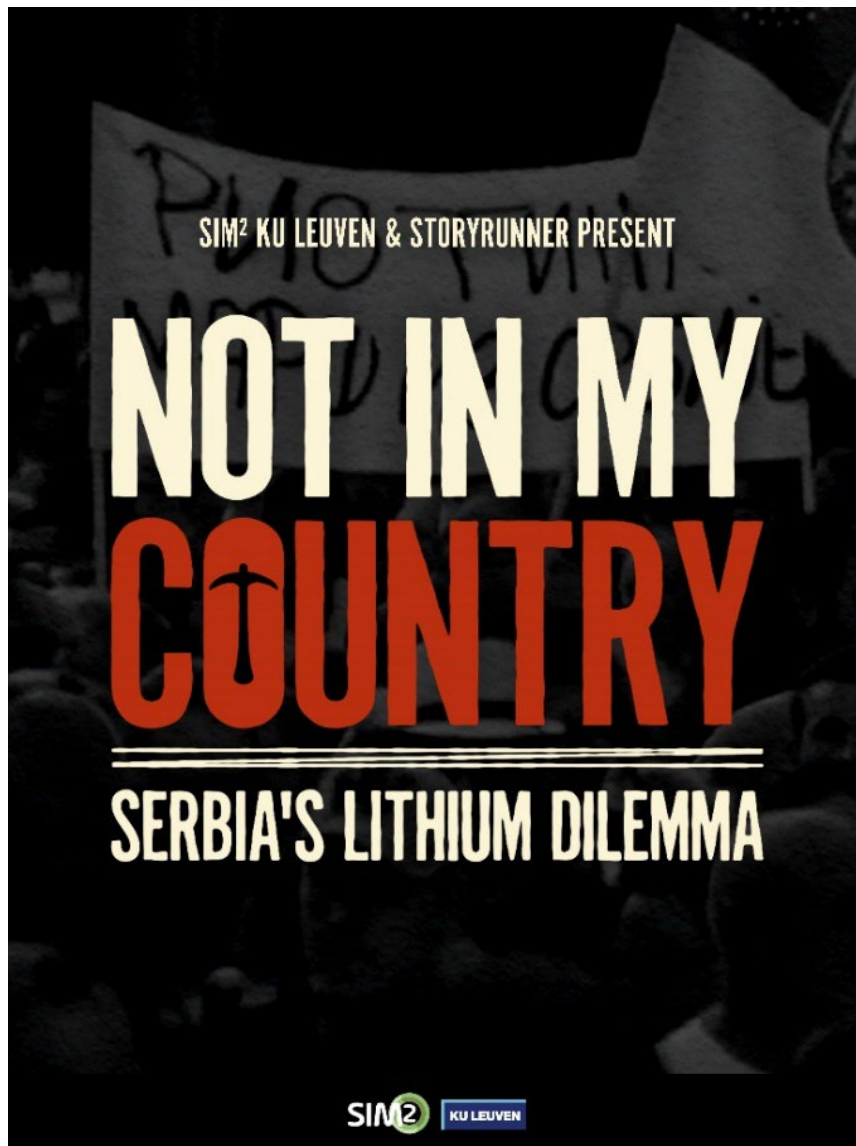


Not In My Country, Serbia's Lithium Dilemma:

New documentary on Europe's most controversial lithium mining project



On 5 February 2025 the avant-première of the new documentary film “*Not in My Country*” will take place in the European Parliament in an exclusive event (on invitation only). This eye-opening film delves into the heart of the massive protests in Serbia over the proposed opening of Europe’s largest lithium mine in the Jadar Valley. The documentary explores the tension between environmental preservation and the drive for a climate-neutral future powered by lithium-ion batteries for clean mobility and energy (storage). It also examines the geopolitical complexities surrounding Serbia’s aspirations for EU membership and allegations of political interference. After the showing of the film, the event will feature an interview with the film’s presenter and a high-level debate with proponents and opponents of the project.

The film

In December 2004, exploration geologists of the Anglo-Australian mining giant Rio Tinto made a remarkable discovery in the fertile Jadar Valley of Western Serbia: a unique lithium-boron-silicate mineral, which was later officially named “jadarite”.¹ Dubbed “Serbian kryptonite,” this potent mineral was hailed as a source of immense wealth for the Serbian people, promising to propel the Republic into a cleantech-based, future-proof, climate-neutral economy.

Fast forward to 2020: Rio Tinto’s land acquisition program began to divide the Jadar Valley villagers, sparking the birth of a local agricultural opposition movement. This quickly evolved into a diverse and determined national movement: *Not In My Country!* By 2022, mass demonstrations had grown so powerful that they forced the Serbian government to withdraw Rio Tinto’s permits, only for the decision to be reversed two years later by Serbia’s Constitutional Court. This abrupt U-turn led to a new wave of protests in Belgrade in July 2024, splitting the nation into two camps: those in favour and those against.

In *Not in My Country*, the film’s presenter seeks to understand how seemingly unlikely allies such as Serbian nationalists; local farmers; urban environmentalists; scientists; and pro-EU, pro-democracy Serbs can unite against the Jadar project. The presenter engages with a multitude of voices from the Jadar Valley, Belgrade, and Brussels, exploring pressing questions:

- ✓ Can Rio Tinto be trusted to uphold the strictest ESG standards?
- ✓ Is Serbia merely an EU mining colony, sacrificing its environment so wealthy Europeans can drive oversized electric vehicles?
- ✓ Is the Jadar project an entry ticket to the European Union?
- ✓ Shouldn’t the EU open its own lithium mines before asking Serbia to open its Jadar mine?

The Film Producers

The documentary is co-developed and fully financed by SIM², the KU Leuven Institute for Sustainable Metals and Minerals. Recognising their pivotal role in achieving a climate-neutral society, SIM² is dedicated to advancing the sustainable production and recycling of critical metals and minerals through research, education, and wider-society learning, including the development of science communication documentaries.

Dr. Peter Tom Jones states: *“When we embarked on producing this film, our goal was to create a ‘science communication’ documentary, aligned with the mission of our KU Leuven Institute. However, we quickly realized that the Jadar project is so heavily politicized that it is challenging to separate a fact-based discussion on the intrinsic techno-environmental merits and pitfalls of this mining & refining project from the complex nature of Serbian politics. We discovered firsthand that this story is one of intimidation from all sides, filled with confusion, distrust, and deep-seated historical emotions and suspicions towards external players who come into Serbia and seem to want to dictate terms. With the recent disaster in Novi Sad and the on-going massive student-led protests against the regime, all of this has become even more explosive. Is it a matter of the right mine at the wrong time and wrong place? Is it a question of not throwing the baby out with the bathwater?”*

¹ Rio Tinto enlisted the help of Dr Chris Stanley, a mineralogist at London’s Natural History Museum, to unravel the unique mineral’s chemical make-up. The atomic structure was later determined with the help of Canada’s National Research Council (Dr Pamela Whitfield & Dr Yvon Le Page). See BBC, “‘Kryptonite’ discovered in mine”, 24 April 2007; Jadarite classification: <https://www.mindat.org/min-31570.html>

The Panel Debate

After the film has been aired in the Parliament, David Rose will moderate a unique panel discussion about the film, bringing together the two hosting Members of the European Parliament (MEP Hildegard Bentele & MEP Yvan Verougstraete), Transport & Environment's Julia Poliscanova, as well as direct proponents and opponents from Serbia. The aim of this panel debate is to investigate how we can bridge on the one hand the tensions between environmental preservation and people's right to object to mining activities in their country, with on the other hand the pressing need to source metals such as lithium, which are essential enablers of the ongoing transition towards climate neutrality.

Join us for the avant-première screening by Dr Peter Tom Jones of



“NOT IN MY COUNTRY : SERBIA’S LITHIUM DILEMMA”

 **5/02/2025** | **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT** | **ASP JAN 4Q1**
3PM-5PM

Discover the story behind Serbia's Jadar lithium project in this groundbreaking documentary. The screening will be followed by :

- 🎙️ An interview with the presenter
- 💬 Panel discussion with various stakeholders, moderated by **David Rose** (50 minutes). Speakers : **Yvan Verougstraete** (MEP, Les Engagés / RENEW), **Hildegard Bentele** (MEP, CDU / EPP), **Marijanti Babic** (Rio Sava), **Marko Cadez** (Serbian Chamber of Commerce), **Aleksandar Matkovic** (Belgrade University), **Aleksandar Jovanovic** (Member National Assembly Republic of Serbia, invited/tbc), **Julia Poliscanova** (Transport & Environment)

HOSTS



YVAN VEROUGSTRAETE



HILDEGARD BENTELE

IN COLLABORATION WITH **KU LEUVEN INSTITUTE**
FOR SUSTAINABLE METALS AND MINERALS



INVITATION ONLY



NOT IN MY COUNTRY

Additional information

Trailer

The trailer for *Not In My Country* is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qmbxy71FHtg> The film will not be made public before all avant-première events have been completed. Journalists can ask for a protected link to the film for reviewing purposes only. Alternatively, journalists can obtain images or footages. Contact Journeyman Pictures directly or Peter Tom Jones through his LinkedIn profile.

SIM² KU Leuven

This documentary was co-developed and fully financed by SIM², the KU Leuven Institute for Sustainable Metals and Minerals. This interdisciplinary institute spans fields such as geology, chemistry, metallurgy, engineering, law, and economics. As one of the leading academic institutes in Europe, SIM² is dedicated to advancing the sustainable production and recycling of critical metals through research, education, and wider-society learning. The latter includes the creation of science communication documentaries. Notable examples are the award-winning *Made In Europe: From Mine to Electric Vehicle* (2023), *The Sami Perspective* (2024), and *Europe's Mining Renaissance: A Catalyst for Climate Neutrality* (2024). Recently, SIM² was formally endorsed and commended by the International Panel that evaluated all official KU Leuven Institutes, including SIM² ('Strong Pass' received), for its wider-society learning strategy.

For the *Not In My Country* documentary, SIM² leverages its internationally recognised expertise in lithium exploration, extraction, processing, refining, and recycling. SIM² has been and continues to be involved in numerous fundamental science, strategic basic science, and applied research projects at KU Leuven, as well as Flemish-funded, EU-funded, and bilateral projects. SIM² has a track record in all possible primary and secondary lithium sources, including lithium hard-rock ores, (salt lake and geothermal) lithium brines, lithium-clay deposits, and end-of-life lithium-ion batteries and derived black mass.

The film's presenter, Dr. Peter Tom Jones, has been the (co-)author of 7 books on the climate & environmental crises, the effects of neoliberal globalisation, and the transition to climate neutrality (*Ya Basta!*, *Het Klimaatboek*, *Klimaatcrisis*, *Terra Incognita*, *Terra Reversa...*). He completed his Masters Degree in Environmental/Chemical Engineering in 1996. In 2001 he obtained his PhD in metallurgy (stainless steelmaking). From 2001 to 2008 he worked as a postdoctoral researcher. In 2008 he obtained an Industrial Research Fund position at KU Leuven as Research & Innovation Manager in the field of Sustainable Metallurgy. Since 2020 he is the director of SIM² (as official KU Leuven Institute). Jones has been involved in around 40 European projects in the field of critical metals and sustainable metallurgical processing, with a strong focus on the primary and secondary production of lithium, cobalt/nickel and rare earths. Understanding the role of critical metals in the transition to climate neutrality has been his core interest.

Disclaimer: SIM² has no financial interest in publishing its documentaries. It does not and it will not receive royalties or commercial income from the airing of these films on tv stations, streaming platforms, or social media channels. The production of these films is solely part of SIM²'s commitment to "wider-society learning, as acknowledged by the International Panel evaluating SIM²'s first 4 years as official KU Leuven Institute.

For more information, visit <https://kuleuven.sim2.be/>

Journeyman Pictures

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