

Title of abstract (use 'Title' style)

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ABSTRACT

INTERROGATING THE LEGITIMACY TO ENTER INTO A SOCIAL LICENCE: A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

Discussions about the significance of the social license phenomenon have been increasing over the last two decades, yet the trend has been to approach it from a company perspective. Over the same period, there have been increasing challenges in mine-community relations, and company interventions have not led to the desired outcomes. A credible process for achieving a social licence within a complex and historically sensitive context is currently not in place, which has perpetuated the feelings of dissatisfaction and has led to serious conflict between mining communities and companies. The literature revealed a lack of clarity on the role of the community in the process, necessitating an interrogation of the phenomenon from a community perspective.

Legitimacy theory was used as the basis of the study. The multi-dimensional and dynamic nature of the study necessitated the use of qualitative methods and an inductive approach, based upon a case study within two South African mining communities.

The results of the study demonstrated that communities are limited in influencing the social licence, and this highlighted the need to incorporate community specific legitimacy, which more closely reflects the reality within communities (their diversity, informality, broad representation, and dynamic nature). The lack of agreement (emanating from communities, government and industry) on legitimate community leadership significantly also impacts on the social licence process. Communities are unable to articulate their expectations to mining companies, and the requirements for a social licence are not being satisfied. The study also highlighted the deep and complex nature of discourse transition, and that mining companies must concentrate on understanding context and produce context-specific interventions.

This research contributes by extending the theorisation of legitimacy, as it relates to the social licence, by adding the concept of community legitimacy and proposes a community leadership framework, to incorporate this aspect. A conceptual model, which integrates the context-specific nuances, is therefore proposed for sectors which are dependent upon achieving accord with stakeholders via a social contract, and are experiencing increasing complexity and social tensions relating to their operations. Such a framework would facilitate engagement through representative structures and result in a more robust social licence outcome.