



The Struggle for Corporate Accountability: Strategies, Methods, Outcomes

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Since the rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s, an emerging global movement has coalesced to expose, confront, and construct frameworks to hold corporations accountable for human rights violations and environmental degradation. Corporate accountability strategies have increasingly widened to include a large spectrum of methods: from advocacy for national and international regulation, to criminal and civil litigations, boycotts and divestment campaigns, to truth commissions, peoples' tribunals, anti-extractivist protests, to "hacktivist" networks countering digital surveillance, political art projects, or shareholder activism, to name a few. Scholarship on corporate accountability has started to assess the results of such campaigns, particularly in the legal field. Nevertheless, holistic approaches that examine the interactions of different strategies, the way they are applied across national borders and world regions, and the conditions under which they succeed (or not) to generate accountability are largely missing.

This conference seeks to broaden the current academic debates on corporate accountability by analyzing a variety of methods and assess how they have worked since the 1970s in different (and across) political and historical contexts, and with what outcomes. We encourage papers examining both legal and non-legal tactics. We see legal endeavors as critical tools for advancing legislation, jurisprudence, and legal doctrine. However, trials and legal reform are usually slow, extending over years or even decades and being marked by progress, reversals, and sometimes paralysis. Non-legal instruments can therefore support and complement legal action and, in contexts where legal recourse is unavailable or ineffective, can become alternative means of seeking accountability. For instance, when attracting broad participation, political protests and boycotts can put immediate pressure on corporations to withdraw their investments or adopt responsible business practices. Truth commissions and peoples' tribunals can provide historical justice, while political art (including exhibitions, movies, performances

etc.) can play a key role in reaching out wide audiences to denounce corporate crimes. Although trials and legal reform are essential for engendering accountability, non-legal instruments can enable more inclusive participation and empower communities, due to their capacity to build cross-boundary relationships between various social actors, including victims of corporate crimes, civil society, judicial officials, consumers, or investors.

We welcome empirical contributions on various strategies and campaigns that have unfolded since the 1970s and connected, but not limited, to the following questions:

- How have different (legal and non-legal) strategies and methods improved corporate accountability across national borders and world regions and across different industry sectors? What tangible impact did they have on community well-being, environmental sustainability, and social justice?
- Why and how did different social actors employ specific methods of corporate accountability in particular socio-historical contexts and in what specific chronological sequences? How did different strategies enable or hinder one another?
- What were the specific conditions under which various strategies achieved (or not) their intended results? How did various cultural, political, and economic factors impact corporate accountability tactics?
- To what extent did grassroots and community-led initiatives reshape or are currently reshaping traditional notions of corporate accountability? What alternatives did / do they provide and how did / do they advance their struggle with corporations?
- Do contentious repertoires (such as protests, strikes, occupations of public or private spaces, blockades, or hacktivism) lead to more accountability than tactics based on legal actions, political negotiation, or different forms of awareness-raising? Do these methods strengthen their impact if used in combination or not?
- What is the role of indigenous struggles, including their battles for and outcomes of “free and informed consultations”?
- What lessons for the future can be drawn from the analysis of different campaigns, strategies, and tactics? How should we assess stories of “success” or “failure”?

We encourage comparative and transnational approaches, but we are also interested in submissions that examine particular case studies that can make broader arguments about the

results of different methods, their dynamics and outcomes, as well as historical analyses that track the evolution of such strategies.

Please submit your proposal including authors' names, email addresses and affiliations, a short CV and an abstract of around 300 words by 1 March 2025. The conference organizers will provide a response to the proposals by 30 March 2025. Selected participants will be invited to submit their papers (max. 7,000 words including tables, figures, and references) by 10 November 2025. A selection of papers will be published in English, in a special issue of an international academic journal / edited volume at a leading university press. Please, submit paper abstracts to: corpaccount@politice.ro. For additional information, please contact Henry Rammelt (henry.rammelt@politice.ro) or Mariuca Petre (mariuca.petre@politice.ro).

Funding opportunities for travel and accommodation are available, but we ask contributors to also explore funding opportunities at their home institutions.

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