Public Acceptance in Mining

Click to start

By the end of this DTM, you will be able to:

- Define public acceptance and tell why it matters
- Understand the levels and key factors of public acceptance
- Understand who is the public in mining governance

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How to study this DTM

Your path through the DTM:

1. Begin with What is Public Acceptance? to familiarize yourself with the key concept.
2. Navigate through the topic hubs to explore why public acceptance matters and how it is formed.
3. Open the detailed pages and examples by clicking the interactive elements.
4. Use the Back buttons to move between sections.
5. Consider how different stakeholders may view the same project differently.
6. Complete the module by reviewing the Key Takeaways and reflecting on the examples presented.

Time needed
20 minutes

Format
self-study

How to explore
click to explore/ return to the main hub

Files
PDF + H5P (NEXPERT website)

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This is how a 'how to study' slide guides the learner through the DTM.

Navigation hub

Figure out the meaning and application of public acceptance in mining

What is public acceptance?	Why it matters?	What are the different levels of acceptance?	What factors count?	Why perspectives matter?	Key takeaways

Click on the boxes to explore each item.

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Public acceptance

refers to how willing people and societal actors are to support or allow certain uses of natural resources or projects, such as mining, forestry, wind farms, or water use.

Imagine a plan to open an open-pit mine close to your home is published.

How would you react? What about your community? Would there be different reactions?

Return to Hub

Why it matters

The more acceptable the project is, the more likely it is to (effectively) achieve the desired outcome.

The focus on the acceptance of mining and on the responsibilities of the mining industry has been steadily intensifying.

Public acceptance has become **a key challenge** for the mining sector's future development.

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Acceptance can range across different levels:

Click to learn what these are about!

Low: Opposition

Medium: Acceptance

High: Support

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Acceptance

Acceptance is often more passive or neutral reaction.

For example, acceptance is evident when the local community neither opposes nor supports the project but allows it to proceed.

This can also be referred to as tolerance.

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Support

Support is a form of acceptance that people actively show.

For example, support is shown when a local community speaks in favor of a project at public meetings or in the media.

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Opposition

Opposition occurs if the project is not accepted.

For example, opposition takes the form of campaigning against and protesting a project to stop it.

In the face of opposition, a project might be harder to pass, delayed, or even cancelled.

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What factors count?

The level of public acceptance is formed based on three key factors:

What is the project like?

Where is the project located?

Who evaluates acceptance?

Return to Hub

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What are the project and its impacts like?

Click to learn more!

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Project characteristics

What is known about the project itself, such as its size, type (open-pit or underground), and duration of operations, affects how acceptability is evaluated.

In addition, the characteristics of the company and how trustworthy it is perceived shape acceptability. Issues such as transparency, communication, and community engagement affect the company's image and perceived trustworthiness.

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Impacts on the environment

The anticipated or realized impacts on the environment, such as pollution to water or the surrounding nature, fragmentation of habitats, and overall effects on the landscape, shape how people evaluate the acceptability of a project.

Also, information and fears of long-term impacts and their management during closure and site rehabilitation affect acceptability.

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Impacts on society

Whether a project has positive or negative impacts on society, the local community, and the everyday lives of its residents has significant value for acceptability.

These socio-economic impacts include possible employment opportunities, impact on other livelihoods such as tourism, and impact on the overall vitality of the region.

Anticipated or experienced everyday disturbances, such as noise, increased traffic, or dust, as well as impacts on health and safety, likely also affect acceptability.

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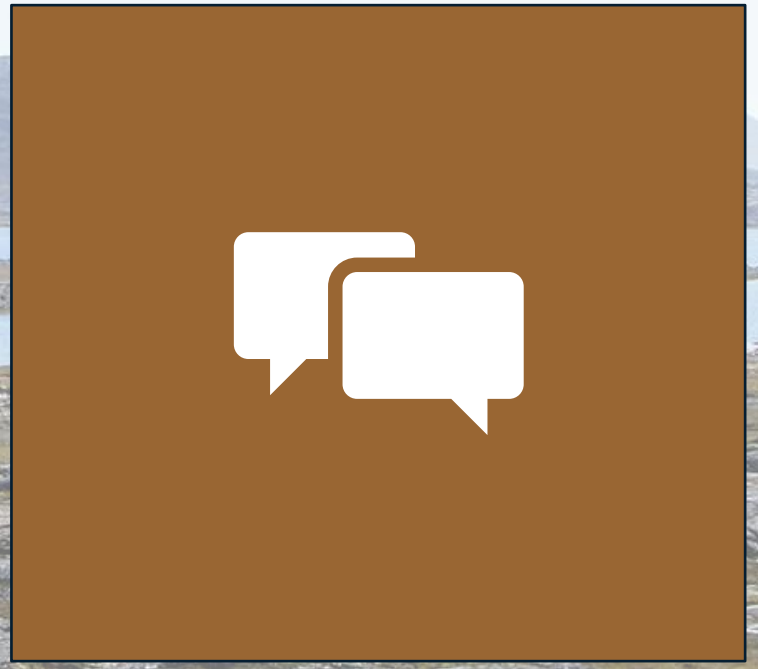
Where is the project located?

Click to reveal!



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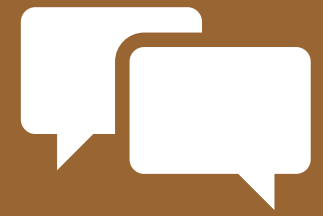
Where is the project located?

Geographical location:
e.g., are there water systems, nature conservation or cultural heritage sites nearby



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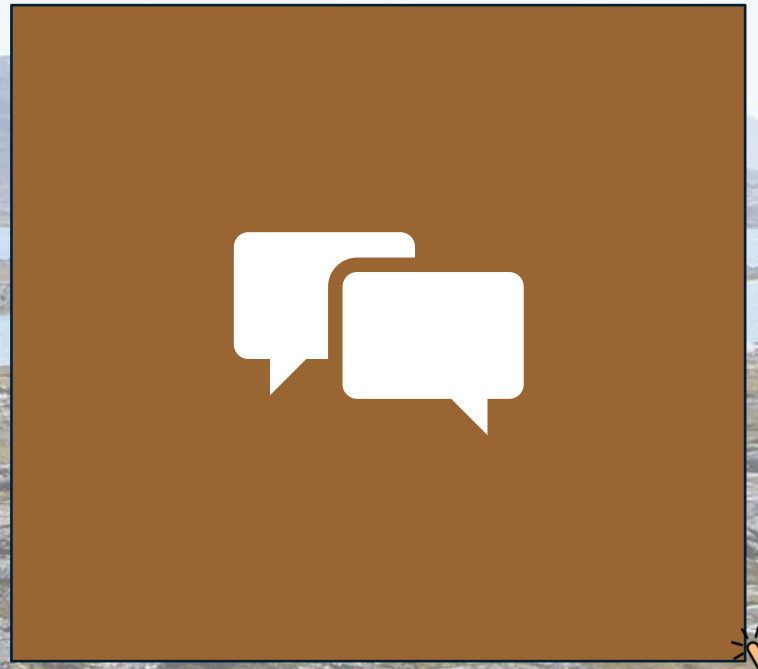
Where is the project located?

History:
e.g., are there previous experiences of mining in the region



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Where is the project located?

Political context:
e.g., what is the prevailing political climate, does the mining industry divide opinions

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Who evaluates acceptance?

Click a triangle to learn more!

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Society and policymakers

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Who are the stakeholders?

What are the key issues?

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Society and policymakers

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Governments, regulators, non-governmental organizations, and the broader national public

What are the key issues?

Back

Society and policymakers

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Who are the stakeholders?

How is the industry perceived in politics?
Are there strong and influential lobbying organizations?
Are there influential civil society campaigns?
How are the industry and the project discussed in the media?

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The market

Who are the stakeholders?

What are the key issues?

Back

The market

Investors, companies, customers, and supply-chain partners

What are the key issues?

Back

The market

Who are the stakeholders?

What is the demand for the minerals?
How does the market value fluctuate?
Is the company a trusted actor with a good reputation?
Are there project-related social risks, e.g., conflicts, ethical concerns?
Does the project meet industry or sustainability standards?

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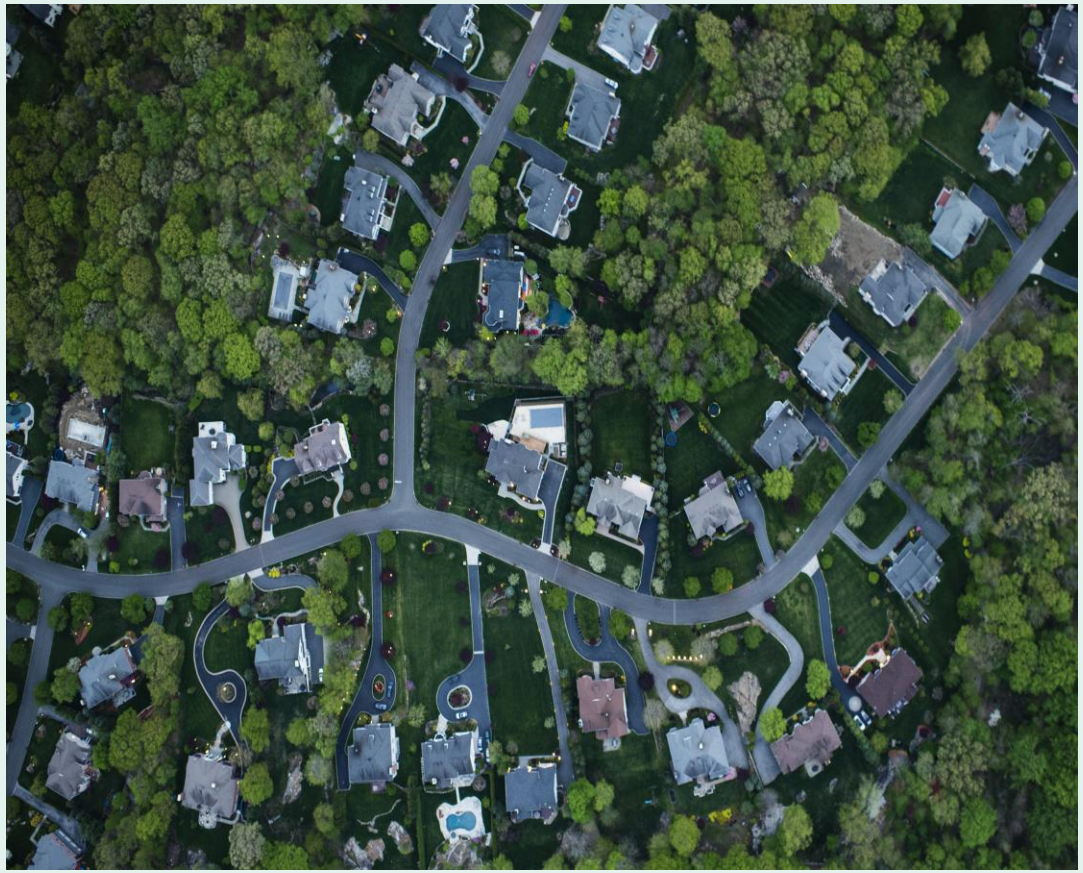
Local community



Who are the stakeholders?

What are the key issues?

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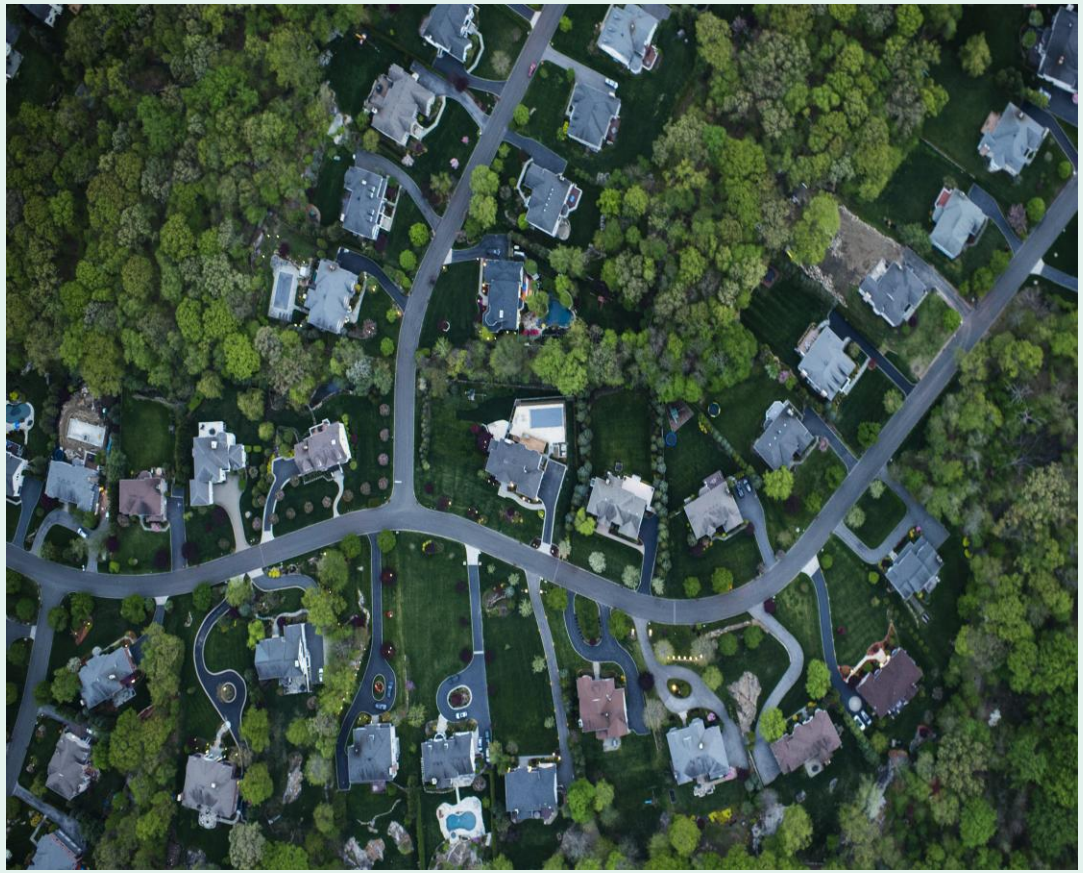
Local community



Local residents, municipalities, landowners, fishers, reindeer herders, Indigenous communities, and other groups directly affected by the project

What are the key issues?

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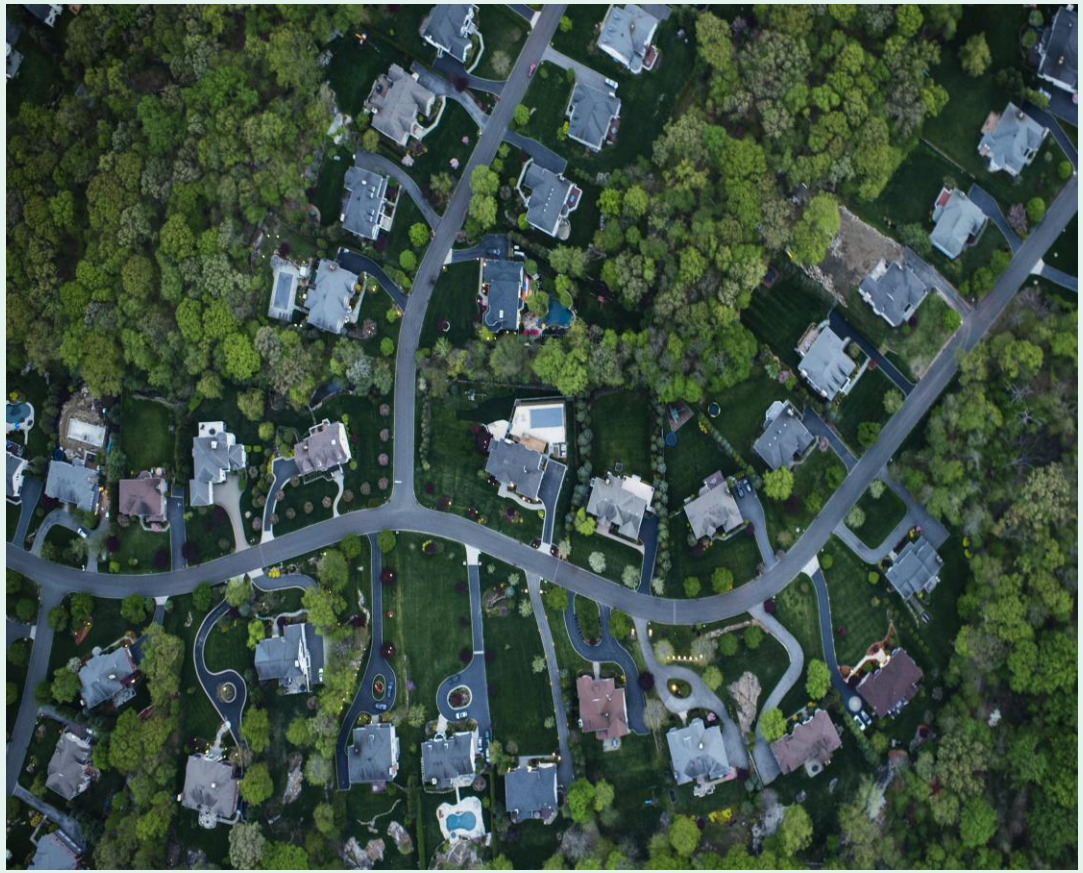
Local community



Who are the stakeholders?

Are there proven or perceived local risks: water contamination, noise, dust, biodiversity loss?
Are there direct impacts on local livelihoods?
Are there local benefits: jobs, taxes, infrastructure, compensation?
Are there earlier experiences with mining activities?
Does the company meaningfully involve locals?
Are the regulations and authorities trusted?

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Why care about different perspectives

Public acceptance is built on the interlinked perspectives of the society, market, and local communit.

These all affect the conditions for the project to proceed.

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See examples

Why care about different perspectives

Example 1:

a mine project may have strong political support but fail due to local community opposition.

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More examples

Why care about different perspectives

Example 2:

Markets and politics support minerals for the energy transition, public protests or court cases can halt the project.

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More examples

Why care about different perspectives

Example 3:

A mine with local support may still be unviable if investors or buyers reject it due to responsibility concerns or if the global market prices are too low for feasible operation.

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More examples

Why care about different perspectives

Example 4:

A local community may support a proposed mine, but national environmental organizations and urban populations oppose the project for its environmental impacts.

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Key takeaways

Public acceptance is the reaction of the society, market, and local community to a project, such as a mine.

Together, the **characteristics** of the project, its **impacts** on the environment and surrounding society, as well as the key **stakeholders**, affect the level of acceptance.

If acceptance is not gained, the project can face opposition.

In the next session: From broad reaction of public acceptance to community-company relations of social license to operate

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Sources & further reading

Data sources

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- Wüstenhagen, R., Wolsink, M. & Bürer, M. 2007. Social acceptance of renewable energy innovation: An introduction to the concept. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2006.12.001

Learn more / videos

- World Economic Forum, 4 ways to build social acceptance for critical mineral projects: https://www.weforum.org/stories/energy-transition/social-acceptance-critical-minerals/

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This is what a references slide can look like — sources and links to go deeper.