



Holding government accountable

*for cultural sustainability and
just urban development*



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD



4

Policy note

Part 4 of the SA-EU Dialogue series

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About the series

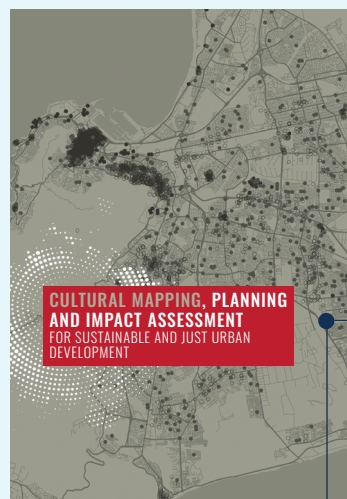
Funded by the European Union, through the “SA-EU Dialogue Facility Project”, this dialogue brought together a variety of South African and European practitioners, academics and experts to explore the role of culture in urban development. The dialogue series created a platform to share case studies and best practices about the role of cultural mapping, planning and impact assessment in promoting sustainable and just cities. The SA-EU Dialogue built on existing relationships between government and the African Centre for Cities through the Mistra Urban Futures’ Cultural Heritage and Just Cities project.

The SA-EU Dialogue focused on the following three dimensions:

Policy instruments: reviewing local and regional policy instruments identify ways to strengthen policy implementation through cultural mapping, planning and impact assessment.

Good practice: examples of good practice from different contexts that can shape policy discussions. Partners bring a wealth of knowledge in this regard and can share the kinds of action-oriented experiences that may strengthen policy discourses and practices.

Dialogue: The exchange provided a platform for dialogue between role players from Durban, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Gothenburg, Bilbao and Dublin, with an interest in developing sustained relationships between different partners that ideally extend beyond the scope of the SA-EU dialogue opportunity.



This series of 4 toolkits and policy orientated action briefs is based on the South Africa–European Union Dialogue on *Cultural mapping, planning and impact assessment for Sustainable and Just Urban Development*.





Introduction

Global policy imperatives are increasingly recognising the role of culture as key in creating liveable cities.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), The African Union's Agenda 2063, Habitat's New Urban Agenda, and the United Cities and Local Government's Agenda 21 for Culture share a commitment to think of sustainability in environmental, economic, social, cultural and political terms.

While these global policy pronouncements do indicate progress towards recognizing the role of culture in development, policy cannot be an isolated response without action, and it is rather part of the discourse of a problem, but not to the full extent of an adequate response.

The primary responsibility for implementing global policy imperatives lies with national governments as the official signatories to the agreements, however the integration of culture in the construction and formation of sustainable development is a responsibility of each level of government, and local cultural policy and local government must be acknowledged with this framework of accountability. Yet there are no formal repercussions for inaction and poor service delivery, no traditional enforceability.

However, governments are answerable to the people whose lives are affected by their actions and decisions. It is therefore the responsibility of civil society to hold governments accountable to the commitments they make through National Development Plans, Arts and Culture policies and other related laws and strategies (Cardinal et al., 2019).

Getting involved in cultural mapping and planning is one way for cultural and creative practitioners to assert their interests into urban planning and development. A cultural plan provides a roadmap for short-, medium- and long-term activities in a neighbourhood and across a city. Ideally this is co-produced by local cultural and creative practitioners and government officials, setting out key responsibilities for each actor.

What is accountability?

Accountability, in the context of a government's relationship with its residents, implies the obligation of the government to account for its actions as well as the right of the residents to hold the government accountable. **Accountability, in the context of cultural development, comprises three main elements** (Cardinal et al., 2019):



Responsibility – the notion that authorities have clearly defined duties, performance standards or responsibilities to take certain actions and ultimately fostering an enabling environment for culture to thrive



Answerability – the obligation of authorities to provide information and reasoned justifications for their actions, especially to the residents affected by them. Information also needs to be shared in ways that residents can recognise and that respond to cultural needs in the city.

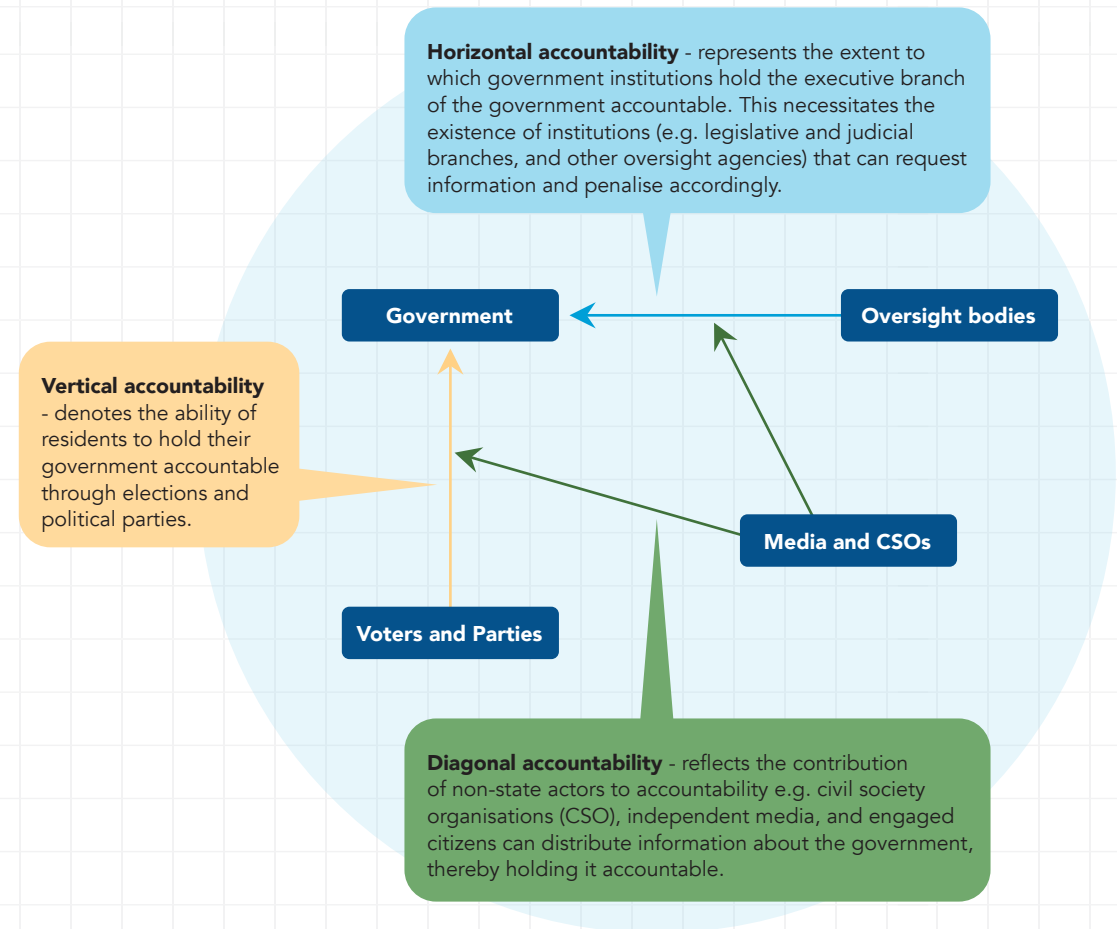


Enforceability – the concept that authorities may be subject to formal consequences or sanctions for their actions or omissions – which is so important in contexts where culture is regularly sidelined.

A basic principle of democracy is that public officials have an obligation to be accountable and residents have the right to demand accountability. A co-produced cultural plan is a useful way to set the agenda and keep governments accountable to their commitments.

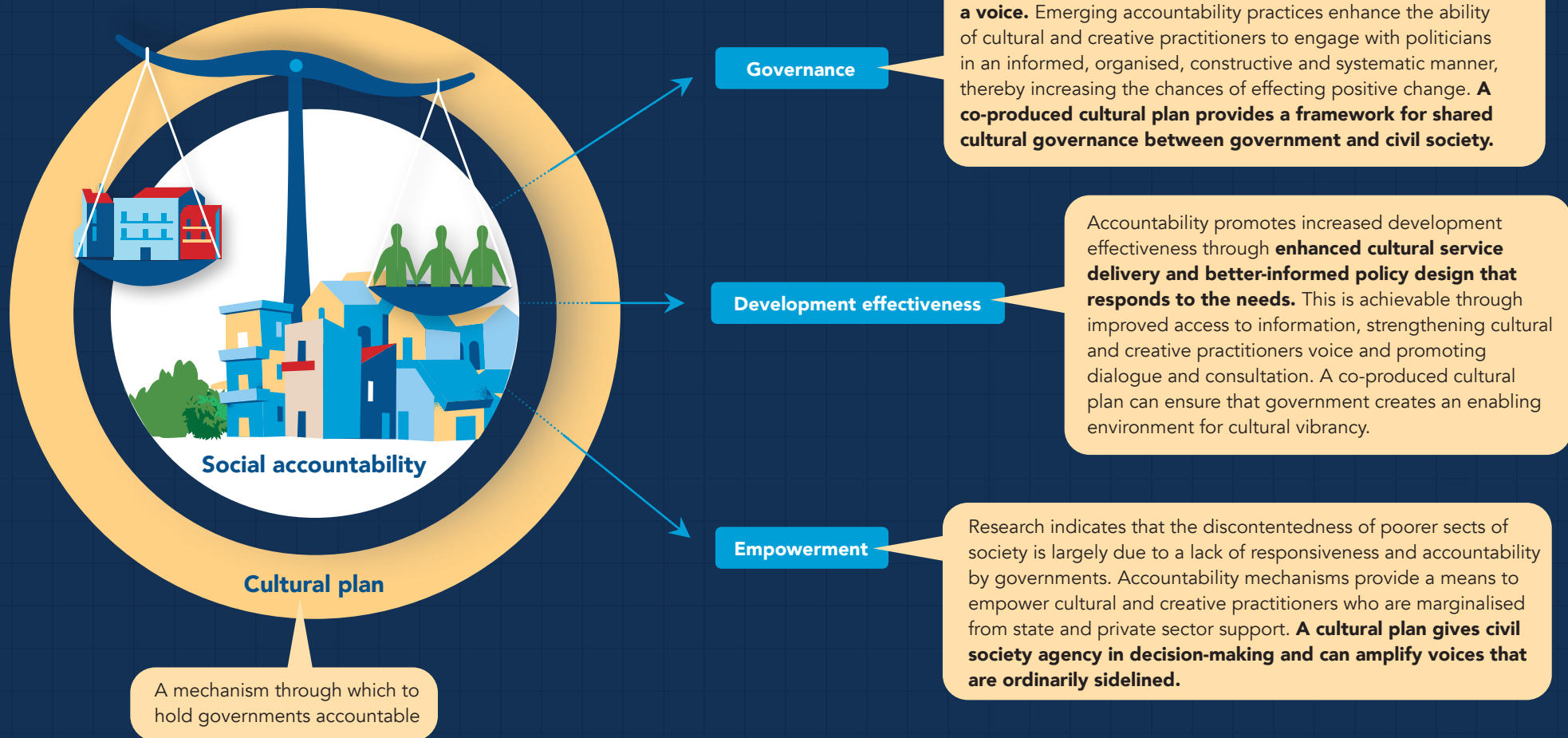
Accountability subtypes

(Source: Lührmann et al., 2020)



Why is it important to hold governments accountable?

There are three main arguments underlying the importance of accountability that a cultural plan can enable, as follows (Malena et al., 2004):



How can civil society hold governments accountable?

There are several ways that cultural and creative practitioners can hold government officials accountable.

The actors (e.g., individual citizens, communities, CSOs, media), occur at different levels (e.g., local to national), address a variety of different issues (e.g., public policy, political conduct, public expenditures, service delivery) and use diverse strategies (e.g., research, monitoring, participatory planning, civic education, media coverage, coalition building). Accountability approaches typically comprise the following five steps (Cardinal et al., 2019):

1

Mobilising around an entry point

Firstly, the entry point is identified followed by the development of a strategy whereby the problem can be addressed. The problem may be of a specific or general nature and may be identified at a local, regional or national level. **A cultural plan is a way to articulate an entry point around which to mobilise.**

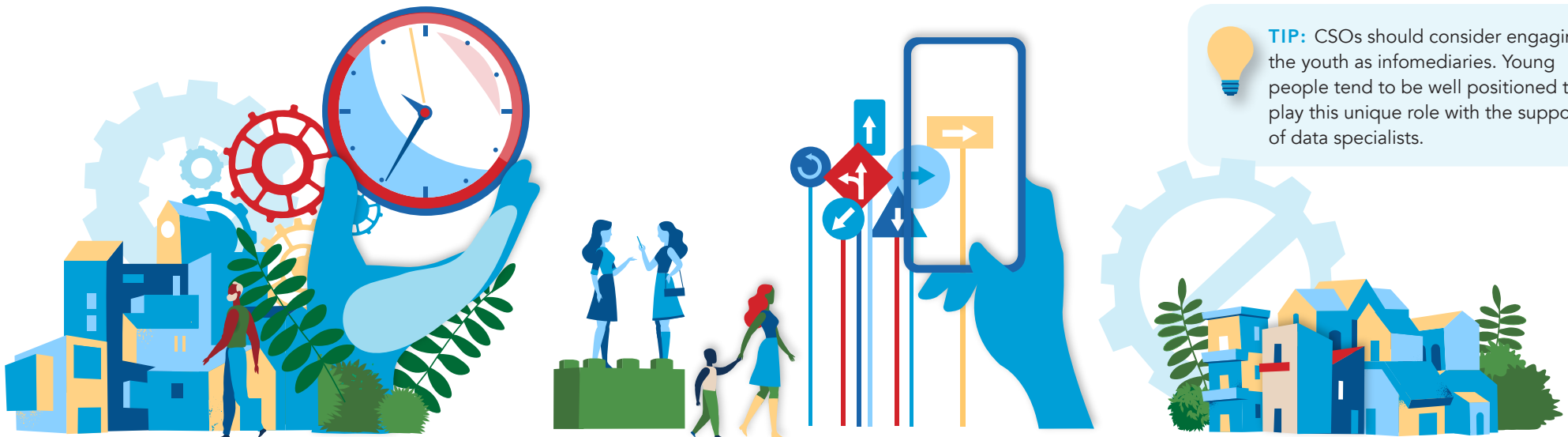
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Building an information/evidence base

Accessing or building a reliable evidence base is a critical aspect of accountability. Relevant data/information needs to be gathered and analysed. Cultural planning is based on cultural mapping that identifies the cultural eco-system of a neighbourhood or a city. This can be enriched by working with specialists.



TIP: CSOs should consider engaging the youth as infomediaries. Young people tend to be well positioned to play this unique role with the support of data specialists.



3

Going public

Publicising a cultural plan and generating public debate are key elements of most accountability initiatives. Effective communication strategies and mechanisms are important here, such as public meetings and events and the strategic use of both modern and traditional forms of media. Furthermore, relaying information to relevant government officials (and ideally interacting with decision-makers on an on-going basis) is also an essential aspect of accountability.

The media can be a powerful tool for promoting accountability. A free and independent media can inform and influence public opinion about government policy. It can monitor the performance of public institutions, expose misconduct and advocate for change (Cardinal et al., 2019). The media can also provide a platform for public debate and dialogue, ensuring that the voices and needs of cultural and creative practitioners in relation to government policies and actions are heard.



TIP: CSOs should consider using innovative methods such as social media and online platforms, radio and crowdsourcing to collect resident-generated data.

4

Rallying support and building coalitions

Notifying cultural and creative practitioners of their rights and responsibilities and mobilising them to build coalitions and partnerships with different interest groups (like the media, parliamentarians, etc.) is a core aspect of accountability. The ability of cultural and creative practitioners to organise for collective action and the capacity of CSOs to facilitate and support such mobilisation are crucial and are vital in the development of a cultural plan.

5

Advocating and negotiating change

Often the most challenging element of an accountability strategy is to evoke a response from government that effects real change. The most effective strategies tend to involve direct interaction and negotiation with the respective government counterparts and, in some cases, the institutionalisation of mechanisms for ongoing consultation and dialogue. **A co-produced cultural plan gives a concrete set of aims, objectives and responsibilities** that can foster and institutionalise change.



TIP: Where governments are unwilling or unable to hold consultations on policy reviews or implementation, CSOs may hold their own independent consultations and publicise the results among government, residents and other stakeholders. In such cases, CSOs should follow good public consultation practices.

Principles for an inclusive accountability process

Meaningful public participation is key to a successful accountability process. Civil society organisations, creative collectives, and cultural and creative practitioners should consider the following principles in advocating for or designing an inclusive accountability process in cultural planning:



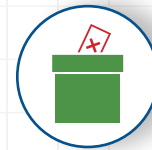
Engagement should aim to be **regular and continuous** rather than a one-off opportunity.



There should be **formal and informal engagement mechanisms** and spaces to support people's effective, meaningful and safe participation and dialogue with decision-makers.



There should be communication, awareness-raising and information-sharing with **various interest groups** to highlight opportunities for their contribution and participation.



Steps should be taken to **support people's awareness of their rights**, empowerment, intrinsic value and capacity to participate in accountability processes.



There should be **targeted outreach and strategies for specific groups** – for instance, through dedicated consultations, events, meetings, workshops or activities that allow a specific group to participate and express their views freely, and active measures should be taken to accommodate the special needs of groups such as providing childcare services for parents or ensuring that meetings occur after school for children and young people.



There should be **different ways for people to participate in accountability processes** including online/offline, written/oral, and in-person/remote opportunities.



Processes should take place at **subnational and local levels**, in addition to the national level, to facilitate people's participation.



People should have access to relevant information and materials in a **timely and accessible manner**, format and language they can understand.



Decision-makers and those in positions of power should **be prepared to listen and provide feedback** to people on how their input or participation has been taken into consideration.

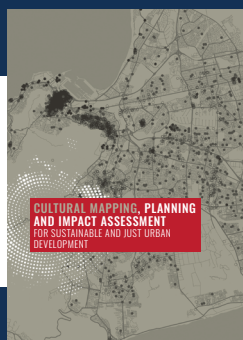


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