

Mining Dialogues: From Troubles to Transformation

Episode 6 overview

Journey Towards Sustainable Mining: Insights from MMSD

This conversation explores the impacts and evolution of the Mining, Minerals, and Sustainable Development (MMSD) project, emphasizing its role in establishing global standards for the mining industry. Glenn Sigurdson will highlight the transition from "sustainable development" to "sustainability," a term that will evolve in response to criticisms that economic development often overshadows environmental concerns. This shift will lead to a focus on building sustainable relationships, exemplified by Placer Dome's groundbreaking sustainability policy in the 1990s. Placer Dome's approach will involve comprehensive training programs and engagement with various stakeholders, showcasing the importance of collaboration and trust-building in achieving sustainable outcomes.

Luke Danielson will reflect on the MMSD project's ambition to establish global mining standards, noting the unrealistic expectation of creating a comprehensive rulebook within a short timeframe. Instead, MMSD will lay the foundation for various sectoral standards and initiatives, such as IRMA and the Equator Principles. The project will underscore the need for broad consultation and highlight the complex interplay between industry, government, and local communities.

The conversation will delve into the difficulties of ensuring authentic representation from developing countries in global dialogues. Visa issues, funding constraints, and the dominance of Northern environmental organizations will often hinder genuine participation. The MMSD project will attempt to address these challenges by decentralizing the process and involving regional groups, although achieving true representation will remain a significant hurdle.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies and consumer pressure will emerge as critical drivers for the adoption of sustainable practices. The example of Tiffany's CEO will illustrate how consumer concerns about ethical sourcing can influence corporate behavior. However, the conversation will also highlight the complexities of tracing minerals through the supply chain, emphasizing the need for robust traceability systems.

Financial institutions will play a pivotal role in pushing for unified standards due to reputational risks and the cumbersome nature of varied due diligence processes. The adoption of the Equator Principles will exemplify this trend. The conversation will also note the increasing influence of regional development banks and emerging economies in shaping global standards.

Both Sigurdson and Danielson will emphasize the importance of building sustainable relationships as the foundation for effective standards. They will argue that clear understandings and trust are essential for successful engagement and long-term sustainability. The MMSD project's focus on process and engagement, rather than merely setting rules, will reflect this philosophy.



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The discussion will conclude with reflections on the future of mining standards, predicting a convergence of industry-led and multi-stakeholder governance models. The need for a balance between relationships and rules, the importance of understanding different stakeholders' perspectives, and the ongoing evolution of global standards will be highlighted as key factors in shaping the future of sustainable mining.