

# The right to say no. Why do women in Ecuador and Portugal oppose mining projects?

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## Project's Overview and Research Objectives

Recent approaches to women and climate change have evolved from describing women solely as victims of environmental degradation to emphasizing their role as sustainable managers of natural resources. Nonetheless, such approaches tend to conceal women's participation in Ecological Distribution Conflicts (EDCs). Scholar approaches to women's involvement in EDCs tend to: a) focus on self-representations of their actions and in the more visible aspects of their activism; b) omit the influence of everyday life experiences on women's motivations to act.

This research project looks specifically at women's motivations to oppose mining projects in new extractive frontiers in Southern Europe (Portugal) and South America (Ecuador). It asks the following guiding question: 'why do women oppose mining projects?' by following two operative questions:

- How does women's activism appear in their life-trajectories?
- How do women's material conditions and everyday practices relate to their activism?

### Objectives

The first question asks how different women, with different biographic paths, find themselves in the role of activists.

The objective is to map women's life-trajectories and how they connect to their activism.

The second question asks about the materiality of everyday life practices. What kind of activities do these women perform in the household, in their community, and in other realms of their quotidian?

The objective is to map the everyday practices of women that oppose mining.

## Theoretical Framework

This research projects draws upon three main theoretical fields:

- Materialist ecofeminism explains the gender-environment link as based on the sexual division of labour.
- Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) considers environmental politics as a gendered process. Women's motivations, processes and results of their mobilization reflect historical, social and geographical specificity.
- Postcolonial feminisms state that it is difference and particularities at the micro-level, including women's everyday practices of resistance, that allow the theorization of universal concerns.

## Research Methods and Techniques

Ethnographic research guided by Grounded Theory methods so as to achieve a more focused analysis. Data processing and analysis takes place simultaneously with data collection.

### Data Collection Techniques

Participant observation of women's daily routines.

In-depth interviews about women's life trajectories.

## Communications and Publications

Venes, Francisco; Barca, Stefania (2021), "The curse of white gold?", *Undisciplined Environments*, 14 May. Accessed on 08.06.2021, at <https://undisciplinedenvironments.org/2021/05/14/the-curse-of-white-gold-debating-lithium-mining-in-portugal/>

Venes, Francisco (2020), "Women and climate change. Going beyond vulnerability, adaptation and inclusion", Conference Paper, *International Seminar on Environment and Society "Current challenges and pathways to change"*, Portuguese Sociological Association and Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, 2-3 March 2020, Lisbon, Portugal.

## Case Studies

*Covas do Barroso, Boticas municipality, Portugal*

Opposition movement against lithium ore mining started in 2017. Local women are active participants.

Ongoing fieldwork in Covas do Barroso started in September 2020. Six life-story trajectories have been collected and I have participated in several moments of daily routine with research participants.



Aida semeia erva para alimentar as vacas (setembro de 2020)



Maria e Engrácia fritam rojões após a matança do porco (novembro de 2020)



Aida planta um sobreiro num ato simbólico organizado pela comunidade (novembro de 2020)



Mulheres de Romainho penduram alheiras na cozinha do fumeiro (dezembro de 2020)



Maria e Engrácia lavam as tripas para os enchidos (dezembro de 2020)

*Río Blanco and Molleturo, Cuenca municipality, Ecuador*

Opposition to gold mining started in the 1990s. Women from Río Blanco have created an organization -Sinchi Warmi (Strong Women) - to oppose the project.

Fieldwork in Río Blanco and Molleturo will start in November 2021.