



## Good Governance: Art, Craft And Accountability

### KEYWORDS

-good governance, art, craft, accountability

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**ABSTRACT** *The paper relates good governance with its EU model indicators – openness, participation, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and coherence– and with transparency. Good governance should not reduce to good rhetoric, as it involves decision-making, information, freedom of expression, and transparency. Deficient transparency implies deficient communication and democratization (poor quality of the political class, corruption, and poverty). Investigating the hypothesis that governance based on republican tradition is an accountable political craft, good governance relates the techniques, rules and good practices of politics, best approximating a democratic political optimum. Democratization depends on good governance exerted by local, regional, national and global factors, according to the good governance's set of principles. This perspective interprets the connection between republicanism, trust and accountability, in our globalising world.*

#### ON GOVERNANCE: ART AND CRAFT

The complexity of the contemporary world is increasing despite the hope for more uniformity and predictability induced by globalisation. In this context, governance involves relations to the citizens, officials, traditional bureaucracy, public organizations working frequently with the government and various networks of non-governmental organizations, so that accountability and the communicational component of governance has become more important. This study investigates these aspects, correlating arguments with the hypothesis that governance based on republican tradition is an accountable political craft.

The main coordinates for the investigation of the notion of good governance develop from the extended definition of good governance (Serban, 2010). It connects the formula offered by the European documents (2001) – openness, participation, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and coherence – with transparency.

Etymologically, good governance refers to the craft of governing, which is a political craft. The phrase relates the techniques, rules and good practices that approximate best the democratic political optimum. Democratization depends on the good governance exerted by the local, regional, national and global factors, according to the democratic set of principles of good governance. The complexity of the relation between policies, numbers and real life situations renders governmental communication(s) more important in accomplishing governmental accountability, transparency, and responsibility. In this view, governance is an art as much as communication and sustaining relations are arts in themselves.

Good governance should not reduce to good rhetoric, as it involves decision-making, information, freedom of expression, transparency. Deficient transparency implies deficient communication and democratization (poor quality of the political class, corruption, and poverty), a valuable work hypothesis of research. Without transparency, accountability is not possible and without accountability, there are no check and balances, or rule of law. Governance is an art at the level of relations (with the citizens, the different public organizations and the NGOs), manifest in

public policies. (Ingraham, Lynn, 2004)

However, when we consider governance an art, it hardly relates to the concept of accountability. Arendt saw art as a form of magic, or mystique (Arendt, 1958, 1961). Although art can be sometimes a form of criticism, governance seen as art is almost legitimacy for unaccountability. Seen as art, governance bears a threat: the possibility to contradict the imperatives of good governance: governmental transparency, accountability, participation, openness, coherence, efficiency and rule of law. For Arendt, the participative account of citizenship is the perfect counterweight of accountability. This revolves around the expressions of the individual rights, of common action, and political praxis – substance to accountability and good governance in democracy.

The individual freedom (at Arendt politics is home of freedom) (Arendt, 1961: 163), social relations and transparent communication create together the home of politics where good governance is possible. Good governance is politics oriented toward the participative creation and maintaining of a house of freedom, not an opaque artistic enterprise or a science (verified and applied methods). Arendt emphasizes that in the absence of a home of freedom totalitarianism rules, propaganda and indoctrination make room for terror. Totalitarian governance declares infallible methods and resolution, it conveys infallible prophecies, while good governance adapts to realities, following the laws, the rules, the principles and the values of liberal democracy, transparent and accountable in real terms (Arendt, 1961).

Totalitarian governance fabricates accomplishments, wearing thin the very substance of reality. Power begins where secrecy begins and no one knows the real relations among the authorities. (Arendt, 1961: 579) On the contrary, good governance ought to base on accountable and transparent power, measured by its real and measurable results. Villa emphasizes (2006: 133) that Arendt considers that political action has to be memorable making history in later generations. To be memorable, political action has to be also authentic. Thus, people must be able to participate in the public affairs, with their diverse opinions (although not extensive or technical knowledge). Governance has to be au-

thentic, but understandable, for people to bring their input: by and for the people.

### ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE

An accountable governance, and transparent, brings about trust. Philip Pettit (1998) shows how quality of government correlates directly to its trustworthy disposition. Thus, the theme of trust becomes a key parameter for the functioning and the legitimacy of governance: the result of a long classical and modern republican tradition. Republican tradition stimulates personal trust in government (in what regards the personnel involved in government) and impersonal trust in government (the agents of government are to follow certain norms making these trustworthy). Notably, there is an apparent paradox in the fact that republican citizens should be vigilant in their proactive relation to the government; a certain amount of suspicion is normal in this political relation. Pettit (1998) shows the paradox resolute in the fact that trust is subject of rational rules. The trustworthiness of the governance and government extends as much as government acts lawfully and rationally and with respect for the rights of the citizens. The trust of the citizens in government should match the trust-responsiveness of those in power. This trust-responsiveness is just a different expression of the concept of accountability. The citizens oversee the activity of the government, watch over it, direct it, or constrain it, through their requirements for information on various matters, for specific public policies, or through their requirements for the guarantee of their rights. This concept of trust-responsiveness brings a philosophical perspective on the answerability of the government in good governance, an answerability that becomes a stake in maintaining legitimacy, precisely through the maintaining of truth.

The notion of accountability is an amorphous concept (Stapenhurst & O'Brien). Nevertheless, the authors identify the dimension of answerability (the obligation of government to provide information and to justify decisions) and the dimension of enforcement (the public or the legitimate institution not only watch the fulfilment of the tasks of the government, but also sanction the offending party whenever the case, offering a remedy when necessary). Accountability ensures governmental actions based on transparency. Accountability sustains transparency, efficiency, openness, and coherence: necessary ingredients of accountable governance. Only accountability can ensure that governmental actions and decisions meet the declared objectives, responding to the needs of the community.

Interest in good governance pays attention to the various types of accountability. The European Commission becomes subject to multiple accountability, to the member states and to the citizens (Christiansen 1997, 2011). He investigates accountability in relation to the organizational dynamics providing executive government and public administration for the EU. Transnational organizations and institutions are to pay attention to accountability and openness for legitimacy (avoiding crises). The European Union brings new perspectives on accountability and democracy, within the novel context of transnational relations and multi-level governance (Curtin et al., 2012). Accountability is of interest in relation to economic regulation for state ownership and private ownership, and this has implications for the institutional design. (Stern & Holder, 1999) The authors see structural liberalisation as a catalyst for developing good practice regulation and emphasize transparency for effectiveness in good governance. Without respect for accountability, transparency is less valued too, as these are

mutually enhancing.

### GLOBALIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

Building well-thought policies in a climate of rule of law enforces the democratic suitable institutional change that answers better both to global and regional requirements. EU White Paper on governance shows the importance of the rule of law and of applying the principles of good governance responsibly enforcing the accountable activity of the international institutions. (European Governance. White Paper, 2001: 5)

Globalisation may enhance governance although in countries characterized by poverty it appears doubtful (Bonaglia et al., 2001). Globalisation may bring development – inducing interaction, along with the necessary institutional change. In addition, globalisation affects reforms concerning foreign trade in goods, services, etc. much more than the reforms of the national economy and social structure. This positive causal effect cannot result automatically, though. Globalisation brings a certain openness, but is the task of the government to take proactive measures to fight against corruption, to make good policies and to adequate the national and regional governance responses to globalisation. Treisman (2000) shows that countries with Protestant traditions tend to be more developed and to have better governance, corruption flourishes in fledging federal state democracies, or in a country not opened to trade. In "Klitgaard's words, corruption thrives when monopoly power is combined with discretion and low accountability. [...] Similarly, corruption is reduced when economic rents do not depend on the discretionary power of some public official, or when monopolistic economic activities as well as governments are subject to strict rules of accountability." (Bonaglia et al., 2001: 14)

The quality of the domestic policies, their adequacy and efficiency are ultimately the genuine expression of the accountability, central for the political craft of good governance.

### CONCLUSIONS

Governance should be memorable politics that generates effective policies: a craft. Art may mask governance, legitimating the lack of accountability. The accent placed on accountability describes a middle ground between the conception of governance as art and the conception of governance as technocratic approach both rendering good governance a mere rhetoric adornment of the authoritative enterprise. Good governance should be a more inclusive political craft equipped to fight poverty and corruption. Leaders sometimes find themselves forced to be jugglers (Radin, 2002): but their legitimacy, value and results do not stay in juggling as in the more pragmatic effectiveness and accountability.

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