Call for Chapter Proposals

Beyond Boundaries: Thinking Through Empirical Research Approaches to Business, Human Rights and the Environment

Proposal Submission Deadline: 30 September 2024

Chapter Submission Deadline: 28 February 2025

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This edited compilation invites authors involved in empirical research on business, human rights and/or the environment - including research using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approaches - to reflect on key challenges in the design and implementation of their methodologies.

Book Editors

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Topic

The field of business, human rights, and the environment – and its unique approaches to governance, norm diffusion, rethinking the role of corporations and other business models in society, the Anthropocene, wicked problems, and considerations of justice - raises unique challenges for empirical research. These include challenges to how we render 'the corporation', 'human rights' or 'the environment' as research objects amenable to empirical research, how we conceptualise matters such as corporate agency, causation, normativity, and power, and how we make decisions over data collection and data analysis methods to produce reliable research findings addressing global issues.

For many researchers embarking on research in this domain, it can be difficult enough to identify all the relevant questions to answer let alone reach the best answers. **This volume aims to provide an in-depth exploration of the rich methodological journeys taken in research on business, human rights and the environment, including the choices made regarding theory, ethics, data collection and analysis,** and the implications of these choices on the research itself and the field more broadly.

This book is informed by the observation that many researchers tackle the same types of methodological questions, but literature facilitating peer-to-peer learning on these questions is absent. It creates a space where researchers can share their honest reflections on how they made decisions in their overall research approaches and critically reflect on the challenges and limitations of empirical research in the context of empirical research on business, human rights, and the environment.

Author Instructions

Authors are invited to write chapters on 1-3 key methodological issues they had to address in the course of their work, how they addressed the research question(s), and the consequences this had for their research. Authors can choose their own questions and are encouraged to consider the example methodological questions on the next page. Prospective authors are encouraged to discuss these methodological choices in connection with prior or ongoing research, including reflecting on the consequences of their choices for their research. Authors may also refer to their research experiences in critiquing structures relating to academic research and publishing in this field. Researchers from all academic disciplines are welcome, as well as non-academics who engage in academic research in the area of business, human rights, and the environment.

The book will be divided into shorter chapters which focus on a specific methodological choice (4000 words) and longer chapters looking at multiple methodological choices (8000 words). Chapters should use in-text referencing. Each chapter should provide:

- A selection of methodological questions (see examples on next page) that the author had to invest significant time and effort in answering during the course of the research.
- An account of real-life empirical research on business and human rights/environment carried out by the author(s). The chapter should give a short overview of the research project (research topic, methodology, and findings) and the methodological hurdles that existed for studying this topic empirically.
- Critical reflection on the stakes of those questions for the research findings, how the research design changed over the course of the research to address these questions, and how the author would do the research differently in its aftermath. Authors are encouraged to actively engage with how their positionality and worldviews informed their research.

Authors should submit a 600 word abstract to beyondboundariesbhre@gmail.com by 30 September 2024. Alongside this abstract, prospective authors should indicate

1. Whether they are submitting an abstract for a short or long chapter.
2. Why the methodological choices chosen are especially relevant for business, human rights, and the environment.
3. Any published research that the chapter relates to.
4. their positionality, including their gender, ethnicity, ability, geographical location, career stage etc.

The book will be composed of a mixture of invited submissions and submissions in response to this Call for Chapter Proposals. Efforts will be made to ensure a balance of perspectives and to ensure both diversity and a balance of perspectives according to academic discipline, type of research approach, and positionality of the author(s).

This book is part of Springer's Book Series 'New Approaches to Business, Human Rights and the Environment.' This series contributes to discussions which are highly relevant to legal and policy developments and meaningful changes in corporate practices in the area of business, human rights and the environment. It draws from disciplines such as law, business/management studies, political economy, and political science. The book series editors are Nadia Bernaz (Wageningen University), David Birchall (London South Bank University), and Rachel Chambers (University of Connecticut).

Example Methodological Issues a Chapter can Discuss

Foundational Questions

- Why was a particular philosophical foundation (e.g., positivist, post-positivist, constructivist, post structural, or critical) chosen rather than other foundations, and how did this inform the findings?
- How did the research conceptualise agency and structure, what other modes were considered, and why was this approach chosen?
- What assumptions were made about how corporations or other actors make decisions and how did this affect the research design?
- Was the research synchronic or diachronic and why was this approach chosen?
- How was power conceptualised, why was this conceptualisation chosen over others, and how did this influence the findings?

Data Collection

- Why was a particular data collection method (or methods) chosen, what other methods were considered, and what was the added value and limitations of the chosen method compared to the others?
- How did difficulties in accessing relevant data and knowledge in the context of research on corporations affect the methodology?
- How were the perspectives of marginalised groups recognised relative to other knowledge sources and how did this influence the findings?
- If the researcher collected unanticipated forms of data and/or failed to collect anticipated data, and how did they adapt the research accordingly?

Data Analysis

- Why was a particular data analysis method (or methods) chosen, what other methods were considered, and what was the added value and limitations of the chosen method compared to the others?
- Did the nature of the data collected alter the data analysis approach in any way, why?
- How did the research generalise its findings in a reliable way?
- How did the data analysis lead to new theory?
- In the context of interdisciplinary research, what different disciplines did the author draw from, and what were the challenges and benefits of integrating different approaches?

Ethics

- How was ethics approached, and what were the consequences of this ethical paradigm for how research was conducted?
- What policy, advocacy, or personal goals did the research have and how was the research designed accordingly?
- How did the researcher's positionality and worldview play a role in the empirical research?
- If the research was done in the capacity of NGO work, consultancy, or other professional undertakings, how did the researcher navigate their conflicts of interest?

External Factors

- How did the researcher adapt their research to meet external requirements of grants, ethics committees, publishing practices of journals, and other academic practices, and how did these external requirements enable or threaten the production of necessary research?
- What unanticipated events occurred which affected the research and how did the researcher adapt their approach accordingly?
- If the research was carried out under a research contract with a relevant external organisation, how did this research contract affect the research?