

## Edited book project

*Invitation for chapter contributions*

### **Anti-corruption in a discordant world: Contestation, abuse and innovation**

#### **Book abstract**

As the *United Nations Convention against Corruption* celebrates 20 years, there is a sense in some circles that anti-corruption discourses, policies, and practices are settling into a stable, consensus-driven phase. This edited volume argues that they are not.

Evidence is emerging of anti-corruption's discord, not least due to rising powers challenging democratic norms and the proliferation of populist and illiberal leaders around the world. This book recasts anti-corruption as an arena where domestic and transnational politics play out, shaping outcomes in unpredictable ways.

Consensus on the roles of anti-corruption is *contested* in times of crisis, by the growth models and ideologies of rising powers, and by mixed evidence that mainstream anti-corruption approaches bring significant change. Some observers doubt the wisdom of pursuing anti-corruption before economic growth, noting how support for democratic values is wavering, and how banks, consultants and PR firms, even NGO initiatives, have helped corrupt leaders launder reputations and money. Illiberal leaders, too, have agitated against anti-corruption as 'foreign interference' or a 'Western plot'.

Practice is being *abused* as anti-corruption is weaponised and hijacked by illiberal leaders to target opponents or gain impunity. Anti-corruption has been used to bolster corrupt leaders by 'frying small fish', or, through an emphasis on 'terrorist financing' or 'tax evasion', into tools that restrict space for media and civil society.

As a response to these abuses, *innovative* forms of collective action and technology, as well as new entrants to anti-corruption are, however, also emerging. Transnational networks help local NGOs use legislation and policy to pressurise corrupt leaders. And new ways of analysing big data identify patterns in everything from tax evasion to social networks.

The book captures evidence from around the world where anti-corruption is contested and challenged, where it is abused, and where innovation takes places. Its empirical studies bring a dose of realism to anti-corruption, contributing to answering the central emerging question: what kind of anti-corruption do we need to meet the challenges of a discordant world?

#### **Contributions sought**

Each chapter shall evaluate how anti-corruption is contested, abused, and innovated in a particular context, *and* how these are explained by political and economic processes like democratic backsliding, populism, and the changing political and economic world order.

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Chosen units of analysis will be at authors' discretion and the editors encourage a diversity of perspectives. The book is not restricted to country-level analysis, and chapters considering sectoral, subnational, regional, or international anti-corruption are welcomed. Theoretical and conceptual chapters will also be considered. Chapters may examine anti-corruption via, for instance, periods of political rule, scandals and criminal cases, campaigns, discourses, sectoral trends, the role of various actors, as well as through international frameworks and legislation.

Possible guiding questions are:

### *Contestation*

- Where is contestation most visible and why? Is there a mainstream approach to anti-corruption, what are its origins and who backs it? Why has anti-corruption seemingly become a clarion-call for both autocrats and democrats across the world? How are de-democratisation and populism weakening anti-corruption?
- To what extent are countries in the Global South and rising powers challenging the ideological foundations of mainstream anti-corruption and why? Has anti-corruption been considered as anti-democratic or anti-economic diversification?
- How are the World Bank, Western donors, and the bigger anti-corruption NGOs, responding to critiques and emerging alternatives?

### *Abuse*

- Where and how is the manipulation and hijacking of anti-corruption practice and discourse taking place? How is anti-corruption used to legitimise the rolling back of checks and balances? Under what circumstances is this hijacking effective and under what circumstances is it not?
- How does anti-corruption fit into the discourse of illiberal and populist leaders? What is the overall effect of the abuse of anti-corruption on the legitimacy of mainstream anti-corruption practice?
- To what extent are international donors being caught up or enabling these abuses?

### *Innovation*

- How are democratisers using anti-corruption to resist autocratisation? Why is innovation happening? Who is supporting it? Who is gaining from the new forms of technology and innovations emerging in the field of anti-corruption?
- What would a truly democratic, decolonized, form of anti-corruption look like? How can localised anti-corruption succeed?
- What anti-corruption innovations can be transferred from one situation/country to another? What kind of anti-corruption is needed to meet the challenges of a discordant world?

### **How to contribute**

Please submit chapter abstracts by **January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024** to David Jackson ([David.jackson@cmi.no](mailto:David.jackson@cmi.no)), Inge Amundsen ([inge.amundsen@cmi.no](mailto:inge.amundsen@cmi.no)) or Aled Williams ([aled.williams@cmi.no](mailto:aled.williams@cmi.no)).

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Abstracts shall include:

- a) A tentative chapter title;
- b) Names and affiliations of all authors;
- c) Short author biographies;
- d) A brief description of the chapter (300-400 words).

Draft chapters shall be completed by July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, with final chapters due on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Chapters will be a maximum of 8,000 words and will be peer reviewed.

### **About the editors**

The editors will seek publication at a leading academic publisher.

David Jackson is Senior Advisor at the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre at the Chr. Michelsen Institute, Norway. He has published widely in academic journals and edited volumes on the political and social factors behind anti-corruption. See:

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Inge Amundsen is Senior Researcher at the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) in Bergen, Norway. He is editor of *Political Corruption in Africa: Extraction and Power Preservation*, published by Edward Elgar (2019). See: <https://www.cmi.no/staff/inge-amundsen>

Aled Williams is Principal Advisor at the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre and Senior Researcher at the Chr. Michelsen Institute, Norway. He is author of *The Politics of Deforestation and REDD+ in Indonesia: Global Climate Change Mitigation*, published by Routledge (2023). See: <http://www.cmi.no/staff/?aled-williams>