

# On Global Accountability: A Theoretical Revisit to Accountability Mechanisms for Development Partnerships\*

TAEKYOON KIM | SEOUL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

*This study sets out to conduct a theoretical analysis on the institutional utility of accountability for sustaining development partnerships. The two contradictable points are observable when it comes to the linkage between accountability and development partnerships: while accountability mechanisms are seen as an essential apparatus to make development partnerships more transparent and sustainable, they confront the internal politicization deteriorating the democratic nature of accountability and even creating buck-passing. With this dilemma, it is aimed to find the third way of ontological perceptions on accountability by not only reframing it in terms of the Foucauldian governmentality, but also triggering its conceptual transformation from procedural accountability to relational accountability in order to align its theoretical tenets with practical efficacy.*

**Keywords:** *accountability, governmentality, development partnership, procedural accountability, relational accountability, perverse incentive*

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## Introduction

International development efforts are at the crossroads where the old era of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) came to an end in 2015 and the global search for the '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' is now culminating in a new roadmap of development effectiveness and sustainable development beyond 2015. In this historic transition, the two fronts of development paradigms, particularly as implementation mechanisms to achieve the post-2015 new goals, keep receiving greater attentions from all actors involved in development aid: first, multi-stakeholder partnerships for development cooperation; and second, mutual accountability holding development partners to be responsible for their performances (United Nations 2013a, 2015). There is no doubt that both issues are taken into consideration as essential conditions in order to facilitate and implement international development cooperation in various areas of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and harness systematic platforms to better respond and meet needs of developing countries.

However, linking aid accountability with development partnerships remains still unexplored domains of international politics as well as development studies. The long presence of economic downturns in leading donor countries has hampered their efforts to increase the volume of official development assistance (ODA) or even maintain the status quo. Under these circumstances, new development actors such as private firms, civil society organizations (CSOs), and philanthropic foundations have been spotlighted as alternative partners. Among the many challenges arising from the increased importance of multiple stakeholders and privatization are those of accountability and transparency (Reeves 2013; Steets 2010). The shift towards greater non-state sector involvement in public service delivery at the global level weakens the thread of accountability between aid-givers, aid-receivers, and public authorities responsible for aid disbursement, such as intergovernmental aid organizations. Accordingly, the rise in popularity of development partnerships requires well-developed institutional frameworks that incorporate formal accountability mechanisms calling upon all partners to be accountable for their behaviours (Kim and Lim 2016; Goetz and Jenkins 2005). Without institutional guarantees of risk management, development partners would lose incentives for their engagements in development partnerships.

In this regard, this study sets out to answer the following two questions: (1) is partnership accountability a necessary condition for making development partnerships sustainable?; and (2) does the accountability for partnership

need to be always necessarily governed in a democratic way? Many international aid organizations are looking at how to become more accountable to internal and external stakeholders in a systematic way in order to better respond to needs and consolidate development partnerships. Indeed, numerous initiatives have been developed for identifying methodologies, standards and criteria to adapt to changing needs throughout the program cycle and achieve greater accountability. This study, therefore, focuses on the first question by investigating why accountability is a fundamental institutional foundation for nurturing development partnerships, which is able to base collective action to curb buck-passing across all agencies participating in development partnerships.

The second analytical frontline that this study takes lies in accountability politics. Accountability politics, defined here as the arena of conflict over whether and how those in power are held publicly responsible for their decisions, involves challenging who is accountable to whom, as both principals and agencies become actors taking dual roles simultaneously (Grant and Keohane 2005; Collier 2011). Accountability politics provides the conceptual lens through which this study explores the rugged landscapes of power, voice, and exit in the terrain of development partnerships (Ackerman 2004). Consequently, an institutional effort to enhance accountability for more transparent management of development partnerships does not always result in the establishment and consolidation of democratic accountability mechanisms. Embedding mutual accountability into democratic politics of development partnerships often remains as an inherently contested, politically misled, and practically ineffectual process. Rather, the *rationality* of political authorities governing development partnerships—the Foucault effect of governmentality—overweighs the importance of how democratic accountability mechanisms for development partnerships should be (Gordon 1991).

This study proceeds in four steps with the particular emphasis on conceptual and theoretical aspects of the accountability-partnership nexus. First, it reconsiders the definitional ethos and practice of both accountability and development partnerships. Second, it explores the underlying mechanism of institutional processes in advancing accountability as an essential platform for regulating collective action problems and reinforcing sustainable development partnerships. The third section further deals with non-democratic tenets of accountability mechanisms in the terrain of power-based intertwinements of development partners. Fourth, the theoretical revisit to the rational-choice institutionalism via both the Foucauldian

governmentality and sociological perspectives of the new institutionalism is undertaken to enhance the appropriateness of the linkage between accountability and development partnerships. Such a theoretical hybrid experiment offers the *third* way of combining the how of governing on the basis of global governmentality and the isomorphic institutionalization of accountability mechanisms within the frame of development partnerships.

### Reconceptualizing Accountability and Partnerships: The Complexity of Multiple Actors, Resource Scarcity and Aid Partnership

As Francis Fukuyama (2011, 2014) aptly asserts, the historical evolution of authentic political regimes, from tribal societies through modern states in Europe to the contemporary globalised world, demonstrates political accountability commonly as a crucial foundation of institutional legitimization. In the field of international development, the Paris Declaration of 2005 clearly stipulated 'mutual accountability' as one of the five key principles for aid effectiveness, and the cruciality of accountability was reconfirmed by the Busan High-level Forum IV on Aid Effectiveness in 2011. New and traditional development players have been working more proactively together to build accountability mechanisms that are not only compliance driven but also led by a commitment to shared learning and responsibility, and a focus on building local capacity, assets, and political voice for the poor themselves in developing countries. Development aid has been increasingly under scrutiny with increasing demands for accountable results (Brown 2007).

However, the notion of (mutual) accountability *per se* remains to be slippery with its conceptual loopholes that lack sophisticated components of it (Mulgan 2000). Given that measuring procedures of accountability, unlike the other four principles of the Paris Declaration, have not been cemented as a mature stepping stone to augment the aid effectiveness, the accountability principle has been cynically labelled as the 'orphan pillar' of the Paris Declaration (AusAid 2008). A veritable enterprise of definitions emerges from scholarly attempts to frame accountability in the following terms: "the means by which individuals and organizations report to a recognised authority (or authorities) and are held responsible for their actions" (Edwards and Hulme 1996, p. 967), "the process of holding actors responsible for actions" (Brown and Fox 1998, p. 440), "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, p. 5), and “the right to hold other actors to a set of standards, to judge whether they have fulfilled their responsibilities in light of these standards, and to impose sanctions if they determine that these responsibilities have not been met” (Grant and Keohane 2005, p. 29).

Avoiding wasting semantic debates over accountability, this study scrutinises the three main components commonly applied for defining accountability: responsibility, answerability, and enforceability (United Nations 2013b). First, responsibility is referred as to the clear delineation of mandates in the sense that those in positions of authority have clearly defined duties and performance standards, enabling their behaviours to be assessed transparently and objectively. In brief, it involves the clear demarcation of who is responsible for which commitments, via the MOU, policy dialogues, due diligence program and so forth. Second, answerability requires that public officials and institutions provide reasoned justifications for their actions and decisions to those they affect, including the public at large, voters who invest public officials with authority and institutions mandated to provide oversight. Normally, the answerability component is achievable by enhancing transparency via database sharing, informational sharing, mutual assessments, development assistance database (DAD), monitoring & evaluation, etc. Third, enforceability requires public institutions to put mechanisms in place that inspect the degree to which public officials and institutions comply with established standards, impose sanctions on officials who do not comply, and ensure that appropriate corrective and remedial action are taken when required. The Inspection Panel of the World Bank or the Compliance Review Mechanism of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) shows a typical pattern of enforceability for resettlement procedures throughout institutionalised penalties.

All three components can be lined up in accordance with the maturity degree of accountability mechanisms (Kim and Lim 2016). An unfledged stage of accountability mechanisms tends to introduce responsibility as a core initial foundation to hold development actors to be accountable. Subsequently, answerability requires more maturity of accountability mechanisms because all actors need to open all data and evaluations to the public on the basis of clearly-divided mandates of responsibility. As a result, a full-fledged mechanism for accountability is normally equipped with enforcement apparatuses, which enable principal agents to exercise organised sanctions against rule-breakers if necessary. Obviously, the completion of accountability mechanisms includes the hybrid of all three components, but the politics of global governance, unlike domestic democracies, does seldom allow

development partners to institutionalize sanction processes as a last resort to regulate violators of international aid norms.

Meanwhile, development partnerships are “voluntary, formalised arrangements involving public, private, and/or civil society organizations which have common, nonhierarchical decision-making procedures and address public policy issues,” particularly in the domain of international development (Steets and Blattner 2010, p. 55). Historically, sustainable development requires greater participation of aid recipients and other related partners in order to tackle “our common future” beyond individual national territories (Pearson 1969; Weber 1999). Such a move to multiple-actor involvements in international development implies a concomitant decline in a donor’s authority over its own aid packages as well as a greater responsibility on behalf of the recipient. The shift also implies a new institutional constellation on both sides of the aid exchange since sustainable development demands more attention to the long term (Mulgan 2003). Indeed, the inducement of multiple actors into development partnerships demands an institutional platform to ensure the incentive provision to stakeholders who are interested in partnerships, prevent partners involved from passing their bucks to others, review their performances and provide appropriate interventions with penalties unless they meet the standardised principles and expectations (Held and Koenig-Archibugi 2005). As a consequence, the partnership for international development treats accountability mechanisms as a necessary condition to not only preclude itself from being just a political rhetoric but also make it more sustainable and transparent (Brinkerhoff 2002).

The risk of buck-passing is at the centre of all risks that multiple-stakeholder partnerships are going to face. Due to resource scarcity in financing development, more engagements by non-state stakeholders are envisaged as a critical alternative to nurture financial capacities of development aid projects (Holland et al. 2009; Hubbard 2009). Thereby, the new forms of partnerships such as public-private partnerships (PPPs) gain greater popularity than ever before. In the process of development partnerships, however, multiple actors, despite their contributions to curbing resource scarcity, would fail to define the clear mandate of development missions and bring about serious dangers of buck-passing among partners. Accordingly, the accountability deficits end up as the creation of institutional cavities undermining the partnership for development. The Commission on Public-Private Partnerships (2001, p. 231) in the United Kingdom firmly admits the significance of accountability mechanisms by emphasizing that:

“Public accountability is a pre-condition for the legitimate use of public authority. It is the basis on which citizens are willing to delegate power to others to act on their behalf. It underpins government based on consent. Without proper accountability mechanisms, organisations delivering services are not subject to democratic oversight and control, the rights of citizens are uncertain and services are unlikely to reflect the needs of service users. Accountability is therefore an end as well as a means.”

In a nutshell, the ultimate goal of accountability mechanisms is to instil trust among multiple development actors and promote change in behaviour leading to improved aid quality. Mutual accountability is able to make development financing more predictable, reduce use of parallel systems and project implementation units, encourage division of labour among providers, and promote the transparent use of development cooperation on the ground. It is fair to state that accountability mechanisms play a significant role as an institutional foundation to encourage multiparty social collaborations for development partnerships and deter collective action problems of organised buck-passing among partners. The social origins of organised buck-passing in the case of development partnerships can be detected by the new institutionalism whose theoretical frame stems mainly from the ‘rational-choice’ institutionalism.

### Deciphering the Samaritan’s Dilemma: The New Institutionalism, Development Aid and Collective Action Problems

Designing collective action to govern the commons under the resource-limited circumstances has been a longstanding academic agenda in international political economy as well as political sociology (Olson 1965; March and Olsen 1984; North 1990; Ostrom 1990; DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Since entering into the 2000s, development aid has received many spotlights from new institutional analyses which intend to interpret development aid as a sort of collective action to secure the provision of global public goods (Gibson et al. 2005; Ostrom 2007). At the national level, individual’s rational choice in pursuit of his or her personal interests results in bringing about disadvantages against society as a whole, which can be called ‘collective action problems.’ Likewise, the rational actions which a certain state takes in pursuit of its strategic objectives lead to collective action

problems at the international level, thereby undermining global solidarity for tackling against globalised social problems. Fundamentally, the international development assistance system *per se* is a complex web of relationships that can generate the *perverse* incentives, which prevent those collective-action problems from being solved.

The perverse incentives are indeed the crucial matter of concerns about development partnerships, particularly with the point of how to regulate them. According to rational-choice institutionalists, the importance of structural constraints on the behaviour of individuals and the necessity of rational actors to maximise within institutional boundaries can be simultaneously set by exogenous structures of the institutions. The rules imposed through institutions constrain individual maximising behaviour and enable stable and predictable decision-making. In this regard, institutional constraints based upon norms and values are proactively mobilised as an essential governing mechanism to minimise the incidences of perverse incentives. Otherwise, the micro-level focus of rational choice theories and their emphasis on utilitarian calculations of individuals would devalue many normative and collective aspects of governing (March and Olsen 1984, p. 736).

Elinor Ostrom in her seminal volume, *Governing the Commons*, develops a new approach to institutions based upon rules and the enforcement of rules that permit, prescribe and proscribe actions by the members of the institution—that is to say, the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) Framework.<sup>1</sup> The IAD Framework is an analytical frame in understanding how individuals behave in collective action settings and the institutional foundations that inform such arrangements and control actors' behaviours based on individual preferences. In order to prevent perverse incentives from being disseminated within the institutional settings of development aid, the

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<sup>1</sup> The IAD Framework offers researchers a way to understand the policy process by outlining a systematic approach for analyzing institutions that govern action and outcomes within collective action arrangements. Institutions are defined within the IAD Framework as a set of prescriptions (rules, norms, and shared strategies) and constraints that humans use to organize all forms of repetitive and structured interactions. Institutions are further delineated as being formal or informal; the former characterized as rules-in-form and the latter as rules-in-use. The IAD Framework identifies key variables that researchers should use in evaluating the role of institutions in shaping social interactions and decision-making processes. The analytical focus of the IAD is on an "action arena," where social choices and decisions take place. Three broad categories of variables are identified as influencing the action arena: institutions or rules that govern the action arena, the characteristics of the community or collective unit of interest, and the attributes of the physical environment within which the community acts.



micro-level analysis in the face of the problems of methodological individualism should be reconsidered and macro-level analyses need to be encouraged for the purpose of locating perverse incentives and prescribing proper institutional solutions—for example, accountability mechanisms for development partnerships.

Such perverse incentives may exist within donor agencies themselves, as well as between these agencies, their contractors, and other donor country organizations. Then, few incentives may exist for individuals and organizations to produce sustainable development initiatives and development partnerships. What is less clear in the process of the joint production in which multiple actors participate for their own interests is what actors are accountable for and who needs to get more ownership (Gibson et al. 2005). Due to physical and political distances between donors and recipients, policy feedback is not possible and thereby lack of feedback results in distorted incentives, which also lead to the distortion of principal-agent relationship (Martens et al. 2002; Miller 2005). The problem of accountability deficits pervades all the arenas of international relations, and even destabilises the underpinning for implementing and sustaining multi-stakeholder partnerships for development.

When it comes to inclusive partnership for development, it ultimately requires the uniformity of values and incentives, both of which should be geared by the institutions of development aid. Rather, negative effects generated by the institutions of development aid, more often than not, come into real practices, due to lack of the mission clarification among parties involved. By and large, the root causes of negativities of development partnerships, which produce various perverse incentives to aid partners, can be putatively modelled by the two following patterned relationships: (1) the

		<i>Recipient</i>	
		High Effort	Low Effort
<i>Samaritan</i>	No Help	2, 2	1, 1
	Help	4, 3	3, 4

Source: Buchanan (1977, p. 170).

FIG. 1.—The Samaritan’s Dilemma

'Samaritan's dilemma' within the bilateral frame of development partnerships, and (2) the complexity of blurred boundaries between account-holders and duty-bearers within the multiple-actor framework.

In the first place, the Samaritan's dilemma (SD) takes place under the rational choice institutionalist assumption that an actor deeply concerned about the welfare of others—the Samaritan as per the parable in the New Testament—confronts situations in which other people might be in need of help. Usually, SD requires the two players—donor and recipient—in the bilateral form. As shown in figure 1, in James Buchanan (1977)'s formulation, the Samaritan has two options, helping and no helping, whereas the recipient decides how much effort it makes to obtain the Samaritan's help, high or low. Given that Samaritans employ extending help as a dominant strategy, they face a fundamental problem—they are better-off helping no matter what the recipient does. Once the recipient perceives the Samaritan's dominant strategy, its own dominant strategy, then, clings to the extension of a low level of effort. Accordingly, this two-actor game with ordinal payoffs results in a dilemma, in the sense that the Samaritan prefers that the recipient puts in high effort to enhance aid effectiveness by meeting the Samaritan's expectations, but the structure of the interaction guarantees the recipient gives only low effort.

SD demonstrates the negative aspect of perverse incentives—thereby, generating collective action problems—as Mancur Olson (1990, p. 2) argues that “unless the number of individuals is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other device to make individuals act in their common interest, *rational self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests.*” Not contributing to a joint effort when others do is the typical case of 'free-riding,' as the non-contributor benefits. Worse enough, the 'tragedy of the commons,' as Garrett Hardin (1968) grimly characterises, occurs whenever multiple actors jointly use a single common-pool resource in the absence of effective institutions to control the behaviour of actors. Development aid can be regarded as a common-pool resource, and all the aid partners would drain it out without the institutionalizing processes of controlling mechanisms. Thus, imposing accountability mechanisms needs to be necessarily undertaken in order to prevent the recipient from becoming a free rider or manipulating perverse incentives by distorting the structure of donors' dominant strategies in bilateral aid relations.

## Power Politics Within Democratic Accountability for Development Partnerships

In theory, a successful institutionalization of accountability mechanisms contributes to bringing democratic tenets for transparency and mutual accountability back into development partnerships. Within the frame of principal-agent theory, accountability plays a critical role as a mechanism to ensure that the agent does not abuse his authority and acts in the best interest of the principal (Helgesson 2010). However, power politics embedded in accountability need to be retaken as an intervening variable, simply because power *per se* is not equally distributed to all participants in development partnerships. Unequal sharing of power distorts principal-agent relations by way of hidden information, adverse selection, and the broken feedback loop of information (Svensson 2008). A certain actor with more power under global governance is able to dominate the whole processes of partnerships by designing focal agendas, setting up rules and norms that the other players comply with, and monitoring the implementation and final results of partnerships (Caporaso 2000; Keohane and Nye 2000). Accordingly, the assumption of the new institutionalism that all actors are equally treated as rational-choice partners with no consideration of power politics goes simply wrong.

Most of all, it is not evident why democratic accountability is required in all influential institutions and development partnerships (Steets and Blattner 2010, p. 58). In particular, the absence of centralised global authorities makes it impossible that actors contributing to global governance must be democratically accountable, just like the domestic context where the relationship between principal and agent is institutionalised in democratic ways (Held and Koenig-Archibugi 2005). Donors and recipients in the domain of international development are not equal partners, even though they forge a nice form of friendly partnerships. Donors intend to attach harsh conditionalities to development aid in order to regulate the recipient partners. Also, the recipient governments and CSOs intend to abuse accountability mechanisms in order to claim its benefits from development partnerships. The private sector, which is basically risk-averter, is always ready to withdraw its financial investments from the PPP, whenever its portion for benefits is not secured. In this sense, buck-passing becomes easily routinized unless the power holder—politically or financially—decides to democratise accountability mechanisms.

Also, it is unviable to claim that a governance body of development

partnerships should be able to hold all parties to account on equal and democratic basis. Due to the extended decoupling processes between too many accountability-related norms and the power-based structure of the institutions, principals can hardly hold agents accountable in accordance with a unified democratic standardization, but sometimes can do according to even contradictory standards, which have paralyzing effects on development partnerships. As Robert Keohane (2002, p. 146) points out, accountability claims are “not issues of “lack of accountability” as much as issues of “accountability to whom?” Different types of accountability favour different accountability holders. Once again, accountability is largely a matter of power.”

On another sobering note, accountability mechanisms generate unnecessary costs and the excessive accountability undermines efficiency and innovations of development partnerships (Kim 2011). Creating transparency and M&E activities in fulfilling partnerships requires substantial financial contributions on the part of the principal as well as the agent. The partner investing more financial inputs is able to have more say or more veto powers than the others. When accountability is aimed to ensure strict institutional control over all actors, this mechanism results in restraining the agent’s flexibility and thus ability to react to events and new developments. By contrast, people or non-state actors, affected badly by development aid projects, may manipulate accountability mechanisms by abusing the institutional rigidity for strict control through the ceaseless claiming of lawsuits or other challenges against aid-givers and thereby politicizing or securitizing the accountability deficits of development partnerships (Deacon 2007). Legal investigations that accountability mechanisms conduct in response to lawsuits entail additional costs and time as claimants abuse the lawsuit processes (Wade 2009).

In a nutshell, power politics, embedded in accountability mechanisms, has high risks to sink the governmentality of development partnerships, whereas the request of democratic accountability may offset the diminishment of governmentality. According to a French sociologist, Michel Foucault (1991, p. 88), governmentality is “the art of government” which signifies the organised practices, such as mentalities, rationalities and techniques, through which subjects are governed or the way governments try to produce the citizen best suited to fulfil those governments’ policies. Depending on who has hegemonic power and knowledge to govern, the profile and nature of governmentality can be dually formed and operated: self-governing or dependent upon power (Foucault 1980; Lemke 2002). The political authorities

whose way of governing is democratic and autonomous would render the calculated means of directing how people believe and act more accountable and transparent. Otherwise, they would wield the techniques and strategies by which a society is tamed so as to be sensitive to power politics. Therefore, the accountability for development partnerships needs to be transformed into the democratic governmentality in the sense that accountability mechanisms are reconsidered not only as the how of governing but also as the what of political apparatuses. While accountability easily fails to clarify political struggles among partners as one of the structural ingredients of development partnerships, governmentality is able to cover varied alliance between political and other authorities that seek to govern economic activity, social life and individual conduct (Rose 1996). Indeed, the Foucauldian governmentality provides a new value-added analytical framework to govern the economic centrality of rational-choice development, its associated perverse incentives, and political power to govern them in a democratic fashion. The accountability of democracy is not certainly guaranteed by institutional arrangements, but the governmentality of democracy can be promoted institutionally (Donzelot 1991).

### On Global Governmentality for Isomorphic Institutionalization of Partnership Accountability

As aforementioned, the two contradictable points surrounding accountability politics are always observable when it comes to the association of accountability with development partnerships: first, accountability mechanisms need to be institutionalised as an essential apparatus for making development partnerships more transparent and sustainable; and second, they, nevertheless, can be politicised as negative effects to deteriorate the democratic nature of accountability and even warrant partners to pass their bucks to other actors. Beyond such an analytical gridlock of the new rational-choice institutionalism, more scholarly attention should be paid to the *third* way of combining the Foucauldian governmentality and another new institutionalism in sociological perspectives for the sake of the accountability-partnership nexus in the developmental context.

With regards to the enclosure of governmentality, the level of analysis needs to be elevated to governance outside the nation-state and onto new theoretical and political territories. ‘Global governmentality’—governing international spaces for development partnerships—marks the investigation

of power beyond the state, with the tactics, techniques and technologies which configure global political sites as spaces of power projections (Rose and Miller 1992). The notion that modern political rationalities and governmental technologies at the national level are intrinsically linked to developments in knowledge and to the powers of expertise is possibly applicable to the global accountability for effective development partnerships. Both Samaritan's dilemma and buck-passing of rational problematics of development partnerships are dependent on technologies for governing perverse incentives at the global level, seeking to create internal institutions, rules and experts able to operate the regulated autonomy of accountability mechanisms. An investigation of accountability as a mode of governmentality at the global level offers a reflective line of investigation that appeals to researchers frustrated with the enduring positivism of the social sciences, which beg the question that accountable institutions always result from rational-choice traditions (Larner and Walters 2004). By viewing power as fragmented and controllable, insisting on the constitutive nature of power, and viewing agency in terms of contingent rather than fixed rationalities, global governmentality becomes a core concept within a wide range of studies of power, order, subjectivity and resistance in the accountability-partnership nexus. In this regard, accountability mechanisms are reframed as a social construct to govern power-centred buck-passing of development partners, rather than as a simple institutional instrument free from power struggles among them.

Global governmentality, therefore, concerns the social construction of institutional processes for holding actors to account by focusing on how the social capacities of actors are socially produced, and how these processes shape actors' self-understandings and perceived interests in complying with even loose norms and rules for development partnerships.<sup>2</sup> The value of global governmentality derives from the extent that accountability mechanisms exert power with more reflexive and diffuse social processes such as discourse, techniques and knowledge systems, along with direct structural pressures such as authorised penalties against organised buck-passing. The diffusion of development paradigms for global governmentality across development partnerships means the institutionalization of accountability mechanisms whose power frontiers keep moving from structures where rational actors

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<sup>2</sup> Power in global governance, according to Michael Barnett & Raymond Duvall (2005, 12), can be reconceptualised as a fourfold typology—compulsory, institutional, structural and productive—by taking the two core dimensions—“the kinds of social relations through which power works, and the specificity of the social relations through which power's effects are produced.”

react to others' moves, towards networks of social forces which are able to shape structures. Such a constitutive capacity of global governmentality can slowly expand its influential realm through consultations on rationalities and social networks, but incrementally keeps on deepening the institutional foundation for accountability mechanisms, in which democratic accountability is securely reinforced and the organised buck-passing of individual partners is voluntarily prohibited. Accordingly, the organizational frame of global governmentality provides the way development partnerships produce all parties concerned best suited to carry out those partnerships' objectives and hold them to be accountable for their activities in a much more voluntary manner.

Furthermore, global governmentality can be enriched and disseminated by restating the new institutionalism via sociological perspectives with the particular emphasis on isomorphic institutionalization. Such a sociological account aims to devise an alternative formulation of the accountability-partnership nexus by reflecting the scholarly efforts to overcome the analytical limits of the positivist approach that the rational-choice theory mostly relies on and by advancing the co-constitutional relationship between agencies and a given structural system (Bhaskar 1979; Giddens 1984; Wendt 1999). The sociological institutionalism is a theory of new institutionalisms that focuses on developing a sociological view of the institutions, particularly on the way they interact and the way they affect society as a whole (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Drori 2006). It provides an alternative way of analysing institutions outside of the traditional views of economics by explaining why and how institutions emerge in a certain pattern within a given social context. One of main arguments that this institutionalism provides is the *isomorphic* convergence that institutions have developed to become similar across organizations even though they evolved in different ways and thereby they change and shape the behaviour of agents in different forms. Supposing the introduction of global governmentality and its entailing accountability mechanisms is seen as a common scheme that most aid institutions intend to employ for consolidating development partnerships, global governmentality can become isomorphically convergent in acting as an institutional safeguard to prevent partners from passing their bucks to others, thereby impeding their perverse incentives.

The sociological theory of the isomorphic institutionalism contains the three different processes: coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Coercive isomorphism results from compulsory power based on both formal and informal

Excluding coercive isomorphism, the other two patterns of isomorphic institutionalisms provide critical implications on how to overcome the analytical limits of the rational-choice institutionalism. While coercive processes imply an institutional impact of compulsory power dominating other actors via physical controls, mimetic and normative processes contribute to galvanizing the social construction of institutional mechanisms enhancing accountability and lowering buck-passing. Mimetic isomorphism can be achieved under the condition that secondary powers, threatened by uncertainty in managing development partnerships, voluntarily demand to constitute accountability mechanisms as an institutional platform that they want to copy from success cases in other partnerships for development. Such a voluntary commitment from a weaker group of powers can be formally crystallised and horizontally expanded by embracing normative pressures of institutional isomorphism, which are legitimised in a universal base produced by epistemic communities in international organizations and the elaboration of global professional networks across which successful models diffuse rapidly (Meyer et al. 2006). Such constitutive processes for global governmentality are structured properly, when the expert-generated knowledge and its associated accountability mechanisms can be mobilized to mesh with the interests of institutional coalitions of development partners at the global level (Haas 1990; Rojas 2004). The positive nexus of the knowledge creation by epistemic communities and development partnership via accountability mechanisms marshals mimetic/normative isomorphism, rather than coercive isomorphism for forging global governmentality.

Democratic governance within the partnership for development is not automatically secured or properly implemented by installing accountability mechanisms only. Power politics inside development partnerships always distort the incentive structure in which all partners agree to pursue collective actions against the common problems. For more sustainable consistence of development partnerships, the concept of power needs to be reformulated in the way of constitutive power that contextualises the social construction of institutional processes, rather than the materialistic understanding of compulsory power (Escobar 1995). Also, negative effects of power politics

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political pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations upon which they are dependent. Mimetic isomorphism is referred as to institutional imitations or modeling in response to uncertainty, which arises when the goals of organizations are not clear, or when the external environment creates symbolic uncertainty. Normative isomorphism derives from normative pressures associated with professionalism by which professional networks and formal educations press actors involved to share isomorphic components. See DiMaggio and Powell (1983).



can be further systematically regulated when the isomorphic processes of global governmentality are universally shared and standardized by all aid-related organizations, and any partner agencies, which do not accept the accountability scheme, are unable to deny the external pressure from other organizations that institutionalise accountability mechanisms for development partnerships. Indeed, the juxtaposition of the sociological institutionalism and global governmentality foils the pervasive and insidious impacts of collective action problems detected in the rational-choice institutionalism.

## Concluding Remarks

The complexity posed by globalization, coupled with the continuing challenges of poverty, security, and other globalised social issues, requires innovative approaches and new institutional structures to address the urgent needs for not only technical expertise but participatory and democratic practices. However, resources remain scarce, and policymakers and the general public continue to seek to minimise the direct involvement and funding of government bodies. In every sector and service sphere of international development, actors are looking for the most effective and efficient means to deliver services in an increasingly interdependent world. Such a simultaneous recognition of interdependence and resource scarcity in our globalised world has led scholars and practitioners to argue that development is not possible without partnership approaches. Truly, the partnership for development has become the buzzword used to describe many of these endeavours. Nevertheless, political rhetoric alone does not lead to solutions, but many only without accountability mechanisms make things worse as it leads to lack of trust, discouraging actors from pursuing partnership approaches.

In this regard, this study seeks to map the changing structure of accountability mechanisms in the political context of development partnerships and to unpack some of the most important and most difficult dilemmas that arise. All such maps of a political terrain are necessarily interpretative and normative; thereby, the prescription for these dilemmas also stems from normative aspects of the interpretive hybrid of multiple theoretical perspectives. Therefore, this study is a conceptual and theoretical analysis of how accountability mechanisms can be reinterpreted as an institutional platform of global governmentality for development partnerships by vanquishing the explanatory rigidity and limitations of existing theoretical mainstreams.

The substance of accountability mechanisms is originally aimed as an institutional prism for organizational change in democratizing the relationship of development partners and driving them to work for the common goals in the face of the enduring enticement of perverse incentives. All actors in the development partnership, if accountability fails to be institutionalised, would be easily exposed to the attractiveness of collective action problems created under the circumstances of the presence of rational actors, the ubiquity of the Samaritan's dilemma in bilateral partnerships, and the incidence of organised buck-passing in multilateral partnerships. The lack of accountability, nevertheless, is not the only cause of withdrawing their memberships from development partnerships. Accountability mechanisms always remain as a stunted institution unless power is equally distributed across all actors involved in partnerships.

The two requirements for development partnerships are at odds. Obviously, accountability mechanisms are a necessary condition to make the partnerships more transparent and sustainable, but they should be underpinned by the power distribution on the equal basis. Otherwise, accountability politics is easily embroiled in the non-democratic politicization of development partnerships, thereby dampening structural incentives for actors to comply with the behest of development partnerships. In response to this dilemma, two further conceptual clarifications are essentially called upon in theoretical perspectives. First, accountability needs to be conceptually revamped and technically sophisticated by benefiting from the Foucauldian governmentality that contributes not only to strategizing organised practices, such as mentalities, knowledge and techniques, as the how of self-governing and holding partner agencies to be accountable, but also to exercising power with more reflexive and diffuse processes for the social construction of accountability politics. Second, global governmentality would be conceived as a more convincing frame for the accountability-partnership nexus if its utility were underpinned by the sociological perspective of institutional isomorphism that maintains agencies in an isomorphic and loosely coupled state in order to popularise the installation of accountability mechanisms as a universal policy to facilitate and stabilise development partnerships.

In practice, the most critical solution is to set in motion an international accountability initiative for global governmentality and its positive impact on development partnerships as the international standardization of accountability guidelines, knowledge, and practical techniques, all of which are formed on the basis of the three main assets of accountability—responsibility,

answerability, and enforceability.<sup>4</sup> Through this international accountability initiative, all aid agencies and organizations, which seek the sustainable operation of development partnerships, can share and pursue the isomorphic introduction of accountability mechanisms as an institutional platform with the reflection of political and cultural contingencies that contextualises the historical path and societal systems in the making of global governmentality for development partnerships. To constitute accountability mechanisms as a common top-down instrument for governmentality at the global level is, accordingly, the best solution to realize the democratic governance by which power politics can be regulated and multi-stakeholders work together for the common goal within development partnerships.

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<sup>4</sup> The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) can be taken as a similar case that publicizes the need of aid transparency across the multiple number of stakeholders. IATI is a voluntary multi-stakeholder initiative that seeks to improve the transparency of aid, development and humanitarian resources in order to increase their effectiveness in tackling poverty. IATI also brings together donor and recipient countries, CSOs and other stakeholders in aid information who share the aspiration of the original IATI Accra Statement and are committed to working together to increase the transparency of aid.

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**TAEKYOON KIM** is Associate Professor of International Development at the Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University in South Korea. His main research areas are international development, global governance, international political sociology and state-society relations. His scholarly works have appeared at various peer-reviewed journals, including *International Sociology*, *Global Governance*, *Pacific Focus*, *Asian Perspective*, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, *Journal of Democracy*, *Korea Observer* and so on. Address: Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University, 1 Gwanakro, Gwanakgu, Seoul, South Korea. [E-mail: oxonian07@snu.ac.kr]

