



Borderless Politics: How & Why Do Large Firms Participate in Political Life?

Civil society workshop

20 January 2016, 2-4.30pm

The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London SE11 5RR

Borderless Politics, a joint initiative of the universities of Aberdeen and Glasgow seeks to improve society's understanding of how and why firms participate in public life by tracking the political behaviour of large transnational corporations across different activities (lobbying, campaign contributions and corporate social responsibility) and venues (national, European Union and United Nations).

The session will be an opportunity for civil society practitioners working on corporate accountability and transparency to discuss the project's initial analysis and the implications for corporate disclosure in the UK and internationally.

All welcome, registration required: email intern@corporate-responsibility.org

Background

This workshop is organised by the [CORE Coalition](#).

The project researchers will present findings from their analysis of CSR / corporate sustainability reports published by large UK, German and US companies from the 1990s to the present, giving an overview of which issues firms have engaged with most substantively over the twenty year period and how this differs across the three countries.

The initial analysis shows that corporate reporting on environmental issues is more comprehensive and developed than companies' reporting on labour and human rights issues in all three countries. This has, however, begun to change since the financial crisis and has been influenced by other political developments such as the publication of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the passage of the new EU Directive on Non-financial Reporting. Finally, there is a very embryonic trend towards greater reporting on companies' lobbying activities, although at present the latter is generally not well-aligned with the companies' stated CSR commitments.

To help explore and explain these trends, approximately 40 interviews with CSR managers at large firms in Germany, the US and UK have been conducted, as well as with NGOs working on CSR issues in the three countries.

The workshop will inform and stimulate conversations about policy issues, including UK's implementation of the UN Guiding Principles, ongoing debates about lobby registers, as well as the future regulation of non-financial reporting.