

Collaborative Governance

Mutual accountability and the role of civil society

Workshop - Civicus World Assembly
May 25th, 2007



AccountAbility

Development, power, interdependence



- **Changing landscape of actors**; globalization, decentralization, private sector, '*philantro-capitalists*', and civil society;
- **Development outcomes depend on coordination**; country variations and similarities, e.g. Brazil and Russia.
- **Awareness leading to rise of collaborative initiatives** - organize development delivery in health, infrastructure, finance, etc.
- **Growing recognition** that development is about mutual accountability for roles and responsibilities...
- **But a governance deficit** leads collaborative initiatives to under-perform, and turns cross-sector dialogues to participation fatigue;

Collaborative Initiatives (CI)



Cover the full range of formal and informal collaborations: *dialogues, alliances, public-private partnerships*

One or more organizations seek to collaborate based on:

1. **Synergistic goals and opportunities** to address particular issues that they cannot accomplish on their own; and
2. Whose organizations cannot acquire the **resources or competencies individually** through a market transaction.

A21 Report: What we found

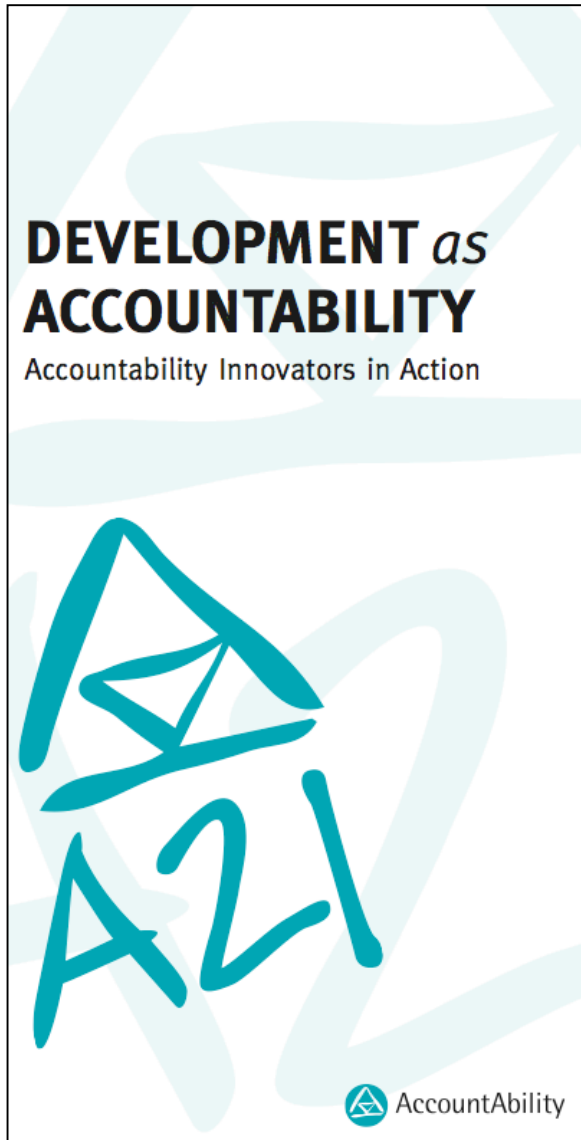


- **Partnerships are not inherently more accountable.** Asymmetric power between partners and competing accountabilities result in unexpected new forms of unaccountability. The right governance systems don't magically grow out of collaboration.
- **Building the collective voice of the poor is a major task.** Poor people understand and value accountability. But ensuring participation by the poor continues to be a major challenge for 'collaborative' projects. It requires *social and political organization of the poor*.

A21 Report: What we found



- **Gap of knowledge about collaborative governance:** e.g. when negotiating the design of public-private partnerships in the delivery of public services and infrastructure; involvement of southern civil society in new multi-billion dollar health partnerships; or corporations proposing the creation of new major development partnerships...
- **Collaborative governance** requires systems that encourage *mutual accountability* on shared roles and responsibilities among development actors, instead of one-way, bottom-to-top reporting and compliance systems. E.g. Moscow municipality or Brazilian Development Bank.



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In sum

- ✓ **Development outcomes require ‘strategic’ collaboration** between stakeholders;
- ✓ **It is difficult to manage a pool of competencies** and assets from private, public and civil society sectors to sustain and scale their joint value;
- ✓ **Only mutual accountability** can make interdependency work; there are power issues, different institutional cultures and ideologies;
- ✓ **Improving collaborative governance is key** to enable actors to work together effectively.

AccountAbility's Collaborative Governance Framework (CGF)

"The Collaborative Governance Framework (CGF) developed by AccountAbility is a user-friendly online tool for exploring and improving the accountability and effectiveness of collaborative initiatives. Developed and tested over three years by dozens of collaborative initiatives, the CGF assesses collaborative governance across six different domains, asking whether:"

1. **The stated vision, mission and goals** are the result of agreements between partners.
2. **The development strategy** has been adequately discussed between the partners and the risks and impacts assessed as they relate to all stakeholders involved. The input and views of ultimate beneficiaries are taken centrally into account in the strategy process.
3. **The governance mechanisms** are legitimately in place. An effective governing body evaluates not only the partnership's compliance but also discusses strategies and performance, based on transparent and participatory evaluations and feedback that give voice to intended beneficiaries and weaker partners.
4. **The performance** is monitored and evaluated according to indicators developed in consultation with intended beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Monitoring and evaluation results are used to encourage learning of all the partners and used by governing bodies to make strategic decisions. Report-back mechanisms establish clear lines of accountability for performance.
5. **The financial and asset integrity** is realized through procedures understood by all the partners and key stakeholders. Reports are clearly and transparently communicated through the governance mechanisms.
6. **The stakeholder engagement process** provides the basis to understand and respond to the views and concerns of critical groups, and subsequently informs the decisions and actions of the partners and the governing body. Engagement can be used to anticipate and manage risks, increase trust, gain knowledge of impacts and, therefore, drive performance.

Collaborative Governance



...are the structures, processes, rules and traditions through which decision-making power is exercised in collaborative initiatives.

Effective CIs embed mutual accountability in decision-making, from the definition of purpose, strategies, roles and responsibilities, financial integrity, evaluations and learning.

Variety of forms of “accountability compacts” between stakeholders, e.g. contracts, MoUs.

What's at stake for civil society



A new setting for NGO interventions; **A complex twin role:**

- **As advocates**, they must stay on top of fast-moving contracts between the state and the private sector. Traditional advocacy capabilities need to be adapted to a new institutional context.
- **As partners:** (a) Ensure their accountability to their beneficiaries to maintain legitimacy/leverage; (b) Safeguard the public interest of these partnerships, against private capture.

Recommendations



- **Partnership practitioners:** Make the time early on to design a governance system. It can begin simple. Role of a Collaborative Governance Framework;
- **Government regulators:** Ensure transparency and access to contracts and documents for **PPPs** and capacity building;
- **Donors/investors:** Ensure good governance of the Cis they fund or enter into.
- **Civil society: Use or develop good governance criteria for CIs both as partners as well as advocates, to ensure safeguarding of public interest;**
- **Standards institutions:** Include governance provisions for Cis, in the case where they are Cis themselves (FSC, EITI, etc.) ensure their governance systems are in accordance with governance criteria;



Where next?

Country Perspectives and debate

1. Are there similar challenges and opportunities across countries?
2. How to advance mutual accountability in development?
3. What is the role civil society has to play in ensuring good governance of collaborative initiatives?



Workshop Conclusions and Recommendations

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Conclusions - Recommendations (1)



- Need to address the risk of capture of civil society organizations that enter collaborative initiatives; what provisions can help NGOs deal with dilemma?
- ‘Accountability compacts’ are a useful way to thinking about collaborative mechanisms for accountability - need to develop criteria and examples of when/how they work.
- Vertical accountability mechanisms in government bureaucracies make mutual accountability difficult to achieve; legal framework for partnerships need to deal with the inadequacy of bureaucratic systems;
- Improving mutual accountability requires to overcome obstacles such as: differences in language/culture of partners, internal power struggles within participating organizations/sectors; and different development ideologies;
- Invest time early on the management framework for a partnership; include mutual accountability provisions, e.g. joint definition of indicators;
- Collaboration is extremely challenging because of power issues;

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Conclusions - Recommendations (2)



- Define better how/where to place beneficiaries in the accountability process of CIs when they are not sitting at the table as partners;
- Difficult to know for NGOs how far to go in demanding accountability of powerful partners without straining relationships; how to do it?
- Pay attention to the role of media in mobilizing incentives for mutual accountability for powerful institutions such as governments and business;
- Concept of 'interdependence' could be developed more in the debate of mutual accountability. It is a recognition that we need each other, and is different from compliance-based understandings of accountability such as in donor-NGO.
- Develop a more critical approach of who is recognized and included as a 'stakeholder' by a partnership, and ways to overcome the 'gatekeeper' partners to broader participation.
- Develop a way to address power issues playing in partnerships, from a sector, organizational and personal level;

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Conclusions - Recommendations (3)



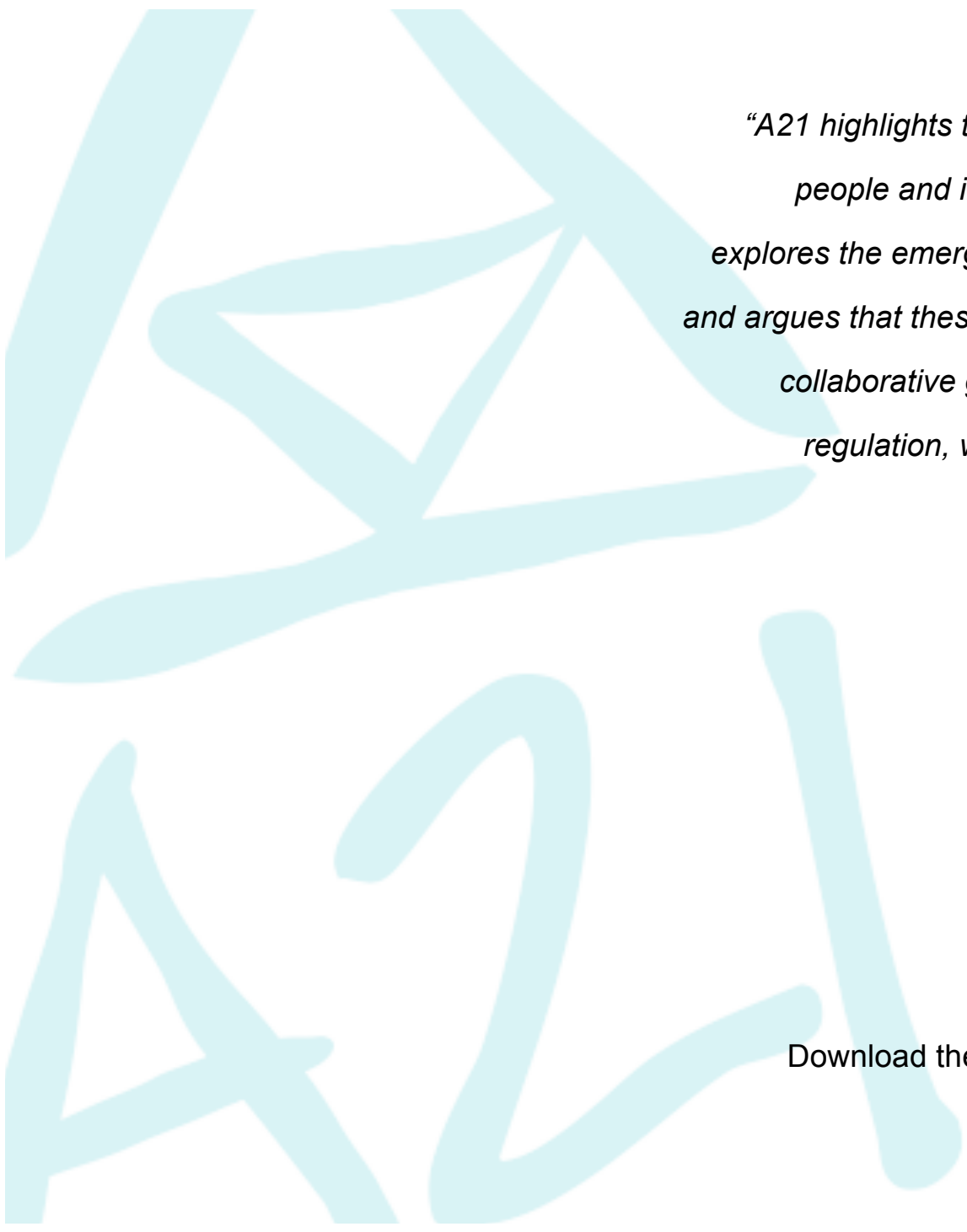
- Need to develop guidance on how to build mutual accountability provisions into regular NGO project proposals and activities; how to build more time for learning and stakeholder collaboration (not necessarily in formal partnerships);
- Useful to define collaborative governance as the building of institutional systems that can protect collaborative initiatives from weakening accountability and credibility;
- Explore further if successful relationships *weaken accountability*. Are CIs doomed to weaken when/if they succeed?
- The language used to describe mutual accountability creates its own incentives for actors; Debate whether the language of 'power' creates a zero-sum game; and is better to talk about 'incentives' for CG;
- Suggest informal governance mechanisms to broaden participation and inclusion of constituents to improve the legitimacy of formal governance of CIs (e.g. creation of advisory groups) - assess their effectiveness as accountability mechanisms

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Conclusions - Recommendations (4)



- Suggestion for AccountAbility to analyze CI case studies and provide guidance on issues raised; and demonstrate how ‘incentives’ for CG play out in different contexts; what are success factors for building ‘accountability compacts’?
- Research questions that are critical to explore:
 - What are the conditions under which a collaborative initiative transforms rather than reproduce existing power relationships?
 - How do collaborative initiatives define the ‘public interest’ and how they advance it, since many CIs can rather advance private interest of organizations, even NGOs;
 - What are the *incentives* for mutual accountability to work?
- Case studies should advance our understanding of power in CIs. For example, cases where confrontation is important to create the space for mutual accountability; the language of ‘collaboration’ can disguise vested interests that have the power to push agendas and exclude others; How can CI become inclusive of weaker voices; how can weaker actors and beneficiaries organized to change the terms of relationships?



“A21 highlights the need for seismic transformations in how people and institutions are effectively held to account. It explores the emergence of tomorrow’s forms of accountability and argues that these will be rooted in today’s experiments with collaborative governance, peer-2-peer networks and civil regulation, which cross sovereign, cultural and sectoral boundaries.”

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Download the A21 report from www.accountability21.net