

## Article

# Opaque Urban Planning. The Megaproject Santa Cruz Verde 2030 Seen from the Local Perspective (Tenerife, Spain)

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**Abstract:** Megaprojects, as a part of neoliberal urbanism, have become an important element of cities worldwide. In Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain, the megaproject Santa Cruz Verde 2030 represents this type of project. The ambitious plan seeks to transform the city's oil refinery into an urban quarter. However, since its announcement in summer 2018, no critical public discussion has taken place, although the project is expected to reconfigure the city's waterfront and its tourist model. In this context, it is particularly the stakeholders' point of view that is neglected. We thus offer a qualitative analysis of five interviews with local stakeholders from the real estate sector, politics, urban planning and an environmental association. The analysis shows that the interviewees feel insufficiently informed by the project's initiators. The project is interpreted as an elitist symbol of how the project's initiators understand urban development. While some of the stakeholders want to accelerate the whole process, others call for a more integrative and participative planning approach. Moreover, the observed marketing campaign is directly linked to the upcoming elections. The interviewees observe a simple top-down planning process, which contradicts the promises of the initiators to enable civic participation and integration.



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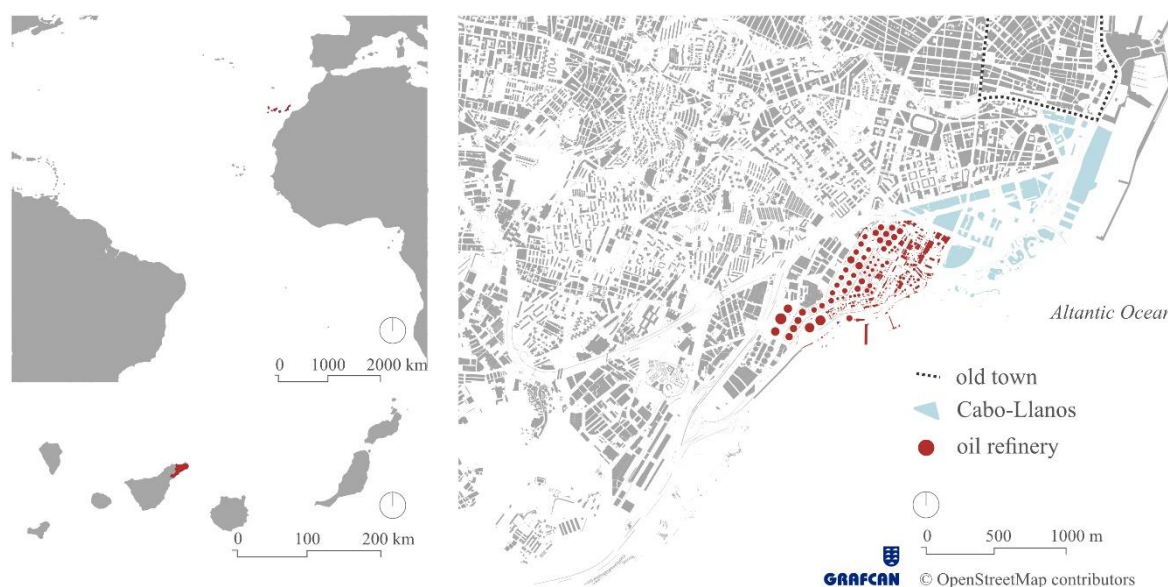
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**Keywords:** megaprojects; neoliberalism; urban development; urban planning; Santa Cruz de Tenerife; Spain

## 1. Introduction

Megaprojects have become typical elements of today's urbanism around the globe. Cities such as Barcelona (22@), Valencia (Ciutat de les Arts i les Ciències) or Hamburg (Hafencity) have shown how megaprojects are used as an effective tool to reposition themselves within the global competition [1]. However, behind the bright mask of megaprojects, there is often a less appealing story of underestimated costs, construction time and overestimated benefits [2]. There is a "new generation of megaprojects" [3] (p. 761) that is linked to neoliberal logics and marked by the creation of sustainable project images. However, unmasking these concepts often reveals unsustainable practices.

This paper focuses on Santa Cruz Verde 2030, an emerging megaproject in Tenerife (Spain), which was announced in summer 2018 (see Figure 1). The project deals with the conversion of an inner-city oil refinery into a mixed-use urban quarter with a surface area of more than 500,000 square meters. The concept entails a large amount of green spaces, but also housing, tourism and the city's first urban beach [4]. The impacts on the city's urbanism are expected to be considerable. According to other studies, the project will double the city's number of hotel beds and reconfigure the current urban setting significantly [5].



**Figure 1.** The geographical setting of the oil refinery and the Cabo-Llanos neighborhood, which formed part of the refinery until the 1990s. Own elaboration based on Open Street Map [6] and Grafcan [7].

Until 2020, the urban planning process has been characterized by its exclusiveness, as the two initiating stakeholders, the town hall of Santa Cruz de Tenerife and the refinery's owner, the Compañía Española de Petróleos (CEPSA), have negotiated behind closed doors.

It thus comes as a surprise that in Santa Cruz, only little public discussion about the project has taken place so far. Hence, this study shifts the light from the project's design to the planning process itself, seen through the perspective of relevant urban stakeholders in Santa Cruz. Research on megaprojects has focused on stakeholders that are in charge, but not on those who might be affected indirectly [8] (p. 1537). With this paper, we aim to bridge the gap between “top-down built megaprojects [and] bottom-up perceptions” [9]. Our objective is to understand the local stakeholders' perspective on the megaproject Santa Cruz Verde 2030 using five qualitative interviews with stakeholders from politics, urban planning, the real estate sector and an environmental association. Although the planning of the megaproject has just begun and the final outcome of the process might be uncertain, we argue that now is the time to start the analysis from a scientific point of view. As several planning steps are pending [10], there is still the opportunity to influence the project and contribute to a more sustainable outcome, which is our research motivation.

This article presents the following structure. Section 2 sets up a theoretical framework for analyzing the chosen megaproject. In Section 3, the case study is introduced. Section 4 describes the applied methods. The fifth part of this article presents the empirical results and emphasizes planning and image. In the final section, we discuss the findings and put them into their context of the current discourse.

## 2. Megaprojects: Grand Images, Little Transparency?

Megaprojects [11], large-scale urban development projects [12] and grand projects [13] are often synonymously used terms describing projects that are complex from different points of view [14]. On the one hand, megaprojects are instruments to gain an international audience and are expected to cause multiple direct and indirect effects for the surroundings [15] (p. 144). On the other hand, they have a long history of wrong estimations, particularly when it comes to costs, construction time and final output. This pattern is also referred to as the “iron law of megaprojects” [2] (p. 2).

Different approaches exist that help to define megaprojects. Some scholars focus on quantitative aspects and investigate costs, scale or risk [15]. Therefore, a broad range of

what is considered a megaproject exists. While Stoddart-Stones sees a minimum value of GBP 150 million [16], Bruzelius et al. propose costs of USD 1 billion or more [15]. Apart from that, there are also attempts to understand megaprojects from a qualitative point of view. In this paper, we focus on this approach, as it allows us to explore (a) the large networks of stakeholders involved [17] (p. 620), (b) the intertwined relationship between public and private actors [18] (p. 240) and (c) the characteristics to transform urban settings [12] (p. 75).

During the last two decades, Diaz Orueta and Fainstein have observed a new generation of megaprojects [3]. This new generation is characterized by projects that try to avoid public protest, and contribute to post-democratic conditions, which is understood as a “replacement of debate, disagreement and dissent in current urban governance” [19] (p. 72). In order to avoid protest movements, “new” megaprojects firstly entail mixed uses instead of focusing on single aspects. Consequently, the projects can be sold to a variety of groups as beneficial [1] (p. 800). Secondly, present megaprojects are often situated on brownfield sites, which minimizes direct displacement of inhabitants or local businesses [3] (p. 760). Thirdly, project managers put notable emphasis on marketing- and image-related topics. It is the concept of (environmental) sustainability that is often used, although the output might differ significantly from the promises made. In that respect, green logics even serve to justify the legitimization of the projects [3] (p. 764).

However, deconstructing the sustainable mask of these projects reveals numerous not sustainable practices, such as non-transparent planning mechanisms, as illustrated by Lehrer and Laidley [1] (p. 795). It is the interest of selected middle and upper classes that dominates megaprojects’ concepts, rather than applying a participative understanding of planning [20] (p. 547). This also explains why large-scale projects are poorly integrated into the urban process and their conception lies at the margins of formal planning structures [20] (p. 577). Another paradox is the relationship between project management and civic society. Megaprojects are often used to gain a wide public audience and increase the city’s visibility in a global competition [21] (p. 54). Simultaneously, an obvious tendency of masking certain aspects of the projects is observed, also referred to as the “hiding hand” [22] (p. 12). Contrary to that, project marketing and communication focus on potential benefits, which are often expected to reach the whole city. This phenomenon also explains the high attractiveness to announce megaprojects during election campaigns [23] (p. 257).

The rise of megaprojects as a common tool of urban planning is not only linked to general political settings but also to spatial and structural conditions in cities. This kind of cooperation between public and private stakeholders has become an important tool in the neoliberal city [24] (p. 76), used to “reconfigure local land-use patterns” [25] (p. 61). Megaprojects stand for the restructuring of urban governance under neoliberal frameworks [26]. The main goal of such projects is to create “profit-oriented urban entities” [27] (p. 77) spurring the commodification of the city [28]. On that basis, we understand neoliberal urbanism as a way of making the city that puts entrepreneurial interests first while neglecting the needs of other urban groups. Based on the increasing inter-city competitiveness and the prevailing ways of “producing a successful city” [29] (p. 1), city governments aim to foster growth and communicate economic success to reposition themselves within the global urban hierarchy. Large-scale urban development projects are not only regarded as powerful tools but also as new instruments to conduct planning and to achieve these objectives [20] (p. 547). Hence, research has to be conducted to deconstruct the planning processes observed. This is the case if established and more participative ways of planning the city are avoided. According to Swyngedouw, these practices belong to new forms of governance that promise to “deepen democracy” [30] (p. 3), while, in fact, they do the opposite.

Addressing these aspects from a local stakeholder’s point of view is one feasible access, but it is still a perspective that is researched to a lesser extent [9]. However, this perspective is relevant because local groups will not only experience the externalities of the megaproject [31] but are also considered to be of crucial importance for the project’s success [32].

This is a consensus that has been agreed upon both in the European (Aalborg Charta) [33] and the international discourse on sustainability (UN Habitat III) [34]. Although participation does not guarantee a sustainable outcome in the stricter sense, it strengthens democratic structures and helps inhabitants to find an access to new urban projects. This is why participation is regarded as an important pillar in sustainability concepts for urban regeneration projects and is included in several indicator systems [35–38], but also in city concepts based on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations [39].

Now, shifting the light on our case study, the abovementioned aspects identified in the literature serve as starting points for our empirical investigation. We summarize the following three questions, which will help to structure both our research tool (qualitative interviews) and, later, the discussion:

- What is the local stakeholders' point of view on the megaproject? Does it reflect the criticism observed in the academic discourse (neoliberal contexts, elitist interest, a new generation of megaprojects, etc.)?
- How is the concept of sustainability in the megaproject perceived by local stakeholders? On that basis, what is the relation to image and marketing?
- How do local stakeholders imagine their participation in the project?

### 3. Santa Cruz: Introducing the Case Study

This paper deals with the megaproject “Santa Cruz Verde 2030”, which aims to transform an inner-city oil refinery (Figure 2) into a new urban neighborhood. Santa Cruz is the capital of Tenerife and co-capital of the Canary Islands, one of the 17 Spanish autonomous communities. With its 200,000 inhabitants, the city forms part of the metropolitan area of the island, where about 400,000 inhabitants live [40].



**Figure 2.** The oil refinery “Tenerife” in Santa Cruz de Tenerife. Own photographs.

Founded in 1930, the industrial plant “Tenerife” was Spain’s first oil refinery. It became a fundamental pillar in Santa Cruz’s economy, but it was also an important sponsor of culture, education and housing programs in the city [41]. The refinery owned by CEPSA diversified the archipelago’s economic structure, which is increasingly dominated by tourism. Considering the gross value added, the share of the industrial production dropped from 10.9% to 5.6% between 2000 and 2018 on the Canary Islands [42].

Due to the strong population growth (62,000 in 1930 to 223,000 in 2010), the urban setting of the refinery changed completely [40]. While it was originally located on the outskirts of Santa Cruz, it was soon surrounded by several neighborhoods (see Figure 1). This is linked to the scarcity of space in Santa Cruz, an insular city limited by the Atlantic Ocean in the south and the Anaga Mountains in the north. The pressure on the housing market has become highly visible in 2018, when Santa Cruz showed the highest increases in housing prices in Spain, although its population slightly decreased in the last ten years [43,44]. As a result, there are considerable economic interests that aim to urbanize



the refinery's area. During the last decade, increasing pressure has been put on the refinery. The argument that is put forward is based on environmental and safety issues, as the industry is on the list of the 200 most contaminating industries in the European Union [45]. Finally, in June 2018, CEPESA and the town hall announced the dismantling of the oil refinery and presented "Santa Cruz Verde 2030" (see Figure 3) [46]. Its concept entails 40% green spaces, but also 20% for residential and 10% for touristic uses.

year	proceedings
1930	founding of Spain's first oil refinery on Tenerife
1990	The Cabo-Llanos plan was implemented: start of the dismantling of the eastern part of the refinery
01/2014	implementation of new air quality plan by the Canarian government; the oil refinery stops refining
06/2018	announcement of Santa Cruz Verde 2030 by local government (Coalición Canaria and Partido Popular)
05/2019	municipal elections in Santa Cruz de Tenerife
06/2019	new government took over the town hall (PSOE and Ciudadanos)
07/2020	motion of censure against the government of PSOE and Ciudadanos; the former government (Coalición Canaria and Partido Popular) regains mayoralty

**Figure 3.** The history of the oil refinery "Tenerife" in Santa Cruz de Tenerife and current politics. Own elaboration based on Arencibia de Torres [41], Gobierno de Canarias [47] and Santa Cruz de Tenerife Ayuntamiento [4].

We chose the case of Santa Cruz Verde 2030 for two reasons. Firstly, our analysis will contribute to the still ongoing planning process. As the project has just begun, the starting point of our investigation lies in the public–private agreement, announced in summer 2018 [4]. However, the actual importance of this document can be questioned due to various reasons. The document is not binding, as it is not implemented in formal planning instruments. Moreover, a considerable number of technical questions remain, such as juridical problems concerning the land classification and upcoming claims of formerly expropriated landowners [48]. From the administrative perspective, the local government of the municipality changed two times since the announcement of the megaproject (see Figure 3). This has not only led to a time delay in the planning processes but has also left the current state of the project rather unclear. Consequently, the public–private agreement is currently the only existing and most detailed document of how the project initiators imagine the production process of the megaproject to take place. By understanding this process, we can contribute to increasing its transparency. This is also relevant if we consider the polarized urban setting in Santa Cruz [49].

Secondly, Santa Cruz is the only large city worldwide with this type of industry in a central district [50]. However, Santa Cruz represents a considerable number of cities where deindustrialization goes hand in hand with touristification [51,52] and gentrification [53], most notably on the city's waterfront [54]. This relationship between the city and water has been reshaped by several large-scale projects in recent years. Since the 1990s, a general conversion can be observed, shifting the port's character from industrial to recreative

functions. The areas nearest to the city center (for example, Plaza de España) have been of particular interest in this reconversion and have been renewed with projects from the star architects Herzog and De Meuron [55] (p. 917). Apart from that, an adjacent quarter south of the center, the so-called “Cabo-Llanos Plan”, transformed large parts of the city into an affluent area and displaced an entire neighborhood [56]. This strategic shift of the port’s function was also possible due to the megaproject “Puerto de Granadilla”. This new port constructed in the south of Tenerife is supposed to relocate industrial activities from Santa Cruz to the south and make space for further commodification and privatization at the waterfront of the island’s capital [57]. Hence, we argue that our analysis of the chosen case study enriches the discussion about megaprojects and governance both in academia and the city. This is the case as we refer to the existing research gap in the stakeholders’ perspective (see Section 4). It is of particular interest how the new megaproject Santa Cruz Verde 2030 on the city’s last central brownfield site is developed—and whether or not it follows the trajectories of an exclusionary urbanism that is found in Santa Cruz.

#### 4. Materials and Methods

This paper aims to understand the planning process of Santa Cruz Verde 2030 from a stakeholder perspective. There is a research gap in local perceptions of megaprojects in general [9]. However, the question of which stakeholder groups are relevant for large-scale urban development projects has already been addressed by several authors, both from a theoretical and a practical point of view [32,58,59].

For our study, we chose to follow the CABERNET (Concerted Action on Brownfield and Economic Regeneration Network) stakeholder model [60] to identify different local experts. CABERNET is a European scientific platform that aims to facilitate the development and reuse of brownfield areas. This stakeholder model entails both primary and secondary actors. The projects’ initiators or responsible planners are primary stakeholders because they actively shape the project. Contrary to that, secondary stakeholders influence and are influenced by the project, “but are not directly involved in it” [9] (p. 4). We selected actors from both stakeholder groups (see Figure 4) to seize different perceptions of the megaproject.

No.	profession/ function	date	place
I1	territorial representative of the Professional Association of Real Estate Experts (APEI)	23.08.2019	office of the interviewee, Santa Cruz de Tenerife
I2	representative of the urban planning office, Santa Cruz de Tenerife	30.08.2019	office of the interviewee, Santa Cruz de Tenerife
I3	real estate agent, 40 years of working experience in Santa Cruz de Tenerife	02.09.2019	office of the interviewee, Santa Cruz de Tenerife
I4	preservationist, former politician (Coalición Canaria)	04.09.2019	public café, Santa Cruz de Tenerife
I5	representative of a local environmental association (Ecologistas en Accion)	12.09.2019	public café, San Cristóbal de la Laguna

**Figure 4.** Interviewees and their professions. Own elaboration.

The representative of Santa Cruz’s urban planning office is a primary stakeholder because the public planning authority is a mayor institution based on the public–private partnership announced by CEPISA and the town hall [4]. However, this person did not

initiate the megaproject because of a change in the local government in June 2019 (see Figure 3). We also contacted primary stakeholders that were responsible for the elaboration of the plan Santa Cruz Verde 2030 in the first place such as CEPISA and the responsible politicians from Coalición Canaria and Partido Popular. Their opinion is essential in order to contrast both internal and external points of view. Unfortunately, they were not willing to take part in the investigation at this point. Consequently, our results are limited to some extent because they lack this point of view.

Apart from that, several secondary stakeholders such as neighborhood associations and real estate experts were willing to participate. The interviewees were chosen by means of online desktop research, based on the stakeholder groups identified by CABERNET [60] (p. 20). Some of them were selected due to their profession, others because they had joined the public discussion and commented on the megaproject in newspaper articles and interviews. We conducted five qualitative interviews in summer 2019 in Santa Cruz de Tenerife (see Figure 4). All of the interviewees were interested in receiving the results of our research, which will help to add our findings to the local discourse.

The research method we propose is a semi-structured interview as one type of qualitative expert interview [61] (p. 418). It consists of key questions [62] (p. 291) which allows us to delve deep into social matters [63] (p. 315). The guideline helps to stick to the topics that were indicated as relevant for our research interest. Moreover, it provides comparability between the interviews. However, still, it depends on how the question is put forward [64] (p. 755). Semi-structured interviews also enable the interviewer to drop questions that do not lead to the aimed output while others can be added spontaneously [63] (p. 316). This puts the interviewees in the position to follow aspects that they consider to be important [64] (p. 755) [65] (p. 179), which is fundamental with regard to the aim of this research.

The objective is to understand the perception of the stakeholders. This requires a certain openness of the questions and the conversation, as the interviewer might not consider each relevant aspect in advance with the prepared questions. The aim is to address both the internal expertise in the professional field of work of each expert but also the capacity to reflect these aspects [66] (p. 31). We regard semi-structured interviews as an instrument not only to understand stakeholders' opinions but also the logics behind the social constructs they explain [67].

Our guideline consists of several thematic blocks that slightly differ from interviewee to interviewee, depending on each professional context. The interviews with real estate experts of course put a stronger focus on the local housing market compared to the interview with the representative of the planning office and so forth. Nevertheless, the basic structure of each guideline remained the same based on the main topics discussed in Section 2 (such as "the image of the project", "the perception of the ongoing planning process" and "the relationship between project and city"). Each topic is introduced with an open and more general question that stimulates the interviewee to narrate (for example, "How do you perceive the project Santa Cruz Verde 2030?") [65]. After that, we used follow-up questions to maintain the topic or comprehension questions to dive deeper into it [64] (p. 758). The interviews were held in Spanish and recorded after the stakeholders gave permission. The material was treated according to the General Data Protection Regulation of the European Union [68,69].

We transcribed the material using the software F4 and analyzed it with MAXQDA. A qualitative content analysis is the basis of our research. This means that the material is analyzed step by step putting the "categories in the center" [70] (p. 3). This procedure is systematic and requires developing one part of the categories with the material [71] (p. 2). The code system was set up with a mixed approach. While some of the codes were already defined due to theory and the interview guideline (deductive, for example, "urban context", "post crisis", "uses in the megaproject"), the code system was complemented by the material itself (inductive) [72] (p. 64). This applies to codes such as "level of information"

or “political dimension of monument preservation” because these aspects have not been on our agenda previously. Our main categories are shown in Figure 5.

<b>urban development in Santa Cruz</b>	<b>monument preservation</b>	<b>neighborhoods</b>
crisis 2008	elements	change
post-crisis	political dimension	housing market
housing market	planning	history
tourism/ short-term rentals	El Tanque	Cabo-Llanos
<b>Santa Cruz Verde 2030</b>	<b>sustainability</b>	
image	ecological aspects	
uses/ functions	integration	
deindustrialization	qualities	
planning	aesthetics	
political dimension	qualities	
transparence		

**Figure 5.** Main categories and subcategories in the qualitative analysis. Own elaboration.

On that basis, we defined subcategories [73] (p. 96) to complete the code system, although we omitted third-level categories for reasons of clarity in Figure 5. The result is a matrix composed of topics in columns and interviewees in rows which leads to concrete text passages in the cells. This matrix can be interpreted focusing on certain interviewees or categories but also allows us to compare the cases with each other [72] (p. 50). For this paper, we put the focus on the main categories “urban development”, “Santa Cruz Verde 2030” and “sustainability”. These categories were directly related to our paper’s topic.

## 5. Results: The Stakeholders’ Perspectives

This section presents the empirical findings of the conducted interviews and puts them into their theoretical context. Two subtopics are addressed. We firstly analyze the general planning process before we deconstruct the image created by primary stakeholders.

### 5.1. Planning Process

In general, the mere fact that the local oil refinery is going to be dismantled is perceived as positive by all of the stakeholders. It is rather the surprising announcement of the megaproject and the public–private agreement itself that causes contradicting perceptions among the interviewees. For some of them, such as those from the real estate sector, the project is not advancing fast enough. The representative of the local real estate association points out that from his point of view, “there is no formalized agreement” [74] (l.6). He even questions the title of the announcement and insists that the document should rather be regarded as “pre-agreement” [74] (l.25). He justifies this opinion with the lack of concreteness in the document. Indeed, it remains rather vague, as the contract presented by CEPESA and the townhall describes very general goals such as sustainability and the remodeling of Santa Cruz’s waterfront. The urbanistic figures it contains, such as planning parameters, have provoked confusion among the interviewees. Presenting concrete numbers is far too rushed [75] (l.8), as they do not have a legal bindingness. This is why all of the stakeholders highly doubt the quality of the planning process and criticize prevailing uncertainties in the plan. Critics range from “there is literally nothing” [74] (l.24) to “it’s a plan without urbanism” [76] (l.18). It is not untypical in urban development contracts to start with a rather general first version. This can be concretized and complemented by further agreements [77]. However, the prevailing document lacks a concrete (time) schedule, which could increase its transparency and acceptability.



Apart from that, one out of five interviewees felt sufficiently informed about the project itself. Only the representative of a monument preservation association gained insights into the process because she actively investigated. She also had contacts to primary stakeholders in charge due to her former political career [76] (l.22). The other interviewees clearly criticized the communication management of the megaproject's initiators [74] (l.24) [78] (l.32). One interviewee summarized it in the following way: "In the initial phase of the agreement between CEPESA and the town hall the process has not been transparent at all, which means, [ . . . ] they sat down, they negotiated, they signed and there was nothing communicative about it" [79] (l.32). This policy of non-transparency is linked directly to the fact that no considerable public discussion is taking place: "Those of us who could have been critical did not have enough information to be critical" [79] (l.56). This observation represents what has been described in Section 2 as the underlying intention to prevent critical opinions. The problem is considered to be a structural one: "Certain political organizations have a habit of not being transparent, but of doing everything behind the citizen's back. It's a historical habit" [79] (l.38). This non-transparent situation leaves stakeholders disappointed, also because it seems to be a regular thing in the city's urban planning: "Every time the politicians go ahead, without considering that they motivate us and then the years pass by, as it has happened in so many cases" [74] (l.6).

## 5.2. Image and the Political Dimension

As has already been indicated in Section 2, a strong focus on image- and marketing-related instruments is a typical characteristic of current megaprojects. This is also the case in the prevailing case study. The interviewees notice "a very strong marketing campaign [ . . . ]" [79] (l.32). In that respect, not only representative 3D models in images and videos were published by the initiators [76] (l.100). The whole marketing campaign is perceived as disproportional: "these are information and news with a hype, simply to create sensationalism in that moment" [74] (l.6). However, "behind [the image], there is no contents" [76] (l.22).

The interviewees assign the strong motivation to present the megaproject to the media and sell it as a success rather to the townhall than to CEPESA [79] (p. 32). According to the interviews, this is based on political interests. A direct relation to the upcoming municipal election is suggested, which took place only eleven months after the first announcement of Santa Cruz Verde 2030 [74] (l.22) [79] (l.52). Some even see in the upcoming election campaign the main motivation behind the project: "I know that their priority was to announce the project before the elections" [76] (l.22). For the former mayor Bermúdez and his party, the regionalist Coalición Canaria, this strategy has paid off, as they increased their result about 28% and defended the largest parliamentary group with currently more than one third of all city councilors [80]. Nevertheless, they lost the mayoralty temporarily. The oppositional left-wing and liberal parties formed a stronger coalition that led to a change in the municipal government in June 2019. The liberal party Ciudadanos was part of this new government and occupied henceforth the area of urban planning in the city. It thus became responsible for Santa Cruz Verde 2030. Interestingly, in the interview, the new head of the municipal planning office admitted that he did not even study in detail the public-private agreement announced by the anterior government [75] (l.5). This symbolizes the value he assigns to the document. From this moment on, a policy change concerning the announced megaproject was observed. A much less public-oriented approach was focused on. It follows the argument that a deeper analysis of the megaproject's setting, its opportunities and limitations is required [75] (l.8). The interviewee places the responsibility for that on the technicians who elaborate the new land-use plan of the city [75] (l.10). The less publicity-related way of working of the new government has also led to the perception that the new government did not bring forward the megaproject sufficiently [74] (l.6). The preservationist puts it this way: "They still don't know what to do" [76] (l.36), while the representative of the environmental association observes that "with the new government in charge, the whole project has been paralyzed" [79] (l.82).

In July 2020, the former mayor Bermúdez was able to regain the mayoralty because the city councilor of Ciudadanos (who was head of the planning office) left the government due to internal conflicts [81]. It is not clear if the megaproject Santa Cruz Verde 2030 was part of the conflicts that the politician described. It has also led to a change in public communication with regard to the megaproject—again. Since July, new pieces of information on how the megaproject is advancing have been distributed by the new government. This was promoted as a new set of policies including the reopening of the negotiations with CEPSA, but also the establishment of a task force [10,82]. However, this most recent episode of the planning process did not form part of our research because the interviews had taken place before the government changed again.

The aforementioned findings reveal how the megaproject has become highly political. Both opposition and government argue on how to best approach this highly complex project. The current government under Bermúdez is trying to establish new alliances with secondary stakeholders such as the architectural association of the island [10]. The aim is to integrate the knowledge on urbanism of this institution into the planning process. Simultaneously, there is still an ongoing legal dispute promoted by the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), which denounced the public–private contract to be misleading. According to their perception, it must not be considered as a contract because it lacks legal cohesiveness. The court decision is still underway [83].

## 6. Discussion

This paper aimed to explore the stakeholders' perceptions of the megaproject Santa Cruz Verde 2030 in Tenerife, Spain. This was conducted using qualitative interviews. Our study shows how two different local governments applied two extremes of approaching the megaproject and turned it into a political arena where their conflict is waged. The government that initiated the project in summer 2018 (led by Coalición Canaria and Partido Popular) was highly interested in pushing the megaproject forward by any means and put a strong focus on creating an image around it. This was regarded as window-dressing by the interviewees. The subsequent government that was in charge from June 2019 until July 2020 (PSOE and Ciudadanos) had a more conservative point of view. It promoted an in-depth analysis by the technicians of the local planning authority without attention-grabbing means. However, it did not comment on the megaproject and failed to inform the public regularly, which associates the stakeholders with a lack of willingness to proceed with the project. In this paper, we put the focus on the planning process before June 2019 and thus on the local government that initiated Santa Cruz Verde 2030 because our interviews took place only about four months after the political change. We want to discuss our main findings based on two aspects, namely, image and planning. It is our responsibility as researchers to help integrate these findings in the local context. We aim to do so by deliberating the results with relevant stakeholders, particularly those in charge, but also by joining the public discussion by means of the media.

### 6.1. *Creating the Image, Not Contents*

Firstly, with regard to image, Santa Cruz Verde 2030 reflects certain elements detected in other case studies and the academic discourse. As we depicted in Section 2, there is a new generation of megaprojects and Santa Cruz Verde 2030 fulfils several of the described characteristics [1,3]. The redevelopment of a brownfield site, a mixed-use concept and the (mis)use of sustainability concepts in marketing campaigns are some of these aspects. Our study could not prove one of the main points found in theory, namely, that the project's design was intended to avoid protest [3] (p. 760), as no interviews with the project initiators could be conducted.

However, it is the strong marketing campaign surrounding the megaproject that has initiated a critical discussion among the stakeholders. Interestingly, the mere fact that a new urban quarter is supposed to replace the local oil refinery is generally perceived as positive by the stakeholders. This is also because the industry provoked serious problems such as

contamination and urbanistic barriers in the city [5]. The described positive basic attitude helps to increase the general interest in the megaproject and also decreases protests against the idea itself. This is a difference compared to other megaprojects, where the concept is criticized, as it has been the case before the 2016 Olympics and the 2014 World Cup in Rio de Janeiro [84], the N2 Gateway project in Cape Town [85] or the reconfiguration of Valencia's waterfront to prepare it for The America's Cup and Formula 1 races [86]. It is surprising that the local stakeholders in Santa Cruz show such a critical opinion on the megaproject, and this is due to the strong emphasis on marketing- and image-related topics promoted by primary stakeholders. We explain this focus on the image with the underlying neoliberal logics, where megaprojects are typically "state-led and state-financed" [20] (p. 556).

The non-transparent practices in megaprojects have become symptomatic of this so-called "post-politic city", which describes how open discussions and decision processes are substituted by not legitimized and camouflaged undemocratic structures [87]. The list of non-transparent megaprojects is long, with examples such as Barangaroo (Sydney) [88], Belgrade's waterfront [89] or the Olympic Games in Vancouver in 2010 [90] at the forefront. Further, the Hafencity in Hamburg is an example of where a broad civic participation has not taken place. However, public interests in participating in the planning process have also not been extensive, as neighbors did not feel directly affected [91] (p. 49). The Hafencity is definitely not a showcase of sustainability, but it has addressed several urgent questions in urban development (such as density, diversity, energy and sustainable building) [91] (p. 49). Consequently, the question remains if this project has been sustainable or not [92], considering the fact that less participation apparently makes it easier for local governments to enforce their plan top-down. This is what has been observed by local stakeholders in Santa Cruz, and what is described as "new forms of urban governance" in cities worldwide [13] (p. 8).

Our case represents a significant number of megaprojects with a strong public "control over land use" [93] (p. 168), in order to protect the interests of some classes. Within the context of an entrepreneurial city, we identify two reasons for that. To begin with, in the logic of the so-called CABERNET A-B-C model, Santa Cruz Verde 2030 can be classified as a "potential development site", where high land values are expected, but there are also high reclamation costs due to decontamination and deindustrialization. These projects "are on the borderline of profitability" [60] and hence require a public-private partnership to reduce risks. This significant involvement of public money has to be defended by public stakeholders. A positive image of such projects helps to communicate the benefits of public involvement. Apart from that, by gaining an international audience, multiple direct and indirect effects for the project and the city are expected [15] (p. 144). In theory, Tenerife can reach out easily to this international audience. Based on the island's function as an important tourism destination, there are connections to the rest of Europe but also Africa's west coast. It is not surprising at all that international authors started to report on Santa Cruz Verde 2030 in German or English ([94,95], for example, and transport the project's idea to other countries and target groups. We consider this as a first step to increase the project's visibility in the global competition [21] (p. 54) and attract further capital in the future. This is a goal described in the public-private partnership between Santa Cruz and CEPESA [4] (p. 2). Our case study also shows that neoliberalism does not mean that the state is "less interventionist [ . . . ]; rather, it organizes and rationalizes its interventions in different ways" [96] (p. 447). This is the case for many large-scale urban development projects [97] (p. 79). It is also reflected by the fact that it is the local government in Santa Cruz that promotes the megaproject, while the landowner CEPESA remains in the background.

## 6.2. Management of or for Stakeholders?

Secondly, with regard to planning, neoliberal practices have been applied. Megaprojects are seen as a means to build the city and to avoid existing planning mechanisms. Deconstructing these projects reveals non-transparent planning practices, as has been illustrated by Lehrer and Laidley [1] (p. 795). Rather than applying a participative under-

standing of planning, it is the interest of selected middle and upper classes that dominates megaprojects' concepts [20] (p. 547). This is one of the main doubts that stakeholders pointed out about Santa Cruz Verde 2030, namely, the fact that the private interests of the landowner (CEPSA) are put first. Sustainability is often used to greenwash these aspects and justify the legitimization of the project [3] (p. 764). In the case of Santa Cruz Verde 2030, it is difficult to find stakeholders who would seriously oppose the idea of dedicating more than 40% of the area to green spaces. However, this does not imply that the other 60% does not have to be discussed, and this is exactly what has not taken place in the public discourse.

The highly untransparent planning process stands in complete contradiction to what has been said by project initiators, who promised "civic participation in every phase of the project" [4] (p. 6). The mismanagement of information, which is regarded as intended by the secondary stakeholders, leads to negative reactions. While some of the stakeholders are just very skeptical about the feasibility of the project, others are disappointed because of the expectations it raises. Santa Cruz Verde 2030 is presented in a way that does not encourage public discussions but puts a focus on image-related aspects. This is seen as a proof for the fact that the project's initiators are more concerned about selling the concept as a success, rather than putting emphasis on contents or participation. It is this culture of not integrating secondary stakeholders that is seen by other scholars [8,98,99].

The planning approach during this first two years since Santa Cruz Verde 2030 has been announced is a "management of stakeholders" [100] (p. 3), which is characterized as manipulative and puts the economic perspective first. Instead, a "management for stakeholders" [100] (p. 3) regards secondary actors as crucial partners whose integration might increase complexity, but also leads to a more sustainable output. Santa Cruz Verde 2030 represents the first approach with a unidirectional flow of information that aims to convince local stakeholders rather than offering concrete opportunities to participate. Although Di Maddaloni and Davis [8] (p. 1538) pointed out that there is still no study that proves how the "management for stakeholders" approach is beneficial to megaproject performance, our study shows that not integrating these secondary stakeholders leaves all of them disaffected. This increases the gap between primary and secondary stakeholders—a matrix where protests against the megaproject are likely to grow. Some of the stakeholders have already started to attack the project. The political opposition has put forward a court case on the public–private agreement in December 2018 [83]. Apart from that, the local association for monument preservation has started an initiative to prevent some of the industrial structures from being demolished [76] (l.18). They sent an application to Tenerife's government and therefore might put terms on the megaproject, without even being integrated by the primary stakeholders. Both examples show how not letting these stakeholders participate might lead to time delays in the planning processes and cost overruns, even if we just take an entrepreneurial point of view [101] (p. 1).

However, the secondary stakeholders feel that Santa Cruz Verde 2030 was used as a political instrument right before the municipal election in May 2019 by Coalición Canaria and Partido Popular. This seems to be a typical habit in the context of megaprojects [102] (p. 251), but, at the same time, megaprojects play a decisive role "in the erosion of democracy" [103] (p. 68). The mechanisms used to implement megaprojects into urbanism indicate an authoritative form of making decisions, as the case of Valencia shows [103] (p. 80). This is reproduced in many cases worldwide and represents the so-called post-democratic way of governing [104]. According to Tarazona Vento [103] (p. 71), this leads to a "depoliticization" of the project because it disappoints the other stakeholders [74] (l.6) and prevents them from participating [79] (l.56).

Our study reveals various deficits from different stakeholders' points of view. More research has to be conducted to understand the project initiators' standpoint, although finding an access to them is difficult due to the high political relevance of the topic. However, this will contribute to a deeper understanding of the wider urban process. What research on megaprojects can do is broaden methods and approaches on how to integrate stakeholders

and how to manage a truly reciprocal communication. The first steps have already been carried out, but it has been shown that there is still a “limited knowledge about the broader involvement of secondary actors” [8] (p. 1552).

This analysis indicates that integrating secondary stakeholders offers the opportunity to benefit from a large pool of knowledge, as the interviewees actively propose ideas to improve the planning process. This entails the request to enable the integration of stakeholders from different backgrounds [76] (l.24). Moreover, an international planning competition is suggested to increase the quality of the project’s output [74] (l.29). Apart from that, induced gentrification processes as they have occurred in Cabo-Llanos are seen as a major threat in neighboring quarters of the new megaproject and should be tackled *ex ante* [79] (l.120).

Our research took place in a pre-COVID-19 setting. This does not mean that the global pandemic will not affect the megaproject, its planning process or the perception of it. On the contrary, in the light of COVID-19, the integration of stakeholders is more important than ever before. Recent studies indicate that the consequences of the pandemic are disruptive and will change the urban system in many ways [105–107]. Santa Cruz Verde 2030 should integrate the lessons learnt during 2020, for example, how to make the urbanism more resilient [108]. This is relevant because there is not only a relationship between the COVID-19 susceptibility and socioeconomic characteristics on the neighborhood scale [109,110]. The pandemic is also expected to increase urban inequalities [111,112]. This will add to the polarized setting of Santa Cruz’s southwest, where, adjacent to the oil refinery, both high and low socioeconomic vulnerabilities have been found [49] (p. 78). As lower-income households are hit hardest by COVID-19, for example, due to unemployment [113] (p. 3), the vulnerability to be displaced by gentrification will rise too [114].

This perspective alone gives sufficient reasons to accompany the megaproject from a scientific point of view, particularly against the background of the existing trajectories of touristification and gentrification in Santa Cruz [53]. Letting local stakeholders participate is one feasible approach that will help to ensure a more sustainable output since it is the diversity of stakeholders that makes the city.

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