It is uncertain whether the project will go ahead, or whether it will be as environmentally friendly as advertised. Nevertheless, the case shows that social movements can influence and actively shape the way green energy transition projects are designed in the EU.

To study the case, the theoretical approach chosen was the political opportunity approach. It emphasizes exogenous factors as key to a social movement's influence. The approach is consistent with the state of research on the influence of social movements in mining projects, which suggests that the context in which a social movement is embedded has a significant impact on its prospects for influencing such changes.

On this basis, I developed the research question "**How and under what conditions can social movements influence changes in mining projects, such as cancellations or changes in the project design?**".

It connects the two questions:

- Under what conditions can social movements influence changes in mining projects?
- How can social movements influence changes in mining projects?

In the introduction, I listed three sub-questions which are related to the two questions above.

1. What institutions and actors are relevant to changes in mining projects that can be influenced by social movements?
2. What strategies of social movements can contribute to enabling changes in mining projects?
3. What obstacles can hinder social movements from influencing changes in mining projects?

I will use these three sub-questions to address and answer my research question based on the results of my single case study.

Under what conditions can social movements influence changes in mining projects?

I complement this question with the sub-question "**What institutions and actors are relevant to changes in mining projects?**". In Cáceres, Extremadura, the institutions and actors relevant to the changes in the mining project were state institutions, especially municipal and regional policy actors and courts, NGOs, mining companies, and the social movement PSMC.

The influence of state actors and courts on mining projects and their relevance to social movements is conditioned by more stable types of political opportunities (Tarrow, 2011, p.175-179) related to the type of regime in which a social movement is active. In Spain, democracy allows social movement actors to protest against mining without fear of repression. This is an important precondition, as protesters in Cáceres did not have to fear repression for participating in collective actions. This is in contrast to undemocratic regimes, where repression may make people reluctant to protest. Another condition related to democracy and conducive to the influence of social movements is elections, which allow social movements to put pressure on political actors who may be afraid of losing electoral votes. In Cáceres, close elections had a positive impact on the political opportunity structure for the opposition of the PSMC, as local political parties felt pressured to take a position on the mining project. Most of these parties became important allies in supporting the opposition by not changing the Cáceres Urban Plan during the phase of the open-pit mining project proposal. Thus, it was the executive right that made the parties so influential in the Cáceres City Council because it gave them the power to stop the mining project plan from moving forward. In addition, municipal governments can file lawsuits, as the PSOE government in Cáceres did against the mining company, forcing it to restore the land where soil

extraction that was considered illegal took place. However, the influence of the Cáceres City Council was linked to the policy of the Junta de Extremadura as the main institution responsible for the lithium mining project in Valdeflores. This responsibility is due to the decentralization of Spanish mining law, granting Autonomous Communities administrative and executive powers over mining projects. In Cáceres, the Junta de Extremadura did not impose itself against the decision of the Cáceres City Council, although it could have done so. This is important because the Junta did not oppose the project. While this may have been related to strategic considerations of the Junta to maintain political majorities, it shows that the stability of state actors' strength and their dominant strategies towards protests is only relatively stable. At least in democracies, they also depend on exogenous factors such as elections or public opinion. Also relevant in terms of democratic control, in Cáceres, the administrative process of granting a license for the open-pit mine was repealed because the Junta de Extremadura made a procedural error. This gave the opposition the opportunity to file a lawsuit and gain time to promote their opposition.

In Cáceres, other relevant actors that supported the PSMC in its opposition were NGOs, the opposition party CT-P (later UP), and neighborhood associations that have been present since the PSMC's creation and beyond. They helped organize the formation of the PSMC and the protests. The NGOs helped to organize the actions of the social movement, filed lawsuits and provided financial support. The CT-P (later UP) supported the PSMC by filing motions, bringing the PSMC's claims to the EU, and providing information.

Moreover, a mining project that is not perceived as a threat will not be contested; thus, in Valdeflores, the perception of the mining project as a threat was an important condition for protest. In Cáceres, several factors contributed to this perception, including air pollution and health risks from open-pit mining, the loss of a natural recreational area, water, the proximity of the mine to the city of Cáceres, and damage to the tourism sector of the UNESCO-protected city of Cáceres. The perception of the lithium mine as a threat united the PSMC and its allies. The perception of threat is linked to the mining company, which is another relevant actor in changes to mining projects. On the one hand, they condition the perception and design of a project, which influences whether people perceive the project as a threat or a benefit. On the other hand, they have the ability to change the mining project and thereby the threats associated with it.

After all, according to the CEO of the operating mining company, the changes in the mining project were only possible because of the increase in the price of lithium. The projected profit from lithium mining has increased, which made the increased expenditures necessary for an underground mine worthwhile.

Both the state of research and this thesis have shown that social movements can be actors in influencing change in mining projects. The following section explains why and how this is the case.

How can social movements influence changes in mining projects?

This question is related to the sub-question about **social movement strategies that can help to enable change in mining projects**. Measuring the relationship between social movement tactics more generally and their outcomes is empirically difficult (Sovacool et al., 2022). Therefore, the focus of the answer to the question is on the strategies that I could empirically trace back to influence in the mining project.

The PSMC was able to win over most of the local political parties to its opposition. The PSMC organized large demonstrations after the plans for the open pit mine became public and talked to local political parties about the threats they perceived from the open pit mining project. This put pressure on the local political parties to take a position or re-evaluate their position on the mining project. In 2018, the majority of local political parties joined the demonstrations organized by the PSMC. In the same year, these political parties voted to keep the mining project on hold by refusing to adjust the Cáceres Urban Plan, which would have been necessary for the project to continue. Thus, the PSMC expanded its opportunities by gaining allies through its own contentious actions and expanding the opportunities of its allies, who saw their position against the mine supported by a visible protest movement. The group of NGOs and neighborhood associations that had supported the movement from the beginning contributed to this rapid organization.

The PSMC maintained an exchange with most of the political parties represented in the Cáceres City Council. During the open pit proposal phase, the PSMC was in close contact with the PSOE, which governed Cáceres from 2019 to 2023, and supported it, not least in the face of the PSOE-governed Junta de Extremadura, which did not oppose the mining project.

Another strategy was to file lawsuits. These showed the invalidity of a license granted to the mining company. In addition, a procedural error by the Junta de Extremadura in presenting the project to the public and allowing public submissions on the project resulted in the reopening of the permitting process and the opportunity for public comment on the mining project. In this way, the lawsuits have reinstated the legal right and prolonged the process of the mining project as well as the possibilities to publicly challenge this project, although the public submissions have a representative and not a legal function.

Other strategies of representative function were used; however, their influence cannot be measured, but only imagined in terms of their effect on the Junta not to push the realization of the mining project. Such strategies were, for example, calling UNESCO or presenting a petition to the EU Parliament. The latter resulted in Members of the European Parliament asking the Junta for details about the project.

What can be obstacles that hinder social movements from influencing changes in mining projects?

The third sub-question is about the conditions that hinder the influence of social movements on changes in mining projects. It considers the limits of the influence of social movements on mining projects. In relation to my case study, this can be answered along the decrease of political opportunities for the PSMC. Still, the mining project is not realized yet, so these obstacles do not necessarily mean that the mining project will not be changed or cancelled again.

The change in the strategies of the mining company as an opponent in the political opportunity structure reduced the political opportunities for the PSMC because it led to the loss of the two main major parties in Cáceres, the PP and the PSOE, as influential allies. The mining company proposed an underground mine, which it claimed would have fewer negative impacts and more social and economic benefits than the open pit mine. The underground mine would be operated by a Spanish subsidiary of the Australian mining company that proposed the open pit mine. Therefore, more taxes will be paid in Spain. In addition, the mining company established a foundation to invest in projects in the region, and the processing of the lithium mined was planned to take place in Extremadura. This changed the local political parties' perception of the costs and benefits. The change in perception of the mining project as a threat to a potentially beneficial project for the city must be understood in the context of Extremadura as an economically depressed region, with more than a third of the population at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

The efforts of the Junta de Extremadura to issue a decree on lithium that, among other things, considers lithium mining projects to be of regional interest should also be considered in the context of this political-economic situation in Extremadura. The original decree also included the requirement that lithium mined in Extremadura be processed within the region. In this way, the Junta de Extremadura seeks to obtain economic benefits from lithium mining projects and related sectors. Thus, the Junta sought not only to attract the mining industry to the region, but also to avoid a fate common to poor regions around the world, where minerals are mined but not processed. However, the Spanish government successfully challenged this obligation and the Junta announced that it would adjust its decree. Consequently, the impact of this decree on the influence of social movements on lithium mining projects will depend on its final form and whether it is in line with Spanish law.

Another twofold obstacle is related to the viability of project changes due to the recoverable price of the mineral lithium. On the one hand, the CEO of the mining company claims that without the change in the market price, the changes in the mining project design could not have been implemented. On the other hand, the open pit mining project had less prospects to be realized than the underground mining project. While the changes in the mining project design could be realized due to the price

increases of lithium, these changes make it less likely that the project will be canceled, which is the ultimate goal of PSMC. However, the current market prices for lithium are relatively low, making the underground mine unrentable at this time, the impact of which remains to be seen.

Further remarks

How social movements can influence changes in mining is strongly linked to the conditions under which their contentious actions take place. These conditions are often interrelated, and form complex sets of political opportunity structures.

This brings me to my final point, which is whether it is an obstacle that the protests in Cáceres are against lithium mining and not fossil fuel mining.

In terms of the justification that this project, or lithium mining projects in general, are needed to secure the EU's green energy transition, it makes a difference. However, whether it makes a difference in terms of PSMC's practical influence on further changes in lithium mining projects is a question that is too early to assess, since, at the end of the research for this thesis, the underground mine project had not even been finally proposed.

Subsequently, it would be interesting to further investigate the influence of the PSMC on the lithium mining project. Examining this and other lithium projects in the EU would contribute to understanding how the design of the lithium mining sector in the EU is influenced by social movements. In this context, the question of how the influence of social movements on the design of mining projects depends on whether the mining is done in the name of green energy transition or for other purposes could be addressed.

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Appendix

Coding tree

Deductive categories

The most salient signals of opportunities, volatile type (Tarrow, 2022)

Increasing access

Increasing access refers to the assumption, that people might not attack their opponents are too powerful and therefore opportunities are closed. When contentious actors get more access to power, incentives to protests can emerge (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145).

protest occurs mostly in a “mixed system because the pace of change does not keep up with expectations, *even though change is occurring*”

example

En 2019 ya nosotros manifestamos el no, nos reunimos con ellos, nos explicaron el proyecto y era un proyecto muy agresivo desde nuestro punto de vista. Empieza la legislatura. El PP también manifestó que no estaba a favor y Podemos manifestó que tampoco estaba a favor

Shifting Alignments - Politics and political positioning to the mining project

Shifting Alignments create opportunities when political alignments are shifting, and are therefore instable. Especially when new coalitions are present and opposition parties create uncertainty among the supporters of such coalitions “challengers [can be encouraged] to try to exercise marginal power, and may even induce elites to compete for support from outside the polity “ (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145). In liberal democracy, this is indicated by electoral instability (Tarrow, 1996, p. 55).

- ➔ Includes positioning in times of elections
- ➔ Includes positioning of parties

example

“Y luego hay partidos de nuevo cuño que antes estaban en contra y ahora a favor. Ha estado a favor de la mina como gente que venía de Ciudadanos, del partido Ciudadanos y ahora que se acercan unas elecciones, pues están en contra. Yo creo que todo el mundo está buscando votos.” (Consuelo Lopez, § 31)

I: Y de hecho hemos intentado organizar un debate entre los partidos políticos, algunos sí han respondido, otros directamente es que no se han tomado la molestia de responder ni siquiera un e-mail. O sea, es intentan evitar la relación con nosotros porque saben que tendrían que posicionarse y hablar claro, y es algo que a ninguno le conviene. A ver qué pasa después de las elecciones. (Isa + Miguel, § 32-33).

Divided Elites

Divided Elites can stimulate outbreaks of contention by giving incentives to resource-poor groups to take the opportunity of protest when elites are weaker than usually. It also can encourage the parts of the elite that are out of power to represent claims of a social movement, because then they might be perceived as the “tribunes of the people” (Tarrow, 2022, p. 145).

- ➔ Includes divisions between different political parties
- ➔ Includes inner party-divisions on the mining project and the protests against it inside one party
- ➔ Includes conflictive political agendas on the mining project on different governing scales (local, regional, national..)
- ➔ Includes explanation on the options for the different scales of governments to accelerate or hold the project
- ➔ Includes passages that refer to closing of this window of opportunity

example

Entonces salió a la luz y de repente, claro, se encuentra el gobierno anterior (En el 2017 gobernaba el Partido Popular.) con una oposición de la calle, de la Asociación, con una oposición de un partido que estaba en el Ayuntamiento, que era el nuestro, y con una oposición de otro partido, del Partido Socialista. Con lo cual reculó, dio marcha atrás, quitó esos permisos y se posicionó también en contra de la mina. (Interview with M. C. López Balset [Chairperson of UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres], § 31)

Influential Allies

influential allies (Tarrow, 2022, pp. 145–146), that provide resources and support to contentious actors.

- ➔ Includes passages on how influential allies that provide resources (f.e. informations) and support to contentious actors (e.g. provide help that is not visible in the communication of the movement for the best of the movement).
- ➔ Includes changes of influential allies, f.e. less and more support
- ➔ Includes relationship of SM with its allies and reverse
- ➔ Includes passages that refer to closing of this window of opportunity

example

Cuando la mina era a cielo abierto, todos [los partidos políticos] dijeron que no. Menos, Ciudadanos, el partido este que te digo que es de centro. (Consuelo Lopez, § 37)

El mayor gasto normalmente es de temas de abogados. Lo que me han contado es que al principio de la plataforma los abogados nos ayudaron gratis (Activist D , § 99)

Bueno, el PSOE es el que está actuando actualmente en el gobierno. Ellos han cambiado de opinión y entonces ha habido un momento de encontronazo en una reunión con él en que nos dijo muy claramente que los caminos se habían separado (Two PSMC activists, § 122)

POS operationalized to mining company as opponent

Mining company's impact on political opportunities for the SM

The impact of the mining company on the political opportunity structure that influenced the social movement's influence on changes in the mining project (e.g., cancellation of the project or adjustments in the project design).

example

Cuando lo presenté a cielo abierto le preguntamos porque una mina a cielo abierto, Nos dijeron que una soterrada era inviable, que no se podía hacer, que no existía ninguna en el mundo y sin embargo ahora lo cambia y dice que sí, que va a ser soterrada. (Consuelo Lopez, § 31)

Es verdad que la empresa minera está moviendo mucho dinero para cambiar voluntades. Se ha visto en el club de baloncesto, los cofrades en un festival de teatro de cine solidario, que hoy no sabemos si han ido más allá y es verdad que están haciendo un trabajo de propaganda tremenda para cambiar la posición de los partidos y la posición de la sociedad. (Consuelo Lopez, § 31)

Expanding opportunities

expansion of a group's own opportunities

Opportunities that emerged for the social movement due to its collective action

Emerging protest might expand opportunities in this situation, by e.g. mobilizing elite allies. Expanding opportunities can initiate broad cycles of contention, since these are mostly likely to begin in moments of widely distributed resources (Tarrow 2022, p. 150).

- ➔ Includes possibilities for diffusion (e.g. requests for giving lectures on their protests' reasoning)

example

Muy rápido, tomamos partido. ¿Por qué? Porque vimos que la plataforma estaba aglutinando un sentir de bastante gente. De ahí aquella demostración de fuerza en aquella manifestación fue muchísima gente para lo que acostumbra a ir aquí en Cáceres a una manifestación y fuimos representantes de todos los partidos. (Jose_Ramon_PSOE , § 2)

opportunities' expansion for cognate groups

Protesting groups raise issues to the agenda to which other people relate. They demonstrate the utility of collective action and create opportunities for other to support, copy or innovate upon. political opportunities created for cognate groups, that may influence changes in the mining project. Cognate groups to look for can be for example political parties, NGOs, or other social movements.

- ➔ Includes the handling of the cognate groups with the opportunities that emerge due to the protests

example

Insisto, primero, por sentido común, y luego, por todos los datos. Todos los datos. Ahí imagino que habéis hablado con la plataforma en la montaña, tienen gente buenísima trabajando, haciendo estudios de todo, y todos los datos que han recabado son impresionantes, ha movilizado a mucha gente. No tiene sentido para nosotros. Sigue sin tener sentido. La mina es una mina, aunque sea soterrada, no existe ninguna mina de litio soterrada en todo el mundo, con lo cual no creemos en su viabilidad. (Consuelo Lopez, § 37)

Perceived threats

People's decision on whether to engage in collective action or not is shaped by a combination of opportunities and threats (Tarrow, 2022, p. 143)

Threats are "[relating] to the risks and costs of action or inaction rather than to the prospect of success. Threats are often seen only as the "flip side" of opportunities, but they are actually analytically distinct. A group may decide to bear very high costs for protest if it believes the chances of success are high, but the same group may decide to avoid even modest costs if it believes the chances of succeeding are low" (Tarrow, 2022, p. 143)

example

Yo creo que parte de la ciudadanía. Defendía que ese proyecto a cielo abierto era muy agresivo y nos iba a perjudicar en nuestro turismo por el polvo en suspensión. Las detonaciones de esa imagen de cráter gigantesco que aunque en un momento determinado la empresa de la mina nos intentó vender que iban a hacer ahí un ladito y además era muy agresivo. Y eso llevó a que incluso a través de la presión que hizo la plataforma, que fue bastante inteligente también en esto y presionó a la UNESCO (Jose_Ramon_PSOE , § 4)

State actors— more stable opportunities

states' prevailing strategies – at different scales

The state's prevailing strategy can be an inclusive strategy responding to and absorbing protests' demands, or an exclusive strategy that marginalizes protests claims (Kriesi et al. 1992, p. 225).

Asking for the state actors' handling with protests: inclusive strategy responding to, and absorbing protests' demands, versus exclusive strategy that marginalizes protests claims

example

Entonces, por ejemplo, existe el Consejo Sectorial de Medio Ambiente, en el que he estado, hasta la Plataforma, cualquier asociación que quiera ser incluida y se convocan cada tres meses o algo así.

Institutional structure's impacts on protests influence

Information on scope of influence of the social movement conditioned by institutional structures such as democracy type, the strength of the state to impose itself, the impact of its (de)centralization level and the mining law as well as its execution

example

Nosotros este en este caso yo como concejal de urbanismo, en mi manera de defender el no a este proyecto, es que era imposible, no, porque ello porque yo siempre teniendo un papel. Complicado, yo puedo tener mi opinión personal, pero soy concejal de urbanismo. Y yo tengo que intentar darle darle digamos equilibrio jurídico a todo lo que se plantea en la ciudad se yo, no puedo decir no, aquí no voy, aquí no se puede poner en una nuclear porque yo no quiero yo tengo que estudiarme el proyecto y ver si cumple la ley. Si bien nuestro plan de Ordenación Urbana, etcétera, etcétera (Interview with José Ramon Bello (PSOE), § 3)

Inductive categories

Lithium price conditioning the project design

Rise in the price of lithium and the resulting increase in the profitability of lithium mines as an enabling factor for changes in mining projects

example

So all these measures we have implemented and we are able to implement because the price of the lithium move from 6000 up to 17,000, according to our model. But the reality is that has fluctuated between. €75,000 up to 40,000 €40,000 in the last one year and a half. Okay. And they're foreseen prices between 35 and €40,000 in the next 30 years. Okay. So this is why we have been able to hear the city and to implement all the measures that the city has requested us to implement. (Interview with the CEO of Extremadura New Energies, § 11)

Matter of lithium for the energy transition

Political justification on the necessity of lithium extraction to reach carbon neutrality

example

Una comunidad autónoma y en este caso una ciudad que ha apostado por las energías renovables. Yo no puedo pedirle a la gente que use un coche eléctrico si no tiene la manera de suministrar energía a ese coche eléctrico. Sería un poco un poco extraño. No? Que definiendo. Economía verde pero sin coche eléctrico. (Interview with José Ramon Bello (PSOE), § 4)

Litigations

Litigations on the mining project and their ability to stop the proceeding of the mining project and thereby hindering its implementation

example

Oye, nos felicitamos por haber puesto la multa. Como va la Junta?. Se ha cobrado. a Sí?, sí, sí. se han restaurado. Si se han restaurado los caminos, lo hemos pedido. Esa era la interlocución. (Interview with José Ramon Bello (PSOE), § 136)

Interview guidelines

Guide for Interview with J. R. Bello [PSOE; City Councilor for Urban Planning and Patrimony in Cáceres 2019-2023]

Leading question or narrative prompt	Memo	Concrete Question	Maintenance/Guidance Questions
1 - proyecto minero a cielo abierto: En relación con el pasado: ¿Cómo influyeron las protestas contra el proyecto de extracción de litio a cielo abierto en la política local de Cáceres y en la política de la Junta de Extremadura?	• El PP apoyó inicialmente el proyecto • Elecciones en 2019 • política de la Junta de Extremadura • diferencias entre los partidos políticos	• ¿Estuvo el PSOE en contra del proyecto minero a cielo abierto desde el principio? • ¿Hasta qué punto influyeron las protestas en las elecciones de Cáceres de 2019?	• ¿En qué medida afectaron las protestas a la política municipal?
2 - PSMC ¿Hasta qué medida su gobierno ha intercambiado con el PSMC desde 2016/17?	• Luis Salaya decía que se jubilaba si se hubiera realizado el proyecto de minería a cielo abierto	¿Trabajaba el ayuntamiento junto con la PSMC para la oposición al proyecto de minería a cielo abierto? En caso afirmativo: ¿ influenciaba la cooperación a su política en relación al proyecto minero?	• ¿Hubo periodos en los que el ayuntamiento de Cáceres intercambiaba con la PSMC de forma regular? • ¿El ayuntamiento se aliaba con las demandas de la PSMC o se anticipó a algunas? • ¿Cambió en algún punto su intercambio con la PSMC? En caso afirmativo ¿por qué?

3 - cambios en el proyecto ¿Sabe si Extremadura New Energies cambió su proyecto también por las protestas ?	• En una entrevista concedida a un periódico alemán, el CEO afirmó que habían modificado su proyecto para que fuera más aceptado por el público • las restricciones del proyecto debidas a la ley de concesiones	¿diría que los cambios en el Proyecto de Litio de Extremadura New Energies, de minería a cielo abierto a subterránea, están relacionados con las protestas ciudadanas a su proyecto?	¿En qué medida están en intercambio con Extremadura New Energies, Castilla mining o Infinity Lithium?
4 – influencia de la PSMC ¿Cambió el nivel de influencia de las protestas de la PSMC en la política con la propuesta del nuevo proyecto de minería subterránea ?	• Entrevista a Luis Salaya en agosto • Encuestas de opinión pública	¿Cambió la opinión pública sobre el proyecto minero con la propuesta de la mina subterránea ? En caso afirmativo: ¿como influencia este cambio sus políticas sobre la mina?	¿Cambió la opinión pública sobre las protestas de la PSMC desde la propuesta del proyecto subterráneo?
5 – Posición política del PSOE ¿Cuál es la posición política actual del PSOE respecto a la oposición de la PSMC al proyecto de extracción de litio en Valdeflores?	• Ayuntamiento de Cáceres • Junta de Extremadura	¿De qué depende la decisión del PSOE de aceptar o rechazar el proyecto de la mina subterránea?	¿Influenció el cambio del proyecto a la mina subterránea a su relación con la PSMC ?
6 – Elecciones 2023 ¿En qué medida influyen las protestas a las elecciones al fin de mayo ?	• - Campañas electorales • - Votos • - Junta • Interpelaciones de la PSMC a los partidos de Cáceres	¿Es el proyecto minero un tema importante en las batallas electorales ?	

Question about relevant points not mentioned		¿Hay algo que le gustaría añadir como factor importante en relación con la influencia de la sociedad civil en el proyecto de extracción de litio de lo que aún no hayamos hablado?	
Ending question: <u>Probabilidad de realización de la mina</u> ¿Consideraría probable la realización del proyecto de mina subterránea ?	• Deja de ser relevante el plan del urbanismo • Influencia de la Junta de Extremadura	¿Hasta qué punto depende la realización de la mina de las protestas contra ella?	¿Qué probabilidades hay de que se apruebe una licencia de extracción en 2024?

Guide for Interview with R. Jiménez Serrano [CEO of Extremadura New Energies]

Leading question or narrative prompt	Memo	Specific question	Maintenance/Guidance Questions
<u>Project changes</u> What were the reasons to change your project from open pit to underground mining?	• Acceptance of Cáceres inhabitants - Extremadura New Energy's CEO said this in an interview with a German newspaper • restrictions due to the concession law • protests	Was the proposition of the underground mining project related to the civil society's opposition against the open pit mining project? If so, to what extent?	• What made the change to an underground mine possible? Why didn't you initially propose an underground mine? • Or was the decision mainly taken because of the problems with the Plan del Urbanismo?

<u>Exchange with the civil society</u> In what ways do you exchange with the inhabitants and the civil society of Cáceres?	• Information tables • Exchange with NGOs? • Exchange with PSMC?	Are you or did you try to get in contact with the different groups opposing your project? If so: How and since when?	• What ways do you use to inform the inhabitants on your project? • Is your project more accepted by the citizens of Cáceres since the proposition of the underground mine?
<u>Handling/Willingness to make concessions</u> How is the public opinion going to affect your further project planning? Did the protests of Cáceres civil society influence your project handling in some way?	• prevention	Would you make concessions regarding your project to get the social acceptance of the society of Cáceres or/and groups that are at the moment opposing your project?	• Do you try to convince the groups that are opposing your project to change their mind? • Did you expect such big protests against your project? • Do you have experience with protests? • How did you react when the first protests appeared? • How do you get more social acceptance for your project?
<u>Politics</u> Did the proposition of the underground mining project change your relation to local and/or regional politics?	• City Council • Junta • Parties ➔ exchange • Ciudadanos are now in favor	Do you consider the civil society's opposition as an important factor influencing the political parties' opinion towards your project?	• To what extent do you exchange with the political parties in Cáceres? • How is your relationship with the City Council of Cáceres? Did it change with the proposition of the new project? • How is your relationship with the Junta de Extremadura? Did it change with the proposition of the new project?

Question about relevant points not mentioned		Is there anything you would like to add as an important factor for the changes in your project, we have not yet talked about?	
<u>Ending question – Probability of realization of the mine</u> Would you consider the actual underground mine project as likely to be realized ?	- Plan del Urbanismo nicht mehr relevant? Junta de Extremadura Corte /tribunal de justicia		- Will protests influence this? - How eventual is it that an extraction license is approved by 2024?

Guide for Interview with M. C. López Baset [Chairperson of UP (formerly CT-P) in Cáceres]

Leading question or narrative prompt	Memo	Concrete Question	Maintenance/Guidance Questions
<u>1 - proyecto minero a cielo abierto:</u> En relación con el pasado: ¿Cómo influyeron las protestas contra el proyecto de extracción de litio a cielo abierto en la política local de Cáceres y en la política de la Junta de Extremadura?	- El PP apoyó inicialmente el proyecto - Elecciones en 2019 - política de la Junta de Extremadura - diferencias entre los partidos políticos	¿Qué papel tiene el proyecto minero en los plenos del ayuntamiento? ¿Había cambios desde la propuesta del nuevo proyecto minero?	¿En qué medida afectaron las protestas a la política municipal? ¿Hasta qué punto influyeron las protestas en las elecciones de Cáceres de 2019?

2 - PSMC ¿Hasta qué medida su partido ha intercambiado con el PSM y/o otros grupos que se oponen contra el proyecto minero desde 2017?	• ¿Intercambio con varios grupos? • Ecologistas en Acción • Adenex	¿Había cambios en su relación con las protestas desde la propuesta del intercambio desde la propuesta del proyecto subterráneo? En caso afirmativo, ¿cuáles?	• ¿Hay un intercambio con la PSM de forma regular? • ¿Cambió en algún punto su intercambio con la PSMC? En caso afirmativo ¿por qué?
3 – influencia de la PSMC ¿Qué papel tienen las protestas contra la mina en las charlas políticas en Cáceres / los plenos del ayuntamiento?	• Encuestas de opinión pública • plenos del ayuntamiento	¿Cambió el nivel de influencia de las protestas de la PSM en la política de Cáceres con la propuesta del nuevo proyecto de minería subterránea?	• ¿Cambió la opinión pública sobre las protestas de la PSMC desde la propuesta del proyecto subterráneo? • ¿Influenció el cambio del proyecto a la mina subterránea a su relación con la PSMC? • ¿En qué medida influencian las protestas la política de UNIDAS PODEMOS?

4 – Posición política de UNIDAS PODEMOS ¿Existen algunas circunstancias con cuáles UNIDAS PODEMOS apoyaría el proyecto minero como unos cambios en el proyecto o un cambio en la opinión del pueblo de Cáceres? Es beneficioso para su política que hay las protestas contra el proyecto minero?	• Ayuntamiento de Cáceres • Junta de Extremadura	¿Tenéis encuestas de la opinión pública sobre el proyecto minero?	
5 – Elecciones 2023 ¿En qué medida influyen las protestas a las elecciones al fin de mayo?	• Campañas electorales • Votos • Junta • Interpelaciones de la PSMC a los partidos de Cáceres	¿Es el proyecto minero un tema importante en las batallas electorales (por UNIDAS PODEMOS) al nivel de las elecciones de la Extremadura?	
Question about relevant points not mentioned		¿Hay algo que le gustaría añadir como factor importante en relación con la influencia de la sociedad civil en el proyecto de extracción de litio de lo que aún no hayamos hablado?	
Ending question: Probabilidad de realización de la mina ¿Hasta qué punto depende la realización de la mina de las protestas contra ella?	• Deja de ser relevante el plan del urbanismo • Influencia de la Junta de Extremadura	¿Consideraría probable la realización del proyecto de mina subterránea?	

Guiding Question	Concrete / Guidance Question	Memo
¿Cuál es la relación entre ACIMA y el PSMC? <i>Memo: 2017 ACIMA ortegó recursos legales por el proyecto de Valdeflores por incumplir con los plazos de exposición de 30 días</i>	- ¿ACIMA forma parte de la PSMC? - ¿Cómo ACIMA ha apoyado a la PSMC? - ¿Ha cambiado la relación a lo largo del tiempo? - ¿Les has apoyado a desarrollar estrategias de protesta?	Vi un post de Facebook que sugiere que ACIMA es un parte de la PSMC En la página del web de ACIMA hay un artículo de 2018, donde celebran un año de cooperación
¿En su opinión: ¿Cómo se ha establecido tan bien el PSMC?	¿Cuántos activistas ecologistas había en Cáceres antes de la fundación de la PSMC?	Inicio, conexiones con otros movimientos sociales estrategias de movilización
¿En qué medida están relacionados los cambios en el proyecto a la extracción del litio subterránea en Valdeflores, con la oposición de la PSMC contra el proyecto de minería a cielo abierto?		concesión Plan del Urbanismo

¿Cómo evalúa las posibilidades legales actuales de actuar contra el proyecto de Infinity Lithium?	¿Serían tan diferente las probabilidades de tener éxito con poner una denuncia a un proyecto, que no esté relacionado a la idea de una transformación energética? por ejemplo con un proyecto de la extracción del combustible fósil	Litio = estratégica por Extremadura
¿Sabe si Infinity Lithium y sus empresas asociadas están relacionadas con partidos políticos en España? En caso afirmativo, ¿influyen la permisión de su proyecto?		
POLITICAS ¿Cómo influyeron las protestas contra el proyecto de extracción de litio a cielo abierto en la política local de Cáceres ?	¿En qué medida afectan las protestas a las elecciones en 2019?	PP -> PSOE
¿Cuál es la relación entre el PSOE de Cáceres y la PSMC ?	¿Sabe si el PSOE de Cáceres estaba en contra del proyecto de minería a cielo abierto desde el principio?	
¿Habría sido más probable la realización del proyecto con un ayuntamiento del PP ?	¿Ayudó a la oposición local contra el proyecto minero a cielo abierto que el PSOE estuviera al frente del ayuntamiento de Cáceres y de la Junta de Extremadura?	Plan del Urbanismo

¿Cambió la influencia de la PSMC en la política con la propuesta del nuevo proyecto subterráneo ?	¿Cambió la influencia de la PSMC en la opinión del pueblo con la propuesta del nuevo proyecto subterráneo?	
¿En qué medida afectan las protestas contra la mina a las elecciones del mayo de 28 ?		
Sé que medir la influencia es una tarea difícil, porque es difícil saber qué factores llevaron al cambio. Aun así, me gustaría preguntar: ¿ Hasta qué punto pueden influir los movimientos sociales en los proyectos mineros de Extremadura / España ?	¿Existen diferencias entre la extracción de minerales en batería y la extracción de fósiles en cuanto a las posibilidades de éxito de la oposición de los movimientos sociales?	
¿Hay algo que le gustaría añadir a la entrevista, de lo que aún no hayamos hablado?		
¿ Qué probabilidades considera que tiene de realizarse el nuevo proyecto que contiene la mina subterránea y una fábrica de baterías?		

Notes

Legalmente, el proyecto ha sido aprobado por el gobierno municipal, que no ha adaptado el Plan del Urbanismo

- La concesión obtenida contiene una zona no licitada para la explotación minera, por lo que no es válida sin una adaptación del Plan del Urbanismo
- El plan de urbanismo tendría que ser modificado por el ayuntamiento
- Las concesiones de minería las otorga el gobierno regional
- El gobierno local y nacional están dirigidos por el PSOE
 - ➔ Conflicto entre el gobierno local y nacional del PSOE
- Guillermo Fernández Vara, Presidente de la Junta Extremadura, enfatizó en declaraciones a la prensa de la Junta sobre el decreto de prospecciones de litio que la decisión corresponde al gobierno local, aunque existan otras posibilidades legales para aprobar el proyecto.
- La Junta de Extremadura es oficialmente responsable de la decisión sobre el permiso de exploración.
- Qué tendría que pasar: el gobierno local tendría que cambiar el Plan del Urbanismo
- El gobierno regional puede anular el plan urbanístico, pero no para el litio. El año pasado se publicó un decreto sobre proyectos de infraestructuras estratégicas que excluye el litio.

⇒ En cualquier caso, existe margen de maniobra

Leading question or narrative prompt	Memo	Concrete Question	Maintenance/Guidance Questions
<u>1 - proyecto minero a cielo abierto:</u> En relación con el pasado: ¿Cómo influyeron las protestas contra el proyecto de extracción de litio a cielo abierto en la política local de Cáceres y en la política de la Junta de Extremadura?	• El PP apoyó inicialmente el proyecto • Elecciones en 2019 • política de la Junta de Extremadura • diferencias entre los partidos políticos	• ¿Qué papel tiene el proyecto minero en los plenos del ayuntamiento? ¿Había cambios desde la propuesta del nuevo proyecto minero?	• ¿En qué medida afectaron las protestas a la política municipal? • ¿Hasta qué punto influyeron las protestas en las elecciones de Cáceres de 2019?
<u>2 - PSMC</u> ¿Hasta qué medida su partido ha intercambiado con el PSM y/o otros grupos que se oponen contra el proyecto minero desde 2017?	• ¿Intercambio con varios grupos? • Ecologistas en Acción • Adenex	¿Había cambios en su relación con las protestas desde la propuesta del intercambio desde la propuesta del proyecto subterráneo? En caso afirmativo, ¿cuáles?	• ¿Hay un intercambio con la PSM de forma regular? • ¿Cambió en algún punto su intercambio con la PSMC? En caso afirmativo ¿por qué?
<u>3 – influencia de la PSMC</u> ¿Qué papel tienen las protestas contra la mina en las charlas políticas en Cáceres / los plenos del ayuntamiento? (Cgh	• Encuestas de opinión pública • plenos del ayuntamiento	¿Cambió el nivel de influencia de las protestas de la PSM en la política de Cáceres con la propuesta del nuevo proyecto de minería subterránea?	• ¿Cambió la opinión pública sobre las protestas de la PSMC desde la propuesta del proyecto subterráneo? • ¿Influenció el cambio del proyecto a la mina subterránea a su relación con la PSMC? • ¿En qué medida influencian las protestas la política de UNIDAS PODEMOS?

4 – Posición política de UNIDAS PODEMOS ¿Existen algunas circunstancias con cuáles UNIDAS PODEMOS apoyaría el proyecto minero como unos cambios en el proyecto o un cambio en la opinión del pueblo de Cáceres? Es beneficioso para su política que hay las protestas contra el proyecto minero?	• Ayuntamiento de Cáceres • Junta de Extremadura	¿Tenéis encuestas de la opinión pública sobre el proyecto minero?	
5 – Elecciones 2023 ¿En qué medida influyen las protestas a las elecciones al fin de mayo?	• Campañas electorales • Votos • Junta • Interpelaciones de la PSMC a los partidos de Cáceres	¿Es el proyecto minero un tema importante en las batallas electorales (por UNIDAS PODEMOS) al nivel de las elecciones de la Extremadura?	
Question about relevant points not mentioned		¿Hay algo que le gustaría añadir como factor importante en relación con la influencia de la sociedad civil en el proyecto de extracción de litio de lo que aún no hayamos hablado?	
Ending question: <u>Probabilidad de realización de la mina</u> ¿Hasta qué punto depende la realización de la mina de las protestas contra ella?	• Deja de ser relevante el plan del urbanismo • Influencia de la Junta de Extremadura	¿Consideraría probable la realización del proyecto de mina subterránea?	

Leading question or narrative prompt	Memo	Concrete Question	Maintenance/Guidance Questions
<u>1: Start</u> Desde sus inicios hasta la actualidad: ¿Cómo evolucionaba el movimiento Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres (PSMC)?	• personas activas • Frecuencia de las protestas • Picos (peaks) de protestas • organización de protestas (experiencias)		¿Qué formas de apoyo recibíais al inicio de la Plataforma? ¿Cuántas personas están activas en la Plataforma Salvemos La Montaña de Cáceres en este momento? ¿Algunos de vosotros ya tenían experiencia en la organización de protestas?
<u>2: Desarrollo de estrategias de contención</u> ¿Qué estrategias de oposición utilizáis y han cambiado vuestras estrategias con el tiempo?	• Estrategias con gran nivel de participación, • cambios en las estrategias • reordenación de la oposición debido a cambios en el proyecto, de mina a cielo abierto a mina subterránea de litio + fábrica de baterías, alimentada por plantas solares locales)	¿Ha habido algún cambio importante en sus estrategias desde que inició la oposición al proyecto de extracción de litio? ¿Cómo ha conseguido la plataforma mantenerse tan activo por tanto tiempo?	• ¿Cómo evolucionaron sus estrategias de oposición? • ¿Hay algunos eventos o formas de protesta con un índice especialmente alto de participantes? • ¿Os habéis enfrentado a nuevos retos desde que se propuso el proyecto de la mina subterránea? en caso afirmativo, ¿cuáles?

<u>3: Alianzas</u> ¿Cúales intercambios habéis mantenido con otras SM, ONG o científicos y sobre qué temas?	• NGOs: ADEMAX, ACIMA, • SM Alliances: ContraMinAcción + Jadar Declaration	¿Fueron útiles esos intercambios/alianzas para vuestra oposición y, en caso afirmativo, por qué?	• ¿Recibió apoyo para desarrollar estrategias de contención? • ¿Se han puesto en contacto con vosotros ONG, otras movimientos sociales o científicos?
<u>4: Relación con la industria minera</u> ¿Habéis mantenido o mantenéis relaciones con las empresas mineras de litio que operan en Valdeflores y, en caso afirmativo, de qué tipo y en qué medida?	• Protestas contra Proyectos en Cáceres, fundados por el "Extremadura New Energies" (club de baloncesto y festival de cine) • Extremadura New Energies, Infinity Lithium, nuevo: Extremadura SE	¿Ha habido cambios a lo largo de los años en su relación con las empresas mineras, Extremadura New Energies, Infinity Lithium u otras empresas mineras de litio?	• - ¿Han intentado hablar con vosotros? ¿Ofrecieron hacer concesiones / compromisos? • - ¿Qué opinas de la transparencia del proyecto de extracción de litio en Valdeflores? Había cambios con eso?
<u>5: Relaciones con la esfera política</u> ¿Qué tipo de relación hay entre el PSMC y los políticos en general y es-tes que se ocupan del proyecto de extracción de litio en Valdeflores?	• - Cambios en la relación con Luis Salaya (alcalde de Cáceres) & la PSOE • - Políticos de la oposición a favor del PSMC • Junta de Extremadura	¿Cómo ha cambiado su relación con el ayuntamiento de la ciudad de Cáceres desde que se propuso el nuevo plan del proyecto? (no sólo Luis Salaya, sino todo el gobierno de la ciudad)	• ¿En qué medida reciben apoyo de los políticos del ayuntamiento? • ¿Ha cambiado el apoyo de los políticos locales a lo largo de vuestras protestas? • ¿Tenéis algún intercambio con la Junta de Extremadura?

6: medios ¿Cómo es su relación con los medios de comunicación y la prensa local ?	• Artículos en el salto diario de la Plataforma • Correcciones de comunicados de prensa a través de las redes sociales • Desaprobación vs. apoyo		• - ¿Estáis en contacto frecuente con (algunos) periódicos?
Question about relevant points not mentioned		¿Hay algo que le gustaría añadir como factor importante para su oposición , de lo que aún no hayamos hablado?	
Ending question: ¿Hasta qué punto cree que el proyecto tendrá éxito ?		Comparación entre el antiguo y el nuevo proyecto	
Notes	¿Añadirías o quitarías algo de esta lista de vuestras formas de movilización, recogidas en el Atlas de la EJF? - Acciones artísticas y creativas (por ejemplo, teatro de guerrilla, murales) - Investigación participativa basada en la comunidad (estudios de epidemiología popular, etc.) - Creación de informes/conocimientos alternativos - Desarrollo de una red/acción colectiva - Desarrollo de propuestas alternativas - Demandas, procesos judiciales, activismo judicial - Activismo mediático/medios de comunicación alternativos - Objeciones a la EIA - Cartas oficiales de reclamación y peticiones - Campañas públicas - Protestas/marchas callejeras		

Leading question or narrative prompt	Memo	Concrete Question	Maintenance/Guidance Questions
<u>1: Start:</u> Desde sus inicios hasta la actualidad: ¿Cómo evolucionaba el movimiento Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres (PSMC)?	• personas activas • Frecuencia de las protestas • Picos (peaks) de protestas • organización de protestas (experiencias)		1. ¿Qué formas de apoyo recibáis al inicio de la Plataforma? 2. ¿Algunos de vosotros ya tenían experiencia en la organización de protestas? (Übergang)
<u>2: Desarrollo de estrategias de contención</u> ¿Qué estrategias de oposición utilizáis y han cambiado vuestras estrategias con el tiempo?	• Estrategias con gran nivel de participación, • cambios en las estrategias • reordenación de la oposición debido a cambios en el proyecto, de mina a cielo abierto a mina subterránea de litio + fábrica de baterías, alimentada por plantas solares locales)	¿Ha habido algún cambio importante en sus estrategias desde que inició la oposición al proyecto de extracción de litio? ¿Cómo ha conseguido la plataforma mantenerse tan activo por tanto tiempo?	• ¿Cómo evolucionaron sus estrategias de oposición? • ¿Hay algunos eventos o formas de protesta con un índice especialmente alto de participantes? • ¿Os habéis enfrentado a nuevos retos desde que se propuso el proyecto de la mina subterránea? en caso afirmativo, ¿cuáles?
<u>3: Alianzas</u> ¿Cuáles intercambios habéis mantenido con otras SM, ONG o científicos y sobre qué temas?	• NGOs: ADEMAX, ACIMA, • SM Alliances: ContraMinAcción + Jadar Declaration	¿Fueron útiles esos intercambios/alianzas para vuestra oposición y, en caso afirmativo, por qué?	• ¿Recibió apoyo para desarrollar estrategias de contención? • ¿Se han puesto en contacto con vosotros ONG, otros movimientos sociales o científicos?

<u>4: Relación con la industria minera</u> ¿Habéis mantenido o mantenéis relaciones con las empresas mineras de litio que operan en Valdeflores y, en caso afirmativo, de qué tipo y en qué medida?	• Protestas contra Proyectos en Cáceres, fundados por el "Extremadura New Energies" (club de baloncesto y festival de cine) • Extremadura New Energies, Infinity Lithium, nuevo: Extremadura SE	• - ¿Han intentado hablar con vosotros? ¿Ofrecieron hacer concesiones / compromisos?	• - ¿Qué opinas de la transparencia del proyecto de extracción de litio en Valdeflores? Había cambios con eso?
<u>5: Relaciones con la esfera política</u> ¿Qué tipo de relación hay entre el PSMC y los políticos en general y estos que se ocupan del proyecto de extracción de litio en Valdeflores?	• - Cambios en la relación con Luis Salaya (alcalde de Cáceres) & la PSOE • - Políticos de la oposición a favor del PSMC • Junta de Extremadura	¿Cómo ha cambiado su relación con el ayuntamiento de la ciudad de Cáceres desde que se propuso el nuevo plan del proyecto? (no sólo Luis Salaya, sino todo el gobierno de la ciudad)	• ¿Ha cambiado el apoyo de los políticos locales a lo largo de vuestras protestas? • ¿Tenéis algún intercambio con la Junta de Extremadura?
<u>6: medios</u> ¿Cómo es su relación con los medios de comunicación y la prensa local?	• Artículos en el salto diario de la Plataforma • Correcciones de comunicados de prensa a través de las redes sociales • Desaprobación vs. apoyo		• - ¿Estáis en contacto frecuente con (algunos) periódicos?

Question about relevant points not mentioned		¿Hay algo que le gustaría añadir como factor importante para su oposición , de lo que aún no hayamos hablado?	
Ending question: ¿Hasta qué punto cree que el proyecto tendrá éxito ?		Comparación entre el antiguo y el nuevo proyecto	
Possible further questions ¿Añadirías o quitarías algo de esta lista de vuestras formas de movilización, recogidas en el Atlas de la EJF?	- Acciones artísticas y creativas (por ejemplo, teatro de guerrilla, murales) - Investigación participativa basada en la comunidad (estudios de epidemiología popular, etc.) - Creación de informes/conocimientos alternativos - Desarrollo de propuestas alternativas		- Demandas, procesos judiciales, activismo judicial - Activismo mediático/medios de comunicación alternativos - Objeciones a la EIA - Cartas oficiales de reclamación y peticiones - Campañas públicas - Protestas/marchas callejeras - Desarrollo de una red/acción colectiva

Leading question or narrative prompt	Memo	Concrete Question	Maintenance/Guidance Questions
1: “Quien sois”: ¿A qué se dedican las Ecologistas en Acción en Cáceres y cómo se organizan en la Plataforma Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres?	• Inició de l@s Ecologistas (año) • Cuantas personas • Activo en la PSMC - ¿Desde el principio? - Fundación del movimiento	¿Eran las Ecologistas en Acción parte de la Plataforma desde el principio y ayudáis con la fundación del movimiento?	1. ¿Desde cuándo existe un grupo de las Ecologistas en Acción en Cáceres? → ¿Cuántas personas sois? 2. ¿L@s Ecologistas en Acción se organizan como grupo en la plataforma o como individuos?
2: Movilización hasta la paralización temporal del proyecto En su / vuestra opinión ¿Cómo fue posible movilizar un movimiento tan grande contra el proyecto de la mina y mantenerlo hasta ahora?	• Tiempo antes la PSMC • Movilización Picos de participantes • Estructura de la organización • Cambios durante el tiempo (participation)	¿Cómo ha conseguido la plataforma mantenerse tan activo por tanto tiempo? ¿Hubo picos de participantes en las protestas? En comparación con otras protestas locales contra proyectos energéticos: ¿Actúa la Plataforma de forma diferente en algún aspecto?	• ¿Había ya mucha gente en Cáceres activa en grupos ecologistas antes de que se fundara la Plataforma? • ¿Ha participado mucha gente en las protestas que antes no se implican políticamente? • ¿Hay un tipo de protesta que acude la mayoría de la gente?

<u>3: Políticas</u> ¿Qué tipo de relación hay entre el PSMC y la política local de Cáceres? ¿Qué influencia tiene el PSMC en la política local?	• Cambios en la relación con Luis Salaya (alcalde de Cáceres) & con PSOE • Elecciones el 28 mayo • Los últimos elecciones 19 mayo	¿Ayuda la movilización de la PSMC no estar próximo a ningún partido político, porque así son accesible a más personas?	• ¿Cómo responde la política local a las protestas de la plataforma? • ¿Había o hay intercambio o unas cooperaciones?
<u>4: Extremadura New Energies & Co.</u> ¿Hay o había algún intercambio entre Extremadura New Energies, Castilla Mining o Infinity Lithium y las Ecologistas en Acción?	• Protestas contra Proyectos en Cáceres, fundados por el "Extremadura New Energies" (club de baloncesto y festival de cine)	¿Han intentado ponerse en contacto con usted o usted con ellos?	• ¿Habéis preguntado por informaciones sobre algunos proyectos relacionado a la extracción del litio en Valdeflores?
<u>5: La mina subterránea</u> ¿Es diferente la movilización contra la mina desde que Extremadura New Energies se ha propuesto construir una mina subterránea?	• Encuestas • Comerciales de ENE por el proyecto • Represión del ayuntamiento • Apoyo de la población	¿Ha cambiado la relación entre la política local y las protestas desde que Extremadura Nuevas Energías se ha propuesto construir una mina subterránea?	• ¿Cambió la influencia del PSMC en la opinión popular con la propuesta del nuevo proyecto de minería subterránea? • ¿Es más difícil de mantener la oposición contra el nuevo proyecto?

Question about relevant points not mentioned		¿Hay algo que les gustaría añadir como factor importante para el éxito de las protestas en Cáceres, de lo que aún no hayamos hablado?	
Ending question:¿Influye en el avance del proyecto de la mina que gane las elecciones el PSOE o el PP . En caso afirmativo, ¿en qué manera?		¿Qué va a pasar con el proyecto de la mina si el PSOE gana las elecciones?	

Guide for Interview with Top Candidate for Cáceres Viva [former spokesperson of PSMC]

Leading question or narrative prompt	Memo	Concrete Question	Maintenance/Guidance Questions
<u>1 -evolución de la PSMC</u> ¿Cómo ha evolucionado la PSMC en un movimiento tan grande y bien organizado ?	• personas activas • Frecuencia de las protestas • Picos (peaks) de protestas • organización de protestas (experiencias) • - cambios en las estrategias • - éxito en la movilización • - medios de comunicación	• ¿Qué estrategias de oposición, pero también de movilización, utiliza? ¿Han cambiado con el tiempo?	• - ¿Qué importancia concede al apoyo que recibió de otras organizaciones? • - ¿Cómo desarrollaron sus estrategias de oposición? • - ¿Cómo consiguió la PSMC estar tan activo durante tanto tiempo? • - ¿Tuvo picos de movilización?

2 - Influencia política ¿En qué medida influyeron las protestas contra el proyecto de extracción de litio en la política local de Cáceres?	• Opinión publica • Plan del Urbanismo • Relaciones de la PSMC a los partidos de Cáceres → cambios del intercambio • Elecciones 2019 + 2023 • - reordenación de la oposición (mina subterránea + fábrica de baterías, energizadas por plantas solares locales)	¿Cómo intercambió con los partidos políticos? ¿Se cambió la relación con la política local después de la propuesta del proyecto de minería subterránea?	• ¿En qué medida es/estaba la PSMC en contacto con los distintos partidos de Cáceres y el ayuntamiento? • ¿En qué medida influye la oposición contra el proyecto minero en las elecciones de 2019 y en las de mayo? • ¿Se enfrentaron a nuevos retos para mantener su oposición cuando se propuso la mina subterránea?
3 - Más allá de la política local ¿En qué medida ha estado el PSMC en contacto con la Junta de Extremadura ¿En qué medida ha estado la Plataforma en contacto con el Gobierno de España y la Unión Europea?	• EU • Junta • Spain	• - ¿Cómo consiguió que la UE y la UNESCO estudiaran el proyecto minero?	• - ¿Hasta qué punto influyeron las protestas en la política regional de Extremadura? • - ¿Intercambió la PSMC con el gobierno de España o la UE?

4 - Empresas mineras de litio En caso de que exista algún intercambio: ¿Qué tipo de relación mantienen con las empresas mineras de Litio, que planean extraer en Valdelflores?	• distintas empresas	• - ¿Intentaron acercarse a la Plataforma o ustedes a ellos?	• - ¿Les ofrecieron hacer concesiones?
5 - posibilidades de futuro ¿Qué posibilidades ve usted de que la Plataforma influya en el proyecto del litio en el futuro?	• - Opinión pública • - Política local • - Regional • - Nacional • - Nivel de la UE	• ¿Ve alguna opción para que el PSMC pueda aumentar su influencia en el proyecto?	• ¿Cómo puede afrontar la PSMC la influencia que Extremadura New Energies está ejerciendo en la opinión pública?
Question about relevant points not mentioned		¿Hay algo que le gustaría añadir como factor importante en relación con la influencia de la sociedad civil en el proyecto de extracción de litio de lo que aún no hayamos hablado?	

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