

Follow up - avant-première of the new documentary film “Not in My Country, Serbia's Lithium Dilemma” in the European Parliament



On 5 February 2025, more than 150 invited guests, including a significant group of Serbian citizens and scientists, attended the avant-première of the new documentary film “*Not in My Country*”, followed by an interview with the film’s presenter and a high-level debate with both proponents and opponents of the project.

SIM² KU Leuven would like to thank MEP Hildegard Bentele and MEP Yan Verougstraete for hosting the event at the European Parliament, and all our speakers and audience for their contributions. SIM² KU Leuven is pleased to have been able to co-facilitate a respectful dialogue between all parties in this iconic house of democracy, the European Parliament.

The film’s presenter Dr. Peter Tom Jones said: “*There's no dispute that combating climate change means we need metals such as lithium, which is essential for e-mobility and energy storage for renewables such as solar and wind. What's at question is which path do we take? Do we mine it ourselves, with the world's highest ESG standards, or import it from other parts of the world where standards are harder to monitor?*”

The Jadar project in Serbia is a high-quality and very large lithium deposit, and offers the chance to not only help with EU lithium needs but also, importantly, to set up a full made-in-Serbia value chain, from the mine to the refinery, LFP battery production and EV assembly. However, we have to accept that the Jadar project is heavily politicized, so it is challenging to separate a fact-based discussion on the intrinsic techno-environmental-social merits and pitfalls of this mining and

refining project from the complex nature of Serbian politics and an underlying distrust between the different sides.

As was highlighted by a range of speakers in yesterday's debate, fairly moderated by David Rose, the decision on Jadar is quite clearly Serbia's to take. If there is a way forward, it will be via a continued, respectful and above all fact-based dialogue which includes a fair representation of both proponents and opponents, and fully includes the people of the Jadar Valley.

Several speakers, including the film's presenter and T&E's Julia Poliscanova suggested that an independent, external body such as the "Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance" (IRMA) can play a central role in ensuring that people's genuine concerns about environment damage are fully and transparently addressed, mitigated and monitored. But, as Julia Poliscanova pointed out: *"Such an approach will require a lot of time. There is no other way forward."*

Film distribution

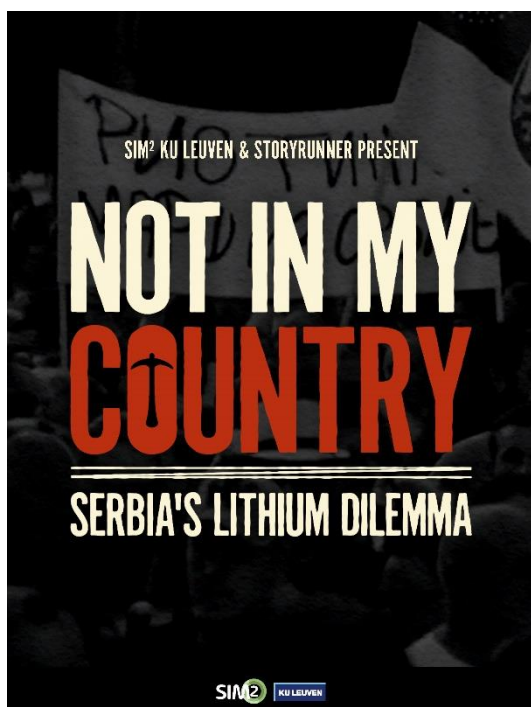
The film is distributed by Journeyman Pictures. Journeyman is one of the leading independent suppliers of award winning stories to the global theatrical, broadcast, digital and educational markets. The film will become available soon on Amazon, Apple TV+, YouTube (paid version), and several educational platforms for universities. A version with Serbian subtitles will become available as well.

Not in my Country is available to buy (by tv stations et al) on the Journeyman platform: <https://www.journeyman.tv/film/8771/not-in-my-country>. Also fragments can be acquired for news reports etc. For more information, visit <https://www.journeyman.tv/about/about-us>

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Additional information

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?

Trailer

The trailer for *Not In My Country* is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qmbxy71FHtg>

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.

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>

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.

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