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PORTUGUESA

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES: A MULTI-CASE STUDY IN THE
COPPER MINING INDUSTRIES IN THE NORTH OF CHILE

Dissertation submitted to Universidade Católica Portuguesa
to obtain a Master's Degree in Communication Studies,
Strategic Communication and Leadership

By

Javier Muñoz Hernandez

Faculty of Human Sciences

September, 2024



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Abstract

Copper mining is a crucial industry for the Chilean economy, but its high levels of extraction and industrial activity create numerous external impacts, which can lead to conflicts with nearby communities (Schorr, 2018). Community engagement and the use of strategic communication are approaches that enable the establishment of key moments of dialogue between communities and companies. This in turn facilitates the consensus of development models that can make mining an activity compatible with the demands of its stakeholders.

This study explores how Chilean mining companies and local communities engage with each other, focusing on the role played by strategic communication in this process. It highlights the importance of dialogue and two-way communication in fostering community involvement. Furthermore, the study aims to understand the opinions of community engagement professionals regarding the effectiveness of current programs, as well as the perspectives of community leaders on the engagement strategies being implemented. With these objectives in mind, the research questions that guided the study were as follows:

- 1) What community engagement strategies do mining companies in Chile use, and what role does strategic communication play in these strategies?
- 2) How do key community stakeholders and professionals involved in managing the community-company relationship assess the effectiveness of these strategies, and what challenges do they face in their implementation?

By drawing upon a qualitative methodological approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with professionals from the mining sector who are in charge of creating and implementing community engagement plans. Community leaders were also interviewed for this study in order to ascertain their evaluation and views of these plans. After the data collection process, the interviews were analyzed using content analysis.

The results show that the companies in this study are inclined to implement transformative strategies that include communities in the final decision-making and in the co-management of social development programs. However, transactional approaches (Bowen et al., 2010) and the

prevailing perception of communities as a risk for the industry are still present in the discourse of the mining companies' participants. The same result was noted in the responses of community leaders, whose discourses strongly permeates the concept of Social License to Operate (SLO) as an element that gives relevance to the power of their consent over mining projects. The participant's responses also indicates that strategic communication plays a relevant role in facilitating the dialogue between communities and companies. This is clearly expressed in the creation of specific communication channels that allow the diffusion of different key messages in a focused manner. Both groups of participants emphasized that holding public consultation activities and face-to-face meetings was crucial for reaching agreements, building mutual trust, and advancing joint projects.

The conclusions of this study may help identify the most effective practices that enable communities and mining companies to seek common understanding and involve communities in the development of mining in Chile and other regions. Additionally, it can contribute to the study of strategic communication and its ability to influence stakeholders, supporting the achievement of strategic objectives that are crucial for companies.

Keywords: Chilean Copper Mining Industry, Community Engagement, Strategic communications, Social License to Operate (SLO), Consultation meetings

Resumo

A exploração mineira de cobre é uma indústria crucial para a economia chilena, no entanto os seus elevados níveis de extração e atividade industrial criam numerosos impactos externos que podem levar a conflitos com as comunidades vizinhas (Schorr, 2018). O envolvimento da comunidade e o uso da comunicação estratégica são, neste sentido, abordagens e estratégias que permitem importantes momentos de diálogo entre as comunidades e empresas em questão o que facilita o consenso de modelos de desenvolvimento que podem tornar a indústria de extração de atividade mineira numa atividade compatível com as exigências das suas partes interessadas.

Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar as ações e abordagens de comunicação estratégica das empresas mineiras, assim como das comunidades chilenas no processo de envolvimento comunitário, focando essencialmente no papel da comunicação estratégica durante este processo. O estudo explora também a forma como os profissionais da indústria mineira avaliam a eficácia dos seus programas de comunicação estratégica de forma a envolver as comunidades, assim como as perspetivas dos líderes comunitários sobre as mesmas estratégias de comunicação. Com estes objetivos em mente, as questões de investigação que orientaram o estudo foram as seguintes:

- 1) Quais estratégias de envolvimento comunitário são utilizadas pelas empresas mineiras no Chile, e qual o papel da comunicação estratégica nessas estratégias?
- 2) Como é que as principais partes interessadas da comunidade e os profissionais envolvidos na gestão da relação entre a comunidade e a empresa avaliam a eficácia dessas estratégias, e que desafios enfrentam na sua implementação?

Através de uma abordagem metodológica de carácter qualitativa, foram realizadas entrevistas semi-estruturadas com profissionais responsáveis pela criação e implementação de planos de envolvimento comunitário, assim como entrevistas com líderes comunitários, de forma a melhor entender e conhecer a avaliação de ambas as partes sobre os planos de comunicação estratégica. Após o processo de recolha de dados, as entrevistas foram analisadas através de uma análise de conteúdo.

Os dados revelam que a maioria das empresas tem interesse em implementar estratégias de comunicação transformadoras que incluam as comunidades na tomada de decisões e na gestão de programas de desenvolvimento social. No entanto, as abordagens transacionais e a percepção das comunidades como um risco para a indústria são dois aspetos ainda muito presentes no discurso dos respondentes que trabalham nas indústrias extrativas de mineral. O mesmo se observa nas respostas dos representantes que lideram a parte comunitárias, sendo este um discurso que permeia fortemente o conceito de Licença Social para Operar (LSO) como elemento que dá relevância ao poder de seu consentimento sobre os projetos de mineração.

Os dados obtidos através das entrevistas com os participantes também mostram que a comunicação estratégica tem um papel relevante na moderação do diálogo entre comunidades e empresas, o que revela a crescente necessidade de criar canais de comunicação específicos que permitam a disseminação de diferentes mensagens-chave, de forma mais direcionada e estruturada. As momentos de consulta e as reuniões presenciais entre ambas as partes foram destacadas pelas duas partes dos grupos de participantes como vitais para a obtenção de acordos, assim como a construção de confiança mútua e o avanço de projetos conjuntos.

As conclusões deste estudo podem ajudar a identificar as práticas mais eficazes que permitem às comunidades e às empresas mineiras alcançar um entendimento comum e envolver as comunidades no desenvolvimento da mineração no Chile e noutras regiões. Adicionalmente, pode contribuir para o estudo da comunicação estratégica e da sua capacidade de influenciar os stakeholders, apoiando a concretização de objetivos estratégicos fundamentais para as empresas.

Palavras-chaves: Comunicação estratégica, Indústria chilena de extração de minerais, comunicação comunitário, Licença Social para Operar (LSO), Reuniões de consulta

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As the grandson and son of individuals who have dedicated their lives to copper mining, it is a deep honor for me to contribute to the study of an industry that, with its lights and shadows, has shaped both my life and that of my family. Exploring a subject so personal from the perspective of communications has been a rewarding challenge, one that has prompted me to reflect on the significance of the field I chose for my master's studies.

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the Universidade Católica Portuguesa and the professors who supported my efforts to link my curiosity about copper culture with the world of communications. I firmly believe that the role of universities is to promote interdisciplinarity and the generation of academic content that challenge the students. In this case, I am certain that much of what I have explored in this thesis will stay with me as I return to Chile, where I hope to contribute to the development of my beloved country.

I must extend special thanks to my advisor, Professor Sandra Borges Tavares. Her insightful guidance, patience, and, above all, her kindness, were invaluable in the completion of this thesis, which at times posed significant difficulties. I will always cherish our meetings at Padaria Portuguesa and the late-night calls where she consistently provided me with her best advice.

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Introduction

Chile is a country whose history has been profoundly shaped by the mining sector. Since the early 16th century, when the territory was first colonized, the discovery and settlement of the nation was transformed by the interest of its inhabitants in finding deposits of different metals that would allow them to generate productive activities. Meanwhile, the diversity of communities that have settled near the mining wells have seen their lives transformed and impacted by the mining activity over the decades. This implied either suffering its externalities or enjoying its benefits. Consequently, the community-mining sector relationship in the Chilean context is a complex, if not sensitive, subject to cover. The reason for this is mainly due to the large number of historic factors that have influenced the mutual perception between citizens and the mining companies, and how the media has been portraying this type of relationship by contributing to different views formed by the public opinion (Torrent et al., 2012).

In the last decades, the evolution of a new type of citizen, globalized and more informed (Jensen & Sandström, 2011) means that communities are also becoming more demanding, informed and literate, about what they expect to receive from mining companies or to what extent they are willing to tolerate their negative externalities and impacts. In parallel, the copper mining industry has gained much ground in the Chilean economy, becoming one of the main contributors to the country's GDP, the fiscal coffers and the economic development of large regions of the country (Rodriguez et al., 2021). Considering the dichotomy between the need to boost the economy and guarantee acceptable treatment to communities, mining companies and communities have found in community engagement a mechanism by which they can communicate and reach points of agreement regarding what practices are considered acceptable and how the benefits of this industry will be shared. To this end, the communication aspect of this process is critical in terms of outcomes and the relationship between these two parts.

This thesis identifies and examines the different strategic communication lines and actions carried out by some well-established Chilean mining companies and communities in terms of community engagement, with a special interest in exploring how the use of strategic communication plays a role in this process. At the same time, this research aims to understand

further the evaluation process put into place by mining companies' professionals regarding the rationale and effectiveness behind their community engagement programs as well the opinion of community leaders on the same strategic communication approaches aimed at them.

In addition to the research conducted in order to understand the industry practices of community engagement in the Chilean context, the objective of this thesis is to understand the main elements that guide decision-making in the voice of the protagonists of this relationship, identifying the challenges and opportunities they see in the use of strategic communications and community engagement as a way of achieving organizational goals. Identifying the role played by strategic communication and community engagement when managing intangible assets like reputation and social legitimacy will be important for advancing the field of stakeholder engagement in the extractive industries.

Based on the aforementioned research objectives, this study is structured around the following research questions. First, to understand what community engagement strategies are used by mining companies and the role they attribute to strategic communication within these strategies. Second, to assess how key community stakeholders and professionals who implement the community-companies relationship evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies and the challenges they encounter.

Taking into consideration the stated objectives and research questions, this work is divided into three main sections: literature review, methodology and discussion chapter. The first part of this thesis is divided into Chapters 1 and 2, where the main conceptual elements of the study are reviewed and critically analyzed.

In Chapter 1, I discuss the key theories by drawing upon the international case studies that address the relationship between stakeholders and organizations. In the first part of this chapter, strategic communication, which is at the core of this thesis work, is described as a means for companies to manage their intangible assets, such as its image, reputation, and social legitimacy. Additionally, relevant concepts related to strategic communication are explored and expanded, including the role of stakeholders as a significant audience and strategy as a tool to plan efforts and achieve objectives. The second part reviews the concept of community engagement,

highlighting its importance in managing community relations and exploring cases that illustrate the benefits and challenges of this practice. Finally, the third part focuses on explaining why the community is a unique and significant stakeholder in the mining sector, distinguishing it from typical stakeholders. Moreover, the main ways in which communities interact with companies are outlined.

Chapter 2 frames the work within the Chilean context, with the aim to characterize the historical relationship and the development of communication strategies between mining companies and communities. The first part addresses the economic and cultural significance of mining in Chile by critiquing emblematic cases of conflicts between communities and mining companies. The final section explores key initiatives undertaken by the Chilean mining sector in terms of stakeholder engagement, as well as relevant legislation and guidelines that shape the actions of companies towards communities. Finally, it shows how direct communication with the communities, transparency in access to information and public participation are practices that are increasingly promoted in the Chilean mining sector.

Chapter 3 of this paper describes the methodology employed in the study to answer the main research questions of this study. By drawing upon, an inductive approach to the object of study, I used content analysis to analyze the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews with mining company professionals responsible for community engagement initiatives and community leaders involved in these interactions.

Finally, Chapter 4 analyses participants' experiences with key community engagement practices, including their evaluations and views on the role of strategic communications in the process. Additionally, in this chapter I explore how these findings relate to the main theories discussed in the literature review and the extent to which some of them fits within some of the identified body of scholarly.

Chapter 5 presents a general conclusion, highlighting key findings from the data analysis and their connection to the theories discussed in the literature review. It addresses the research questions that motivated the study and identifies areas for further exploration on the issues discussed in this paper. This chapter also identifies the study's limitations, and the challenges

faced during the research, which may have impacted the development of the proposed methods and the conclusions drawn from the data analysis.

PART I - Theoretical Framework

Chapter 1: The importance of strategic communications and corporate community engagement in the extractive industries

1.1. Beyond Natural Resources: Managing Intangible Assets Through the Use of Communication

Reputation is something that takes years to establish and seconds to ruin. This adage of common human knowledge is applicable to both people and organizations. Reputation is based on individuals' assessment of someone or something. This suggests that reputation is not something that cannot be controlled, as it depends on the subjective perception of a third party (Hartman & Lenk, 2001). While it is not possible to control reputation, the use of corporate communications strategies that target reputation management have shown to be effective in managing reputation and achieving reputation improvement (Cornelissen, 2023). Studies published by authors such as Aula & Heinonen (2016) have shown that the strategic analysis of the reputational situation, the creation of key meaningful messages and the selection of appropriate audiences can be decisive in reputation management.

In the case of companies, this is clearly manifested in the differentiation between brand and reputation. Organizations own and control their brand but have no direct control over their reputation and the image they project (Lewis, 2003). However, although it may be true that it is not always possible to control how the public views an organization, the actions from the organization and the way it presents to communicates to the public are determinant in terms of how it can influence and generate an alignment between the reputation expected by the company and that perceived by the public (Eccles et al., 2007).

Maintaining a positive reputation is a central element that can be enhanced through corporate communication strategies and the right communication strategies or tools (Karnaukhova & Polyanskaya, 2015). This can turn reputation and image management into a sustainable

competitive advantage that is very difficult for competitors to imitate, and with positive repercussions on the financial and business side of an organization (Torné et al., 2020). As I will demonstrate in the next sections of this chapter, reputation, public image and legitimacy, are concepts that all together reflect the social valuation of an organization. They are also argued as having a great influence on the positioning of mining companies concerning their communities (Svobodova et al., 2020).

Given to the fundamental importance of the aforementioned elements in the success of an organization, most companies have well established communication departments, with the aim of maintain and enhance the intangible assets of an organization, such as its reputation, credibility and public image (Watson & Kitchen, 2010). As stated by authors like Hallahan et al. (2007) and Frandsen & Johansen (2017), the area of strategic communications is a key one in this field as it examines ways in which companies intentionally use communications to accomplish their goals. For other authors, this area is aligned with the general objectives of an organization by allowing it to strengthen its position within its competitive environment (Alberti et al., 2005). In other words, this field of studies integrates communications as an element that can be managed by companies as another yet important tool that allows them to increase their value proposition and advance in achieving their goals (Thomas & Stephens, 2014).

Intangible assets are organizational resources that are difficult to measure or quantify, such as reputation or public image. Although they are often not included in the traditional elements considered when valuing a company, they can be crucial to an organization's performance and can have a great impact in the financial performance and in the internal culture (Ang & Wight, 2009). The interconnection between the intangible elements of a company with the success in achieving its objectives is the reason why the field of strategic communications has gained so much relevance during the last few years (Winkler & Etter, 2018). However, despite a greater interest in this field, its definitions and applications are often broad and different both in academia and business circles. The term “strategic communications” is used by various institutions, including companies, non-profit organizations, diplomatic bodies, universities, and government or military institutions (Zerfass et al., 2018). As a result, while a general definition

exists, the term is often linked to fields like public relations, management, propaganda, or marketing.

The term strategic communication is sometimes understood as the execution of communication campaigns that use media and information dissemination to achieve their goals. However, Frandsen & Johansen (2016) point out that, in addition to covering information dissemination processes, strategic communication also focuses on achieving long-term objectives and fulfilling the organization's mission. This is why the term strategic communication serves as a broad umbrella encompassing academic fields such as public relations and internal and external communications (Heide et al., 2018). While strategic communication aims to maintain and enhance an organization's image, it places less emphasis on consumers and prioritizes indirect relationships with communities and institutions (Falkheimer, 2014). Given the vital role that strategic communication can play in achieving an organization's overall strategic objectives, Van Ruler (2021) simply characterizes strategic communication as the role communication plays within the context of planning and implementing the organization's overall strategy. Considering this wide use of the term strategic communications, various authors attempted at defining the concept in a broad way by mentioning that:

“Strategic communication encompasses all communication that is substantial for the survival and sustained success of an entity. Specifically, strategic communication is the purposeful use of communication by an organization or other entity to engage in conversations of strategic significance to its goals” (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 7)

The above statement by Zerfass et al. (2018), draws upon other theorists such as Hallahan et al. (2007) yet it gives communication a central role as a mechanism by which organizations represent themselves and seek to position within a competitive environment. Taking into consideration the difficulty of assigning value to strategic communication in organizations that are very different from each other, it will be relevant for the purpose of this study to explore the role that Chilean mining companies give to strategic communication in their community relations.

Strategic communication differs from other branches that use communication as a tool to achieve their objectives, such as advertising and marketing, because instead of trying to sell something, organizations try to sell themselves (Argenti, 1996). To fully grasp the essence of

this area of research, it is crucial to highlight the significance of strategy as a core component of the term strategic communications. In general terms, strategy within an organization serves to establish long-term objectives, positioning the organization within the competition, adapting to opportunities and threats, and is at the same time the engine that gives strength to the different layers of an organization (Moss & Warnaby, 1998). Other perspectives view it as the prescriptive approach to strategy, suggesting that strategy is the result of a rational process that involves an analysis of the context, the formation of a strategy that allows reacting to the context, which can then be implemented and evaluated (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). Yet, the emergent strategy theory refers to an approach that focuses on strategic learning, trying to differentiate itself from the control and direction of the prescriptive approach (James, 2018). The reality is that both approaches are currently valid and are used according to the objectives proposed by organizations while executing communications plans. The identification of these two strategic approaches is relevant to this study because it can help to clarify and understand what the strategic foundations supporting the communication strategies of the mining industry in Chile are.

One identified aspect of all variants of communication strategies is that they all place the stakeholder as a central element, both in strategic planning and in the evaluation of the effectiveness of tactics. A stakeholder is a person or an institution that is affected by the actions of an organization, and at the same time has an impact and can affect the organization (Chinyio & Olomolaiye, 2009). In other words, they are the main interest of an organization, and therefore establishing a link with them is crucial. In this regard, James Grunig and Larissa Grunig (2000) argue that stakeholders play a central role in determining an organization's success or failure. As a result, the authors highlight that building both short and long-term relationships through public relations is essential for achieving corporate objectives. The targeted stakeholders are public that will receive the messages that the organization tries to transmit, and at the same time will share feedback to the organization with their response.

The decision to consider or not an organization or specific group as a stakeholder may center on three main attributes, which, depending on their intensity, can be prioritized or segmented with

respect to other stakeholders. The scholars Ronald Mitchell, Bradely Agle and Donna Wood (1997), who contributed to the development of the theory of stakeholder identification and salience, suggested segmenting them according to power, legitimacy and urgency. The aforementioned authors consider that the concept of power refers to the possibility of an individual or entity to impose its will in a relationship. On the other hand, the concept of legitimacy refers to the generalized perception that the actions or positions of an entity or individual are appropriate or desired (Mitchell et al., 1997). Finally, Mitchell et al. (1997) characterize urgency as a relationship that is sensitive and crucial to the stakeholder. Considering that in the mining industry, communities are stakeholders exposed to externalities that grant them power, legitimacy, and urgency, it is important for this study to examine the presence of this stakeholder differentiation model in the Chilean context. This is based on studies such as the one conducted by Vanessa Magness (2007), which identifies communities as a key group for the mining industry, where the salience model is particularly relevant for organizational responses to community demands. Understanding the value attributed to communities among the stakeholders managed by copper mining companies in Chile can serve as a valuable analytical tool for this research. In this regard, the stakeholder salience model may help evaluate the organizational importance assigned to community engagement and the strategic communications tactics targeting these groups.

The relationship and intensity of the elements contained in this triad can enable decision makers to prioritize and differentiate each stakeholder (Koschmann & Kopczynski, 2017). In this way, according to some scholars (Mitchell et al., 1997), they can fall into three different typologies: the latent stakeholder, who only possesses one of the attributes; the expectant stakeholder, who contains two attributes; and the definitive stakeholder, who comprehends all three attributes. In the case of extractive industries, and mining in particular, there is a great diversity of stakeholders that can be impacted economically, socially, and environmentally by mining operations (Viveros, 2014). This means that there is a diversity of actors that acquire the characteristics exposed by Mitchell et al. (1997), with great intensity, which makes the stakeholders' approach as relevant as the corporate business model in relation to dispute-solving and alignment (Mzembe & Meaton, 2013). In the context of this study, communities are a

particularly complex stakeholder, as they tend to immediately perceive both the benefits and the negative externalities of mining operations, which is why they tend to have a particular treatment (MMSD, 2002).

The identification and salience model proposed by Mitchell et al. (1997) is currently widely used for the identification and prioritization of citizen groups, community leaders and communities close to mining. A good exponent of the use of this model is the Colombian National Mining Agency, which in its report titled Stakeholder and Community Service Model (2020)¹, uses this theoretical framework to attribute relevance and differentiate the needs and expectations of the communities towards the Colombian mining sector. Specifically, the report suggests developing a matrix that includes all possible community stakeholders and their strategic relationship with mining companies. Once the process of superficial stakeholder identification is complete, it suggests applying the Mitchell et al. (1997) model to differentiate them based on their power, legitimacy and urgency. In this way, a relevant strategic input can be obtained to form strategy and develop practices toward communities.

In the case of Chile, this conceptual model can also be found in sustainability and stakeholder engagement reports in Chilean mining companies. For example, Anglo American, one of the key players in Chile's copper mining ecosystem, illustrates the influence of the stakeholder salience model and the application of power, legitimacy, and urgency criteria in explaining its stakeholder mapping model. In the section of its institutional website related to community relations, Anglo American (2024) states that the impact of a stakeholder on-site activities is determined by their level of interest, historical involvement, and expectations, which may include prior engagement in projects and their record of complaints or incidents. The company expands on this by explaining that the influence of its stakeholders can manifest either directly, such as through decision-making authority, or indirectly via their influence on other

¹ The report aims identifying the characteristics, needs, and expectations of the stakeholders of the Colombian National Mining Agency. The main objective of the document is to gather and consolidate information that contributes to the continuous improvement of procedures, as well as enhancing transparency instruments and promoting opportunities for interaction and public participation within the Colombian mining sector.

stakeholders. Additionally, the multinational states that stakeholders may represent other groups and offer relevant expertise in managing social or human rights risks, conflict resolution, or creating opportunities (Anglo American, 2024). Although the categories mentioned by Mitchell et al. (1997) can be glimpsed in some mining companies operating in Chile, considering the size and relevance of the Chilean mining sector, scholars argue that it appears to be a lack of research in this field, particularly in relation to managerial perceptions on the stakeholder salience within this sector (Viveros, 2016).

In some other relevant mining region in the world, like the Chinese minerals industry, studies have shown that the stakeholder salience framework has not yet acquired greater relevance, so that communities, employees and civil organizations are often not taken into account as stakeholders that need to be addressed (Dong et al., 2014). Making a distinction, authors such as Qian et al. (2024) mention that while China's industry is increasingly reporting to communities, the motivations behind this shift are not primarily ethical or due to a genuine change in the organization's culture. Rather, the focus is more on complying with established rules that enhance the organization's prestige. Therefore, the authors identify that this could result in ineffective engagement programs and meaningless information sharing (Qian et al., 2024). The role and importance given to communities as stakeholders within the mining industry, and its implications in the communicational and relational strategy is one of the questions that this study will seek to explore in the Chilean context. In this regard, the stakeholder salience model developed by Mitchell et al. (1997) is valuable as it provides criteria to prioritize certain stakeholders over others. As will be explained in the methods chapter, the perception of managerial groups inside the Chilean mining industry about communities as a relevant stakeholder is one of the areas that this study aims to contribute, both theoretically and methodologically.

There are also more general categories that analyze stakeholders on the basis of their immediate relevance to organizations. As a precursor to these identification criteria, Clarkson (1995) identifies two main groups of stakeholders: primary and secondary. The author classifies primary stakeholders as groups essential to an organization's survival; without their

involvement, the organization could not continue to operate. In contrast, secondary stakeholders are those who influence or are influenced by the organization, but they do not engage in direct transactions with it and are not crucial for its survival (Clarkson, 1995). The differentiation mentioned by Clarkson's (1995) gives rise to another subcategory that is useful for a concrete understanding of an organization's stakeholders. According to McEwan (2001), primary stakeholders can be qualified as internal publics, and secondary stakeholders can be associated with external publics. Internal stakeholders include individuals who influence or are part of an organization's internal value chain, including shareholders, managers, employees, subcontracted workers, professionals, subcontracted partners and key suppliers (Ahmad et al., 2005). On the other hand, external stakeholders are associated with secondary publics (Ahmad et al., 2005), which are generally customers, society, regulatory bodies, government and communities. Given the various methods employed in academic literature to differentiate and assign relevance to stakeholders, it is relevant for this study to examine the specific approaches used for stakeholder differentiation within Chile's copper mining industry. As will be discussed in the following paragraph, there do not appear to be uniform practices for mapping stakeholders and assigning them relevance.

The division employed by companies to differentiate its stakeholders is relevant to this study, as it helps in understanding how Chilean mining companies differentiate and assign varying levels of importance to their stakeholders. Codelco, for instance, distinguishes between internal and external stakeholders, categorizing direct employees, collaborators, unions, and their families as internal stakeholders (Codelco, 2024). Among external stakeholders, the company includes buyers, financiers, certification bodies, suppliers of goods and services, competitors, customers, social organizations, authorities, communities, and the press (Codelco, 2024). In contrast, other companies in the sector do not appear to use this typology in their public documents. Instead, they classify stakeholders operationally, based on the frequency of engagement and the communication channels established with each group. A good example of this practice is the Lomas Bayas company, which in its most recent sustainability report categorizes stakeholders according to the communication channels used and the regularity of engagement (Lomas Bayas, 2023). The stakeholders identified under these criteria include territorial organizations that are

part of committees, functional organizations that are part of committees, collaborators, unions and joint committees, political authorities with local and regional leadership, contractors, the media, and competitors (Lomas Bayas, 2023). It will be interesting to observe whether these different approaches to conceptualizing and dividing stakeholders result in significant differences in the communication and community engagement strategies applied by the companies in this study.

Although there are different models to qualify and prioritize stakeholders, the degree of influence in an organization and the urgency of being taken into account are all parameters maintained when assigning a position to each stakeholder within the interests of a company. Although academic models of stakeholder differentiation provide a theoretical framework, in practice, corporations often modify and apply these criteria to suit their operational needs when identifying and prioritizing stakeholders. For the purpose of this study, it is important to understand the position of communities as a stakeholder considered by the Chilean mining industry.

Extractive industries are often in the public eye due to their environmental and social externalities (Dávid-Barrett & Okamura, 2015). Moreover, these industries are subject to strong pressure from diverse stakeholders, ranging from local interest groups, national and international regulatory bodies to multi-lateral agencies and civil organizations (Sethi et al., 2016). Due to the complex scenario faced by the extractive industries in relation to public opinion and legitimacy, strategic communications became a relevant area given the need to increase transparency and dialogue with different stakeholders (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2019). The professionalization of the communicational departments within these organizations functions towards the goal of identifying the public of interest and promote a healthy reputation, which in the long term generates greater prestige, better possibilities for strategic alliances and the reduction of tension with communities and regulatory bodies (Sethi et al., 2016). Yet this is more complex than it appears, as it involves many other steps and processes that need to be thought carefully for each one of the communication strategies and types of engagement with the public or stakeholders. For instance, when an organization decides to undertake the

development of a communications strategy, one of the first processes to be carried out is the identification of the actors that will be the targets of the communications tactics to be developed (Bernal & Rivas, 2012). This process is usually called stakeholder mapping or stakeholder identification (Walker et al., 2008) and it is critical for the rest of the process. The term refers to the exercise of identifying and prioritizing the relevant individuals or entities that either are affected or have influence on the actions of an organization (Palacios & Coppa, 2015). In the case of extractive industries, they are often differentiated from other organizations because certain stakeholders tend to be more relevant due to the sensitivity of their operations such as labor unions and regulatory institutions. Due to the scale and impact of extractive activities, communities, regulatory bodies and national governments play a more important role in focusing external communications efforts. For example, a company's reputation is often associated with a country's national reputation, due to the high degree of scrutiny from national and international civil society (Ingenhoff et al. 2018). In these cases, the appropriate management of communications and reputation by organizations can help countries move away from pariah status², while the reputation of an entire country can be enhanced internationally (Bracking, 2009). Concerning communities, dialogue and the possibility of upward feedback in an extractive company is relevant for communication efforts, as the genuine participation of community stakeholders can help improve negotiations, the search for shared solutions and a better public perception of a company (Klerk & Oelofse, 2010). Additionally, the perception of empathy in the communications provided by the company has proven to be essential for preventing reputational damage, positively influencing stakeholders, and mitigating further consequences during moments of communication crises (Schoofs et al., 2019).

By recognizing the importance of direct two-way communication with communities (Kent & Taylor, 2002), extractive industries intentionally develop different communication tactics to

² A definition that may be useful to understand this concept is provided by Matt Nixon in his book *Pariahs: Hubris, Reputation and Organisational Crises*. According to the author a “pariah organization is well known, but is more infamous than famous. It has become - permanently or temporarily - stigmatized as unacceptable to many stakeholders in the society in which it operates because it has violated the norms of that society” (Nixon, 2016, p.15).

achieve their strategic objectives and fulfill their mission. An example of this is Shell, one of the largest hydrocarbon extraction companies in the world, that executes the policy of regularly sending the CEO, members of the board and executives to visit Shell operations around the world, with the objective of engaging directly with communities, civil organizations and NGOs (Shell Company, 2022). In the mining sector, BHP Billiton, one of the most globally expanded mining corporations, recognizes that:

“Our exploration, projects, operated assets, activities, closed and legacy assets (legacy assets refer to those assets operated by BHP, or parts of them, that are in the closure phase) can affect communities, but also create opportunities for BHP to contribute to social value”. (BHP, 2023)

The ways in which extractive industries can improve their image and reputation with their communities is not only through direct interaction with communities, as will be discussed in the next section, but also through the use of conventional PR strategies. Nowadays, social media campaigns and traditional press content are also tools that help organizations engage with their audiences, helping to install topics of conversation and above all to increase stakeholder participation in the co-creation of sustainable corporate models (Hutchins & Tindall, 2016). The following sections of this literature review will provide examples of specific stakeholder engagement experiences, portraying the various channels and tactics used by companies in the Chilean mining sector to implement their communication and community engagement strategies

1.2 From Extraction to Engagement: Strategic Communication with Communities and other important stakeholders

In industries subject to substantial institutional pressures and with the potential for significant environmental impacts, community engagement and strategic communication have become an important part of the corporate strategy. These areas have therefore evolved as a fundamental prerequisite for obtaining a social license to operate (Boiral et al., 2019). This phenomenon is very broad and applies to multiple industries. For example, wind and solar initiatives across different countries face opposition from communities who view these projects as potential

challenges to their way of life, cultural identity, and who very often feel excluded from the discussion around the project's advantages and decision-making processes (Funder et al., 2021). In the same line, Manuel Glave (2007) gives an example of the Peruvian mining case, which also generates problems with communities, due to the high environmental and social impact that it causes to nearby communities.

The externalities and the unavoidable impact that extractive companies have on the areas where they operate make it necessary for them to require the active or passive consent of their stakeholders. Some authors have identified this phenomenon as the search for social legitimacy, which can be understood as a broadly held belief or presumption that the conduct of an organization aligns with the accepted standards, values, and beliefs within a socially constructed framework (Suchman, 1995). Under this definition of social legitimacy, a company is fulfilling its social validation objective when the stakeholders, encompassing both internal and external parties impacted by organizational outcomes, express approval and provide backing for an organization's objectives and initiatives (Gehman et al., 2017).

Given that the process of building social legitimacy is bidirectional, disputes often arise because both companies and communities tend to legitimize their positions and arguments either in favor or against such industries. While it has already been mentioned what is expected from the legitimacy of companies, communities must also validate their demands depending on whether these are related to contracts, legal ownership, legal entitlement, ethical entitlement, exposure to potential risk, or ethical stake in the consequences of company actions (Agle et al., 1999). In this regard, the term Social License to Operate (SLO) has been synthesized both by the industry and academia as a concept that relates social legitimacy with the development of productive activities. Broadly speaking, SLO can be defined as a "set of concepts, values, tools and practices that represent a way of viewing reality for industry and stakeholders" (Nelsen, 2006, p. 1). Underlying this definition is the idea that a company can only obtain a Social License to Operate through the widespread acceptance of its actions by society or the local community. This means in practice that without this endorsement, a business might encounter significant impediments and expenses hindering its operations (Wilburn & Wilburn, 2011). The consequences of stopping production are so devastating to the extractive industries that over the

past 20 years the use of the term SLO has grown exponentially at industry conferences and academia, with particular emphasis on the mining and petroleum sector (Gehman et al., 2017).

Just to exemplify the magnitude of the impact caused by the breakdown of the relationship between companies and communities, during a general strike the former CEO of Codelco, Chile's largest mining company, mentioned that the company was losing US\$40 million a day (La Tercera, 2011). In February 2006, the developers of the Esquel project in Argentina had to record a depreciation of US\$379 million in assets and forgo the development of projected reserves worth US\$1.33 billion due to community conflicts (Davies & Franks, 2014). To look at a similar case on another continent, during a dispute with communities near Shell's oil operations in Nigeria, the crisis led to the closure of the SPDC flow station for 30 days. The company lost about \$105 million in that period (Hamilton, 2011).

The aforementioned examples on the industry impact has meant that many organizations, with a special emphasis on extractive companies, have significantly increased their efforts to showcase the positive contributions they make to the communities where they operate, especially in the last decade (Addison & Roe, 2018). This approach between organizations and communities can be associated with stakeholder theory, which usually places communities as a relevant stakeholder for every organization (Mahajan et al., 2023). Such an approach implies that companies make big efforts to influence their stakeholders because their success or failure will depend heavily on the mutually beneficial relationships that are attained (Broom et al., 2013). As a result, on the one hand, industries need to show their contribution to communities to obtain some type of social legitimacy that justifies the existence of their operations in society (Gehman et al., 2017). Yet, on the other hand, companies also have other motivations and objectives that drive them to develop strategies that generate effective communication and cooperation with their communities (Banguero, 2017).

In this sense, strategic communications can help achieve social change, influence public opinion and behavior, and strengthen democracy and culture (Falkheimer, 2014). On this note, strategic communication also influences how the media portrays these industries which in turn ends up influencing the attitudes and views of communities and vice versa. The way in which the press portrays some activities or conflicts can influence public opinion, raise relevant

questions and direct citizen opposition to some practices, as has been seen in cases of fracking in England (BBC, 2022) and in the emerging lithium industry in Chile (Dannemann, 2024). Similarly, Arli & Cadeaux (2014) states that community involvement policies with a social orientation can produce positive impacts such as healthier communities or contribute to improving morale both within companies and in communities, which in turn also impacts upon active citizenship at a local level.

There are many approaches and takes on the relationship between companies and communities. One of these approaches, relevant for this study, can be framed in terms of organizational sustainability policies (Van Bueren & De Jong, 2007; Barr, 2016), which basically seeks to incorporate the objectives of sustainable development, such as social equity, economic efficiency, and environmentally responsible practices, into the operational environment of industries (Rahman et al., 2022). This approach usually highlights the value of considering communities and contributing to the development of their projects (Chungyalpa & Wangchuk, 2021)

An example of this are the policies that the global mining industry have developed together with the World Bank (2006), where voluntary guidelines³ have been created to improve the economic conditions and lifestyle of people living near mining operations (Luning, 2012). Part of these corporate principles are illustrated in the objectives promoted by the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM), which is an organization that brings together the main players in today's mining industry. The ICMM's policies include the publicly available Social Performance Guidelines, which outline key principles for the mining industry. These principles focus on fostering community development, supporting local economies, engaging with local stakeholders, and collaboratively addressing challenges related to artisanal mining (ICMM, 2024).

³ In the guidelines outlined by the World Bank (2006) regarding the mining sector, the institution identifies several potential areas of impact that community engagement initiatives and social well-being investments can generate. These areas include comprehensive development, infrastructure, positive net impacts in the oil, gas, and mining sectors, agriculture, health, education, poverty reduction, enlightened self-interest, community organization and capacity building, employability, small business development, and environmental sustainability.

In the section on stakeholder engagement with communities within the Social Performance Guidelines, the mining organization highlights the need to engage stakeholders by analyzing the local context and providing accessible and efficient channels for addressing any concerns they may have about the company and its operations (ICMM, 2023). In relation to this topic, Sabine Luning (2012) argues that international experience has shown the need for stakeholder engagement to start from the stages prior to the establishment of a mining project until its day-to-day execution phase. As we will be able to see further down, in the case of the mining industries examined in this study, this is a relevant issue that companies recognize, though it can sometimes be challenging to implement.

In order to engage with the different stakeholders, companies deploy strategic communications plans that intend to use a plethora of communications strategically to achieve their objectives. Although communities are part of the external stakeholders that companies usually consider when mapping their audiences of interest, Bowen et al. (2010) differentiate them from a common or traditional external stakeholder by claiming that that “community engagement strategy addresses communities that are drawn together by shared social well-being, and not to other stakeholders such as 'the financial community' or 'the institutional investment community’” (p. 298).

The above statement frames communities as an important group of players that must differentiate themselves when undertaking an engagement strategy. In this regard, Dunham et al. (2006) states that the perception of communities as stakeholders has become a kind of term without much depth, something like a misnomer that contains various interests and externalities difficult to place in other terms like customer, shareholder groups or supplier. Such assumption can be problematic. This lack of definition regarding communities as public makes it difficult to understand their motivations and needs, as well as affecting the effectiveness of corporate communication strategies targeted to them (Dunham et al., 2006). Through the observation of different experiences of relationships between companies and communities, this research will try to address such gap in order to understand the role played by communities as stakeholders in the Chilean mining industry.

Delannon et al. (2016) define corporate community relations as “the forms of engagement between companies and the local communities in which they operate” (p. 2). These authors identify three categories that group the different approaches to corporate community engagement: transactional strategies, which includes information sharing and philanthropy, transitional strategies which could be consulting the community and transformational strategies that involves creating corporate community joint initiatives.

The transactional strategy embodies the initial efforts in community engagement and is still present today (Delannon et al., 2016). This strategy could be related to the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) model that prevailed during the second half of the 20th century, where the focus of action of companies with respect to their responsibility towards their external stakeholders was based on philanthropy and the transfer of economic benefits (Fordham & Robinson, 2018). In other words, the CSR model emphasizes the responsibilities of companies towards their stakeholders, establishing that these responsibilities extend beyond legal obligations and the company's duties towards its shareholders (Latapí et al., 2019). Since 2011, there has been a tendency for the concept of CSR to shift away from a purely transactional approach, incorporating the idea of shared value. The concept of shared value aims to generate “policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates” (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p. 6).

The ongoing revision of the old concept of CSR by academia and industry leads some authors to project that this concept might maintain its transactional nature while undergoing a constrained transformative progression (Carroll, 2015). The evolution described above is due to the fact that the transactional concept of CSR often responds to a pragmatism that tends to highlight specific tangible benefits achievable through community collaborations rather than directly addressing community issues (Avant et al., 2023). This approach has been shown to struggle to achieve its objectives, as the transfer of resources and the business-centric vision that often characterizes CSR strategies can treat engagement with communities as a necessary evil that helps the company to remain active and profitable (Mitnick et al., 2021).

Transitional strategies, as their name indicates, constitute an intermediate step between transactional and transformative strategies, where companies commit more resources to promoting dialogue and generating instances of conversation where communities can express their grievances and request the implementation of concrete actions (Delannon et al., 2016). Common practices associated with Transitional strategies can be the execution of townhalls, public consultations and two-way communication engagements, which aim to build bridges between organizations and communities (Bowen et al., 2010).

On the other hand, transformational strategies aim to “change society beyond what can be achieved by basic philanthropy and strategic consultation, integrating local communities in the planning, development, and operations of a project” (Baba et al., 2021, p. 890). The former approach suggests a more purposeful tactic, which contrasts with the reactive nature of other forms of corporate community engagement. Transformational strategies respond to more altruistic and complex objectives, as they seek to transform society rather than simply give back to the communities around them (Stirling et al., 2016).

Strategic planning for this kind of approach involves a much greater intellectual and operational effort for organizations, as to implement it they must have a clear conception of what kind of society they want to aim for. The old values of protecting shareholder interests remain relevant, but they are not at the center of companies' value proposition objectives (Gordon et al., 2013). Moreover, in addition to pursuing a non-business-focused corporate vision, transformational strategies involve the co-creation of solutions and tactics, which installs communities as co-authors of the solutions that will help improve both their own conditions and the activities of companies (Afieroho et al., 2023). It is therefore difficult to define the tactics used during the implementation of a transformational strategy, as it does not respond to pragmatic objectives that can be solved with immediate measures.

In any case, the integration of communities in decision making implies an extra effort in the processes of consultation, participation and integration in the development of projects. The potential advantage of this approach over other strategies is that companies can achieve results that were previously out of reach without the participation of the community, while the community takes on a backed leadership position in outlining problems and steering solutions

(Bowen et al., 2010). In the context of this work, the theories of transactional, transitional, and transformative strategies discussed by Bowen et al. (2010) and Delannon et al. (2016) will be useful, as they provide a broad range of business practices that can be identified in the companies selected for this study and subsequently linked to these theories.

There is a growing interest in academia to study the actions of organizations when interacting with their communities (Omar & El-Haggar, 2017; Jonek-Kowalska et al., 2022). The topic has been approached from different perspectives, such as anthropological studies, development economics, strategic communication, and public administration studies. The set of diverse areas of research dedicated to this phenomenon is due in part to the fact that when mediating and executing sustainable community engagement policies, it is vital to work with a multidisciplinary approach. (Schoolman et al., 2012). At the same time, due to the particular challenges faced by different industries and communities in establishing sustainable relationships, there are studies that focus on different industry sectors specifically. For example, studies applied to the forestry industry in Australia (Dare et al., 2012) and the oil industry in Nigeria (Uwafiokun Idemudia, 2014), demonstrate the emergence of a worldwide interest in the topic. The global study of the phenomenon and the comparison between different case studies also allows to observe the particularities of the communities' perceptions and the strategies deployed by different productive sectors. Nevertheless, Mayes et al. (2014) considers that “community-engagement discourses and practices deployed by private corporations remain largely unexamined in the critical literature” (p. 2). Along the same lines, Davis & Franks (2014) argue that many companies still view corporate community issues as an external threat that is challenging to proactively prevent or effectively address. Other scholars add that the fundamental issue with instrumental approaches to community engagement is that they conceive of communities in primarily or exclusively instrumental terms. Such approach can be negative as it tends to perceive that "communities matter normatively insofar as they contribute to, or detract from, the firm's achievement of their goals" (Baba et al., 2021, p. 890). Given the varying perspectives across industries regarding communities, this study aims to assess the relevance and level of commitment demonstrated by Chilean mining companies toward the communities located near their operations.

This instrumental approach towards communities can be seen as negative because it treats the relationship with communities as a means to an end, rather than recognizing them as a core objective in fulfilling the company's mission. At the same time, this approach diverts organizations from achieving sustainable development objectives that are widely accepted in the world (Barrero & Valdés, 2020). The sustainable development goals aim at promoting business models that generate value to both the environment of communities and their individual members (Banguero Lozano, 2017). The first step for a genuine relationship that allows the development of successful projects, both economically and socially, must place the communities as a valid strategic partner recognized by the organizations.

1.3 How Communities Interact with Extractive Organizations

In the previous sections, communities have been identified as a relevant group that must be attended to both for their intrinsic rights and for the relevance they have for the operation and legitimacy of companies. Considering the aforementioned arguments, it is important to explain what is understood as a community and the different ways through which communities may interact with organizations, such as the ones from the mining industries. The concept of community has been covered by multiple authors throughout the history, who have tried to define it based on its historical context and in contrast to other forms of human organization, such as society and nation. Classical philosophers such as Plato identified the establishment of communities as a natural process where individuals came together in order to make their existence easier (Martín, 2016). In a similar current of thought, Ferdinand Tonnies, the author who theoretically differentiated the community from society at the end of the 19th century, characterized the community as freely associated organic whole, where the links between different individuals were generated naturally and voluntarily (Álvaro, 2010). Tonnies' definition is on the opposite side of his definition of society, where the links that unite the members are artificial, and the purpose of the association of individuals pursues instrumental objectives (Wirth, 1926). Tonnies' perception of community can also be associated with the concept of nation expounded by Ernest Renan in 1887, who defined it as a daily plebiscite of

union among its members, who share a common history and a desire to belong together in the future (Trejo, 2023).

Another useful theory that can frame the concept of community in light of modern society is the concept of a public sphere, developed by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas and then reworked by many other scholars in the area of sociology, media and other fields of study. The idea of a public sphere refers to an intermediate sphere located between the state and civil society, where individuals engage in a process of rational discussion of public life and issues concerning society in general (Adut, 2012). For Habermas, this sphere of public life is the consequence of a process in which new social classes are created and shaped by the emergence of the media, the separation of the state from the church and the emergence of the public opinion (Thompson, 1993).

In other words, in the public sphere, citizens engage in rational dialogue that allows them to shape the state and the normative system, which is why the public sphere is often associated with a consequence or cause of deliberative democracy (Maia, 2013). Saeed (2009) mentions that within the public sphere, individuals who make up communities can seek social change and participation through their involvement in public affairs and their inclusion in the rational discussion among issues that concern their common good. For the process of inclusion in the public sphere to be successful, the right of access to information and the right to participate must be guaranteed (Saeed, 2009). This concept and its instrumentalization, is useful to understand the processes of information and transparency of certain organizations to the individuals that make up the communities, since public communication and the media are a crucial factor that allows the involvement in common issues (Flew et al., 2023).

In the context of this study, access to information and the level of involvement that communities are allowed to have are paramount, since they will enable us to understand their genuine inclusion as part of the public sphere where communities have the power to decide on issues that concern their wellbeing.

From another perspective, Maimunah (2009) states that communities are defined as groups of individuals who share common interests, live close to each other, and interact regularly. These

entities usually have a community leader who can influence others and takes responsibility for the challenges and successes of community well-being (Maimunah, 2009). The above indicates that communities have an organization and a self-interest in defending their position in society. Considering that community leaders play a key role in representing the interests of their communities, this study will use them as a data source to understand the actions taken by the communities. According to O'Faircheallaigh (2013), there is also another definition of community that arises from the relationship of groups with the industry, in which a set of individuals “share economic, cultural and social ties, through their association with an area of land or water” (p. 223).

Communities can also be considered external groups of an organization under the stakeholder theory, which places them as a group that can affect and can be affected by the activities of companies (Mahajan et al., 2023). The stakeholder approach does not necessarily perceive communities as a stakeholder requiring special treatment but sees them as an interest group whose welfare can be promoted through ethical organizational behavior (Argandoña, 1998). Some of the actions that constitute this ethical behavior can be "hiring employees locally or subcontracting to local firms, avoiding pollution, paying local taxes, obeying the law and encouraging its employees to behave as model citizens" (Argandoña, 1998, p. 4). However, the approach of stakeholder theory towards communities has been described by some authors as business-centric and too focused on the business vision, to the detriment of a stakeholder-oriented position (Ventura & Jáuregui, 2017).

Given that the stakeholder theory does not place communities as a stakeholder group of greater relevance than others, the implementation of corporate policies guided by this theoretical approach has often resulted in economic decisions taking precedence over social ones. The former has led to the dislocation of companies, unemployment and social erosion in places where communities were not prioritized (Clement, 2005). The authors Jensen & Sandström (2011) also mention that globalization has changed the power that communities have, as they have shown in multiple cases of conflicts to have more links with other power groups, which has challenged the stakeholder theory in recent years.

In the context of the mining industry, it is important to note that indigenous groups are often categorized and treated differently than other types of communities (Banerjee, 2001). This differentiation is based on both conceptual and legal considerations, given that due to the great cultural and geographic diversity of different indigenous communities throughout the world, it is complicated to define the essence of this type of human group in a generalized way (Gajardo, 2015).

A good example of this complexity is the series of different definitions provided by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES, 2024) glossary, which divides the definitions of indigenous peoples according to the continent where the term is being employed. This shows that even in international organizations it is difficult to reach a semantic consensus on the essence of what an indigenous group is, as well as to understand its challenges.

In a unifying effort, the International Labour Organization (ILO) in its Convention 169⁴ concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries coined some criteria widely accepted to this day to identify indigenous groups, which are often cited by the United Nations in multiple reports and official documents. The ILO Convention (1989), outlines requirements like occupying ancestral lands, sharing ancestry with the original occupants, living in specific parts of the nation or the world, language (mother tongue, native tongue, habitual in the home, etc.), culture (religion, tribal life, indigenous community, dress, means of subsistence, lifestyle, etc.), and other pertinent factors. Alternatively, the World Bank (2023) refers to Indigenous peoples specifying that "are distinct social and cultural groups that share collective ancestral ties to the lands and natural resources on which they live, occupy, or from which they have been displaced" (p. 1).

⁴ ILO Convention No. 169, adopted in 1989, stands out as a significant and forward-looking instrument. Its primary goal was to guarantee that indigenous and tribal peoples can fully enjoy their human rights without facing discrimination. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of these communities having control over their own development and actively participating in decision-making processes that impact their lives (Larsen & Gilbert, 2020).

Another relevant factor is that indigenous peoples have special recognition in international law, which means that the obligations of companies and governments towards them are related to the fulfilment of human rights and compliance of regulations that are elevated to the constitutional level (Burger, 2014). As Burger (2014) mentions in his report commissioned by the European Parliament, in addition to basic human rights, indigenous groups have special rights in terms of Right of self-determination, Right to Land, territories and resources and Consultation and free, prior and informed consent. These indigenous rights were unanimously approved by the United Nations General Council in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), which gives this set of special protections a bonding status that requires member states' compliance. In this direction, the United Nations declaration explicitly mentions the special responsibility of states to protect the ancestral environment of aboriginal peoples, placing special emphasis on informed consent, by mentioning in its article 32.2 that:

“States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources”. (UNDRIP, 2007, p. 12)

But the special treatment of indigenous peoples is not only related to activities that may affect their environment or natural resources. Given their distinct relationship with the land, articles such as 25 (UNDRIP, 2007), highlight the importance of the connection of Indigenous peoples with the land from a historical and cultural perspective, so in addition to caring for their environment there are responsibilities not to affect the cultural relationship between their members and with the space they inhabit. A study by Scheidel et al. (2023) comparing the principles contained in the UNDRIP (2007) and the current situation of indigenous communities concerning extractive industries worldwide, establishes that knowledge loss and the loss of cultural traditions and practices are a significant threat to indigenous peoples throughout the world.

The global phenomenon described above suggests that states and companies must consider the impact on the life ways of indigenous communities, which adds a subjective and complex layer to the management of the industry-indigenous relationship, as mentioned by Lorca et al. (2022)

in a study of indigenous communities near a lithium mining operation in northern Chile. As it will be laid out in the next section, Chile has multiple indigenous communities around its territory and conflicts with mining companies has been observed. As a result, this aspect will be considered and taken into consideration in this study, by seeking to understand the relevance and the role of these groups in the mining environment.

As mentioned previously, communities and indigenous groups close to industries may perceive as negative externalities such as environmental pollution, asymmetry of power, and social and economic inequities (Ventura & Jáuregui, 2017). The above argument resulted into an increase intention from both parts in the negotiation of agreements between organizations and local communities in different regions (O'Faircheallaigh, 2013). How agreements are organized and how communication instances of dialogue are constructed and developed vary depending on the case and the nature of the communities.

One of the ways in which communities engage in dialogue processes with organizations is through instances of Social Impact Assessment (SIA), that can be defined as the “processes of managing the social issues associated with planned interventions” (Esteves et al., 2012, p. 34). In these processes, communities can express their opinions by participating in the creation of policy documents that includes “community viewpoints and convening of forums to share and debate these data” (Lockie et al., 2008, p. 178). In relation to the above, public participation can be defined as the “direct participation by non-governmental actors in decision-making” (Mostert, 2003, p. 180). These instances of participation allow communities to express their point of views and help seek improvements in community life, its economic resources, and its services (Butterfoss, 2006).

In relation to community participation dynamics, Lockie et al. (2008) explains that there are four factors that contribute to the success of a community participation process. These are the participation of a diverse public, the affected publics having a genuine influence in decision-making, communities being allowed to get involved from the beginning of the projects, and willingness from companies to go beyond what is required by the norm (Lockie et al., 2008).

In the case of communities linked to extractive industries, research indicates that a two-way communication process has proven in the past to be a basic prerequisite to operate in this area, as seen in studies carried out in communities near mines in Canada and Finland (Tuulentie et al., 2019). Furthermore, governments and institutions also promote public participation as a way to give citizens a voice and improve dynamics between governments, companies and communities.

A good example of these initiatives are the guidelines published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which states that citizen participation is vital to achieve changes and improve policies (OECD, 2022)⁵. Part of the essential steps that the OECD (2022) promotes when conducting participation processes is the need to adequately inform potential participants, carry out two-way consultation processes and provide the possibility to engage with the public in all stages of the development of a new project or policy. This would be, arguably, the same steps that mining industries should follow in order to integrate communities and other interested parts into the process of communication and negotiation.

Although governments and institutions seem to agree that community participation is a positive element when developing projects, there is evidence that indicates that carrying out these processes can present difficulties. A study led by Webler et al. (2001) concluded, for example, that a problematic element is that people involved in public participation processes have difficulties defining what constitutes a successful participation process. As could be expected, the human factor is relevant, since dialogue processes imply trust and mutual respect of the different parties. An additional issue that has been identified pertains to the selection of community representatives by companies when establishing communication channels (Luning, 2012). This selection process can potentially escalate tensions and disputes within communities

⁵ The OECD's Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes provide a framework specifically aimed at public officials and institutions interested in initiating citizen participation efforts. The guidelines present a ten-step approach for designing, planning, implementing, and evaluating these processes. Furthermore, they identify methods for engaging citizens in participatory activities, including information and data sharing, open meetings, public consultations, open innovation, citizen science, civic monitoring, participatory budgeting, and representative deliberative processes. (OECD, 2022).

characterized by diverse interests (Luning, 2012), such as economic ambitions, cultural differences and political ideas.

The process of selecting legitimate leaders to represent communities when engaging in dialogue processes is critical to ensure that the communication and outcomes are meaningful and effective for both parts (Moodie et al., 2023). A leader is one or more individuals who coach or inspire their followers with a variety of skills and abilities, focusing on the organization's objectives, which inspires members to take concerted, joint action (Winston & Patterson, 2006). From the company perspective, community leaders are the point of contact that allows the vision of companies to be passed on so that information reaches communities, ensuring that they distribute information and initiate deliberation about what approach might be most valuable for the community (Veiga et al., 2001). From the community side, community leaders can channel the community's position and manage the relationship and programs put into place (Aref & Redzuan, 2009).

In the context of the relationship between communities and extractive industries, O'Faircheallaigh (2013) mentions that community leaders must act as negotiators, where in some cases they must even handle the delegated responsibility of approving or vetoing an agreement. The author also highlights that the representativeness of these leaders, meaning their ability to accurately represent and advocate for the diverse interests of the community, is a crucial factor in achieving sustainable agreements (O'Faircheallaigh, 2013). The absence of this representativeness can generate tensions and the loss of opportunities for a community (O'Faircheallaigh, 2013). The representativeness of the community leaders and the way in which they acceded to a negotiation position will be a determining factor to be studied in this thesis, since it will allow a deeper understanding of the elements that characterize the relationship between the communities and different Chilean mining operations.

Another common problem within the relationship between communities and mining companies is that the response from the communities is often limited and unrepresentative, which causes many of the people involved to have little confidence and feel that their input will not be taken seriously (Mostert, 2003). In this regard, Jeffery (2009) points out that a lack of representativeness can occur when the interests of the entire community are not properly

reflected, or when certain leaders hijack meetings, pushing their own personal agendas instead of the collective concerns.

Additionally, disparities in negotiation power between communities and industries can result in inequitable agreements that do not satisfy the real will of the communities involved (O'Faircheallaigh, 2014). In this sense, Papillon & Rodon (2017) mention that sometimes the consent of communities, with special emphasis on indigenous groups, is perceived by companies as something to aim for rather than something that is non-negotiable. One of the challenges in the process of community consultation is that these can lead to a sense of fatigue from the communities and local governments, particularly in situations with multiple developments, which can make participants to question the value of their involvement (Esteves et al., 2012).

The problems in community negotiation and citizen participation mentioned above illustrates the challenges of a consultation practice that is advancing but that has not yet achieved real consensus about what constitutes the appropriate balance between organizations and communities. To this end, this research will attempt to explore this further with the case studies presented here.

Chapter 2: Mining and its current corporate communication and community engagement policies: the Chilean case

2.1 Chilean copper mining and its relationship with communities: a thorny issue

Organizations involved in the extraction and exploitation of soil, subsoil, and water resources with the goal of obtaining raw materials are known as extractive industries. Among them, mining is a paradigmatic and interesting case due to both the nature of its business and its intensive use of natural resources to carry out its activity. Chile is the world's largest producer of copper (Consejo Minero, 2023), which makes it a good subject for observation and to examine the contrast between the economic returns and the externalities generated by the mining industry.

From a macro economical perspective, the figures below show the tremendous importance of this industry for the country. This South American nation has a world market share of approximately 34% both in copper ore and copper cathodes (Hanni & Podestá, 2019). The copper mining industry has contributed with 10% of GDP and 7.8% of tax revenues to Chile's economy over the past 20 years, and in the country's main mining region, it accounts for both directly and indirectly 65% of GDP (Rodriguez et al., 2021). In relation to exports, mining accounted for nearly 65% of the Andean country's total exports in 2021 (Stella et al., 2023), that demonstrates the relevance of copper mining for the national economic activity and for the tax coffers. This also reflects some impacts at a local level that need to be taken into consideration.

Investments in the copper mining market in Chile remain at high levels, mainly encouraged by the momentum of new structural projects in the country's main companies. Adding the investment of private companies and the state company, Cochilco (2023) forecasts that between 2023 and 2032 there will be a total investment of 65 billion dollars that will be allocated in 49 different projects. The main actors participating in this new investment cycle will be the State, through the state-owned company Codelco, and the private world through the 10 main private companies operating in the country (Cochilco, 2023).

Despite the economic relevance shown by the figures of the copper mining industry in Chile, the economic evolution of the country in the last 30 years has generated that copper has lost prominence in its financial contribution to the country's GDP, being replaced by an economy focused on services and trade (Ferrando et al., 2015). The declining prominence of the mining sector within the disaggregated sectors of the economy raises significant concerns about its future role. This shift prompts critical questions, such as those outlined below, regarding whether mining should continue to be a key component of Chile's economic model in the years ahead.

The global transition to green energy and decarbonization resulted into an enormous demand for lithium, a mineral that Chile possesses in abundance (Berezkin et al., 2023). Considering the relevance that copper has had, there is an eagerness in Chile to fully join the exploitation of the vast reserves of lithium, which raises dichotomous questions regarding the costs and benefits of starting a new mining rush (Godoy, 2022). From a competitiveness standpoint, it is not clear whether the country will be able to provide this new industry with added value and avoid what happened with copper, in which the country only managed to be an exporter of the raw material without adding much value through industrial processes (Meller, 2003). In addition, the question asked by authors such as Lorca et al. (2023) and Jerez et al. (2023) is whether, considering the impacts of large-scale mining on communities and the environment, it is worthwhile to undertake another large-scale mining process.

Copper mining in Chile can be also read from a cultural perspective, since in some dimensions it is more than just an economic activity. Due to its rapid installation and development since the second half of the 20th century, copper and its exploitation have become part of the imaginary of Chilean society (Meller, 2003). Its work regime, based on the establishment of mining camps located in isolated areas and the harsh working conditions for those who work in the exploitation of the resource, have generated a popular and political culture around this activity (Valderrama, 2002). The study of how an individual's self-perception is influenced by the place they live has been approached from several academic disciplines, including social psychology, history, geography, and urban planning (Groote & Haartsen, 2000). Since there seem to be a broad agreement among these disciplines that a person's environment influences their identity, the term place identity has been coined by the academia. According to Harold Proshansky (1978), this

concept suggests that self-identity is shaped, in part, by how individuals relate to their physical environment. For the author, the relationship individual-environment involves a complex interaction of conscious and unconscious thoughts, beliefs, emotions, goals, values, and behaviors that affect how people perceive and engage with their surroundings (Proshansky, 1978). In this regard, applying the concept of place identity to the reality of mining communities in Chile can be important for this study, as it can help explain how these communities perceive themselves in relation to their environment and how their experiences living near the mines shape their self-identity and practices. This dynamic may have significant implications for community leaders that interact with the mining companies included in this study.

In the context of Chilean society, Torrent et al. (2012) mentions that the communities near the mines share a common imaginary where many cultural and historical concepts coexist, forming a collective identity related to the fact of being miner citizens. These scholars highlight that the idea of wealth manifested in infrastructure, social ascent, and a permanent sense of sacrifice of citizens living in cities where the only possible activity is mining have formed a particular identity where there are conflicting views regarding mining as a vehicle for development (Torrent et al., 2012). This phenomenon is not unique to the Chilean mining industry, as studies show the existence of a conflicting community identity tied to an economic activity in other cases, such as coal mining in West Virginia (Bell & York, 2010) and the fisher industry in Alaskan towns (Kelty & Kelty, 2010).

A concept that illustrates the construction of signifiers by Chilean society with respect to the mining world is the concept of sacrifice zones. According to Retamal et al. (2021) sacrifice zones is a social and political category under construction that serves to name places where residents are condemned to live in severely polluted environments and where their rights are violated on a daily basis. These sites are often stigmatized nationally and internationally due to the disproportionate number of industrial externalities they receive in comparison with other areas (De Souza, 2020). The tragic character of the sacrifice zones is that sometimes, due to the Chilean neoliberal and extractive model, they are considered as an inevitable cost of progress (Pinto et al., 2023). The Quinteros-Puchuncaví port is a prominent example of the application of the sacrifice zone concept in Chile. The city currently hosts petrochemical industries, copper

smelters, port activities, and other industrial operations that have significantly affected the community's quality of life (Valenzuela-Fuentes et al., 2021). The economic development in the area, driven by these industries and their externalities, has come at a high cost to the well-being of the local population (Navea & Oyarzún, 2024), which has made Quinteros-Punchuncaví known nationally and internationally as a sacrifice zone.

In 1971, the famous socialist president Salvador Allende coined the following famous phrase in the midst of the process of nationalization of the resource: Copper is Chile's salary (Caputo & Galarce, 2006). On July 11, 2024, 53 years later, President Boric repeated the same phrase in front of the strong unions of the state mining company, in a political event commemorating the company's anniversary (López, 2024). These historical parallels show that when analyzing copper mining and its communities, not only the economic perspective should be taken into account, but also other aspects since there is an important historical, cultural and political continuity that adds layers of complexity to the analysis of copper mining activity in the country.

As a result of the contribution of this industry to the daily life of many Chileans, the country's economy is heavily dependent on the mining industry, which can be problematic and challenging for both industries and communities. According to Toledo et al. (2017), there is a significant conflict between national and international agreements⁶ that seek to recognize and protect communities and their environment, and Chile's economic growth, which is heavily dependent on the production of minerals for the global market. The externalities of mining, such as “environmental contaminations that pollute water and soil quality, relocation of local communities, increases in living cost due to the massive inflow of mining labor” (Lin et al., 2015, p. 1) makes it necessary that the main mining companies based in Chile have, as part of their external communication strategy, corporate community engagement programs.

A study commissioned by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, which includes Chile, claims that the conflicts that have arisen between governments and

⁶ According to Toledo et al. (2018), treaties related to the protection of the environment and areas near communities, as well as those aimed at safeguarding the physical and cultural spaces of Indigenous peoples, are increasingly coming into conflict with historical extractive practices that have been essential to Chile's economic development

affected communities are the result of the increase in concessions that governments granted to large mining companies (Hazin, 2014) without carrying out consultation processes and appropriate information sharing. In addition, there is evidence in such reports that support the view that worldwide “extractive industries are often located in places with disadvantaged and marginalized people” (Kowszyk et al., 2023, p. 2), which in turn makes these industries even more prone to criticism by the locals and international community (Svobodová et al., 2020).

Some of the phenomena aforementioned can be explained by Davis & Franks (2011) study that argues that the ability of extractive companies to transform environments often generates tensions or disputes between resource developers and local communities. The same authors assert that these conflicts can escalate, leading to a complete breakdown of the company's social license to operate, ultimately damaging the relationship between the company and the affected communities. In the same line, Havard & Arvind (2016) suggest that these types of conflicts are likely to occur because the effects of the extractive industries' operations on the environment, the economy, and society on the whole presents many significant difficulties. In the Chilean context, the series of externalities generated by the mining industry often extends disputes into the media, where opposing views are reflected. According to Palma & Alcaíno (2020), communities in Chile have gained prominence in the press by denouncing practices that interfere with their lives and environment, while simultaneously seeking to sway public opinion in their favor. At the same time, there is a global trend that impacts the Chilean mining sector, which criticizes mining companies for having done little to address the rise in the number and severity of conflicts related to extractive activities over time (Sanchez & Jhodin, 2012). The level of accuracy in such statements will be highlighted in the data obtained for this study

Chile is plagued with examples that allow us to observe the social conflict that mining usually generates in the communities near its industrial operations, from environmentally related clashes to complaints about disruptions to residents' daily lives. Moreover, according to Schorr (2018), Chile is among the nations with one of the highest rates of mining-related social conflicts in Latin America. One of the explanations for the high degree of conflicts that exist is due to the water factor (Garcia-Zavala et al., 2023), since mining uses a large amount of water in desert

areas, which makes them compete for the use of this resource with the communities, where the companies usually come out victorious (Castillo, 2016).

A revealing example of the seriousness of the water conflict is the case of the town of El Melón. This village, located in a semi-desert area, has been involved in a strong dispute with the Anglo-American mining company over the use of water rights in the area for several years. A report published by Greenpeace (2020) states that the mining company's systematic use of shared water sources between the company and the community has meant that the residents no longer have access to drinking water in their homes, which makes them depend on water brought in by truck from other areas. This has generated strong conflicts, which have even materialized in violent social seizures of the mining company's water wells and episodes of violence in which the police have had to intervene (Marconi & Urquiza, 2020).

Another relevant factor that generates a high degree of conflict is environmental pollution. Copper mining produces a large amount of toxic waste, both in the extractive process and in the process of refining and smelting copper cathodes (Covre et al., 2022). The most relevant waste from the extractive process is usually mine tailings, which flood large areas of territory with a pulp that contains the rocks that did not contain copper, and which are usually loaded with heavy metals and toxic elements that degrade soils and infiltrate groundwater (Menéndez & Muñoz, 2021). On the other hand, the industrial process of processing and smelting copper usually generates gas emissions containing toxic substances that damage the health of the people living near the smelting plants and contaminate urban soils with harmful elements. (García et al., 2024).

Mining-related environmental pollution has led to several notable cases of social conflict, with one of the most significant occurring in Quinteros in 2022. Due to repeated cases of poisoning of school children that generated great national pressure, the state company Codelco, for example, was forced to close its copper smelter located in the city (DW, 2022). The constant crises of severe poisoning that occurred for many years due to air quality made Quinteros popularly known in Chile as the Chilean Chernobyl (Leija, 2022). For many communities, the most recent poisoning incident caused by the Ventanas smelter in Quintero was the tipping point. It led to an outpouring of frustration in the media, with numerous articles highlighting the

community's growing exhaustion and their demands for concrete actions to permanently prevent further pollution events in the area (Carrillo, 2023; JGM Radio, 2022)

What makes this case particular is that contrary to what one might think at first glance, the closing of the smelter did not generate generalized joy in the population. On the contrary, a large number of people who depended on the industry economically or who had family ties with the workers came out in protest and even carried out a total strike to try to prevent its closure (Parra, 2023). Today the issue is still being debated and the company has faced many obstacles from the community to make the total closure of the facility official (Ibarra, 2024).

Despite ongoing conflicts and the slow response of some companies in the mining sector to mitigate externalities affecting nearby communities, Marta Conde (2017) highlights that corporations are increasingly recognizing the community responses to their mining operations. This in turn allows these companies to conduct their activities in a more harmonious way with the communities. This is a step forward and, in the Chilean case, which is the focus of this study, scholars such as Campos et al. (2022) underscore that the modernization of Chilean environmental institutions has helped to improve the protection of the ecosystem and local communities. As I will discuss in the next section of this chapter, developments in corporate culture and in the guidelines governing the industry have attempted to address community issues by introducing new industrial practices that make community development more acceptable or beneficial to communities.

2.2 The mitigation efforts of the Chilean mining sector towards communities

The commitment to fostering a more harmonious relationship between communities and the Chilean mining companies can be seen in several instances where, both within and outside the industry, changes have been implemented to address the challenge of effective community engagement, such as communication strategies.

One important measure that came from the State is the manual published by the Chilean Ministry of Mining, called Mining Companies and Indigenous Peoples in Chile: Good practices for

building mutually beneficial relationships⁷, published in 2014. In this extensive document, the national supervising entity of the Chilean mining industry details that the final objective is to "create a tool that provides criteria for the design, approach, implementation and evaluation of the relationship that mining companies could develop with communities"(Subsecretaría de Minería, 2014, p. 76). This report allows visualizing the different areas of a mining project in which community engagement should play a fundamental role.

The document also establishes that community relations and mutual work with communities should include the stages of exploration, design, construction, operation, closure and abandonment (Subsecretaría de Minería, 2014). This implies that the integration of communities should be thought through from the very beginning and even be considered when a mine ceases to exist, which is a departure from a classic approach linked to transactional strategies. This community engagement approach appears to respond to academic evidence and international experiences such as those mentioned by Lockie et al. (2008), where the importance of involving communities in decision-making processes from the beginning of the life of a new mining project is highlighted as a success driver.

Another fundamental aspect referred to in the document are the correct practices for establishing areas of influence, which in the case of mining responds to the need to correctly identify all potential areas that may be affected by the company's activity. In the Chilean case, the body that defines the legal requirements and provides the definition of guiding terms that regulate the conduct of impact studies by companies is the Environmental Impact Assessment System (SEIA)⁸. The instrument, in accordance with the law, defines areas of influence as:

⁷ The report published by the Subsecretaría de Minería aims to identify best practices in mining projects affecting Indigenous communities and share the lessons learned with mining companies, public sector agencies, Indigenous organizations, civil society groups, and the wider public. It presents successful experiences at both national and international levels while offering readers practical tools and recommendations for building healthy, long-lasting relationships with Indigenous communities. These insights apply to all phases of mining projects, including exploration, design, construction, operation, closure, and abandonment. The report can be downloaded at: https://catalogobiblioteca.sernageomin.cl/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=307364&shelfbrowse_itemnumber=636171

⁸ The SEIA (Environmental Impact Assessment System) is a preventive environmental management tool, defined as a procedure overseen by the Environmental Assessment Service. Its purpose is to determine whether the environmental impact of a given activity or project complies with current regulations. The SEIA has been in effect in Chile since April 3, 1997. More information at: <https://www.sea.gob.cl/que-es-el-seia-0>

“The area or geographic space, whose attributes, natural or socio-cultural elements must be considered in order to define whether the project or activity generates or presents any of the effects, characteristics or circumstances of Article 11 of the Law, or to justify the non-existence of such effects, characteristics or circumstances”. (SEIA, 2017, p. 18)

The definition provided by the SEIA (2017) is complemented by a series of technical criteria and precisions that indicate all the potential areas where a company must pay attention in relation to the impact on communities. A new regulation of the same institution mentions that the health of the population, the customs of human groups, areas of scenic and tourist value, monuments and sites of cultural, anthropological and historical value, are some of the criteria on the basis of which the potential impact on communities must be evaluated (SEIA, 2020). In addition, the institution makes an effort to define communities in the context of the Chilean industrial landscape, indicating that

“Human communities or human groups shall be understood as any group of people who share a territory, in which they interact permanently, giving rise to a system of life formed by social, economic and cultural relations, which eventually tend to generate traditions, community interests and feelings of rootedness”. (SEIA, 2020, p. 20)

The aforementioned regulatory efforts seem to aim to establish clear criteria to identify and deal with the stakeholders of mining activities, with a special emphasis on communities, which are both complex to define a relevant for the daily operations of the companies (Dunham et al., 2006). In addition to the conceptual and clear regulations promoted by different government agencies, the mining sector has also made efforts to generate best practices based on its national experience and international references.

One joint action worth highlighting is the incorporation of the main Chilean mining companies, both private and state-owned, into the International Council of Mining and Metals. The international body, which brings together the main players in the global mining industry, has generated a series of initiatives in community relations that have been incorporated by the companies in Chile.

One of the key documents from the ICMM used by major copper mining companies in Chile is the Understanding Company-Community Relations Toolkit (ICMM, 2015). This report offers practical guidelines for building effective relationships with local communities. The report provides tools focused on how to identify current levels of community support, how to propose

improvements to current community engagement plans, how to plan and design the improvements to be proposed and how to overcome internal obstacles to execute better community support policies.

Among ICMM's (2015) best practices for analyzing the current state of community support, the agency suggests effectively collecting data from external stakeholders, like community leader and others, and ensuring that any external teams involved are familiar with the site context. The report also highlights that it is important to provide teams with relevant documents, such as stakeholder maps and social risk analyses, before starting the assessment (ICMM, 2015). Once the context of the level of community support has been identified, ICMM (2015) notes that teams should analyze whether there are significant differences between perceptions of company and community support. This step also includes identifying the reasons behind low or neutral stakeholder ratings and the contextual factors that influence these ratings. Based on the results, community engagement teams need to make recommendations for improving community support.

Regarding the internal resistance that organizations may encounter when developing new community engagement policies, the ICMM (2015) report recommends conducting individual interviews or small focus groups, which is one of the approaches also taken in this study. According to the corporate body, individual interviews encourage more open feedback, while focus groups provide diverse perspectives. The mix of both information systems will allow us to identify the main resistance to change and propose solutions that address internal difficulties (ICMM, 2015).

Based on existing legislation and the guidelines that have been generated from within the industry, the main mining companies in Chile have formed specialized sustainability departments with which they intend to meet their sustainability and community engagement challenges. Codelco, for example, is a Chilean state company dedicated to the exploration, exploitation and processing of copper. Yet, in their 2021 sustainability report, published on their corporate website, they announce that they

“Have prioritized the urgent challenge of contributing to minimize and mitigate the effects of climate change and environmental impacts, and our relations with communities. It is about taking charge of our

objective as a company, in terms of strengthening the sustainable development of the Chilean mining industry, with defined goals and deadlines”. (Codelco Sustainability Report, 2021, p. 39)

The above announcement from Codelco summarizes the company's willingness to strategically confront its challenges regarding negative externalities, placing special emphasis on communities and the environment. In addition to mentioning that the mitigation of externalities is necessary, Codelco highlights the need for sustainable development as a fundamental axis in its objective as a company, which represents a company vision that goes beyond a CSR tactic.

In the very same report, Codelco announces specific commitments in relation to its relationship with communities. For example, they set out that by 2030 they plan to “increase by 60% the goods and services provided by local providers along with increasing the local workforce” (Codelco Sustainability Report, 2021). In parallel, Codelco recently announced that in 2022 invested nearly US\$9,367,164 in community aid programs, which include professional training programs, water supply projects for isolated communities and economic support for local entrepreneurs (Codelco Sustainability Report, 2022). In its 2022 sustainability report, Codelco also outlines specific tactics for strategic communication with local communities. The report highlights the use of various channels, such as WhatsApp, community social networks, and digital magazines, aimed at promoting the company's activities while also providing a platform for community representation and engagement. (Codelco Sustainability Report, 2022).

It is also possible to identify community engagement strategies in the private sector. Antofagasta Minerals⁹, one of the main private players in the region, divides its social management model into three large areas, which are relationships, initiative management and impact measurement (Antofagasta Minerals Sustainability Report, 2022). Among the announced tactics, the emphasis is put on achieving early warnings that allow conflict resolution and on the economic contribution to adjacent communities.

In relation to direct instances of engagement with communities, Antofagasta Minerals’ strategic approach seeks to contribute to the generation of economic, social and human capital in the

⁹ Antofagasta Minerals is one of the largest copper-producing companies in Chile. The mining company is owned by the Luksic family, the wealthiest family in Chile and one of the richest in South America. It is the largest Chilean-owned company competing in the copper industry within the country.

environments where it operates, through processes of effective, participatory and transparent dialogue with the different stakeholders of the territory, which allows identifying controversies and opportunities to generate a shared vision regarding development (Antofagasta Minerals, 2024).

As a result of the dialogue and the generation of projects, Antofagasta Minerals has developed a series of projects ranging from the delivery of infrastructure to increase the quality of life of the communities to community development programs, where its contribution to areas such as education and sports stand out. In relation to these programs, in their latest sustainability report they mention that they have benefited more than 64,000 people with critical infrastructure for access to drinking water and have supported more than 1,352 students with their educational programs (Antofagasta Minerals, 2023).

The variety of tactical approaches used to manage relationships with communities in the examples presented above suggests that the categorization system developed by Bowen et al. (2010) can be a valuable tool for classifying different organizations' community engagement efforts. This is further supported by studies like Delannon et al. (2016), which applied these categories to case studies of mining companies in Canada and Australia, demonstrating their practical relevance. While there is a growing tendency to generate sectorial regulations and practices that standardize the correct practices for the construction of effective community engagement strategies in Chile, this set of guidelines leaves a high degree of freedom to companies to generate their own community engagement models. With this in consideration, it will be interesting to observe in the next chapters which paths the consulted companies chose to follow, as well as the rationale behind their decisions.

Having characterized the complex relationship between mining and communities in Chile, it is important to highlight that Chile serves as a vast showcase of practices that demonstrate the different approaches companies and communities may adopt in their strategic communication strategies and community engagement programs. Furthermore, Chile's rich history, shaped by cultural dynamics, environmental and social conflicts, and fast economic development, makes it an interesting place to analyze the experiences of key players in the relationship between often-conflicting forces. With this in mind, the following chapter will present a methodology

aimed at leveraging the diversity of actors, both within companies and communities, to not only understand common practices of community engagement and strategic communication, but also to explore the motivations, experiences, and lived realities of the individuals involved in this relationship.

PART II: Methodological Approach

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Contextualizing the study

This study explores how strategic communications and community engagement strategies are used to manage the relationship between communities and mining companies, by focusing on three major copper mining companies in Chile in order to address the following research questions:

- 1) What community engagement strategies do mining companies in Chile use, and what role does strategic communication play in these strategies?
- 2) How do key community stakeholders and professionals involved in managing the community-company relationship assess the effectiveness of these strategies, and what challenges do they face in their implementation?

In other words, this study aims at understanding and exploring the evaluation of mining communities regarding the strategies deployed by these corporations. Through the analysis of specific cases¹⁰, this research seeks to elaborate a portrait of the practices and perceptions of community engagement in the Chilean mining sector. As a result, I will use a diverse sample that will allow to represent in general terms the current situation of the Chilean mining sector in terms of community engagement. This study is a multi-case study since independently and comparatively analyses individual cases to explore community engagement practices between Chilean mining companies and their surrounding communities. While all cases share a common

¹⁰ This study aims to analyze specific cases of community engagement to examine the relationship between copper mining companies in Chile and their surrounding communities. For this analysis, a mining company and its associated mining operation were selected, along with a nearby community for each case. The study will compare the perspectives and experiences of community engagement professionals and local community leaders to identify common practices and highlight differences in their experiences. Through this comparison, the research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the interactions between companies and communities, uncovering patterns and variations in the implementation of community engagement strategies.

theme, each is examined separately to identify both similarities and differences. This approach provides a broader understanding of community engagement and strategic communication as key mechanisms through which companies and communities negotiate and define the terms of their relationship.

The process of sampling the companies was conducted on the basis of the main purpose of this study and the research questions. The three companies that were selected have a large market share in terms of copper production and export in Chile (Ocaranza & Cochilco, 2022), which makes them relevant players within the Chilean market in relation to the size of their operations and significant as case studies for this research.

Operation / Company	Monthly Production (Jan-21)	Monthly Production (Jan-22)	Change (Kt)	Change (%)	Cumulative Production (2021)	Cumulative Production (2022)	Change (Kt)	Change (%)
Codelco ¹	133	113	-19.5	-14.7%	133	113	-19.5	-14.7%
Escondida	85	81	-3.7	-4.4%	85	81	-3.7	-4.4%
Collahuasi	51	47	-4.9	-9.6%	51	47	-4.9	-9.6%
Los Pelambres	29	31	1.8	6.3%	29	31	1.8	6.3%
Anglo American Sur	28	23	-5.4	-19.0%	28	23	-5.4	-19.0%
El Abra	12	13	0.7	5.6%	12	13	0.7	5.6%
Candelaria	7	8	1.8	31.2%	7	8	1.8	31.2%
Mantos Copper	7	7	0.2	3.3%	7	7	0.2	3.3%
Zaldivar	7	6	-0.8	-12.4%	7	6	-0.8	-12.4%
Cerro Colorado	4	4	-0.5	-12.6%	4	4	-0.5	-12.6%
Centinela (Oxides)	3	4	0.6	20.4%	3	4	0.6	20.4%
Quebrada Blanca	3	4	0.6	21.4%	3	4	0.6	21.4%
Lomas Bayas	3	4	0.3	11.2%	3	4	0.3	11.2%
Centinela (Sulfides)	30	24	-6.8	-22.5%	30	24	-6.8	-22.5%
Spence	20	15	-5.1	-25.0%	20	15	-5.1	-25.0%
Michilla	3	0	-2.9	-100.0%	3	0	-2.9	-100.0%
Caserones	13	14	0.9	6.5%	13	14	0.9	6.5%
Sierra Gorda	12	17	5.2	45.0%	12	17	5.2	45.0%
Andacollo	6	5	-1.6	-25.9%	6	5	-1.6	-25.9%
Ojos del Salado	4	3	-0.9	-25.5%	4	3	-0.9	-25.5%
Antucoya	7	6	-1.4	-19.5%	7	6	-1.4	-19.5%
Atacama Kozán	1	1	0.0	-0.2%	1	1	0.0	-0.2%
Haldeman	1	1	0.0	0.0%	1	1	0.0	0.0%
Grace	1	1	0.0	-10.2%	1	1	0.0	-10.2%
Tres Valles	1	1	0.0	-11.2%	1	1	0.0	-11.2%
Altos Punitaqui	1	0	-0.2	-18.2%	1	0	-0.2	-18.2%
Others	11	13	1.9	15.6%	11	13	1.9	15.6%

Table 1: Copper production by companies during January 2021 and 2022 expressed in thousands of metric tons. Extracted from the Chilean Copper Commission report: Statistical report on copper production and exports (2022), translated by the author.

As seen in the table, the selected companies were chosen from a list of companies that contains the largest-scale mining operations in Chile. This type of data is relevant based on the ideas of Kowszyk et al. (2023) and Havard & Arvind (2016), it could be argued that these companies are more likely to have conflicts with their communities, and therefore, consolidated community engagement strategies. The conflicts with nearby communities due to mining operations can be observed in cases studies such as those of Montalvo & Collaguazo (2021) in the Amazon rainforest of Ecuador and Nkumba (2020) in Congo, as well as in other studies mentioned above in the previous sections.

Second, within the list of selected companies it is possible to find great diversity regarding the origin of their owners, history in the country and origin of capital, which is key for this research in terms of representation and diversity of views. Within the table there are also public companies, private companies of Chilean origin, European companies that exploit concessions in Chile and international mining holdings with an international finance structure. Altogether, diversity across these companies is an advantageous factor because it will be possible to find differences in their work culture, practices and community engagement strategies. During the fieldwork, efforts will be made to introduce and discuss key factors and findings. This has already been observed in studies such as the one carried out by Gregory Poelzer (2023), who contrasts the reality of a Canadian mine with a Swedish one. The author highlights that comprehending the various corporate methodologies and the contextual factors that facilitate collaboration offers a significant basis for comparing corporate-community relations and the social license to operate (Poelzer, 2023).

The aforementioned characteristics make these organizations good case studies, bearing in mind the research questions within this study are designed to elucidate the nature of communication and community engagement strategies deployed by copper mining companies in Chile. In addition to previously mentioned, this study also seeks to explore the assessment of the community engagement policies implemented by these companies, both from the perspective of the communities impacted by these initiatives and the professionals driving these measures.

By selecting these companies, it is expected that the elements of analysis raised in the research objectives can be observed when applying the methodology proposed in the following section.

3.2 Methodological approach

Taking into consideration the research objectives stated above, I employed a qualitative approach, that this is a "discovery-oriented" study (Weil, 2017, p. 1) that aims to obtain a deep understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the participants (Quecedo & Castaño, 2002). According to Alan Bryman (2012), a common understanding of qualitative research often involves the emergence of theory and categorization through the collection and analysis of data, which is exactly the case of this study. The decision to use a qualitative methodology reflects the study's aim to understand the experiences and perspectives of key individuals who manage the relationship between companies and communities. Through their personal and subjective insights, the study seeks to generate ideas that can develop theory, helping to explain the motivations behind their actions and how these actions are assessed, both in terms of effectiveness and relevance. Furthermore, Salazar & Anselmo (2019) claim that the conclusions drawn from the qualitative analysis are achieved through the application of methods and techniques that are derived from its epistemological principles, such as hermeneutics, phenomenology, and the inductive method. A virtue of the inductive approach is that it allows the researcher to observe the data obtained without preconceptions, allowing theories to be derived from the scenario presented after data collection (Bengtsson, 2016). Bearing in mind the goals outlined for this research study, I will draw on an inductive analysis approach towards the data gathered from the interviews carried out to community engagement professionals and the communities linked to engagement strategies. The inductive approach is appropriate for achieving the objectives of this study, as one of the primary goals of the inductive method is to allow discoveries to emerge directly from relevant, recurring, or significant patterns present in the collected data (Thomas, 2006).

The following sections of the methodology chapter explains in more detail about the execution of the methodology.

3.3 Sampling

Companies

Three companies operating in the field of mining and extractive areas were selected for the purpose of this study. The selection criterion was based on two aspects: the financial size and the geographic location. As indicated in the previous sections, these companies are useful for this research because the sum of their operations makes them the largest copper producing companies in the country with respect to their market share. The fact that these companies are among the largest in Chile allowed me to presume that their projects would generate more noticeable externalities due to their large scale. It was also presumed that, given their size, they were likely to have more professionalized communication and community engagement departments. The geographic focus was determined by the fact that the study is set in Chile. Therefore, for international companies included in the study, only reports produced by their Chilean branches and information from their Chilean websites were considered.

Another relevant element that was taken into consideration was the availability of reports that account for community engagement policies. A thorough review helped to determine that the three companies have up-to -date reports where they account for their community engagement policies, with a publication date not exceeding two years old. This makes them comparable both in terms of their content and temporal validity and easy to access from a researcher perspective in relation to its documentations

I opted to conduct a purposive sampling.¹¹ This decision was relevant since this study seeks to know the experiences of employees with a unique know-how in specific positions and also pursues to grasp the insights of members of groups that specifically represent certain aspects of

¹¹ Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research to identify and select participants or cases that are relevant to the phenomenon being studied. Given the study's design, this method involves the intentional selection of participants who possess specific characteristics that are essential for the sample.

their communities. If the sampling process were carried out randomly without knowing the background of the interviewees, it could potentially cause problems in terms of the validity and representativeness of the data obtained. Hence, this could have been a problem because while the social perception of a community may be relevant when analyzing its relationship with mining companies, community engagement and strategic communication strategies usually target community leaders who have a higher level of contact and decision making than any individual. At the same time, although there are multidisciplinary teams in each company that take care of corporate relations, it felt relevant to talk to senior members who participate in the strategic conception of community engagement and who also have direct contact with community representatives. This way, I could ensure that the interviewees on both sides share similar levels of information and dealt with each other with a lower level of asymmetry.

Regarding staff members involved in carrying out community engagement, the goal was to get in touch with three employees at a comparable seniority level—that is, executives with executive roles entailing tactical and strategic execution responsibilities. Moreover, due to limited resources and time constraints for the elaboration of this study, it was a manageable number that allowed me to ensure a rigorous recruitment and data analysis process. Although the ideal would be to aim for the age and gender representation of the interviewees, due to the specific profile of the managers required by this study, it was not possible to guarantee representative parity. Senior representatives from the sustainability and community relations departments of each company were contacted by phone to help conduct the selection process. During the call, they were requested to name a professional who satisfied the aforementioned requirements. The professional designated by each company was contacted via phone or corporate email, where they received a detailed explanation of the study's purpose and were invited to participate voluntarily. Upon agreement, they were requested to sign a consent (please refer to Appendix B for the consent form sent to these participants) before arranging the interviews.

Anonymization was also kept constantly throughout the whole process. Hence, in the case of the community engagement professionals from the different companies that were selected, their names and the companies in which they work were anonymized in order to ensure that the

participants were free to give their views freely without breaching the confidentiality of their jobs. Also, anonymization is paramount in research and regardless of the intention, this was always going to be assured for any participant (please see section Ethics on page 54 for more details on ethics guidelines and procedures). Given that community engagement strategies are often a controversial element within mining organizations, the anonymization of interviewees and companies allows for a more honest and critical dialogue, enabling easy detection of critical challenges for the sector in relation to its relationship with communities. Another reason for the decision to anonymized companies and professionals is that this study aims to present a case study of the mining industry in Chile as a whole, without seeking to explore or target specific companies. To ensure anonymity, numbers will be assigned to each person and company, so that names are safeguarded and ensuring that the information provided by them can be published.

Community leaders

In the case of community leaders, the objective was to contact three representatives of communities that are closely related to the mining operations of each company. Community leaders have certain requirements to fulfil, including living in villages near the mines, having previous interactions with the mining firms, and attesting to their own community representation. The aim was to have ethnic, age and gender representation, to ensure sample diversity.

The selection process was carried out through prior research, in which regional authorities and the media will be contacted by phone in order to identify community leaders aligned with the requirements of this study. Once potential interviewees were found, they were contacted by phone or email. Through these means, the objective and the methodology of the study was explained to them and their voluntary participation was requested. Once they approved to cooperate in the study, they were asked to sign a literal consent (please refer to Appendix A for the consent form sent to these participants).

3.4 Data collection

Two main sources of data are used in this study. On the one hand, there is the data from the selected mining companies' sustainability reports where they state their community engagement policies. This facilitated the extraction of the primary undertakings are currently executing to foster engagement with their respective communities. The above data gathering will be valuable both for mapping the actions that are currently being carried out and for the construction of the interview script that will be used and applied in the second data collection mechanism, also presented in this section.

On the other hand, this study aims to obtain data from professionals who execute community engagement strategies in the selected companies, as well as the communities that are engaged through engagement tactics. By applying semi-structured interviews, it will be possible to know their perceptions and experiences regarding the topic discussed in this research.

After having established the two sources from which the data will be obtained, the next paragraphs will explain in more detail how the data will be collected from each sample.

Publishing sustainability reports is an increasingly common practice for companies that seek to promote transparency and generate greater impact (Chungyalpa, 2021). In the context of the mining companies chosen for this investigation, each of them has published reports elucidating their strategies and pledges to the local communities in proximity to their operational sites. These documents are publicly accessible and available for free download from the official websites of the respective organizations.

The most recent sustainability report linked to each of the selected companies was downloaded from their websites and placed into distinct folders, in order to facilitate the organization of the information. Then, these reports were review in detail, in order to be able to differentiate the parts or chapters that would be relevant in the context of this study. Specifically, all sections where commitments, actions or goals related to community engagement are made explicit. This process is relevant since it allowed me to identify all the strategic approaches, measures in application and future commitments in terms of community engagement of each company to be

brought together. Since the inductive approach is about detecting key concepts and themes in raw data, focusing on the areas of interest of each sustainability report was useful to carry out a systematic reading where the themes were relatable to each other.

Interviews

Interviewing is one of the most widely employed methods of data collection in qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). Within the different types of interviews that are part of the qualitative approaches, the semi-structured interviews are one type used when a study would benefit from a fairly open framework (Pathak & Intratat, 2016), such as getting views and opinions from participants in a more open-ended format as well as letting them explore the topics posed in the interviewing process. In general, the semi-structured interview format can be defined as a method of data extraction that has a greater degree of flexibility when compared with structured ones, because they are based on planned questions that can be adjusted to the interviewees. One of its advantages is the possibility of adapting to the subjects with enormous possibilities to motivate the interlocutor, clarify terms, identify ambiguities and reduce formalisms” (Díaz et al., 2013), which is precisely part of what this study intends to do. Given that the objective of this research is to compare the perception of professionals and communities about community engagement tactics of the mining industry in Chile in an inductive way, semi-structured interviews are one of the modes of data collection selected since it will enable us to obtain data from both sides of the participants (those working in the industries and the ones from communities) in a more open and flexible format.

In addition, semi-structured interviews fit the purpose of this study because although there are specific topics and questions that should be contained in the interview guide, in this format the “interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply” (Bryman, 2012, p. 471) and therefore it will enable this research to obtain perceptions that could escape a structured format (Salazar & Anselmo, 2019).

These interviews were conducted with one professional from each company selected for this study and with one community leader representing a community impacted by the mining

operations of each company (please refer to Appendix C for the template of the semi/structured interviews used for professional from companies and for community leaders). Professionals belonging to the selected companies were equally contacted through telephone calls and corporate email. Leaders of community organizations were also contacted by telephone and personal email. The interviews were carried out remotely, using a digital platform designed for telematic communication that was convenient for the interviewees. The interviews were recorded in both image and audio and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Additionally, notes were taken to register relevant aspects that appear as the interview develops. All these details and information was recorded and saved in secure places following the GDPR data protection guidelines.

The questions contained in the questionnaire were previously prepared, taking into consideration the relevant aspects that came to light when reading and comparing the sustainability reports but also in light of the research questions that this study aims to answer. However, as this research is using semi-structured interviews, this format of inquiring will have the space to delve deeper and generate questions based on relevant ideas that each interviewee can mention. On the participant side, semi-structure interviews are convenient to this study because they allow the discourse of each interviewee to be freer of structures that can condition or guide the responses.

Each interview was transcribed, converting the video and audio into a written format which included annotations that emerge during the development of the conversation. In this way, six documents with raw data were analyzed through content analysis, using an inductive coding process.

Each document containing the interview transcription was adapted to a format compatible with MAXQDA software. This computer program allows to carry out qualitative data analysis by structuring the coding and data analysis process. The access to this qualitative data analysis software was provided by the Portuguese Catholic University, the entity in charge of the supervision and review of this study. The next section explains the process of data analysis in more detail.

3.5 Data Analysis

Content analysis was selected as the method for analyzing the data collected from the interviews and reports. This method enables the researcher to extract meaning from raw data in order to build conclusions and produce theory (Bengstoon, 2016). Additionally, one of the advantages of content analysis is that it allows to gain direct information from participants without imposing preconceived categories or theoretical perspectives from the beginning (Shava et al., 2021). Content analysis has shown to have great potential to extract theories and insights from complex and diverse communities, as has been observed in studies in education (Gläser-Zikuda et al., 2020) or in research carried out in indigenous communities such as the one made by Connolly-Ahern & Talens (2010), which aligns to a certain degree with what this research aims

In order to carry out this process, I used MAXQDA software 2024 version as a tool to assist with the organization and analysis the data. This computer program specializes in qualitative data processing, and it is a digital platform that allows information to be coded in an orderly and efficient manner, facilitating the task of categorizing information. The transcripts of the interviews were therefore inserted into MAXQDA and subject to systematic content reviewing.

Considering that this study follows an inductive epistemological approach, the coding process did not begin with pre-defined labels that I was trying to find in the data. Instead, reviewing the data enabled the development of themes and categories, which made it possible to draw conclusions (Thomas, 2006). Taking into consideration that inductive coding was carried out, the data analysis was done through the following steps, based on the sequence proposed by Thomas (2006):

1. Adaptation of interview transcripts to a common and standardized format that allows MAXQDA to organize the collected data and seamlessly identify questions, answers and comments.
2. Intensive reading of the text to familiarize myself with the concepts
3. Creation of labels that reflect themes

4. Grouping of labels into themes
5. Review the labels and themes created, look for contradictions and match the themes to literature contained in this study.

Once the labels were obtained through the coding and the content analysis process described above, the themes derived were compared with the research questions and the theory presented in the literature review. Since it is a qualitative study, it was the researcher's responsibility to extract meaning from the information obtained and then develop a theory or tentative answer to the questions posed in the previous sections of the study. The prior use of qualitative content analysis software such as MAXQDA is relevant as it helps increase credibility and trustworthiness (Shava et al., 2021). The coding process involved reviewing the data and identifying emerging topics or ideas. In line with the study's research questions, I organized the participants' experiences and structured the presentation of information around key themes they highlighted that aligned with these questions, as it will be discussed further below.

Overall, the results of the qualitative content analysis were useful for developing new theories, validating existing ones, and providing detailed descriptions of the conflict between the community and the mining industry in Chile.

3.6 Ethical considerations

This research safeguards the ethical principles required in conducting qualitative research. Firstly, regarding the use of theories and information extracted from academic articles, this study explicitly cites and mentions the sources of information used through the APA7 system. This is important as it protects intellectual property and guarantees the application of common academic standards in the scientific world (Lida et al., 2020).

Secondly, all participants were explicitly informed of the purpose of this study and assured that the use of their information would be confined solely to an academic context, with no possibility of being used for other purposes. All interviewees were then required to sign an informed consent document. This procedure aimed to ensure that participants understood the scope, motivations, and focus of the research, which helped provide transparency when requesting their participation. At the start of each interview, participants were reminded that they could withdraw

from the conversation at any time without consequences. Additionally, they were given the direct contact information of both the researcher and the lead supervising professor, should they have any further questions about the process or need to report any concerns.

Another important ethical procedure guarantee ensured to participants was anonymity of their names and relationship to the data. Beyond helping ensure unbiased responses, maintaining anonymity is important as it protects the participants' image and reputation, while also upholding the commitment made by the author of the study (Snyder, 2002). In parallel, participants from companies were also assured that the names of their organizations would be anonymized. Given that this thesis focuses on strategic communication and community engagement, reputation is one of the major assets at stake for these companies. To encourage them to speak freely without risking their jobs or the reputation of their organizations, they were promised anonymity. This study was conducted in compliance with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)¹², which was approved and published by the European Parliament in 2016. This regulation, which defines the correct use and storage of individuals' personal data, was rigorously applied to the handling and storage of the information gathered through interviews. Specifically, the implementation of this legal framework in the thesis ensured that all audio recordings and their corresponding transcripts were securely stored, with strict access restrictions. Only I, the sole authorized individual, had access to these materials. The audio files and transcripts were saved in separate, dedicated folders, which were distinct from other research-related documents. These folders were protected by a unique password, known only to me, ensuring exclusive access. Moreover, given that anonymity was guaranteed to the participants, all consent forms—containing names, job titles, and any other information that could potentially identify the participants—were also stored in secure, password-protected folders. This process was designed to uphold the privacy and confidentiality of the participants throughout the research.

¹²<https://gdpr-info.eu/>

3.7 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have outlined the methodology employed to carry out this study, with the aim of addressing the research questions presented earlier. I explained the rationale behind opting for a qualitative approach, which enables the identification of participants' experiences and insights, contributing valuable knowledge to the study of strategic communication within community engagement programs. Additionally, I discussed the reasoning behind the selection of specific companies and participants as the focus of the study, who were later interviewed through semi-structured interviews.

The criteria for selecting the companies were based on their size within the Chilean market. The focus was placed on companies with large-scale operations and publicly available sustainability reports, using these as a reference to understand that community engagement and the use of strategic communication were integral elements of their corporate strategy. On the community side, I outlined the criteria for reaching out to and interviewing community leaders who had participated in engagement and consultation processes with the selected companies.

I also detailed the process of designing the interview guides, explaining how they were structured to capture relevant data for analysis and the development of significant conclusions. This chapter further described the methods used to process the interview data, explaining the decision to use inductive content analysis to extract meaningful results, which was primarily driven by the intention to let the findings emerge directly from the participants' narratives, minimizing the influence of preconceived notions. The inductive coding process facilitated the identification of key impressions and new ideas, which were subsequently organized into themes aligned with the research objectives and questions. The coding process was conducted using MAXQDA version 2024.

Finally, this chapter includes a section detailing the procedures employed to ensure that the study complied with academic standards of research ethics. It outlines how participants were informed about the study's characteristics and how their consent was freely given, voluntary, and included the option to withdraw at any time without providing an explanation. Additionally, the

application of ethical standards regarding the use of participants' personal information was discussed, following GDPR procedures as outlined by the European Parliament. These measures were implemented to ensure that the research was conducted with high ethical standards and that participants could engage with confidence, fully understanding the scope and handling of the information provided.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the main findings from the data collection process, emphasizing key connections between these findings and the literature review.

CHAPTER 4: Data Presentation and Discussion

4.1 Data Presentation and Structure

This chapter discusses the main findings from the data analysis conducted with the participants, by highlighting the key themes that emerged and by addressing the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis.

The data collection for this empirical part of the study was carried out through the use of semi-structured interviews, with three professionals from the mining industries I also selected for this project, who manage or are in charge of the community engagement departments in three of the main copper mining companies in Chile. As explained in the methodological section of this study, the transcript of each interview was analyzed through a process of inductive coding. This data analysis technique allowed me to identify recurring patterns and labels that were subsequently grouped into three major themes related to the research questions and the research objectives of this study. The labels gathered during the coding procedure are grouped according to three primary topics that summarize the substance of the semi-structured interviews and with the intention to answer the key questions of this study:

1. Community engagement strategy and tactics
2. Personal evaluation of the strategy and tactics
3. The role of communication in the community engagement strategy.

To ensure a more focused presentation of topics relevant to community engagement professionals and community leaders, the three main themes that emerged from the data are presented in alignment with the study's research questions. A differentiation was made in how the data is presented to allow for clearer discussion of key topics. Consequently, the results are divided as follows:

- A) Results from community engagement professionals
 - a. Strategic Design
 - b. Engagement Tactics
 - c. Personal Evaluation of Strategy and Tactic of Community Engagement
 - d. The role of Communication in the Community Engagement Strategy

B) Results from Community Leaders

- a. Community Organization
- b. Community Participation
- c. Community Evaluation of Engagement Strategy of Companies
- d. Community Evaluation of Communications

The following section presents the key responses from participants working at the selected companies, as well as community leaders who are key stakeholders for these companies. The analysis highlights both the similarities and differences in their experiences with designing and implementing the companies' community engagement strategies.

Selected company	Brief description
Company A	This Chilean company is focused on extraction and copper production. It is part of a large national business group and operates several mines in different regions of Chile. The company is one of the world's leading copper producers and also extracts byproducts such as molybdenum, gold, and silver.
Company B	This company owns an open-pit copper mine located in northern Chile and is owned by one of the largest multinational natural resource companies in the world. The mine primarily produces copper cathodes through a leaching process. The company and its mine in Chile are known for their stable production and innovation.

Company C	This company is one of the largest copper producers in the world and is owned by the Chilean government. It operates multiple mines across the country and plays a key role in the Chilean economy, generating significant public revenues.
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Table 2: Selected companies and description of each

Name	Company
Participant 1 (2024)	Company A
Participant 2 (2024)	Company B
Participant 3 (2024)	Company C

Table 3: Identification of community engagement professionals and consulted companies

Name	Company
Community leader 1 (2024)	Company A
Community leader 2 (2024)	Company B
Community leader 3 (2024)	Company C

Table 4: Identification of community leaders and consulted companies

4.2 Data Discussion: Mining companies and their community engagement professionals

4.2.1 Strategic design

When framing the positioning of the community engagement department within the organizational chart of the selected companies, all participants were unanimous about the fact that their department reports directly to the company's board of directors yet highlighting the strategic importance that the companies give to maintaining institutional relationships with the communities near the mines. However, some participants emphasized that the integration of the community engagement department was only recently embedded into the executive committee because the company has given greater strategic preponderance to this department in recent times. The incorporation of community engagement as a central element within companies may be related to the global phenomenon that communities are more demanding and organized than before (Jensen & Sandström, 2011), which gives greater visibility to issues and externalities of the industry and therefore potentially threatens the legitimacy of the company and its SLO (Wilburn & Wilburn, 2011). On the other hand, participants mentioned that there is a cultural change in the mining industry in general, which has come from internal changes as well as new regulations and more demanding guidelines. This is aligned with the discussion of the recent literature where some scholars have stressed that the mining industry in Chile but also across other countries is changing and further attention is being given to the guidelines and regulations when dealing with communities affected by this industry (Campos et al., 2022). This aligns with recent literature, where scholars such as Conde (2007) have emphasized that the mining industry is undergoing change, with increasing attention being paid to guidelines and regulations when addressing communities impacted by the industry's externalities (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2019). Understanding the professional profile of the members that make up the community engagement teams might be considered a relevant aspect since they are in charge of planning and executing

the community engagement policy of the companies. The professional background of the members of these teams including the ones that participated in this study are somewhat connected to the theoretical and professional approach from which the strategic analysis arises, which might impact on the vision and tactics that are therefore proposed. Two participants from this pool of professionals indicated that there is a great variety of different professions within the team, given that rather than looking for a specific professional profile, the tasks of their department require professionals with human aptitudes and soft skills. Just to give an example, Participant 1 saw this role as something more than a professional skill, according to him, the role *“has to do with a person's capacity to generate commitment, to generate an important listening capacity, to have an important strategic influence and management capacity”* (Participant 1, 2/5/2024, 21:00, Santiago, 2024). In fact, this is precisely the type of profile and attributes necessary for a successful strategic communication in this type of industry, with the communities. As demonstrated in other studies, such as that of Tuulentie et al. (2019), two-way communication and strong listening skills have proven to be particularly effective generating positive community-mining communicational experiences. In their research, the authors analyze community-mining relations in other parts of the world, further supporting the importance of these qualities. When it comes to the deployment of a community engagement team within the company, most of the participants agreed that it is essential for members of their department to be present across the company's engagement chain because the community engagement strategy needs to be reflected in both local and corporate decision-making. In practice, this means that teams of both participants have people directly working with the community, who then report to and execute actions according to the different levels of the department, ranging from the local level to the executive level. The idea that communication and community engagement strategies should be present across all areas of the company could be linked to Van Ruler's (2021) theory of strategic communication. The author argues that strategic communication should be a core element of the overall business strategy, rather than being limited to a specific communications department. Instead, communication should be integrated into all actions where the company interacts with stakeholders (Van Ruler, 2021). This conception of communication and the establishment of serious institutional relationships as a means of executing the overall strategy of their companies appears to be reflected in the discourse of some of the participants.

For most participants, community engagement is viewed as a central component of their companies' missions. According to them, this area allows the company to showcase its role as an agent of development and progress, extending beyond the traditional perception of merely providing jobs and resources. In this regard, participants 1 and 2 seem to advocate for the integration of a community-oriented perspective at all levels that generates a change in organizational culture and the abandonment of transactional perspectives. In other words, integrating dialogue with communities at all operational levels aims to align community engagement initiatives with the aspirations of the communities. As suggested by Baba et al. (2021), this approach may be linked to the goal of implementing transformational strategies. Furthermore, in order to develop industrial practices that lessen their negative impact on communities and at the same time incorporate the community vision into the way they conduct mining operations, some participants highlighted the importance of integrating the community perspective into the actions inherent to their business. What this implies is an increasingly need to adopt a bilateral and dynamic conversation instead of a unidirectional one. On the other hand, some participants mentioned that the main objective of the community engagement department is to maintain and secure the Social License to Operate (SLO), which seems to indicate that his company continues to view communities as an external group to be managed rather than integrated into decision-making. The following excerpt from participant 3 illustrates this rather well:

“It is a kind of commitment in terms of minimizing or not impacting the company and also providing the communities with certain, I would not speak of benefits, but of conditions that somehow compensate for the impacts generated by the company's presence” (Participant 3, 26/7/2024, 16:00, Rancagua, 2024).

Although there could be various reasons why the company of Participant 3 continues to maintain a discourse that strongly reflects the concept of Social License to Operate (SLO) and views communities as a group that must be compensated for the impacts generated by mining, two possible causes can be identified from the literature review of this study. First, based on the ideas of Hardvard and Arvind (2016), it is plausible to suggest that since Participant 3's company operates one of the largest mining operations in the country, it is more prone to social conflict. Second, considering that community demands have gained prominence and influence in public

discourse (Palma & Alcaíno, 2020), the company perceives the risk of a conflict that could jeopardize its social legitimacy and disrupt its operations (Wilburn & Wilburn, 2011).

When devising and planning organizational strategies, strategic inputs can serve as the cornerstone for strategic choices, guaranteeing that the organization's activities are consistent with its long-term objectives, vision, and mission. Strategic inputs assist in creating a plan that is more coherent and well-fitted to the environment by incorporating existing information, context analysis, and essential assumptions. In this regard, when referring to the basic strategic rationale behind his company's community engagement strategy, Participant 1 mentioned that their projects *“arise from dialogue with the communities”* (Participant 1, 2/5/2024, 21:00, Santiago, 2024). On a similar view, Participant 2 highlighted that his company seeks to ensure that *“the community develops capabilities and carries out work that links the community with its own interests and not with the interests of the company”* (Participant 2, 05/06/2024, Santiago, 2024). The above-mentioned excerpts seem to show that the companies of these participants are applying strategic approaches linked to the emergent strategy theory (James, 2018), where the permanent dialogue with the communities and the permanent alignment of community expectations with the companies' plans generate a fluid strategy that iterates based on the emergent knowledge created within the relationship. From a different perspective, when referring to relevant strategic concepts used when developing his community engagement strategy, Participant 3 mentioned that there is no centralized vision about the topic but *“what there is, more than a rule, is the awareness that it is an issue -community engagement- that needs to be addressed”* (Participant 3, 26/7/2024, 16:00, Rancagua, 2024).

from different companies A key difference between this participant and the other two from different companies is that his company's community engagement and communication strategies are developed in a top-down manner. The strategy is defined at the managerial level and then implemented throughout the organization, aligning this company with a prescriptive strategy approach (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). It is important to mention that the participant in question did highlight the relevance of the dialogue with the communities, yet he also did not refer to it as something relevant during the creation of the strategy. Instead, he characterizes it as a tool that allows him to adjust direction and improve tactics.

Taking into account that most participants agree on the relevance of community input in shaping and developing their engagement strategy, it is important to note that the use of dialogue and consultation seems to vary according to the strategic approaches they use and the structure or vision of their own companies to that regard. Some of the participants mentioned that one relevant process is to conduct consultations and meetings with community representatives to identify pain points and opportunities for new initiatives. This practice appears to align with the ideas of Bowen et al. (2010), who suggest that companies aiming to co-create community engagement projects with local communities from the early stages, by using the community's input as the foundation for their strategy, tend to generate more impactful and meaningful relationships. In this regard, one participant described the dynamics of dialogue with the communities quite well by characterizing them as

"Conversation meetings which are moderated by specialists. All the members of the community have the possibility to give their opinion on different projects and then we build with them the long-term objectives that we are going to have" (Participant 1, 2/5/2024, 21:00, Santiago, 2024).

However, in companies that regard community opinion as important for assessing project performance but not central to strategy development, the experiences of other participants suggest alternative uses and methods for gathering community inputs. One of the participants mentioned that the main point of contact where the company receives feedback is through differentiated opinion surveys, which are applied to community representatives and a representative sample of the community. These periodic quantitative evaluations seek to measure the communities' evaluation of the company in relation to how they feel and what is the community's mood toward the company. On the other hand, for more urgent or circumstantial issues, there is a system of informal on-demand meetings that allow companies to deal with crises and extraordinary requests from different social organizations.

When prompted about the conceptual frameworks that help them guide the planning of the community participation strategy, concepts such as SROI and Theory of Change were highlighted as useful guides for structuring and prioritizing objectives. A central element shared by all participants is the incorporation of practices suggested by the ICMM, which seems to be a reference body for the Chilean mining sector. Among the different tools provided by this

organization, a highlight was the mention of the Community Relations Tool Kit, a report that suggests effective engagement and communication practices to incorporate communities into economic development, ensuring capacity building, transparency and accountability (ICMM, 2015). One aspect that was striking and stood out in this research is that participants belonging to an international conglomerate have the restriction that in addition to complying with practices required in Chile, they must align their actions with international business guidelines, driven by the global corporate governance of their companies.

The identification of stakeholders is considered relevant by the participant when creating the community engagement strategies. This can be linked to the widespread practice in the development of communication strategies known as stakeholder mapping (Walker et al. 2008). During the interview process, participants emphasized that rather than immediately looking for relevant stakeholders, mining companies should define their areas of influence. Such approach seems to be commonly used by participants and refers to seeking stakeholders not only by criteria such as proximity to the mine site or economic benefits but also by taking into consideration every aspect of what mining involves. This suggests that all participants consider the legislation proposed by SEIA (2017), which provides definitions and practices for identifying the area of influence of a project. A clear example that illustrates this is the following excerpt from one of the participants around the fact that while there are people impacted by industrial activity close to the mine, water extraction or mine waste treatment can cover areas hundreds of kilometers away from the mine, which makes the mapping of stakeholder areas more complex and diversified. This was highlighted by the importance of mapping and updating stakeholders because according to the same participant:

"What happens is that over time communities evolve and other sectors appear. At one time there were no stakeholders in the Calama oasis. Today we have land takeovers, we have a series of new actors that have appeared" (Participant 2, 05/06/2024, Santiago, 2024).

Additionally, participants noted that certain practices once accepted by communities are no longer viewed as permissible. As a result, communities may perceive a higher level of impact, and new groups may come to see themselves as affected by mining activities. This dynamic requires ongoing remapping of stakeholders and areas of influence.

When asked about the main objective of community engagement, two participants agreed that it responds to the need to make their companies a positive member of society that allows people close to the mines to perceive the benefits of the industry. The former idea could be related to the concept of shared value mentioned by Porter and Kramer (2011), which suggests that, beyond sharing economic benefits with local communities, some companies are now seeking to transition into active roles where they contribute to community development. The main way in which the selected companies try to achieve this is by co-managing projects that allows communities to achieve their own long-term objectives. At the same time, all participants emphasized that maintaining positive relationships with the community is essential for the company's continued operation and retention of its Social License to Operate. The continued relevance of the Social License to Operate (SLO) as noted by the interviewees suggests that, despite an ongoing shift in their community engagement approach, the perception of communities as potential risks to be mitigated seem to persist. From the references made by the participants in terms of SLO and community risk management, it could be argued that the instrumental approach to community engagement is still present to different degrees in the strategic thinking of the selected companies. Another element highlighted by the participants is that responsibility towards communities is not an issue that should be exclusive to the department that manages community engagement, but rather permeate all areas in which the company operates.

Regarding the criteria with which companies evaluate the performance of their community engagement strategies, it was noted from this analysis that some companies have started to focus more on qualitative aspects instead of just performance and quantitative results. The following excerpt from Participant 1 highlights this rather well, by stressing the fact that his company has moved from evaluating through performance indicators related to the number of people impacted by each project towards a more qualitative approach, linked to the Theory of Change¹³

¹³ The Theory of Change outlines the sequence of influences that a project or program has, from outcomes to impacts, and how it is expected to contribute to improving the lives of people in poverty, thus constituting the fundamental objective of all intervention (Goodier et al., 2018).

and SROI¹⁴. For this participant the following questions were paramount in order to evaluate their actions:

"How much does it change the trajectory of lives? How much does it change the access to new resources, skills, competencies, and capacities to move communities forward?" (Participant 1, 2/5/2024, 21:00, Santiago, 2024).

Based on participants' responses to the evaluation topic, there appears to be a disparity in evaluation methods, even though some participants share strategic principles and the spirit of their main community engagement tactics. One participant mentioned that they opted to carry on surveys and effectiveness analysis. This was explained by one participant when he mentioned that *"what interests us is the mobilization of people and their commitment to our programs. We evaluate them precisely to make a cycle of continuous improvement"* (Participant 2, 05/06/2024, Santiago). In a similar vein, other participants mentioned that they apply differentiated surveys to random samples of community members and to certain community leaders. These two surveys are differentiated because the first one seeks to understand, in the context of the country, how the communities feel about the company and whether they are aware of the things the company is doing with them. The second survey specifically evaluates tactics with community leaders. A key finding from the analysis of these survey results, as noted by one participant, is the predominant reliance on a quantitative approach. The following excerpt identifies well the interviewee's company's motivations for preferring this method, highlighting the importance of objectively measuring the communities' perceptions in order to have a solid basis for comparison from year to year:

"We are judged by the fact that we are growing in the index, because this can lead you to permanently improve, and if that happens, it means that we are doing our job well and we insist on what we are doing" (Participant 3, 26/7/2024, 16:00, Rancagua).

The data collected from the experts who participated in this study suggests that companies employ various evaluation mechanisms aligned with their vision of community engagement. Companies aiming to move away from transactional approaches and focused on the impact of their initiatives at the individual level tend to use qualitative measurements. Conversely,

¹⁴ Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a method that enables the assessment of social outputs and the quantification of social outcomes in financial terms (Costa, 2013).

companies that adhere to resource transfer or mitigation logics typically utilize quantitative mechanisms to assess overall perceived well-being.

4.2.2 Engagement Tactics

The participants from companies mentioned various areas where their tactics are being developed. Despite the diversity of initiatives undertaken by their companies, certain areas were predominantly highlighted in their responses. Most participants emphasized that their organizations' main actions focused on education, health, water, gender, and economic impact.

Regarding the topic of education, some participants mentioned that through public-private partnerships with local universities, they tend to seek to support programs that develop technical skills in community members, so that they can effectively integrate into the workforce. Participant 2, for example, mentioned that another objective of their organizations' education program is to enable young kids in the region of mining to see this as an education opportunity. As he puts it well, it is aimed at enabling boys and girls in the region *“to see mining as an attractive industry to be able to work”* (Participant 1, 2/5/2024, 21:00, Santiago, 2024).

In this regard, both Participant 1 and Participant 2's companies are seeking to hire individuals who have completed these training programs. This is also related to the companies' gender objectives, where companies see a great opportunity to contribute to local development while benefiting from the incorporation of new professionals. One participant stated that one of their programs aims to train and employ more women from nearby communities, involving them in the company's economic benefits through programs that seek to integrate them, taking into consideration their time and family needs.

In addition to programs dedicated exclusively to the mining world, the participants mentioned that capacity building is relevant to them because it is an effective way to generate long-term impact without positioning mining as the only possible way of life. While some of the companies' objectives with the communities may overlap with their interests - such as training new workers - all participants mentioned the relevance of training people in entrepreneurship,

computer skills or other areas that allow the communities to achieve their long-term objectives autonomously. Some participants mentioned that the dialogue and consultation meetings are useful in this sense, since they allow understanding the areas in which the communities would like to develop capacities, which enables the co-design of programs that directly address community interests.

Another relevant aspect in which companies appear to generate a positive impact is on the area of health. Some of the participants highlighted that their company funds and co-manages health centers in isolated communities near one of the mines. One professional indicated that they "*have initially financed its operation and we hope that later, with contributions from the local and regional governments, it will become self-sustainable, but it was an infrastructure that did not exist, and therefore did not allow people to have access to it*" (Participant 1, 2/5/2024, 21:00, Santiago, 2024). Although investments in health are present in some of the companies consulted, some participants mentioned that the long-term objective is to abandon these types of practices because they blur the line between the state and the mining companies, confusing the expectations of citizens and making it more difficult to define the role of the company on society. Some participants stressed the fact that welfarism has been a historical position of mining in Chile and that in recent years an effort has been made to gradually abandon these practices. The intention to move away from simply providing resources for public services or infrastructure may be linked to the ideas of Mitnick et al. (2021), who suggest that this approach often struggles to achieve meaningful outcomes because it treats communities as stakeholders to be appeased primarily for business-centered reasons. Another key area of concern for the companies is water management. As noted in the literature review, scholars such as Castillo (2016) and García-Zavala et al. (2023) highlight that water disputes are among the leading causes of conflict in Chile and the wider region. In the context of this research, most mining operations included in this analysis consume significant amounts of water and are situated in arid, desert regions. Although natural resource management is not directly related to community affairs, the presence of projects related to water resources may indicate that companies are taking action from a Corporate Social Responsibility perspective, seeking to reduce their impact and be accountable in the environmental management of shared resources (Latapí et al. 2019), which may ultimately

impact their relationship with communities. In this regard, all the participants seem to agree in the interconnection between the relationship with communities and environmental issues, since non-compliance with acceptable environmental standards can erode the work done in other areas of their engagement initiatives. The following excerpt from the Participant 1 interview illustrates this dilemma in a clear way:

"Beyond the good, bad, excellent relationship that we may have with the communities, is evaluated as an unacceptable event. If there is someone who believes that by having good community relations the communities will tolerate an environmental incident, he is wrong. That is judged in a completely different key and that has to do with the fact that people aspire that the place where they live is free of contamination and of any type of small, medium or large incidents". (Participant 1, 2/5/2024, 21:00, Santiago, 2024).

While there are many areas of action in which the selected mining companies implement water management policies, when speaking about the initiatives undertaken by his department, some participants indicated that that they focus their work on irrigation and in providing access to sanitation and drinking water to isolated communities. In this regard, Participant 1 mentions that they:

"Already support more than 82 of these services with financing for their operation. We have emergency brigades to solve problems, carry out studies, deepen wells, etc., in order to ensure access to drinking water for human consumption in the province" (Participant 1, 2/5/2024, 21:00, Santiago, 2024).

Although the participants consider this type of initiative relevant, the dilemma of positioning mining companies as a pseudo-State provider of essential services resonates with the participants' concern to clearly establish which attributions correspond to the companies and which responsibilities are part of the public sector.

On the other hand, others pointed out that the work in relation to water management points in two different directions. One participant mentioned that his company has ceded their water rights in the river to the community and have moved towards co-management of water resources with the Calama farmers' association. In an unprecedented public-private alliance, they have managed to become the first company to only use water from the sewage system of Antofagasta, which allows them not to use inland water.

Economic impact to the communities is one of the areas in which the three companies analyzed seek to involve the people living in the surrounding area in the high sums of money mobilized

by their industry. The former can be related to practices like CSR and Stakeholder Engagement theory, where ethical business practices aim to integrate communities into economic development (Argandoña, 1998). In this direction, some participants mentioned that one way to achieve this is through purchasing and prioritizing suppliers and companies from local people, so that economic resources do not leave the region. Specifically, one participant noted that "*we have business with local suppliers per year for about 78 million dollars*" (Participant 2, 05/06/2024, Santiago, 2024). Similarly, other companies also identified the promotion of local labor and the hiring of local people as one of the ways in which the company can increase its impact and importance to the communities.

4.2.3 Personal Evaluation of the Strategy and Tactics in Community Engagement

In terms of lessons learned by the company in terms of community engagement, all the participants agree that there has been a big change during the last 15 years. One of the biggest takes can be found in one participant excerpt, which stated that an important principle they learned is that:

"The role of business in society goes far beyond the distribution of profits, earnings or taxes to the treasury. Companies are active and relevant actors for the communities that host them"(Participant 1, 2/5/2024, 21:00, Santiago, 2024).

Considering the aforementioned, some participants highlighted that tactics focused on capacity building and changing people's life trajectories are the most successful initiatives because of the long-term impact they generate in communities. The fact that companies can be agents of change in society with a positive impact (Argandoña, 1998; Porter & Kramer, 2011; Baba et al. 2021) is also highlighted as a challenge or a stressor by some of the participants. As one participant explains, mining companies have many resources and ways in which they can finance projects, so the temptation to divert resources to areas where they do not belong is also great. This reasoning does not seem to be unanimous among the companies consulted in this study. The following sentence from one of the participants aptly exemplifies that there are companies that still feel that the provision of infrastructure and resources should not be abandoned by mining companies:

"The state is hardly going to build better schools than the ones that exist. The state is not going to implement better laboratories, the state is not thinking about how mining has evolved technologically and what laboratories they have developed. The ones who have to do that are us and I have the impression that it is mining that has to play a role since we are ahead of the state." (Participant 2, 05/06/2024, Santiago, 2024)

This opinion is along the same lines as that expressed by other participants, who indicated that one of the main challenges for the company is to understand what role it plays in society in relation to the State. In this regard, a significant phrase from one participant indicated that:

"Here in Chile, we have been looking at the issue from a conception in which companies comply when they pay taxes to the state so that the state can develop projects with the communities, to a conception in which it is said, no, here there are things where companies have to intervene" (Participant 1, 2/5/2024, 21:00, Santiago, 2024).

The role of mining vis-à-vis the state seems to be a relevant issue for the participants due to the enormous influence that mining companies have on the economic development in their areas. All participants seem to agree that in addition to being an important contributor to the fiscal coffers, companies should personalize their efforts to engage with individuals in the communities. One participant illustrated this idea clearly in the following excerpt:

"The benefits must include the people and not only the money for the State. It is about what each neighbor receives. Nowadays this is a challenge because the conditions that the neighbors set for the impacts of mining are more and more demanding" (Participant 3, 26/7/2024, 16:00, Rancagua).

As the main future challenge for mining industries in relation to community engagement, the participants identified safeguarding their reputation in the territory and protecting their SLO. With a special risk factor in water and environmental issues. At the same time, some participants mentioned that their company must continue to gain sensitivity regarding operations that generate harm to the quality of life of the communities around it, in order to be able to react faster and develop programs that help mitigate problems before they escalate. The urgency to monitor conflicts related to externalities appears to align with specific legislation and guidelines that govern strategic communication and community engagement in Chile. The literature review of this research highlights several guidelines that could be crucial for the participants, including those from ICMM (2015) and SEIA (2017). This challenge was recurrent in the discourse of the participants, who mentioned that there is a cultural change regarding the relevance that communities give to certain impacts of the industry, which generates that their companies

generate resistance on issues that in the past people did not care about. An excerpt mentioned by Participant 3 illustrated this quite well by mentioning that

“There are parts of our company that still operate with logics of 50 years ago. The challenge is to catch up, to adapt to new social and environmental requirements. In the 1960s, smoke was sent into the environment; today that is intolerable. Nowadays, more and more gases have to be treated and that implies an investment in money and in the capacity to provide information” (Participant 3, 26/7/2024, 16:00, Rancagua).

Overall, the statements made by the participants suggest that there is a duality in their conception of the objectives of community engagement. On the one hand, the participants mentioned that it is a proactive process in which the integration of communities into decision-making seeks to influence how companies structure their business operations. This can be associated with the implementation of transitional or transformative strategies, based on the categories outlined by Delannon et al. (2016). On the other hand, communities are also perceived as a risk for the operation, so conflict mitigation and prevention are also part of the strategic positioning of community engagement departments. The perception of communities as a potential risk is also a recurring phenomenon that continues to persist today, as observed in the literature review by authors such as Davis & Franks (2014) and Baba et al. (2021). This could indicate that the companies analyzed in this study are still in a process of transition both in terms of organizational culture and in the evolution of their community engagement strategies, where traditional CSR visions coexist with new approaches that promote the active participation of communities in decision making.

4.2.4 The role of communication in the community engagement strategy

The use of strategic communication is highlighted by the participants working in the mining industry as a relevant element when designing and implementing their community engagement strategy. The use of communication as an element within community engagement strategies may relate to ideas such as those presented by Cornelissen (2023), who states that the strategic use of communication has proven effective in enhancing an organization's reputation and intangible assets. Considering that the literature review of this study has discussed the profound relevance of the relationship between extractive companies and communities in achieving organizational

objectives, the strategic communication approach may merely represent another arena in which communication plays a role in the relevant actions of executing corporate strategy (Zerfass et al. 2018; Van Ruler, 2021). In this regard, some participants mentioned that in order to implement their community engagement policies, it is essential to have communication channels that allow them to effectively understand the community's position. The expert mentioned that some relevant questions regarding active listening channels are:

"What is happening in the territories, what information are we receiving, how this information is being considered in the projects and plans we are developing?" (Participant 1, 2/5/2024, 21:00, Santiago, 2024).

The creation of effective communication platforms that facilitate direct interaction and the exchange of viewpoints between communities and mining companies is recognized in academic research as a critical factor in building positive relationships. As highlighted in the literature review chapter, studies by Butterfoss (2006) and Tuulentie et al. (2019) stress that these interactions are vital for the success of community engagement initiatives.

In this regard, some participants highlighted the importance of strategic communication to establish the first links with the communities and generate greater participation in the dialogue processes. In this regard, one participant pointed out that effective communication *"can get people closer to mining and help building those bridges"* (Participant 2, 05/06/2024, Santiago, 2024).

Among the tactics used to generate participation and transparency in the dialogue processes, some participants mentioned the use of informative emails, WhatsApp groups, and physical posters placed at strategic points as the most relevant channels to accompany the dialogue processes. Yet, as mentioned by Frandsen and Johansen (2016), strategic communication is more than just an information dissemination process. One participant, for example, mentioned the importance of adapting the communication channels based on the characteristics of the community, being careful to use the communication channel that suits the habits of the people rather than the expectations of the company. This could be interpreted as the use of strategic communication through the lens of emergent strategy theory, as outlined by James (2018) in the literature review. By applying this theory to the participants' experiences, it becomes evident that the companies' use of communication continuously evolves. This evolution is informed by

strategic lessons learned from community responses and insights gained during the engagement process, which makes the communication process not rigid but dynamic.

From the external perspective of using communications as a vehicle to disseminate and showcase their initiatives, one participant mentioned that the goal of communications in his team *"aims to have visibility of the actions that are undertaken, to ensure that there is adequate dissemination and to guarantee that there is adequate understanding"* (Participant 2, 05/06/2024, Santiago, 2024). Another participant mentioned that his company does not seek to show itself as a protagonist of what it is doing, on the contrary, it seeks that *"those who talk about the projects are the people impacted by the projects, not us"* (Participant 1, 2/5/2024, 21:00, Santiago, 2024). All the participants also mentioned the significance of social networks, noting that they enable the mining operation to demonstrate its activities to the community. This transparency helps to enhance the company's reputation and foster a sense of closeness with the communities.

When planning the execution of strategic communications, all participants emphasized the importance of segmenting audiences and tailoring messages to generate a positive impact. Participant 3 elaborated on his company's approach to communications in the following way:

"Communications have that special connotation for us and are a strategic element of our strategy. We do not communicate for the sake of communicating, but we seek to reach different strata, through different channels. And the messages we deliver have to do mainly with our community commitment and that people see and understand what it is like to work at the mine, what ordinary people do. All this generates a relationship of loyalty" (Participant 3, 26/7/2024, 16:00, Rancagua).

While the participants seem to agree that community engagement seeks above all to build relationships that align community expectations with the actions carried out by the companies, based on the answers given by the participants it is possible to realize that strategic communications play a key role for them. From the creation and establishment of links and channels to the highlighting of success stories, the strategic approach to communications as an element that enables the advancement of strategic objectives for the companies is present in the vision of the participants. The participants' emphasis on strategic communications as a term that includes practices of public relations and external communication suggests that strategic communication is perceived similarly to the interpretation of Heide et al. (2018), where the term

functions as an umbrella for various practices that utilize communication to achieve objectives. This is not surprising, considering that concepts such as SLO and the social legitimacy of a business are subjective elements that can be addressed through proper communication and the management of the intangibles of companies, such as public image and reputation (Aula & Heinonen, 2016)

4.3 Data Discussion: Community leaders, the other end of the story

4.3.1 Community organization

Understanding leadership and community organization is crucial for grasping the relationship between mining companies and communities. Social organization plays a key role in forming structures that represent the community's interests, which in turn, gives these structures legitimacy during negotiations with mining companies (O'Faircheallaigh, 2013). As mentioned in the literature review, the perceived legitimacy of the parties when building a relationship between companies and communities is relevant and can be a determining factor for the success of the engagement and the alignment of interests (Moodie et al., 2023). In the case of the social structures observed during this study, all participants mentioned having a leadership role within social organizations created around a specific objective or a *Junta de Vecinos*¹⁵, which is a social organization structure present in Chile since the 1960s. In this regard, all the participants confirmed having been democratically elected to their representative positions. This is an interesting fact, given that in terms of the origin of legitimacy within their own communities, there seem to be common aspects in the lives' stories of the participants. Most of the participants from the communities have lived all their lives in their communities and claim to know personally many the people who surround them in their villages or neighbourhoods. The fact that the participants feel they are part of their communities and are knowledgeable about the issues affecting their residents is noteworthy. In this vein, authors such as Valderrama (2002)

¹⁵ In Chile, a local community organization called a "Junta de Vecinos" brings together people who live in a particular neighbourhood or area. Its principal goals are to manage neighbourhood projects, settle local conflicts, act as a liaison between the community and local government, and advocate and advance the interests of the neighbours.

mentions that communities near mining operations often share a common collective identity that fosters a sense of belonging and unity around a particular way of life. In this regard, the ability of community leaders to have the social awareness to understand these specific dynamics can influence their capacity to perceive and guide their communities effectively. It may be for this reason that participants mentioned that the origin of their involvement in community affairs stemmed both from a personal interest in taking on a leadership role and from the recognition they received from the community. A kind of call from peers to lead certain actions. The following excerpt mentioned by one of the participants illustrates the sense of service to the neighbours and the feeling of responsibility towards the trust placed in their leadership:

“First of all, what matters most is that you are validated by your peers. That the community recognizes that you are a valid and transparent voice with the support of the community. If you don't have the support and credibility of the people, you are just going to be one more, do you understand me? To be able to carry the voice of the people and the needs and requirements of the people, you must have the capacity to convene.” (Community leader 2, 26 /08/2024, Sierra Gorda, 2024).

Validation with the rest of the community is one of the main assets mentioned by the participants when describing the core of the community leadership activity. This is not only crucial for the participants but also aligns with academic literature on the interaction between communities and extractive industries. Scholars such as O'Faircheallaigh (2013) have noted that the representativeness of community leaders in relation to their peers is one of the central factors that can increase the success of negotiations or engagements. In this regard, some participants stressed the value of maintaining a close relationship with community members as well as the need for empathy and listening skills, which enable them to see new challenges and then plan initiatives that can address specific issues. In this sense, the discourse from one of the participants defined quite well the role played by being close and showing empathy in the exercise of his function as a leader:

“You must be very empathetic with the people. Know how to listen, because that way you understand the needs of the people, you feel the pains of the people, you hear their needs and, based on that, you take the projects and programs. That way you can direct social assistance. I believe that if a leader has

at least these things as a base, he will be a good leader”. (Community leader 1 13/08/2024, Baquedano, 2024).

A key point regarding the development of leadership abilities is that some participants noted the mining companies played a significant role in enhancing their growth and effectiveness as community leaders. It was mentioned that extractive firms had supported and promoted community leadership programs, enabling participants to develop valuable skills and gain a clearer understanding of their leadership roles.

Among the skills learned, some participants mentioned that the most important were the management of co-created projects, the raising of issues, and basic legal training that enabled them to understand their rights and the restrictions of certain demands. An excerpt from one of the participants explains this rather well to understand the role that the education received played in the exercise of his position:

“A lot of doubts were clarified, especially for those of us who are the presidents, we learned that one must master the law. In any situation we must bring up the law to say and clarify that we are going to do things within those parameters, because that is what is required. We also had many workshops where they gave us ideas and we had to carry out projects or short-term solutions. We had to think about how we would put together a project.... So that was very useful for us to gain knowledge and to exchange ideas with other leaders from other parts” (Community leader 1, 13/08/2014, Baquedano, 2024).

In light of the aforementioned excerpt, it is noteworthy that companies place emphasis on training their counterparts, and that community leaders are keen to capitalize on the opportunities offered by these initiatives. This seems to indicate a common recognition of the importance of dialogue and negotiation in the communication process, as well as the relevance of professionalization and standardization of practices to make the search for solutions and the construction of projects possible. In this sense, the construction of legitimacy of community leaders seems to come from their democratically elected position of representation, their trajectory, and the very validation provided by the companies that certified them and professionalized their roles.

4.3.2 Community participation

As indicated in the literature review of this study, community participation in moments of direct contact with companies is the main vehicle through which demands can be channelled and negotiation instances can be built (Bowen et al., 2010). These instances can occur in different formats, which are manifested in the experiences of the participants.

One of the instances most valued by the participants in this study are the periodic meetings for conversation and consultation, where the community can openly participate in a direct dialogue with company representatives. The appreciation for this initiative can be understood through the lens of public sphere theory, where the right to participate and express oneself freely is a prerequisite for the sense of involvement and decision-making in public affairs (Saeed, 2009). This seems to reaffirm that instances of direct two-way communication between communities and companies is one of the most effective elements in resolving disputes and developing agreements, as observed in a study conducted by Tuulentie et al. (2019) in other mining regions of the world.

In this sense, most of the participants stated that there is a clearly defined process of meetings with the companies, which is usually monthly and guided by a pre-defined structure. At these meetings, the entire community can attend to give ideas or learn about joint projects that are being developed. One participant clearly explained the functioning of these conclaves in the following excerpt:

“We have a monthly meeting in which the “The good neighbours” team meets once a month. A general invitation is made in an open table format. There we discuss and develop the issues and then the mining company has its own separate meeting with the community. A general monthly meeting is held and then the mining companies have their own satellite meetings for the different interested citizens to attend.” (Community leader 2, 26 /08/2024, Sierra Gorda, 2024).

The meetings described by the participants are guided by company professionals who conduct the reunions and mediate the participation of the members, which allows for the construction of clear roadmaps. However, some participants have mentioned that while occasionally some community members join these consultation meetings, the community leaders are the ones who

attend the vast majority of these events. This manifests the challenge of generating community involvement on a permanent basis. The above argument highlights a phenomenon already observed in the community engagement literature, which is the difficulty of generating engagement processes in which the community continuously sees a value in participating and attending processes that link them to their own interests (Mostert, 2003). On the other hand, this seems to give even more relevance to the representative role of community leaders, who are the guarantors of interests over time and are responsible for executing the necessary actions to participate in the corresponding representative bodies. However, it is also evident that the establishment of official periodic meetings is not a practice that is always present in all the companies, which leads some participants to mention that they would like more of these instances to exist in order to maintain a permanent dialogue with the companies.

It was also mentioned that these meetings enabled the communities to propose new projects that allow directing funds and aid from the companies to projects that are useful for specific members of the community. The way in which these funds are allocated to the communities is generally through a system of competitive funds provided by the companies. Community leaders must listen to ideas from neighbours and ensure that applications from the community comply with the parameters established by the statutes of these funds.

Another way in which participants say they participate and express their opinion is during the compliance or project evaluation processes¹⁶. Depending on the community to which they belong and which company operates in their area, one participant mentioned that the way in which they have the opportunity to express their opinion regarding the company's performance in their sector is through participation in evaluation surveys. In these measuring instruments, this participant mentioned that he can evaluate with a positive or negative note certain aspects of the company. However, it seems to him that the points of interaction with the company are insufficient and impersonal. Considering that direct meetings with companies are positively

¹⁶ In Chile, there are several regulations that obligate companies to evaluate the impact of their projects on adjacent communities prior to approval. Among the most significant of these is the Environmental Impact Assessment decree, as discussed in the literature review. This regulation requires that communities be consulted and ensures that there is a fundamental level of awareness and consent concerning any proposed project. Additional information can be found at the following link: <https://www.sea.gob.cl/>.

highlighted by the majority of participants, this indicates that personal contact and the possibility of having a concrete person on the other side of the negotiation table contributes to the creation of trust and legitimization of both parties. The principle of building trust between organizations and communities through continuous contact and the deployment of staff who maintain regular interaction with communities is often emphasized in reports of organizations such as the OECD (2022) and the ICMM (2015). These organizations are key references for the Chilean mining sector regarding community engagement, as discussed in the literature review. This suggests that the incorporation of international guidelines has influenced and contributed to the relationship between communities and mining companies.

Lastly, it is important to note that communities have various means of participating in public life and maintaining mediated relationships with companies. As previously mentioned, social organizations and *Juntas de Vecinos* serve as platforms for community engagement in daily affairs. Additionally, informal channels like neighbourhood WhatsApp group chats and direct conversations enable citizens to communicate their concerns and demands effectively to their community representatives, who can then elevate these issues to higher authorities.

In this sense, the participants of this study have the responsibility to be attentive to the social mood and the potential areas of development that they can explore together with the companies. The mere fact of belonging to a community and interacting with the co-citizens means that in a way people are contributing with their feedback and opinions that can be escalated to the representatives. This idea of community participation could be associated with the concept of the public sphere coined by Habermas, where rational dialogue and the involvement of community members in public affairs ends up creating a deliberative space that influences the prevailing system and generates changes that take into account the interests of individuals (Saeed, 2009)

4.3.3 Community evaluation of engagement strategy of companies

Evaluating the totality of the perception of community leaders regarding the actions that companies take to engage with them is complex. This is because the range of points of contact between companies and communities is very broad. From one point of view, the community is

a difficult stakeholder to read, since it can group together other stakeholders, such as ordinary citizens, company employees, and social organizations (Dunham et al., 2006). In this sense, perceptions about the companies were different depending on the topic addressed by the participants.

As previously described, most of the participants value positively the consultation meetings, where they have the possibility of creating permanent ties with members of the company and can have open channels of communication. In this sense, the sense of closeness and the possibility of having direct human contact as opposed to other means of communication were stressed by the participants as a central element for them. The following experience told by a participant illustrates the impact generated by closeness and engagement at a human level in the community:

“I have always said it, I don't have a friendship with her (the community engagement manager), but you must recognize the good things. Just as I complain about the bad, I also highlight the good. Every time a natural catastrophe occurs in Baquedano or a person dies, the lady always calls me or any other leader to ask how we are, and what do we need. She tells us that the company is at our disposal and asks us what our requirements are. So she is the voice of the company, the face of the company, she is always with that good disposition”. (Community leader 1, 13/08/2024, Baquedano, 2024).

On the other hand, the same participant stressed the fact that other mining companies, with greater resources and impact in the area, appear to have more corporate and distant communication, which makes the results in terms of trust and closeness much worse. This observation reflects the sentiments expressed by some participants, who pointed out that it is easy to recognize when companies only perform the bare minimum to satisfy basic expectations.

In relation to the aforementioned, another striking aspect is that participants seem to be aware that part of the reasons why companies interact with them is because it is required by environmental legislation or because companies need their consent in order to operate. Again, this brings up the notion that SLO is a concept that still dominates community-company relations. Just as companies are concerned with managing their legitimacy and image in order to continue operating, communities also understand that they are vital to the existence of mining operations, which gives them a bargaining position and high expectations of what they should

receive (Wilburn & Wilburn, 2011). The self-recognition of the power that communities have over the operational continuity of companies was clearly expressed by one participant in the following excerpt:

“The company has the obligation and the imperative need to relate with the communities for the proper development of its operations. No company is going to want the communities to protest, close their projects or make them fail in their environmental requirements of citizen participation. The worst thing that can happen to an investor is that the communities do not want them” (Community leader 2, 26 /08/2024, Sierra Gorda, 2024).

In the same line, the Community Leader 3 shared an anecdote that exemplifies how a breakdown in the community's expectations regarding the obligations and promises of companies can lead to social conflicts:

In fact, last year, the company wanted to create job opportunities for small local businesses. But what happens is that when companies hire subcontractors that aren't part of the main company, these subcontractors often didn't fulfil their payment commitments to the local entrepreneurs. Many times, these smaller subcontractors would leave and leave behind a big debt to the local people. I remember last year, the community blocked part of the road so that the company would pressure the subcontractors to fulfil their commitments to the people (Community leader 3, 11/09/2024, Sierra Gorda, 2024)

A recurring complaint in Chilean political discourse, and highlighted by several of the participants, is that the wealth of the mining industry does not stay in the areas where it is extracted. For the participants, their communities do not advance at the same pace as other areas of the country benefiting from the large resources provided by mining. It is for this reason that local employment and gender programs that seek to incorporate people from the community into well-paying jobs are seen as beneficial to the community. This shows that in addition to being included in decision-making and in the co-creation of projects, communities also seem to have expectations of receiving benefits associated with CSR strategies or Triple Bottom Line impact. The following excerpt from a participant illustrates this idea clearly:

“Chile is a country of mining excellence, of copper, it has been like that all its life. And in Chile, what do we say? Chile's salary is copper. Well, then we have to be part of it, to be present actors, not absent. We have to be present in the development of large mining here in Chile” (Community leader 2, 26 /08/2024, Sierra Gorda, 2024).

It is also important to note that some participants identified the same problem mentioned by the community engagement professionals consulted in this study. During the interview process, some participants mentioned that it is also a challenge for community leaders to moderate the

expectations of the people around them, given that they perceive that there is confusion about what things can be asked of mining companies and what things are the responsibility of the state. For members of isolated and impoverished communities, mining companies are often perceived as responsible for supplying basic services and infrastructure. This perception complicates their ability to request additional community projects from these companies because community leaders understand that some requests are unlikely to be fulfilled by the companies.

4.3.4 Community evaluation of communications

The communication strategy proposed by the different companies as an additional or parallel element to the community engagement strategy is something that the participants clearly understand and that generates different appreciations. Considering that the strategic communication's goal is to intentionally use communication to achieve strategic objectives (Hallahan et al., 2007), it can be observed that there are different channels and instruments in which community members are engaged in a planned matter by the organizations. The ability to differentiate between channels that address various objectives reflects the type of strategic approach used by companies in their communication with communities. By correlating the communication channels described by company professionals in the previous section, it is presumed that certain channels are designed to target different audiences within the community. The use of social media is expected to resonate more strongly with young people, as these messages aim to promote mining as an attractive professional activity and make the processes more accessible to the community. Conversely, some community leaders regard traditional techniques, such as signage in public spaces, as more effective, likely because they reach individuals who may be less exposed to mass communication methods. At the same time, communities react, use, and filter channels based on their perception of their usefulness.

One of the elements mentioned by the participants that was present in all companies is the availability of specific channels for complaints and alerts. Through a special email or an area of the companies' website, participants mentioned that there are ways to raise early warnings or complaints about certain issues, which is useful to solve urgent problems and avoid escalation of conflicts (Davis & Franks, 2011). In addition to these direct channels, the experience of the

participants seems to indicate that due to the relationship of trust that exists with certain professionals in the companies with whom they have direct contact, personal or telephone contact is still relevant for certain situations. This shows that the human component is also relevant in terms of complaints and crises. The existence of direct channels to submit complaints and to provide a quick response to pressing issues resonates with some of the comments made by the community engagement professionals consulted in this study, who mentioned that the area of risk and the importance of conflict resolution was a priority for their departments. The following excerpt mentioned by one of the participants is particularly enlightening in this regard:

“There are several means by which we communicate. There are the web pages of each company, the community WhatsApp group, social networks and the telephone. The telephone nowadays replaces many previous methods. You also use e-mails... The truth is that there are many channels, they have communications departments so we communicate through them. And above all, it is instantaneous. It is immediate. It's not like before when the manager came every 15 days. No, now someone has a problem and can send a photo, there is the WhatsApp of the “Good Neighbours” or of the community. So it's instantaneous, plus they also have their complaint forms or their specific management for communication. I feel it is fluid, fast and truthful” (Community leader 2, 26 /08/2024, Sierra Gorda, 2024)

The daily relationship between the community leaders and the professionals present in the field plays a relevant role in the daily communications and the organization of community participation. Communication channels appear to be direct and less structured, adapting to the specific needs of the people in the community and the convenience of the moment. Some participants mentioned that there are WhatsApp groups and email chains that allow them to communicate directly with company professionals. At the same time, phone calls and face-to-face contact are also tools that were identified as commonly used to coordinate some activities and communications. While these channels are less structured and can facilitate the introduction of noise into communications (Oliinyk et al. 2020), participants seem to prefer them as they feel that it is a more empathetic and personalized communication, which increases their sense of feeling heard. This appears to align with academic evidence presented in this literature review, such as that provided by Schoofs et al. (2019), which states that the use of communication perceived as empathetic between organizations and stakeholders can be vital for navigating challenging moments and fostering a greater willingness to cooperate.

Other forms of external communication were also identified in which the participants are informed of the status of the projects developed jointly and the successes of the companies are highlighted. In this sense, there are different experiences reported by the participants. For example, this segment provided by a participant shows how in his village, which is very isolated, mass communication is still done in old fashion, through the use of blackboards located at strategic points:

“At certain points in the town, boards were installed with the authorization of the people and on these boards they put posters with all the information about the mining company. You can see if there are courses, scholarships, if people are being received, when the meetings are, etcetera. So, now we are supposed to start again with this modality that we had before, which helps to make the information available” (Community leader 1, 13/08/2024, Baquedano, 2024).

On the other hand, other participants living in larger urban areas mentioned mass communication formats such as advertisements on local radios or even on national television. Some participants described that in these communication channels, companies usually show their sustainability commitments and show themselves as a new way of mining, highlighting their contribution to local employment and to the country. In addition, some participants stated that companies are increasingly developing social networks where they showcase mining operations and highlight employee diversity.

Based on the experiences of the participants, it can be observed that there are different tactics being implemented in the area of communication. On the one hand, there is a system of channels and methods used for direct communication between companies and communities, such as shared WhatsApp groups and periodic meetings. These communication channels serve the purpose of coordinating urgent matters and maintaining the day-to-day relationship with the communities. It could be argued that this type of channels serve as a vehicle that facilitates the implementation of community engagement strategies. At the same time, there are communications tactics associated with the world of public relations and external communications, such as appearances in the press, social media and corporate commercials in the media, which target mass audiences but still reach communities.

4.3.5 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I discussed the data gathered from interviews with professionals from selected mining companies responsible for community engagement strategies, as well as community leaders who evaluate and describe how the relationship between their community and the companies functions. The discussion presents the main findings and impressions shared by participants, analysed through the lens of the theories and authors covered in the literature review. The aim of this chapter was to identify how these findings relate to existing academic knowledge on community engagement and strategic communication between communities and extractive companies.

The analysis revealed several elements that connect to established theories, along with patterns specific to the Chilean mining context. Responses from community engagement professionals highlighted that communication and engagement teams play a central role within their companies' overall strategies, closely connected to senior management. This aligns with theories from authors like Zerfass et al. (2018) and Van Ruler (2021). Additionally, some companies are developing new approaches to community relations, aiming to involve communities in decision-making and co-create projects aligned with community interests. However, all company representatives also expressed concerns about viewing communities as potential risks that could threaten their operations, which is critical to understanding the relationship. Based on Delannon et al. (2016), it was noted that some companies are currently employing transitional and transactional strategies but are working towards more transformative approaches. Key communication strategies highlighted include specific channels for direct community meetings to address concerns and plan projects. Consultation meetings were particularly valued by participants, and the most prominent community engagement projects included initiatives in education, health, water, gender, and economic development.

Community leaders also provided valuable insights relevant to the study. Many explained that their leadership emerged from a deep understanding of their community and emphasized empathy as a key quality of a community leader. This form of leadership was linked to Habermas's theory of the public sphere, as explored by Saeed (2009) and Maia (2013). Another

notable finding was the preference for direct consultation meetings over other methods, such as company-conducted performance surveys. This preference aligns with the concept of empathetic communication, as suggested by Schoofs et al. (2019). Lastly, both community leaders and company professionals recognized that community leaders play a critical role in ensuring the success of the companies. They understood that if their concerns are not addressed and the benefits of the industry are not shared fairly, they could take actions that disrupt the company's operations or harm its reputation. This finding underscores the importance of the Social License to Operate (SLO) as a key factor in the relationship between companies and communities.

The next chapter will present the main conclusions of this study, showing how these findings contribute to academic research on community engagement and strategic communication in the context of extractive companies and communities. Additionally, it will address the main limitations of this study and suggest future research opportunities that could provide further insights into this topic.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

5.1 Main conclusions

This study has explored the identification of strategic lines and actions undertaken by Chilean mining companies and communities concerning community engagement. It focused in particular on the role of strategic communication throughout this process. Moreover, the research has sought to understand how mining professionals assess the rationale and effectiveness of their community engagement initiatives, as well as gather the perspectives of community leaders on the strategies and tactics directed at them. The objective has been to delve into the key factors that influence decision-making, as expressed by the key stakeholders in this relationship, and to identify the challenges and opportunities they perceive in fostering long-term, mutually beneficial agreements. On a similar line, this research also explores the community leaders' views and perceptions of such communication strategies and engagement. This allows for a better understanding of the key factors underpinning the decisions and actions from both the corporate side and the community one.

Based on the content analysis of the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews with three community engagement professionals and three community leaders, this study has provided significant conclusions regarding the main initiatives in this area, the participants' evaluation of the effectiveness of these strategies, and the role of strategic communication in these relationships. It also provides some pointers for future research around the same topic.

Firstly, in addressing the research question of what community engagement strategies are used by mining companies in Chile and the role of strategic communication within them, one key finding is that the companies represented by the interviewed professionals have highly professionalized teams dedicated to community engagement and strategic communication. These teams report directly to their organization's boards, indicating a clear strategic prioritization of community engagement and communication. The prioritization of community engagement and related communication strategies could suggest that strategic communication is interpreted as the use of communication across the various areas where organizations carry

out their actions (Van Ruler, 2021), serving as an additional tool to help them achieve their objectives (Zerfass et al., 2018). However, despite the fact that most participants stressed that their companies aim to move away from substantialist approaches, the analysis reveals that they are still in a transitional phase. Regarding the main community engagement projects that companies are developing to engage with communities, participants mentioned the following areas of development: education, health, water, gender, and economic impact. Taking into consideration the categories of community engagement strategies outlined by Delannon et al. (2016), most of the participants indicated that they aimed for projects to emerge from dialogue with the communities, suggesting a growing incorporation of transformational strategy elements. However, the continued presence of the Social License to Operate (SLO) concept in their discourse, along with ongoing projects focused on resource transfers and local economic development, suggests that the companies are still in a transitional phase. In this stage, while the relationship with communities gains strength and becomes increasingly important (Delannon et al. 2016), there is still a lack of full incorporation of community input in an equal partnership during the co-creation and co-management of projects. The fact that the companies are still pursuing initiatives involving resource transfers for infrastructure projects or CSR practices, suggest that the model of community integration into decision-making processes has not been fully implemented.

Regarding the motivations behind community engagement strategies, the professionals interviewed emphasized the intention to advance toward corporate governance that positions their companies as relevant societal actors, distancing themselves from the traditional role of resource providers. While the ethical responsibility to integrate communities into decision-making processes was acknowledged, all participants mentioned the importance of the Social License to Operate (SLO) concept, and the risks posed by potential popular mobilizations. This demonstrates that, despite progress, communities are still perceived in many cases as a potential risk to mining operations (Mitnick et al., 2021).

As for the tools used for community engagement, consultation meetings with the community were mentioned as the primary strategy for addressing demands and coordinating joint projects. In connection with the previous point, and shifting focus to strategic communications, the

professionals emphasized the role of communication in active listening processes. They highlighted the use of various targeted communication channels to effectively address the needs and concerns of the communities. Additionally, some pointed out that, in terms of external communication, the goal is to highlight the beneficiaries of the company's policies rather than the company itself, reinforcing a more community focused approach. Some participants also emphasized the use of social media as a new form of mass communication that brings mining closer to the communities, strengthening the proximity of the company to the people, enhancing feelings of belonging and promoting the historical role that companies have played in local development. This suggest that companies have strategically adapted to new formats to promote their key messages and use communication as a tool to achieve their strategic objectives.

Regarding the second research question of this study, which examines how key community stakeholders and professionals involved in managing the community-company relationship assess the effectiveness of these strategies, community leaders emphasized the importance of empathy and public recognition of community members as crucial factors in gaining legitimacy and effectively representing the collective interests of their communities. Some highlighted the importance of company-sponsored leadership courses in their professional development and ability to negotiate and be effective leaders. They also praised consultation meetings as opportunities where they feel heard and part of a serious and productive process. The appreciation for direct and empathetic communication, which in the case of the participants seems to be linked to the possibility of face-to-face conversations, is a phenomenon already mentioned by authors like Schoofs et al., (2019). These scholars argue that the perception of empathy is often a key driver of success in building relationships with communities. Additionally, the opportunity for direct meetings that facilitate two-way communication is another factor that fosters a positive perception within communities, thereby leading to greater success in negotiation processes (Tuulentie et al., 2019).

In relation to the community engagement tactics valued by the communities, the most significant initiatives include competitive grant programs, cultural heritage protection, educational programs that provide easier access to mining jobs for community members, and environmental conservation efforts.

Finally, community leaders expressed full awareness of the power they hold, and the companies' need to interact with them. This is an interesting fact as it can play a key role in the whole process of strategic communication between the two parts. In this regard, the perception that they have the ability to halt business operations if they feel inadequately integrated (Davis & Franks, 2011), reinforces the relevance of the SLO concept, which was widely mentioned by all participants. In terms of communication, there was a preference for direct contact methods, such as WhatsApp groups and phone calls, which for the participants promote transparency and empathy. Additionally, the existence of specific channels for handling complaints and grievances was seen as a positive element for resolving conflicts quickly and effectively. The communities' appreciation for the existence of specific channels to address crises or complaints indicates that the introduction of international guidelines, such as those from the ICMM (2015), has been significant. This is particularly noteworthy because establishing these channels is one of the essential recommendations highlighted by the ICMM Community Relations Tool Kit. A common thread between community engagement professionals and community leaders is that both groups identified the challenge of getting expectations right about what companies can do in relation to the state. It was pointed out that a challenge is that some individuals may make demands on companies for things that are the responsibility of the state, such as building public infrastructure or implementing local development programs. This problem seems to affect both companies and community leaders, as it places too high expectations on both parties and can generate the idea that community engagement efforts do not yield sufficiently effective results.

Overall, this study reveals a transitional phase in companies seeking to integrate communities into their decision-making processes, although some transactional practices persist. Strategic communication and community engagement tools play a key role in this process, while community leaders feel increasingly empowered to participate actively in their relationships with businesses.

In general terms and based on the evidence presented throughout the chapters of this study, it is possible to assert that large copper mining companies in Chile are actively taking steps to advance towards new models of community management. They are undertaking changes in corporate culture and incorporating international standards and guidelines. Acknowledging a

past characterized by practices that adversely affected communities and the environment, these companies appear to be initiating concrete initiatives to move away from a relationship based solely on mitigation and ongoing tension with communities. The perception of communities as strategic partners in the development of mining activities is a process currently underway, and tangible results are expected to emerge in the coming years.

5.2 Limitations and future analysis: a personal reflection as a researcher

Throughout this qualitative research, several limitations emerged that impacted its execution and may have influenced the application of the proposed methodology, potentially affecting the scope and validity of the results.

Since the research and data collection was done from Portugal, from a great distance from Chile, there were great difficulties in establishing effective contact with both community leaders and community engagement specialists of the selected companies. In this sense, although the initial proposed methodology contemplated interviewing four community engagement professionals and four community leaders to act as their counterparts, it was only possible to interview three professionals and three community leaders. However, given that this is not a representative study and bearing in mind its qualitative approach and conceptual framework nature, the outcomes were still valid and relevant to answer the research questions posed initially.

Regarding the participants from the communities near mining areas, their isolation and limited access to telecommunication services made it more difficult to reach them. Additionally, poor internet connectivity frequently disrupted the interviews. The interruption of interviews due to poor internet connectivity may have potentially influenced the quality of the material collected.

Another limitation that possibly generated biases in the collected material and its subsequent analysis is that it was not possible to generate a gender-equal sample of participants. In the case of this study, 4 out of the 6 participants are men, so their perspectives and life experiences concerning the topic of the study may influence the representativeness of data. Although the intention of this study was not to explore the differences of views from a gender perspective, it

would still be interesting to be able to conduct a study with similar characteristics in which there would be an appropriate gender representation in the participants. The potential for conducting further studies that take into account the gender of participants could produce different results, as mining culture is often associated with masculinity and most jobs in the mining sector are predominantly occupied by men. Therefore, adopting a gender-focused approach could lead to future research that more accurately represents the diverse individuals involved in the complex relationship between communities and mining companies, potentially identifying elements that are often overlooked in most studies conducted on mining-related topics.

Despite the limitations mentioned, this study offers a solid foundation for future research in the area of community engagement and the role of strategic communications in the day-to-day relationship between communities and mining companies. Studies with a similar approach could benefit from incorporating field methodologies that involve a larger number of community members. Techniques such as focus groups, or dialogic interviews could provide deeper insights by capturing shared perspectives and experiences of the participants. It would also be interesting to conduct longitudinal studies that would allow us to observe the relationship between communities and companies over a longer period of time. This approach would enrich the data by providing a clearer view of how specific events impact the relationship between mining companies and communities. Additionally, it would offer insights into how time contributes to the development of successful community engagement projects.

Finally, it would be valuable to conduct similar studies on the relationship between other extractive industries and their communities in Chile and potentially in other countries where the same industry and problematic is present. This study focused specifically on the copper mining sector, but it would be insightful to explore whether the dynamics observed here are also present in the lithium mining, forestry, or salmon farming industries, which are the three main extractive industries in the country. Identifying common patterns and successful practices across these industries could help establish better policies and regulations, enabling companies and communities to coexist peacefully and generate mutual benefits.

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Appendix

A. Informed consents

FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO

Corporate communication and community engagement strategies: Multi-study case in the copper mining industry of Chile

Acerca del estudio:

Este estudio se enmarca dentro del proyecto de tesis exigido por la Universidad Católica Portuguesa a los alumnos del máster en Comunicación Estratégica y Liderazgo que acaban sus estudios en septiembre del 2024. Los fines de esta tesis de grado son puramente académicos, en donde el alumno Javier Felipe Muñoz Hernandez deberá plasmar dentro de una investigación académica alguna de las áreas de estudio abarcadas durante el desarrollo de su programa. La selección de la temática fue aprobada por el consejo académico de la UCP y su supervisión se encuentra a cargo de la profesora Sandra Borges Tavares, sborgestavares@ucp.pt.

Consentimiento Informado para Participar en Estudio Académico