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# Multiple Players, Different Tactics, a Shared Goal: Building Bridges and Political Agency While Fighting Against Oil and Gas Drilling

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Several individuals, groups, and organizations have been fighting against oil and natural gas drilling in Portuguese territory. The mobilizations intensified in 2015 in Algarve, and since then 13 concession agreements for oil and gas exploitation, extraction, and production have been canceled. Two concessions for gas drilling remain in Leiria, and this is where the movement is presently more active. Inspired by literature on the role of players and tactics in social movements, as well as on the meanings of agency, we examined how individuals, groups, and organizations contested and demanded the cancellation of the existing concession agreements. We conducted 12 in-depth interviews with highly engaged activists. Based on a thematic analysis, we identified six major themes, named as: “multiple players, a shared goal”; “building bridges with multiple players and tactics”; “links to institutional power”; “the route to the court”; “paths to popular mobilization”; and “movement building and power to act.” Overall, we identified three broad sets of tactics used by the movement, which shows the diversity of players involved in the struggles against oil and gas in Portugal. The first tactic relates to the social movement organizations’ efforts to connect with institutional power, either by seeking to pressure local political leaders or by using public consultations, petitions, and other means for expressing their voices. The second tactic refers to the movement’s engagement with legal procedures, and the third relates to the movement’s efforts to promote popular mobilization. In terms of actions, the movement engaged in protests and public demonstrations, public consultations, public campaigns with celebrities, leaflet distributions, political pressuring of leaders, awareness campaigns in schools and streets, legal actions, among other approaches. All participants described the movement as successful in achieving its shared goal “to cancel oil and gas concessions” and attributed such a success to the movement’s ability to combine different strategies and tactics. The movement is also perceived as a setting for building political agency. We discuss the role of the movement in building bridges between multiple players/tactics and in constructing political agency, by focusing on the implications for collective action in environmental and climate issues.

**Keywords:** environmental movement, oil, natural gas, players, tactics, agency, Portugal

## INTRODUCTION

During the past few years, the environmental and climate movement in Portugal has experienced significant changes. With the emergence and intensification of protests against lithium extraction mega projects, the plans for constructing a second airport in Lisbon, the dredging works in the river Sado, and the struggles against oil and gas drilling, just to name a few, the environmental movement seems to be occupying “new spatial and symbolic spaces” (Temper et al., 2015, p. 256). Such spaces are examples of environmental conflicts, as they involve mobilizations by local communities and social movements, against particular economic activities, infrastructure construction, or waste disposal/pollutions (Temper et al., 2015; Scheidel et al., 2018).

Considering the energy sector, a detailed mapping of the environmental conflicts in Portugal during the past four decades identified 20 environmental conflicts, most of them just in the last few years (Fernandes and Fernandes, 2019). In particular, the movement against oil and gas extraction in Portuguese territory (MAOG) assumed significant visibility, media coverage, and intensity (EjAtlas, 2016; Caitana et al., 2019).

Oil companies's interest in Portugal dates back to 1938, when the first oil concession was attributed (Gomes and Batista, 2018). Over the years, several other contracts were signed between the Portuguese government and diverse oil companies and consortiums (e.g., ENI, GALP, Partex, Australis, Repsol), but there has been no significant extraction of oil and gas in the country. The oil and gas industries in Portugal are essentially dominated by large companies who primarily import oil and gas products from other countries. Since 2007, with the execution of 175 offshore drillings, of which 117 gave supporting evidence for the presence of oil and gas, oil companies' interest grew significantly (Gomes and Batista, 2018). A few years ago, when the 15 concessions for onshore and offshore oil and gas extraction became publicly know, citizens started protesting against the concessions affecting the Algarve region (Matos, 2017; Caitana et al., 2019). The movement has been reaching its goals, as 13 of the 15 existing concessions were canceled. Currently, the struggle is focused on the two remaining gas concessions affecting the region of Leiria.

Conflicts over natural resource extraction, such as crude oil and natural gas, are spaces typically occupied by the environmental movement (EjAtlas, 2020), with the majority of environmental conflicts located in the resource extraction phase (Martinez-Alier et al., 2016). Often the actors that most regularly mobilize against such projects are local groups, and worldwide there has been an increase in localized forms of environmental activism (e.g., Savage et al., 2009; Martinez-Alier et al., 2016; Willow, 2014). With the growing use of fracking, a drilling technique associated with several environmental risks and impacts, including soil, air and water pollution, as well as higher seismic activity (e.g., Meng, 2017), many different countries and localities began to stand up against both oil and gas drilling and the practice of hydraulic fracturing (Steger and Milicevic, 2014). Yet, localized environmental movements often converge different types of collective identities (Mihaylov,

2019), and people engaged in environmental conflicts may not even identify themselves as environmentalists (Willow, 2014). Considering that a social movement is a broad network of individuals and organizations engaged in collective action and seeking to mobilize regular citizens for sustained action (Rootes, 1999, 2007; Amenta et al., 2010), it is then crucial to understand how such networks emerge, develop and remain stable over time. Previous studies have shown that these networks may be more or less formal, structured, or continuous (Diani, 1992; Saunders, 2007; Van Dyke and Amos, 2017). Nevertheless, we know very little about how local and protester actors interact with other social and political players within the space of the social movement (Jasper and Duyvendak, 2015). Such a research gap can be explained by the lack of interlink between studies on public participation, social movements, and institutional political participation (e.g., Baumgarten and Amelung, 2017).

Moreover, local groups fighting against oil and gas extraction are often highly connected with national and international branches of the environmental/climate movement, aggregating not only grassroots movements, but also Non-Governmental Organizations (hereafter NGOs) (De Moor, 2018) and even other political players such as local branches of governmental players (Verhoeven and Duyvendak, 2017). An interpretative and interactionist approach has been proposed to understand the complex interaction between different players and their arenas (Jasper, 2004, 2015; Jabola-Carolus et al., 2018). Players can be individuals (simple players) or groups of individuals, ranging from informal groups to formal organizations (compound players), who engage “in strategic action with some goal in mind” (Jasper, 2015, p. 10). Each player may have different goals, meanings and feelings (Jasper, 2004, 2015). Arenas, instead, are the settings where the decisions are made (Jasper, 2015, p. 18), which can be less formal or informal (e.g., law courts, media, public opinion, political parties, corporations). Recognizing the difference between players and arenas allows us to acknowledge the role of structure in players' actions without reducing them to institutional structures (Jabola-Carolus et al., 2018). Therefore, a player-arena approach acknowledges that groups and individuals participating in social movements have agency and can make their own choices (Jasper, 2004). The decision to be part of an alliance, for example, can be considered as a strategic choice, leading organizations to act in multiple arenas (Jasper, 2004; Jabola-Carolus et al., 2018), and in cooperation with “powerful allies” (e.g., politicians, celebrities, corporations). In turn, alliances with powerful players often contribute to moderate or discourage radical demands and tactics (Jasper, 2004; Jabola-Carolus et al., 2018). In addition, particularly in the climate and environmental movement, it is quite common to have alliances between grassroots groups (local and informal organizations) and NGOs (formally organized under non-profit charters), although these players trend to distrust each other (De Moor, 2018). Simultaneously, the existence of top-down platforms of compound players may also restrain the participation of individual and ordinary players (Cox, 2019).

Overall, previous studies suggest that the type of actors involved in a specific social movement may influence the type of

strategies and tactics used to achieve the movement's own goals (Jasper, 2004; Jabola-Carolus et al., 2018). Nevertheless, there is a lack of studies focusing on the relationship between the players and the strategies and the tactics used by the movement (Jasper, 2004; Smithey, 2009). By strategies we mean the intentional decisions taken by the movement, with the hope of achieving its goals and demands (Smithey, 2009). Thus, strategies are related to the method and set of tactics used to achieve a specific demand or goal (e.g., to end oil extraction). Tactics, in turn, involve the "collective actions publicly deployed, whether in-person or via audio, visual, or written media, in service of a sustained campaign of claims making" (Larson, 2013, p. 866). Examples of common tactics are boycotts, strikes, riots, sit-ins, occupations, marches, and demonstrations. The decision about which tactics are the best to achieve the movement's goals is also related to the paths considered most successful by the movement itself, i.e., its "theory of change" (Hestres, 2015; Hestres and Hopke, 2019). Some may agree that the path to reach their goals is through elite persuasion, whereas others may believe that what is necessary is grassroots mobilization and/or movement building (Hestres and Hopke, 2019). In this regard, it seems that if we want to understand the reasons why certain tactics are being used and others are not, we would have to consider how the movement's players perceive agency and influence. Scholars have shown that the decision to be involved in activism is influenced by whether people feel they can make a difference (van Stekenburg et al., 2016). Thus, perceived political agency can be a powerful impetus to action or inaction, depending on how people perceive their ability to influence change and which forms are perceived as most influential (Kenis and Mathijs, 2012). Complementarily, Campbell (2009) proposes to look at agency in two ways: as the power that individuals possess that enables them to engage in action; and as the power individuals have to act as agents independently of structural constraints. Therefore, the power to act collectively or to choose a path of inaction (Brennan and Israel, 2008; Mikulewicz, 2018), is related with ideational elements of power (Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016), and the decision of which tactics are more effective may also be related to activists' views and meanings of political agency.

An increasing number of scholars have been arguing for the need to look at the role of political agency and collective forms of climate and environmental engagement (Arora-Jonsson, 2011; O'Brien, 2015; Carvalho et al., 2017; Walshe and Stancioff, 2018). Conversely, despite scholars' increased interest in the impacts and political influence of social movements (Amenta et al., 2010), the meanings of political agency and the relationship between political agency and the movement's strategies and tactics have been largely overlooked. Hence, understanding environmental activism requires that we consider not only the relationship between different type of players (Van Dyke and Amos, 2017), but also their perceptions of agency and influence (Jasper, 2004, 2015). The emergence, development and success of the MAOG, led us to question the movement's dynamics, tactics, and meanings of agency and influence. Specifically, we asked: Who were the players involved and how did they interact? Which main arenas were occupied? What were the main tactics implemented by the players? What meanings of agency and influence do

participants have? We sought to answer those questions based on the voices and perspectives of 12 activists who are/were highly involved in MAOG. Despite a few descriptive studies focusing on the movement against oil and gas drilling in Portugal (Matos, 2017; Caitana et al., 2019), to our knowledge there are no studies based on the voices of the movement's players. By examining the activists' views, experiences and meanings, we expect to contribute to the understanding of how the movement organized, mobilized and evolved, as well as which meanings of agency and influence were the most salient in the activists' discourses.

## METHODS

We conducted 12 in-depth, semi-structured interviews between January and May 2019. This technique was selected to "bring human agency to the center of the movement analysis" (Blee, 2013, p. 96), and to understand the movement's strategies and tactics from the players' perspective. The age of the participants was between 28 and 72 years old. The sample was composed of seven men and five women. All but two had a university degree. At the time of the study, 10 participants were living in Lisbon and two in Algarve. Of these, eight were born and/or have lived for many years in the localities affected by the concessions. Snowball sampling was used as the sampling method. The first participant was actively engaged in national and local groups and it was a personal contact of the first author. The first author was briefly engaged with the movement between 2015 and 2016. Since then, she has been following the movement and occasionally participating in some of its activities. The second author did not have any previous connection with the movement and was the one who conducted all the interviews. We explicitly asked participants to recruit other participants who were actively involved in the movement against oil and gas in Portugal, both in Algarve and/or Leiria. Participants were members of different groups and organizations (see **Table S1**), with different goals and place of action (local, national). Most participants were actively involved in more than one group. Some groups can be best described as a platform of individuals and organizations. The list of groups details the most significant and active groups involved in the fights against oil and natural gas in Portugal, but it is not representative of all the groups and organizations involved in the movement. The names (participants and groups) used in this article are fictitious in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Additionally, all personal details (e.g., age and profession) were intentionally omitted. The average interview duration was 87 min. The interviews were conducted in public locations, participants' private homes, or at a university campus. All interviews were audio taped and the participants gave their verbal consent. A script composed of a set of questions was developed to guide the conversation between the participants and the interviewer, but all interviews were quite flexible. Interview topics included questions related to (1) personal engagement and group participation within the movement; (2) emergence and development of the movement/group; (3) the movement's modes of organization; (4) forms of action and communication between the different organizations involved; (5) views on the



environmental problems. We transcribed all interviews and conducted a thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Clarke and Braun (2013). We coded each transcript using the NVivo software package and the initial codes were then examined and merged into broader themes outlined below. This software was used as a tool to support the organization and management of the data, as the analysis was entirely conducted by the researchers. The process of data analysis began with open coding and was then followed by selective coding guided by our research questions. Interview excerpts were translated from Portuguese into English after data analysis. We started by translating the text literally, word-by-word. Then, small adaptations, in terms of grammatical and syntactical structures, were made to improve readability.

## FINDINGS

The analysis presented in this paper focuses on six interlinked themes that emerged from the data. In the first theme, “multiple players, a shared goal,” we describe the emergence and development of the movement, and the type of players involved. In the second theme, “building bridges with multiple players and tactics,” we examined how different players and tactics converged in the movement. In the third theme, we focused on the “links to institutional power” to explore the movement’s relationship with powerful actors, and institutional processes of public participation. Then, in the fourth theme, “the route to the court,” we examined the movement’s engagement with legal action. In the fifth theme, we move onto the “paths to popular mobilization,” to explore the mobilizing tactics used by the movement. Finally, in the sixth theme, “movement building and power to act,” we examined participants’ meanings of influence and agency.

### Multiple Players, a Shared Goal

According to our participants, it seems that people started becoming aware of the existence of concession agreements for the exploitation of oil and gas during events that “date back to around 2011, 2012” (Madalena). Mobilizations then began in the southern region of the country, namely in Algarve. These coincided with the date when two new concessions were attributed to oil companies by the Portuguese government, a fact which received some local media coverage (Jornal Algarve, 2012). Based on the participants’ accounts, civic actions at that time included the dissemination of a letter written by a local politician with several arguments against oil exploitation in Algarve; a few press releases by NGOs arguing against such concessions; and the creation of a grassroots group that would fight to keep the region free of oil. These and other chronological events related to the initial stages of the movement have been described elsewhere (Caitana et al., 2019). However, according to the participants in our study, organized, continuous, and coordinated action started in 2015, namely with the creation of a “platform” against oil and gas drilling in Algarve. This platform included individuals, several national, and local environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), local grassroots community-based initiatives (e.g., Transition

Initiative), and national grassroots groups. While some of these groups were created with the main purpose of fighting against oil and gas drilling in particular regions of the country, others were well-established groups and NGOs working on different environmental issues (e.g., marine life; birds, and biodiversity loss; climate change). Pedro, one of the interviewees, who has been actively involved in several local and national groups during the last decade, explained:

Not all groups focus exclusively on the issue of fossil fuels, you have to keep that in mind. If a group, for example, like Group-Q, they are involved in a very varied range of issues. Group-U was formed, ok, mostly with that goal, ok, it’s the “Algarve free from oil” and that was the issue. For example, now Group-Y has been very involved in this issue, but it looks at the problem in a much wider way (Pedro).

Pedro’s perspective was shared by other participants (e.g., Rute, Paulo), and supports previous arguments that social movements are rarely cohesive players (Saunders, 2008; Jasper, 2019). Participants’ discourses also suggest that, as in other contexts (e.g., Van Dyke and Amos, 2017; Grosse, 2019), social ties and previous networks of activists (mostly informal), had a key role in building the movement. As explained by Alice, one of the founders of Group-U:

Because Group-U was created from a range of, precisely, of regional associations that were already used to collaborating (...) and there was nothing at the time [2015], but ok, we had [gatherings], we would meet now and then to handle this and other things, right? We ended up realizing, and began to see, that we didn’t have [access to] the contracts, we had nothing. But deep down there was a purpose, we thought of making a platform, that initially involved, actually, these [regional] associations or movements (Alice).

Over time, other groups and organizations joined the platform, including large national NGOs, grassroots groups, initiatives, and movements. Simultaneously, the creation of new groups was always encouraged “small groups of people for brainstorming, for dissemination in the [affected] places” (Paulo). These “points of local resistance” were in “places affected by the concessions for oil and gas drilling” (Rute). From a wider perspective, the movement can be described as having two major focuses and episodes of mobilization. First, the movement focused on the imminent drilling affecting the country’s south (namely in Algarve). With the cancellation of the concessions in Algarve territory, the mobilizations in Leiria intensified. The link between these two places can be described as dynamic and continuous. According to most participants, some of the groups and campaigns which were created to oppose the concessions in Algarve disappeared when these concessions were canceled (in 2018). Some argued that this was the time to rest: “we are worn out, and tired, and fed up, and now we want to be at rest (...) resting, so that if 1 day there is an alarm, we go” (Madalena). For others, “this struggle is not over” (Pedro), and they are focusing their actions toward the cancellation of the two remaining concessions in Leiria.

In total, at least five activists who were engaged in the fight against the Algarve concessions are also involved in the mobilizations in Leiria, either by participating or organizing protests, organizing information sessions and participating in meetings with politicians and other powerful actors. Five participants, namely from NGOs, are less engaged with the current mobilizations in Leiria, but were very active in campaigning against the concessions in Algarve. The two participants who were residing in Algarve were not involved in the mobilizations in Leiria. Additionally, one participant had joined the movement only a few months ago, and therefore had not been engaged in the mobilizations in Algarve. The link between both places of mobilization was perceived as an advantage. First, because it allowed participants to learn from previous actions and tactics, and second because public acceptance of the movement is now greater, according to the participants “(...) but we, we were able to get this great visibility, as the local and the media, or even from the politicians because Algarve prepared it for us, the Algarve suffered much more than us” (Ivone). Regardless of their current engagement, all participants supported the goal “to cancel all the oil and gas concessions in Portugal” and tend to see the mobilizations as part of the same movement. Furthermore, many participants argued that one feature of this movement was precisely its ability to mobilize different players in different locations, despite the fact that mobilizations tend to be perceived as stronger in Algarve and currently in Bajouca (a small village in Leiria): “There was always a less strong movement, because the people that were more active and more interested were the population from the south [of the country]” (Paulo). During the interviews, many participants used terms such as: “local community,” “local population,” or “local citizen” to differentiate between the “typical activist” and the local actors and communities. This distinction was made even by those participants who were born and/or had lived in the affected communities.

No, I think that, clearly, the people who initially take up this cause, at first are only the usual activists, because, for example, the movement in the center region, 80% of the people more involved are already in other environmental causes, at the national level. Regarding the Bajouca, which is an extremely active village, meaning, people already have, like “they are interfering with something,” as the drill site is right on the village “interfering with the village, no way!,” there, so we already knew (Ivone).

Ivone’s excerpt is a clear example of the distinction made between activists and local members, but it also exemplifies the movement’s ability to mobilize beyond the typical “activist.” This feature was mentioned by several other participants: “Yes, yes, I think so, I think you can affirm that with conviction. At Bajouca, for example, the actions of the population have involved very diverse people, with very diverse qualifications and levels of education” (Carlos).

Additionally, the movement was also able to engage with powerful allies such as celebrities (e.g., who were the face of a particular campaign), academics and scientists (e.g., guest speakers in debates, information sessions, and meetings;

signatories of public campaigns such as “clean future”) and local politicians and political parties (who publicly supported the positions of the movement). Previous studies have found evidence for the role of powerful allies in successfully engaging and mobilizing the public (e.g., Hein and Chaudhri, 2019). These alliances were considered by several participants as a key factor in the movement’s success:

If they [in Leiria] have the local power [on their side], I think the largest part of the work is already done, because it’s very different when you have the chairperson of the parish or of the municipal councils saying it (Diana).

In summary, the movement was able to mobilize individuals and local and national groups, NGOs, grassroots initiatives, municipal governmental and political actors, left political parties, celebrities, local tourism companies, and so forth. As in other contexts (e.g., Grosse, 2019), informal social ties were particularly important in establishing such networks. Despite the diversity of the players involved, they were able to cooperate toward a common goal: “to cancel the concession agreements for oil and gas exploitation in Portugal.” The success in mobilizing institutional and economic allies was particularly evident at the local and regional levels, but the movement also encountered strong resistance from national entities and the oil companies involved (Consortium ENI/GALP; Australis-Portugal). These oppositional forces included the Nacional Entity for the Energy Sector (previously the National Authority for the Fuel Market), the Minister of the Environment and Climate Action, the Minister of the Sea, and the central government itself. For example, the current prime minister clearly supported the extraction of oil and gas in Portugal by arguing that “we cannot, naturally, neither comprise the existing contracts, or risk to not take advantage of the existing geological resources which can be used by the country, without sacrificing other values” (Sul Informação, 2016).

Importantly, the concessions were signed between the national government and the oil companies without the consultation of local communities and, according to several participants, the local branches of government were not consulted or informed either. Besides, as reported by the national press (Sábado, 2018), several politicians, who were part of past and current governments, have been accused of influence peddling, involving the oil and gas concessions in Algarve.

## Building Bridges Between Players and Tactics

Regarding the mobilizations in Algarve, SMOs used the movement mainly as a source of support for their actions and activities: “I think it’s very spontaneous and very much about mutual support, I mean, it’s interesting that we, Group-R, did many events, several activities, demonstrations, and dynamics” (Madalena). According to most participants, the individual actors also assumed certain roles and functions spontaneously. Rui and Rute perceived themselves as having a wider role in the environmental movement, by facilitating national campaigns and protests, and making sure that the

MAOG included global climate change in the movement's demands. Pedro and Diana defined their role as helpers, available to do what was necessary, from organizing information to facilitating participation in petitions and public consultations to attend meetings with allies and opposing forces. Joana, Olga and also Diana characterized their roles as peripheral, establishing bridges between organizations and campaigns. Ivone, Carlos, Miguel and Pedro had a central role, by initiating and developing the mobilizations in Leiria, and by organizing local and national actions addressing the two remaining concessions. In Algarve, Alice and Madalena, had a key role as local organizers and mobilizers. Together with Alice, Paulo also assumed the role of dealing with external communication (e.g., press) and he was considered by the other participants as having a central role in certain key actions (e.g., legal action). Paulo and Pedro seemed to have also assumed a kind of expert role, as they were both involved in collecting and organizing scientific material, which was then used for the movement's actions and campaigns. Finally, Alice was perceived as a leader and a bridge builder by most participants, establishing, and ensuring the communication between the individual and collective players involved in the MAOG.

The movement used several tools to facilitate communication between the organizations involved, such as: face to face meetings, online meetings, phone calls, and mailing lists. According to several participants, these tools were mainly used to share events and actions, asking for others support and collaboration. The collaboration between the participants was often sporadic "people joined a specific project and we work together, it is more like that" (Rui). This approach was explained by the participants as a consequence of the lack of a common strategy "It's more because they don't see the things like we do, therefore, it becomes difficult to do big things together" (Rute). Nevertheless, several participants stressed that the movement has been successful, precisely because it has been able to build bridges between individuals and organizations that did not share the same goals and strategic approach. As explained below:

In more concrete terms, for example, something that Group-U did, which I think was key in this movement, was to create points, no longer between isolated people, but between the movements themselves. For example, Group-Y has an approach which is completely, how should I say it, is completely radical or opposed in relation to Group-L or many similar organizations and yet both are inside the Group-U umbrella (Pedro).

Several participants addressed the potential of a network of organizations that support each other in their own actions and events "each one has its importance; each one acts differently" (Diana). In the participants' views, the movement has been able to gather together different people and groups, with diverse and complementary skills and resources. For example, several NGOs contributed with their influence networks, facilitating contact with powerful actors (e.g., deputies, politicians). In turn, local groups already had links with the local community, which facilitated the mobilizations "there are other groups very good at organizing protests and mobilizing local people" (Pedro).

The mutual support and cooperation between the groups was referred by several participants as a key factor in explaining the movement's successes. Group-U was described as a "bridge builder," with a key role in promoting the interaction between different players: "The Group-U was able to gather the attention, because we're many, we worked in a way that we're building something" (Paulo).

Some of the tactics used in Algarve are currently being used in Leiria and local groups are working together with national organizations and groups. The movement is presently trying to establish new bridges with new groups and citizens and intensifying the focus against gas extraction in Portugal. At the time of the interviews, a large event was being organized with the aim of creating links between people, groups and movements, i.e., to "be a network" as mentioned by Carlos. The event took place in one of the affected villages in Leiria and was organized by national groups in coordination with local groups and citizens. In turn, participants representing national grassroots groups that focus their action on the global impacts of climate change, stressed several times that the movement needed to develop a common strategy:

We made several attempts to unite people, in fact, the National Meeting arose as meeting, not as a conference, a meeting, to bring various movements together so we could strategize together (...) to make a strategy [a line of action] to do something together (Rute).

As suggested by some participants, the barriers and difficulties of elaborating a joint plan of action might be related to the lack of a common collective identity. The forms of protest people in social movements choose are influenced by their collective identities (Polletta and Jasper, 2001), and social movements are often spaces where multiple identities converge (Della Porta and Diani, 2006). Participants' distinctions between "activists and local community," as well as between "NGOs and grassroots movements," and "local population and the movement" support this argument. Furthermore, some participants expressed belonging to several different groups (e.g., Pedro, Miguel, Paulo, Madalena) and differentiate these groups and organizations by their strategic choices. For example, participants who identify themselves as belonging to Group Y, often mentioned terms such as civil disobedience and direct action. Participants who belong to Group Z and Group T, often mentioned lobbying and public awareness.

The diversity of actors involved and their scope of action may have led to a lack of shared ideology and collective identity, a feature of the climate movement, which has been previously identified in the Italian movement (Bertuzzi, 2019) and the global climate movement (De Moor, 2018). This is particularly the case if we consider collective identity in terms of strategic choice and consider that collective identities in social movements "tend to reflect what we believe, what we are comfortable with, what we like, who we are" (Polletta and Jasper, 2001, p. 284). On the one hand, it seems that the movement has been very successful in building bridges between different players. However, the lack of a shared collective identity may have limited the movement's

ability to build a continuous and established network, able to survive over time and across regions. This may explain why several groups are still investing in building bridges between groups and organizations. On the other hand, the multiplicity of actors engaged seems to be related to a diversified repertoire of action, that may not have been possible without the combination of different types of citizens, organizations, and initiatives. In this regard, when we asked participants about the type of strategies and the tactics used by the movement, several argued that there was not a single strategy or tactic, it was a combination of multiple tactics:

I don't think there was one priority over another, I think that we tried everything, for which there were human resources to do so. Like, an action was started in court, all the public consultations were participated, that civil mobilization. I think that in these things, in these struggles, the more combat fronts you can have, the better, the question is if you have people to create them (...) the main strategies, I think they were 2 or 3, political pressure, mobilizing civil society, the population, and then the legal action, meaning, there were these 3, all 3 were able to be worked, which was very good (Joana).

Joana's view of the potential of combining these three different strategies was shared with several other participants. Based on the participants' discourses, it seems that the movement focused on three different arenas: political/institutional; streets/popular; and courts. Groups chose the actions they could/want to be involved in, according to their own resources and availability: "Our group understood that at the legal level we didn't have any power, as power, we didn't have anyone, we didn't have a lawyer, there were few Portuguese people involved..." (Madalena). Moreover, the combination of different tactics was also perceived as key "for reaching different publics" (Rui). In the following sections, we examine the three types of tactics used by the movement: links to institutional power; the route to the court; and paths to popular mobilizing.

## Links to Institutional Power

Participants argued that having the public support of local political leaders and political parties is an effective way to ban oil and gas extraction activities in Portugal: "if they [SMOs] have the local power, like, I think that half the work is done, because it's very different when you have the chairperson of the parish council or the municipal council saying it" (Joana). In Algarve, the movement was able to mobilize diverse actors and got the support of local municipalities, politicians, deputies, and political parties. This was perceived as an important factor leading to the cancellation of 13 concessions.

Exactly, yes, we also were very persisting, right? Talking with the city council, talking with mayors, talking with parish councils, and an important part was (...) it [the movement] wasn't only something of the environmentalists. When the message was passed it wasn't only of those environmentalists that are always criticizing everything that comes up, [protecting] birds and whatnot. When the idea passed that it [the movement] was us, it was the tourism associations, it was the population in general, it

was the mayors, it was the Tourism of Portugal, it was the tourism region of Algarve, it was all these entities, that normally don't get along. You have the tourism entity and organizations always colliding with NGOs, they are always colliding (Paulo).

The experience in Algarve was crucial and used as an example for the mobilizations in Leiria: "The goal is to make a network with the local organizations and municipalities, much like Algarve did, which is to create relationships, because the municipalities in Algarve are against it, right? (...) the people themselves mobilized to add pressure" (Ivone). At the time of data collection, activists were trying to influence local politicians in Leiria and asking them to take a public position against the exploitation of gas in their territory. Very recently, the mayor of Leiria used the local press to write to the central government demanding the cancellation of the concessions in that region of the country (Jornal de Leiria, 2019). Many tactics were used to get the public support of the political elite, including protests at the local level, participation in municipal assemblies, meetings with political leaders, and a strong presence in the local press (e.g., press releases after all actions). Participants also mentioned a campaign organized by 18 organizations during the 2017 Portuguese local elections. Under this campaign for "Fossil Free Municipalities," candidates in regions affected by oil and gas concessions were contacted and asked to state their position on oil and gas extraction in Portugal. This type of political pressure was used to push and force into the spotlight a local and national political agenda aiming to keep the country free of oil and gas.

Placing the issue in the public agenda in a way that even the most conservative parties feel some pressure to speak themselves about it. That's what happened with the oil drills [In Algarve] as well, often there was so much pressure that they had to, really, there were proposals for the parliament, and each one of them had to make it very clear what they position about it were (Rute).

In this regard, there were several signs of governmental activism in the Portuguese movement against oil and gas drilling. Governmental activism is a phenomenon in which "politicians, civil servants and governmental players engage with citizens, SMOs/NGOs and sometimes businesses in contentious claim-making to alter or redress policies proposed by other governmental players" (Verhoeven and Duyvendak, 2017, p. 565). This was particularly the case in Algarve, with the involvement of the "inter-municipality community of Algarve" and members of the tourism sector in several actions against the extraction of oil and gas in Algarve.

Additionally, the participants mentioned other actions involving links with institutional political power, including a petition against the development of oil and gas extraction in Algarve which had more than 7,000 signatures. Conversely, the majority of the participants mentioned their massive participation in the public consultations around the concessions in Algarve and also in Leiria. Participants disseminated word of the public consultation and encouraged people to participate, sharing relevant information in order to facilitate said participation.



Alentejo and Aljezur took a long time to wake up, a long, long time to wake up, when they woke up we already had 42 thousand signatures, which were the ones taken to public consultation that lead all of this to crumble, and we did that work for them at the time (Madalena).

The link between public participation processes and social movements is often ignored in the literature of institutional and public participation, as highlighted by previous scholars (Baumgarten and Amelung, 2017; Bhattacharya and Jairath, 2017; Verhoeven and Duyvendak, 2017). Our analysis suggests that the activists were also key actors in participating and organizing forums for citizen engagement with public participation (e.g., making the relevant information available in online platforms, preparing texts to use in the public consultation or letters to be sent to politicians, etc.).

## The Route to the Court

On June 31, 2016, a public consultation was launched concerning the issuance of an oil prospection and research permit at one of the concessions signed in 2007 (Participa, 2016). Despite the massive participation that recommended against the authorization, the license was granted by the responsible entity (Directorate General of Natural Resources) on January 2017, valid until January 2019. Confronted with imminent drilling, the SMOs decided to try the judicial path:

And after, later, appeared, because of it, the judicial path, obviously, it had to appear, it had to appear because it became clear that was the way to go, because we had subject matter to go, because it could all be legal, morally wrong but legal, it wasn't, fortunately it wasn't all legal. But yes, that was the concern, ending the immediate threat, right away, in principle it was done. Now the next area of action, next concern, is to guarantee that there wouldn't be no more concessions (Diana).

Thus, the SMOs decided to initiate a protective order, questioning the procedures and the legality of the license and requesting the suspension of the permission. The judicial process was formally initiated and "represented by three NGOs" (Paulo), yet it was always assumed as a joint action by the coalition of organizations belonging to Group-U, as explained by Paulo, Alice and Olga. Furthermore, as mentioned by several participants, the case for a protective order was built on a set of illegalities which included the lack of information on the potential effects of the planned activities (during the public consultation phase); and the violation of a procedure that should have taken place before the emission of the administrative authorization to initiate the drilling.

Although the consortium ENI/GALP joined forces with the Portuguese Ministry of the Sea (e.g., an appeal action), the consortium ultimately renounced the concessions contracts. The renouncement came after more than 1 year since the start of the legal proceedings, and only after the court decision. The victory in the court "was decisive for, at least for that drilling not happening and the oil companies giving up, and for the Portuguese state losing some credibility" (Paulo). From the perspective of several participants, it was the judicial action that

led to the cancellation of the drillings in Algarve "it was a legal action, a protective order in the courts, which made the project be canceled" (Pedro). This was perceived as a victory for the movement by a majority of participants, including those not directly involved in the legal action (e.g., Ivone, Carlos, Olga).

Yes, yes, because we can see, eventually, that there are 2 ways, maybe more, but there are at least 2 ways to end the contracts, which is the judicial, through popular actions, and the other is the popular pressure itself, and also parish council pressure that might arise. Eventually, there are political decisions, there are political decisions that can end the contracts (Carlos).

Carlos' reference to the case of the concessions yet to be canceled in Leiria, suggests that the victory in Algarve influenced the views of the participants currently engaged in the Leiria mobilizations. As previously argued in the literature, it is expected that the movement's actions are influenced by previous movements' successes (Van Dyke and Amos, 2017).

Importantly, participants contested other things besides the illegalities in the licenses and concessions in their regions. Indeed, several interviewees mentioned their concerns about the decree/law n° 109/94, which regulates all oil and gas extraction activities in Portugal and opens the door to new concession agreements. For some participants, the movement should focus on changing the environmental law "(...) to ensure that there are no more concessions attributed, and to change that decree-law of the devil, the 109/94" (Diana). This decree-law (109/94, April 26) establishes the juridical regime for oil prospection, drilling, development and production activities in Portugal (Gomes and Batista, 2018) and has been highly contested by social movements.

The occupation of the court arena was made despite it being considered a "big risk" (Paulo). It required scientific skills (scientific arguments, for example, as explained by Alice), time, and money (e.g., for paying the tribunal costs and hiring a lawyer, as explained by Paulo, Pedro and Alice). These and other aspects were mentioned by Rute, who also contested the long-term effects of the movement's alleged victory and the strategic choices of some organizations:

I would say that the protective order, maybe, they thought about it like a strategy, they saw the problem, they saw where they were and thought that legal action was enough to resolve the problem, ok, I would say so, it can be qualified as a strategy. I don't think it's a strategy that, meaning, judicial decisions most of the time are on the side of the companies, when you're able to have a judicial decision, involving companies, lots of lawyers, and very well-paid, to be on the side of the population and not on the side of the companies, we will never know why, because we can't put society into a test tube and isolate variables. But the fact that you have a public opinion being formed in a certain way, at the time, having protests, having things in the parliament, having actions, having more mobilization makes it so that (...) If you stop the mobilizations, you'll go to second instance and second instance will agree with the company (Rute).

Besides Rute, similar concerns were raised by other participants, namely by those participants who described themselves as belonging to grassroots groups. However, most of them prefer to see the judicial path as complementary to the other strategies. This was explained by Alice, who insisted on the idea that the movement should enter into different arenas, such as “political” (including local and national government), judicial, and economic and combine multiple tactics to educate, raise awareness, and mobilize the population.

## Paths to Popular Mobilization

Concerning the mobilization tactics used by the SMOs, nearly all the participants mentioned that their organizations actively organized actions to disseminate information, either regarding climate change, or the impacts of oil and gas drilling and exploitation. As expressed by Diana, this was the primary purpose of some organizations “without a doubt the first goal of the platform [was] to inform” (Diana). To that end, the groups have been organizing information sessions in schools (oriented toward children and young people) and parish councils, leafleting in coffees shops, streets and at public events, human chain (people joined their hands to form a human chain) in Algarve beaches, debates and public meetings, and so forth.

Some participants described the Portuguese people as misinformed about the risks of oil and gas exploitation, especially regarding the impacts of natural gas: “and more so the gas is called natural, which it is a fallacy, but people think gas is ‘natural,’ that it is not risky” (Ivone). For some participants, part of the movement’s role is to educate the population “to take information to people, and one type of information that is not just a slogan, but also, substantiated information” (Alice). This required that activists themselves be familiar with climate science, so they could “inform and give facts” (Diana) and be able to argue with those who are negationists and/or skeptical.

It’s also important, when I spoke of informing a while ago, it’s informing the population, but also our own information, let’s say, the scientific background, because this situation implies that we have, actually, strong arguments, and strong arguments come to us from science (...). I think that in this case we did the mobilization through information, ok. The initial problem was people not knowing (...) and from there on, from the moment when people were informed, people refused petroleum, in Algarve people refused petroleum (Alice).

The views on the role of a social movement as a mean to inform and educate the population suggested that these participants see social change as highly dependent on the level of knowledge and information people have access to. Not all participants agreed that information is enough to get people to act. For example, a few participants criticized the groups who mainly focus on public awareness, arguing that “what motivates people is not access to information, what motivates people is to see things happen, so they feel inspired” (Rute). Conversely, Rui added that their group’s goal is “mobilization, mass mobilization, therefore, to create a large and wider movement of civil disobedience” (Rui). In order

to get there, they believe their group’s actions should be oriented toward training future activists: “We organize climate activism training, to prepare activists, and that happens, at least twice per year. By principle our focus is not raising awareness in the general population” (Rui). As suggested by Hestres and Hopke (2019), spaces to train, educate, mentor, and prepare individuals to be effective movement agents (e.g., activism training;) can be named as “schools of social movements” and are often proposed by social movements.

Additionally, public demonstrations were mentioned by all participants as part of their mobilizing tactics. Several national and local marches and protests were organized during the last few years, and our participants were actively engaged: “But since 2014, that yes, we were able to mobilize more and more people and have already set the agenda, at these marches (...) we were able to put it into the agenda of the media and politicians” (Joana). Apart from protests, marches and demonstrations, some participants also mentioned a few occupations of public space. Additionally, several participants referred to direct action (such as blockades) and civil disobedience as acceptable tactics.

They [grassroot groups] believe a lot that, for example, it’s important to have direct action. What is meant by direct action is street demonstrations, it’s eventually civil disobedience actions, so it’s a much more physical and more active participation. Group-U also sees that point of view, but the administrative side was much more debated, meaning, we need to have access to documents, they pressured the state secretaries, the ministers to meet with them to explain what is happening, etc. Ok, and for me, both strategies are complementary, and also others [strategies] we might have (Pedro).

Overall, we identified some differences in terms of the approaches followed by the organizations. First, it seems that local organizations were more oriented toward public awareness actions, aiming to inform, and educate the population. National grassroots groups’ discourses suggested a higher focus on building spaces for training future activists, and the use of tactics such as civil disobedience and direct action. Finally, both NGOs and grassroots groups tend to see public demonstrations as necessary and part of the mobilizing strategy, and all participants mentioned having participated in marches, protests, and demonstrations. Regarding the mobilization tactics, although the SMOs involved may not always agree on the type of tactics used, there was a general agreement on the movement’s ability to reach its goal by combining multiple tactics. Several tactics were used as a tool for popular mobilization, including public awareness campaigns, training for activists, protests, marches, and demonstrations. Participants seem to all agree on the need to base their arguments and actions on scientific arguments as a way of legitimizing the movement’s actions. Nevertheless, although opting for diverse approaches, the different tactics mentioned by the participants seemed to be based on the idea that the “other” needs to be educated, informed or trained, and afterwards then they will also engage in environmental collective action.

## Movement Building and “Power to Act”

The different types of mobilization tactics used by the movement also raised questions regarding how the participants view the movement's influence in terms of the ability to achieve its shared goal, but also beyond that specific goal. The majority of the participants described the movement's approach as “super-efficient” and “well-succeeded.” For some participants, this has been the “first big environmental movement” in Portugal (e.g., Paulo, Joana, Diana):

The environmental movement today has very little to do with the 90's environmental movement, when I started (...). And, therefore, in 2014 it's been created, then, this group of people, which will work in the next years, which are connected to some entities and which can mobilize, through different means, can mobilize. We even had an increase in citizen participation in marches for the climate (...). For real, for real, it's since 2014, afterwards the rest are [smaller] demonstrations (Joana).

Joana's excerpt also shows how the MAOG was also able to contribute to other actions within the environmental movement, feeding other mobilizations, and protests. In this regard, several participants emphasized that “oil and gas extraction in Portugal” is only a small part of a bigger problem: “we are mobilizing against other things; I mean the climate (...) our intention is to create a sufficiently large group of people to contest all the politics” (Rui) and achieve “a broad social transformation, I mean, above all [we want] to pressure toward an energy transition” (Rute). As such, participants suggested that building the movement by bringing organizations together and mobilizing the masses should be considered a significant achievement of the movement (De Moor, 2018). All participants agreed that the environmental and the climate movement in Portugal grew significantly during the last few years: “Yes, because I think that it might serve as a link between several people, movements, also to create other things, other actions, let's say” (Carlos). The movement's extension was mentioned in terms of regions, but also in terms of causes and the movement's goals: “In my opinion, there are new movements in Algarve, concerning specific causes. Recently, one was created regarding the white lagoons, it turned up now because of a construction they want to do on the costal cliffs” (Paulo).

Complementarily, several participants see the movement's influence in terms of building political agency “now, we're in a setting where people understood that they, by themselves can do and write something” (Pedro). Participants see the movement as a creator of people's engagement with climate and environmental issues, spaces that go beyond private forms of action “such as recycling,” as well as beyond classical forms of environmentalism.

It became more concrete because it's like this, we told everybody this “Ok, you're an environment sympathizer, you're also afraid of climate change, then look, here is something that you can get involved in, something real, a real threat, “I'm not talking about ice melting with the polar bear and whatever, I'm saying, here you can do it.” Therefore, I think that we gave that to people, to the people who had climate change in their imagination, in the thing

of “damn, this is really bad for us, what do I do? Ok, I already recycle, but what do I do, what do I do?” we say “Look, it's here, here you can do something” and those who felt that need to act before others, but couldn't, found the perfect place there (Diana).

Diana's excerpt also shows the importance attributed by the participants to collective action in climate and environmental issues. Rute, in the same line of argument, argued that the idea of individual environmental action (e.g., namely linked to consumption) has been highly disseminated in society by companies and states as a way to avoid solving the climate crisis. She argued that they know that “individual choices, even from people highly committed, who follow [them] strictly, are not going to solve the problem. Mostly, they will not threaten the status quo, they will not threaten anything that is being done by the big companies.” The perceived success of the movement is then seen as the ability to influence others to join the movement and to express their own grievances (Mathieu, 2019), through collective action. Simultaneously, for several participants, it is crucial to build political agency, and the movement seems to have been able to do so by bringing hope and inspiration to other people, as explained by Joana and Paulo:

And I think it created this network, I think it created hope, like, it's really important. If you think that you won't get anything, it's not worth it, [it] inspired, I think it inspired a lot of people, really, I think it inspired the rest of the country, I think it inspired the center (Joana).

Ah yes, in that sense, yes, we felt differences, people are much more, in Algarve I felt the difference, it seems to me there was a click in many people, even people which I don't know, that it (...) is possible to do something, any person can do it, or rather, in this regard any might be [saying] too much (...) (Paulo).

In accordance with these views, Ivone argued that “by building this model of activism and citizenship, that is simpler and sharper than creating formal organizations, we expected to inspire other people, and for other environmental causes.” In her view, “waiting for the government or associations to solve our problems” was not a viable solution, and it is important to create paths and channels so “citizens have a voice and are able to have an impact” (Ivone).

The quotes presented above suggest that participants tend to see the movement's influence in relation to its ability to promote and develop political agency, namely the dimension associated with the sense of “power to act” (Campbell, 2009). This was very present in the discourses of some participants: “(...) ok, it's always like this, like the (...), it's the same thing, we go there and stop things, it's not we making a mass so that someone will stop the mine, we will stop the mine, we go, right?” (Rui). In summary, the movement sees its political influence as going beyond the achievement of its initial goals, scope and context of action. Specifically, the movement's success is being related to its ability to mobilize others by developing their political agency to act collectively.



## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to analyze the Portuguese movement against oil and gas drilling considering three main dimensions: players, tactics, and agency. We specifically explored who were the players involved, what were the main tactics used, and what meanings of agency and influence were expressed by participants. The analysis presented was mainly based on the discourses of activists followed a player-arena approach (Jasper, 2004, 2015; Jabola-Carolus et al., 2018) and focused on political agency (Campbell, 2009; Amenta et al., 2010).

Our empirical analysis suggests that the MAOG has been able to mobilize different players, including local and national groups, NGOs, grassroots groups, local governmental and political actors, political parties, celebrities, tourism companies, and other local companies. Importantly, the movement was able to mobilize players which are (or are considered to be) outside of the protest arena, such as local transition initiatives (Fernandes-Jesus et al., 2017), economic companies and local governmental players (Verhoeven and Duyvendak, 2017).

Moreover, our analysis suggests that the MAOG organized as a platform for collaboration in specific tactics and actions but avoided building a common and broad strategy for the movement. From the perspective of the participants, such an organization was key for the movement's achievements and has led to a combination of tactics (protests, awareness campaigns, petitions, public consultations) in multiple arenas (streets, schools, political parties, courts, etc.). Some groups argued that movement building and grassroot organization are the way to achieve social transformation, while others seemed to stress the role of political pressure by powerful allies. As argued by Hestres (2015), social transformation requires the combination of different tactics, strategies and theories of change. In the MAOG we identified three wide sets of tactics used by the movement, which shows the diversity of collective identities involved in the struggle against oil and gas in Portugal. The first relates to links with institutional political power; the second refers to the court arena; and the third to actions for popular mobilization. These were the set of tactics highlighted by the activists in our study, however, it is possible that other tactics were used by the movement. Complementary press analysis exploring how the media represented the movement, as well as an analysis of websites of all the collective players involved in the movement, could tell us more about their strategies, tactics and actions. In turn, future studies should also collect observational data, so we can better understand the process of decision making within SMOs.

A feature of this movement was the importance attributed to politicians, deputies, and local governmental organizations joining protest and resistance against the concessions. In this aspect, MAOG seemed to be an interesting case for understanding governmental activism (Verhoeven and Duyvendak, 2017), and showed that powerful actors can be key allies for social movements. Nevertheless, the successful alliance between the MAOG and governmental and corporation players, may have been facilitated by the type of players involved and the territory affected by the concessions. The individuals within the movement were highly educated, members of

NGOs and probably had ties with arenas of political influence. Moreover, Algarve is a region highly dependent on tourism, both international and domestic, and this sector is of great importance to the Portuguese economy (Bento, 2016). This may explain why economic groups and local political leaders took a clear position against oil and gas drilling in their region. The groups who are now fighting to cancel the two remaining contracts in Leiria (a rural, non-touristic area), may face other barriers, despite the support of local political players (e.g., parish mayor). Powerful alliances and judicial action may be effective tactics, but they may also be highly dependent on the resources the movement already has or can attain. Future research should look into the barriers and constraints faced by marginalized, rural and poor communities in establishing such alliances and attempting legal action.

The formation of coalitions is a strategy often used by social movements (Jasper, 2004; De Moor, 2018; Jabola-Carolus et al., 2018) and participants discourses suggested that this was key in justifying the urgency, extension and local relevance of the movement's demands. Therefore, it seems, that for the Portuguese movement against oil and gas, this strategy has been quite successful in building the environmental movement's legitimacy (Hein and Chaudhri, 2019). From a theoretical point of view, our study supports previous theoretical claims that the state may be best seen as composed of multiple governmental players (Duyvendak and Jasper, 2015; Verhoeven and Duyvendak, 2017) and that we need to look at social movements as arenas of multiple and diverse players (Jasper, 2019). Social movements can be a site for collaboration between different kind of players, including governmental actors. However, it is important to ensure that the coalition is inclusive enough to gather multiple identities (Della Porta and Diani, 2006), especially considering collective identity in terms of strategic choices (Polletta and Jasper, 2001). In our view, the MAOG exemplifies how social movements can build a coalition, ensuring that groups maintain their collective identities. The existing signs of tension between the players, which were associated by the participants with a lack of shared strategy and perspective, suggests that this was not done without effort or tensions between players. These tensions could be more rigorously explored in a larger sample than used in this study. Our sampling approach lead us to a set of participants highly engaged with the MAOG, but unrepresentative of the views of local community members either in Algarve or Leiria. Additionally, by focusing our analysis solely on the views of a reduced number of participants who were highly involved, we did not examine if and how such bridges may have constrained the involvement of ordinary citizens (Cox, 2019). Future studies should look into the dynamics of interaction between different players, for example between grassroots groups and political parties, through ethnographic approaches, and from the perspective of community members. Furthermore, in our study, we considered the struggles against oil and gas natural as part of the same movement, what we named MAOG. At the time of data collection, both places of action (Algarve and Leiria) and topics (oil and natural gas) were still linked. As such, the snowballing sampling approach lead us to a sample of activists



engaged in both contexts, who shared the goal to cancel all oil and natural gas concessions. Meanwhile, during the last year, the struggle against natural gas has assumed its own dynamics and specificities, with new coalitions and campaigns. Future studies should look at how environmental struggles remain connected over time, and what influence do specific struggles have in building a wider environmental movement.

Conversely, our analysis suggests that the movement's success is viewed in relation to its ability to promote movement building (Grosse, 2019), and to be a space and vehicle for building citizens' political agency. Specifically, in this context, political agency is perceived as the power to act (Campbell, 2009), which is viewed as of equal importance to the ability to achieve political influence (Amenta et al., 2010). As argued by Han and Barnett-Loro (2018), to build the political will necessary to address climate crisis will involve building the collective power necessary to shift power dynamics. It seems that movements such as the MAOG may help in transforming the way people engage with environmental issues. Following other scholars (Carvalho and Peterson, 2012; Pepermans and Maesele, 2016), we argue that building political agency through collective action is an important step for building the collective power necessary for social transformation. What remains to be seen, however, is whether movements' struggles, such as the one reported in this study, can establish change over time (Jabola-Carolus et al., 2018), and contribute to the level of political engagement necessary for dealing with current and future climate challenges. Additional research should look at social movements from a longitudinal perspective, by addressing the changes within participants' movements and the external political influence of the movements.

Our pattern of findings lends support to the importance of placing political agency as a key dimension in social movements research (Jasper, 2004; Jabola-Carolus et al., 2018) and for the relevance of distinguishing types of agency (Campbell, 2009). To give centrality to agency implies not only acknowledging that groups and individuals can choose different strategies or tactics (Jasper, 2004), but also that social movements' successes may be important sites for building a sense of "power to act." This is especially relevant because previous literature has shown that the belief that nothing can be done to solve climate change (i.e., "fatalistic doubt") may be a demotivator of collective action (Smith and Leiserowitz, 2014; Marlon et al., 2019). Building political agency seems to be relevant and valued by the activists, but further research should examine if similar meanings are also

relevant for non-activists. Although more research is needed, emphasizing political agency as the "power to act" may be a promising route to communicate and mobilize people to participate in environmental movements. Ultimately, our study shows that struggles against oil and gas drilling constitute an important site for building bridges and political agency, which may be key dimensions for promoting political engagement with climate change.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets presented in this article are not publicly available due to their containing information that could compromise the privacy of research participants. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to the corresponding author at maria.jesus@iscte-iul.pt.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

All the participants provided their informed consent. They agreed to audio recorded interviews and for their quotes to be used for publication. The verbatim quotes presented in this manuscript were anonymized so participants could not be identified.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

MF-J and RG conceived, designed and contributed to the theoretical framework of the study, and contributed to the analyses of the interviews. RG collected data and transcribed the material. MF-J wrote the first draft of the manuscript.

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## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fcomm.2020.00033/full#supplementary-material>

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**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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