Accountability in Global Economic Governance

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Abstract and Keywords

Contemporary theoretical debates surrounding accountability in global economic governance have often adopted a problem-focused analytical lens—centred on real-world political controversies surrounding the accountability of global governing authorities. This chapter explores four distinctive problems of global accountability for which empirical inquiry has usefully informed normative analysis: first, the problem of unaccountable power within global governance processes; second, the problem of decentred political authority in global governance; third, problems establishing appropriate foundations of social power through which normatively desirable transnational accountabilities can be rendered practically effective at multiple scales; finally, problems associated with the need to traverse significant forms of social and cultural difference in negotiating appropriate normative terms of transnational accountability relationships. In relation to each, this chapter examines how systematic engagement between empirical and normative modes of analysis can both illuminate the theoretical problem and inform practical political strategies for strengthening accountability in global economic governance.

Keywords: accountability, global economic governance, political authority, social power, cultural difference

RECENT decades have witnessed the meteoric rise of accountability as a concept, discourse, and political practice. The expansive embrace of accountability evident in national governance settings throughout the Anglosphere has extended to many domains of global governance, perhaps most strikingly in the fields of environmental and economic governance—the latter of which is the subject of this chapter. Global economic governance is interpreted broadly here to encompass cross-border governance of trade, finance, and direct investment flows, transnational business activity, and the financing of a broad range of international development activities.

Although definitions of accountability have proliferated, many prominent accounts of accountability have converged around a core understanding of accountability as a moral or institutional relationship in which one actor (or group of actors) is accorded entitlements to question, direct, sanction, or constrain the actions of another—thereby providing a

means of defining and enforcing obligations of answerability and responsiveness in public life (Macdonald 2014). From the perspective of the international political theorist—concerned broadly with normative questions about the organization of international political relationships—investigations of accountability are oriented towards specifying how transnational accountability mechanisms can structure and constrain the exercise of transnational governance authority in ways that oblige decision-makers to respond appropriately to the concerns of those they govern. To inform practical political action in this way, theories of global accountability must be capable of bringing normative analysis of political responsibility and its justification together with more materialist empirical analysis of both structural social power and real-world strategies of institutional design, operation, and reform.

Fortunately for the aspiring realist accountability theorist, international theoretical debates about accountability have rarely been afflicted with the detachment from "real-world" problems and politics that has been criticized in other domains of international theory. Normatively oriented analyses of transnational accountability have consistently taken as their starting point real-world accountability problems that have been concretely experienced and politically articulated by specific global constituencies (p. 454) (Freeden 2012; Miller 2016). Moreover, empirical analysis has often been used as a basis for informing analysis of the feasibility (see Chapter 48) or effectiveness of real-world accountability strategies—based on analysis variously of the capacities and motivations of key actors, institutional capacities, and functions, or enabling or constraining social conditions underpinning the establishment and maintenance of accountability practices in particular domains of economic governance. Also evident in small pockets of transnational accountability research have been more interpretive modes (see Chapter 1) of empirical inquiry, examining existing social beliefs and practices as a basis for informing analysis of constitutive questions concerning the meanings and normative purposes of transnational accountability.

The specific manner in which empirical inquiry has informed normative analysis has varied significantly in relation to transnational accountability problems of different kinds. To capture some of this variation, and associated implications for normative accounts of accountability, this chapter is organized around discussion of four distinctive problems of global accountability: first, the problem of unaccountable power within global governance processes; second, the problem of decentred political authority in global governance; third, problems establishing appropriate foundations of social power through which normatively desirable transnational accountabilities can be rendered practically effective at multiple scales; finally, problems associated with the need to traverse significant forms of social and cultural difference in negotiating appropriate normative terms of transnational accountability relationships.

The analysis that follows considers each of these four global accountability problems in turn, identifying for each how empirical and normative modes of analysis have been brought together to help illuminate the problem, and the implications of such realist analysis for practical prescriptions concerning the operation of global accountability.

These four global accountability problems are shown to be associated respectively with four kinds of institutional prescriptions: first, the need for established global authorities to recognize new categories of accountability holders, and establish corresponding accountability mechanisms; second, increased reliance on horizontal modes of accountability, alongside traditional accountability mechanisms; third, a strengthened focus on the social underpinnings of transnational accountability at multiple scales—entailing accountability strategies that draw social power not only from cross-border civil-society mobilization but also from engagement with a mix of grassroots and elite networks at national and sub-national levels; and fourth, approaches to negotiating cross-cultural accountability that are sensitive both to varying social and cultural beliefs and to the systems of material and ideological power in which these are embedded.

The Problem of Unaccountable Power in Global Economic Governance

One of the most fundamental and widely lamented problems of global accountability is the basic problem of unaccountable power in global economic governance. Perceived (p. 455) deficits in the accountability of established systems of global economic governance have been widely identified as a major source of illegitimacy (see Chapter 29).

Early global democratic literature addressing problems of accountability drew attention to structural accountability deficits resulting from the declining capacity of national democratic authorities to control key decisions affecting the lives of their citizens, in the face of powerful cross-border processes of economic and social interdependence associated with globalization. Effective democratic control at the national level was argued to be further undermined by the capacity of international bodies such as the IMF, economic policy-makers in influential nations such as the United States, or powerful transnational companies to directly influence the decisions of national governments, or to shape the structural environment in which national governments must act (Held 1995; 2009; Goodhart 2014). Identification of such structural accountability deficits was accompanied by calls for the creation of more expansively cosmopolitan forms of transnational governance authority, in which effective power would be more closely aligned with democratic responsibility at global scale (Held 2009).

Claims about the prevalence of global accountability deficits have drawn heavily on empirical analysis of the organization and exercise of global political power, and its effects on a wide range of individual and collective “stakeholders.” Such analyses have often focused on the power exerted over people’s lives by large, visible international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, or the World Trade Organization. Particularly from the early 1990s, such organizations were subjected to sustained condemnation by well-organized networks of global civil-society actors, demanding that they become more accountable to the communities and populations around the world affected by their decisions (O’Brien, Goetz, Scholte, and Williams 2000). While such global governance organizations have always had clear lines of accountability to member

states (Grant and Keohane 2005; Woods and Narlikar 2001), the demand from these civil society organizations was for more overtly democratic forms of accountability, encompassing a range of affected constituencies situated within and between individual member states (Grant and Keohane 2005; Goodhart 2014; Fox and Brown 1998).

While theoretical accounts of accountability deficits associated with these highly visible global governance actors have closely mirrored patterns of real-world political mobilization and claim-making, other global governance scholars have employed critical empirical analysis of power and authority as a means of revealing accountability deficits that have been publicly obscured, and correspondingly associated with more limited forms of political mobilization demanding strengthened accountability. For example, such analyses have highlighted accountability deficits associated with systems of private governance that exert significant yet often opaque forms of influence over global economic activity through formulating regulatory standards in areas such as international accounting standards or banking and financial regulation (Rudder 2008; Cutler, Haufler, and Porter 1999). Scholars of networked governance and global administrative law have likewise sought to bring greater visibility and scrutiny to sometimes neglected, yet influential, structures of global economic governance authority (p. 456) such as transnational networks of government officials and regulators (Slaughter 2004; Chesterman 2008).

Sustained scrutiny and condemnation of unaccountable power in global economic governance has been associated with innumerable reforms that have been portrayed as means of strengthening accountability to affected people. Private and multi-stakeholder governance systems have been established in many sectors to regulate the operations of large transnational companies and other influential participants in their global supply chains, and to provide grievance-handling channels for those affected by their operations. In response to periods of intense civil-society pressure over the past two to three decades, prominent multilateral development finance organizations such as the World Bank have increasingly acknowledged the need for their decisions to be answerable to an expanding array of “stakeholders” outside their own organizations, through increased transparency, strengthened dialogue with external stakeholders, and provision of access to grievance procedures for project-affected people (Suzuki and Nanwani 2005; Park 2010). However, the initiation and consolidation of such accountability systems across the multiple development finance organizations that operate around the world has been extremely uneven. Significant accountability gaps persist, and in some instances there is even evidence of established accountability safeguards unwinding. Such trends reflect the fragile power of pro-accountability coalitions at the global level, and the strong cross-pressures that confront global development finance agencies, as they seek to balance obligations to multiple stakeholders with competing interests and values, across widely varying political environments (Macdonald and Miller-Dawkins 2015).

Accountability for Decentred Political Authority

Another significant challenge highlighted by theorists of global accountability is the difficulties of holding to account the diffuse, opaque, and dynamic forms of power exercised through networked and other non-hierarchical structures of global economic governance. Characterization of global economic governance as multi-layered or decentred is now commonplace. Such depictions reflect the messy overlaying of multiple political authorities encompassing national and sub-national governments, alongside intergovernmental bodies, private and multi-stakeholder organizations, and looser forms of networked coordination (Zurn 2010; Krisch 2006).

Such decentred governance structures are frequently associated with the diffusion of authority and with blurred lines of responsibility. Attendant accountability challenges have perhaps most commonly been highlighted in relation to networked forms of global governance. For example, Benner, Reinicke, and Witte (2004) examined distinctive challenges of accountability associated with multi-sectoral public policy networks in a number of policy fields, including the regulation of global labour standards. In such (p. 457) networks, the absence of a single clear principal or stakeholder constituency to whom networks should be accountable creates challenges of obscured responsibility and pervasive blame avoidance. Bäckstrand's analysis of networked climate governance similarly highlighted the challenges associated with a plurality of principals in networked global governance processes, encompassing states, citizens, NGOs, and other actors (Bäckstrand 2008). Anne-Marie Slaughter's study of intergovernmental global governance networks documented numerous challenges associated with weak transparency, lack of representative authority, difficulties in regulating power imbalances between network participants, and the risk of domination by special interests or technical experts (Slaughter 2004).

Challenges of this kind have motivated numerous prescriptions for strengthening accountability within networked and multi-layered governance systems. Slaughter (2004) proposed several means of strengthening networked accountability, including increased visibility and accessibility of intergovernmental networks, greater direct participation of stakeholders, using government networks to mobilize non-governmental actors, and empowerment of sub-national government units to participate in transnational processes (Slaughter 2004). Benner et al. (2004) advocated mechanisms of collective accountability that would mitigate risks of blame avoidance by promoting multiple, horizontal checks and balances amongst network participants, drawing on a mix of reputational, market, legal, and peer-based accountability mechanisms (see also Bäckstrand 2008).

Such prescriptions for the strengthened accountability of networked global governance have often been extended more broadly to other decentred global governance arrangements. Many scholars of global accountability have called for the pluralization of accountability mechanisms beyond traditional constitutional or representative models, to also encompass horizontal accountability mechanisms such as courts and other oversight or re-

view bodies, auditors, ombudsmen and complaints mechanisms, transparency and disclosure requirements, and monitoring and evaluation systems (Black 2008; Woods and Narlikar 2001; Slaughter 2004). Practical examples of such initiatives are abundant. Professional and peer review mechanisms are widely used to oversee economic policy-making processes within the OECD. Transparency, market, and reputational mechanisms of accountability are commonly deployed as means of enabling investors or consumers to hold companies to account for their social and environment practices, or to enable bond and equity holders to call to account national governments or multilateral agencies whose activities they help to finance (Koenig-Archibugi 2010). Such accountability mechanisms are often viewed as means of making global economic governance processes more reasoned and publicly justified, if not necessarily democratic (Chesterman 2008; Kingsbury 2004).

Multi-layered systems of governance and accountability are also often associated with highly intermediated accountability arrangements, in which “surrogates” or “proxies” hold decision-makers to account, nominally on behalf of primary accountability holders (Rubenstein 2007; Koenig-Archibugi and Macdonald 2013). Such third-party intermediaries play important roles in shaping or endorsing standards, receiving (p. 458) information about compliance, and sanctioning those who wield power. Intermediated accountability relationships of this kind are particularly common where normatively recognized principals of transnational accountability relationships lack sufficient information, power, or institutional access to enforce accountability obligations directly. Proxy accountability roles are commonly taken on by NGOs or other civil-society actors, who claim to act on behalf of others—whether on the basis of a direct representative mandate or on their own initiative. Reliance on intermediated accountability relationships poses distinctive risks and dilemmas with regard to the accountability of intermediaries to ultimate principals—particularly when such actors have not been explicitly authorized to act in such roles, and where their own organizational values or interests diverge from those of the people they claim to represent. Such risks highlight the need for greater attention to the quality of accountability processes throughout the complex chains of accountability that are frequently required to regulate decentred processes of global governance.

Theorists of transnational accountability have also sometimes highlighted the dynamic and interactive character of multi-layered processes of global economic governance. Such dynamism generates additional challenges in identifying appropriate targets of accountability claims, and establishing institutionalized means of linking decision-makers to those they affect. The highly dynamic character of transnational and local political dynamics can make it particularly difficult to identify changing groups of actors who are indirectly affected by decisions taken in multiple, interacting forums. Such challenges suggest the need for accountability mechanisms that are equipped to enable ongoing contestability, revision, and review regarding stakeholder entry and exit, and to accommodate appropriate forms of recognition and voice for indirectly affected stakeholders.

Multi-scale Social Strategies of Accountability

In any context, accountability strategies need to be analysed not only with reference to formal political institutions but also in relation to wider regimes of power in which formal accountability arrangements are embedded. In a transnational context, where governance institutions tend to be more weakly institutionalized—lacking the coercive backing of state authority, the perennial challenge for accountability institutions of establishing an adequate grounding in material social power to regulate the behaviour of political authorities becomes all the more salient. This practical challenge demands realist empirical analysis of how regimes of accountability actually function over both the local and the global scales at which accountability processes are implemented in global economic governance.

(p. 459) Explicit empirical analysis of the social power relations that underpin and structure real-world accountability practices has been particularly widespread amongst scholars focused on the role of global civil society in shaping evolving regimes of accountability (Scholte 2004; Fox and Brown 1998). Such analysis has also been common amongst scholars of what has sometimes been called “social accountability”—a broad cluster of accountability approaches promoted by international development organizations with the stated aim of strengthening the capacity of citizens and civil-society organizations to pressure political authorities to respond to the needs or voices of those they claim to serve (McGee and Gaventa 2010). Such studies have identified factors at national, sub-national, and global scales that enable and constrain the capacity of accountability systems to empower citizens to make effective demands on decision-makers. Such factors include characteristics of citizen capacities and rights awareness; civil-society resources, networks, and strategies; political and civic culture and freedoms; state, media, and party institutions; and structures of informal elite relationships and interests.

Empirical scholarship examining transnational corporate accountability has likewise been informed by extensive analysis of the social power relations that underpin accountability regimes at multiple scales (Garvey and Newell 2005). Yet many of the most influential analyses of corporate accountability in the field of international political theory have remained more narrowly focused on the political confrontations between transnational companies and affected people and their civil-society supporters that have played out on the global stage (Koenig-Archibugi 2004; Utting 2008). International political theorists have given less attention to analysing the interplay between these global accountability processes and institutions, and the behaviour of transnational businesses and regulatory authorities at national and sub-national levels.

To be effective, accountability institutions that seek to regulate the power of transnational companies over people’s lives require the capacity to constrain local as well as global systems of social and political power. In the absence of such capacity, Bartley (2010) has shown how systems of business accountability pursued through transnational certification systems can be systematically undermined by resistance from networks of international investors, local companies, and powerful state elites at national and sub-national

levels. Similar challenges confront the operation of independent accountability mechanisms such as ombudsmen or complaint systems linked to international financial institutions or multi-stakeholder governance systems (Miller-Dawkins, Macdonald, and Marshall 2016). Analysis of such social-power dynamics demands detailed forms of empirical "thick description" that can shed light on the micro-politics of organizational interests, networks, and ideologies shaping the behaviour of actors in specific social and political settings (Ebrahim 2009; Olsen 2015). Yet such micro-level political ethnography is often largely absent from the more aerial views of transnational accountability on which international political theorists tend to focus.

Where multi-scale empirical analysis of transnational accountability regimes has been undertaken, it has generated distinctive insights into appropriate prescriptions for the design and operation of transnational accountability. For example, such analyses have highlighted the need for formal accountability systems associated with (p. 460) international financial institutions or multi-stakeholder certification schemes to be supplemented by more diffuse social-empowerment initiatives at the local level, in order to provide affected people with requisite information, resources, relationships, and bargaining power to make practical use of formally available accountability mechanisms (Miller-Dawkins et al. 2016). In some contexts, establishing an effective power base to support the practical operation of transnational accountability systems requires building alliances or coalitions that include established elites at national and sub-national levels. However, in circumstances where such elites are hostile to the mobilization and empowerment of grassroots civil-society organizations, such strategies can risk reinforcing or legitimizing established patterns of power and exclusion at the local level (Hughes 2007; Rodan and Hughes 2012). Making strategic prescriptive judgements about appropriate trade-offs between competing strategies of institutional empowerment demands detailed, contextually responsive forms of empirical analysis.

Cross-cultural Accountabilities

Another important challenge of accountability in a global governance context is that accountability institutions must frequently operate cross-culturally. Such cross-cultural accountability relationships commonly arise in fields of global economic governance such as transnational business regulation and international development finance, where essentially liberal models of accountability are promoted by companies, NGOs, governments, or global governance institutions in countries lacking liberal-democratic political traditions and cultures.

Establishing transnational accountability relationships that can be broadly recognized as legitimate in any setting demands negotiation of some mutual understanding regarding the meaning and purposes of the accountability arrangements being sought. It also requires some minimal normative agreement between the parties with regard to the constitutive terms of these relationships—that is, specification of the entitlements and obligations that the accountability relationships confer. Where transnational accountability rela-

tionships are established between political systems and cultural settings in which diverse understandings of the meanings and purposes of accountability are prevalent, this frequently creates challenges of cross-cultural misunderstanding and disagreement surrounding efforts to negotiate transnational accountability relationships on terms that parties are able to mutually understand and normatively commit to.

One common dimension of this challenge entails obstacles to establishing the conceptual legibility of imported accountability discourses in political and cultural settings that lack strong liberal-democratic histories and traditions. It has often been observed that the term "accountability" has Anglo linguistic origins, and in many languages there is no straightforward translation of the word. It is commonly translated either narrowly around notions of financial accounting or in terms of broader ideas of responsibility (Bovens 2007). While straightforward linguistic problems of translation may be (p. 461) overcome quite readily in settings where the liberal values and practices that the term invokes are familiar, problems of conceptual legibility run deeper where linguistic barriers are underpinned also by incompatibilities of social practices, power relations, and other lived realities to which the language and concept of accountability refer. For example, as demonstrated in research on accountability practices in the Cambodian development sector, in authoritarian political regimes in which ordinary people have few experiences of a responsible and accountable state, and few practical institutional protections for individual rights, the term can lose not only normative salience but also deeper forms of intelligibility for many people (ANSA 2010).

Even where overt normative disagreements about appropriate relationships between citizens and governing authorities are not highly salient, such forms of conceptual and ontological difference can generate significant forms of what global anthropologist Anna Tsing has called "friction," as incompatible rationalities encounter one another through shared practice (Tsing 2011). To continue the above example of internationally financed development projects operating within Cambodia's neo-patrimonial political regime, liberal accountability norms grounded in assumptions about individual rights and democratic citizenship promote normative assumptions that differ significantly from locally influential norms regarding the grounding of legitimate authority in traditional virtues of wisdom, honesty, fairness, respect for social rules, and capacity to deliver results (Macdonald et al. 2016; ANSA 2010). Such difference need not result in overt disagreement. Practices such as participatory community meetings to consult on the expenditure of international donor funds—often promoted as part of transnational accountability agendas—are often at least superficially compatible with established community decision-making processes based around village meetings. Nonetheless, participants in such transnational accountability practices often understand their meaning, purpose, and sources of legitimacy in different ways—for example, donors may view them as vehicles for individual and community empowerment, while local government or village leaders regard such participatory processes as valuable primarily insofar as they enable government authorities and citizens to work together to achieve development goals.

Though such forms of “awkward engagement” (Tsing 2011) need not preclude productive engagement in shared practices, they can generate significant patterns of misunderstanding. Theorizing such cross-cultural accountability challenges demands realist analysis of an interpretive character—drawing on “empirically ascertainable manifestations of political and ideological practices” at vernacular as well as elite levels, as a basis for enabling political theory to be sensitive to facts about beliefs and normative commitments in a particular context (Freeden 2012: 1).

Cross-cultural communication challenges have been extensively explored by political theorists in many contexts—perhaps most prominently in relation to debates about multiculturalism and pluralism in democratic societies (Taylor 1994; Dallmayr 1996)—yet they have rarely been applied to analyses of transnational accountability. Drawing on these broader theoretical insights, recognition of cross-cultural accountability challenges suggests the potential value of parties to cross-cultural accountability (p. 462) relationships engaging in critical processes of cross-cultural dialogue and learning—seeking actively to understand the differing assumptions and aspirations of others, to reflect on their own positions of relative power, and to consider calling some basic convictions into question through processes of mutual learning, adjustment of moral standards, and development of new vocabularies of comparison (Taylor 1994). When significant “frictions” between different rationalities and practices persist, ongoing joint participation in shared accountability practices can contribute further to building shared vocabularies, and mutually intelligible and valuable practices of accountability—building at least some partial basis for negotiating hybrid accountability practices that may be appropriate in particular contexts of transnational encounter.

While such dialogue- and practice-based approaches to building cross-cultural accountabilities can help to build shared understandings of what is reasonable and valuable (Van Der Stoep 2004), cross-cultural frictions take on a more overtly conflictual character when contrasting vocabularies and rationalities are underscored by conflicting interests and power struggles amongst participants in transnational accountability encounters. In Cambodia, transnational accountability agendas have been particularly contentious when they have entailed support for accountability claims by poor communities concerning the use of land and natural resources, in which local political elites are heavily invested. In resisting forms of transnational accountability supported by foreign NGOs, it is common for local elites to invoke local cultural norms as means of delegitimizing transnational accountability claims. For example, paternalistic norms that stress the responsibility of leaders to promote collective processes of development have been invoked as a basis for legitimizing the repression of community dissent to the activities of foreign investors or large-scale economic development projects (Rodan and Hughes 2012). With powerful elites seeking to represent traditional values in ways that serve the reinforcement of prevailing power relations, the ideological character of representations of “authentic” local beliefs and normative commitments complicates efforts to engage in cross-cultural interpretation and dialogue—blurring the lines between cultural friction and more materialist conflicts of power and interest. Realist analyses of such power struggles highlight the need for cross-cultural dialogue to be critically attentive to questions of whose interests

are served by particular representations of local culture, and the ways in which social and ideological power shape competing representations of cultural norms in negotiations surrounding the terms of transnational accountabilities.

Concluding Reflections

The accountability challenges mapped above reflect a real world of global economic governance and accountability which is culturally diverse, multi-layered, and very unevenly institutionalized. Such challenges demand distinctive theoretical and methodological approaches to the task of developing action-guiding, normative accounts of what accountability in global economic governance ought to look like.

(p. 463) Prescriptively, the analysis presented above has underlined the value of accountability arrangements that are multi-layered and pluralist—both in the sense of recognizing multiple sites of global authority and associated accountability constituencies, and in the sense of encompassing a plural array of institutional forms, embracing horizontal alongside more traditional hierarchical mechanisms of accountability. It has pointed to the need for explicit strategies of social mobilization and coalition-building as a basis for establishing the material social power required to render transnational accountability systems functionally effective and politically sustainable. And it has highlighted the importance of fostering forms of cross-cultural dialogue in the negotiation of transnational accountability relationships that are sufficiently open and adaptable to accommodate cultural difference, while also reflecting critically on how representations of culturally salient meanings and purposes of accountability are themselves embedded within broader regimes of social power.

The forms of empirical evidence required to inform such prescriptive analysis have been shown to be highly variable—encompassing analysis of the feasibility or effectiveness of different accountability strategies, and existing beliefs and practices concerning the meanings and normative purposes of transnational accountability in particular contexts. Such evidence has been developed and applied in quite uneven ways to transnational accountability problems of different kinds. In general, existing literature on transnational accountability has tended to focus more on the macro-level empirical study of formal institutions of authority and accountability than on the micro-level study of more diffuse and decentred processes of cultural beliefs and practices, social power, and sub-national dynamics of informal political power. More systematic study of transnational social processes at micro as well as macro scales could usefully inform the development of realist prescriptions for transnational accountability systems better suited to the complexities of contemporary global economic governance.

How then might we reflect on our invitation as contributors to engage in renewed contemplation of the vocation and basic purpose of international political theory? If we understand such theory as oriented towards critical appraisal and prescription of political institutions and wider political practices, then this contribution has sought to show how analysis of accountability in international theory can be enriched by the tighter integra-

tion of empirical and normative approaches of diverse kinds. Empirical and normative scholars need each other, or both risk straying from the central political problems of their day. In seeking to maintain such engagement, normative scholars may sometimes simply borrow empirical insights from established bodies of empirically oriented political research in related fields. However, the specific kinds of facts that normative theorists reach for in seeking both to interpret established social practices and to make predictions about the consequences of feasible and accessible political and institutional strategies do not always map onto bodies of empirical research that have been developed for quite different purposes. Such mismatches have meant that to date, the capacity of realist analysis to adapt to the differentiated accountability problems that confront architects of global economic governance has remained limited in important ways.

(p. 464) Rising interest in realist modes of political theory have led numerous political theorists to "go public to fault their subdiscipline for its flaws" for failing to engage adequately with empirical analysis (Honig and Stears 2011: 177). It is rarer to see empirical-accountability scholars engage in similar self-castigation for failing to shape their research agendas and methodological approaches in accordance with the demands of their normatively oriented colleagues. Yet engagement between normative and empirical scholars needs to run in both directions. Such engagement is necessary not only to ensure that available empirical facts can be incorporated appropriately into normative theory development, but also so that required empirical insights can be identified and acquired in the first place. Deep, two-way engagement between normative and empirical sub-fields of political inquiry is needed to inform both the imagination and the realization of transnational accountability systems capable of pressuring global economic governance actors to respond to the needs or desires of those they govern.

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