

Accountability



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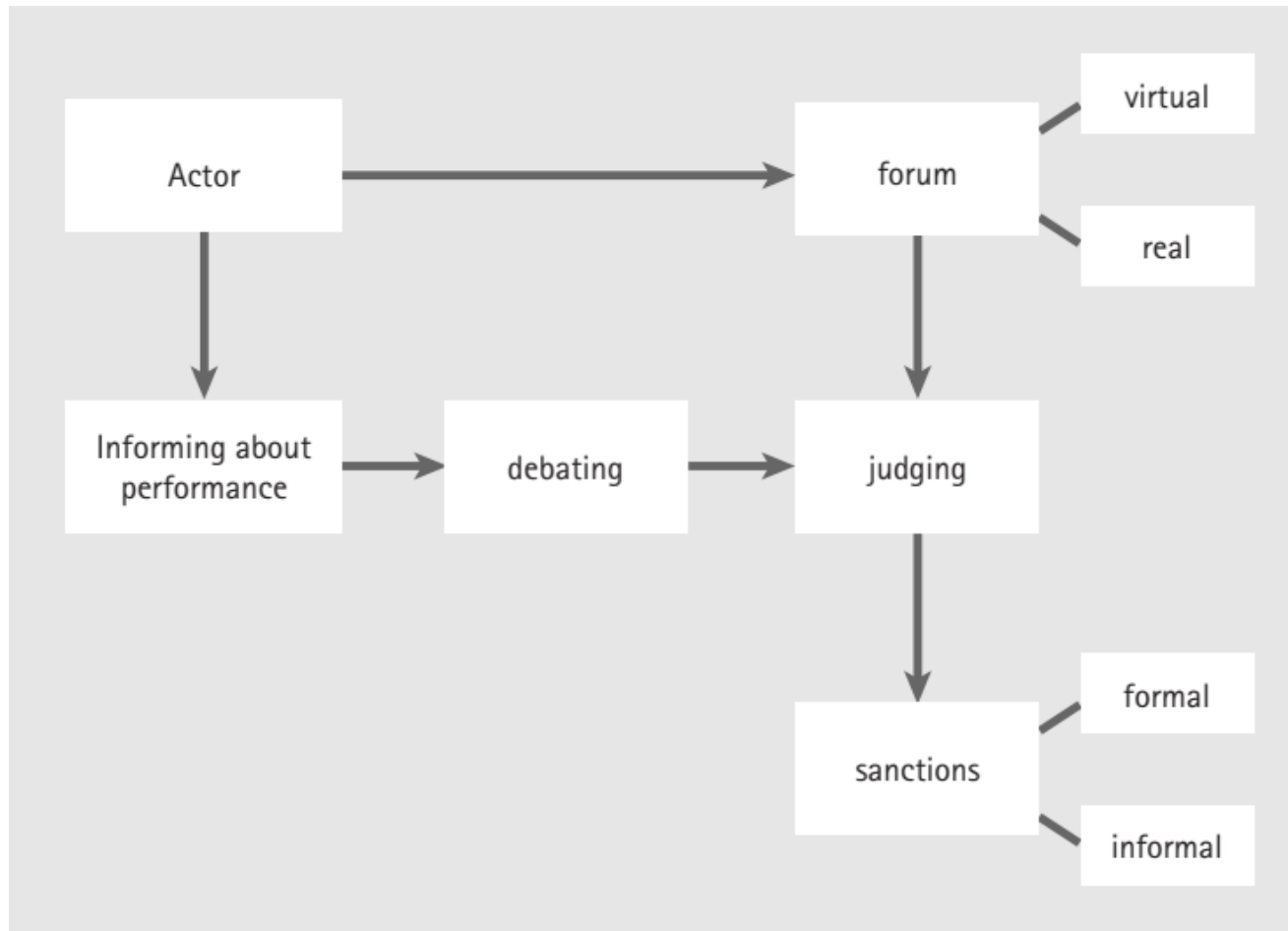
Accountability

- Accountability can be defined as a **social relationship** in which **an actor feels an obligation to explain and to justify** his or her conduct to some **significant other**.
- Two key factors:
 - ▣ Actor or accountor
 - ▣ Significant other-accountability forum or accontee

Elements of an accountability system

- The relationship between the actor and the forum, usually consists of at least **three** elements :
 - ▣ First of all, the actor must feel **obliged to inform the forum about his conduct**
 - ▣ Secondly, the information can prompt the forum to **interrogate** the actor and to **question the adequacy of the information** or the legitimacy of the conduct.
 - ▣ Thirdly, the forum usually **passes judgment** on the conduct of the actor.

Accountability mechanisms



Types of accountability

Based on the nature of the forum

- Political accountability
- Legal accountability
- Administrative accountability
- Professional accountability
- Social accountability

Based on the nature of the actor

- Corporate accountability
- Hierarchical accountability
- Collective accountability
- Individual accountability

Based on the nature of the conduct

- Financial accountability
- Procedural accountability
- Product accountability

Based on the nature of the obligation

- Vertical accountability
- Diagonal accountability
- Horizontal accountability

Based on the nature of the forum

- **Political** Accountability: *Elected Representatives, Political Parties, Voters, Media*
- **Legal** Accountability: *Courts*
- **Administrative** Accountability: *Auditors, Inspectors and Controllers*
- **Professional** Accountability: *Professional Peers*
- **Social** Accountability: *Interest Groups, Charities and Other Stakeholders*

Based on the nature of the actor

- **Corporate** Accountability: *The Organisation as Actor*
- **Hierarchical** Accountability: *One for All* (Minister for Ministry)
- **Collective** Accountability: *All for One* (applicable for small public bodies).
- **Individual** Accountability: *Each for Himself*

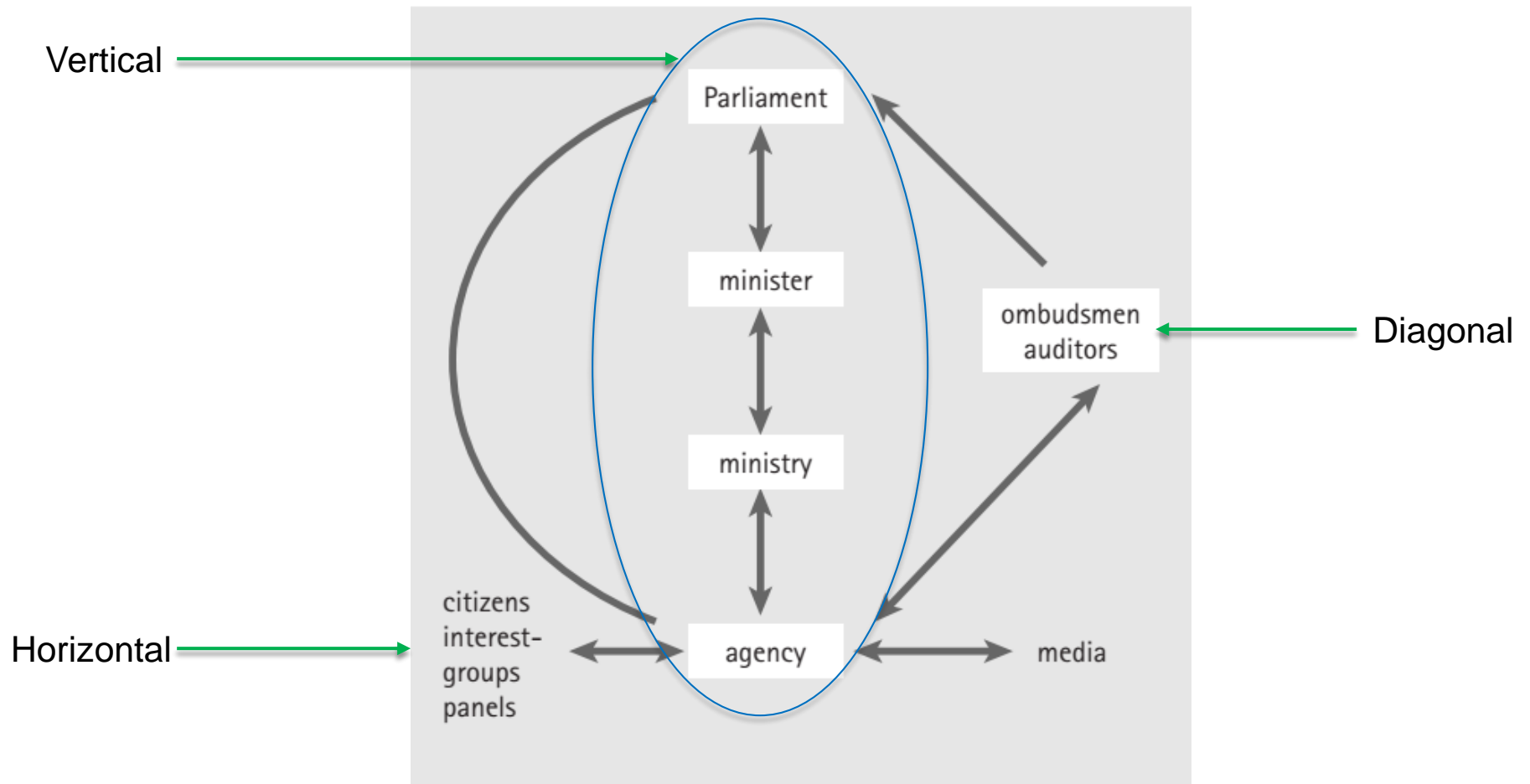
Based on the nature of the conduct

- *Financial-Efficiency, effectiveness and equity*
- *Procedural- comply the existing procedural steps.*
- *Product-labeling, date, elements etc.*

Based on the nature of the obligation

- **Vertical** accountability refers to the situation where the forum formally wields power over the actor, perhaps due to the **hierarchical relationship between actor and forum**
- **Horizontal** accountability-mutual accountability between **bodies standing on equal footing**; it also consist the accountability to the general public.
- **Diagonal** accountability-ombudsmen, audit offices which stand in no direct hierarchical relationship.

Based on the nature of the obligation



Excess of Accountability

- Accountably may be **good but too much may generate problems-** accountability **dilemma** or accountability **paradox**.
- Rule-obsessed organizations turn the timid into cowards and the bold into outlaws.

Functions and dysfunctions of public accountability Functions

Functions	Dysfunctions
Democratic control	Rule-obsession
Integrity	Proceduralism
Improvement	Rigidity
Legitimacy	Politics of scandal
Catharsis	Scapegoating

Suggested readings

- Bovens, M. (2007). Analysing and assessing accountability: A conceptual framework 1. *European law journal*, 13(4), 447-468.
- Bovens, M. (2014). Public accountability, Chapter 8. in Bovens, M., Schillemans, T., & Goodin, R. E. (2014). Public accountability. *The Oxford handbook of public accountability*.

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