

**Dependent Stakeholders, Ethical Value Judgments, and Relational Legitimacy:
The Case of Fracking in the United Kingdom**

ABSTRACT

The relationship between corporations and local community stakeholders in sites of contestation and flux, such as the oil and gas extractive industries, is well documented. However, several scholars have called for research concerning how dependent stakeholders, notably the local community stakeholders, are defined, formed, and comprised. Adopting an interpretivist case study methodology, this research focuses on the case of fracking in the United Kingdom. Drawing on ethnographic data, which included twelve semi-structured interviews with participants from two cohorts of stakeholders, namely the industry and the community, stakeholder observations were thematically analyzed. Triangulation was achieved with academic survey data, relevant government documents, and local and national media reportage. The findings show that the formation, definition, and self-identification of local community stakeholders make such groups more powerful and salient actors than is often assumed in the literature and by the stakeholders themselves. The study highlights the problem of focusing on institutional legitimacy to the detriment of relational legitimacy, emphasizing that ‘dependent’ stakeholders engage in value judgments critical for businesses’ social license to operate.

Keywords: *fracking; stakeholder legitimacy; relational legitimacy; social license to operate; CSR; virtue ethics; social capital*

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INTRODUCTION

This research investigates the concept of the Social License to Operate (SLO) within the context of dynamic and dependent stakeholder relationships in contested environments, focusing on the fracking industry in the UK. The SLO refers to the approval of a company's activities by local communities and stakeholders, particularly in extractive industries where public contention often arises (Demuijnck & Fasterling, 2016; Boutilier & Thomson, 2011). Local community stakeholders are traditionally seen as 'dependent,' holding urgent and legitimate claims, but lacking power (Van Buren, 2010; Wagner Mainardes et al., 2012). However, this dependency does not preclude agency, as communities can actively challenge firms when their well-being is at stake. The extractive industry's tendency to focus on institutional legitimacy often leads to eroded trust and degraded relationships with these stakeholders, highlighting the importance of relational legitimacy (Kougiannou & Wallis, 2020).

Beyond its use as a corporate strategy (Holt & McNulty, 2008), the SLO has received limited scholarly attention. Relational legitimacy, informed by value judgments and community engagement, is a key dimension of the SLO and implies firms' engagement in meaningful dialogue and collaboration with stakeholders (Buhmann, 2016; Painter & Deslandes, 2017). Past studies on fracking have focused on environmental and public health risks but overlook the ethical and relational dimensions of stakeholder interactions (Cotton, 2017; Clarke et al., 2015). Also, traditionally, local communities are viewed as altruistic actors opposing monolithic corporate interests, which results in diminished trust and relational legitimacy (Kougiannou & Wallis, 2020). This study contributes to the literature by examining the relational aspects of SLO, emphasizing the importance of value judgments in shaping stakeholder relationships. Drawing on ethical value judgment and stakeholder theories, it explores how local community stakeholders perceive their relationships with extractive firms and how these perceptions influence relational legitimacy. The study adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on the case study of fracking in East Midlands. By integrating aspects of virtue ethics and relationality, it aims to provide theoretical and practical insights, guided by the following three questions: (a) *RQ1: What is the composition and formation of the local community stakeholders?* (b) *RQ2: What value judgments are*

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espoused in stakeholders' relational engagement with the industry stakeholders? (c) RQ3: What are the dimensions of the SLO, and how is it earned and lost? The findings seek to advance stakeholder theory by addressing its normative deficit, emphasizing relational legitimacy. The case of fracking in the UK provides a compelling context (Hands, 2022) for understanding how SLO operates in practice and how virtue ethics can enrich the discourse on stakeholder management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

'Stakeholder' and fracking

Rather than focusing explicitly on moral risks, extant literature on fracking prevalently highlights seismicity, pollution, and health (e.g., Wilson et al., 2015). The uncertainty endured by local communities is grounded in environmental and health concerns, reinforced by a negative image that has dogged the industry since it became commercially viable (Hawkins, 2015). Also, extractive industry scandals imply visible, measurable impacts on environmental and human health with repercussions for the legitimacy of firms (Banerjee, 2010) and the SLO (Cui et al., 2016). Extant literature often uses the word 'stakeholder' to delineate various complex perspectives, attitudes, and prevalent discourses (Clarke et al., 2015; Cotton, 2017; Cook, 2015). An ethical debate in urban studies, human geography, and social science journals has subsequently emerged. Yet, articles on fracking are much less prevalent in business ethics, management, and organization studies, with a few notable exceptions (Gond et al., 2016; Peach & Adkisson, 2017; Nyberg et al., 2018). In this literature, there is an assumption that fracking firms and local communities consider the risks of fracking in a dichotomous way. Williams et al. (2017) support that studies need to investigate the public understanding, institutional behaviors, and decision-making processes, including how institutions and fracking firms recognize, encounter, and accommodate diverse values and meanings. Addressing this call, the current study focuses on relational legitimacy, integrating both firms' and dependent stakeholders' perspectives on fracking. It addresses, through a case study, the call for "thicker" ethics theory building at the business and society interface (Islam and Greenwood, 2021)

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Benefits or ethical justification? The stakeholder theory response

Ethical arguments in favor of fracking are scant, with fracking benefits mostly described in terms of economic and institutional legitimacy. Sovacool and Dworkin (2015) cite Aristotelianism to present fracking as promoting ‘energy justice’ and providing a ‘bridge fuel’ to a carbon-free future. De Wit (2011) argues that fracking may alleviate poverty. Brock (2014) explains that fracking is ethically needed because energy is a commodity related to a high quality of life. Despite these benefits, it is the risks of fracking, vastly deriving from environmental concerns, which lead to controversy. The several ethical risks or value judgments to fracking center around actions of the businesses and the ‘community,’ who both use the term ‘stakeholder’ often in their discourse. On the one hand, firms establish connections with community stakeholders to improve their reputation—i.e., the relational legitimacy of the SLO (Demuijnck and Festerling, 2016). On the other hand, the SLO is often touted as a means for dependent stakeholders to hold large companies accountable (Wright and Bice, 2017). In stakeholder theory terms, both parties rely on ‘social capital’ to achieve their aims (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2020).

Theory’s response to the ethical risks of fracking rather lacks a normative component. Although the integration of a normative dimension has been questioned (Treviño & Weaver, 1999), pragmatically, stakeholder theory has been described as a ‘genre’ aligned with the normative core of the corporate mission (Freeman et al., 2010). In most traditional models, a normative moral compass guiding ethical practice is yet absent. Indeed, fracking firms often view ethically virtuous decision-making as a domain separate from their core business, avoiding ‘meaningful exchanges with stakeholders and external parties’ (Purnell and Freeman, 2012: 110). Hence, fracking’s ethical risks merit further attention. It is a reimagined stakeholder theory beyond its pragmatic descriptive ‘essentially contested’ nature, that can make the term ‘normative’ meaningful. Along these lines, Freeman’s recent work has focused on *pragmatism* rather than *the pragmatic* (e.g., Pouryousefi & Freeman, 2021). In search of universal ethical principles, stakeholder theory begins exploring diverse practices to address current business hazards. We accordingly frame our research considering fracking’s inherent risks, assessing universal stakeholder

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theory principles that may formulate a moral response to fracking. Reframing relationships through a moral response may provide explanations that highlight stakeholders' shared values and practices.

Legitimacy

One of the ways to empirically explore the SLO is by examining legitimacy perceptions of stakeholder relationships (Kougiannou and O'Meara Wallis, 2020). Dating back to the inception of organization theory, the SLO invokes legitimacy (Deephouse and Suchman, 2008; Gehman et al., 2017). Suchman describes SLO as: "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions." (Suchman, 1995: 574). Fracking is regularly subjected to legitimacy evaluations, and stakeholders are evaluated as to whether they have legitimate claims based on "contract, exchange, legal title, legal right, moral right, at-risk status, or moral interest in the harms and benefits generated by company actions" (Agle et al., 1999: 508). Recent definitions of SLO by business ethicists stress the role of legitimacy. Demuijnck and Fasterling (2016: 675) define SLO in relational terms as a "contractarian basis for the legitimacy of a company's specific activity or project... [which justifies] an institution or a moral or political rule by referring to the consent of all persons concerned with it." This points to legitimacy as part of a dynamic interaction based on communitarian consent.

Local communities predominantly use the SLO to endorse a firm's pursuit of a resource extraction project. Despite this simple dyadic evaluation, the conferring of legitimacy is polyphonic. Beyond stakeholders' evaluations of each other, legitimacy concerns the company's evaluations of its stakeholders (Mitchell et al., 1997). At the descriptive level, the SLO divides stakeholders according to their interests in the firm. In terms of community acceptance, though, the SLO depends on procedural justice, distributional justice, and trust. Legitimacy is granted if ethically virtuous practices are followed. This is highlighted by MacIntyre's (1985) emphasis on the importance of moral goods, described as 'internal goods' or 'goods of excellence.' Based on philosophical arguments and historical analysis, MacIntyre's work includes normative claims on how things should be vis-à-vis descriptions about how things are. Although MacIntyre does not explicitly tie internal goods of communitarian and consensual

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relationships to trust, communal practices are often seen as involving elements of cooperation and mutual respect (MacIntyre, 1985). Communities do judge an extractive industry project according to internal and external goods, which are fundamental to the SLO. Hence, stakeholders' network interactions lead to the consideration of SLO in terms of social capital, intangible assets, and internal goods. Justice, trust, and the resources embedded in social relationships become valuable through the moral practices of firms and stakeholders who have the power to confer legitimacy to a project.

Defining the local community stakeholders

Defining stakeholders is not straightforward (Willis, 2012). Context is important as the 'community' may consist of individuals or organizations with diverse interests and may be grouped by geography, interaction, or identity. In the management literature, definitions of the 'community' are relatively split evenly between the general public and groups or organizations (Dunham et al., 2006). In this research, we approach the 'community' strictly in terms of stakeholder theory. According to the literature, the local 'community stakeholders' of the extractive industry are described as both dependent (i.e., lacking power) and virtuous. Specifically, the community activist is either a derivative stakeholder or not one at all (Kaler, 2003; Phillips, 2003). The extractive industry firm usually considers the low-power or dependent stakeholders as lacking in salience. Painting the local community stakeholders in these terms is, at times, attractive also for the local communities that engage in a dialogue as the underdog—the 'David versus Goliath' narrative. Institutions, including entire sectors and extractive industry firms, are concerned with external goods (e.g., acquisitiveness or pleonexia), which relate to the structuring of power and status, usually through the distribution of money (Moore, 2003). In this context, the virtues of justice, courage, and truthfulness promote resistance to the corrupting power of institutions (MacIntyre, 2013). There are, hence, two implicit perspectives: (a) the local stakeholders are dependent, lacking in agency, power, and salience in their relationship with the firm, and (b) the stakeholders are virtuous, just, courageous, and truthful, resistant to corruption and pleonexia. In practice, the self-definition remains that the local stakeholder is low in power and in salience, and the one who pertains or holds to virtue. What is missing from this definition, however, is the recognition of how the coalition of the local stakeholders is formed.

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Local community stakeholders and virtue ethics

Virtue ethics, with a focus on community, utilizes the value of social capital and, through it, can give stakeholder theory a stronger normative force, prioritizing internal over external goods and virtues over vices, a relatively difficult task in the current conditions of modernity that promote pleonexia (MacIntyre, 2016). Painter and Ten Bos (2011) note the axiomatic universal truth that profit is valuable in and of itself. For MacIntyre, to not accede to it refers to not letting this axiom corrupt the possibility of virtuous practice in the community (MacIntyre, 2016). This is where the Aristotelian understanding of the *human animal's* flourishing can fill in stakeholder theory's moral gap or normative paucity. MacIntyre claims that, under the current capitalist paradigm, a mechanism to balance internal social 'goods' and external economic 'goods' does not exist. Notwithstanding this fact, this research aligns with the paradigm that a normative guide can still be provided to respond to the ethical risks of fracking through virtue ethics. If firms articulate that their pragmatic mission is not only to generate profit or appease the shareholders, then a neo-Aristotelian business practice may emerge. This is espoused in extractive industry firm annual reports, where mission success rather than profit is presented as key. Moore (2005) argues that virtuous firms can adopt a responsible approach to decision-making, considering all stakeholders' well-being. Therefore, virtuous practices may provide a normative core to stakeholder theory. If business practices emphasize internal goods over pleonexia—i.e., the corporate mission does not prioritize profit, just practices will provide context and guide business decision-making, an imperative particularly relevant for today's increasingly digitized economies (Sama et al., 2022). While seeking SLO, some extractive industry firms are already pivoting away from pleonexia as the *sine qua non*.

Relational Legitimacy

In the extant literature, emergent questions include whether stakeholder relationships with power asymmetries are virtuous, vicious, both, or neither. Seeking a normative framework core, this research follows MacIntyre's conceptions of virtuousness and of what values human beings prefer to flourish (MacIntyre, 1985). Focusing on the composition and the values of networked stakeholders' relationships, we emphasize the role of relationality in both virtue ethics and stakeholder theory. Relationality

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encompasses the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals, organizations, and other stakeholders. It is hence important to acknowledge that ethical decision-making is an inherently relational process (Painter & Werhane, 2023) influenced by interactions. Relational legitimacy emphasizes ethical dialogue, collective decision-making, and shared values. Therefore, relationality can be regarded as closely aligned with stakeholder theory. After all, stakeholder theory posits that organizations should consider the interests of multiple parties. Relationality expands how various organizations, such as healthcare organizations (Werhane, 2000), build the moral imagination to maintain positive relationships with diverse stakeholders. The importance of recognizing the ‘other’ in ethical encounters while shaping the discourse on relationality is a key part of how the stakeholder self-identifies. While MacIntyre (2016) emphasizes moral practices and character development, relationality underscores the importance of relationships in ethical decision-making. Trust is central to relationality, as it fosters cooperation and open communication, and is crucial for ethical behavior. The SLO is created gradually over time, as organizations build trust with the community. Relational legitimacy challenges dominant models based on individualism, rationality, and hierarchy, and proposes a more inclusive and collaborative way of leading (Painter-Morland, 2008). Pérezts et al. (2020) suggest that relationality is grounded in the local realities and cultures of different stakeholders but is also open to learning from other perspectives and traditions.

METHOD

This research employs a pragmatist framework (Bhaskar, 1978), aligning the methodology with the examined phenomenon and research questions (Van de Ven, 2010). It focuses on understanding the lived experience of a relational SLO, which cannot be effectively studied using survey or experimental research. Instead, qualitative research is selected for its strength in capturing complex, nuanced data about individual experiences and stakeholder dynamics (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This approach is particularly suited to exploring the interplay of stakeholder relations, social capital, and power dynamics within specific contexts. The research adopts a longitudinal and iterative case study approach, which is ideal for exploring contemporary phenomena within real-life settings (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2003, providing a rich framework to investigate “how” and “why” questions (Wood & Budhwar, 2014; Eisenhardt & Graebner,

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2007). This study focuses on fracking in East Midlands, a contentious industry with significant public opposition and environmental concerns. The period studied spans from the governmental inception of fracking to the eventual moratorium imposed in 2020. This timeline provides a dynamic backdrop for exploring stakeholder tensions and relational legitimacy.

Data collection involved three primary methods: interviews, participant observation, and archival analysis. Twelve semi-structured interviews involving diverse stakeholders were conducted (with 4 anti-fracking activists, 1 parish council member, 1 internet media professional, and 2 oil and gas executives) (see Table 1). The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to understand stakeholder relationships, expectations, and perceptions of legitimacy. The semi-structured format facilitated open-ended exploration of participant perspectives (Silverman, 2009). Participant observation enriched the data by immersing the researcher in stakeholder activities and interactions. This included attending over 15 Frack Free Notts meetings between 2014 and 2018, observing local council planning meetings and community fora from 2015 to 2016, and participating in leaflet deliveries and market stands with local stakeholders between 2016 and 2019. These activities provided contextual insights and supported the triangulation of interview data. Supplementary data sources, including archival and media reviews, enhanced the analysis. Documents such as local government planning reports, court rulings, news articles, and public statements from GasInc (the case study firm) were examined to provide historical context, verify claims, and capture broader narratives. Meeting minutes from activist groups further illuminated contested legitimacy and stakeholder dynamics. Official documents, such as court rulings and planning reports, contextualized historical developments, and verified interview statements. Interviews captured stakeholder perspectives, while participant observation added depth to narrative analyses. Archival and media data triangulated findings, ensuring a robust understanding of contested legitimacy. Table 1 provides an overview of data sources and their roles in the analysis. Data analysis followed an iterative process inspired by the Gioia methodology (Gioia et al., 2013). Through multiple rounds of open coding, we identified concepts, moving from in-vivo (e.g., simple descriptive phase) to second-order codes (e.g., thematic coding of concepts) (Maanen, 1979; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Triangulation with additional data

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sources strengthened the validity of findings (Yin, 2003). Figure 1 presents the data structure derived from the analysis. This systematic approach ensured a rigorous examination of the complexities surrounding relational SLO. Ethical considerations, such as transparency and respect for participant confidentiality, were integral throughout the research process (Gill & Johnson, 2010).

[Insert Tables 1 & 2 and Figure 1 about here]

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The case study highlighted the divergence between institutional legitimacy and local acceptance. Initially, fracking received strong governmental support, framed as essential for energy security and economic growth (Figure 2). However, public acceptance declined significantly, as evidenced by the 2016 YouGov Shale Gas Survey, which reported the lowest support levels for shale gas extraction (O'Hara et al., 2016). Public protests, media scrutiny, and legal challenges underscored widespread environmental and health concerns, contributing to local resistance and skepticism. Government incentives, such as tax allowances for exploration, further fueled tensions by appearing to prioritize corporate interests over community well-being. The East Midlands fracking case highlights the complexities of achieving relational legitimacy in contentious industries. The tension between centralized policy agendas and local stakeholder concerns highlights the challenges in reconciling institutional and relational legitimacy. This study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding these dynamics, offering insights into stakeholder theory and the broader implications of contested business-society relations.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

Addressing RQ1, this study reveals that the composition and formation of local community stakeholders in the fracking industry are far more dynamic and complex than traditionally portrayed. Local community stakeholders, often dismissed as dependent and low-power entities, demonstrated significant agency by mobilizing collective resources, forming alliances with activists, and leveraging social media to amplify their concerns. These coalitions allowed them to shift from being perceived as passive actors to influential stakeholders capable of challenging corporate practices. GasInc's oversight in recognizing this complexity led to its mismanagement of stakeholder relationships. By focusing on

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institutional legitimacy rather than understanding the evolving composition of the community, GasInc failed to anticipate the emergence of coalitions that emphasize the importance of acknowledging the fluidity of stakeholder roles and the transformative potential of collective action.

Answering RQ2, this study reveals that value judgments play a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of stakeholder relationships. Local community stakeholders in this case study espoused values rooted in justice, fairness, and environmental sustainability. They judged GasInc's actions through distributive, procedural, and interactional justice lenses. Distributive justice concerns focused on the unequal sharing of risks and benefits, as the community bore environmental and health risks without equitable returns. Procedural justice critiques stemmed from the lack of transparency and inclusivity in decision-making processes. Interactional justice issues arose from perceived disrespect and dismissiveness in stakeholder engagements. GasInc's actions, such as using euphemistic terminology like "*exploratory drilling*" to downplay fracking activities, were perceived as insincere and manipulative. These actions eroded trust and reinforced the community's negative value judgments, framing GasInc as a corporate antagonist. The study highlights the importance of aligning corporate actions with community values to foster mutual respect and trust, which are foundational to effective relational engagement.

Lastly, in answering RQ3, we find that SLO is multi-dimensional, encompassing trust, justice, and relational engagement. It is earned through transparent, equitable, and inclusive interactions that prioritize the well-being and values of all stakeholders. Distributive justice requires a fair allocation of risks and benefits; procedural justice demands transparency and meaningful participation in decision-making; and interactional justice calls for respectful and honest communication. GasInc's approach failed to uphold these principles, leading to the erosion of its SLO. By prioritizing institutional legitimacy and regulatory compliance over relational legitimacy, the company neglected the relational dynamics necessary to build trust. Community perceptions of hypocrisy—where corporate rhetoric on community engagement was not matched by action—further undermined GasInc's credibility. This breakdown in relational engagement fostered active resistance, culminating in the loss of the SLO and the formation of a powerful coalition opposing GasInc's operations.

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This research contributes to stakeholder theory by integrating Aristotelian virtue ethics, emphasizing internal goods and virtuous practices as foundational elements of relational legitimacy. By framing stakeholder relationships through the lens of virtue ethics, this study addresses a normative deficit often noted in stakeholder theory literature (Donaldson and Preston, 1995). The findings propose that businesses should prioritize internal goods—values and practices that promote human flourishing—over external goods such as profit maximization. This approach aligns with MacIntyre’s (1985) emphasis on moral goods and their role in fostering community trust and cooperation. Additionally, this study challenges the conventional characterization of local community stakeholders as merely dependent or low-power entities. Building on Mitchell et al.’s (1997) stakeholder salience framework, it demonstrates the fluidity of stakeholder roles and the potential for these groups to leverage alliances and social capital to exert significant influence. The research extends Kougiannou and Wallis’s (2020) work on relational legitimacy, showing how local stakeholders use value-based judgments to critique corporate practices and reshape power dynamics. The integration of virtue ethics into stakeholder theory also responds to Treviño and Weaver’s (1999) critique of the lack of a normative core in stakeholder theory. By emphasizing practices that foster relational legitimacy, this study provides a robust ethical framework which addresses the severe risks of fracking. This theoretical contribution enriches the discourse on SLO by highlighting the interplay of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice as dimensions of relational legitimacy.

Furthermore, this research draws attention to the underexplored relationality literature in business ethics (Perezts et al., 2020; Edwards and Kakavelakis, 2022). By framing stakeholder relationships as dynamic and context-dependent, the study highlights the importance of ethical dialogue and shared values in building sustainable, inclusive business practices. This approach moves stakeholder theory beyond transactional models, offering insights into how relational legitimacy can address the ethical and operational challenges faced by extractive industries. The case of GasInc has practical implications, highlighting the necessity of prioritizing relational legitimacy in corporate practices. Companies must engage in authentic dialogue with stakeholders, ensuring that their voices are heard and respected. Transparent communication, equitable risk-sharing, and inclusive decision-making are essential to

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building trust and maintaining the SLO. The study also cautions against organizational hypocrisy, where discrepancies between rhetoric and actions degrade trust and stakeholder relationships. A research limitation is that the findings are context-specific and may not generalize across industries. Future research should explore the applicability of these insights in diverse geographic and industrial contexts. Quantitative studies could further examine the impact of relational legitimacy on corporate performance and community well-being. Additionally, investigating the role of digital platforms in shaping stakeholder relationships could provide deeper insights into the evolving dynamics of corporate-community engagement. In conclusion, the study highlights the critical importance of relational legitimacy in sustaining the SLO. By redefining the composition and agency of local community stakeholders, it challenges traditional classifications and underscores the need for ethically grounded corporate practices. The findings emphasize the transformative potential of inclusive and transparent engagement strategies, offering valuable lessons for theory and practice in stakeholder management.

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Table 1. Biographical details of the interviewees

<u>Interviewees</u>	<u>Relevant Biographical Details</u>
P01	Freelance media reporter specialising in fracking
P02	Local Resident and first time activist - local community stakeholder who has lived whole life in M****
P03	Local Resident and first time activist - local community stakeholder who retired to live near SSSI in M****
P04	PR and Communications expert in the Oil and Gas Industry
P05	A “professional” activist and member of multiple pressure groups with regular attendance – not local to area
P06	Former CEO of Fracking Firm – Now CEO of Renewable Energy Firm
P07	Local resident and first time activist - local community stakeholder who has lived all their life in M**** married to P08
P08	Local resident and first time activist - local community stakeholder who has lived all their life in M**** married to P07
P09	Member of Frack Free ***ham - not local to M*** and a retired planner
P10	Local farmer and landowner – opposed to fracking
P11	Member of Frack Free ***ham - not local to M*** and a Health & Safety Officer in the Power Industry
P12	Local Parish Councillor – Member of the Liberal Democrats

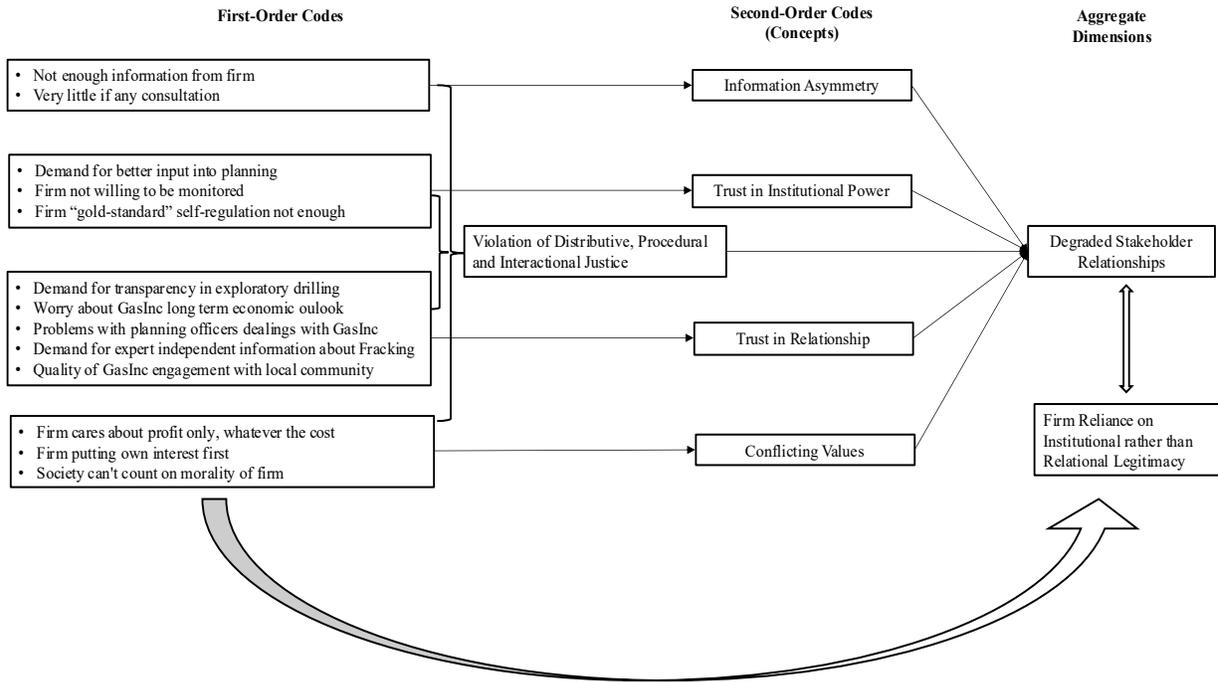
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Table 2. Data sources and use

Source	Type of data	Use in the analysis
Official public documents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local and High Court rulings 2. Local government documents re planning permission 3. Local and national government reports and declarations 4. Minutes from Local government Planning Meetings 5. Minutes from 15+ Frack Free Activist Meetings over the years 2014-2018 	<p>Gather information regarding the contested events.</p> <p>Background details and further clarification of planning process.</p> <p>Understand the history of the case-study.</p> <p>Cross-check truthfulness of interview statements.</p>
Interviews	<p>2021-2022</p> <p>12 interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Anti-Fracking Activists • 3 local residents • 1 Parish council member • 1 member of internet media • 2 Oil and Gas Industry Executives <p>All audio recorded translated and transcribed.</p>	<p>Gather data about the relationship history and expectations re stakeholder theory and legitimacy.</p>
Participant-Observation	<p>15+ Frack Free Notts Meetings in the Lincolnshire Poacher with minutes recorded.</p> <p>1 City council planning meeting: 15th October 2016</p> <p>4 X community fora: October 2015 – October 2016</p> <p>All recorded with notes taken. See Intro Picture on Page 1</p> <p>2 X FrackFree Notts Leaflet deliveries with local community stakeholders</p> <p>3 X Representing Frack Free Notts at market stands in Worksop and the Green Festival at the Arboretum in 2016,2017 and 2019</p>	<p>Gather data regarding perceptions of various stakeholders e.g. local politicians and stakeholders</p> <p>Further contextualize interview narratives.</p> <p>Triangulate facts.</p>
Other documents	<p>News articles</p> <p>GasInc annual reports</p> <p>GasInc Public Statements online and in press</p>	<p>Check for contested legitimacy perceptions.</p>

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Figure 1. Data Structure



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Figure 2. Oil and Gas Well Licenses Mapping

