

The road to mutual accountability

The case of the World Trade Organization's

Aid for Trade initiative

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Abstract

. The WTO is constantly criticized for its lack of accountable activities, here this notion will be considered in relation to the Aid for Trade initiative enforced by the WTO. By evaluating this initiative and the emphasis by WTO on different accountability mechanisms a comprehensive picture on actions to improve accountability is intended to be reached. Through the application of a critical analysis approach to the policy reports for this initiative a charting of prioritized relationships is made, by using a theoretical framework of accountability mechanisms and dimensions which is constructed for this purpose. This analysis is then discussed in relation to debates of legitimacy in global governance, accountability in international aid, and most importantly; accountability in the WTO. Concluding remarks upon the potential of international institutions to use international initiatives for improving understandings of legitimate governance is then pursued with the aim of generating a possible area for further debate.

Key words: accountability, World Trade Organization, Aid for Trade, legitimacy, global governance

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1 Introduction

Within the discussion of global governance many views have been expressed during the last decades. That interdependence is growing, international institutions claiming further importance, and interactions among nation-states increasing in number is evident (Little, 2008: 298). This fact in turn implies a number of emanating issues which constructs the backbone of global governance discussions. As an important figure in these discussion David Held has generated perspectives of global governance institutions and norms being important factors of the global system due to how decisions taken in one country not only affect that same country's citizens but citizens of other countries as well (1997). Deriving from such arguments activities of international institutions have been put under pressure for being legitimate to all those affected, which in the extension is everyone.

Even though political and social interactions are growing in number, the economic integration has developed far beyond other integration (Woods, 2008:246). This is why many scholars place the World Trade Organization (WTO) under the loop in multiple instances. Criticism of the WTO's work is raised at all levels, the criticism interesting for this research is that regarding the legitimacy of the institution. In relation to David Held's argument presented above the WTO has been criticized as not delivering results and equally beneficial agreements to all its members (for example Glenn, 2008). Academics have therefore been dealing with exploring this issue, and the WTO in turn is actively engaging in achieving legitimacy.

Aid is considered a way to even out global inequalities and achieve development and thus being a way to improve legitimacy quests of rich countries and international institutions. However the way to deliver aid has been a highly contested issue since its beginning (Stokke, 2009: 16). For this research a focus on one of the most recent initiatives, Aid for Trade, has been chosen. That this initiative provides a good starting point for evaluating the global agenda can be seen through its wide applicability. Being driven by the WTO, which has close to universal membership, most nation-states are actively working with this initiative. Aid for Trade emanated as a response to the failing results in the Doha Development Agenda as well as the slow progress of the Millennium Development Goals (Wang, 2011). Trade has been argued to be an engine to growth, and in turn development, multiple times with the theoretical background of comparative advantage as the most distinguishing idea (Hoekman and Kostecki, 2009: 33).

Combining the two main components of this research, WTO and aid, has been done since the WTO is not an institution with primary focus on neither aid nor development, while in the last years the growing participation of members has made development more prominent on the WTO's agenda. The connection between aid and development is argued to be true, thus making aid taking the stage also in the context of the WTO. Also quests for more equal results of WTO agreements make accountability an important part of WTO work. As both accountability and development have been included due to pressure from other actors and members alike this work will be of interest to study in this research.

1.1 Problem and aim

The aim of this research is to evaluate how the WTO distinguishes among accountability mechanisms and how the emphasis differs among actors. By doing so the hope is to be able to add a small piece to the global discussion on legitimate global governance through the adaptation of one of the most prominent global institutions' perspective on this issue. The idea to pursue this research emanates from an interest of how international institutions deal with growing quests for accountability, and how they use international initiatives to enhance accountability. The Aid for Trade initiative was chosen due to it being a contemporary initiative dealing with the most recent issues on the development agenda.

Guiding this research is a research question: *What accountability relations are emphasized in the Aid for Trade agenda by the WTO?* This is intended to be answered and contribute to the more general aim of placing this issue into the global discussion on legitimacy in global governance institutions. Analyzing policy reports through accountability theories will be a first step, the analysis will then be put into a discussion informed by previous research on the subject of accountability in WTO, and in international aid and a general background of legitimacy.

1.2 Limitations

Due to time limitations this research deals with one specific case of an international initiative. To evaluate accountability mechanisms can be done in multiple ways, this research will look at how a global institution itself engages in quests for greater accountability. Choosing the Aid for Trade agenda and WTO was done due to the importance of WTO internationally and Aid for Trade as being a recent initiative dealing with current issues (Dervis and Özer, 2005: 155). Also the fact that Aid for Trade represents a variety of aspects important for development makes this an interesting case of international cooperation and initiatives. Another limitation to this research is the classification of countries. Even though the global arena is being ever more complex this research will treat countries as either developed (donor) or developing (partner) countries. This is a narrow distinction, but a necessary one in order to pursue this research during this short period of time.

1.3 Disposition

This research starts of in a discussion regarding the critical analysis approach applied, thereafter a comprehensive background of global governance and international initiatives is included. In chapter 4 the theoretical framework guiding the analysis is constructed and followed by previous research upon related issues. The analysis on policy reports is then conducted. Lastly a discussion relating all aspects mentioned earlier to the analysis is made, ending up with a conclusion.

2 Method

For this research a critical analysis approach has been chosen as method. A few points on this choice of method are provided here. Firstly it is important to understand the complexity of pursuing a critical analysis of policies, second a few notes on the empirical material which will be used as data will be outlined, and thirdly source criticism will be discussed as an important part of this study.

2.1 Critical analysis

As the research problem looks to evaluate an international initiative the method used here will be critical policy analysis, on material published by the WTO. More specifically the aim is to pursue a critical analysis of the situation within the Aid for Trade initiative as explained and regarded by these two organizations. A critical analysis aims at evaluating whether a given argumentation lives up to agreed norms (Esaiasson et. al, 2007: 239), which is of utmost interest in this analysis. The qualitative nature of pursuing such a research implies that there will be a thorough analysis of whole texts. This analysis is done by symbolically reading through entire texts (May, 2001: 232) and trying to understand the prevailing situation. In favor of pursuing a qualitative textual analysis in relation to quantitative textual analysis, where coding is used, is the vast flexibility regarding how to read documents and reporting on them (May, 2001: 232) as well as the possibility of understanding complex social settings within which accountability is present.

In this research a guiding theoretical framework of accountability dimensions and mechanisms has been outlined which the analysis will utilize. That such a framework is important when conducting a critical analysis can be understood by discussing the flexibility of pursuing a qualitative analysis of documents. When reading documents out of this perspective some guiding norms need to be kept in mind in order to remain on track with the research, this is the aim of the theoretical framework of accountability mechanisms.

The results presented will be of one specific case in international politics, thus indicating a limited ability to generalize the results (Bryman, 2008: 391). On the other hand the Aid for Trade initiative engages most states in the world and deals with issues of supreme importance in the international aid agenda and can therefore be argued to be a representative case. Even though one can argue in this line for this study the generalization will be carefully dealt with since the central aim is to evaluate accountability within this specific case through the eyes of the WTO.

2.2 Material

Gathering sufficient material to analyze the accountability situation in the Aid for Trade agreement has been done by collecting material from the WTO. What is used are reports regarding Aid for Trade from 2007, 2009 and 2011. The reports on Aid for Trade will be analyzed in their entirety attempting to understand underlying situations and relationships. Since what is studied here is the situation in the light of WTO the reports used are argued to be primary sources. Even though the reports are based on research they are analyzed in their entirety as reports from the WTO (WTO, 2007: 17), thus they are emanating from the WTO and can therefore be regarded as primary sources.

The chosen material is quite limited to include three reviews of the Aid for Trade initiative. Choosing a narrow set of material provides an opportunity to engage in a deeper analysis of this material (Esaiasson et. al. 2007: 249). On the subject of critical material deriving from other actors, this, as well as an OECD evaluation of the Aid for Trade initiative, will be included to some extent as informants in the discussion.

Considering the narrow perspective by this material there will be limitations as to what conclusions can be drawn. This limitation will be kept close in mind, while some of the problems is hoped to be overcome by including critical voices of the global system in both background, previous research and discussion. It is however very important to keep close in mind that these critical perspectives are not to be evaluated, meaning then that limitations to generalization and conclusions are maintained, while to some extent dealt with.

2.3 Source criticism

Concerns regarding sources such as these which need to be taken into consideration are the possibility of them presenting biased views (May, 2001: 219). This involves both the credibility and the tendency of the material. As Bryman argues biased material does not make it useless but can instead make it even more interesting, as long as the bias is kept in thought (2008: 521). In regard to the material used here the underlying social understanding of WTO as representing ideas of developed countries is important to maintain in mind while actively using reports published by this institution. Therefore it is here assumed that the material presents a partially biased view, while still trying to manage ideas of all members of the WTO, which also is the moral dilemma currently facing the WTO. When discussing source criticism of this type of material tendencies are important. Looking at material while maintaining tendency criteria in mind might enhance the understanding of why this material has been produced (Esaiasson et.al. 2007: 321). Regarding other aspects of source criticism – originality, independence, and concurrency – these are argued to be achieved since sources originate from the institution of interest, are independent of other institutions, and are published directly after the research is conducted.

3 Background

During the last decades the world's interconnectedness has increased substantially, with global regimes being argued as a specific character of our time (Little, 2008: 298). While these global regimes act in a centralized manner, dealing with abstract political issues, their decisions are affecting people everywhere in their daily life. Global regimes set the global political agenda, which in turn influence national political agendas (Willetts, 2008: 341) and by doing so they partake in shaping political, economic, and social structures globally. Here these global regimes will be explored and explained, moving into a discussion of the political agendas which have been implemented during the 21st century.

3.1 International governance

Globalization in the form that we see it today is characterized by interdependence, interconnectedness, and the ability of some to influence others. Critics have argued that the international institutions reflect the interests of some, taking evidence from the management of the Asian financial crisis where the fall in trust for Thailand led to an extensive reduction of incoming resources (Woods, 2008: 256). Arguments of differential priority given to various stakeholders often take ground in the discussion of neoliberal hegemonic relationships. The hope is that this type of relations can be overcome through engaging in international institutions and cooperation.

In the words of Buchanan and Keohane these institutions “*create norms and information that enable member-states and other actors to coordinate their behavior in mutually beneficial ways*” (2006: 408). At the end of the Cold War the hope was for these institutions to provide for an ideological convergence which could help the global quest for development. However, this hope was irrational considering both the emergence of new powers, and also the implications to these institutions of failing states (Dervis and Özer, 2005: 34). Thus, “[u]nfortunately, since the operation of international organizations is dominated by major powers, the decisions of international organizations are still inevitably affected by political factors” (Wang, 2011: 722). By stating such criticism the interdependence of the world system is being questioned in the form of equal dependence, making some more dependent than others (Dervis and Özer, 2005: 41). Such opinions explicitly regard how bilateral interactions are influenced by political wills, while multilateral interactions pose greater opportunities for equal interactions. However these multilateral interactions are also criticized for expressing power inequalities in a hegemonic sense, thus hampering possibilities for equality among states (see for example Buchanan and Keohane, 2006).

Political and economic relations are constantly evolving both in relation to the asymmetries among countries and the changing set of stakeholders, thus putting pressure on the international system to adapt rapidly to these new situations (Chandy and Karas, 2011). The UN declaration for the fourth development decade (1991-2000) concerning global interdependence emphasized mutual responsibility by both rich and poor to develop the global

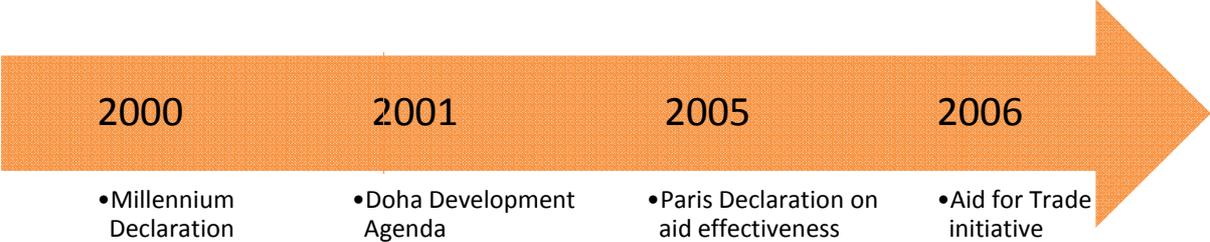
community (Stokke, 2009: 333). The slow adaption of policies within these institutions has led to a discussion of the legitimacy of global governance institutions (Buchanan and Keohane, 2006). Legitimacy is often argued to be low among these actors, and solutions tend to be presented, where a common discussion is that of accountability and global governance. It is argued that a more accountable governance structure will enhance the feeling of this governance’s right to rule (Buchanan and Keohane, 2006), which in turn is the same as constituting a legitimate governance. Therefore most of the international institutions are engaging in work to improve their accountability and legitimacy, as will be discussed in the case of the WTO further on.

A common discussion when dealing with legitimacy in global governance is that of cosmopolitan democracy. While the normative sense of developing a global democracy with a legitimate governance structure (Held, 1997) is very tempting, applying this into the practical world is argued as very complex. While democracy can be argued a cross-national good that should intertwine populations, especially in discussions of global goods such as environment, the heterogeneity cannot be disregarded (Grant and Keohane, 2005). A potential spread of one type of democracy has therefore been considered with some awareness of the importance for developing new structures able to deal with current situations (Held, 1997).

One issue for the international system that has led to quests for improved legitimacy can be argued to be the outward image today of inefficient bureaucracy driven by special interests of some. As has been expressed in various instances this might be due to the diversion of interests, making international institutions efficient in the eyes of some, while still being inefficient in others’ eyes (Glenn, 2008). Tracing this image lead to the extensive growth of agencies in the international system with its’ lack of coordination, that in turn has led to a perceived increasing inefficiency (Dervis and Özer, 2005: 41). Coordinating international efforts can be argued as a quite straightforward approach to enhance efficiency, understandings of legitimate governance, and minimize negative outcomes of development efforts. Nonetheless such coordination has previously failed time after time, both among donors and between donors and partners (Chandy and Karas, 2011). Hence coordinating efforts in the form of initiatives are enforced from different institutions in a greater regularity. Initiatives during the 21st century will be discussed below.

3.2 International initiatives

As social aspects became more important on the development agenda and new nations increased their political and economic influence the nature of international initiatives has seen some change (Stokke, 2009:13). Since the shift of the Millennium a few core initiatives have been concluded upon, these will be explained here, leading to a rationale for the birth of the Aid for Trade initiative. These initiatives are as is pictured here:



The first of these new initiatives was the Millennium Declaration, which stresses the importance of pragmatic goals in the form of human development indicators. This initiative came to a conclusion in the year 2000, as a means to deal with the lack of coherence among differentiating policy areas and global challenges in tandem (Stokke, 2009: 445). The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provides an overview of how to focus development efforts (UN¹). Although the dominant paradigm focuses on the individual, there is a presence of issues regarding international cooperation and governance structures, pushing for structures to be legitimate and accountable to those affected by its' decisions.

Even though the UN in many cases is seen as the main institution for deliberations and development initiatives, the WTO also saw the importance of its participation in such efforts. Therefore the trade negotiation round in Doha was dominated by issues in close connection to development, this Round is commonly known as the Doha Development Agenda (DDA). Reasoning behind this initiative was that trade is more than economic efficiency; it provides possibilities to enhance economic growth through which poverty can be reduced (Hoekman and Kostecki, 2010: 141). The aim of this Round of trade negotiations is to achieve a major reform of the international trading system which can promote development by putting developing countries' needs in the centre (WTO¹). That officials working with the operationalization of the MDGs also pushed for such a focus in the international trading regime was obvious. Reasoning was that trade made it possible to achieve growth that could be a way of allocating resources by developing countries themselves (Stokke, 2009: 455)

The next organization to react upon the Goals was the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). OECD reacted upon the lack of results to achieve the Goals, and therefore saw a room for enhancement of the efficiency of aid. Their response came to be called the Paris Declaration, and focuses on how aid can be more effective upon delivering its promises (OECD¹). That this part of the international community saw a need for managing efforts can be argued to be partly because of the growing complexity, with an amounting number of different donors, in the aid system (Chandy and Karas, 2011). Operationalizing the Paris Declaration was a response to the growing concerns for increased coordination earlier discussed as an issue of international aid and governance.

Launching the Aid for Trade initiative by the WTO was done at the Hong-Kong Ministerial with these words accompanying it "*Aid for Trade cannot be a substitute for the development benefits that will result from a successful conclusion to the DDA, particularly on market access. However, it can be a valuable complement to the DDA*" (WTO²). Deriving from these words one can develop an understanding of how the failure of the DDA to deliver sufficient growth to developing countries in order to give them the potential of achieving the MDGs affected officials (Cai, 2008). Aid for Trade focuses on pragmatic ideas of how to target aid in order to improve export capacity so that developing countries can trade themselves out of poverty (Cai, 2008). Another issue for why Aid for Trade saw an opening was the increasingly engagement in trade policy by multiple actors whom did not possess the knowledge of how to accomplish such projects successfully (Dervis and Özer, 2005: 157). Lastly, it is interesting to point to the fact that Aid for Trade can be viewed as an overlapping initiative dealing with core issues for all initiatives previously outlined. Also the prevailing financial crisis calls for actions to be done with the limited resources available, making trade a natural response.

4 Theoretical framework

In order to guide this research a theoretical framework working as an analytical tool has been developed. This framework builds upon the concept of accountability. That accountability has been identified as an entrance for analyzing the Aid for Trade initiative is due to the importance it has gained in the overall debate on aid. For example it is one out of five main components of the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness. In this part accountability will firstly be explored and developed into a pluralistic approach of accountability. As accountability is a concept for which various dimensions have been applied a definition of these same dimensions will be made. After that different mechanisms will be explained and explored, these mechanisms will later on work as the analytical tool guiding the analysis.

4.1 Defining accountability

International institutions are given authority by member-states, however this authority is dependent on the support of the general public, in other words they need to be legitimate (Buchanan and Keohane, 2006). Multiple views on how legitimacy by these institutions is to be achieved have been expressed, with some being more similar than others. What most views agree upon is that there is a need for institutions to be held to account for their actions (Grant and Keohane, 2005), in other words the right of some actors to hold others to account for their actions. Even though there is a general consensus that an increased accountability will improve the potential to be a legitimate authority, accountability cannot on its' own make an authority legitimate (Buchanan and Keohane, 2006).

While accountability is a topic lacking consensus one can still see some main strands within definitions of what constitutes it. Buchanan and Keohane (2006) in their article explains three different elements of accountability: first are standards which authorities are expected to meet, second is the information made available to those which are to hold the authority to account, and thirdly the ability to pose sanctions on the authorities by the accountability holders (see also Benner et. al, 2004; Wenar, 2006). Ensuring accountability can be seen as a way of constraining such international authorities from abusing power, however it is important to explicitly mention the need for active engagement by those holding these same authorities to account. While checks and balances work in order to prevent abuses of power, accountability uses the power of exposing actions to view (Grant and Keohane, 2006) and therefore need a wider engagement from a range of actors.

The different strands of accountability can be used in order to identify different dimensions of accountability. Such dimensions are identified as horizontal versus vertical accountability and also internal versus external accountability. In continuation this exploration of dimensions will lead up to explaining various accountability mechanisms which constitutes Keohane's (2006) *pluralistic accountability system*. Pluralistic accountability means that these different mechanisms together provide for a wholesome

picture of accountability, while each being more straightforward and operational than the abstract concept of accountability on its' own.

4.2 Accountability dimensions

Using the definition of accountability by Schedler where “*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 Grigorescu, 2008: 286) one can identify different dimensions of accountability. First and foremost internal and external, but also vertical and horizontal. That such different dimensions are important in the discussion on accountability is due to the complexity of the international agenda. As organizations are dependent on financial resources provided by rich actors and these in turn demand some control over those, organizations should be accountable in this relationship. However the actions taken by these same organizations affect various individuals, societies, governments and therefore the organizations also should be accountable in that direction (Keohane, 2006). How these dimensions interact and affect each other is crucial to understand if one is to understand how mechanisms of accountability function.

Internal accountability implies that people are accountable to those whom delegated power to them, while when “*external accountability is at issue, organizations are held accountable [...] to those affected by their actions*” (Keohane, 2006: 79). This shows the complexity outlined above and explains how one actor can be put under pressure from various directions. Even though such mechanisms might be conflicting, the idea is that they should complement each other (Grigorescu, 2008). This is also true about vertical and horizontal accountability mechanisms, where a combination of these can provide a comprehensive accountability system (Schillemans, 2011). In the dilemma facing horizontal and vertical mechanisms the argument tend to be that horizontal mechanisms lack enforcement power possessed by vertical mechanisms. Therefore “*horizontal accountability mechanisms need to convert the feedback from relevant stakeholders into incentives to improve their conduct and performance*” (Schillemans, 2011: 397). The dimensions presented here are of basic nature and present in most accountability discussions. They provide for a good background in discussing different mechanisms and will be used in order to connect various mechanisms into a comprehensive picture in the analysis and discussion later on.

4.3 Accountability mechanisms

The different parts of the pluralistic accountability approach will now be explored in order to generate an operational reference point guiding the analysis later on. These definitions are gathered from the article by Grant and Keohane (2006) as well as that by Benner et. al. (2004). These different mechanisms of accountability are also combined with different dimensions explored above in order to create a complete picture. The mechanisms dealt with are hierarchical, supervisory, legal, fiscal, market, reputational, and peer accountability. For each mechanism there is an accountability holder and a power-wielder, these are presented, as well as the connected dimension, in the diagram below. In this diagram accountability holder is the one which delegate power (i.e. the one who claim accountability)

and the power-wielder is the one whom has been delegated power (i.e. the one who should be accountable). Applying dimensions has been done by defining the relationship in light of definitions of dimensions, as mentioned above.

Mechanism	Accountability holder	Power-wielder	Dimension
Hierarchical	Leaders of organizations	Subordinate	Vertical Internal
Supervisory	States	Multilateral organizations	Vertical Internal
Legal	Courts	Individual	Vertical External
Fiscal	Funding agency	Funded agency	Vertical Internal
Market	Consumer	Firms and governments	Horizontal External
Reputational	Peers and diffuse public	Individual or agency	Horizontal External
Peer	Peer organizations	Organizations and their leaders	Horizontal External

Inspired by definitions by Grant and Keohane (2005: 36) and added accountability dimensions.

Hierarchical accountability: Within all organizations and companies there are those with comparatively more power than others, often these are referred to as chiefs. These in turn delegate assignments for their subordinates making the same subordinates accountable to their mains. Hierarchical accountability is often seen as the most traditional of different mechanisms, however it is argued to pose varying consequences. For example “*in a complex and large public sector, hierarchical accountability may provide too few learning stimuli from the feedback from stakeholders*” (Schillemans, 2011: 409). Even though such criticism is apparent this type of accountability cannot be ignored, considering its presence in various relationships. The argument here is that this mechanism expresses itself as a vertical and internal mechanism, since it applies power relationships and also concerns intra organizational structures.

Supervisory accountability: Among actors there are some with principal status, such as the WTO, to which other actors feel obliged to report, or the supervisor demands reporting from other actors which it is supervising. In relation to the growing quest for active participation in international institutions this type of accountability mechanism has become ever more apparent (Grant and Keohane, 2005). There are similarities of this type of accountability to that of hierarchical. Both includes some kind of power relationships, making also this one vertical, as well as being driven by delegation of tasks, making also it internal.

Legal accountability: Regarding legal accountability at the international level this provides limited sources of accountability channels. Even though formal laws are scarce at the international level, it is increasingly becoming important (Keohane, 2006). Since actors are active in different legal systems this type of accountability poses complications and is therefore assumed to be of less importance in the international setting (Benner et. al. 2004). As legal accountability includes actions made by individuals or organizations, and the formal

legal system this is argued to be external in nature. Concerning the question of vertical or horizontal, it is considered to imply vertical relations, with one possessing enforcement abilities upon the other.

Fiscal accountability: Fiscal relationships are dependent on the transfer of resources, thus also implying some kind of power relation where the one funding an agency or government is regarded as having a hold on the one funded. That fiscal accountability is important to actors such as the UN and also small grass-root NGOs is appropriate to understand. It can also be seen as a reason as to why reporting has escalated as a means to achieving accountability (Grant and Keohane, 2005). Here fiscal accountability is treated as a vertical and internal mechanism since it is acting within projects and have enforcement power through the withdrawal of resources.

Market accountability: This refers to the power possessed by consumers and investors. All actors active on a market, may it be global or local, have the opportunity of acting out their consumer power. Therefore active players can hold each other to account on a market (Bennet et. al. 2004). Investors can on the other hand stop investing in a market with which they do not agree (Grant and Keohane, 2005). For such an accountability mechanism the relationships are argued to be external and horizontal, considering that non-related actors can hold each other to account.

Reputational accountability: ‘Naming and shaming’ is a powerful tool in the international arena since it exposes actors to the general public. This can derive both positive and negative outcomes for the actor in the spotlight, by either collecting additional funds or trust, or losing it (Keohane, 2006). With the obvious equality among actors engaging in this mechanism, which all individuals, states and organizations can do, there is an apparent horizontal dimension. Concerning the lack of need for relations among actors an external view is also connected here.

Peer accountability: As interdependence is evolving and actors are in many instances working in cooperation the necessity for holding each other accountable for their promises is clear. By doing so they engage in a horizontal accountability mechanism, checking each other (Benner et. al. 2004). The mutual significance for all actors to be regarded as accountable is important in settings at all levels. Even though criticism considers the sanctioning ability of such mechanisms to be weak (Schillemans, 2011), being regarded as unaccountable by one’s peers might lead to difficulties in continuing to carry out activities. While the interdependence on the international arena might motivate an understanding of peer accountability as internal, it will still be argued to be external in nature due to its variation in actors.

5 Previous Research

In this part previous views on accountability in the World Trade Organization as well as in the international aid architecture will be revised. Firstly however some small notes on previous studies of the Aid for Trade initiative will be mentioned. While some studies on this initiative have been made the material is trivial, with no studies on accountability mechanisms being discovered. The aim of the other two parts is to provide a comprehensive picture of how the two main components in the Aid for Trade agenda, its' implementer (the WTO) and its' driver (aid), are working with accountability.

5.1 Aid for Trade

As mentioned the literature evaluating Aid for Trade is scarce. Some authors have focused on evaluating how Aid for Trade actually affects trade capacity in developing countries. Cali and Te Velde (2011) in their article explore the function of Aid for Trade and conclude that some policies within the Aid for Trade agenda are more effective than others. They also mention that even though in their overall research some policies seem to be effective, there is a need for understanding each specific case and the differential possibilities and constraints within them. In relation Wang (2011) explores varying ways to deliver Aid for Trade. Engaging in aid is connected to political interests, and therefore he views multilateral aid as having the potential to be a more unconditional aid placed where it is most needed. Thirdly literature on Aid for Trade is also concerned with the conflicting interests of aid and trade. Cai is very critical to the idea of Aid for Trade while still saying that "*Aid for trade has tremendous potential. If done right, it can help to bring developing nations out of poverty, legitimize and democratize the WTO, and provide the basis for a fertile intellectual exchange between two divergent disciplines.*" (2008: 308). With this background he then provides what he calls 'a roadmap to success' within which he outlines how actors should interact in order to assure a successful outcome of the Aid for Trade agenda.

5.2 Accountability in the World Trade Organization

The World Trade Organization is viewed as one of the most important international institutions since it deals with financial issues guiding relations among nations. As people around the world are affected by the decisions made within this institution, opinions regarding both the institution as such and also actions by the institution are being expressed from a variety of actors. Among these opinions are calls for enhanced accountability. Woods and Narlikar (2001) bring up such concerns when mentioning how protesters and demonstrators tend to participate outside international meetings.

Arguments about how accountability is not met is often related to the uneven participation and representation of members within WTO structures (Higgott and Erman, 2010; Singh, 2008; Woods and Narlikar, 2001). Higgott and Erman provides a good overview of how formal and informal structures within the WTO counteract the other. Their argument is that formal structures pose a good framework for making the WTO legitimate through accountability and equal representation, however due to prevailing power asymmetries this potential is hindered. As power asymmetries are expressed throughout the institution also fundamental values are biased toward interests of the most powerful actors (2010). Concluding they still view potentials of WTO to enhance legitimacy through accountability, equality and justice as strong.

Dividing the criticism into three strands of arguments, Glenn (2008) provides a good overview of how the WTO was formally constructed to promote equal participation and representation. However he see the procedural fairness being hampered by power asymmetries already mentioned, and in turn these generate unequal outcomes since outputs tend to show preferences for some. These same unequal opportunities to participate are argued as a reason for the WTO to actively engage in accountability enhancing work (Ehlermann and Ehring, 2005), even though, as the institution argues, it is member driven and thus are as accountable as its members.

Previous authors consider the unequal participation among members, states, although the question of improving participation might be more complex. As both Singh (2008) and Woods and Narlikar (2001) address there are arguments meaning that including a wider range of actors in the system can lead to improved accountability and legitimacy. That inclusion of for example non-governmental organizations can generate a greater legitimacy of the institution is because of them being viewed as representing interests of the public. Also they are believed as enhancing accountability by adding another layer of accountability providers and demanders (Singh, 2008). Woods and Narlikar (2001) see that the WTO as it acts today pose accountability pressures on members, while lacking in accountability mechanisms for the institution as such.

5.3 Accountability in international aid

International aid has been a hot topic for a long time. Recently much focus has been put on both design and delivery of aid projects. Within this literature one can find general views of how accountability might enhance the efficiency of aid, which is also the reasoning behind the Paris Declaration mentioned earlier. Critical views on accountability among actors concerned with development aid are common, making questions regarding augmenting the levels of aid justifiable (Winters, 2010). Here some of these critical arguments will be mentioned.

Wenar in his article *Accountability in International Aid* (2006) puts the accountability chain in perspective when he departs from the aid givers, namely citizens of rich countries, to the aid receivers, citizens of poor countries. He states that “[m]orally, the greatest need for accountability would be for the rich to be accountable to the poor for effective and sufficient development aid” (23). However he argues that this accountability chain is neither feasible nor desirable considering the high costs of implementing such accountability mechanisms, costs of accountability should not exceed derived benefits. Emanating from this he then develops a rationale for making intermediate actors the ones

obliged to both be accountable and hold others to account. These intermediate actors are those engaged in international aid; national governments, international financial institutions, and aid NGOs.

Enforcing accountability upon intermediate actors has been an aim within different aid strategies during a period of time, but as Winters (2010) concludes seems to have had little effect upon changing planning and implementation strategies. Such lack of change might be traced back to how power is both distributed and understood within the international system (Eyben, 2008). Power within the international system is unevenly distributed (Eyben, 2008), with the aid system being no exception. Regarding power as an important aspect of these relationships one needs to understand the strategic disadvantage possessed by developing countries to hold developed countries to account (Wenar, 2006). Dealing with this reality there are potentials for managing such flaws, for example by emphasizing the importance of participation in order to enhance potentials by end users to hold other actors to account (Winters, 2010).

As a complementary comment on accountability in international aid Hoffstaedter and Roch (2011) points to the implications of accountability as it is being pursued today. They argue that donor and recipient governments alike only make parts of their work publicly available, by doing so they undermine accountability potentials. On the other hand, as the authors also mention, accountability in this area needs to adapt to a range of different political and social settings, thus complicating reporting routines. As a solution they suggest that arranging different networks to hold aid actors to account have the possibility to enhance public ability of holding them accountable. In the end accountability in international aid is a complex issue since it engages so many actors and various relationships which all need to be accountable (Winters, 2010: 220).

6 Analysis

“Monitoring Aid for Trade is based on the concept of mutual accountability – that aid is more effective when donors and partner governments are not only accountable to their general public for the use of resources to achieve development, but are also accountable to each other for better management of aid.” (WTO, 2007: 61)

This analysis will make use of the accountability framework developed as a theoretical framework. The aim is to identify characteristics of accountability mechanisms as expressed by the WTO by looking at how relationships are explained and emphasized. Empirical material used in this part is, as discussed in Chapter 4, three reports about Aid for Trade, from 2007, 2009 and 2011. Reaching the aim is done by first identifying general opinions, thereafter a more scrutinizing analysis of donors and partners responsibilities respectively will be carried out.

In the first report of Aid for Trade from 2007 the WTO express their aim of providing such an evaluation as a way to generate greater accountability (WTO 2007: 15), thus making results an essential part of accountability. The intention is to do so by providing a way for actors to hold each other to account for their actions. With these actors it is generally states and multilateral institutions which are referred to. Extremely easily expressed the WTO see accountability relations as follows:



That these relationships have been extracted from the policy reports can be seen as a direct effect of the initial citation where WTO is pushing accountability responsibilities to donors and partners alike. Aspects which WTO outlines as important for these actors to engage in are alignment, results-based management, national ownership, and predictable financing (see all documents). While responsibility is being delegated downward, the WTO see some importance of themselves as a coordinating mechanism, steering the initiative and overlooking the results, thus acting out a kind of **supervisory** accountability.

Looking at the two standards of alignment and national ownership, this is often viewed as a means for actors to be regarded as more accountable. However *“[d]onors and partners seem to view the importance of aid for trade to trade, growth and development somewhat differently. While partner countries tend to focus more on the short-term trade outcomes from aid for trade, donors tend to concentrate more on its longer-term impacts on economic growth and poverty reduction”* (WTO, 2011: 97). Even though this dilemma is observed the WTO take no responsibility, but instead continue to emphasize the role of donors and partners alike, as we shall see.

Taking the other two standards into consideration, results-based management and predictable funding, one can see also how these interact so as to make actors more accountable. As argued by the WTO an unpredictable funding makes planning complex, and with insufficient planning results are hard to achieve, thus creating a vicious circle (WTO, 2009: 34). WTO Task Force expressed a necessity for concrete and visible results on the ground, therefore the results-based management approach has gained importance among donors to actively monitor potential impacts of projects (WTO, 2009: 76). Results-based management is often carried out by using donors or joint donor-partner arrangements, while adopting donors arrangements in partner countries might pose complications emanating from different prevailing conditions (WTO, 2009: 43).

These general ideas expressed by the WTO have lead to seeing some preference for mechanisms such as **hierarchical** accountability (where structures within governments and institutions are important factors), **fiscal** accountability (the importance of results-based management and predictable funding), **reputational** accountability (stressing importance of actors engaging in dialogue with general public), and **peer** accountability (horizontal relationships among donors, partners and stakeholders alike). These mechanisms will now be applied to views of how actors should engage in Aid for Trade, as they are articulated in the policy reports.

6.1 Accountability mechanisms for donors

In the baseline document from 2007 donors strategies are classified as implicit at best, and lacking coherence (WTO, 2007: 36-7). This is then a recurring issue which is identified as one of the main challenges for donors in order to become accountable, by harmonizing efforts and mainstreaming national ownership (for example WTO, 2009: 70; WTO, 2011: 69). A distinction need to be made among donors, since it is problematic to view these as one homogenous group. Donors consist of multilateral institutions carrying out development projects, OECD DAC members, South-south cooperation, and other emerging donors. Harmonization is expressed as an important means to achieve accountability; such efforts are achieved with varying results with multilateral donors being the most successful, while bilateral donors report that they generally do not engage in joint efforts (WTO, 2009: 75). Even though such effort varies donors tend to agree upon the three main issues for Aid for Trade – economic growth, poverty reduction and regional integration (WTO, 2011: 33) – thus maintaining a sort of **peer** accountability relationship amongst themselves.

Actions made by donors also fluctuate depending on the nature of the donor, all are engaging in dialogues and activities differently. For example 60% of multilateral institutions report including the private sector regularly in policy dialogues, while South-south providers do this less frequently (WTO, 2011: 74). In the 2011 report also donors report engaging in dialogues with civil society and other stakeholders, which was not the case in earlier reports (WTO, 2011: 77). However this engagement differs as well, with multilateral institutions reporting a more regular dialogue with such actors than other donors. Another example of when donors differ in meeting partners' quests is apparent in the dialogue on complementary policies, where South-south providers often do not want to interfere in internal affairs, while other donors engage in dialogues (WTO, 2011: 103-4). While efforts to include various actors differ, generally donors actively engage in *“bolstering in-house expertise and raising awareness among policy-makers and practitioners at headquarters and in the field”* (WTO,

2009: 72). By doing so they are consistently working with the strengthening of **hierarchical** accountability.

A common issue which the WTO deals with is that of more predictable funding by donors as a means to achieve sufficient accountability. Considering the importance of results-based management for donors, partner countries need to be able to be confident in the financing of projects in order to manage for the results requested (WTO, 2009: 34). Those results are important for donors because: *“[t]he ability to demonstrate these positive results can help generate greater political and public support within donor and partner countries, and bring about behavioral changes in the way donors operate. This, in turn, can promote improved performance, enhanced accountability and transparency, and increased learning and knowledge”* (WTO, 2009: 66). Focus on the relationship from government to public expresses an awareness of how **market** accountability also is important, while this being an issue generally expressed by donors themselves, and not from the WTO.

Lastly the issue of adapting the Aid for Trade agenda to new circumstances will be mentioned. The WTO see themselves as some kind of supervisors, therefore they are the ones changing the agenda in general. Donors on the other hand need to work with a greater public for which to be accountable; by engaging in work with these actors social aspects and green growth have become more important in the work of Aid for Trade. In this sense **reputational** accountability is important for both donors and the WTO; however it is shown to be of greater importance for them than partners (WTO, 2011: 37-8).

6.2 Accountability mechanisms for partners

Priorities among partners have been identified as competitiveness and export diversification (WTO, 2011: 30). While in order to receive funding to be able to engage in work towards these goals they need to be accountable to donors; maintaining **fiscal** accountability. As mentioned results-based management is of utmost importance for donors, therefore partners have adopted donors' arrangements or joint arrangements to control for such achievements (WTO, 2009: 42). Considering that Aid for Trade flows include various ministries in partner countries the tracking of these flows is complex (WTO, 2011: 63), making **fiscal** accountability extremely hard to achieve. One example is that in the 2011 report of Aid for Trade flows partner countries were not able to provide information of these flows, apart from the initial amount (WTO, 2011: 64). Another solution that has been adapted by both donors and partners is to provide an operational strategy in order to attract funding (WTO, 2009: 36)

National ownership is dealt with extensively and is argued to be a means for inspiring governments of partner countries to feel more responsible and obliged to achieve efficient usage of Aid for Trade flows. In relation to this partner countries report having implemented institutional arrangements so as to promote cooperation and coordination across government instances (WTO, 2009: 40). Partners report improving knowledge in Aid for Trade teams in order to be able to generate better policies and operational strategies, as well as increase coordination within ministries (WTO, 2011: 75), thus actively engaging in improving **hierarchical** accountability. By strengthening such coordination and cooperation the aim is to provide more efficient delivery and tracking (WTO, 2009: 41). In regard to the issue of national ownership an example of how this is being promoted can be withdrawn from the 2011 report where partners express a necessity for complementary policies (WTO, 2011:

93). With this concern partners have taken control of national ownership and are guiding donors through dialogues and implementation, which in turn are starting to fund such complementary policies (WTO, 2011: 103).

The last point to deal with in regard to how WTO picture partners active work with accountability is that of **peer** accountability. “*Almost all partner countries engage in dialogues with the private sector and other stakeholders about the formulation and implementation of their trade strategies*” (WTO, 2009: 41). This was expressed already in the report from 2007 (54), however this report might not be too representative because of the low number of correspondents being partners. Experience is reported to show that mainstreaming trade depends on consultation and coordination among private and public stakeholders (WTO, 2011: 71), making such arrangements evermore important if the priorities of partners – regarding competitiveness and export diversification – are to be reached. Another critical point made placing **peer** accountability as a core concern is that it supposedly improves national ownership and mutual accountability efforts (WTO, 2011: 70).

7 Discussion

For this part the characteristics identified in the analysis will be discussed in comparison to previous research, background, and theoretical aspects. The discussion is also informed by a document regarding how to strengthen accountability in the Aid for Trade initiative provided by the OECD, which is the WTO's companion in this initiative, and some critical informants.

When looking at how the WTO frames relationships and accountability among its members one can see a clear division of how enforceable mechanisms are more clearly directed towards donors, while non-enforceable mechanisms dependent on reputation and good-will are generally expressed in partner discussions. Trying to understand this picture in light of the broader discussion regarding accountability in the WTO can be done by looking at arguments of formal versus informal structures. Informal structures make active use of power asymmetries which in turn make developing countries (which generally also are equal to partner countries) unable to efficiently take advantage of formal structures (see for example Higgot and Erman, 2010), since they lack enforcement mechanisms possessed by developed (donor) countries. Such enforcement mechanisms are often identical to financial resources.

While partner countries often are regarded as less powerful, one can view accountability mechanisms that rely on horizontal relationships as more efficient. By incorporating stakeholders on an equal basis they often motivate for effective use of both resources and delegated responsibility (Schillemans, 2011), making partners more accountable in the global system according to theories of increase participation. Thinking about partners activities in trying to engage a wider set of stakeholders, both private and public, into both trade and development discussions can therefore be viewed as a means for efficient usage of aid, and a way for increasing the results. On the other hand, partner countries tend to lack enforcement mechanisms to donors, therefore making their planning very complicated.

Criticism regarding the treatment of financial resources by donors has been expressed from various aspects. The general argument is that the Aid for Trade agenda distorts financial resources from other important aspects of the development agenda (BIC¹; IPS¹; ITC¹). Concerns are for WTO to express such an importance of the Aid for Trade initiative so as to make donors prioritize efforts related to this agenda, and by doing so undermine social aspects such as health and education. Donors would respond to this concern by placing Aid for Trade as a means to an end, with the end being development at all levels of society. When making Aid for Trade a means one connect it to the debate regarding efficient global governance where prevailing inefficiency has led to concerns for illegitimate global governance (Buchanan and Keohane, 2006).

When discussing how efficiency affects opinions of actors in general, and of institutions especially, one can find relations in all discussions that have been raised in the framework of this thesis. A means to achieve efficiency is argued to be the coordination among actors, and in order to manage an efficient coordination the importance of holding each other accountable is important (Chandy and Karas, 2011). Also in the discussion about international aid one can see how the discussion of accountable management of these

resources emanates from inefficient delivery (Winters, 2010). Even though much of the academic criticism deals with inadequate and unpredictable funding by donors, which in turn make planning for sustainable results complex, the WTO also points to the fact that strengthened governance in partner countries is a prerequisite for success (WTO, 2011: 102).

Regarding the role of global governance institutions, the view of them providing for a global perspective on current activities is commonly expressed by institutions themselves (OECD, 2011: 31). In academic literature regarding normative situations their potential is often observed as extending beyond their own claims of providing global perspectives. As was explored briefly in Chapter 3 these institutions affect norms and values globally (Buchanan and Keohane, 2006) which in turn should be expressed as a potential in their own documents, this cannot be found in the documents from WTO, nor the evaluation from OECD. Instead they aim to achieve accountability by adapting the role as supervisors active in a state-centric system, contrary to the underlying idea of global cooperation expressed by Held (1997) which gave birth to the growth of these institutions.

As was expressed first in the UN Declaration for the period of 1991-2000, development is characterized by mutual responsibility, rich as poor. This idea has later on been adapted in various settings, with the Paris Declaration including mutual accountability as one of its' five pillars. In the WTO report from 2009 mutual accountability is pointed out as one of the pillars which is failing (69). The WTO, and OECD, emphasizes the necessity for democratic ownership and stakeholder involvement as means to success. However as is discussed in the global debate such means provides for a complex setting considering that not all nation-states are democratic. As is expressed by scholars dealing with the issue of global democracy such ideas are impractical due to the great variety of actors (Keohane, 2006).

Another way which is outlined as a means for improving mutual accountability prospects is that of coordination. The ICTSD is critical to the Aid for Trade initiative since it does not put enough pressure on coordination at any level, making results hard to achieve (ICTSD¹). That coordination among stakeholders is important has been expressed above, for this part the idea of coordinating for results will be more outlined. Managing for results should be an inclusive process, dealing with results at all phases – project inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, long-term impacts (OECD, 2011: 74). Evaluations should include both failures and successes, however failures are often left out (OECD, 2011: 27), which is an interesting point considering how successes are associated with enhanced accountability. On the other hand managing for results can be interlinked again with the discussion of funding, meaning that as long as donors do not fulfill their commitments in disbursements partners will find it difficult in managing for planned results. It is in this part of the Aid for Trade initiative that global governance institutions with their ability of creating norms and values (Buchanan and Keohane, 2006) have the potential to counteract prevailing informal power asymmetries apparent in most interactions among nation-states.

8 Conclusion

That the WTO has many points of departure for enhancing the understanding of its' legitimacy is evident in the previous research chapter. As is expressed by Cai (2008) the Aid for Trade initiative pose possibilities for enhancing perceptions of both democracy and legitimacy in the WTO. Also initiatives are regarded as a means to enhance efficiency of international aid, thus making also this part of the global interconnectedness more legitimate. For global governance institutions it is important to be regarded as legitimate due to it acting upon the will by states to participate. When global governance spread the most the idea of cosmopolitan democracy was uttered, meaning that the normative goal should be to adhere to one global community. However as has been evident in this analysis, one of the most prominent international institutions does not direct its' efforts in this direction. Instead a state-centric approach is maintained and focused upon.

Focusing on accountability mechanisms among actors, and not recognizing their own role pose both implications and possibilities. Foremost it is a more straightforward approach to accountability since states and other actors have formal structures which are more easily addressed by legal aspects and also reached by the general public. However, due to the prevailing asymmetrical relationships globally applying equal mechanisms among all actors will be hard to achieve. This is evident in the Aid for Trade documents where the WTO expresses priority for vertical mechanisms to donors and horizontal mechanisms to partners. On the other hand, as was mentioned in the discussion this does not necessarily have to be a negative consequence. Instead it might enhance partners' prospects of achieving accountability in the sense of critical voices where active participation of a variety of stakeholders is argued to be one way of increasing accountability in global governance.

Much of the discussion in this research has been focused upon the role of funding and results-based management, concerns for partners and donors alike. The WTO see these aspects as expressing the potential of enhancing accountability for the whole initiative if done correct, which is a thought grounded well in theory and evidence regarding legitimacy in global governance and international aid. Improving efficiency and managing for results can pose a new era of greater belief for the right of global governance institutions to rule. If this is to have these affects upon the perception of global governance, these same institutions need to take a more active role and more responsibility for the activities of their initiatives. Responsibility cannot solely be placed on states to engage a wider public, apply accountability mechanisms, and answer to those affected. Also the institutions cannot adhere only to publics of donor communities, which can be seen through the WTO taking on responsibility for changing the agenda into concerns which were expressed by donor communities, but need to be adequately responsive to concerns raised in partner communities.

Lastly; international institutions have the possibility of affecting power asymmetries in the global arena, if they take on this responsibility. However, to what extent this is desirable has been discussed, and will continue to be discussed. The role of the Aid for Trade initiative in enhancing accountability quests for the WTO can be seen through both theoretical and empirical aspects, while the WTO need to engage in these activities more actively in order to reach the full potential. How this is to be done legitimately is yet to be explored.

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