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Trust, engagement, information and social licence—insights from New Zealand

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Abstract

This research examines trust at the government, industry, community nexus, as mediated by media, and its effect on social licence. We attempted to understand levels and importance of trust in New Zealand's natural resource sectors by examining ways of building, maintaining and assessing public trust in a post-truth society. We surveyed 128 New Zealand public and held a stakeholder forum about perceptions of trust in relation to natural resource sectors. The results provide indications of novel advances around trust and trustworthiness. Honesty was highlighted as the top influencer of trustworthiness and trust, and dishonesty as the top influencer of distrust. In contrast to other literature, we find a nuanced understanding of trust among respondents in relation to the media—respondents distrusted actors cited in media more than the media outlet or platform itself. Further, our findings suggest there is no discernible change in trust levels in the post-truth era, in this context.

Introduction

Never before have the natural resource sectors been so intensively scrutinised by the public. At the same time as questions of social licence, trust and transparency are arising in the natural resources sector, so too are these issues increasing in importance in other sectors. Edeleman (2018) reports that levels of trust in government, media, science and industry have been consistently decreasing, with media and government being particularly distrusted. Public trust (including trust in and between industry and government) underpins any industry's ability to operate successfully. When trust is eroded or absent, the consequences can be severe and may contribute to high levels of social conflict and shutdown for industry (Franks *et al* 2014). Trust has been shown to be a key element of social licence to operate (SLO) (Thomson and Boutilier 2011, Moffat and Zhang 2014). SLO has been defined as broad public

acceptance of a company or industry's development activities and is linked to public trust and confidence in their ability to 'do the right thing' (Morrison 2014, Parsons *et al* 2014). This re-emergence of the value of building trust is particularly important in what some term a post-truth era, which is characterised by populist appeals to emotion and the proliferation of information and misinformation (Laybats and Tredinnick 2016). Post-truth is claimed to significantly damage the foundations of trust that are required in a robust society (Keyes 2004) and points to a need to re-examine the issues of trust and public–private engagement. As an indication of this increasing focus, a recent Scopus search of 'trust and social licence' showed an increase in the number of articles with these two terms in the title/keywords from 0–3 articles per year between 2007 and 2013 to 5–12 articles per year between 2014 and 2018. This paper examines elements of trust, trustworthiness and their association with SLO.

New Zealand is rich in natural resources in global terms, with a high dependence on these natural resources for economic wealth, and indigenous culture and heritage. Despite this, there is a paucity of studies into New Zealanders' relationships with natural resource developers in terms of trust and social licence. New Zealand's relative size and the importance of SLO within the natural sector make it a fitting test bed for examining how trust and SLO are related, especially against the background global trend of apparent growing distrust in industry, government and the media (Edelman 2018). In New Zealand, SLO has become critically important to the future competitiveness of the nation's natural resource sectors, particularly in terms of their ability to operate successfully and generate economic value (MPI 2017). There is also growing recognition of the importance of maintaining SLO across the various natural resource sectors in New Zealand-including—aquaculture (Quigley and Baines 2014), forestry (Edwards *et al* 2016) and agriculture (Williams and Martin 2011).

New Zealand has a unique cultural context. In New Zealand's history of settlement, the nature of the colonial and post-colonial experience of New Zealand's indigenous Māori people, engagement has a particular meaning and focus. Many Māori suffered dislocation from their cultural and material resources (Tuori 2015) with only about 5% of land now under collective Māori ownership (Ruru 2011). This land loss, along with the failure to observe other guarantees under the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi between the British Crown and some Māori iwi (tribes) led to a long history of Māori protest and dissent. Since the mid-1980s, various governments have provided redress settlements to iwi. These settlements have included; monetary compensation, the return of confiscated lands, and 'cultural redress', giving Māori decision-making input regarding geographical locations with which they are connected (Ruckstuhl *et al* 2014). The process of addressing historic claims in relation to the Treaty of Waitangi has created an opportunity for the New Zealand Government to signal the importance of including Māori perspectives and principles in legislation and policy. For example, the 1991 resource management act (RMA) requires local government bodies to acknowledge the relationship of Māori to ancestral lands, water, *wāhi tapu* (sacred sites) and other *taonga* (treasures). The 2017 RMA revisions, have strengthened requirements under the Mana Whakahono-a-rohe provision for local councils to work collaboratively with iwi to inform processes and manage resource management issues. In relation to freshwater, the 2014 national policy statement for freshwater management requires councils to consider and recognise Māori connection between water and the broader environment and to include Māori values to inform the setting of freshwater objectives and limits. The crown minerals act 1991 has requirements for companies to engage with iwi (Down and Erueti 2017). These requirements within government policy demonstrate Māori are in 'lore' if not 'law' the ongoing owners of particular natural resources. Rather than 'engagement' as a community 'stakeholder' (Wilburn and Wilburn 2011), Māori see themselves as, if not owners, at least as partners requiring a direct and

meaningful relationship with the crown. The idea of partnership between different stakeholders has a direct relationship with SLO.

Social licence to operate

Societal expectations about the environmental, social and cultural 'performance' of industries involved in the development, use or management of natural resources have changed over recent decades (Cullen-Knox *et al* 2016, Moffat *et al* 2016). This change is reflected in increasing expectations that communities will receive a greater share of the benefits from the presence of such industries along with assurances that these industries are appropriately regulated (Prno 2013, Van Putten *et al* 2018). SLO has highlighted that civil society action can directly affect or even close down corporate activities (Franks *et al* 2014). While the term is perhaps best known for its use in the mining industry, SLO is increasingly applied to a range of other industries involved in the development, use and management of natural resources for private and public purposes, including agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, energy generation and conservation management (e.g. Quigley and Baines 2014, Hall *et al* 2015, Edwards and Trafford 2016, Kelly *et al* 2017, Kendal and Ford 2017).

The emergence of SLO in corporate usage has been driven, in part, by pressure on industries to maintain their reputation and financial viability in the face of increasing societal expectations about their environmental and social performance. This has led to comparisons between SLO and the related concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR typically refers to the idea that companies have responsibilities that extend beyond those to their shareholders, or those prescribed by law (McWilliams *et al* 2006). For example, Parsons *et al* (2014) argue that there is often an implicit assertion that a corporate decision to 'act responsibly' or pursue activities that are 'beyond compliance' can be perceived as mechanisms for demonstrating organisational legitimacy to a broader audience of stakeholders. However, some distinctions between the two terms can be drawn. CSR has dominated analysis of how business and society interface, while SLO remains more aligned with the informal or perceived social legitimacy of a company or industry (Cullen-Knox *et al* 2016)[9]. In turn, this focus on perceptions of social legitimacy have frequently been described as social acceptance or approval of company/industry performance, and a number of studies

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[9] In CSR, the stakeholders targeted the most are shareholders and customers, although local workers, producers and communities may also be involved. But CSR is often more about reputation and being seen to do the right thing on paper. While some of the stakeholders may be similar in SLO, local relationships may be more important. This may involve actually knowing the people involved and feeling that they are actively sharing the resource or its management. It may also be about wanting to see the right thing done on the ground and directly in communities, rather than reflected through management reports or share prices.

have sought to demonstrate how SLO might in fact reflect the social acceptability of certain practices (Thomson and Boutilier 2011, Zhang *et al* 2015). This has been reflected in increasing empirical studies of SLO that have sought to identify, model and measure how it functions in various contexts (e.g. Moffat and Zhang 2014, Ford and Williams 2016).

As a result, researchers globally have variously discussed the importance of key attributes of SLO, including the role of relationships and dialogue (Mercer-Mapstone *et al* 2017, Baines and Edwards 2018), trust and engagement (Kelly *et al under review*) and accountability and fairness (Zhang *et al* 2015) in seeking to establish greater understanding of how SLO functions. These, along with other SLO attributes have been used or prioritised differently depending on the context, e.g. theories of impact assessment (Bice and Moffat 2014), engagement and public participation (Prno 2013), political and media contexts (Lester 2016, Gunster and Neubauer 2018), or cultural values (Meesters and Behagel 2017). Unfortunately, this has also meant that the lack of a formal or accepted understanding of SLO has seen the term used opportunistically by different stakeholders to advance agendas, and in some cases using non-democratic means (Bice and Moffat 2014, Moffat *et al* 2016). As a result, SLO has been applied in diverse contexts in quite different ways, potentially creating confusion about the underpinning concepts and exacerbating tensions between stakeholders. Even though the term remains somewhat informal and variously defined, it also has become ubiquitous in discussions of resource use, management and the need to respond to societal expectations. This increase in use has also seen SLO move from the industry discourse into popular usage by a range of stakeholders, including the media (Lester 2016).

A closer examination of trust in relation to SLO

Trust has been posited as a critical component of SLO (figure 1); Thomson and Boutilier (2011) propose that trust is key to the highest level of social acceptance (underpinned by credibility and legitimacy[10]), while Moffat and Zhang (2014) propose that, acceptance of industrial activities is mediated by trust in the industry. Trust is cemented in social relationships; founded on ways people experience their relationships with each other and the institutions or organisations they interact with. Trust arises when individuals and institutions or organisations demonstrate that they are trustworthy. Within the government-industry-community nexus, many discussions of trust can be confounded with trustworthiness—trustworthiness is the ability to engender trust, while trust is the outcome of interactions between trustworthy entities (see Hardin 1996). Despite the differences, much of the literature on trust

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[10] Where legitimacy is a reflection of norms and a foundation for trust, which is performance in light of certain norms (Kaina 2008).

hardly mentions trustworthiness, even though the situations described are often about trustworthiness rather than trust. Without trustworthiness, there is no value in trust for the trustor. We do not make an explicit connection between honesty and truth claims as these claims may not be the 'truth'; the entities engaging in a trusting relationship must make those judgements for themselves.

Trustworthy entities exhibit characteristics that include predictability (Maguire *et al* 2001), goodwill (Uslaner 2002), credibility and commitment (Hardin 1996), and truth claims/honesty (O'Neill 2014, 2018). These characteristics are often conflated as trust (O'Neill 2014). Public trust emerges from the meeting of collective expectations held by the public, while trust more broadly is defined as accepting vulnerability due to positive expectations of another (see Lacey *et al* 2018).
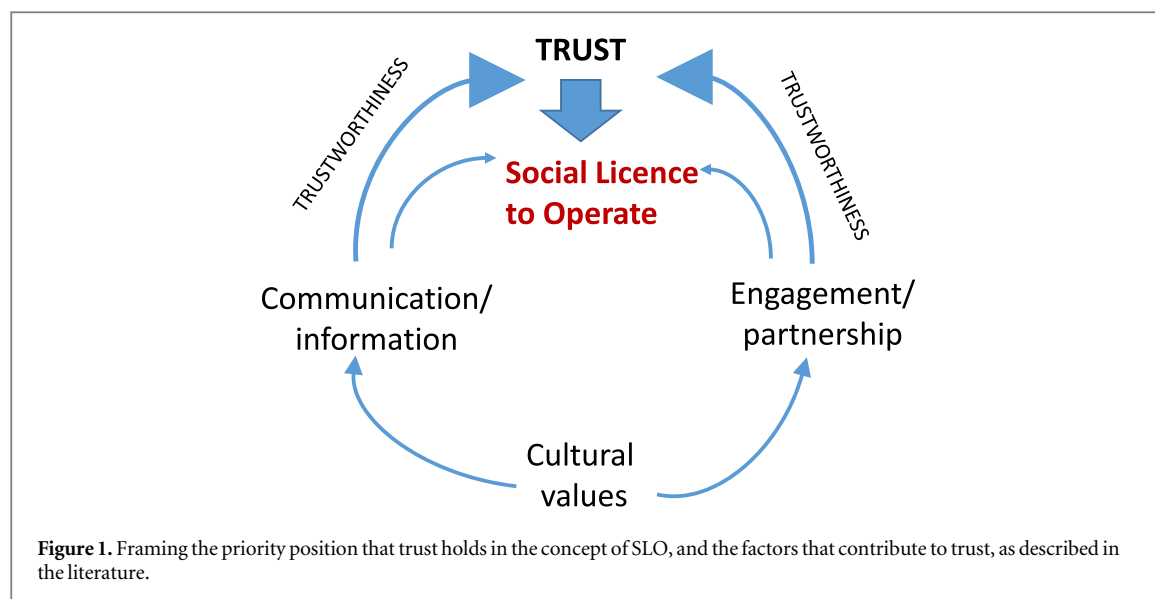
A number of global surveys have examined and measured trust in a variety of contexts. New Zealand, as a small country with a relatively small population, does not generally feature in these surveys. For example, the Edelman survey and the MEF global consumer trust report do not include New Zealand. New Zealand has been surveyed in the Nielsen 'Trust in Marketing' report, however data are aggregated into an Asia-Pacific grouping (Nielsen Company 2015) and New Zealand's small population responses are dwarfed by those from some of the world's most populous countries.

Using publicly available New Zealand data from the global world values survey (WVS) (Inglehart *et al* 2014), we identified two questions pertaining to trust—trust in various groups of people, and confidence in organisations. The data suggest that government, political parties, major corporations and the media were the least trusted organisations. However, there is evident confidence in the parliamentary system, and the legal system. Overall, the WVS showed that 50% of respondents trusted society in general in 1998, increasing to 57% in 2011.

How trust is affected by communication and information sharing

The post-truth society has been posited as a new phenomenon (Laybats and Tredinnick 2016). The framing adopted in this study is founded on contemporary contexts for trustworthiness and trust, and recognises the importance of public communication and the need for decision-making to occur within a dynamic, complex space of negotiation, debate and conflict (Cox 2012). In this framework political and social actors compete to win trust, legitimacy and efficacy. Strategy and symbolism work together to influence public opinion and social outcomes through both emotional and rational appeals. Practical demonstrations of these forces have occurred over time in sites as diverse as news media, town hall meetings or the agora. No form of public communication has been static or left unchallenged; both the emergence of

Figure 1. Framing the priority position that trust holds in the concept of SLO, and the factors that contribute to trust, as described in the literature.

popular newspapers in the 19th Century and television in the 20th, prompted significant anxieties about how information is communicated in such a way that it can be recognised as trustworthy and thus underpin well-informed and reasoned public debate and decision-making within appropriate geographic, political and cultural boundaries. Nevertheless, new and emerging communications practices and technologies (i.e. the Internet, including social media) are prompting changes to communicative forms, scale and reach not before seen (Lester and Hutchins 2013), fundamentally shifting what we know about decision-making processes, local and international governance regimes and regulation, and the notion of an 'affected public' (Fraser 2007).

The Australian and Canadian studies of media appearance of the term 'social licence' (Lester 2016, Gunster and Neubauer 2018) have traced the term as it shifted from its initial form to spread beyond industry, where broader public use now suggests a 'potential to think about SLO as a way of building consensus among diverse perspectives, particularly in terms of building trust and fairness in stakeholder relations' (Moffatt *et al* 2016: 485). In this context, the concept of social licence—and the trust that it implicitly relies upon—is a dynamic concept, embedded within the 'inescapably discursive' process' (Sen 2011: 337), that enslaves all concepts related to fairness and justice. This discursive enslavement ensures the concept is subject to the usual conditions of public debate: for example, the symbolic power that is carried by some communications, including images, and of strategic attempts to make an issue more visible or to contain it from public view. It is also clear that the concept is subject to the new conditions of public debate where notions of trust must manifest globally rather than just locally; where transnational corporations, NGOs and governance regimes continue to emerge; and where social media and other communication practices and

technologies puncture the traditional boundaries of communications. These new conditions undermine the myth of the bounded community; that a 'local community' or 'the affected' can be defined by and contained within its physical location.

Methods

This research examines trust at the government, industry, community nexus, as mediated by media, and its effect on SLO. We investigated the importance and extent of trust in New Zealand's natural resource sectors by examining the ways public trust is built, maintained or lost in a post-truth society. We hypothesise that trust is the core element that needs to be present, as a precondition to achieve and maintain SLO.

As the level of trust that society places in an industry or business can change significantly for many reasons, our initial focus was solely on trust. However, it became apparent through our research that the factors influencing trust (as a component of SLO) cannot easily be distinguished, necessitating a broader, more conceptual examination of trust, information, media and culture and SLO.

To explore our hypothesis, an online survey instrument (see Uslaner 2015, Edelman 2018) with 21 measures of trust on Likert scale indices was developed. These questions were based on elements of trust, including care, competency and consistency (Mishra and Mishra 2013), emotional response, identity with Māori culture and values, and trust in media. Respondents were asked to select a specific natural resource sector and tailor their answers to that sector. Respondents were questioned about social and institutional trust, associated activities and other measures. Additional qualitative and quantitative questions asking, for example, about information sharing, media reporting, social media, new technologies and

knowledge/understanding of natural resource sector operations were included to reveal the effects of issues such as the Treaty of Waitangi and relationships between organisations or groups on the important of trust in relation to the SLO context. For most questions, open-ended, text box options gave respondents the opportunity to comment further on their 'quantitative' responses. The survey was distributed through researcher personal and professional networks using social media as a vehicle (including Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook) through September and October 2017. The survey was aimed at the general New Zealand population. However, from the responses received to open-ended and likert-scale questions, it appears that the majority were from industries associated with natural resource sectors, and due to the number of responses associated with forestry, the sample is not representative or generalisable, but indicative. Further, comparisons between industries were unable to be undertaken due to the skew in responses.

The quantitative likert ranked scores for the 31 measures were converted to a Q-Sort distribution using an 11-point scale design (-5 to $+5$) and a Q factor analysis. Principal components using varimax rotation was applied through the online Ken-Q analysis (Banasick 2018).

The qualitative data were uploaded into NVivo v.11 software for analysis. Basic frequency analysis of terms associated with building trust and distrust were performed. Thematic analysis was conducted on written, qualitative responses to multiple general trust questions in the survey. In addition, to report and elaborate on the survey findings, a national forum was held in Wellington in 2017 and operated as a focus group/workshop. Approximately 25 researchers, government, industry and community members attended this forum, and worked through a number of questions around SLO. One key question, 'what does SLO mean to you and your industry/community?' provided some insights into our research on trust and SLO. The answers to this question were used to further interpret the survey in terms of how trust and social licence interact in natural resource industries.

Results

Most of the survey responses to the Likert scale questions pertained to forestry and insufficient responses referred to other sectors so generalisable results and rigorous comparisons could not be achieved. There was a total of 128 respondents to the survey, with 53% identifying as male, 47% female. Sixteen percent identified as Māori. Respondents were asked to identify a natural resource sector they were familiar with; 45% identified forestry, 20% dairy and 35% other sectors.

Of the 71 responses to the likert-scale items, the Q sort analysis identified five key groupings that distinguished difference behind their trust or distrust in the chosen sector. These five key groupings accounted for 61% of the variance, and comprised:

(1) Trust based on the sector's credibility and reports from credible sources;

(2) Distrust based on the lack of sectoral engagement, communication and information sharing with the respondent;

(3) Trust or distrust that is built largely on media reporting;

(4) Trust or distrust based on the level of engagement with Māori, and recognition of Māori cultural practices;

(5) Trust or distrust based on personal knowledge of the sector or companies within the sector, and the reputation and rapport they have built up over time.

Responses to questions about generalised trust ($n = 128$) form the key results of our analysis. The number of respondents that provided written, qualitative responses was quite low. We recognise the limitations on generalisability from low response rates, and thus this study provides early indications of new factors involved in trustworthiness and the development of trust.

A strong theme among qualitative responses was the importance of honesty in building trust. Numerous respondents ($n = 29$; 23% of respondents) highlighted that honesty is the most important element to engender trust in natural resource sectors followed by 'transparency and openness' and then the 'person' (figure 2). Conversely, a similar number perceived dishonesty or lying ($n = 25$) as the most important reasons to distrust the natural resource sectors.

Further responses to the question of building trust or distrust were consistent with findings in the literature on the topic. In particular, characteristics of trustworthiness included the trustor 'assessing' their previous experiences with the trustee (predictability), transparency and openness, communication, consistency and reliability. Further factors that made people untrustworthy, and precipitated distrust included poor communication, unpredictable past experiences, a lack of transparency, inconsistency and hypocrisy (suggesting past experience with natural resource industries).

A second key finding from this work is that individuals portrayed in media are distrusted, perhaps more so than media themselves. Multiple written responses noted that the respondents did not trust the politicians, scientists or NGOs quoted in media. Example responses included 'Yeah right, we all trust politicians', 'Politicians are not always honest' and 'Some
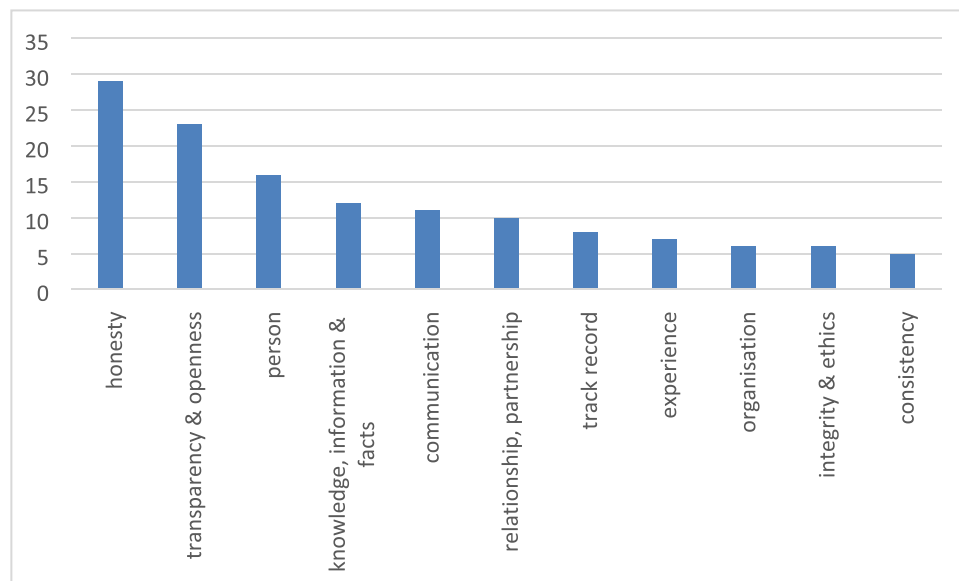
Figure 2. The most important factors that influence trust. The notion of 'person' is unclear, but is likely to relate to interpersonal rather than institutional trust.

groups have their own agendas and are happy to bend the truth'. By being associated with an untrustworthy speaker, media may also be 'tarnished' as untrustworthy. Nevertheless, it does highlight and confirm the significant role played by individuals and groups whose views are communicated by the media on such issues (see Lester and Cottle 2009) as well as the highly contextual nature of trust and trustworthiness (cf O'Neill 2002).

The survey also provided indications that the level of trust in natural resources sectors is generally constant. Among respondents ($n = 94$) to the statement 'Over the past five years has your trust in a natural resource sector—remained constant, decreased or increased?', 55% ($n = 52$) stated that it remained constant, 21% ($n = 20$) selected decreased, and 23% ($n = 22$) selected increased. Respondents were further asked to describe why they selected a particular response. These responses fell into three categories—(i) information and communication, (ii) values, and (iii) actions.

Where respondents stated trust levels remained constant, they provided a number of respondent statements around 'nothing has changed' in the natural resources industries. The more interesting responses came from those that felt trust was decreasing or increasing.

The first category of decreasing trust was described as information and communication, including misinformation. Examples provided by respondents to support their perceptions that trust decreased includes statements such as:

'Instead of fronting up, they have used information to hide'

'Their actions—opposing regulation, continued intensification, denying science—are at odds with their message of caring for the environment'.

'Denial of negative effects rather than acknowledgements'.

'Media coverage on labour standards and environmental sustainability of sector'.

The second category of decreasing trust reflected a perceived shift in values towards money and self-interest. Examples provided by the respondents for this cause of decreasing trust included:

'A move to be in favour of shareholders rather than the industry'.

'Many participants jumping in to try to make money without adding value'.

'Feedback is not listened to and those in decision making roles are too busy with own vested interests'.

The final category of potential causes of decreasing trust included 'physical actions seen to degrade the environment, society or culture'. Examples provided by respondents for this cause of decreasing trust included:

'Not following processes/internal standards'.

'Don't give appropriate resources, it is a joke. We don't have control of our forest economically, it all given

away. Waterways and land destroyed by bringing in non native plants animals fish etc [*sic*]'.

 '*Chemicals used to spray crops, selling off arable land for housing*'.

 Responses from those indicating increased trust in natural resource sectors fell into three categories— personal experiences and relationships, perceived positive changes in industry practices, and increased knowledge. Support provided for increased trust was less descriptive than that for decreasing trust, but included ideas around the quality of contact with the sector (Moffat and Zhang 2014):

 '*Because I started to work in the sector*'.

 '*Greater interaction with sector leaders*'.

 '*More knowledge about the sector due to contact with a worker*'.

 With respect to perceived positive changes in industry practices, respondents noted:

 '*They are taking H&S [Health and Safety] more seriously*'.

 '*Maturing culture of care*'.

 '*Becoming more open*'.

 Support for the influence of increased knowledge on perspectives of SLO is highlighted in responses above. However, one respondent noted that '*I have knowledge of and know people in primary production, secondary processing and tertiary infrastructure and supply chain…. I trust some areas of my sector more than others*'. This quote suggests that in-depth knowledge across individual natural resources sectors and the many business, operations and ways of doing business that they are comprised of can impact on trustworthiness and trust in multiple ways.

 We also explored aspects of the cultural dimension of trust and social licence in the natural resources sectors. Few respondents commented on Māori dimensions and trust within the natural resource sectors. Those that did, highlighted the need for early engagement and relationship building between companies and Māori in order to build trust over the long term.

 '*All sectors have to consult with Māori. The process should be side by side not last minute. It should be right at the beginning. The relationship process is the treaty relationship which binds us together. Trust can be built though a willingness by our treaty partners to learn and accept Te Ao Maori*'.

 Participants at the national forum/focus group also surfaced some additional considerations that relate to trust, particularly through the elements of engagement and contact quality. In describing SLO, participants suggested it is 'An on-going dialogue or negotiation between industry and communities of interest', where communities of interest were described as not just local communities, but those at different scales having an interest in the industry or operations. Further, it was agreed that 'Industry needs to identify appropriate communities, their values, beliefs, perceptions and opinions, and listen to, understand and take into account community expectations

of the company'. In summary, the group suggested that social licence is a balancing act between companies and communities.

Discussion

Cullen-Knox *et al* (2016) and Moffat *et al* (2016) note the changing dynamics of SLO, and thus perceptions of how communities are now defined—not solely in terms of local geography or proximity, but including more dispersed 'communities of interest' that may be globally distributed. Furthermore, the proliferation of information in the 'media age' through the Internet and social media creates new channels of information and avenues of influence between private industries and interested communities (Fraser 2007). Thus, two significant, related questions of whether this changes the key elements of trust and trustworthiness, and ways of earning trust, and how trust is earned have emerged. We have not found any significant new key elements of trust or trustworthiness that affect 'negative' perceptions in relation to SLO beyond those already documented in the literature. Echoing O'Neill's (2018) findings that honesty is a characteristic of trustworthiness, we found honesty emerged as the most important element of trustworthiness. However, our results do not suggest that the ways trust is earned have changed in the so-called 'post-truth society'.

 In New Zealand, engagement practices that ensure that values held by Māori, as resource owners are addressed when matters associated with natural resource use or protection are under consideration and the cultural redress element offer useful insights and lessons for SLO. The primary lessons can be found around these ideas of engagement and partnership between companies and communities in order to achieve SLO. As these requirements are enshrined in government policy, it also raises questions about the role of policy and regulation in SLO.

 Despite changing information sources, individual and institutional trust (Lacey *et al* 2018) are still built through engagement and relationships involving face-to-face contact. Our results reaffirm the importance of personal interactions in order to build trust, through the ideas of 'people', previous experiences and track records. Alongside relationships, credibility, the 'lowest level' of SLO (Thomson and Boutilier 2011), is a foundation for trust, trustworthiness and SLO. Where companies are seen to be credible, there is a higher likelihood of building trust. Similarly, while not addressed in this study, legitimacy provides a further foundation for both trust and SLO (see Kaina 2008). While we did not explicitly examine credibility and legitimacy, our results indicate that as foundations for trust, these elements do exist in the New Zealand natural resources sector.

The ability to differentiate between media platform and individuals who appear in and on media that we found seems to contradict the general global findings in Edelman (2018: 18), which suggest that 'people define media as both content and platforms'. This suggests that people may have a stronger focus or response to individuals than to institutions when it comes to trust. It has been suggested that where people trust institutions, this trust has been built through relationships with individuals that are the public face of those institutions, suggesting potential avenues for future research on the ways in which trust and trustworthiness can be examined alongside the role of communications. In reinforcing the role of individuals and groups (politicians, corporate sustainability/public relations, NGO campaigners) within public debate over land use and resource management, further questions are raised about who has the right and responsibility to attempt to influence SLO outcomes, and whether this is connected to the capacity to identify and isolate an 'affected public' (Fraser 2007).

Conclusions

We present some early findings from New Zealand that open up new lines of enquiry into SLO and trust globally. This work clarifies the contribution of trustworthiness to the establishment of trust. Many of the characteristics that were identified as essential to building trust are actually characteristics of trustworthiness. This can help focus companies and community representatives on what they need to do in order to become trustworthy, and thus engender building of trust. While preliminary, we have not explicitly found that 'post-truth' factors into trustworthiness and the building of trust. Thus, we believe a re-introduction of face-to-face and/or more personal contact is necessary for trustworthiness and trust due to the importance of contact quality, despite technological innovations in information and communication. This also brings out a key difference between CSR and SLO—CSR might be achieved through external accountability reporting, but SLO requires a local, face-to-face component that engenders trust.

In terms of policy and management, lessons from New Zealand's Treaty of Waitangi, particularly elements of partnership can be applied to other contexts, including between communities, companies and even governments. Emerging from the forum discussion on what is SLO, participants questioned the boundary between and effects of legislation or regulation on SLO. If these processes do not facilitate engagement in policy development, there may be an erosion of trust between communities, companies and the government. We feel that further work to test our framework, no matter the community of interest, would be of significant value in the policy/regulatory sphere.

Key gaps in our knowledge and understanding of SLO include the effect of legislation or regulation on SLO, particularly if these processes do not facilitate consultation or policy development; ways to identify, measure and monitor SLO; how businesses might identify appropriate and legitimate communities of interest; how untrustworthy actors are able to build trust and gain a SLO; and how communities might engage with companies to build trusting relationships. In managing natural resources, we feel that this research has also identified further research avenues to examine factors that may cause trust to decline in natural resources sectors, whether the same drivers in reverse are able to increase trust, and if negative options can be changed.

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