

Aid, Democracy, and the Magic Wand of Accountability

Effectiveness and (In)consistency in Donor Notions of
Accountability in Democracy Assistance and the Aid
Discourse

Fredrik Bruhn

Abstract

Two trends can be identified within the current development assistance discourse: the pursuit of aid effectiveness, and the support for democratic development, both of which emphasise the importance of accountability. By adopting a critical approach to the ‘buzzword’ accountability, this study explores how a number of bilateral donors conceptualise and understand the notion of accountability in the two contexts of the aid effectiveness paradigm and democracy assistance. By analysing primary and secondary material, it is found that while in the context of the aid effectiveness paradigm donors adhere to an outcome-oriented view of accountability; perceived as a technocratic and apolitical issue, in the context of democracy assistance, accountability is understood in terms of process; closely related to the concepts of voice, participation, and rights. When considered in relation to each other, it is argued that the dissonance between the two might have detrimental implications on the effectiveness of the objectives in respective domain, as well as render donors vulnerable to the critique of inconsistency. Further, the donor approach to their own accountabilities, as well as the consistent failure to recognise the political and power-infused underpinnings of aid, is found to be highly problematic.

Keywords: accountability, democracy assistance, aid effectiveness, democratisation, aid

Words: 20837

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Anders Uhlin for helpful comments and constructive feedback. I would also like to thank all my forgiving friends and family members whom I neglected systematically, during the intensive periods of actually working, and during the periods of equally intense procrastination and self-pity. Most of all thanks to Nora, without the support of whom this thesis would never have been finished. For being so good when I was so bad. Guess you can't be wise and in love at the same time.

Table of Content

1	Introduction	2
1.1	Purpose and research questions	3
1.2	Delimitations and initial specifications.....	4
1.3	The structure	5
2	Analytical Framework	6
2.1	Introducing accountability	6
2.1.1	Conceptualizing a buzzword.....	6
2.1.2	Different forms of accountability	10
2.2	Setting the contexts	13
2.2.1	The aid relationship and the aid effectiveness paradigm.....	13
2.2.2	Democracy assistance	15
2.3	Exploring the links	17
3	Theory and Methodology	22
3.1	Social constructionism and accountability as discourse	22
3.2	Qualitative text analysis and constructive deconstruction	25
4	Analysis	28
4.1	Accountability in the aid relationship	28
4.1.1	Lines of accountability in aid.....	29
4.1.2	Mutual accountability, ownership, and the aid effectiveness paradigm	32
4.2	Accountability in democracy assistance	36
4.2.1	The notion of democratic accountability	37
4.3	The two notions compared and combined: Effectiveness and consistency	43
5	Conclusion	48
6	Executive Summary	50
7	References	54

1 Introduction

As the Heads of State, Ministers, and delegates left the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan in December 2011, a new ‘Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation’ was signed, complete with renewed commitments and reinvigorated principles, all in the name of effective international development. This was merely the latest expression of one of the prominent trends within the contemporary development assistance community; the strive for aid effectiveness.

Another trend is about democracy. Northern bilateral donors recognize, now more than ever, democracy and democratization as an integral part of the development assistance effort. Through the adoption of ‘rights-based approaches’, ‘multidimensional views on poverty’, mainstreaming of human rights and democracy, and increased resources spent on direct support for democratic development, the emphasis on democracy in development assistance is at an all time high. In face of these parallel trends, one cannot but wonder how they relate to each other.

At the centre of both lies a concern with accountability. Accountability between donors and recipients for the purpose of effective aid, and accountability as a means for, and constituent part of, democratisation and the state of democracy itself. Indeed, in these two contexts, as in the wider development discourse, the word accountability has come to acquire a seemingly universal appeal, equally crucial as a remedy for ‘democratic deficits’ as it is a prerequisite for effective recipient country ‘ownership’, management, and implementation of development aid. But what does accountability mean in these specific contexts? What, exactly, do donors mean when they coin the furthering of domestic accountability as an important objective of democracy assistance? Or mutual accountability as a core principle of the aid effectiveness agenda? Once we pose these questions, the perceived universality of the term unveils its actual contextual specificity. It becomes obvious that the sheer normative force of the term serves to make possible and legitimise a whole range of social relations and actions.

This project is about donor understandings of accountability in these two contexts; the aid effectiveness paradigm, and democracy assistance. For as it has aptly been put recently: “One person’s accountability is another’s persecution. Where one stands on these issues depends on where one sits.” (Fox 2007:663). It is also sometimes said that ‘words make worlds’. It is the intention of this study, then, to critically examine what worlds accountability make in the two contexts of the aid effectiveness paradigm and democracy assistance.

1.1 Purpose and research questions

There are two research interests and clusters of issues underlying the rationale for this study. On the one hand; the relation between aid and democracy. As manifested by the two trends mentioned above, the nature of this relation and the compatibility of the two are more relevant than ever within the field of development assistance. However, it remains poorly understood and explored on a conceptual level, and the firm focus on results and outcomes within the aid community has left the theoretical underpinnings of these processes largely unexamined. On the other hand; the seemingly common assumption that ‘all good things go together’ as expressed by the creation of and faith in development ‘buzzwords’. Accountability is often portrayed as a universal fix for all kinds of problems, and without further elaboration the prevailing assumption seems to be that more is always better. Here too, as a result of the urgency and moral imperative embedded in the goal of eradicating poverty, knowledge of the conceptual models underpinning the chase for accountability remains limited.

Thus, the purpose of the study is equally twofold: 1) to problematize and denaturalize the taken-for-granted roles and virtues of accountability in development assistance, in order to 2) better understand what possibilities and limitations exist in the double pursuit for aid effectiveness and democratisation. There are several reasons for undertaking such a project, and for adopting this particular focus.

First, it is important to understand how the aid effectiveness paradigm and the configuration of the aid relationship affect democracy assistance. While there is considerable attention to each of these domains individually, in academic and practitioner circles, there is little understanding of how the former affects the objectives of the latter. This is problematic because it might lead to missed opportunities of conjunction and the overlooking of key challenges and tensions that might inhibit the ultimate objectives of both domains.

Second, it is equally crucial to understand the effects and implications of democracy and democracy assistance on the objective of aid effectiveness. With rising supply of democracy support it is vital to understand how the norms and values reflected in this enterprise relate to those signalled in the strive for effectiveness, in order to avoid inconsistency and the charge of hypocrisy. While more and more donors imply that democracy is beneficial to the objective of aid effectiveness, knowledge of the conceptual compatibility is virtually non-existent.

Third, the particular focus on accountability is important because it is a core value in both contexts, and constitutes a direct and explicit link between the two. The attention paid to accountability in each context separately needs to be complemented by a better understanding of the possibilities of conceptual conjunction. Furthermore, the issue of external accountability, which is recognized as an inhibiting factor to the objectives in both contexts, constitutes a direct manifestation of the problems arising from the nexus of accountability, aid effectiveness, and democracy assistance.

Lastly, the two projects of democracy assistance and aid effectiveness are of course intimately connected. The effectiveness of democracy assistance, as an integral part of development cooperation, is premised on the general character of the latter. Reversely, as the effectiveness of aid depends on the quality of governance in recipient countries, democracy assistance has an important role to play. All the more reason then to critically examine how donors conceptually construct these two endeavours.

The specific research questions guiding the analysis are structured in two clusters:

- 1) How is accountability conceptualized and understood by donors within the aid effectiveness paradigm and democracy assistance respectively? What notions of accountability are embedded in these two contexts?
- 2) How do these notions of accountability relate to each other? Are they compatible and complimentary? Are there tensions and/or contradictions between the two?

Each cluster can essentially be boiled down to the first question in each, and will throughout the study be referred to as the first and second question respectively. A third question, *not* treated directly or exhaustively in the analysis but underlying the interest in the first two, concerns *what implications these notions of accountability have for the relation between aid and democracy*. It will only be loosely reflected upon in some sections of the study but should, in the name of reflexivity and intersubjectivity, be noted by the reader as an implicit point of reference for the proceeding discussions and issues treated in the study. The numerical reference to the questions also reflects the relative priority given to each one within the study. Hence, despite their primarily collective importance for the purpose of the study, the first question deliberately receives more attention than the second.

1.2 Delimitations and initial specifications

As evident in the research questions, the sole focus here is on *donor* views and understandings of accountability. Importantly, this does not mean that other factors, such as recipient views or the global economic and political situation, are necessarily less important or relevant to any of the issues discussed. It does however underline the importance of this specific factor in itself, and constitutes a clear delimitation of the study as well as a considerable limitation to the potential scope of the findings. The specific donors analysed are Sweden (Sida), Denmark (Danida), and the UK (DFID). Hence, only bilateral donors are considered.

While the analysis is mainly based on *general* policy and strategy documents applicable to all development cooperation in the respective donor portfolios, the

focus, and examples provided, primarily concerns *developing countries in the global south*, with particular reference to sub-Saharan Africa.

Development aid or assistance refers to the standard OECD-DAC understanding of flows from donor countries to developing countries or multilateral institutions that is concessional in character and has the main purpose of economic development and welfare (OECD 2008). In practise this includes resources transferred for a wide range of developmental purposes – economic, social, or political¹.

Further specifications regarding the term accountability, the precise meaning of the two contexts, and the specific ‘critical approach to accountability’ applied here is provided in the two subsequent chapters.

1.3 The structure

Following this introductory chapter, the analytical framework of the study is outlined and elaborated. The central concept of accountability is introduced, followed by a presentation and specification of the two contexts. These sections serve the double purpose of outlining the central traits and issues in each domain as well as providing literature reviews of each field, and positioning the study within the relevant academic discourses.

The third chapter elaborates on the critical approach applied in this study. It provides a discussion on some of the ontological and epistemological underpinnings along with the theoretical and methodological implications of this approach.

In the fourth chapter the donor notions of accountability in the two contexts are critically analysed. It sets out with the analysis of the aid relationship and aid effectiveness paradigm, followed by that of democracy assistance and the notion of democratic accountability within this context. A third section considers the results of the previous two in comparison and seeks to understand how they relate to each other by way of the two standards of effectiveness and consistency.

The fifth chapter briefly wraps up the findings and provide some concluding remarks.

¹ Indeed, even though the DAC definition of development assistance, or more precisely Official Development Assistance (ODA), emphasises economic development and welfare, it is important to note that this is on the basis of declared goals and not actual effects, which means that the only criterion is that the respective donors wish their aid to contribute to such development. In practise, therefore, the tendency has been to regard all concessional transfers from donors to recipients as ODA, with the exception of direct military aid (Degnbol–Martinussen & Engberg–Pedersen 2003:57).

2 Analytical Framework

This chapter presents and outlines the main concepts, contexts, and analytical considerations of the study. It starts with introducing the central concept of accountability, followed by a brief presentation of the two contexts and some of the on-going debates and issues on each one. The final section then mixes things up by considering the interactions and overlaps between the concepts and contexts presented in the two previous ones.

2.1 Introducing accountability

It is safe to say that accountability is a popular and widely used term, within the development discourse but also in the language of international politics, democratic theory, democratization studies, business and activism in general. It is often regarded as a kind of panacea to a wide range of governance issues, a cure-all development ‘buzzword’, fit to fulfil the ever apparent need for ordinary people to control and hold the powerful to account (Goetz & Jenkins 2005:8). “The magic wand of accountability”, write Weisband and Ebraim (2007:1), “is regarded as a supervening force able to promote democracy, justice, and greater human decency though the mechanisms of transparency, benchmarked standards, and enforcement”. In fact, the widespread use of accountability in recent years has generated a concern that the term has become too wide, devoid of analytical content as well as practical relevance, spurring some commentators to sceptically characterize it as an ‘elastic’, ‘chameleon-like’, or ‘plastic’ term (Goetz and Jenkins 2005; Mulgan 2000). According to Mulgan, for instance, accountability; a term which a few decades ago was used rarely and with relatively restricted meaning, now crops up everywhere performing all kinds of analytical and rhetorical tasks and carrying most of the major burdens of the prevailing democratic governance agenda (Mulgan 2000:555).

In the face of these criticisms and the ‘booming’ state of the term and concept of accountability it is helpful to provide a minimal, core definition of the term. This is done in the following section below, accompanied by a presentation of the central *aspects* and *actors* embedded in the definition, and some core distinctions related to the practical operation of accountability systems. The second section introduces three specific forms of accountability relevant to this study.

2.1.1 Conceptualizing a buzzword

Dealing with such a ‘slippery’ and encompassing concept as accountability, the literature is literally full of attempts at definitions and framings of different kinds. Stripped down, and simply put, a definition can however be formulated as the following: Accountability describes a relationship where A is accountable to B when A is obliged to inform B about A’s actions and decisions, to justify them, and to suffer punishment (sanctions) in the case of misconduct as perceived by B (Schedler 1999:17). Defined in this way, it is first of all apparent that accountability involves a relationship of power, and more specifically, “the capacity to demand someone engage in reason-giving to justify her behaviour, and/or the capacity to impose a penalty for poor performance” (Goetz and Jenkins 2005:8). Thus, embedded in this relationship of power, or in the words of Goetz and Jenkins, “the accountability drama”, we can distinguish between, on the one hand, two key *aspects* of accountability, and on the other hand, two key *actors* of accountability.

Drawing on what Schedler (1999:14-17) has termed answerability and enforcement, these two *aspects* involves what can be characterized as the three dimensions of political accountability: information and justification (together constituting the aspect of answerability) and punishment (forming the aspect of enforceability). In other words, the former involves the requirement of having to provide information about one’s actions², and justifications for their correctness, whereas the latter regards the obligation to suffer penalties from those dissatisfied either with the actions or with the rationale invoked to justify them (Goetz and Jenkins 2005:9). Thus, accountability can be seen as the interplay of, or discursive space between, answerability and enforceability. According to Weisband and Ebrahim:

“Answerability invites a conversation moored to reasons, reflections, excuse-giving. It requires justifications for decisions and a rational basis for behaviours, both before and after the fact. To the extent that an accountability framework inheres in reasons given, it engages in answerability. But only enforceability and rectification produce “strong forms” of accountability. This requires the application of sanctions” (Weisband and Ebrahim 2007:5).

The inclusion of sanctions, or what Mulgan (2003:10) calls an “element of retributive justice”, is inherent to the meaning of accountability. To illustrate the point and simplify (drastically), Mulgan exemplifies: “Particularly when an institution has caused a major disaster and loss of life, heads should roll. If heads stay stubbornly in place, as often happens, we think that accountability has been denied” (Ibid). The conceptual distinction between answerability and enforcement highlights the practical complexity of accountability systems, mechanisms, and relations in that these might consist of varying degrees and configurations of the

² Information and evidence is sometimes referred to as the ‘currency of accountability’, giving rise to its commonly perceived close connection to the concepts of transparency and openness (Domingo et al 2009:22). However, as made evident by Fox (2007), the relation between these concepts is more complex than the common usage suggests.

two aspects. For example, there are often complicated divisions of labour in accountability relationships, sometimes with those entitled to demand answers (in the form of information and justifications) not being the same as those being in charge of deciding on and executing sanctions³ (Goetz and Jenkins 2005:9). Thus, in practice, while far from always equally present, discernable, or indeed apparent in formally specified institutional settings, answerability and enforcement are both integral and crucial parts of the concept of accountability being used in this study⁴. They are, arguably, equally important; both necessary and neither sufficient on its own (Ibid).

Second, we can distinguish between the two key *actors* of accountability relationships, normally referred to as the ‘principals’ and ‘agents’ of accountability. The principal here constitutes what can also be termed the seeker of accountability; the one entitled to insist on explanations or to impose punishments, while the agent refers to the target of accountability; the one obliged to account for his or her actions and to face sanctions or punishment (Goetz and Jenkins 2005:9). In this standard principal-agent model, accountability relations are thus understood as agency relations in which one party (the agent) makes some choices on behalf of another party (the principal) who has power to sanction or reward the former (Fearon 1999:55).

While the distinction of the two actors of accountability in itself is essential to any analysis of accountability systems and relations, this particular (and popular) model based on ‘principal-agent’ relations is limited in a number of ways⁵, most notably for the purpose of this study, because it is based on the notion of a formal contract between the two actors. The model rests on the notion that performance expectations are defined by contracts that articulate expectations and create legally enforceable obligations (Brown 2007:91). This emphasis on formal contracts becomes problematic when the aim is to analyse and reveal accountability relations that are not defined by explicitly delegated power, such as those between aid agencies or donors and citizens in recipient countries. Indeed, based on the recognition of the power of legitimacy that surrounds the concept of accountability, and the focus here on accountability relations between different sovereign institutions operating in an international setting with, at times, unclear

³ While possible to imagine a wide range of situations where this is the case, Goetz and Jenkins (2005:9) provides two examples: ”In some instances, government agencies can enforce sanctions against politicians on the basis of explanations supplied to private agents in civil litigations. In other cases the information a firm provides to a regulatory agency can, when made public, stimulate a sanction in the form of a consumer boycott”.

⁴ The inclusion of sanctions or penalties in the definition of accountability is contested in the academic literature. A more extensive discussion on this issue is however beyond the reach and purpose of this study. Suffice to say that the version adopted here essentially follows the line of reasoning in Schedler (1999), Goetz and Jenkins (2005), Weisband and Ebrahim (2007), and Mulgan (2000), (2003). For a narrower definition, more sceptical to the inclusion of sanctions, and a good overview of the current state of the controversy, see for example Philip (2009) and Lindberg (2009).

⁵ For a more extensive critique of the principal-agent model, on partly different grounds than the ones forwarded here, see Philip (2009).

boarders of jurisdiction, the definition of the actors of accountability as those operating within formal contracts and through explicitly delegated power excludes many of those informal relations legitimized by the concept under scrutiny. Furthermore, in both contexts analysed in this study, it is the understanding of the nature and quality of the ‘contract’ that underpins accountability relations that is at the very heart of discussions and debates around accountability, be it between citizens and states, donors and recipient country governments, or donors and intended beneficiaries. Moreover, the assumption underpinning the principal-agent model that there are mainly two parties to the accountability relation, rendering it a dyadic model, is unworkable in many contexts – including the field of development assistance – where there are more than two parties involved in a web of accountabilities (Eyben 2008:11). It is to a large extent the tensions between these accountabilities, and the diverging interests held by various actors within them, that render accountability so complex and problematic in these contexts.

Since much of the matters of accountability discussed in this study concerns what might be broadly categorized as *political accountability* – the responsibilities of delegated individuals in public office to carry out specific tasks on behalf of citizens⁶ (Newell and Bellour 2002:7) – it is necessary to consider some further distinctions regarding the operation of accountability in political systems and relations. One distinction can be made between *vertical* and *horizontal* forms of accountability. Vertical accountability refers to the way in which citizens and their associations play direct roles in holding the powerful to account (Goetz and Jenkins 2005:11). Electoral sanctions are the prime example of vertical accountability. Horizontal accountability, on the other hand, refers to self-imposed accountability within the state machinery, in which the holding to account is indirect, delegated to other powerful actors (Newell and Bellour 2002:7; Goetz and Jenkins 2005:11). Horizontal accountability is thus usually referred to as ‘checks and balances’, and can be exercised by institutions such as the judiciary⁷, legislature, auditor general, or human rights commissions. In practise, the two are closely linked and interrelated. For example, it might be argued that in order for horizontal accountability to be effective it should be reinforced by strong vertical accountability, where citizens, mass media, and civil associations are in a position to scrutinize public officials and government practise, thus describing a relationship between unequals, where power from below attempts to exert control on the powers above (Newell and Bellour 2002:7).

A second distinction is between *ex ante* and *ex post* accountability. The former, which might be described as “accountability for policy formation”, comes close to the frequently used term responsiveness and is about making sure that

⁶ Like with all forms of accountability, there is no consensus on how to conceptualize or use the term political accountability. It is an admittedly ambiguous concept and is not used extensively in the remainder of the study.

⁷ In the view of O’Donnell (1999), the founder of the concept, the judiciary is the main example of horizontal accountability.

elected representatives set out to do what society says they should do; that decision-making is responsive to the opinions of the constituency whose interests or needs are most affected (Burnell 2012:274). The latter, which in a strict sense might be considered to be the only true form of accountability, involves accountability for policy implementation and is achieved through oversight and scrutiny of performance after the event (Ibid). The distinction is important because it underscores, in the words of Goetz and Jenkins (2005:12), “the degree to which the frequency of scrutiny, and therefor the frequency with which power-holders must engage in public reason-giving, affects the capacity of accountability systems to alter the incentives facing power-holders”.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that this study is not only about accountability, but about the construction or representation of accountability. More precisely, it is about the construction of accountability through the establishment of “a grammar of conduct and performance and the standards used to assess them” (Newell and Bellour 2002:2) as well as the ordering and ‘fixing’ of social relations within a discursively derived and legitimized framework. Thus, it is most fundamentally about power: the power to define accountability, and the power to enforce accountability. Whereas much of the analysis explicitly concerns the power relations between different actors and in what way accountability is defined and understood in order to affect and shape these relations, the assumption underlying the entire focus on diverging conceptualisations of accountability in different contexts revolves around a recognition of ‘the power of the power to define’. As described by Newell and Bellour:

“power is not embodied in actors, but manifests itself in social processes which construct some actors as the ‘natural’ bearers of power and others as the passive recipients of that power. It is these social processes, which define authority and legitimacy, that create the social roles of legitimate bearer of public power and passive citizen in whose name power is exercised.” (Newell and Bellour 2002:2)

Through the discursive creation of these roles, the project of conceptualising and defining accountability is therefor in itself a profound expression of power.

2.1.2 Different forms of accountability

As a development buzzword, accountability – along with for instance democracy - is often said to belong to that group of words characterized as ‘essentially contested concepts’. As Cornwall (2007:472) explains, “developments buzzwords gain their purchase and power through their vague and euphemistic qualities, their capacity to embrace a multitude of possible meanings, and their normative resonance”. One manifestation of this multitude of meanings and applications is its proneness to attract prefixes, signalling different forms of accountability. Burnell (2008c:11) mentions a few: legal, political, administrative, financial, managerial, parliamentary, moral, market, societal, and even heavenly. And more could easily be added – for example, governmental, organisational, fiscal, public,

functional, corporate – without exhausting the nearly infinite list of versions, forms and types⁸. While practically all of these carry some relevance to the development context, the focus in this study is a much narrower one. There are three forms of accountability that constitutes the analytical core of this analysis – domestic, democratic, and external. They do so first and foremost because they are at the centre of donor notions of, and the current controversies surrounding, accountability in the two contexts studied. However, because of the terminological flux of the field, different terms are frequently used to signify similar meanings, functions, and ideas. In order to avoid terminological confusion and enhance the analytical clarity of the study, the three terms presented here are used as consistently as possible, even in those cases where there might exist synonyms that would do an equally good job of conveying the intended message.

In terms of the principal-agent model⁹, the three forms of accountability focused upon here differ primarily with regard to the nature of the principal. What they share, however, is the character of the agent. Hence, the target of claims of accountability, in all three forms, is ‘the state’ or government, or more precisely; the executive along with the departments and ministries (such as departments of finance and foreign ministries), as well as agencies and implementing organs (in this context primarily donor agencies such as Sida or DFID) over which it exercise control. Hence, *the overarching and sole focus in this study is on what is usually termed public or political accountability*¹⁰.

The concept of *domestic accountability* is frequently used in democracy assistance and aid circles and concerns the relation between the state and the people/citizens over which it governs. It concerns state-citizen relations both in the donor and in the recipient country. The OECD-DAC Network on Governance (GOVNET) defines domestic accountability as “the ability of citizens to hold the state answerable for its actions, and ultimately to impose sanctions for poor performance” (Hudson 2009:1). A further distinction can here be made between the legal and constitutional mechanisms of domestic accountability on the one side (exemplified by most of the vertical and horizontal mechanisms mentioned above), and what is usually referred to as ‘societal accountability’ on the other¹¹. Societal accountability is, in the view of the World Bank for example, an approach “in which it is ordinary citizens and/or civil society organisations [who] participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability” (cited in Eyben

⁸ See Lindberg (2009) for a thorough discussion on how these types can be understood in relation to each other.

⁹ Although not used in the remainder of the study, the principal-agent terminology admittedly has the benefit of terminological clarity. It is therefore used in this section to describe the three forms.

¹⁰ This should not be interpreted as a way of down-playing the importance of holding other power-holders to account. The issue of for instance NGO- or corporate accountability is extremely relevant to all of the three forms focused upon here. They are nonetheless beyond the scope of this study.

¹¹ International IDEA, for example, refers to this distinction as one between “political accountability” and “social accountability” (Jelmin 2012:6). It captures the same idea as the one forwarded here.

2008:12). Among varying ideas of the role of civil society in relation to state accountability, this concept includes the common notion in the development discourse of civil society as a ‘watchdog’ of the state. Importantly, domestic accountability concerns accountability relations *within* the political entity of the state, and is thus premised on the idea of state sovereignty and the presence of a certain degree of self-determination that comes with it.

External accountability, on the other hand, signifies the extent to which a state is accountable to principals outside the state itself; in this context mainly to bilateral donors and donor governments. Although not preferred by donors themselves, in academic and NGO literature this accountability relation is often referred to in terms of ‘upwards’ (towards bilateral donors or multilateral institutions) and ‘downwards’ (towards beneficiaries) accountability. The mechanisms and operations of external accountability is fundamentally different from those of domestic accountability because it involves relations between two sovereign states, with the legal and social contracts that underpins and regulates intra-state interactions consequently absent or at least very different. This puts the power relations embedded in the aid relationship at the centre, with serious implications for the possibilities of creating (the popularly enshrined) ‘partnerships’ between donors and recipient countries. Furthermore, external accountability has received much attention in the aid literature because of its potentially circumscribing effects on the scope for domestic accountability in recipient countries.

Exactly what characterises *democratic accountability* is contested in the literature. To the extent that democracy is (and indeed has been historically) premised on the nation state and the idea of sovereignty, democratic accountability clearly necessitates domestic accountability. Democratic accountability can thus be seen as a special case or specification of domestic accountability, with the latter as a necessary but not sufficient condition for the former. As the further specifications needed clearly revolves around the identity, nature and role of the principal, with the most basic view being that democratic accountability is when ‘the principal is the people’, Burnell (2012:274-5; 2008c:11) offers two additional criteria: First, accountability to the expressed wishes of the whole demos – rather than one part, and second, democratic accountability is effected by instruments that are themselves democratically mandated, embody or respect democratic principles – for example acceptance of the rule of law.

These are deliberately simplistic presentations of the three forms of accountability. The point here is not to exhaust the potential meanings and understandings of these forms, but to provide a framework within which different notions and interpretations - constructions - of accountability can be analysed. Hence, as different interpretations of these basic forms are all present in the context of development aid, it is important to understand what happens when those co-existing and competing *notions* of accountability pull in different directions.

2.2 Setting the contexts

2.2.1 The aid relationship and the aid effectiveness paradigm

Towards the end of the 1990s the aid community faced a number of issues and problems that seemed to impede the impact of development aid. It was recognised that the highly fragmented and complex nature of the aid system, with a breathtaking number of actors, vast array of approaches, modalities, strategies, and agreements, put a huge administrative burden on the recipient countries (Horner et al. 2009:3). Simultaneously, there was increasing attention to the detrimental effects of externally defined priorities and conditionalities on the efficiency of aid, along with recognition of the failure of structural adjustment and the Washington consensus to yield substantial progress in socioeconomic development and poverty reduction (Ibid). Joseph Stiglitz wrote an obituary in 2004: “If there is a consensus today about what strategies are most likely to promote the development of the poorest countries in the world, it is this: there is no consensus except that the Washington consensus did not provide the answer” (Stiglitz 2004). What did seem to provide the answer was the construction of a new ‘aid architecture’, built on a reconfiguration of aid relationships and firmly focused on effective aid delivery. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, signed in 2005, became the foundation stone of this new effectiveness paradigm, emphasising reinforced ‘leadership’ by recipient countries (now termed ‘partners’), and backed by the five principles of ownership, alignment, harmonisation, management for results, and mutual accountability (Meyer and Schulz 2008:4; OECD 2005). Additional High Level Forums (HLF) were held in Accra in 2008 and in Busan in 2011¹², further establishing the agenda set in Paris.

While the Paris Declaration and the subsequent HLFs form the basis of what is here referred to as the aid effectiveness paradigm, the paradigm itself is much wider than this. It encompasses the international development community’s continuous efforts to implement, monitor and elaborate the Paris principles, it is embodied in the current emphasis on specific modalities of aid planning and delivery, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and General Budget Support, and encompasses broader international agreements such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Horner et al. 2009:5; Rocha Menocal and Rogerson 2006:4). Generally speaking, the influence of the agenda on the way development assistance is done and thought about can hardly be overstated. It has affected the behaviour and thinking of both donors and recipients, as well as the relation between them, and is arguably “the best summary we have on the lessons of a half-century of experience in trying to achieve good results and avoid doing harm with aid” (Booth 2008). That being said, it should be noted that there

¹² As the results and implications of the Busan meeting has yet to be seen, both in policy production and in practise, it is not included and reflected in this study.

is anything but consensus around how to interpret and value its central principles, messages, rationale and implications. Harsh critiques are frequent concerning both the effectiveness and appropriateness, of the entire project as well as some of its central parts. And widespread concern and uncertainty persist around the commitment of both recipients and donors on crucial points of the agenda.

Regarding the issue of accountability in this context, both the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) emphasises the importance of accountability for development results and poverty reduction (see for example: AAA paragraph 22). The virtue of accountability is to some extent embedded in, and serves as an overarching issue of, all the five principles. According to the Paris Declaration, effective aid requires: ownership (recipient government ownership of the policies they are implementing); alignment (donors aligning their own policies and resources in relation to these); harmonisation (donors harmonising their procedures and strategies with each other); management for results (a mutual focus on time-bound and measurable results); and mutual accountability (donors and recipients being accountable to each other and to their own constituents for the use of resources and for securing results) (OECD 2005; Eyben 2008:7). However, most debates on accountability in the aid effectiveness agenda have revolved around the principles of ownership and mutual accountability. Regarding ownership, the issue mainly concerns the question of 'ownership by whom'. It is widely asserted that for ownership to lead to effective results it needs to be conceived as ownership beyond the executive, which presupposes mechanisms of domestic accountability. Various versions have been voiced concerning the 'quality of ownership', arguing for, for example, ownership by the people (Lekvall 2011), democratic ownership (Eyben 2010), and 'ownership with adjectives' (Meyer and Schulz 2008).

Mutual accountability, being the principle explicitly stating the role of accountabilities in the aid relationship, is also regarded as the least developed principle of the agenda (Horner et al. 2009). While it does state the importance of both domestic and mutual accountability, exactly how the synergies between the two can and should work remain unclear (Domingo et al. 2009), as well as to what extent a focus on mutual accountability within the broader framework of the agenda can limit the harmful effects of external accountability (Mkandawire 2010). Related to these critiques, and highly relevant to the role of accountability, is the problem of what some have seen as the political correctness of the agenda, leaving it unable to handle issues of politics and power (Hydén 2008; Booth 2008; Meyer and Schulz 2008). Hence, it is argued, that while the mutual accountability mechanism exists in theory, it is wholly ineffective as long as it fails to engage with the power inequalities of the aid relationship, rendering the donors persistently with the upper hand (Hydén 2008:269; Burnell 2012:277).

The aid effectiveness paradigm forms the main framework within which aid relations are managed, interpreted, and manifested. The relationships formed in the aid context is simultaneously the stage upon which the concepts and principles of the effectiveness agenda is applied and acted out. How the notion of accountability is constructed and interpreted in this context will consequently be a product of the point of intersection of the relationship as such and the conceptual

framework in which it is understood. Furthermore, while the presentation here have focused on the agenda itself, it is important to note that since we are here concerned with the *donor* conceptualisation of accountability, the focus in the analysis is on donor interpretations, not the agenda itself.

2.2.2 Democracy assistance

As what seemed as a profound trend of political change towards democracy spread across large parts of the world from the mid 1970s to the early 1990s - coined by Huntington (1991) as ‘the third wave of democratization’ - the idea that donors might explicitly seek to drive or facilitate democratic transitions began to gain support. The result was that by the early 1990s democracy assistance was a key element of development policy in the US, Canada, and much of Europe (Foresti et al. 2011:7). While definitional matters are notoriously difficult - because of the various models of categorization and labelling used by different donors¹³ - and estimations of spending are restrained by data limitations, it is widely recognized that democracy assistance now constitutes a substantive and integral part the development assistance agenda (Burnell 2008a; 2008b; Yilmaz 2009:96; Rakner et al 2007:1).

The European donors have since the turn of the century increased spending on assistance to political reform and democratization incrementally, with leading donors being the UK (now the biggest spender in this area), Germany, and the Scandinavian countries¹⁴ (Youngs 2008:161). These donors have engaged in a variety of activates. While the early years were dominated by support to electoral processes, and the 1990s saw the emphasis shift towards institutional reforms such as constitution building, judiciary reform, and promotion of the rule of law, the more recent focus has been on the strengthening of civil society and the media as well as deepened engagement in what is generally termed ‘voice and accountability’ (V&A) (Foresti et al. 2011:8). The latter trend has, among other things, spurred increased attention to the previously neglected issue of the role of parliaments and political parties in democratisation.

Despite the seemingly diverse nature of donor engagements in democracy assistance, actors within the field have been heavily criticised for the lack of attention to local contexts and for the tendency to apply a one-size-fits-all strategy to democratisation. Carothers (2002), for example, in his influential critique of ‘the transition paradigm’, argues that donor support to democracy have been

¹³ For example, what is here referred to as democracy assistance is categorized by DFID as support to “governance”, by Sida as ‘democratic governance and human rights’, and by Danida as ‘good governance’.

¹⁴ Sida, for instance, is currently the biggest provider of democracy assistance in relative terms, spending 28% of the total disbursements on the sector of Democratic Governance and Human Rights in 2011, making it the best funded sector of Swedish development assistance (Sida 2012:20).

based on a single analytical framework that is essentially flawed by way of ignoring the context-specific and highly dynamic nature of the process of democratisation. Although, since then, the field has admittedly gone through a process of diversification and strategic differentiation (Carothers 2009), stubborn criticisms remain about the failure to engage with local political realities (Unsworth 2009) and a tendency to rely on unrealistic models of governance derived from the OECD experience, consequently ignoring much of the informal structures that underpin political systems in recipient countries (IDS 2010).

There are two important distinctions that characterize much of the debates on democracy assistance. On the one hand, democracy assistance constitutes one specific form of the much wider field of activities usually referred to as democracy promotion; including such instruments as diplomatic pressure¹⁵, trade policy, sanctions, and even military force. In the wake of the US response to 9/11 and what has come to be known as ‘regime change’, as well as the resentment of democracy by major political actors around the world (read; Putin’s Russia), there has been a rising debate suggesting a current ‘backlash against democracy promotion’ (Carothers 2006, 2010; Gershman and Allen 2006). As Burnell (2008a) observes, although not constituting a serious logical challenge to the claims to legitimacy of democracy assistance, these events “have made it possible for democracy promotion *tout court* to attract condemnation by association”. On the other hand, democracy assistance must be recognized as constituting only one aspect of the broader agenda within development aid to support ‘good governance’ (Rakner et al. 2007:1). This is important because, as will be explored below, despite the tendency among donors to assume that ‘all good things go together’, not all aspects even within this particular field are all that easily combined.

The most prominent, and inconclusive, debate on democracy assistance concerns its benefits and effectiveness; of democracy as a goal in itself and its relation to socioeconomic development. In terms of the ‘why’ question, besides being considered as a good in itself, and whatever faith one might have in the ‘democratic peace’ thesis (Kegley Jr. and Hermann 2002:15), most arguments revolve around the instrumental and/or inherent role of democracy in development. Sen’s (1999) ‘development as freedom’ paradigm and his assertion that countries should not become ‘fit for democracy’ but ‘fit through democracy’ (UNDP 2002:63) have been highly influential in this respect. The Human Development Report 2002 was for instance all about establishing the Senian links, and a number of donors, including Sida and DFID, have taken these ideas on board wholeheartedly, through adopting ‘rights-based approaches’ and ‘multidimensional views of poverty’ (see Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010:8). Meanwhile, the larger debates over the comparative economic performance of

¹⁵ General diplomatic relations between donor and recipient countries are of course highly important for development cooperation and democracy assistance, and much development cooperation strategy work, programing and implementation involves and depend on intensive diplomatic dialogue between donor and recipient countries.

democratic and authoritarian regimes remain unresolved (Burnell 2008b:415; Johnson 2002; Leftwich 2005).

The evidence on general impacts and effectiveness of democracy assistance is also limited and inconclusive. This is partly stemming from the challenge, and on-going debate, concerning how to design effective methods for evaluating these programs (Crawford 2003a, 2003b; Burnell 2007). Hence, despite the maturation of the field as an important development area, research on the impact of this assistance and the effectiveness of different types of programming has been limited (Green and Kohl 2007:152). Hence, while there is a growing recognition among donors concerning the limits of external support, that “the impetus for democratisation must come from within” (Rakner et al. 2007:47), there is an equally apparent need for more “robust understanding of what works” (Foresti et al 2011:10). Fundamental to this need is the lack of understanding of the conceptual underpinnings of democracy assistance.

Having introduced the key concept of accountability as well as presented the main themes and debates in the two contexts separately, we turn now to their point of intersection.

2.3 Exploring the links

Considering issues of accountability in relation to aid highlights two analytically different aspects in which the two concepts interrelate, and can be analysed. On the one side, there are the conscious efforts of donors and (in the language of the contemporary aid discourse) their development cooperation partners to support certain mechanisms and relations of accountability in the recipient country, through, for instance, democracy assistance or good governance interventions. On the other side, we must recognize the accountability relations constructed and sustained in the aid relationship as such. Regardless of whether the contributions within a certain development cooperation has the explicit (or implicit) aim of affecting accountability, the relation between the donor and recipient country are affected, shaped and governed by a number of lines of accountability; between different actors and through a range of mechanisms. The donor/recipient relation, and the character of the development cooperation between these two, is of course affected by the degree to which the government of one is accountable to that of the other, but also, for instance, by the accountability of both governments to their respective domestic constituencies.

The most commonly adopted approach to analyse these two aspects is to focus on one or the other, by investigating for example the effectiveness of different forms of accountability assistance in achieving democratization or socioeconomic development, or the effects of, for instance, lack of donor accountability towards the intended beneficiaries in recipient countries. As important and insightful as these approaches are – indeed attention shall be paid to each of these aspects in the analysis – we must also recognize that the two to some extent affect and

influence each other. Simply put, for accountability assistance to be effective, account needs to be taken to the nature of the accountabilities embedded in the donor/recipient relation. It is this idea that is underlying the current focus on accountability in the aid effectiveness discourse. According to the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA):

“Transparency and accountability are essential elements for development results. They lie at the heart of the Paris Declaration, in which we agreed that countries and donors would become more accountable to each other and to their citizens”. (Accra Agenda for Action, paragraph 24)

Since different lines of accountabilities underpin and are inherent to the aid relationship, the configuration and management of these are essential for the prospects of achieving effective aid, and consequently reaching the stated objectives of such aid. Through the conscious efforts within the aid community to enhance aid effectiveness by managing relations of accountability, the two aspects of accountability in aid are clearly connected.

Consider for instance the requirements on democratically elected donor governments to be accountable to the domestic constituencies in their own countries. The use of ‘tax payer’s money’ for the purpose of foreign aid creates a great incentive for donor governments to hold recipient country governments to account for the management and implementation of those means. Subsequently, recipient countries become externally accountable to donors for the use of received aid. This is necessary, it is argued, for aid to be effective in the sense of ending up where it is supposed to. At the same time, however, domestic accountability within the recipient country is equally considered important in order to reduce the risk of for example corruption. Furthermore, as a result of the aid effectiveness discourse, the aid modality of preference among donors is that of budget support - in the name of recipient country ‘ownership’ and ‘alignment’ - which creates a further need for domestic accountability in order for aid to benefit and have an impact on the ‘lives of the poor’. However, it is now commonly argued that many aid-dependent countries are *more* externally accountable to donors than they are domestically accountable to the citizens of their own country, and that there might be a causal relation between these two processes of accountability (Goetz and Jenkins 2005:10; Moncrieffe 1998:400; Lekvall 2011:5; Mkandawire 2010; Adibe 2010). The OECD-DAC mentions this potential trade-off between the objectives of accountability assistance and the accountability relations created by aid itself:

“Aid can contribute to building the capacity of key accountability institutions such as parliaments and civil society organisations, but it can also make governments more accountable to donors than to their own citizens – thereby limiting the scope for domestic accountability” (OECD-DAC GOVNET “Improving support to domestic accountability”)

While outward accountability to donors is considered important for aid to be effective, so is domestic accountability. And there might be a tension between the two. This is of course particularly problematic for aid that has the explicit objective of promoting domestic (or indeed democratic) accountability because it

runs the risk of undermining both this very objective and the secondary objective of aid effectiveness.

From the point of view of democracy assistance then, accountability is essential both as an end in itself because it is inherent to democracy, and as a means to that end because it enhances aid effectiveness (which is required to reach the objective of democratization). And in fact, the connections between aid effectiveness and democracy assistance also work in the opposite direction. Hence, many donors view democratic institutions and processes not only as valuable in themselves, but also as the best means of ensuring that executives manage aid budgets effectively (Horner and Power et al. 2009:6). Swedish democracy assistance is for example premised on this view: “democratisation is not only a goal in itself but also a means of increasing goal achievement and enhancing aid effectiveness” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008:14; see also DFID 2007). Regardless of whether donors adhere to this view or not, since democracy assistance is a significant part of the broader development assistance agenda, the ideas on how to make this agenda more effective as a whole is bound to influence and have implications on ideas and practise within this particular domain as well. Indeed, as will be explored below, the specific donor understanding of the accountabilities in the aid relation and the way these are framed in the aid effectiveness discourse might have implications for the prospects of achieving the objectives of democracy assistance. That is, the conflation of the two notions raises questions of *effectiveness*.

In this context, as far as we are here concerned with explicit attempts to further mechanisms of accountability, it is important to recognize that while democracy assistance and the aid effectiveness agenda share a concern with accountability they do so for (partly) different reasons. Promoting accountability for the sake of aid effectiveness and doing so with the purpose of spurring democratization are fundamentally different things, even if they might be causally connected. In fact, despite the heavy emphasis on domestic and mutual accountability in the current framework for aid effectiveness, nowhere does the Paris Declaration mention the word democracy or democratic accountability. The Accra Agenda for Action does so once – in order to exemplify that “aid is only one part of the development picture” (Accra Agenda for Action, paragraph 3). What then does accountability mean in the context of aid effectiveness? And how does it relate to, or reconcile with, democracy and the demands of democratic accountability? In order to find out, attention must be paid to the power-infused relations and accountabilities underpinning the aid relationship.

At this juncture of the two contexts, a parallel might be drawn to what some commentators have characterized as one of the key issues in current debates on accountability, which involves the potential tension between two different notions of accountability. On the one side is the demands of a technocratic view of accountability, that emphasises performance, efficiency, and proper accounting for public resources, and on the other side is the necessities of democracy, which stresses processes and political accountability. (Mkandawire 2010:1156). The notion of accountability underpinning the aid effectiveness discourse at first glance appears to come closer to the former than the latter. Indeed, historically

this tendency among donors to lean towards a technocratic interpretation of accountability has been most vigorously manifested through the emphasis on governance and particularly ‘good governance’ rather than democracy, underpinned by the persuasion of key actors that the Washington Consensus was the ‘only game in town’ (Ibid: 1159; Abrahamsen 2000). In such a view, effectiveness and the persistent application of a predetermined notion of ‘good policies’ is the main virtue – foreclosing any value of contestation, disputes, and deliberation. The Spartan certainty about the right (and only) way to go makes sense, one might argue, until questions are asked about what constitutes ‘good policies’, and who makes them (Ibid). And it does, in any case, fall very far from the value placed on those characteristics – debate, contestation, deliberation - in democratic theory. Hence, this strategy within (parts of) the aid community largely collided with the deliberative nature of policy-making in democracies and produced what have variously been labelled ‘choiceless democracies’, ‘low-intensity democracies’ or ‘illiberal democracies’ – suggesting severe limitations on the political accountability and sovereignty of new democracies (Mkandawire 2010:1161).

More recently, bilateral donors have faced stubborn criticisms for failing to recognize the inherently political nature of aid contributions to the sector of governance and democracy. One recent review of the links between democracy and aid concludes that donors:

“tends to downplay the overtly political nature of democracy support. Strengthening democratic institutions and processes ultimately involves a redistribution of power. Donors have developed tools for understanding the political structures that influence development outcomes, but have generally failed to apply them to the arena of democracy support, tending instead to treat democracy building as a technical process”. (Horner et al. 2009:28)

This echoes the earlier point about the two notions of accountability activated in the general aid context, with a frequent tendency among donors to downplay the complex, ‘messy’, and necessarily political requirements of a democratic view of accountability. Rather, accountability in this view takes on an ambiguous character that, with the requirements of financial probity and efficient allocation stemming from the accountabilities inherent to the donor/recipient relation, in the recipient country often results in “the substitution of accounting for accountability” (Mkandawire 2010:1156), in turn raising questions concerning the *consistency* and *reciprocity* of the donor approach to accountability.

This at the very least highlights the need to seriously consider what value is subscribed to democracy and how the specific form of democratic accountability is defined, most importantly in contrast to the related concept of domestic accountability. Furthermore, the implications of these notions of accountability on the prospects for achieving a certain form of governance, as well as their consistency with each other and the adopted objectives, must be carefully analysed. If we follow for example Koeble and Lipuma (2008) and recognize that democracy must to some extent be measured and evaluated based on the extent to which governance conforms to the visions of democracy worked out by the

governed, then supporting the formation of these visions must be considered an essential part of democracy assistance. This would most probably require an appreciation of politics. In the case of Africa, for instance, some have seen a technocratization of politics and accountability as largely pursued by the international aid community – underpinned and reinforced by a predetermined ‘good policy’ agenda and an analytical lens that views African politics mainly as patterns of neo-patrimonialism (Olukoshi 2011:16). As a result, a troubling question has been posed: “How would Africa be able to build democratic governance if either we emptied politics out of policy or considered politics to be a problem, an obstacle?” (Ibid). Indeed it would not. Considering the central role of the concept of accountability to such discursive endeavours as the exclusion of politics and the construction and fixing of power relations and social positions, a critical understanding of the interaction between different notions and forms of this concept seems rather essential.

In order to understand these interactions, questions must first be asked of how accountability is conceptualised in respective context, what normative models and ideals these understandings serve, and what practices and power configurations they legitimise. At the very core of these issues is the realisation of the power of conceptualisation, the power to define, and the impact that the fixing and reduction of meanings have on the scope of imagination and social action. This is the premise of what is here referred to as a ‘critical approach to accountability’. Before turning to the analysis, it needs elaboration.

3 Theory and Methodology

What I have so far referred to as ‘a critical approach to accountability’ could more specifically (and correctly) be formulated as ‘a critical social constructionist approach to the analysis of discourses of accountability’. This approach contains three fundamental characteristics and components: that it aims at producing *critical* research, that it is based on the ontological and epistemological assumptions and ideas embedded in *social constructionism*, and that it is centred around the idea that different notions of accountability must be analysed as, and understood in terms of, *the construction of systems of meanings through the formation of, and struggle between, specific discourses*. I will expand on what I mean by critical research later in this chapter, and start here by considering some of the ontological and epistemological assumptions inherent to the theory of social constructionism and the focus on the discursive construction of meaning. The methodological implications and considerations stemming from this theoretical approach is considered and explained in the second section.

3.1 Social constructionism and accountability as discourse

While social constructionism is a broad strand of thought within the social sciences, the particular version that underpins this study draws upon those theories and theorists that place the analysis of discourses at the centre of social research. The focus of the following discussion is consequently mainly on those aspects of social constructionism that stem from this fundamental concern. First, social constructionism rests on two premises that distinguish it from other theories in social science. Jørgensen and Philips (2002:5-6) labels these as 1) a critical approach to taken-for-granted-knowledge, and 2) historical and cultural specificity. The first premise can be reformulated as to capture the *constitutive* character of the approach. This claim, that knowledge can not be taken for granted, or treated as objective truth, stems from the view that ‘reality’ is only accessible to us through categories, which means that our knowledge and representations of the world are not reflections of the reality ‘out there’ but rather products of our ways of categorising the world (Ibid). Hence, theories and the knowledge they produce actually help construct the world; through the use of language and concepts these categorisations are not descriptive or explanatory but constitutive of ‘reality’ or the world (Smith and Owens 2005:272). The second

premise concerns the *anti-foundational* nature of the theory. This means that since human action, and our views of and knowledge about the world, are historically and culturally specific and contingent, there is no solid meta-theoretical base or position that transcends this contingency and against which truth claims can be judged (Jørgensen and Philips 2002:5).

In this model, the ‘ways of categorising the world’ referred to above constitutes discourses. In the words of Eriksson Baaz (2005:11), a discourse can in turn be defined as “a historically, socially and institutionally specific structure of representations or articulations through which meanings are constructed and social practises organized”¹⁶. Most fundamentally, discourse is about the production of meaning – the fixation of a certain meaning through the reduction or exclusion of other possible meanings (Ibid). It is, thus, a reduction of possibilities. However, these fixations are never permanent or finished, but merely temporary and partial closures of meaning. Language, seen as a system of signs that acquire their meaning in relation to other signs, is key here. As it is through language and language use that we position signs in different relations to one another so that they acquire new meanings, and our knowledge, and, consequently, the arrangement of these signs, the concrete fixations, is always contingent; possible but not necessary, the fixations can never be complete (Jørgensen and Philips 2002:25). And, as Laclau and Mouffe (1985:81) asserts, “[t]he impossibility of an ultimate fixity of meaning implies that there have to be partial fixations – otherwise, the very flow of differences would be impossible.” Every attempt at structuring meanings, that is, every discourse, is therefor only a partial fixation of meanings; the relationship between the signs is never completely fixed. This, in turn, gives rise to the crucial notion that discourses are never closed or complete entities, but rather, they are open ended and incomplete. They are therefor also constantly being transformed through contact with other discourses – representing other ways of talking about, representing, and understanding the social world – through a form of discursive struggle with the aim of achieving hegemony or, in other words, the dominance of one particular perspective (Jørgensen and Philips 2002:7).

The constant attempts to partially fix the meanings within a particular social context, “to arrest the flow of differences”, or “to construct a centre”, is based around certain “privileged discursive points”, referred to as nodal points (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:82). It is in relation to the nodal point that other signs are ordered and acquire their meaning. ‘Democracy’, for instance, is a nodal point in political discourses, just as ‘development’ is a nodal point in the aid discourse. The point here is that once a certain sign is placed in a different discourse, surrounded by different signs, it changes its meaning. Development is a good example. Any student of development ever confronted with the question ‘so what do you study?’ has surely been reminded of the hopeless inadequacy of the reply:

¹⁶ The view of discourse presented here and adhered to in the analysis draws on Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) discourse theory. Eriksson Baaz’s definition, however, captures the essence of this theory while avoiding some of the more theory-specific terms and concepts.

'development studies'. 'Development' means completely different things depending on what other words it is related to, what system of meanings it is placed in. And at the same time these meanings are only partially fixed. As the development discourse (as in relation to the signs 'poverty reduction' and 'Bono') is a good example of, there is a constant struggle over the inclusion and exclusion of possible meanings and articulations. The open-ended and overlapping nature of different discourses allows for new signs to be incorporated and fixed with a new meaning. In this process some fixations of meaning become so entrenched and conventionalized that we eventually think of them as natural – we take them and their meaning for granted. In the development discourse, the word 'development' itself is a case in point. As Rist argues, for instance, development has become a "modern shibboleth, an unavoidable password" which has come to be used "to convey the idea that tomorrow things will be better, or that more is necessarily better" (cited in Cornwall 2007:471). This – the taken-for-granted quality of the word – has in turn led to that much of what is actually done in its name is left unquestioned (Ibid). Another prominent feature of the development discourse has been the incorporations of 'alternatives' into the mainstream. When a specific meaning of and approach to development *has* been questioned and challenged by, for example 'bottom-up' approaches or the inclusion of gender, they have often 'succeeded' in the sense of being adopted by the mainstream discourse. The problem, as Kothari (2002:51) contends, is that they in the process become watered down: "The ideas are transformed and disseminated through policy and practise in ways that often make their radical origins unrecognizable, and they are implemented in ways that reinforce rather than challenge the orthodoxy". This has led some commentators (such as Pieterse) to conclude that there is no alternative development paradigm, no simple dichotomies between mainstream and alternative, modern and antimodern (Kothari and Minogue 2002:9).

Importantly, then, the specific meaning of a word such as accountability cannot be taken for granted. As it has been incorporated into different contexts, acquiring status of a buzzword, it serves to "cover, conceal, and mask disparate meanings and realities" and "stamps an imprimatur of legitimacy on a whole range of activities on the assumption that agents, processes, and structures are being held to account" (Weisband and Ebrahim 2007:14). If we want to reveal the disparate meanings of accountability – explore and challenge the taken-for-granted views that, for instance, 'more is necessarily better' or that 'all good things go together', no matter the definition – we must pay attention to the process of the fixation of meaning based on its contextual specificity. For, in Cornwall's words (2007:473), the apparent universality of the term masks the locality of its origin. In other words, we construct 'objectivity' through the discursive production of meaning. But as we have seen, objectivity is nothing but hegemony; the dominance of a particular, yet incomplete and partial, possible but not necessary, perspective.

It is important to note here that conceptualizing accountability as discourse does not mean that accountability has no ‘effects’, is not ‘real’, or that there is nothing outside discourse¹⁷. As Laclau and Mouffe (1985:78) emphasise, “[t]he fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought”. Rather, the claim is that our access to these objects (which certainly exist) is always mediated through certain discursive systems of meaning. Hence, the discursive is intimately connected to the social, and consequently to practise and social action. Contrary to the claims of some criticisms of discourse theory, a central idea here is that discourses are institutionalized and materialized through practices (Eriksson Baaz 2005:13). Therefor, understanding and analysing the discursive representations of accountability (or development) entails not only an examination of what specific meanings are subscribed to this concept in specific contexts, but also how these representations make various courses of action possible, and others impossible. As Eriksson Bazz (Ibid) put it, it entails:

“an acknowledgement that social practices are *meaningful*, that practices are constituted within different discourses, and, therefor that all social practices have a discursive aspect. Just as discourses define and restrict the ways in which a phenomenon can be understood, so they also define a certain type of practice”.

Viewing and analysing accountability as discourse thus entails what Weisband and Ebrahim (2007:16) has called a ‘skeptical approach to accountability’ and what is here labelled a ‘critical approach’, in which accountability is seen as a social phenomenon, the impacts of which is a result of relationships of power and interplays among actors, and the meaning and normative aspirations of which can not be taken for granted.

3.2 Qualitative text analysis and constructive deconstruction

The approach to accountability in this study is critical, in the sense of aiming to identify and unmask the taken-for-granted and to different degrees naturalised meanings and conceptualisations, as well as reveal the potential dissonance between these different meanings, of accountability.

The method applied for doing so is that of qualitative text analysis and deconstruction, drawing on the methodological implications of discourse theory and analysis as outlined above. In discourse analytical terms, deconstruction is a way to reveal the undecidability of a particular articulation; the deconstruction of structures that we take for granted (Jørgensen and Philips 2002:48). Sometimes

¹⁷ The same point is made by Eriksson Baaz (2005:12-13) regarding development as discourse.

termed constructive deconstruction this methodological approach is about the taking apart of different meanings acquired by a word as it has been incorporated in a particular discourse (Cornwall 2007:481). Further, by making evident the variant meanings that popular buzzwords carry, the process of constructive deconstruction can bring into view dissonance between these meanings and reveal ideological differences concealed by them (Ibid). This is done by critically analysing primary material as well as reviewing and incorporating secondary material from a range of sources. In this process close attention must be paid to words, and their relation to other words. However, in order to understand the conceptualisation of accountability in the two contexts, not only textual articulation is of relevance. Other discursive expressions, such as the setting up of a project with a specific emphasis, or the lack of attention to a certain line of accountability, might also reveal something about the meaning and value attached to the notion of accountability.

The primary material analysed consists mainly of public documents in the form of policies, strategy statements, concept papers, and general public information provided by the analysed donors (with a few exceptions publicly available online). A great deal of secondary material is also used, mainly in the form of independent evaluations, literature reviews, and research reports. Many of these have been commissioned by the donors themselves (or joint with each other) and conducted by independent researchers, institutes and think tanks, such as ODI, IDS, International IDEA, and FRIDE. Additionally, these research bodies constitute a rich source of general research and knowledge on these issues, which is also used in the analysis. Scholarly literature, although relatively limited, perhaps partly because of the rapid changes in the field, have been applied when relevant. Although not particularly apparent in the analysis itself, documents provided by the OECD-DAC have been of great value, particularly concerning the aid effectiveness paradigm, for understanding the context.

It is important to be explicit about the limits and possibilities of this kind of analysis. First of all, it is not the intention here either to evaluate the effectiveness of donor approaches to accountability, or to compare the stated views to that of actual behaviour. Strictly speaking, the textual analysis does not reveal anything about the degree to which donors actually adhere to the views conveyed in the documents. However, to the extent that the official documents state an organisational vision or policy, it seems reasonable to assume that it is also being (partly) implemented¹⁸. Further, the inclusion of a number of comprehensive independent evaluations and reviews, as well as other secondary material on donor views and behaviour on these issues complement and supports the conclusions drawn from the primary material. Admittedly, the mere speed with which the development aid discourse changes, donors produce and redefine policies, and takes on board new approaches and ideas runs the risk of, both

¹⁸ As it happens, the pressure on donors to be accountable to various actors (which will be explained below) have probably strengthened the links between policy and implementation, as well as the sheer availability of key documents related to development assistance.

making the present policies poorly anchored in the organisation, and rendering this study ‘old’ very fast. However, this is a general fact, and a problem shared widely within the field. As a member of Sida’s policy department commented: “Writing about policies in Sida is like running after a speeding train” (Cornwall 2009:19).

The donors selected as the main focus of the study are Sida, Danida, and DFID. Among these, Sida receives the most attention, primarily because of my own familiarity and access to this particular organisation as well as what seems as a spectacular proneness to adhering to trends and fads within the wider development discourse. All three were selected in capacity of being widely considered as some of the most progressive and receptive donors within the OECD in respect to taking on-board new and ‘buzzing’ ideas and flows of thought from the development discourse. Moreover, they are all extensively engaged in democracy assistance and active in the work on the Paris agenda and aid effectiveness. When applicable, reference is made to other OECD donors. While wider generalisations are possible on some points, such as when drawing on findings provided by studies of other donors, it must be acknowledged that there are in some aspects quite fundamental differences between donors, even within the OECD. This said, the Scandinavian countries are often considered ‘like minded’, and the differences regarding most aspects covered here are generally rather small.

Lastly, it must be emphasised that the interpretations and readings of the material, as well as the conclusions drawn, are inevitably coloured by my own subjective position in a very specific cultural and historical context. Indeed, the study is limited to a certain extent as it is a product much of the same discursive context as that which it aims to criticise. The flip side, then, would perhaps be, at best, that of indirect introspection. Perhaps, constructive deconstruction as sceptical self-reflexivity.

4 Analysis

The analysis is comprised of three parts. The first two consists of a critical analysis and deconstruction of the donor notion of accountability in the aid relation and the aid effectiveness paradigm, and democracy assistance respectively, thus addressing the first research question. The third part then turns to the second question by relating the two notions to each other and exploring the implications of this interaction, based on the two standards of effectiveness and consistency.

4.1 Accountability in the aid relationship

Who is accountable to whom in development aid? Viewing the aid relationship from the perspective of accountabilities between different actors reveals a truly complex and messy picture. To get an initial sense of the thorny terrain, and grasp the ethical and practical issues that surround the concept of accountability in aid relations, one might, as Leif Wenar suggests, view it from “the broadest moral perspective”. Morally, write Wenar:

”the fundamental relationship in international development is between the rich individuals who provide resources through taxes or private donations on the one side, and the poor individuals who are the intended beneficiaries of these resources on the other. Within this fundamental relationship responsibility is not accompanied by accountability. /.../ The power of any collection of poor people to penalize any collection of rich people for generating insufficient or ineffective development aid is virtually zero.”
(Wenar 2006:9)

And indeed, increasing accountability in this relation seems practically impossible. However, in official development assistance this fundamental (moral) relationship is mediated through a range of intermediary institutions, most importantly donor government aid agencies and recipient country governments, which link the rich with the poor. For the chain of accountability to be sustained, these institutions should be accountable either to the intended beneficiaries, or to those providing the money, or to both (Ibid). The fact that we are here dealing with an inter-state relation where both (sovereign) intermediaries are, at least in theory, accountable to their own respective constituencies adds a further twist to the accountability drama. Somewhat preceding the next chapter in this analysis, it seems fair to assert that “ensuring accountability is difficult enough if there is only one elected sovereign in a particular space”, and, as Mkandawire aptly points

out, "it becomes profoundly more complex when two sovereigns act upon the same space but are accountable to different constituencies and when the power of one of the two sovereigns is likely to impinge on the accountability of the other" (Mkandawire 2010:1149).

This implies not only that the issue of power is key but also that different accountabilities might affect and be in tension with each other. The fact that the aid relation and the configuration of accountabilities in this context, manifested through concepts such as 'partnership', 'ownership', and 'mutual accountability', is fundamentally about the exercise of power¹⁹ indicates that the initial question of 'who is accountable to whom' must be preceded by the question of 'who *is able* to hold whom to account'. Reconsidering Wenar's fundamental moral perspective, for instance, reveals that even as we insert the chain of intermediaries between the rich and the poor, "we find little power of accountability located at either end" (Wenar 2006:10). Particularly at the poor end – where the intended beneficiaries are arguably in the best position to evaluate the aid – people have practically no power to sanction anyone (Ibid). It is within this context of power-infested relations and positions that donors define their own roles and accountabilities, as well as coins the very concepts upon which these relations are built and valued.

This chapter engages the question concerning how accountability is understood and conceptualized in the context of the aid relationship and within the conceptual framework of the aid effectiveness paradigm. The first section explores the various lines of accountability activated in the context of aid as well as how donors perceive their own accountabilities in this setting. The second section then turns specifically to the aid effectiveness paradigm and the particular significance of the concepts of mutual accountability and ownership.

4.1.1 Lines of accountability in aid

While the above questions must provide the ultimate point of reference, since the preoccupation here is with the particular understanding of accountability adhered to by donors, a fruitful entry point is to consider whom donors generally consider themselves to be accountable to in this context. Eyben and Ferguson (2005) suggest there are five categories of institutions or persons that bilateral donors are more or less accountable to: taxpayers in the donor country, government in the donor country, government in the recipient country, poor people in the recipient country, and the international human rights framework. Conventionally, and in terms of accountability procedures, donors see taxpayers as the principal stakeholder to which they are accountable through the democratically elected government, via the responsible minister (Ibid:169-170). These links are practically inherent to and taken for granted in donor working procedures. It is considered important for the simple reason of maintaining popular support for

¹⁹ See for example Hydén (2008), Groves and Hinton (2005), Eriksson Baaz (2005).

development assistance. While it is also mentioned in the PD and the AAA as a part of the concept of mutual accountability, which emphasises that both donors and recipients should become more accountable to each other *and to their citizens* (AAA, paragraph 24), this part of the paragraph have frequently been interpreted as mainly directed at recipient country domestic accountability. Furthermore, the strong line of accountability among donors to their own constituencies reveals some tensions in the concept of mutual accountability. As donors are first and foremost accountable to their own constituents, if the preferences and interests among these are not aligned with the (other) principles of mutual accountability mechanisms, donor ability to implement agreed to commitments might be compromised (Domingo et al. 2009:25-26). In order to avoid this risk, a number of donors have taken steps to increase particularly parliamentary awareness of the principles of the aid effectiveness agenda, through for example, according to the OECD; providing a section on aid effectiveness in the annual report to parliament (Sweden and the UK), or specifically referring to the Paris targets when presenting the development cooperation budget to parliament (the Netherlands) (OECD 2008 quoted in Domingo et al. 2009:26). Besides displaying some of the tensions inherent in the principles of the aid effectiveness agenda when related to the concept and practise of accountability, these examples indicate how closely donors relate notions of accountability in the aid relation to the aid effectiveness paradigm.

As for the line of accountability to recipient governments, this link remains weak. However, since the late 90s there has been increasing attention to this particular relation among donors, with corresponding change of rhetoric's to that of 'partnership', implying a more equal relationship (Eyben and Ferguson 2005:177) (traditionally recipient governments have been overwhelmingly more accountable to donors than the other way around, giving rise to the issue of external accountability). The incentives for the introduction of the partnership discourse came from the realization that for aid to be effective the recipient country had to have a sense of 'ownership' of the policies they were supposed to implement. And with money from the outside and policy 'owned' by the recipient, it was necessary to introduce the idea of mutual accountability (Mkandawire 2010:1166). However, low commitment to this line of accountability among donors, coupled with a lack of enforceability among recipient governments, still renders this allegedly mutual relation essentially a one-way accountability relation, from recipients to donors. Consequently, the partnership terminology, although a sign of increased attention among donors to the importance of some degree of mutual responsibilities in this relation, tends to underplay the power inequalities inherent in the aid relationship.

To the extent that donors consider themselves accountable to beneficiaries in recipient countries, they generally regard this relation to be mediated through elected governments, which in turn is premised on a high level of domestic accountability in the recipient country (Eyben and Ferguson 2005:173). Where

this is not the case, which it generally is not in those countries in most desperate need for aid, donors are virtually unaccountable to the poor people they intend to affect²⁰. There is little mention of any need for donors to be directly accountable to intended beneficiaries in donor policies and strategies. However, the mediated link, that renders domestic accountability crucial, is emphasised, once again, with reference to its importance for ownership and mutual accountability. As Danida puts it, a possible synthesis is here seen between the objectives of democracy assistance and the strive for aid effectiveness:

“applying human rights and democratic principles to development will advance the implementation of the Paris Declaration and the AAA by building on experiences and approaches from these fields - *further anchoring the development process with the very people it aims to support*, especially with regard to ownership and mutual accountability”. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark 2009:20, emphasis added)

It is important to note that, while “anchoring the development process with the very people it aims to support” is considered important both for reasons of democratization and aid effectiveness, in the absence of any mentioning of donor accountability in the context of democracy assistance, whether this argument can be connected to the assumption that donors themselves should be accountable to these people rests entirely on the extent to which mutual accountability is actually mutual. And as mentioned above, this tends not to be the case. Demonstratively, in Sida’s elaboration on the synergies between the objective of democratization and the principles of aid effectiveness, although stressing the need for “democratic ownership” and “mutual responsibility and accountability”, the sole focus is on ‘partner’ country commitments (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010:32). Donor accountability to the poor does not seem to be prioritised for either of these ends.

Lastly, a review of seven (northern) European donors reveals that they all have some form of commitment to a rights-based approach or the mainstreaming of human rights in their development cooperation policies (O’Neil et al. 2007:16). In terms of establishing and managing accountabilities in the aid relationship this is an attractive approach among donors because it allows them to “stand up for the interests of the poor people without imposing their views and conditions on governments” (Eyben and Ferguson 2005:176). Danida is fairly explicit thus far: “Since the human rights framework (standards and institutions) is essentially a global accountability framework, donors and developing countries can use it to help develop concepts and practices of mutual accountability” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark 2009:20). However, it is clear that the adoption of rights-based approaches has not transformed aid relations by way of making donors more accountable, neither to recipient governments nor to the ‘rights-bearing’ intended beneficiaries in these countries. Rather, it seems donors – to

²⁰ The OECD- DAC also recognizes this fact. In an (unpublished) concept note drafted by the DAC on behalf of the Paris Declaration monitoring group in 2007 it is observed that direct accountability relations between donors and recipient country citizens are indeed ‘open to dispute’ (cited in Eyben 2008:11-12).

varying degrees – use the language of rights largely to invoke the discursive power of the concept of rights, without intending to shoulder the corresponding obligations (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi 2004:1433). Consequently, the obligations to ensure that the aid is used in a manner that respects the fulfilment of these rights primarily lie with the recipient state (Ibid). Considering the way channels of accountability are structured in development assistance, which in turn reflects the power inequalities underlining these interactions, reveals why any other scenario is indeed difficult to envision. Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi sums it all up:

“A bilateral development agency's primary accountability is to citizens/tax payers in its own country, through the treasury. Accountability to the recipient state's government is of a loose diplomatic nature, rather than a legal one with clearly defined rights and obligations. Direct accountability to the communities who are the ultimate recipients is non-existent. /.../ Likewise, recipient governments have only a loose accountability to donor governments - accountability based on the power differential rather than on legal obligations”. (Cornwall 2004:1432)

There are two important conclusions to be drawn from this overview. First, accountability in the aid relationship is almost entirely connected and understood in relation to the aid effectiveness framework, with particular reference to the concepts of mutual accountability and ownership (with the only possible alternative source of meaning being the international human rights framework, the practical influence of which must be considered weak). Second, with the exception of the relation to the taxpayers at home, donors have astonishingly weak or non-existing lines of accountability to virtually all actors in the aid relationship.

It has been argued that one of the reasons for establishing the new aid effectiveness agenda was increased attention among donors to the problem with external accountability and other related issues, spurring the need for a reconfiguration of the aid architecture (Meyer and Schulz 2008:2). Considering the influence and popularity of these ideas, the key to the donor notion of accountability clearly lies within the concepts of this paradigm.

4.1.2 Mutual accountability, ownership, and the aid effectiveness paradigm

The aid effectiveness agenda, with the Paris Declaration at its heart, was built around the recognition that the construction of a new aid architecture was paramount to foster aid effectiveness on the basis of the reconstruction of relationships between donors and recipients (Meyer and Schulz 2008:3-4). Matters of accountability lie at the very heart of this paradigm. Two dyadic accountability relationships in particular are placed at the centre of the aid effectiveness agenda; that between state/citizens in the recipient country, and that between donor/recipient governments, enshrined in the principles of ownership and mutual accountability respectively, with the latter ultimately encompassing

both. Of the five key principles of the Paris Declaration (ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results, and mutual accountability), ‘ownership’ is arguably the most fundamental.

This principle reflects a growing recognition that development priorities cannot be imposed externally by donors, and that for aid to be effective it therefore requires recipient ownership of the policies that are to be implemented (Horner et al. 2009:4; Eyben 2008:7). According to Sida’s Action Plan on Aid Effectiveness (Sida 2009:1): “Development cooperation should be designed in a way that respects partner countries’ priorities. The role of donors is primarily to support the development plans and poverty reduction strategies of the partner countries”. As signalled by the cheer emphasis on this principle in donor documents, it is the principle that has received the most attention from donors to date (Horner et al. 2009:12). Concerning the notion of accountability that is implied by this focus, the most fundamental question here is that of ‘ownership by whom?’. Thus far, the interpretation and implementation of ownership has tended to focus on ownership of the development agenda by the executive branch of government, along with the government department in charge of finance (Ibid). This, naturally, downplays the role of and need for domestic accountability in the recipient country.

More recently, however, and particularly since the increased emphasis in the AAA on a ‘broadened ownership’ with a more prominent role of most notably parliaments and civil society, donors have paid more attention to the role of domestic accountability in the creation of ownership. Sida, for instance, indicates that the reinforced commitments in the AAA will be incorporated; “above all as regards the commitment to support broadened ownership by strengthening the capacity of development actors (parliament, the media, civil society, the private sector) to participate in the dialogue and hold partner countries’ governments accountable /.../” (Sida 2009:2). Furthermore, in this vein, a number of donors (including Sida and Danida) have responded to what have sometimes been called the need for ‘ownership with adjectives’, stating more clearly the exact meaning and interpretation of ownership, by introducing the concept of ‘democratic ownership’. Although this concept is generally poorly elaborated on, in Sida’s version it contains a distinction between ‘political ownership’ (by “the country’s rulers”) and “broader democratic ownership”, (involving “democratically elected bodies, civil society actors, universities and the private sector”) and that the former needs to be supplemented by the latter²¹ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010:32). However, there remains no explicit mentioning of the need for any of the latter actors to be able to hold the former to account in this context. Consequently, although in theory the introduction of ‘ownership with adjectives’ clearly pushes the conception of ownership towards an interpretation premised on

²¹ It is worth noting that while the term ‘democratic ownership’ is used in the section on aid effectiveness in the general policy on democracy and human rights in Swedish development cooperation, in the Action Plan for Aid Effectiveness, where aid effectiveness is the prime subject, the term is wholly absent to the favour of ‘broad ownership’.

domestic accountability, it says little about the precise way in which this relation is supposed to function. Much less of its relation to the concept of ‘democratic accountability’.

In order to understand the conceptualization of accountability that underlies the aid effectiveness agenda, the donor understanding of ownership must be seen in light of the additional principle of ‘mutual accountability’. The two are closely linked. From a donor point of view, the flip-side of recipient country ownership of development budgets and processes is good governance, since poor management of aid by recipient countries limits the extent to which ownership can result in improved aid effectiveness (Horner et al. 2009:4). The donor focus on the technical management and accounting aspects embedded in good governance that has risen as a consequence of this realization is embodied in the principle of mutual accountability, which is conceived of as a cross-cutting principle relevant to all the other principles (Ibid). According to the Paris Declaration (Paragraph 47-50), mutual accountability involves enhancing accountability (and transparency) for development results both between donors and recipients and between governments and citizens in respective country. Two tendencies with relevance for donor understandings of accountability in the aid relationship can be noted in relation to this principle. First, it is widely considered to be the principle that has received the least attention and conceptual elaboration within the agenda²². In a recent review conducted by ODI for the Commonwealth Secretariat concerning the possible synergies between domestic and mutual accountability in the aid context it was concluded that:

”Mutual accountability can to date largely be seen as weak and is often characterised by the dominance of ‘one way’ accountability from recipient governments to donors, as power imbalances and a lack of enforceability have limited the extent to which recipient country governments can effectively hold donors to account.” (Domingo et al. 2009:31)

The underlying power imbalances between donors and recipients was also put forward in the 2008 Synthesis Report on the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration as a reason for the “relative lack of coverage and progress reported on mutual accountability:

“the question has been raised as to whether at the present stage accountability can be fully mutual between countries and those providing them with development assistance. The question was explicitly raised in two country evaluations about the relative means available to the two parties for assuring compliance, pointing out that the donor’s option of reducing or withdrawing its aid has no matching equivalent in the hands of the partner country /.../”. (Wood et al. 2008:27)

Despite a firm commitment to the principle of mutual accountability in official documents and policies, evaluations of actual practise indicate that donors are

²² Which has lead the Australian Development Agency (AusAID) to describe it as the ”orphan principle of the Paris Declaration” (AusAID 2008; cited in Horner et al 2009).

either unwilling or incapable of changing the power inequalities of the aid relationship in order to create a more balanced, equal, or indeed mutual, accountability relation.

Second, in those cases where mutual accountability actually have received elaboration and attention, the focus has mainly been on the relationship between donors and recipients, rather than on domestic accountability within recipient (or donor) countries (Domingo et al. 2009:9; Horner et al. 2009:13). This is explained by one of the central traits of the Paris Declaration, underlying much of the donor thinking on accountability in the aid relation; its focus on technical issues. Meyer and Schulz (2008), for instance, distinguishes between the agenda's 'technical, measurable dimensions and indicators', and its 'political spirit', arguing that, particularly regarding the principle of mutual accountability, donors have placed far more attention to the former than the latter. Hence, since this technical side pays more attention to the accountability relation between donors and recipient country governments, the strengthening of mechanisms for domestic accountability receives less attention (Horner et al. 2009:13). Conceptualising accountability in terms of a technical, apolitical issue also reinforces the view that this is a domain that can be managed without consideration or reconfiguration of the underlying power structure. The interpretation among donors of accountability as a predominantly technocratic, managerial, and apolitical issue is further reinforced by its frequent coupling with the similar aspects embedded in the domain of good governance, rather than to for instance democracy or democratic governance. Mutual accountability, and particularly the role of donors in this relationship, is often equated with concepts such as transparency, openness and predictability. The view portrayed in Danida's development cooperation strategy is a case in point. The chapter on effectiveness and results does not elaborate on the concept of mutual accountability, but states that:

"Openness and transparency are core values in Denmark's development cooperation. We will ensure greater transparency in the administration of our development cooperation, both at home and abroad, making it a more integral part of all procedures." (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark 2012:37)

The absence of any 'political' or binding terms, associated with rights, obligations, enforceability or sanctions indicates the managerial focus, almost closer to accounting than accountability. A literature review conducted for the International IDEA confirms this close link between the aid effectiveness agenda and some aspects of good governance. It asserts that when donor literature refers to the aid effectiveness agenda, it tends to be in relation to the financial aspects of good governance, that concern primarily sound management of financial systems and government efficiency (Horner et al 2009:7). However, the commitment among donors, even to this apolitical and seemingly uncontroversial version of accountability is somewhat unclear. The Synthesis Report of the Paris Declaration evaluation cited above found that regarding donor commitment to the principle of mutual accountability most of the evaluation studies conducted reported on "the continuing serious difficulties involved in securing and providing timely,

transparent and comprehensive information on aid flows that enable partner countries to report fully on budgets to their legislature and citizens” (Wood et al 2008:25).

To conclude, the donor notion of accountability in the context of the aid relationship consequently seems somewhat fragmented and ambiguous. While the aid effectiveness paradigm provides the framework within which the concept is conceptualized and the relations configured and fixed, donors themselves remain stubbornly reluctant to be too deeply dragged into the accountability drama. There is a tendency towards seeing accountability as a managerial, apolitical issue, open to technocratic and ‘neutral’ solutions. At the same time, the principle of ownership has, more than the one of mutual accountability, been interpreted in line with the ‘political spirit’ of Paris. However, conceptually (and practically), the power inequalities underlying the aid relationship remain largely untouched, with rights-based approaches poorly elaborated and implemented, and mechanisms of domestic accountability still only weakly present in the work on mutual accountability. In this context of multiple accountabilities, with actors adhering to possibly conflicting expectations and objectives, the risk for so-called ‘multiple accountability disorder’²³ surely seems apparent.

4.2 Accountability in democracy assistance

In 2009, in his introductory overview to the second edition of the *Journal of Democracy*-based volume on Democratization in Africa, Larry Diamond finished off with a piece of advice. In face of current “progress and retreat” on the continent and such challenges as “the relentless dynamics of neopatrimonial politics”, wrote Diamond; “the clear message to donors is that mere forms of democracy, while not to be dismissed, are not enough”. Therefore, he concluded:

“If aid is to encourage democracy (or development) in Africa, The donors must not only look as closely as possible at the institutions they wish to encourage, but must also support more vigorously those civic and political actors who are trying to enhance government accountability and level the playing field.” (Diamond 2009:xxviii)

In Africa, perhaps more than anywhere else, the limits of the process of democratization has been subscribed to an interplay of various forms of accountability deficits; weak legislatures, ‘big man rule’ and untamed executives, charade elections, political cultures infused with patterns of neopatrimonialism and patron-client relations, and weak channels of political participation and representation. Even in countries with some fundamental mechanisms of democratic accountability seemingly in place, such as general elections, the

²³ Eyben (2008:14, citing Jagadananda and Brown 2006).

identification of accountability failures across the system of governance and representation have inclined commentators to question the very legitimacy and quality of these ‘democracies’. Angola, for instance, in light of the 2008 legislative elections, is described by Roque (2009) as a “façade democracy”, and even Botswana, for long considered a rare case of consolidated democracy on the African continent, is in the view of Good (2009), rather a case of “illusionary democracy”. If mechanisms of accountability and the notion of this concept in general is so tightly connected to the idea of democracy, and the absence of it is such an ominous sign for the prospects of democratization, no wonder then that donors of democracy assistance have devoted extensive efforts to support it.

The sheer popularity of the term accountability in the domain of democracy assistance seems to resound Diamond’s advice. The question, however, is what notion and conceptualization underpins this preoccupation.

4.2.1 The notion of democratic accountability

At a general level, accountability assistance aimed at furthering democratization²⁴ can be divided into two broad categories. While one is aimed at strengthening the capability of public institutions that hold government to account, including public institutions of vertical and horizontal accountability, such as elections, legislatures, and ombudsmen, the other approach is aimed at stimulating or supporting expressions of demand by society so that government listens to society and then accounts to society for its actions afterwards (Burnell 2012:275-6). Interventions that follow the two approaches are labelled in a wide variety of ways in donor documents and are variously characterised as for instance top-down/bottom-up or demand-side/supply-side approaches to accountability. Yet another way of labelling this dyadic approach is through the concepts of ‘Voice and Accountability’ (VA).

Underlying this differing terminology is the common idea that democratic accountability requires not only accountable and responsive public institutions, but also possibilities and opportunities for citizens to express their opinions or preferences. Thus, this model of support signals the view that accountability in the

²⁴ It must be emphasised that donors support accountability for a number of reasons and with a range of different purposes, aimed at supporting for example development, democratic governance, good governance, and human rights. As the focus here is on the relation between notions of accountability and democracy, the analysis is mainly occupied with those interventions that concern *democratic accountability* and has the explicit aim of furthering democratization. However, as democratic governance is often considered a means to achieving development, and most of these objectives are interrelated (democracy and human rights are for example usually considered as mutually reinforcing objectives, and as noted earlier, democratic governance is commonly seen as a part of the broader good governance agenda with its emphasis on state-building and effective governance), these efforts indirectly also concerns these other objectives. Notwithstanding this fact, as stated earlier, it is important to distinguish between different reason why accountability matters, and the concern here is solely with its links and benefits to democracy.

democratic system of governance includes both a relational aspect (accountability is about the relationship between two agents, one of which makes decisions which have an impact on the other and/or which the other one has delegated to them) and a performance related aspect (voice is about the act or capacity to express views, opinions, or preferences through a variety of formal or informal mechanisms and channels) and that the two come together at the point where those exercising voice seek accountability (O’Neil et al. 2007:3-4). The Diamond quote above, for instance, should be understood in this light; in order to create government accountability (a relation), which is itself an inherent characteristic to democracy, there must be demand (an act) for such a governmental characteristic. Support to democratic accountability can be both a way of supporting the actors that seek to ‘level the playing field’ and a way to strengthen those institutions that constitute a ‘level playing field’. Since the two aspects are so closely connected, in supporting the process of democratization, the act of demanding accountability might be as important to consider as the actual state of accountability of public institutions. Sida’s approach to democracy assistance highlights the important role of the demand side of accountability:

“Direct democracy support – the primary aim of which is to strengthen the democratic institutional framework and key actors such as political parties and active opinion-makers - involves support for the development of formal democratic structures, framework, key institutions and actors. It frequently involves /.../ actions to strengthen the capacity of political actors to take responsibility and demand accountability.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008:11)

This underlying view of the two sides of accountability is often left implicit in donor approaches to these issues and, once again, differing terminology hide the commonality of views. In a joint evaluation of development aid aimed at strengthening Citizens’ Voice and Accountability (CV&A), commissioned by a group of DAC partners in 2007/8²⁵, it was found that there is a striking commonality among the evaluated donors regarding approach to and articulation of support in this area. The literature review conducted as a part of this evaluation states that in relation to CV&A support; “all six agencies share a common conceptual and ideological framework broadly rooted in the liberal democratic notions of the state and market economy”, and that this underlying framework is generally left implicit (O’Neil et al. 2007:16). The implicit adherence to the liberal democratic model renders the rationale for particularly the first category of accountability assistance fairly straightforward since the institutions of accountability is part of the definitional traits of liberal democracy. The same evaluation consequently found that accountability, in particular political accountability, along with the idea of indirect representation (i.e. elected

²⁵ The evaluation was commissioned jointly by Belgium (DGDC), Denmark (Danida), Germany (BMZ), Norway (Norad), Sweden (Sida), Switzerland (SDC) and UK (DFID). It is considered the most comprehensive overview of donor support to areas related to Voice and Accountability to date.

parliamentarians as channels for citizens' voice), is considered integral to democracy and that donors accordingly assume that supporting CV&A will lead to a 'deepening of democracy' (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008:18).

The rationale behind the second category of support, corresponding to the 'voice' or 'demand' aspect of democratic accountability, frequently seem less directly connected to ideas about democracy, mainly because of the varied terminology used by donors to capture this aspect. While donors variously rely on terms such as 'participation' or 'social accountability', the conceptualisation of these terms generally correspond to the principles that underpin the dual approach to democratic accountability in the form of VA (Ibid:16). Sida's view on the virtuous role of civil society in the process of democratization demonstrates this point:

"Civil society /.../ has the potential to contribute to democratic development in virtue of its roles in giving a voice to public concerns and implementing development initiatives. In its former role it can influence and scrutinize those in power, create space for participation in public debates and act as a school for democracy." (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008:40-41)

Hence, exercising voice and participating in public debate is closely related to influencing and scrutinizing those in power. Furthermore, the connection between these opportunities and the idea of democracy is purportedly so intimate that exercising them has the potential of equalling being in 'a school of democracy'. The fundamental importance of key aspects related to the enhancement of both sides of the notion of democratic accountability to democratic governance (as well as development and human rights) is further emphasised and anchored through the adoption of rights-based approaches to development. Sida's rights-based approach, for instance, includes both the principle of 'responsibility and accountability' and that of 'participation'²⁶, with the former closely linked to, among other things, free and fair elections, and the latter considered important in order to raise people's awareness of their right to demand change and possibility to influence the political process and formulation of policies by which they are affected (Utrikesdepartementet 2010:13). These principles should inform all of Sida's development cooperation, and, when doing so, "it becomes per se an important vehicle for promoting democracy" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008:10).

The two aspects of democratic accountability, and the far-reaching demands stemming from this ideal, are effectively tied together in DFID's policy on governance support. In this view, "accountability involves established and accepted relationships" that "may be within the state itself" or "directly between citizens and the state" (DFID 2007:16). However, the policy cautions; "Even where strong accountability mechanisms exist, some groups may still be excluded

²⁶ Sida's 'rights perspective' also includes the principles of non-discrimination and public access and transparency.

from them, such as when women are prevented from participating in public forums” (Ibid). While the relational aspect of accountability, with the establishment of accountable public institutions, is clearly not sufficient, even the establishment of channels and mechanisms for participation and expression of voice might have to be complemented with further efforts focused on the inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable and marginalized groups and individuals in order to reach what is referred to as the ‘the truly accountable society’²⁷. Whether this is also the essence of democratic accountability, and to what extent this ideal is the objective of accountability assistance within democracy assistance, however, remains unclear. The statement that “ultimately, the right to vote and effect political change by peaceful, democratic means is central to a truly accountable society” (Ibid) offers little by way of directions in this regard.

A certain amount of ambiguity and vagueness regarding the conceptualization of key concepts seems generic to the treatment of these issues in official donor policies and strategies, but should be view in the light of the implicit adherence to the liberal democratic model. Although in the donor documents reviewed as a background for the CV&A evaluation, key concepts, including voice and accountability, were rarely or never defined²⁸, the authors stress that donors have essentially the same toolbox from which to build their approach to voice and accountability, and that the shared liberal democratic conceptual lens is the source of this toolbox (O’Neil 2007:24). Danida’s “Democratisation and Human Rights Strategy” constitutes an exception in this regard by way of offering an explicit definition of accountability:

“Accountability is meant to exist between the state and its people. Accountability is where governments respond to the needs and respects the rights of the people when exercising their power; where all people have a voice in decision-making; and where the people are able to hold government to account for its decisions and actions.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark 2009:12)

This definition captures the essence of what seems to be the generic implicit understanding among donors on this issue. There are at least four thematic aspects embedded in the definition that are relevant to the general donor understanding of the relation between accountability and democracy. First, the phrase “the state and its people” signals that accountability is fundamentally about state/society relations, a relationship that in turn must be understood in relation to the concept

²⁷ It is worth noting that most approaches to these issues starts with the framing of a certain notion of ‘the democratic society’ in order to proceed by subscribing a certain value to the concept of accountability within this normative ideal, thus defining the role and value of ‘accountability in democracy’. In this light, the DFID introduction of the notion of ‘the accountable society’, implying the reverse approach of rather placing ‘democracy in accountability’, must be considered a fairly unconventional analytical manoeuvre.

²⁸ “In the documents reviewed, there were only two clear definitions of accountability and none of voice” (O’Neil 2007:24).

of citizenship. Citizenship is important here because it is in many ways the concept that brings accountability and participation together (Newell and Bellour 2002:23). Framing accountability with reference to notions of citizenship highlights questions such as ‘who has the right to hold to account’, ‘who should be held to account’, and ‘who is entitled to participate in public decision-making and who is not’. Although donors make frequent use of the term ‘citizenship’, it is seldom used as a defining or core concept in the donor discourse on democracy assistance and accountability. This might seem strange, since it provides a relatively clear framework for the identification of power relations, rights and duties that shape the system of accountabilities within a certain political entity, thus providing a useful point of entry for interventions in this area. However, crucial to understanding the choice of terminology here is a consideration of the implications of these terms and concepts on the role of the donors themselves.

On the one hand, defining accountability as ‘existing between the state and its people’ effectively excludes the donors themselves from the accountability equation. Accountability then is an essentially domestic affair and whatever rights and obligations that stem from this concept concerns intra-state actors and institutions, rendering donors principally unaccountable for the impact of their actions (or lack thereof) on recipient populations. On the other hand, the terminology associated with citizenship highlights how awkwardly the idea of political aid (and aid in general for that matter) sits within this model. If political legitimacy is derived from the social contract that underpins citizenship, then the imposition of ‘democracy from the outside’ is indeed hard to justify, or at least requires a different source of justification. The tricky and highly sensitive issue of sovereignty all of a sudden enters the picture; a development that donors are frequently keen to resist.

The second aspect, which is closely related to the first, is the emphasis on rights. There are two sources from where rights can be derived in this context; from the authority of citizenship, and from the authority of universal human rights law. Considering the external nature of aid and democracy assistance in general, it should come as no surprise that most donors seek to anchor and justify their activities in relation to international conventions on universal human rights. Donors with a strong emphasis on human rights and rights-based approaches, such as Danida, Sida and DFID, all emphasize the close connection between human rights and democracy²⁹. There is also an invariable commitment among these donors to the idea that human rights involves supporting an environment in which individual agency can be exercised; in which all have equal opportunity to participate; and where states are able to fulfil their human rights obligations and can be held accountable for these (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008:18).

²⁹ All the donors in the CV&A evaluation, for instance, emphasise that there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between human rights and democracy (as well as between these two and good governance and sustainable development/poverty reduction) (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008:18; see also Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008; Utrikesdepartementet 2010; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark 2009; DFID 2007).

However, despite the donor attraction to the use of human rights as a source of legitimate rights-claims, the rights associated with the demands of democratic accountability is firmly based on the idea of citizenship. This is of course rather expected considering the observed reliance on and adherence to the principles of liberal democracy, in which citizenship is key.

It highlights, nonetheless, the fact that, despite the donor use of the term democracy to signal the promotion of a universal, general model of governance, what is offered is the very specific notion of *liberal* (representative) democracy. This act of discursive power disguise the possibility of grounding rights and entitlements to participate and be represented in democratic decision-making on other principles than that of citizenship. For instance, recognition of the tension that exists in democratic theory and practise between the citizenship-based notions of ‘belongingness’ or ‘membership’ and that of ‘affectedness’ as principles for the production of democratic legitimacy and authority (for example Eckersley 2004:173; Held 1992) opens up a range of other models that would have profound implications for the issue of accountability; in relation to democracy, and considering the power relations in the context of aid and democracy assistance. Importantly, considering notions of democratic accountability that do not rely (solely) on citizenship in a defined political entity such as the state also highlights questions regarding the meaning and usefulness of the popular concept of *domestic* accountability (which is, just as democracy historically has been, premised on the sovereignty of the national state). We shall have reason to return to some of these issues below, when considering the conflation of the two notions. For now we might conclude that the donor notion of democratic accountability, and the rights and obligations associated with it, is firmly citizenship oriented. And that with ‘belongingness’ as the principal source of legitimacy, the precise role of the donors in this part of the accountability drama remains uncertain.

Third, there is a subtle but important recognition of the need for *all people* to have a voice in decision-making. This adds a non-discriminatory aspect to the notion of democratic accountability and might be derived both from the concern within the liberal democratic tradition of guaranteeing minority rights and equality, and from the particular concern among donors with frequently marginalized groups such as women or ‘the poor’, in turn derived from the common mandate around poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This aspect also comes close to what Burnell pinned as a defining characteristic of democratic accountability; accountability to the expressed wishes of the *whole* demos – rather than to just one part. One consequence of this aspect is the importance subscribed to supporting the empowerment and inclusion of marginalized groups in key mechanisms of accountability. Norad, for instance has a specific component devoted to ‘gender and democracy’, which aims to “support women’s participation in politics through elections and other democratic processes” (Foresti et al. 2011:20).

Fourth, as already discussed, democratic accountability requires people to *be able* to hold government to account, that is to have the *capacity and opportunity* to participate. Besides responsiveness of public institutions, like with the previous point, empowerment and inclusion is key here.

The general donor notion of democratic accountability is indeed encompassing and the importance of the notion of accountability to the process of democratization and to the idea of democracy can hardly be overstated. The donor faith in ‘the magic wand of accountability’ is clearly displayed by the sheer space devoted to the two categories of accountability assistance in democracy assistance programs and projects. In Uganda, for example - a country long considered a donor ‘darling’ but now increasingly recognized as suffering from, in the words of Sida, “deficient democratic leadership” – eight donors in 2011 established a Democratic Governance Facility (DGF)³⁰ with the aim of addressing the “governance challenges” (DGF 2011) facing the country. With the stated purpose of “strengthened democratisation, protection of human rights, access to justice, peaceful co-existence and improved accountability”, two of the facility’s three components are directly concerned with the issue of accountability and reflect the two categories respectively. Illustratively, the first component; “Deepening Democracy”, has the objective of “more pluralistic, representative and accountable governance” and aims at “making elected leaders more responsive to citizens’ needs and concerns and increasingly hold them accountable for their performance in office”, while the third; “Voice and Accountability”, focuses on “the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights through strengthening of voice and accountability, which in essence are about how citizens articulate their needs and concerns and subsequently hold the state to account for fulfilling the roles that are entrusted to it by society” (DGF 2011).

It is clear that accountability, through this conceptualization, is at the very heart of democracy assistance and that the objective of democratic accountability constitutes an ambitious standard against which to measure claims of legitimate use of power. It remains to be seen how this idea fare when paired up with the notion of accountability operating in the aid effectiveness paradigm and through the donor/recipient relation. Ultimately, the fusion of the two might reveal something about the relation between aid and democracy.

4.3 The two notions compared and combined: Effectiveness and consistency

By way of the above analysis of the accountability discourse in each context, a broad picture emerges displaying the notions of accountability operating in each domain. Obviously, it is not a complete picture. There are surely nuances and aspects not conveyed or captured. However, the analytical image is clear enough to portray a number of central features of the conceptualisation underlying the

³⁰ The donors are: Austria, Denmark, the European Union Delegation, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom (DGF 2011; see also DFIDs ‘Intervention Summary’ (DFID 2011)).

understanding of and occupation with accountability in each context. Initially, two observations can be made. First, accountability is perceived as a prominent and crucial means to achieve the objectives of the activities in respective domain. Within the aid effectiveness paradigm, and in the context of the aid relations in general, accountability among various actors is conceived of as both inherent to the practise per se, and as a vital tool in the strive for effective aid. In the domain of democracy assistance, accountability is portrayed as a crucial means for achieving the objective of democratization, as well as a constitutive part of democracy itself. Hence, as the buzzword-label suggests, accountability is greatly valued and normatively embraced in both contexts.

Second, however, accountability is valued based on fundamentally different notions of how it is to operate, what purpose and function it is to serve, and what characteristics it is to include. In other words, the conceptualisation of accountability differs between the two contexts. The differences become clear when constructing what Ernesto Laclau (1997) calls 'chains of equivalence'. By combing the term accountability (which in itself is practically empty; it can mean nothing or anything) with other terms within the same discourse, together with which it is used and associated, the term accountability is filled with meaning. That is to say, the meaning of a term is exposed and specified by investigating how it is combined with other terms. Hence, based on the analysis in the previous two chapters we can see that whereas accountability in one context is combined with terms such as *management*, *governance*, *effectiveness*, *transparency*, *results*, and *efficiency*, in the other it is associated with *rights*, *democracy*, *voice*, *responsibility*, and *participation*. When spelled out like this, it is clear that accountability in the two contexts is understood and conceptualised in radically different ways. This is of course a reflection of the differing objectives underpinning donor engagement in each context. But the objectives themselves are also a consequence of the understanding of accountability, which legitimizes certain courses of action and social relations. The fixation of meaning is a reduction of possibilities, and limitation of imagination.

While the deconstruction of the discursive meaning is an important step in itself, by way of denaturalizing the perceived (but deceptive) universality of the concept to the benefit of imagination, it also reveals the tensions and potential conflicts between these meanings. In fact, the dissonance of the two notions, coupled with their frequent interaction, has important implications for the prospects of achieving the stated objectives in both domains. The effects that the coupling of the two has can be structured along two interdependent but analytically distinguishable lines of critique: implications on the *effectiveness* of each objective, and implications on the normative legitimacy or *appropriateness* of the conceptualisations per se. The latter is mainly manifested and understood here in terms of the normative criteria of *consistency*³¹.

³¹ As Crawford (2001:31) observes, donor legitimacy can be categorised in relation to a much wider set of issues, including, for example, the legitimacy of external intervention per se, the

The problematic effect of the dissonance of the two notions in terms of effectiveness is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the phenomenon of external accountability. Here, the demands of accountability in the aid effectiveness discourse render recipient governments ‘upward’ accountable to donors, limiting the scope for domestic or ‘downward’ accountability to its own people, which in turn undermines the objective of democratic accountability adhered to in democracy assistance. This effect is, as already indicated, recognized by the OECD-DAC in terms of the observation that the objective of accountability *for aid* might shape “the scope for domestic accountability” and be in some tension with the direct support for domestic accountability (Hudson 2009:6). However, the two motivations need not be in tension and the policy recommendation is as follows: “As domestic accountability institutions and systems are strengthened, then – as donors make more use of those systems – there will be more scope for governments to be democratically accountable to their citizens” (Ibid:7). What is not recognized is that the term ‘democratic accountability’ is wholly absent in the donor conceptualisation of accountability in the aid effectiveness discourse, and that in this context there is little or no mention of accountability seekers as ‘citizens’. In this context the need for accountability is derived from the ideals of effective administration, efficient governance, and management for results. In other words, the focus is on *outcomes* rather than *process*. In contrast, the democracy assistance notion of accountability is firmly process oriented with its emphasis of participation, inclusion, capability, and rights (which in ethical terms implies the absolute opposite of consequentialism; no matter the outcome, the standard specified in the particular rights framework is to be honoured by virtue in and of its own). Hence, the practical tension is underpinned by deeply rooted conceptual divergence.

A further tension along the line of effectiveness concerns the conceptual similarity and connection of the notion of accountability to the conceptual and practical framework of good governance. As discussed above, the notion of accountability in the aid effectiveness discourse is closely related to the project of promoting good governance, since this is considered crucial for recipient country ownership to translate into effective aid. Three main reasons have been identified as the source of this focus: the primary concern with the disbursement of financial resources, the overarching objective being poverty reduction rather than democratic development, the need for political correctness in order to avoid politically sensitive issues of for example sovereignty (Horner et al. 2009:7-8). The rationale underlying all three motivations reflects a common theme in the understanding of accountability in aid. In relation to the first reason, Horner et al sketches the general line of thought:

“As the term “good governance” encompasses economic as well as political and social dimensions of development /.../ it is generally considered to be

integrity of donor policy, and the reciprocity of policy application. The latter is essentially synonymous to the aspect of consistency as examined here.

the most appropriate lens for dealing with aid effectiveness issues. Democracy tends to be seen to be a more relevant concept for discussing and addressing issues relating to politics and society, rather than economics.” (Ibid)

Considering that it is *only* the technical and economic aspects of good governance that is related to aid effectiveness (democracy assistance is usually seen as the political sub-category of good governance, and as it is apparently not considered as an appropriate framework for aid effectiveness there is only the technical ‘governance’ aspects left), the direct logical implication of this argument is that politics is not a relevant aspect of aid effectiveness. This is indeed a highly technocratic view of the project of development aid, displaying a stunning ignorance of the power relations permeating the aid relation. As Hydén (2008:260-1) has pointed out, the prevailing notions of ownership, mutual accountability, and partnership are not established facts that simply needs to be recognized, they are ideals that require confrontation with issues of power; an understanding that development cooperation is not just about policy but also about politics. The dissonance between this apolitical view of accountability in aid and the objective of promoting democratic accountability is remarkable. The same tension can be detected with regard to the second reason mentioned above. To the extent that the focus on poverty reduction is reinforced and supported by the notion of ‘the developmental state’, the compatibility of the two notions of accountability might certainly be questioned. As developmental state theory suggests that economic growth is best achieved in contexts where the state is relatively insulated from the demands of varying interest groups (such as civil society organisations), the most important function of accountability is to uphold the national economic interests, however defined (Moncrieffe 1998:394). Without engaging in the unresolved dispute over the relation between democracy and development, we can contend that once donors have adopted the view that democracy is worth supporting there is a great deal of inconsistency in simultaneously forwarding a view of accountability in aid that effectively excludes nearly all the normative appeals of the concept within the latter model.

Furthermore, even if we assume normative compatibility between the two projects of good governance and democratization, the practical conflation of the two is at best problematic. As Carothers and others have asserted, while the state-building and governance aspects of good governance usually requires the strengthening of state institutions and consolidation and centralization of state power, donor support to democratization have been concerned with the diffusion of power and weakening of the relative power of the executive branch, encouraging decentralization, redistribution of power, and building civil society (Carothers 2002:179; Rakner et al. 2007:2). Consequently, the close relation to the project of good governance raises questions regarding both the effectiveness of the combination of the two notions of accountability, as well as concerning the consistency with which they are applied.

In terms of consistency, the most outstanding feature is the donor’s own lack of accountability, to recipient governments and to the intended beneficiaries in the recipient countries. In the aid effectiveness discourse the relation to the latter is

mainly regarded as mediated through the recipient country government. However, with the failure, or unwillingness, to engage the power inequalities embedded in this relation, the donors remain virtually unaccountable to both. A possible, perhaps somewhat cynical, reading of the synthesis of the two notions would be the following: By conceptualizing accountability in the democracy assistance context as a matter of rights and obligations between citizens and the state, and at the same time viewing the same concept in the context of the donor/recipient relation as a technical, non-rights related, apolitical issue, the result is that the recipient government is accountable to its citizens (because they have an obligation to be), the donors are not accountable to the intended beneficiaries (because rights-claims are derived from the principle of citizenship), recipient government is accountable to donors (because they cannot afford not to be), and donors are not accountable to recipient governments (because they have the power not to be). However, the issue becomes more complicated when introducing the international human rights framework as an alternative source of legitimate rights claims.

Easterly (2010:1076), for example, have argued that donors apply a ‘double standard’ when it comes to accountability in aid, consisting both of a failure to recognise that they should be accountable to the poor, and indifference towards the state/citizen accountability in recipient countries; resulting in “rights for the rich, and not for the poor”. This is only partly true. As we have seen, the donors analysed here do recognise the need for recipient governments to be accountable to their own citizens, and they do recognise, through the adoption of ‘rights-based approaches’ and mainstreaming of human rights, some form of rights that can be applied beyond the state. However, the problem is that there are practically no obligations to be found anywhere. As a result, the ‘rights-based approach’ has been widely criticised for being a lot less than meets the eye and merely a “quest for the moral high ground” (Uvin 2007:603; see also Cornwall 2004; Darrow and Tomas 2005). The result, then, is rather ‘rights for the poor, but no obligations for the rich’. Although things are definitely changing in this area, one cannot but sense a portion of hypocrisy, or at least inconsistency, when examining the donor approach to their own vs. others accountability in the two contexts.

These are just some of the tensions between the two notions of accountability that underpin donor activities in democracy assistance and the wider aid context. There are surely more. While this does not mean that the two are necessarily incompatible, it does highlight the need to question the all too frequent assumption that all good things in aid go together, as long as there is accountability. And ultimately, as currently conceptualised, it does seem to imply the need to problematize the compatibility of the very objectives themselves, or at least rethink the actual links between, and the virtues of, aid effectiveness on the one side, and the ideal of democracy on the other.

5 Conclusion

The notion of accountability underpinning donor engagement, in the context of the aid relationship and the aid effectiveness paradigm on the one side, and in the context of democracy assistance on the other, differs on fundamental points. Where one emphasises outcomes and effectiveness, the other is about processes and legitimacy. Whereas in one, accountability requires rights and active citizens, in the other it is firmly apolitical and technocratic. While the two overlap in some aspects, such as the emphasis on domestic accountability, it is also clear that there are some fundamental tensions and possible conflicts between the two, affecting the effectiveness of respective objective, and rendering donors vulnerable to the critique of inconsistency.

But this is, after all, maybe not so strange. The two contexts are fundamentally different in terms of conditions and possibilities for accountability. It might be tempting to reside to normative judgments at this point, singling out one of the two models (naturally, the democratic one) and charge the donors with moral hypocrisy for only applying the standard of democratic accountability in the context where they are themselves effectively excluded. This, however, does imply a simplification of some of the issues at stake here. Moreover, such a move would disguise some of the finer nuances of the findings provided in this study. In fact, it can be argued that the donor stand on accountability in the two contexts is rather consistent and non-hypocritical. Consider, for instance the question of how donors should perceive their own accountabilities if it was to be consistent with their view on democratic accountability as conveyed in democracy assistance. Grant and Keohane (2005) assert that there are two theoretical models of democratic accountability derived from nation-state democracies that could be applied to the global level; ‘delegation’ and ‘participation’. In view of the key question of “Who is entitled to hold power-wielders accountable and why”, the two models provide different answers:

“Power wielders can be called to account for failing to fulfill their official duties or for failing to serve the interests of those affected by their actions. And they can be called to account by those who authorized them as well as by those affected by them”. (Ibid:42).

In light of the analysis it is obvious that, as things stand, by being accountable to their own home constituencies, donors strictly adhere to the first alternative in each sentence; the delegation model, both regarding the ‘who’ and the ‘why’. And note that the models of ‘delegation’ and ‘participation’ corresponds precisely to the principles of ‘belongingness’ and ‘affectedness’ respectively, pinpointed in the discussion on democratic accountability. As was noted, the donor notion of democratic accountability derives its legitimacy from the belongingness model.

Thus, donors actually do apply their notion of democratic accountability to themselves in the context of the aid relationship.

What this analysis also shows, however, is that the real power is in the hands of those who define ‘official duties’ and determine which model is to be the ‘legitimate’ one. As accountability is currently conceptualized, this power remains firmly with the donors. Which, from a moral point of view, in turn renders the downplaying of the political and power related aspects of the aid interactions suspicious at best. It also places the ‘partnership’ discourse, so fundamental to the aid effectiveness paradigm, in a different light. The true hypocrisy, on the other hand, is reserved for those instances when power *is* recognised as part of the picture, albeit only partly; the generous handing out of rights, without corresponding obligations.

A partial purpose of this project has been to problematize the conventional appeal of accountability. To show that its meanings cannot be taken for granted, that it cannot be a single story. “The single story creates stereotypes” write Ngozi Adichie, “and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete”. As the aid discourse is changing, with the emergence of new donors (read; China), considerably less interested in the mundane OECD rhetoric of rights and democracy, and the new Global Partnership from Busan is interpreted and implemented, a safe bet is that there will remain a ‘firm commitment to strengthened accountability’. The point of this study, then, is to suggest that if accountability is thought of as a stereotype, perhaps it is a good idea to start by recognizing its incompleteness, rather than simply continue swinging that magic wand.

6 Executive Summary

Two current trends are discernable in the international development assistance discourse. One is about the strive for aid effectiveness and the other one concerns the support to democratic development. At the centre of both of these trends lies a concern with accountability; accountability between donors and recipients for the purpose of effective aid, and accountability as a means for, and constituent part of, democratisation and the state of democracy itself. At the same time, the word accountability itself has acquired status of a ‘development buzzword’, everyone wants it but no one knows what it really means.

In order to understand, on the one hand, how the two trends relate to and fits with each other, and on the other, what role and function the concept of accountability has in these processes, this study seeks to address how a number of bilateral donors have conceptualised and understood the concept of accountability in the two contexts of the aid effectiveness paradigm and democracy assistance respectively. More specifically, the purpose is twofold: 1) to problematize and denaturalize the taken-for-granted roles and virtues of accountability in development assistance, in order to 2) better understand what possibilities and limitations exists in the double pursuit for aid effectiveness and democratization. Two research questions guide the analysis: *How is accountability conceptualized and understood by donors within the aid effectiveness paradigm and democracy assistance respectively? And how do these notions of accountability relate to each other?*

In order to investigate these questions, a critical approach to accountability is adopted, drawing on the insights of discourse theory and utilizing qualitative text analysis to analyse key policy and strategy documents of three of the most progressive and active donors in these areas; Sida, Danida, and DFID. The analysis is complemented by a wide source of secondary material and independent evaluations of donor approaches to the subjects.

Accountability, commonly perceived as a ‘cure all development buzzword’, is most fundamentally about a relationship of power, and more specifically, the capacity to demand someone engage in reason-giving to justify her behaviour, and/or the capacity to impose a penalty for poor performance. It consist of the two aspects of answerability and enforcement, and involves two sets of actors; accountability seekers and accountability targets. Three forms of accountability are particularly relevant to the context of development assistance; domestic, external and democratic accountability. In order to understand how accountability operates in the aid effectiveness paradigm and democracy assistance, the interconnectedness and interpretations, the notions, of these forms of accountability must be critically analysed.

The aid effectiveness paradigm is centred around the Paris Declaration, signed in 2005, and emphasising reinforced ‘leadership’ and ‘ownership’ of development policies by recipient countries. It forms the corner stone of a comprehensive new ‘aid architecture’, built on a reconfiguration of aid relationships and focused on effective aid delivery, planning and implementation. Democracy assistance, the direct support of processes of democratization in recipient countries, now constitutes a substantive and integral part the development assistance agenda, and includes efforts to promote and strengthen a wide range of institutions and actors deemed essential for the process of democratisation and the state of consolidated democracy. Despite a recent maturation and diversification of the field, knowledge is limited on the actual impacts of democracy assistance. Considering the notion of accountability in these two contexts highlights a number of complex and potentially problematic issues. Most recognized is perhaps the detrimental effects of external accountability; recipient country governments being more ‘upwards’ accountable to donors than ‘downwards’ to their own citizens. This is a result of the pressure from donors for recipient governments to manage and implement aid efficiently and effectively, which in turn risks hampering the process of democratization by limiting the democratic influence of domestic constituencies in the recipient countries. Additionally, there is a potential tension between the requirements of two different notions of accountability, on the one hand the demands of effective management, and on the other the need for policy space, deliberation and contestation enshrined in the realm of democratic accountability and public responsiveness.

The meaning subscribed to the concept of accountability can effectively be seen as an act of discursive partial fixing of meanings. This is a profound act of power, which involves a limitation of the meanings of a particular word, a reduction of possibilities. Importantly, then, the specific meaning of a word such as accountability cannot be taken for granted, it must be critically analysed in order to understand what actions and relations are legitimised and conventionalised by a specific discursive configuration. For as we construct ‘objectivity’ through the discursive production of meaning this is nothing but hegemony; the dominance of a particular, yet incomplete and partial, possible but not necessary, perspective. Through the adoption of a critical approach to accountability these hegemonic meanings can be unmasked and questioned.

Accountability in the aid relationship is a complex issue. Multiple lines of accountability flow from a number of actors and shape, and are shaped by, the power relations embedded in these interactions. There are five categories of institutions or persons that bilateral donors are more or less accountable to: taxpayers in the donor country, government in the donor country, government in the recipient country, poor people in the recipient country, and the international human rights framework. However, with the exception of the link to the taxpayers in their own countries, donors are only weakly accountable to these actors. And their conceptual understanding of accountability in this context is most fundamentally shaped by the aid effectiveness paradigm. The two principles of ‘ownership’ and ‘mutual accountability’ are most relevant in this respect. There is a tendency towards seeing accountability as a managerial, apolitical issue, open to

technocratic and 'neutral' solutions. The principle of mutual accountability remains the least developed principle within the paradigm. At the same time, the principle of ownership has, more than the one of mutual accountability, been interpreted in line with the 'political spirit' of Paris, incorporating a need for 'ownership with adjectives', such as 'democratic' or 'inclusive'. However, conceptually (and practically), the power inequalities underlying the aid relationship remain largely untouched, with rights-based approaches poorly elaborated and implemented, and mechanisms of domestic accountability still only weakly present in the work on mutual accountability.

Donors generally put heavy emphasis on issues of accountability in the context of democracy assistance, where assistance is provided both to the 'demand' and the 'supply' side, often labelled and conceived of as 'voice and accountability'. Underlying this terminology is the idea that democratic accountability requires not only accountable and responsive public institutions, but also possibilities and opportunities for citizens to express their opinions or preferences. Moreover, these ideas are in turn derived from the implicit adherence to the liberal democratic model. Hence, these notions together form the donor understanding of democratic accountability. Central features of this notion includes: the idea of citizenship as the source of legitimate claims of accountability, the importance of inclusion, and an active and participating citizenry. Thus, the general donor notion of democratic accountability is indeed encompassing and the importance of the notion of accountability to the process of democratization and to the idea of democracy can hardly be overstated.

Considering the two notions of accountability in relations to each other renders two initial observations possible. First, accountability is perceived as a prominent and crucial means to achieve the objectives of the activities in respective domain. And second, however, accountability is valued based on fundamentally different notions of how it is to operate, what purpose and function it is to serve, and what characteristics it is to include. In other words, the conceptualisation of accountability differs between the two contexts. Where one emphasises outcomes and effectiveness, the other is about processes and legitimacy. Whereas in one, accountability requires rights and active citizens, in the other it is firmly apolitical and technocratic. The implications of the dissonance of the two can be analysed with reference to the two standards of effectiveness and consistency. The problem with external accountability remains a major issue in terms of effectiveness. Another effectiveness issue is the similarities between the aid effectiveness notion of accountability to the state-building and management aspects of the good governance agenda, which might be in some conflict with the objective of democratization. In general, the donor avoidance of politics and failure to recognise the power relations underpinning development cooperation is problematic. And so is the donor treatment of their own accountabilities in the two contexts. The latter point renders donors vulnerable to the critique of inconsistency, along with the tendency to invoke 'rights-based approaches' without much content and corresponding obligations.

Moreover, with regards to the popularity of the concept of accountability, donors are advised to pay more attention to what can really be accomplished and

to the actual functions and roles of accountability mechanisms in both of the contexts. Merely more is not necessarily better, and such generalizations disguise the contextual specificity and incompleteness of the meaning of the term.

7 References

- Abrahamsen, Rita (2000) *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa*, London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Adibe, Clement Eme (2010) “Accountability in Africa and the International Community” *Social Research*, Vol 77, No 4, pp. 1241-1280.
- AusAid (2008) *Mutual Accountability: ‘Orphan’ Principle of the Paris Declaration*, ODE Issues Note, June 2008.
- Booth, David (2008) *Aid Effectiveness After Accra: How to Reform the ‘Paris Agenda’*, Breifing Paper, ODI.
- Brown, David L. (2007) “Multiparty Social Action and Mutual Accountability” in Ebrahim, Alnoor; Weisband, Edward, *Global Accountabilities: Participation, Pluralism, and Public Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burnell, Peter (2007) “Methods and Experiences of evaluating Democracy Support: A Moving Frontier”, in International IDEA and SIDA, *Evaluating Democracy Support: Methods and Experiences*, Stockholm: International IDEA & SIDA.
- Burnell, Peter (2008a) ”International Democracy Promotion: A Role for Public Goods Theory?”, *Contemporary Politics*, 14:1, 37-52.
- Burnell, Peter (2008b) “From Evaluating Democracy Assistance to Appraising Democracy Promotion”, *Political Studies*, 56(2), 414-434.
- Burnell, Peter (2008c) “The Relationship of Accountable Governance and Constitutional Implementation, with Reference to Africa”, *Journal of Politics and Law*, Volume 1, Number 3, pp. 10-24.
- Burnell, Peter (2012) “External Accountability meets Accountability Assistance: The Case of Legislative Strengthening in Africa” in Chirwa, Danwood M.; Nijzink, Lia, *Accountable Government in Africa: Perspectives From Public Law and Political Studies*, New York, NY: United Nations University Press.

- Carothers, Thomas (2002) "The End of the Transition Paradigm" in Carothers, Thomas, *Critical Mission: Essays on Democracy Promotion*, Washington, D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Carothers, Thomas (2006) "The Backlash Against Democracy Promotion", *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 85, Number 2, 55-68.
- Carothers, Thomas (2010) "The Continuing Backlash Against Democracy Promotion" in Burnell, Peter; Youngs, Richard, *New Challenges to Democratization*, New York: Routledge.
- Carothers, Thomas (2009) "Democracy Assistance: Political vs. Developmental?", *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 20, Number 1.
- Cornwall, Andrea (2007) "Buzzwords and Fuzzwords: Deconstructing Development Discourse", *Development in Practise*, Volume 17, Number 4/5, pp. 471-484.
- Cornwall, Andrea; Nyamu-Musembi, Celestine (2004) "Putting the 'Rights-Based Approach' to Development into Perspective", *Third World Quarterly*, Volume 25, Number 8, pp. 1415-1437.
- Cornwall, Andrea (2009) *Changing Ideals in a Donor Organisation: 'Participation' in Sida*, IDS Working Paper 317.
- Crawford, Gordon (2001) *Foreign Aid and Political Reform: A Comparative Analysis of Democracy Assistance and Political Conditionality*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave.
- Crawford, Gordon (2003a): "Promoting Democracy from Without - Learning from Within (Part I)", *Democratization*, 10:1, pp. 77-98.
- Crawford, Gordon (2003b): "Promoting Democracy From Without - Learning From Within (Part II)", *Democratization*, 10:2, pp. 1-20.
- Darrow, Mac; Tomas, Amparo (2005) "Power, Capture, and Conflict: A Call for Human Rights Accountability in Development Cooperation", *Human Rights Quarterly*, Volume 27, Number 2, pp. 471-538.
- Degnbol-Martinussen, John; Engberg-Pedersen, Poul (2003) *Aid: Understanding International Development Cooperation*, London: Zed Books Ltd.
- DFID (2007) "Governance, Development and Democratic Politics: DFID's Work in Building More Effective States", Available at: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/governance.pdf>

- DFID (2011) “Business Case and Intervention Summary: Democratic Governance Facility: Deepening Democracy programme Phase II”, London: DFID.
- DGF (2011) “Programme Information Sheet: Democratic Governance Facility”, Available at: <http://www.swedenabroad.com/sv-SE/Ambassader/Kampala/Utvecklingssamarbete/Sveriges-utvecklings--samarbete-med-Uganda/>.
- Diamond, Larry (2009) “Introduction” in Diamond, Larry; Plattner, Marc F., *Democratization in Africa: Progress and Retreat*, Second Edition, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Domingo, Pilar; Wild, Leni; Hudson, Alan; Wathne, Cecilie (2009) *Domestic and Mutual Accountability for Aid: Building stronger synergies*, Literature Review and Conceptual Framework, Developed for the Commonwealth Secretariat, London: ODI.
- Easterly, William (2010) “Democratic Accountability in Development: The Double Standard”, *Social Research*, Volume 77, Number 4, pp. 1075-1104.
- Eckersley, Robin (2004) *The Green State: Rethinking Democracy and Sovereignty*, Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press
- Eriksson Baaz, Maria (2005) *The Paternalism of Partnership: A Postcolonial Reading of Identity in Development Aid*, London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Eyben, Rosalind (2010) *Supporting Inclusive and Democratic Ownership, A ‘How to Note’ For Donors*, IDS.
- Eyben, Rosalind (2008) *Power, Mutual Accountability and Responsibility in the Practice of International Aid: A Relational Approach*, IDS Working Paper 305.
- Eyben, Rosalind; Ferguson, Clair (2005) “How Can Donors Become More Accountable to Poor People?” in Hinton, Rachel; Groves, Leslie, *Inclusive Aid: Changing Power and Relationships in International Development*, London: Earthscan.
- Fearon, James D. (1999) “Electoral Accountability and the Control of Politicians: Selecting Good Types versus Sanctioning Poor Performance” in Przeworski, Adam; Stokes, Susan C.; Manin, Bernard, *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Foresti, Marta; Harris, Daniel et al. (2011) *Democracy Support Through the United Nations, Literature Review: What Have We Learnt About Donors’ Support for Democratic Development?*, Norad, Report 10/2010.

- Fox, Jonathan (2007) "The Uncertain Relationship Between Transparency and Accountability", *Development in Practise*, Volume 17, Number 4/5, pp. 663-671.
- Gershman, Carl; Allen, Michael (2006) "The Assault on Democracy Assistance", *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 17, Number 2, 36-51.
- Goetz, Anne Marie; Jenkins, Rob (2005) *Reinventing Accountability: Making Democracy Work for Human Development*, New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Good, Kenneth (2009) "The Illusion of Democracy in Botswana" in Diamond, Larry; Plattner, Marc F., *Democratization in Africa: Progress and Retreat*, Second Edition, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Grant, Ruth W.; Keohane, Robert O. (2005) "Accountability and Abuses of Power in World Politics", *American Political Science Review*, Volume 99, Number 1, pp. 29-43.
- Green, Andrew T.; Kohl, Richard D. (2007) "Challenges of Evaluating Democracy Assistance: Perspectives from the Donor Side", *Democratization*, 14:1, pp. 151-165.
- Held, David (1992) "Democracy: From City-states to a Cosmopolitan Order?", in Goodin, Robert E.; Pettit, Philip (2006) *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Horner, Lisa; Power, Greg; Global Partners and Associates (2009) *The Democratic Dimension of Aid*, Literature review for International IDEA.
- Hudson, Alan (2009) "Aid and Domestic Accountability, Background Paper for the Launch of the Work-stream on Aid and Domestic Accountability", DAC Network on Governance (GOVNET). OECD.
- Huntington, Samuel P. (1991) *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Hydén, Göran (2008) "After the Paris Declaration: Taking on the Issue of Power", *Development Policy Review*, Volume 26, Number 3, pp. 259-274.
- IDS (2010) *An Upside-down View of Governance*, Institute of Development Studies.
- Jelmin, Kristina (2012) *Democratic Accountability in Service Delivery: A Synthesis of Case Studies*, International IDEA.

- Johnson, Juliet (2002) "In Pursuit of a Prosperous International System", in Schraeder, Peter J., *Exporting Democracy: Rhetoric vs. Reality*, Boulder CO and London: Lynne Rienner Press.
- Jørgensen, Marianne; Philips, Louise (2002) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Kegley, Jr, Charles W.,; Hermann, Margaret G. (2002) "In Pursuit of a Peaceful International System", in Schraeder, Peter J., *Exporting Democracy: Rhetoric vs. Reality*, Boulder CO and London: Lynne Rienner Press.
- Koeble, Thomas A.; Lipuma, Edward (2008) "Democratizing Democracy: A Postcolonial Critique of Conventional Approaches to the 'Measurement of Democracy'", *Democratization*, Volume 15, Number 1, pp. 1-28.
- Kothari, Uma (2002) "Feminist and Postcolonial Challenges to Development", in Kothari, Uma; Minogue, Martin, *Development Theory and Practice: Critical Perspectives*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave.
- Kothari, Uma; Minogue, Martin (2002) "Critical Perspectives on Development: An Introduction", in Kothari, Uma; Minogue, Martin, *Development Theory and Practice: Critical Perspectives*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave.
- Laclau, Ernesto (1997) "The Death and Resurrection of the Theory of Ideology", *MLN*, 112.3, pp. 297-321.
- Laclau, Ernesto; Mouffe, Chantal (1985) "Hegemony and Socialist Strategy", in Seidman, Steven; Alexander, Jeffrey C. (2001) *The New Social Theory Reader*, London: Routledge.
- Leftwich, Adrian (2005) "Democracy and Development: Is there Institutional Incompatibility?", *Democratization*, Volume 12, Number 5, pp. 686-703.
- Lekvall, Anna (2011) *It's the Peoples Ownership: Why the Aid Agenda Needs Democracy in the Post-Busan Era and how to Start Supporting it*, Discussion Paper, International IDEA.
- Lindberg, Staffan I. (2009) "Accountability: The Core Concept and its Subtypes", Africa Power and Politics Programme (APPP), Working paper, No 1, April 2009.
- Meyer, Stefan; Shulz, Nils-Sjard (2008) *Ownership with Adjectives: Donor Harmonisation: Between Effectiveness and Democratisation*, Synthesis Report, Working Paper 59, Madrid: FRIDE.

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2008) “Freedom from Oppression: Government communication on Swedish Democracy Support”, Available at: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/116271>.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010) “Change for Freedom: Policy for democratic development and human rights in Swedish development cooperation, 2010–2014”, Available at: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/143233>.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2007) “Democratization and Human Rights for the Benefit of the People: Strategic Priorities for Danish Support for Good Governance”.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2012) “The Right to a Better Life: Strategy for Denmark’s Development Cooperation”, Copenhagen.
- Mkandawire, Thandika (2010) “Aid, Accountability, and Democracy in Africa” *Social Research*, Vol 77, No 4, pp. 1149-1182.
- Moncrieffe, Joy Marie (1998) “Reconceptualising Political Accountability”, *International Political Science Review*, Volume 19, Number 4, pp. 387-406.
- Mulgan, Richard (2000) ”’Accountability’: An Ever-Expanding Concept?”, *Public Administration*, Volume 78, Number 3, pp. 555-573.
- Mulgan, Richard (2003) “One Cheer For Hierarchy – Accountability in Disjointed Governance”, *Political Science*, Volume 55, Number 2, pp. 6-18.
- Newell, Peter; Bellour, Shaula (2002) *Mapping Accountability: Origins, Contexts and Implications for Development*, IDS Working Paper 168, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.
- O’Donnell, Guillermo (1999) “Horizontal Accountability in New Democracies”, in Schedler, Andreas; Diamond, Larry; Plattner, Marc F., *The Self-Restraining State: Power and Accountability in New Democracies*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.
- OECD (2008) “Is it ODA?”, Factsheet – November 2008.
- OECD (2005) “The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness”, Available at: http://www.oecd.org/document/19/0,3746,en_2649_3236398_43554003_1_1_1_1,00.html.
- OECD (2008) “Accra Agenda for Action (AAA)”, Available at: http://www.oecd.org/document/19/0,3746,en_2649_3236398_43554003_1_1_1_1,00.html

- OECD-DAC GOVNET, “Improving support to domestic accountability”, A summary of the OECD-DAC Governance Network (GOVNET) work-stream. Accessed online 2012-06-07, Available at: www.oecd.org/dac/governance.
- Olukoshi, Adebayo O. (2011) *Democratic Governance and Accountability in Africa: In Search for a Workable Framework*, Discussion Paper 64, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala.
- O’Neil, Tammie; Foresti, Marta; Hudson, Alan (2007) *Evaluation of Citizens’ Voice and Accountability: Review of the Donor Literature and Donor Approaches*, London: DFID.
- Philip, Mark (2009) “Delimiting Democratic Accountability” *Political Studies*, Volume 57, pp. 28-53.
- Rakner, Lise; Rocha Menocal, Alina; Fritz, Verena (2007) *Democratisation’s Third Wave and the Challenges of Democratic Deepening: Assessing International Democracy Assistance and Lessons Learned*, Working Paper 1, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and Irish Aid.
- Rocha Menocal, Alina; Sharma, Bhavna (2008) *Joint Evaluation of Citizens’ Voice and Accountability: Synthesis Report*, London: DFID.
- Rocha Menocal, Alina; Rogerson, Andrew (2006) *Which Way the Future of Aid? Southern Civil Society Perspectives on Current Debates on Reform to the International Aid System*, Overseas Development Institute, London: ODI.
- Roque, Paula Cristina (2009) “Angola’s Façade Democracy” in Diamond, Larry; Plattner, Marc F., *Democratization in Africa: Progress and Retreat*, Second Edition, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Schedler, Andreas (1999) “Conceptualizing Accountability” in Schedler, Andreas; Diamond, Larry; Plattner, Marc F., *The Self-Restraining State: Power and Accountability in New Democracies*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.
- Sen, Amartya (1999) *Development as Freedom*, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sida (2009) “Action Plan on Aid Effectiveness 2009-2011”, Sida, Utrikesdepartementet,
- Smith, Steve; Owens, Patricia (2005) “Alternative Approaches to International Theory”, in Smith, Steve; Baylis, John, *The Globalization of World Politics*:

- An Introduction to International Relations*, Third Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stiglitz, Joseph (2004) “The Post Washington Consensus Consensus”, The initiative for Policy Dialogue.
- UNDP (2002) *Human Development report 2002: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World*, United Nations Development Programme.
- Unsworth, Sue (2009) “What’s Politics got to do with it?: Why Donors Find it so Hard to Come to Terms with Politics, and Why This Matters”, *Journal of International Development*, Number 21, pp. 883-894.
- Utrikesdepartementet (2010) “Förändring för Frihet: Policy för demokratisk utveckling och mänskliga rättigheter inom svenskt utvecklingsamarbete 2010–2014”, Available at: <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/108/a/155101>.
- Uvin, Peter (2007) “From the Right to Development to the Rights-Based Approach: How 'Human Rights' Entered Development”, *Development in Practice*, Volume 17, Number 4/5, pp. 597-606.
- Weisband, Edward; Ebrahim, Alnoor (2007) “Introduction: Forging global Accountabilities”, in Ebrahim, Alnoor; Weisband, Edward, *Global Accountabilities: Participation, Pluralism, and Public Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wenar, Leif (2006) “Accountability in International Development Aid”, *Ethics and International Affairs*, Volume 20, Number 1, pp. 1-23.
- Wood, Bernard; Kabell, Dorte; Muwanga, Nansori; Sagasti, Francisco (2008) Synthesis Report on the First Phase of the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration, Copenhagen, July 2008.
- Yilmaz, Hakan (2009) “The International Context” in Haerpfer, Christian W.; Bernhagen, Patrick; Inglehart, Ronald F.; Welzel, Christian, *Democratization*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Youngs, Richard (2008) “Trends in Democracy Assistance: What Has Europe Been Doing?”, *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 19, Number 2, pp. 160-169.