Call for Conference Papers

The State of Accountability

The 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Agenda 16 calls for achieving development by deepening the standards of accountability: "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels". This global commitment for accountability and inclusiveness inspires this conference.

Since the publication of the World Development Report of 2004 (*Making Services Work for Poor People*) there has been renewed interest to restructure the relationship between the state and citizens in the service delivery settings. Good service delivery practices are found to be missing in those contexts and places where the services are most needed. The quality of services are systemically structured by factors such as service sector characteristics, fragility of civic mobilization, political cultures interfering with bureaucratic autonomy, and weak legislative and judicial institutions . While state capacity may be limited in the Global South, such a crisis opens up an opportunity for innovations, which may prove to be useful for different types of challenges encountered in the Global North. Therefore, we see a strong possibility of global knowledge sharing on the state of accountability.

For a two-day conference to be held at the International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague during 17-18 October 2017, we specifically welcome papers along the lines of themes below.

Key Dates

Deadline for abstracts (500 words): 30 May 2017

Information on acceptance of paper for conference: 15 June 2017

Deadline for full papers (7000 words): 5 October 2017

Conference dates: 17-18 October 2017

Reinventing Accountability

What are the recent conceptual innovations that link accountability with sustainable development? The inter-connected system approach needed for sustainable development demands newer forms of accountability. The challenges experienced in some sectors (e.g. urban planning, climate change, internet governance) pose the risk of 'experts' stifling citizen voices due to limited know-how on these complex systems. Some experts fear that 'too much accountability' is intrusive to their work and enterprising culture. Papers that explore case studies of such sectors to throw light on conceptual innovations for accountability are welcomed.

Accountability for Inclusive Institutions

Discriminatory practices are perpetuated by poor accountability designs within the institutions. Thus, a practice of inclusion becomes elusive. Absence of inclusive institutions reduces diversity, and thus the possibility to be responsive to multiple citizen needs. Therefore, organizational re-arrangement is an important ingredient to create a tight fabric of accountability. We are keen to include papers that deal with institutional innovations that have delivered better accountability measures.

Public Services

The World Development report 2004 provided a comprehensive tool kit for improving service delivery through accountability mechanisms. Since the beginning of neo-liberal era, the commitment of the state to provide public services has changed. There are some essential sectors where the state continues to take key responsibility (e.g. trade and foreign affairs). In many other sectors (including increasingly security), the services are contracted out. Inflated budgetary allocations and rent seeking practices by bureaucrats are reported also in the Global North. Accountability can be seen as a measure of the state's commitment to providing quality services. During the conference, we would like papers to make sectoral comparisons to show which of the services can be provided with accountability and in what contexts.

Civil Society Initiatives

Many accountability measures across the world have come about through civil society mobilizations demanding better services. In some countries such citizen demands have generated legislations for accountability. However, the space available for civil society, as well as the culture of civil society mobilizations, are hugely different across countries. There are already many case studies that document how civil society initiatives for accountability have originated. However, case studies that show how civil society initiatives have contributed to institutionalizing and sustaining accountability initiatives are far fewer, and we are very interested in receiving proposals on these.

Freedom of Information legislations

Access to information is a critical component for accountability. Today, more than 100 states have enacted Freedom of Information legislations. During the conference we are interested to learn from the jurisprudence that has developed, the factors that made such legislations successful (or can explain their failure), and the impacts they have had on the quality of governance.

Technology for Transparent Government

Data revolutions have transformed the agenda of accountability in the past decade. Technology is capable to transform multiple modes of interactions into data forms. For instance, digital big data are sourced from interactive contexts such as administrative information of citizens seeking specific

services or computer records of attendance of service providers etc. Citizens and service users have started to demand that their governments make pertinent data available in raw formats. Open Government Data has become a benchmark for public accountability. At the same time, the persistent digital divides show that the benefits of technology are not equally available to everyone in the society. Therefore, we invite papers that give a nuanced view on the potential of technology to ensure accountability.

Regulations for Transparency in Corporate Affairs

Transparency in corporate governance has a significant impact on the public services since the mode of service delivery is increasingly through public-private partnerships. We resist the idea that the concept of transparency in corporate affairs can be reduced to Corporate Social Accountability/Responsibility and its practices. We are also not much interested in questions around the ethical issues of corporate governance (which is an important topic in itself). Rather, we are interested in how profit making motives shape the transparency levels in public service deliveries. In recent times, telecom connectivity (including net neutrality), delivery of health services, quality education, and transportation services have been seriously affected by the lack of transparency in the deals that government has entered with corporate service providers. Case studies on innovative designs and solutions to such problems that increase public probity into corporate affairs will be a useful addition to this volume.

> *There are limited funds available for travel and accommodation, which will be decided based on the final written paper submitted prior to the conference. If you would like to avail travel /accommodation support, you will need to send your full paper by 15 September 2017.*

Outcomes of the Conference

The conference organizers are in touch with Edward Elgar for publishing selected papers from the conference. Full papers submitted prior to 5 October 2017 will be considered for the publication.

Conference Organisation:

This conference is jointly convened by Sylvia Bergh, Associate Professor at the International Institute of Social Science, The Hague, and Sony Pellissery, Professor and Director of the Masters Programme in Public Policy at the National Law School of India University, Bangalore. This initiative is part of a grant awarded to the organizers under the 'Social Science Collaboration India - the Netherlands' (SSCIN), funded by NWO and CSSR. For details and clarification, as well as abstract submission, the please contact the conference organizers at:

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