

# Introduction – public accountability in the Global South: approaches and practices

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**Sylvia I. Bergh, Wil Hout, Sony Pellissery and C. Sathyamala**

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## INTRODUCTION

The vast literature on accountability in the public sector (usually called ‘public accountability’)<sup>1</sup> originating from political science and public administration tends to emphasize the positive dimension of holding authorities to account. As formulated by one prominent scholar in the field, ‘[a]ccountability has become an icon for good governance’: it is perceived as ‘a Good Thing, and, so it seems, we can’t have enough of it’ (Bovens, 2005: 182, 183). Accountability has, thus, become one of the central values of democratic rule – varying on a well-known American slogan one could phrase this as ‘no public responsibility without accountability’.

Accountability, operationalized as the participation of citizens in affairs of the state in order to account for the quality of public services, brings in the very idea of democracy and state as a departure from aristocracy. The distance between ruler and ruled, the expert and citizen (Dewey 1927/1954 [2016]) is reduced through the discourse and practice of accountability. Accountability as a tool has emerged as a powerful instrument at the disposal of citizen groups, and accountability mechanisms potentially correct the imbalance of power in state–society relations and help to restore mutual trust.

A range of publications, starting with the 2004 World Development Report (WDR), *Making Services Work for Poor People* (World Bank, 2003), have indicated that political systems across the Global South fail to benefit sizeable groups of citizens, including notably the poor, and have pointed at accountability issues as an explanation of the general unresponsiveness of those systems to citizens’ needs. Since the publication of the WDR 2004, many studies have suggested ways of strengthening existing accountability mechanisms as well as advocated new accountability instruments to serve the interests of people that are left out from representative political structures (cf. Mehrotra, 2006;

Gaventa and Barrett, 2010; Joshi, 2013; Fox, 2015; Börang and Grimes, 2021). A recent study provides preliminary evidence of the possible broader impact of accountability mechanisms in a development context, as it shows that young democracies with stronger accountability mechanisms have better development outcomes (Petkovic and Rahman, 2021).

In a general sense, the attention to accountability issues in the Global South seems to signal problems of political order. As Olsen (2017b: 132) has argued, accountability processes come into the spotlight and are politicized mainly in political orders that are ‘weakly developed, contested, or in transformation’. The study of innovative accountability mechanisms in the Global South is very relevant, because of their possibly transformative impact on the functioning of political systems and their promise to promote the interests of citizens who are not reached well by conventional, representative institutions. Possibly, limited state capacity in the Global South opens up an opportunity for innovations that may also prove useful for different types of challenges encountered in the Global North.

The adoption of the UN’s 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 has added another layer to the discussion about accountability issues in the Global South. The 2030 Agenda holds an obligation for ‘[a]ll countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership’ to implement the SDGs (United Nations, 2015: 1). Importantly, the inclusion of SDG 16 on the 2030 Agenda was an acknowledgement of service-delivery deficits in the Global South. SDG 16 contains a call for achieving development by deepening standards of accountability: it aims to ‘[p]romote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels’ (United Nations, 2015: 14). It is an important ‘enabling goal’ for the entire sustainable development agenda as the realization of many of the other SDGs is contingent on its achievement. At the core of SDG 16 lies an acceptance that the social contract – a dynamic and tacit agreement between states, people and communities on their mutual roles and responsibilities – is unravelling as citizens lose trust in their governments’ ability to protect their lives and property and to provide adequate public services (UNDP, 2016: 5).

Set against this background, the studies brought together in this volume establish the pathways of accountability in a development context. The contributions provide new insights into the context-dependent local manifestations of the various political dimensions of accountability pathways and outcomes, beyond the classic manifestation of voting in elections. The studies build on the insights provided by the WDR 2004 and later studies on accountability innovations in the Global South, but also attempt to move beyond conventional approaches by focusing on new dimensions of accountability relationships.

Collectively, the following chapters explore how studies on accountability issues may contribute to realizing SDG 16.

While our ambition is to understand the dimensions of the politics of accountability in development contexts, we are acutely aware of the pitfalls inherent in such generalizations. The ‘state’ as a construct is postcolonial in several, if not most, countries of the Global South. In some development contexts, fragile states are struggling to maintain law and order (Gough et al., 2004). This book does not suggest that these states should hold Western democracy as an ideal towards which accountability institutions should converge; we see the state as a being deeply embedded in society (Migdal, 2001). In this sense, the politics of accountability is shaped by the interactions of both societal institutions and formal institutions of the state. We believe that this interaction has not yet been adequately explored in the accountability literature.

This introductory chapter sets the scene for the case studies included in the volume. The next section discusses the background to accountability and emphasizes why attention to accountability issues is necessary. The third section focuses on the types of accountability that are commonly highlighted in the literature on the subject. In the fourth section, we sketch some approaches to accountability and argue why there is a need for a political approach to the issue. The fifth section discusses the so-called ‘accountability triangle’ developed in the WDR 2004 and formulates a modified approach to the ‘long’ and ‘short’ routes of accountability. The sixth section contains the research questions that are addressed in this volume. The final section moves to the case study chapters and provides a short overview of the accountability dimensions that are addressed in those chapters.

## WHAT IS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHY IS IT NECESSARY?

Accountability is usually associated with the practice of explaining and justifying a particular course of action by a power holder. This brought Bovens (2005: 184) to define accountability as ‘a social relationship in which an actor feels an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct to some significant other’. Schedler’s (1999: 17) well-known definition emphasizes enforceability of public officials next to answerability: ‘A is accountable to B when A is obliged to inform B about A’s (past or future) actions and decisions, to justify them, and to suffer punishment in the case of eventual misconduct’. In an attempt to synthesize the main characteristics of accountability, Lindberg (2013) has summed up what is key to all types of relationships. In his view, accountability approaches contain a common core of five characteristics: (a) an actor or institution who is to give an account (also called the ‘accountor’); (b) a responsibility that is subject to accountability; (c) an actor or institution

to whom the accountant is to give account (this is the ‘accountee’); (d) the right of the accountee to demand information or justification from the accountant regarding its responsibility; (e) the right of the accountee to sanction the accountant if the latter fails to provide sufficient information or justification on its decisions (Lindberg, 2013: 209).

The fourth and fifth characteristics are the most salient ones, as they define the rights of an accountee to request justification and/or sanction an actor or institution for its action or inaction. In other words, these characteristics define the ‘voice’ and ‘teeth’ of the accountee, as for instance Fox (2015: 346) has called them as shorthand of the right to information and the right to sanction.

Scholars have analysed public accountability mainly from two vantage points: as a normative ideal and as a social, political or administrative mechanism. Understood as a normative ideal, the principle of accountability emphasizes that power holders have the duty to justify their actions to the public (and *in public*) and be sanctionable for these actions. In their introduction to the *Oxford Handbook of Public Management*, Bovens et al. (2014: 8) argue that, according to this interpretation, accountability ‘comes close to “responsiveness”, “a sense of responsibility”, or a willingness to act in a transparent, fair, compliant, and equitable way. ... [A]ccountability deficits manifest themselves as inappropriate behavior, or “bad” governance – unresponsive, opaque, irresponsible, and ineffective’.

Next to seeing accountability as a normative principle that can be applied to assess democratic governance, the concept can also be used to refer to social, political or administrative arrangements that are used to hold power holders to account. When understood instrumentally, as a mechanism, accountability is ‘conceptualized as an institutional relation or arrangement in which an agent can be held to account by another agent or institution. ... Accountability deficits, within this line of research, are defined in terms of gaps in the web of control mechanisms’ (Bovens et al., 2014: 8–9).

Seen from the above two perspectives, weak or lacking accountability is an important challenge. From the normative viewpoint, accountability deficits are indications that rulers are unresponsive or irresponsible in the light of broader needs of the public. Such issues point at the failure to select good – that is, responsible and responsive – rulers and thus reflect deeper-seated problems, such as lacking or ill-functioning democratic governance. From the instrumental angle, accountability deficits indicate that institutional safeguards are weak or not operating as well as they should. The insufficiency of countervailing powers may lead rulers to place their own interests above those of the people they are supposed to serve, and this may result in clientelist politics, practices of patronage and corruption. Underlying both the normative and institutional dimensions is the problem that citizens are not served well by their rulers and that their interests are not represented fairly in the political system. The com-

bination of normative and instrumental elements was reflected in the analysis of accountability deficits in the World Development Report 2004 (cf. World Bank, 2003: 27–29), and has been key to many studies that appeared since the early 2000s, including in the suggestions to strengthen accountability in order to improve service delivery for the poor.

## TYPES OF ACCOUNTABILITY RELATIONS

The literature on accountability is replete with attempts to classify types of accountability relationships, which all in one way or another contain the characteristics identified by Lindberg that were discussed in the previous section. For instance, Bovens' (2005: 187–188) oft-cited introduction mentions organizational, political, legal, administrative and professional types of public accountability. These types of accountability are defined in terms of the relationship between accountor and accountee. In the case of public accountability, accountors are generally managers serving in public organizations, supplemented by ministers as political representatives of the organization in the case of political accountability relations. The accountee is the superior in organizational accountability, while this role is played by elected representatives and political parties in political accountability, by courts in legal accountability, by auditors, inspectors or controllers in administrative accountability and by professional peers in professional accountability.

A different type of relationship is involved in so-called social accountability, which relates to citizen-driven activities that aim to monitor the activities of public authorities or service providers and hold these to account (Joshi, 2013: S29; Börang and Grimes, 2021: 268). Social accountability is a broad category, which includes such diverse initiatives as 'citizen monitoring and oversight of public and/or private sector performance, user-centred public information access/dissemination systems, public complaint and grievance redress mechanisms, as well as citizen participation in actual resource allocation decision-making, such as participatory budgeting' (Fox, 2015: 346).

Next to distinguishing various types of accountability, scholars often refer to vertical and horizontal accountability relationships (Bovens, 2005: 196–200). Vertical accountability involves hierarchy, as in relations between staff and superiors in organizations, and ministers and parliament in political relations. Horizontal accountability refers to relationships between actors that are not in a hierarchical relationship; here one could think of auditors and inspectors who assess the performance of public institutions, such as ministries, universities and public utilities, as well as of peers who comment on the performance of other professionals, for instance in university accreditation systems or medical panels.

A third way of classifying accountability instruments, which has become widespread since the introduction of a new vocabulary by the World Bank, is that involving the supply and demand side. Initiatives from the supply side involve accountability mechanisms that are driven by governments and often involve ‘check and balances type institutions’ (Fox, 2015: 347), including anti-corruption agencies, capacity building for legislative oversight and citizen participation in the preparation of government projects. By contrast, demand-side approaches imply active citizen involvement in decision-making, such as in participatory budgeting, community scorecards or customer user groups – these approaches show much overlap with the activities that were brought together under social accountability.

An important dimension of accountability instruments, which has been receiving increasing attention in the literature, relates to the use of new technologies to provide citizens with new tools for exercising influence on public sector activity. The *Making All Voices Count* programme, implemented by the Institute of Development Studies between 2013 and 2017, focused on how technological innovations could have ‘the power to open up government and allow more fluid communication between citizens and governments’ (McGee et al., 2018: 5). While certainly acknowledging the potential of new information and communications technologies, McGee et al. (2018) warn for exalted expectations concerning their ability to solve accountability issues. They conclude that ‘[t]echnologies can support social mobilisation and collective action by connecting citizens’, but also that ‘[t]ransparency, information or open data are not sufficient to generate accountability’ and that ‘[t]echnologies can’t overturn the social norms that underpin many accountability gaps and silence some voices’ (McGee et al., 2018: 24).

## APPROACHES TO PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

The dominant, mainstream approach to accountability conceptualizes accountability in actor-oriented terms as a so-called principal–agent relationship (Bovens et al., 2014: 13; Olsen, 2015: 426). Principal–agent approaches, as a key element of public-choice theory, stress the information asymmetry between principals and agents and focus on the difference in incentives and objectives of these two sets of actors. Accountability, as external control, serves to keep agents in check, in order to avoid that they pursue their own interests at the detriment of those of the principal. As summarized by Olsen (2015: 437), ‘[a]ccountability is achieved by selecting and removing agents with certain characteristics for/from office, hierarchical command, or reciprocal control established through vertical or horizontal separation of power’.

One crucial element of criticism of principal–agent models centres on the notion of preferences. In essence, principal–agent theory assumes that citizens

are rational actors who are motivated in the first instance by individual preferences and wish to maximize preference satisfaction. Public-choice theorists argue that market-based orders are superior in dealing with accountability issues, because they are better able to satisfy individual preferences than political orders as the latter are beset by principal–agent problems (Faria, 2019: 52–53). The argument is that service providers operating in a market (for instance, a market for electricity or health insurance) will be more sensitive to the demands of their clients, because those clients may choose to switch to a different supplier if their current contract no longer satisfies them. According to public-choice theorists, ‘political institutions suffer from [the principal–agent] problem in a much more harmful way than markets because of political institutions hardly having exit options – like exiting from the welfare state – and because of the concentration of power that increases the distance between principals and agents’ (Pennington, cited in Faria, 2019: 53). One of the key problems that public-choice theory identifies is that political institutions are particularly susceptible to rent-seeking behaviour of office holders: this leads those functionaries to adopt policies that benefit special-interest groups, famously labelled as distributional coalitions by Mancur Olson (Faria 2019: 60–63; Olson 1982: 44–45). Their considerations about the pervasiveness of principal–agent problems lead the most extreme public-choice theorists, such as James Buchanan, to be sceptical about democracy and, more in general, distrust politics and argue that the market should be protected from politics (Robison, 2006: 3–5).

The criticism about the individualist approach inherent in principal–agent models has led scholars to develop different ways to study accountability. Olsen (2013, 2015, 2017a, 2017b) has advocated a so-called ‘institutional’ approach to accountability. This approach has markedly more attention to the political dynamics of accountability than the public-choice inspired principal–agent model. The institutional approach focuses on more dimensions of accountability than only external constraints placed on actors in the public domain. Its core is captured as follows:

An institution-centered approach attends to how *internalized* identities and role conceptions are formed in accountability processes and elsewhere, supplementing external controls. Accountability processes might facilitate the development of identities, roles, and self-restraint through communicative action. Congruence in norms, behavioral codes, and expectations might develop through reciprocal discovery of normative validity through deliberation among initially conflicting parties, or through socialization and habitualization. (Olsen, 2015: 437)

A key element of the institution-centred approach is that preferences are not assumed to be static and given, as in principal–agent models, but that deliberation, socialization and habitualization may change the position of citizens

vis-à-vis their representatives. Moreover, and different from principal–agent theory, the institutional approach does not view accountability mechanisms as technical, but rather as political processes. As argued by Olsen (2017b: 152), the mechanisms ‘have been seen as a crucial aspect of popular self-governance and political order – a political mechanism related to how authority and power are distributed, exercised, controlled, and transformed’.

In a similar vein to Olsen, Grandvoinnet et al. (2015), have aimed to provide a more ‘political’ interpretation of the conditions under which accountability initiatives can be successful and to ‘open the black box’ of accountability. Although Grandvoinnet et al. (2015) focus on social accountability, their findings appear to hold more general application for the understanding of accountability initiatives. Their framework focuses on so-called ‘contextual drivers’ of accountability initiatives and emphasizes that

- political actors are crucial to the form and effectiveness of accountability mechanisms;
- state–society relations and their history have an important impact on accountability initiatives;
- civil society may play an important role, but should be understood in its relationship to state and society;
- cultural factors should be taken into account as these influence social practices; and
- external actors and international initiatives may impact accountability processes positively or negatively (Grandvoinnet et al., 2015: 10–11).

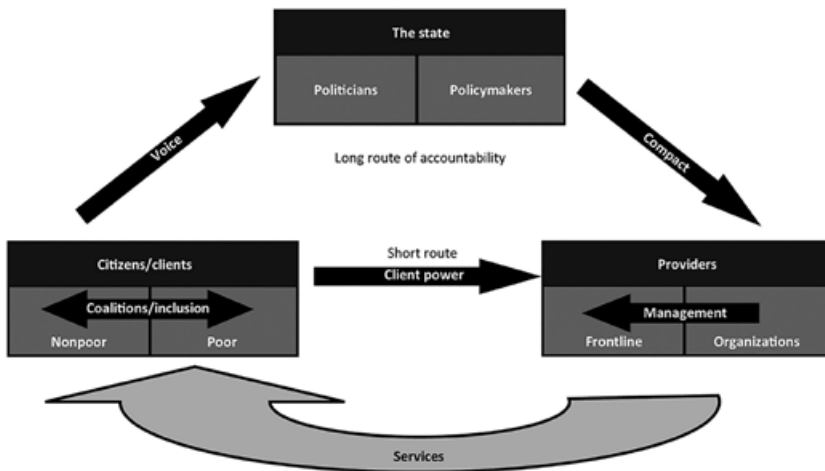
In addition, Grandvoinnet et al. (2015: 120) single out a range of motives for state and citizen action to set up accountability initiatives, related to the importance of particular issues, intrinsic motivation or norms and attitudes. Important conditions for the outcome of accountability initiatives are the provision of information, the existence and strength of citizen–state interfaces, and civic mobilization (Grandvoinnet et al., 2015: 121–123).

As we indicated in the introductory section, accountability mechanisms may thus not just serve as instruments of order maintenance. They may also have a transformative impact in situations where political order, and the norms underlying that order, are contested or in flux. In those situations, ‘accountability relations are likely to be more controversial, politicised and dynamic’ (Olsen, 2013: 451). The case studies brought together in this volume reflect, each in their own way and context, the search for new accountability mechanisms as part of the transformation of (elements of) contested or changing political orders.



## THE ACCOUNTABILITY TRIANGLE

In the context of an institutional approach to accountability, it makes sense to look back at the thinking about different ‘routes’ of accountability underlying the World Development Report 2004. In particular, we are interested in exploring how the notions of the ‘long’ and ‘short’ routes of accountability may benefit research on the order-transforming nature of accountability mechanisms. The WDR 2004 proposed the so-called accountability triangle, focusing on key relationships of power in service delivery (see Figure I.1).



*I.1 The accountability triangle and relationships of power in service delivery*

*Source:* Adapted by the authors from World Bank (2003: 49).

The accountability triangle contains essentially three power relationships: between citizens or clients and the state, between the state and service providers, and between citizens or clients and service providers. Together, the first two relationships constitute what the World Bank calls the long route of accountability, while the third relationship is the short route. The problematique of the WDR 2004 is how failures of the long route can be compensated for by strengthening the short route – in other words, how citizens/clients can be empowered to demand better services from service providers. This reasoning shows the influence of public-choice assumptions about the role of incentives: if citizens/clients would have more information about service

provision and if they are empowered to participate in negotiations with service providers, accountability of those service providers would be enhanced and service delivery improved (Dewachter et al., 2018: 159).

The World Bank's approach to the routes of accountability has attracted substantial criticism. A first line of criticism comes from within the Bank's epistemic community. Scholars such as Keefer and Khemani (2005) have argued that assumptions of economic rationality and the perfect functioning of democracy do not hold up under the real-life governance conditions in the Global South. Therefore, they argue that accountability models in a development context need to consider the functioning of institutions beyond public-choice approaches.

A more fundamental comment concerns the state theory underlying the WDR 2004. As pointed out in the literature on the regulatory state (cf. Jayasuriya, 2004, 2013), neoliberal reforms have led to the downsizing of the state, the introduction of corporate principles into the public sphere – leading to, among others, the privatization of state functions, agentification and the introduction of public service agreements – and the reorganization of service delivery, which is placed at arm's length from the state. This set of reforms has erected additional barriers for citizens to hold service providers to account, as the latter are usually operating as oligopolists and citizens have only limited options to change providers – this effectively reduces the effectiveness of the exit option that is theoretically crucial to client power. In addition, public service agreements are often not disclosed to the public. In the terminology used above, citizens of the regulatory state are often left with little voice and without teeth.

Zooming in on the WDR 2004's assumptions, Dewachter et al. (2018: 159) have summarized three main points of criticism from the literature. First, they note that the short route of accountability is not a standalone process, but should be studied as part of what Halloran (2016) has called an 'accountability ecosystem'. This means that the different routes are interconnected and that strategies aiming at strengthening accountability should make use of various tools across the long and short routes to connect multiple levels of governance and relate to a variety of actors (Halloran, 2016: 6). Also, under certain conditions, it may be possible to attempt to 'shorten' the long route of accountability, for instance by increasing the engagement of citizens with politicians in other ways than through elections (Waddington, 2019: 78).

Second, Dewachter et al. (2018: 159) point out that accountability initiatives should not only focus on citizen-led engagement, but should take civil-society action into account because they may be able to work along the long route of accountability. This point connects to Fox's (2015: 350) observation about strategic accountability approaches, which 'combine information access with enabling environments for collective action that can scale up and coordinate

with reforms of the state that encourage actual public sector responsiveness to voice’.

Third, following Fox (2015: 347, 354), Dewachter et al. (2018: 159) indicate that one cannot expect that demand for and supply of accountability will meet each other as if an invisible hand is at work: ‘the demand side alone, even when provided with information and strengthened in terms of voice, may not achieve the desired results. Voice thus also needs teeth’.

Their critical engagement with the approach of the WDR 2004 led Dewachter et al. (2018: 160) to formulate an ‘adapted accountability framework’. Next to the short route of accountability, which they call the client accountability track, Dewachter et al. (2018: 160) unpack the long route into three ‘tracks’: the political accountability track, the social accountability citizen track and the social accountability CSO track. Conforming to the usage in Bovens (2005: 187), political accountability relates to the opportunities of citizens to influence decision-making on service provision through formal channels, involving elected representative and legally required meetings. Social accountability is an opportunity for citizens to engage decision makers outside formal-legal institutions, for instance by having direct contact with officials (in the citizen track) or voicing demands through intermediary civil-society organizations (in the CSO track).

In their analysis of the accountability triangle, Dewachter et al. (2018) concentrated on the internal or domestic dimensions of accountability. Given the focus of their study on rural water services in Uganda, this is not surprising. Yet, given the orientation of the current volume and the case studies that are included, we feel that an external accountability dimension is missing. This additional track of accountability has two dimensions. The first aspect of external accountability is related to the provision of aid and centres on development aid donors. Donors hold recipient governments to account in two ways: in a technical way, related to the spending of development aid monies, and, in a more political way, for the achievement of the objectives formulated in development donor policies. The latter form of accountability has become more prevalent under influence of the aid effectiveness agenda (cf. Molenaers et al., 2015).

The second aspect of external accountability connects to the introduction of the 2030 Agenda and the adoption of the SDGs: in order to achieve the objectives, governments have agreed ‘to proactively mainstream the 2030 Agenda into our national planning instruments, policies, strategies and financial frameworks’ (United Nations, 2019: 5). As part of the ‘review architecture’ of the 2030 Agenda, governments have agreed to so-called Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). As formulated in the *SDG Accountability Handbook*, which was presented by the civil-society based Transparency, Accountability and

Participation (TAP) Network, and endorsed by UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed,

VNRs are a key tool for accountability for the SDGs at both the national and global level. As the main mechanism for tracking progress on the SDGs at the national level and reporting on it at the global level, VNRs provide an important opportunity for countries to be answerable to their citizens in relation to their implementation of the SDGs, especially for members of civil society who have limited space to participate in SDG accountability processes at a national level. (TAP Network 2019: 35)

The organizations coming together in the TAP Network have launched the Campaign for a Decade of Accountability for the SDGs in 2020 and produced a first Global SDG Accountability Report in 2021 (TAP Network, 2021). By focusing on how national governments are implementing the SDGs, the civil-society organizations of the TAP Network have created a potentially powerful instrument to provide information and hold governments accountable to globally agreed obligations.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Despite all the attention for accountability issues in the academic literature, the implementation of accountability mechanisms and especially the innovation of those mechanisms in the Global South remains understudied. As a consequence, we still do not understand very well how improved accountability relations come about (their ‘drivers’), under what conditions they can be maintained (or institutionalized), and what the role of civil-society actors, donors and new technologies can and should be in developing-country contexts.

Further, the policy-oriented literature continues to be dominated by the model of the accountability triangle proposed in the 2004 World Development Report. Because of the focus on the short route (citizens directly demanding better services) and the long route (citizens indirectly demanding better services through elected politicians) the roles of certain societal processes and actors have still not come completely into the picture. For example, it remains unclear how some of these processes and the actors who are situated outside of the long and short routes can affect state–society accountability relations. We feel that discussions about additional or alternative routes of accountability in the academic literature have not yet been sufficiently incorporated into current debates on ways to strengthen accountability relations in countries of the Global South.

This volume addresses concretely a number of salient research questions. First, the following chapters ask which are important drivers of accountability, particularly those operating outside of the long and short routes identified in the WDR 2004 – these are domestic drivers, operating from within state

and society, and external ones, impacting from the side of donors as well as the ‘international community’ more broadly, particularly in relation to the aforementioned SDG accountability. Second, the case studies presented in the volume address the issue of the durability of accountability initiatives. Attempts to deepen accountability relations often spring from concrete challenges faced by citizens and organized groups in developing countries, and therefore the question about the maintenance and institutionalization of accountability frameworks become relevant. The following chapters therefore seek answers as to which conditions need to be met to strengthen accountability in a durable way. Third, the chapters try to come to grips with what roles civil-society organisations, donor agencies and initiators of new technologies can play in the enhancement of accountability relationships. Taken together, the answers to these questions illustrate the relevance of analysing accountability mechanisms for the strengthening of citizen voice in political contexts in the Global South.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THIS VOLUME

The book is divided into two main parts. The first part (Chapters 1–6) addresses social accountability and related (technological) tools, both as manifested in the social accountability citizen track, as well as the social accountability CSO track, to use Dewachter et al.’s (2018) terminology. In this part, the focus is thus mostly on the demand side perspective. The second part (Chapters 7–11), addresses (neoliberal) accountability politics within government institutions, public accountability towards citizens, as well as the role of donors and external accountability relations. The chapters in this second part have been chosen as there are written mostly (but not exclusively) from the supply side perspective. Each chapter also looks at the interactions between these two sides, but the chapters have been grouped according to the dominant perspective they represent. In addition, the chapters have been chosen to ensure a good geographical coverage (South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa as well as the Western Balkans in South-East Europe). Methodologically, the chapters employ different kinds of mostly qualitative methods (such as case studies, document reviews, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, Qualitative Comparative Analysis [QCA], but also surveys) as they are best suited to critically examine the various types of relationships in the accountability ecosystem.

### The Chapters

Samuel Paul and Meena Nair focus, in Chapter 1, on the role of social accountability in service delivery in India. In particular, the authors discuss

how governments can be held accountable for the services that they provide to their users, and in what ways civil-society organizations in India hold the state to account. The chapter examines the experience of the Public Affairs Centre (PAC), a non-profit-making independent think tank that has been working in the field of governance and public service delivery over the last 25 years. Paul and Nair elaborate on the various social accountability tools that the PAC has either pioneered (citizen report cards), applied (community score cards, budget analysis) or documented (public interest litigation, citizen movement). The authors attempt to understand the scope of application of each of the tools and discuss their intervention effectiveness as experienced by the PAC, and other organizations as well. The conclusion is that enabling environments, informed application and finding champions within systems can go a long way in creating the desired impact of accountability tools.

The second chapter, by Yasmin Khodary, discusses social accountability initiatives in Egypt. When it comes to social accountability in general, and in Egypt in particular, there is still a lack of evidence on how and under what conditions it can engender positive outcomes. Khodary analyses these conditions through a critical deployment of the analytical framework of contextual drivers presented in the 2015 World Bank report entitled *Opening the Black Box*. It closely examines four civil-society initiatives following the 25 January 2011 uprisings, namely: (1) citizens' oversight of fiscal policy; (2) stakeholders' initiatives towards local governance; (3) community evaluations; and (4) an updated model of community evaluations. Based on a qualitative methodology, including participant observation of the initiatives and a limited number of interviews with experts and the local teams involved in the initiatives, the chapter finds that, overall, the contextual drivers are relevant in explaining the positive outcomes. Yet, it is also noted that the limited institutionalization of the initiatives within formal state institutions in the country constitutes a major barrier to their effectiveness.

In Chapter 3, Brian Wampler and Michael Touchton focus on participatory budgeting initiatives implemented across the Global South. The chapter is informed by the motivation of governments around the world to develop democratic policymaking processes with the dual purpose of incorporating citizens directly into democratic venues to express their preferences, and promoting public service delivery to address their needs. Participatory budgeting is a prominent institution designed to incorporate citizens and civil society into policymaking processes in pursuit of social accountability. While a wide body of research demonstrates a series of positive effects stemming from participatory budgeting in Brazil, the country that pioneered it, the instrument is now expanding rapidly to contexts that are considerably different from the urban, middle-income Brazilian cities where it emerged. Wampler and Touchton focus on theory building in the realm of accountability because there is limited

comparative, empirical knowledge about how participatory budgeting operates under different conditions and what outcomes it may produce. Given the limited nature of information on the instrument, the authors design a framework to better conceptualize how participatory institutions like participatory budgeting can and should be analysed.

Fletcher Tembo, in Chapter 4, discusses the role of ‘tech moments’ in citizen voice and state accountability initiatives. Tembo’s observation, on the basis of literature in the field, is that technology leads to accountable governance outcomes and impacts only in cases in which governments are already willing. He argues that this approach is not sufficient because it does not delve deeply enough into changing rules of engagement – and hence, at best, it just promotes upward accountability where it is needed, and this advantage can be withdrawn at will. The chapter builds on a critical review of the *Making All Voices Count* programme, through examining project reports and interviews with a wide range of the programme’s implementing partners. The results show that where transformative change occurred or was a promising result, there was ‘more to tech’ than is often shared in project reports and literature on civic technologies. Transformative change, or the promise of it, was associated with the use of technology in combination with variations in the governance issue in question; the incentive structures of the actors involved; and the context. Three examples from Kenya and Mozambique provide the grounds for these findings. The chapter concludes that a systemic approach to designing transformative tech-enabled initiatives is required and that this approach needs to take account of the increasing tech-based societal and state–society interactions that new technologies are providing.

In Chapter 5, Antony Otieno Ong’ayo discusses the case of Kenyan civil society as an actor that holds the state accountable against the background of shrinking civic space. Ong’ayo argues that civil-society organizations in Kenya have been major players in the agitation for political change during the country’s single-party dictatorship and after the introduction of multiparty politics. Some of the activities of Kenyan civil society included holding the state accountable, often undertaken within a restricted civic space replete with state violence. External support has led to the evolution of a civil society that can demand political reforms and accountability in the management of public affairs, and can shape discourses on democratization, accountability and human rights. Ong’ayo shows that since 2002, however, Kenyan civil-society leaders have joined the government and once-critical voices have fallen silent – either because of co-option, opportunistic tendencies or a political environment increasingly defined by impunity and the erosion of the rule of law. This chapter examines the intersection between political impunity, co-option and shrinking civic space, and the implications for civil-society involvement in state accountability.

Chapter 6, by Anognya Parthasarathy, discusses the introduction of the Right to Information Act and the Right to Public Service Acts in India. Parthasarathy shows that India has ‘pushed the envelope’ on social accountability, centring around citizen–state interactions, as there has been a surge of rights-based initiatives stemming from domestic mass mobilizations and anti-corruption movements. Examples of such initiatives are the Right to Information Act and the Right to Public Service Acts, both of which ground themselves on information and transparency models in order to generate accountability. Parthasarathy argues that a linear approach – that is, assuming that information and transparency will lead to accountability – is not enough to sustain social-accountability initiatives. She further points out that researchers need to pay attention to the international origins of programmes aimed at strengthening accountability. Taking into account the limitation of the linearity assumption as well as the impact that global narratives exert on nationally adopted initiatives, the chapter traces the influence of the Right to Information Act and the Right to Public Service Acts. It conducts a critical analysis of the latter set of acts in Karnataka and Bihar in order to develop and strengthen a three-legged model of accountability – one that broadens the aforesaid linear assumption to include power relations. This model borrows heavily from the Bhilwara Principles – a five-step subaltern conceptualization of social accountability. The larger intention is to reconceptualize a more sustainable and bottom-up articulation of social accountability in India and across the world.

In Chapter 7, James Warner Björkman discusses the use of accountability frameworks in the healthcare sector. Following comments on the concept of accountability and a description of the complex field of health services, Björkman explores five frameworks, focusing on political, bureaucratic, professional, economic–consumer and legal accountability. The chapter identifies some inherent dilemmas within any credible accountability approach to health programmes. Based on a half-century of fieldwork about comparative health policies, it examines how types of accountability may be integrated through practices characteristic of development administration. Björkman argues that a number of devices may facilitate accountability in healthcare. Such devices are the submission of plans and budgets for prior approval, oral and written reporting, financial audits, and peer-group pressure. Björkman argues that, ultimately, administrative bureaucracy is vital for the functioning of accountability in the healthcare sector. Bureaucracy is present in all domains of healthcare beyond the doctor–patient or professional–consumer relationship because of the central role in the sector played by governments. Since, however, bureaucratic accountability is of limited value, the political chain of accountability is crucial for the proper functioning of the healthcare system. The input from healthcare consumers and self-regulation of professionals may



act as a supplement to political accountability if consumers and professionals are subject to meaningful external control mechanisms.

In Chapter 8, Wil Hout, Natascha Wagner and Rose Namara discuss the research findings of a case study of an accountability project implemented with the Uganda Police Force between 2010 and 2013. The project set up a series of workshops involving the police and a variety of societal actors, and organized activities to create awareness of changes to the public order management regime. The authors assess the impact of the accountability project by comparing feedback from police districts where the project was implemented with that from districts that did not take part. A survey conducted among 600 police officers demonstrates that the project has influenced the way in which they respond to integrity issues in their day-to-day work. Interviews with 23 middle- and high-ranking police officers show an enhanced awareness of accountability issues related to the treatment of civilians and their rights. Hout, Wagner and Namara conclude that the accountability project is not a sufficient condition for behavioural change and argue that it may have produced changes in attitudes, which are a necessary condition for changes in the behaviour of the police towards the public.

Chapter 9, by James Hathaway, presents a case study of the accountability role of the Zambian Office of Auditor General. Hathaway argues that the audit office plays a central public accountability role in Zambia since it audits the government's use of public resources and reports its findings to parliament. Over the past decade, the Office of Auditor General has made significant changes in the way in which it conducts its audits and in its interactions with the public. It has improved the quality, quantity and timeliness of its reporting, providing the Zambian Parliament with better resources for holding government entities accountable. The office now also provides ordinary citizens across Zambia with information from its audit reports. These changes within the Zambian audit office are understood using two concepts from institutional theory: institutional entrepreneurship and translation. The perspective of institutional entrepreneurship pictures the Auditor General as a resourceful leader that could act as an 'outsider', but also had the social capital and organizational position to drive change processes. From the perspective of translation of ideas, the Auditor General can be positioned as part of a transnational professional community and a driver of international standards. By using concepts that have been important for institutional analysis in the Global North for this analysis within the Global South, this chapter contributes to the literatures in institutional theory and public accountability in development.

Chapter 10, by Arvind Balaji Rajasekaran, focuses on the case of basic service delivery in India's urban-development programmes. In particular, Rajasekaran discusses the knowledge gap in understanding the relationship between accountability and the delivery of basic services in India. It employs

qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) to investigate the relationship between improvement in basic services under India's Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Mission (JNNURM) programme and causal factors such as devolution, the presence of slum associations, government intervention and the scale of slums in Indian cities. It is found that two causal pathways lead to better service delivery for the urban poor. First, the service improvements in big cities with a large number of slum households are explained by the devolution of powers to local bodies in the absence of active state intervention. Second, service improvements in cities where there are relatively fewer slum households is explained by devolution as well as active state intervention. The evidence supports the salience of devolution of powers as an enabling channel for the poor to exercise their voice for better service delivery. It also critiques the Smart Cities Mission for not adequately focusing on and strengthening devolution reforms, and for introducing parallel implementing agencies that could potentially erode democratic decision-making in local governance.

Rachel Kurian, in Chapter 11, presents the findings of an analysis of public accountability in the Western Balkans against the background of the implementation of neoliberal reforms. Kurian argues that key international players in the Western Balkans – such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the European Union – formally uphold accountability as essential to good governance and democracy in the neoliberal reforms undertaken by the region's local governments as conditionalities for financial support and European Union accession. A technocratic notion of accountability in a context of ethnic, religious and nationalistic tensions contributed to weak democratic institutions. This enabled 'state capture' by local elites, who displayed nominal upward accountability in order to access funds while experiencing insufficient pressure to practise downward accountability. Commercialization of the social welfare regime led to the individualization of benefits and payments, restricting the potential for collective mobilization to hold governments accountable. While civil society was important in highlighting the resulting lack of public accountability, it was politically fragmented, underfunded and aid dependent, and its protests could not be sustained. Kurian concludes that public accountability therefore remains an elusive and fragile goal in the region.

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