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FOR DEVELOPMENT



Getting strategic: vertically integrated approaches

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Further reading

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Halloran, B. (2016) *Accountability ecosystems: directions of accountability and points of engagement*, Brighton: IDS

Leighninger, M. (2016) *Transforming governance: how can technology help reshape democracy?*, Brighton: IDS

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Vertical integration is an effective way of doing accountability work because it “can reveal more clearly where the main problems are, permitting more precisely targeted civil society advocacy strategies”.

Getting strategic: vertically integrated approaches

What are vertically integrated civil society initiatives?

Holding power to account requires understanding where power lies and how it is exercised. It entails understanding how decisions are made, who makes them and what decision criteria are used to make them. Vertically integrated civil society action takes into account how power is exercised and how decisions are made in a given policy, programme or process.

Origin of the concept

The 2014 paper of American academic-activist Jonathan Fox, *Social accountability: What does the evidence really say?*, scans the state of evidence on the impact of social accountability initiatives. It concludes that while the existing empirical evidence is mixed, strategic approaches seem more promising: “Strategic approaches to SAcc [social accountability] ... bolster enabling environments for collective action, scale up citizen engagement beyond the local arena and attempt to bolster governmental capacity to respond to voice” (Fox 2014: 35).

One example of a strategic approach is ‘vertical integration’. The term was first used by Fox in his 2007 study of Mexico’s national food distribution programme, wherein the “autonomous peasant movement won an important ‘war of position”” (Fox 2007: 93).

What is vertical integration for?

Meant as a strategy for civil society engagement in scrutinising government performance, Fox argues that vertical integration is an effective way of doing accountability work because it “can reveal more clearly where the main problems are, permitting more precisely targeted civil society advocacy strategies” (Fox 2001: 624).

Vertical integration is also deemed more effective in addressing corruption and exclusion, since they are “produced by vertically integrated power structures”, thus making “parallel processes that are also vertically integrated” (Fox 2014: 31) more able to effectively engage in “accountability politics”. Parallel and vertically integrated processes can also be more effective at building long-term “countervailing power” (Transparency and Accountability Initiative 2015: 1), which could prompt the state to become more open and transparent.

An integrated approach, Fox further argues, is best suited to today’s context wherein the “design and implementation of public policy is increasingly shared between different levels of decision-making” (Fox 2001: 618). Unfortunately, most initiatives tend to address the symptoms rather than underlying causes of the problem. As Fox explains in his book *Accountability Politics: Power and Voice in Rural Mexico*, “the contemporary discussion of

Vertically integrated civil society action takes into account how power is exercised and how decisions are made in a given policy, programme or process.

public accountability has been constrained by its almost exclusive focus on one level of analysis – whether national, local, or international – without addressing the dynamic interaction between levels” (Fox 2007: 27).

Features of vertical integration

1. *Vertical integration involves a “systematic, coordinated monitoring of the performance of all levels of public decision-making” taking into account “the different levels of power, from the international to the national, state and municipal” (Fox 2001: 621).*

Vertical integration can be understood as a civil society strategy for scrutinising government performance. As Fox points out, “the vertical integration of policy

analysis articulates processes of monitoring, evaluation and analysis of all levels of official decision-making at the same time, permitting civil society advocacy actors to develop strategies in real time rather than after the fact” (Fox 2001: 621).

Such an approach, Fox adds, can be applied “either in specific sectoral issue areas, such as human rights, reproductive rights, the defense of biodiversity, or in broader multisectoral campaigns that cut across issue areas” (Ibid.: 52). The goal of the civil society action is clear and rooted in an issue recognised by a constituency to be critical, thereby facilitating a broad building of alliances across levels involving multiple actions and actors.

Monitoring the textbook supply chain in the Philippines

Textbook Count, a monitoring initiative of Government Watch (G-Watch) and the Department of Education in the Philippines from 2002–2007, covered the entire processes of the government’s Textbook Delivery Programme from procurement to distribution in up to 80% of all the 46,611 delivery points (high schools and district offices). Such scope and scale enabled this civil society action to effectively provide oversight of the various levels of the Department of Education, as well as the entire supply chain of the book distribution process. It prevents what Fox refers to as “squeezing of the balloon” (Fox 2001 and 2014), where authorities and vested interests attempt to resist independent oversight efforts by either deflecting or eluding reform efforts.

Source: Acheron and Isaac (forthcoming)

2. Vertical integration takes scale into account by 'connecting the dots' in order to address root / systemic causes and not merely the symptoms of corruption, inefficiencies and abuse.

Vertical integration entails engaging all levels of decision-making by “linking bottom-up and top-down initiatives, while broadening ‘coverage’ in terms of geographic and social inclusion” (Fox and Acheron, forthcoming).

The aim of vertical integration is to “combine bottom-up independent policy monitoring with the civic muscle needed ... for public interest advocacy” since “information access and citizen voice are often not enough to deliver accountability” (Fox and Acheron, forthcoming).

This is due to “entrenched institutional obstacles” (Fox and Acheron, forthcoming)

that favour anti-accountability forces and similar vested interests. Mal-governance, in other words, does not persist because of “a few bad apples” but because of “vertically integrated power structures” (Fox 2014: 31). This is so because “pro- and anti-accountability forces, inside and outside the state, contest the idea of accountability and the spaces and processes through which it is pursued” (Halloran 2015: 7).

Given the importance of scale in vertical integration, coalition-building and ‘connecting the dots’ are important components of this approach. A core (system, mechanism, group or unit) for coordination and communication is critical to enable integration, to facilitate the “oneness” or “wholeness” of all the actions, making the “whole greater than the sum of its parts” (Acheron and Isaac, forthcoming).

Campaigning for the Reproductive Health Bill in the Philippines

The Reproductive Health Advocacy Network (RHAN) was formed in 2001 to help push for the passage of what was then called the Reproductive Health Bill. From a small coalition of reproductive health advocates, RHAN eventually grew to more than 300 organisations that included women’s groups, health service providers, people’s organisations, party-list groups and academic institutions. RHAN later gained massive public support, as evidenced by surveys carried out by the Social Weather Stations in 2011 and 2012. RHAN served as the campaign centre and brought the different reproductive health groups together, mobilising forces from below and launching various advocacy events. RHAN also actively engaged the state by seeking champions in both the legislative and executive departments. It did so by conducting policy research as inputs for public officials, and by networking with pro-reproductive health legislators in the Senate and the lower houses.

Source: Acheron and Isaac (forthcoming)

3. Vertical integration involves a wide variety of interrelated / interconnected actions by various actors operating at different levels of engagement.

For civil society action that centres on advocacy, integration is driven by the need to respond to resistance by vested interests in pushing for a policy, or in ensuring policy implementation. This makes it critical for civil society advocacy campaigns to use horizontal accountability mechanisms (i.e. the institutional oversight, checks and balances within the state, such as the ombudsman, the courts and the legislature) and use data from experience on the ground to support or bolster lobbying at the top.

A 'mapping tool' (see matrices 1 and 2,

pages 7 and 8) has been developed to "guide the documentation and analysis of vertical integration processes" (Fox and Acheron, forthcoming). Its goal is to "create an accessible, intuitive mapping tool that will allow both public interest strategists and policy analysts to visualise patterns of CSO monitoring and advocacy efforts across three dimensions at once: scale, coverage and intensity of actions" (Fox and Acheron, forthcoming).

This mapping tool comprises two matrices: civil society organisation (CSO) *constituency-building across scale, and interfacing with the state*. In both cases, they can be completed with different colours to indicate the intensity of CSO engagement, to give an at-a-glance map of engagement.

<p>Intensity of CSO engagement (darker = higher)</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>None</p>
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Matrix 1. Template for mapping CSO constituency-building across scales

Constituency-building approaches	Level of action				
	Very local (community, village)	District / county	State / province	National	Inter-national
Grassroots organising / awareness-building					
Coalition-building in already organised, shared constituency					
Cross-sectoral coalition-building					
Mass collective action or protest					
Public education strategy (media)					
Independent CSO monitoring of policy implementation					
Horizontal exchange of experiences / deliberation (across same geographic level)					
Participatory process to develop alternative policy / implementation proposals					
Information and communications technologies (ICTs)					

Matrix 2. Template for mapping CSO interfaces with the state across scale

CSO interfaces with state	Level of action				
	Very local (community, village)	District / county	State / province	National	Inter- national
Policy advocacy – executive authorities (mayor, governor, etc.)					
Policy advocacy – legislature (town council, state legislature, parliament)					
Legal recourse (case-based or strategic)					
Participation in 'invited spaces' (shared but government- controlled)					
Participation in 'claimed spaces' (shared with government, created in response to CSO initiative)					
Engagement with public accountability agencies (ombudsman, audit bureaus, human rights commissions)					

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About Making All Voices Count

Making All Voices Count is a programme working towards a world in which open, effective and participatory governance is the norm and not the exception. This Grand Challenge focuses global attention on creative and cutting-edge solutions to transform the relationship between citizens and their governments. The field of technology for Open Government is relatively young and the consortium partners, Hivos, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Ushahidi, are a part of this rapidly developing domain. These institutions have extensive and complementary skills and experience in the field of citizen engagement, government accountability, private sector entrepreneurs, (technical) innovation and research.

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Research, Evidence and Learning component

The programme's research, evidence and learning contributes to improving performance and practice, and builds an evidence base in the field of citizen voice, government responsiveness, transparency and accountability (T&A) and technology for T&A (Tech4T&A). This component is managed by IDS, a leading global organisation for research, teaching and communication with over 30 years' experience of developing knowledge on governance and citizen participation.

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