



Work Package 3

Articulating New Accountability Systems

Introducing Work Package 3

The last decade has seen a dramatic increase in calls for, and declarations regarding, the advantages of accountability systems. However, within these calls for more accountability, there has been little investigation of the terms, effectiveness, consequences or most appropriate means of achieving accountability. Redistributive initiatives often fail because they do not examine assumptions about what constitutes 'effectiveness'. The role of Work Package 3 was to identify and analyse the emergence of accountability systems that could address inequalities and distributional issues and, simultaneously, generate new forums for making political action more publicly accountable.

What is the problem?

Systems of accountability are the means by which the potential distributional consequences of science, policy and practices can be recognised and assessed — and potentially incorporated — by formal elements of the political system. Accountability systems attuned to the needs of the disadvantaged are thus an important prerequisite for reorienting scientific governance towards greater social inclusion in building science and technology priorities and in distributing its products.

Our study

In this research, two different but complementary contexts were investigated. These were: first, experimental initiatives of capacity building and priority setting; and, second, redistributional issues associated with the design, development, access to and use of mundane, everyday technologies.

The first context focused exclusively on participatory modes of accountability. These initially covered the participatory budgeting processes in Belo Horizonte (Brazil), Seville (Spain) and S. Brás de Alportel (Portugal), and enabled exploration of the areas of urban planning and information and communication technologies. Subsequently, we added cases focused on the creation of a public health system (including national and local levels of intervention) and the control of endemic diseases, both in Brazil, as well as the controversy between the European Union and the Brazilian environmental justice movement on the imports of used/retreated tyres.

In the second context, three areas were defined: textile lifecycles, vaccines and e-waste. For textile lifecycles, the research work identified two central modes of textile accountability with inequality issues. First, textile import and export quotas were analysed in order to understand their redistributional consequences. Second, fair trade textile initiatives were investigated as an accountability system which held out the promise of poverty alleviation. The vaccines case focused on malaria as a neglected disease and analysed attempts to produce a vaccine within a broad suite of interventions (from policy initiatives through to the distribution of bed nets). Public-Private Partnerships with combinations of state, private and philanthropic funding were identified as key sites of intervention where novel forms of accountability were played out. The E-waste case was used to analyse the development of European Directives aimed at tackling e-waste and preventing movement of waste to developing countries, by rendering industry accountable and responsible.

Results and recommendations

This Work Package has proposed four modes of accountability, summarised in the table:

Accountability Mode	Characteristics	Setting	Relation to Inequality	Challenge
<i>Face to face</i>	Face to face accountability relations to constitute sense of interaction	Formal and informal	Face to face meetings can include broader membership	Informal, non-codified, impossible to assess impact
<i>Directive</i>	Metrics and measures used to hold organisation to account	Formal measures often developed outside organisation	Can look to pro-poor metrics	Metrics don't measure, they shape action
<i>Demonstrative</i>	Means by which organisation demonstrates its accountability	Information made available for external audiences	Information made available might enhance transparency	Info made available may match internal activities. Is it useful?
<i>Participatory</i>	Means by which otherwise external audiences can take part in accountability	Usually a set-piece occasion where audience engages with organisation, process, etc.	Broader membership of active participants in, e.g., decision making	Who gets to participate, in what, with what outcome? The training paradox is part of this.

The first set of cases drew up recommendations concerning the design and implementation of public policies, particularly those aimed at addressing inequality through citizen participation:

- In participative modes the 'user' or 'policymaker' is identified by the process. A broader conception of "policy maker" therefore needs to be adopted, based on the articulation of several actors in policy development, including technical staff, citizens, civic organizations or social movements;
- The capacity to participate and deliberate does not emerge spontaneously; specific training procedures, such as the citizenship schools implemented in some experiences of participatory budgeting, should be organised to enhance citizen participation. However, there is a central paradox here, in that such training may frame issues, select issues and modes of contribution in a way that limits the extent of participation and the range of outcomes that can be achieved.
- The integration of participatory procedures in development policies, allowing the inclusion of bottom-up contributions, must take into account that the move from consultative to deliberative modes carries the strong implication that the decision making process has binding powers.

The second set of cases, focused on redistributional issues in mundane science and technology, had the following accountability recommendations:

- The users of modes of accountability should be conscious of their consequences in shaping the direction and success of development projects. eg too much attention to the very prevalent directive (mostly numerical) forms of accountability may blind the user to a range of unanticipated consequences. Combined use with other forms of accountability may help to check that and control for other distributive effects.
- Accountability processes don't guarantee outcomes – these still require scrutiny.
- Drawing forms of accountability together can be useful for managing financial, reputational and opportunity risks in multi-partner pro-poor projects.

Want to Know More?

Work Package 3 has produced 3 analytical reports along with reports on each individual case-study. These are available on the ResIST website: <http://www.resist-research.net/paperslibrary/full-and-final-results.aspx>

- Integrated Accountability Framework
- WP3a Policy Report
- WP3b Policy Report
- Individual Case-Study reports