INFORMATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT: This paper follows the debate over accountability and the place that it occupies on the quality of democracy indexes. Here, I will argue that access and disclosure of public information is an important dimension of all various accountabilities (vertical, horizontal, social and transversal). Therefore, I identify the different stages within these various accountabilities where access and disclosure of information play a pivotal role. Afterwards, I compare these findings to the quality of democracy indexes to verify how thoroughly they include information and transparency indicators when evaluating accountability in democratic regimes.

Key words: accountability, social control, quality of democracy.

I. INTRODUCTION

During the last years, the transparency of public administration and its social control have occupied a privileged place within the debate about democracy and its quality, specially since the beginning of the democratic transitions that took place in many corners of the world. The debate is part of a broader task in Political Science: not only explaining why authoritarian regimes
transform into democratic regimes, but explaining why a certain type of democracy or what quality of democracy appeared in these new and young regimes (Morlino, 2007).

Accountability, the process through which public officials are responsible as well as subject to scrutiny, and are therefore rewarded or punished depending on the results of their deeds, is an indispensable dimension for many democracy theorists. At the core of this definition, however, lies a reality that has not been fully explored: the role-played by public information in the relationship between accountable and accounting actors. To understand it, it is useful to portray this process as an act of communication, where a certain array of processes and mechanisms are activated between two or more actors that exchange information.

The accountability process involves the enunciation of an enquiry to the accountable actor, which is followed by the enunciation of an answer, transmitted through a certain channel. Since the listener (accounting actor) is actively participating in this dialogue (Wolton, 2006), the effect of this exchange of information is the final application of certain rewards or sanctions.

This paper aims to demonstrate that public information is an essential element of all forms of accountability and, therefore, any discussion about measuring the quality of democracy should reflect thoroughly all the dimensions where information plays a pivotal role within accountable processes. To achieve this, I will identify the role that public information plays in various accountabilities (O'Donnell, 2002; Insunza, 2002). Then, we will examine the

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1 Harold D. Lasswell in «The structure and function of communication in society» (Lasswell, 1948: 15), defines an act of communication based on 1) Who says 2) What, 3) To whom, 4) Through which channel 5) with what effect.
way in which this subject has been treated by the quality of democracy indexes. Finally I conclude with a set of questions and research challenges based on this exploratory exercise.

II. INFORMATION AND ITS PLACE IN VARIOUS ACCOUNTABILITIES

II.1. Electoral accountability

Regardless of its multiple definitions, all types of accountability have one element in common: they are “dialogic relationships” that involve accounting actors and accountable actors (Schedler, 1999) in an open dialogue where they share and process information.

Przeworski and Cheihub (1999: 225) consider this relationship to be vertical. In their vision, the accountable actor is the government and the citizens represent the accounting actor. Through voting, the latter rewards or punishes the performance of the former. Thus, governments are accountable as long citizens can discern whether their governments act on their favor and punish them with their vote if they do not. This vision of vertical accountability has also been named electoral accountability, because it is at the polls and in a retrospective manner that citizens reward or punish elected officials.

In the vertical accountability, the accounting actor asks himself a question: does this government act in my benefit? Then he tries to obtain answers based on the information available in his surroundings and finally issues one verdict through his vote, which is in turn a new piece of information in the dialogue established between both actors.
Evidently, this type of accountability has several problems. Przeworski, Stokes and Manin (1999: 40-51) have pointed out that electoral accountability does not lead to representation because the electorate has such diverse and numerous demands that it is impossible to condense all of them simultaneously in one single reward (a reelection vote). Furthermore, the established dialogue is ostensibly asymmetrical due to the incommensurable disadvantage of citizens in terms of their access to useful information. In other words, public officials have privileged knowledge resources that allow them to make decisions whose results cannot be rationally assessed by a voter whose information is considerably limited.

Based on these remarks a first hypothesis can be sketched about the role played by information in the accountability process: regardless of the intrinsic limitations of the electoral accountability, the type of information available to voters about the deeds and decisions of their elected officials can affect the way they are rewarded or punished at the polls.

II. 2. Horizontal Accountability

O’Donnell (2007: 87) considers that new democracies, such as most of the contemporary Latin American regimes, face additional problems in terms of their electoral control mechanisms. He points out that these societies suffer from a preponderancy of non-structured party systems, high voter and party volatility, poor definition of the issues of the public agenda and abrupt changes in the orientation of public policy.

Searching for a better way to establish accountability in new democracies, O’Donnell makes the case for horizontal or interinstitutional
accountability, based in the classic principle of checks and balances of public branches, where the state establishes self-control mechanisms. O'Donnell’s vision of horizontal accountability involves an institutional design that invest certain state actors with the “rights, the legal power and the political autonomy to oversee, control, rectify and/or sanction illegal deeds of other state institutions” (2007: 99-101).

With this horizontal complementation, O'Donnell solves several limitations that existed within electoral accountability. First, the actors in the dialogic relationship change: the accountable actors are not just elected officials, but the whole bureaucratic system, while the accounting actors stop being the citizens and become a group of technical bureaucrats with specific control functions. With these changes, the scope of control is enlarged and its practice is professionalized.

O'Donnell (2007: 109-110) recognizes that horizontal accountability has important and difficult challenges in Latin America, among others, the “essential” need for accurate and opportune information for horizontal accounting actors. In Dissonances: Democratic Critiques of Democracy, the author sustains that a set of conditions for that to exist includes: the existence of “relatively” independent media, research centers, and state institutions that “produce, with independence and objectivity, information about diverse indicators” (2007: 109-110).

By recognizing the information deficit that exists in Latin American horizontal accountability processes, O’donnell points out to a reality that has been treated with great detail by Schedler (1999: 14): in any accountability
process accounting actors must assume the opacity of information, which is a characteristic intimately related to the mere nature of power.

This fact has inspired Schedler to propose a new type of accountability definition that is sensible to the idea of information opacity. This “modest” definition of “political accountability” assumes that in any particular accountability process there are three elements that have to be taken into account: information, justification and punishment (Schedler 1999: 17). However, the intensity in which these elements appear vary, and therefore, its assessment has to be sensible to this fact. In other words, the traditional definition of accountability\(^2\) needs to be set aside in order to work with a more realistic one that is prepared to encounter processes where there is little information, justification or punishment, and vice versa.

In our effort to pinpoint the place of information within the accountabilities, we can suppose that an accountability process implies both mechanisms of access to information and disclosure of justifications, whose character and intensity vary from case to case. In practice, this should encourage us to identify all principles, norms, rules and mechanisms that guarantee access to information and information disclosure, but also to assess the effectiveness of its use.

That being said, we propose a second hypothesis: the institutional designs that determine the principles, norms, rules and mechanisms that regulate both access to information and information disclosure (justifications)

\(^2\) “A is accountable to B when A is obliged to inform B about A’s (past or future) actions and decisions, to justify them, and to suffer punishment in the case of eventual misconducts. See A. SCHEDLER (1999: 17).
are elements that affect the capability of horizontal accounting actors when exercising their duty to scrutinize all accountable actors.

II. 3. Social and transversal accountability

The inherent limitations of electoral and horizontal accountabilities, especially in young democracies such as the ones in Latin America, plus the strengthening and growing autonomy of ample sectors of Civil Society, have seen the emergence of a new way of understanding accountability. O’Donnell (1998: 27), in a very optimistic tone, considered it a “good news” that was a type of vertical accountability, while Cunill Grau (2007a: 15), noting its fluid and episodic nature, dubbed it “spontaneous accountability”\(^3\). Finally, Peruzzotti and Smulovitz (2006: 10) proposed the concept of social accountability, defining it as a “non-electoral yet vertical mechanism of control of political authorities that rests on the actions of an array of citizens’ associations and movements and the media”.

The spectrum of social accountability is ample. It includes political scandals aired by mass media, the judicialization of politics by Civil Society organizations, the increasing exercise of investigative journalism or the denunciations made by Human Rights organizations, amongst others. Given the usually unaccountable vocation of our institutions, social accountability has become a very fruitful field of study in the region\(^4\).

\(^3\) Cunill (2007a: 15) argues that spontaneous accountability can reveals itself on the cases of almost half dozen of Latin American presidents that have been forced to leave office due to popular pressure, and also on the boom of NGO’s specialized on overseeing public institutions.

Social accountability seems to understand the basic precept of Schedler’s information opacity (1999: 20). As an active and independent inquiry exercise, it understands that information is a scarce and vital resource within the democratic process that shapes and defines power. Thus, the scope of access to public information and the nature of that information become a pivotal strategic dimension for all actors willing to exercise social control.

Another essential dimension that conditions social accountability’s effectiveness rests on the ability of social actors “to have a voice” and position their denunciations into the public eye. This process of “mediatization” (Peruzzoti and Smulovitz 2007: 16) proves again the important linkage between social control, public opinion and horizontal accountability, because social accountability, despite its lack of punishment mechanisms, is able to make visible illegal deeds, ignite interinstitutional accounting agents and impose “reputation costs” to the accountable actors.

As a process, social accountability inserts itself in a double historical juncture. On one hand, the increasing participation of local, national and transnational civic organizations that push for democratic transitions and benefit from them. On the other hand, social accountability is encouraged by the successive democratic reforms that have taken place since the early eighties. It is amidst these reform pressures that the Latin American states begin the quest for transparency and the effort to resolve a wide and complex set of questions:

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5 An interesting reflection about the access and quality of information as a power resource can be found in R. Keohane and J. Nye (1998).
what is going to be allowed to be seen, how is it going to be disclosed and under which conditions will it be disclosed\textsuperscript{6}.

As Cunill Grau (2002: 193) sustains, public information is a “critical node” for social accountability. While developing states keep struggling to enhance their still imperfect horizontal accountability capabilities, information access can determine “the possibility of public scrutiny” through which control is performed. The consequence of this argument is clear: in closed societies, where discretion and secrecy are the norm, social control withers.

Information is also a pivotal factor in another type of social accountability, named “transversal” accountability (Insunza, 2002), where the social control is encouraged by the state or its agencies through participation mechanisms. In this respect, the Brazilian case is a good example. As Batista Calvancati (2006) has pointed out, Brazil’s 1988 Constitution enacted many rights and mechanisms to guarantee participatory democracy. However, the Brazilian state has been unable to close the breach between the legal frameworks that guarantee social control and the effective use of these mechanisms. Calvancati has proposed that in order to redefine and empower local institutions the Brazilian state should introduce mechanisms that guarantee access to information that reflect the management of local administration.

In sum, we can suppose that in order to meet its accounting objectives, social and transversal accountability depend heavily on regimes that include principles, norms, rules and mechanisms that deal with information access and

\textsuperscript{6} A good number of Latin American states have access to information laws. In 2007, according N. CUNILL GRAU (2007b: 125), 11 countries have approved such laws.
information divulging. The dimension of access to information would encourage and improve the work of social accounting actors and also enhance the participation of transversal accounting actors. The divulgence dimension, in turn, should encourage both the proactive disclosure of information by the state but also enable social accounting actors to freely develop their “voice capacity” within a given political system.

III. INFORMATION AND QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY

So far, the various accountabilities have been identified as well as the decisive roles that public information plays within them. This path has revealed that principles, norms, rules and mechanisms that regulate information access and information divulgence are critical to accountability processes.

In electoral accountability, information about public officials, including the one pertaining to their campaign promises and financing sources, aides the accounting actor (the citizen) when using his vote to reward or punish a certain official. In horizontal accountability, information is important as long as it is accessible, systematically disclosed and independently gathered. In social accountability, information must be free: that is, social accounting actors depend a great deal on the capacity to access public information and their ability to voice their findings. Finally, transversal accountability depends on access to independent public information to enhance citizen participation in state-sponsored accountability processes, if they do not, they would solely function as mere legitimizing propaganda mechanisms.
As mentioned at the beginning, the quality of democracy debate has generally considered accountability to be an important dimension of democratic quality assessment. This is not surprising, since the majority of scholars, who are devoted to this subject, consider accountability a defining feature of democracy.

Morlino (2007: 5) proposes a “minimum definition” of democracy that includes “universal suffrage, masculine and feminine; free, competitive, recurring and correct elections; more than one party and diverse and alternative information sources”. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) defines democracy as a function of two basic principles: “popular control and political equality” (Beetham, Carvalho, Landman and Weir, 2008: 4). Levine and Molina define it as a system of representation with free and universal participation, equality in rights and rules of the game, where rights and procedures regulate who governs, and where associations and individuals influence as well as demand responsibility from their governments (Levine y Molina, 2007: 20).

Since accountability is often associated with the idea of democracy, it is just natural that most of democracy assessments include it in their indexes. IDEA states that a democracy must be assessed based on seven mediating values: participation, authorization, representation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness and solidarity. While accountability is explicitly included, both transparency and participation relate to accountability. Transparency is a quality

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7 During the initial stage of this study, four quality of democracy indexes were reviewed: IDEA (2008), Freedom House (2006), Levine and Molina (2007) and Democracy Ranking (2008).
of an accounting process whose opacity level is low and participation is a necessary condition for many accounting processes to happen.

Morlino, in turn, recognizes six dimensions that ought to be assessed, two of which relate directly to accountability: rule of law, electoral accountability, interinstitutional accountability, responsiveness, freedom and equality (Morlino 2007: 7 and 8). Levine and Molina propose a “procedural” definition of quality of democracy that has five dimensions: electoral decision, participation, responsibility, responsiveness to popular will and sovereignty (Levine y Molina, 2006: 24-28). Lastly, the political rights and civil liberties of Freedom House look at seven dimensions; three of which deal with accountability (Freedom House, 2007).

If accountability matters for quality of democracy measurement, and information is a critical element of accountability, how and in which ways do democracy assessments deal with information access and information divulgence? Do they reflect the different information needs of the various accountabilities?

In order to answer this question, we have to consider every indicator that each index uses to measure a certain form of accountability process (electoral, horizontal, social or transversal). Then, we will determine whether the indicators measure information access or information divulgence. Since these two dimensions have usually been associated with the concept of transparency (see Fox, 2007) and since many indicators just state “transparency” or “transparent”

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8 Information divulgence will be used here to denote two kinds of indicators. First, those measuring the proactive disclosure of information by state institutions. Secondly, those that can reveal the capabilities of accounting actors to publicly divulge the information gathered. In both cases, actors are divulging information into the public sphere.
as the main feature to be observed in any given aspect of an accountability process, we have created a third category that includes indicators that openly refer to transparency but that fail to mention how that transparency will be measured. This problem of conceptual ambiguity will be discussed later on.

The two main indexes that were picked for the final stage of this study are IDEA and Freedom House. Levine and Molina and Democracy Ranking were left out, since they both include the Freedom House indicators in their studies. Levine and Molina (2007: 34-29) add eight new indicators to the Freedom House index, but none of them deal directly with information access, information divulgence or general transparency issues. Democracy Ranking (2008) takes the Freedom House index as one dimension of its study. It then includes five other dimensions that consider human development issues such as gender, economy, knowledge, health and environment. Interestingly, Democracy Ranking creators have referred to the “knowledge dimension” as a “key for the performance of advanced knowledge-based economies and societies” that are “are complemented by a “knowledge-based democracy” (Campbell, 2008). However, none of their indicators include access to public information or information divulgence.

Let us now analyze the diverse ways in which IDEA and Freedom House address information in their accountability assessments (Charts 1 and 2).

**Electoral accountability:** At first glance, it can be seen that of all accountabilities, the electoral is the least assessed one in terms of information access and information divulgence. IDEA stresses the importance of finding mechanisms that promote disclosure of campaign financing. Meanwhile,
Freedom House puts emphasis on transparency mechanisms for voter registration, candidate registration and vote count. It can be see that one approaches *ex ante* information needs while the other one addresses *ex post* information needs.

**Interinstitutional accountability**: Neither one of the indexes attends to interinstitutional accounting actors such as the ombudsman. When they do refer to horizontal accounting actors, they tend to privilege the legislature, especially IDEA.

Another interesting feature that emerges from this analysis is the difference in the qualities both indexes look for when assessing information. Both refer to the importance of states disclosing information. However, in IDEA, there is a strong emphasis on the “independence” of the agency that collects and produces that information in the first place. On the other hand, Freedom House expects information to be “detailed” and delivered “timely”.

Finally, for IDEA, the most relevant accountable subjects are: executive performance, taxation and public expenditure. For Freedom House, “government contracts” are the main subject to be accounted for.

**Social accountability**: Both indexes share three common values: freedom of expression, access to information and media independence. However, as far as social accountability is concerned, they have also marked contrasts.

In terms of access to information, IDEA does not just look for access to information rights; it also wants to verify if that access actually occurs in the real
world. Its indicators are result-oriented; it looks for legal rights but also for proofs of negligence on information disclosure or other laws that may be an obstacle to it. Freedom House instead focuses on the right and the abilities needed for petition. As with many other issues of citizenship, it is not enough to have a legal right protected, citizens also need to develop capabilities to enjoy that right while governments should make it easy for those who are less capable to do so.

In terms of media independence, Freedom House takes the lead. Its index has six specified indicators to assess the level of independence of a media outlet. Additionally, it is also concerned about the physical protection of those who investigate and denounce. However, those indicators all share the same preoccupation: that the media is independent of the government. However, Freedom House is less concerned about the media being independent from powerful private sectors. In contrast, IDEA seems overtly more interested in this kind of dependence. Its index values foreign governments or corporation media independence, as well as pluralistic media ownership. It also considers it a bad sign of access to information if the media depends on official or corporate channels of information.

**Transversal accountability:** Freedom House does not explicitly mention processes of transversal accountability. However, it does state that budget planning should be scrutinized. Without any further information, it is very difficult to ensure that this would mean an assessment of participatory budget planning or any other form of transversal accountability, for instance. IDEA, in contrast, looks for “public consultation on policy and legislation” by the government and the legislature. These procedures must be open, systematic, inclusive and
transparent. Again, without more information-specific indicators, it is very difficult to establish whether this assessment is concerned with the quality of information being disclosed by the states in these processes.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study has clearly demonstrated the close relationship between information and the various accountabilities. It has revealed that these links are complex and they involve two levels or dimensions: information access and information divulgence. As long as this conceptual line is respected, it will be possible to draw better definitions of transparency, which many times is used by quality of democracy indexes without an explicit clarification. That confusion, in turn, makes it very hard to perform proper operationalizations in order to measure the effectiveness of accountability processes.

In terms of the assessment that both indexes make of the different accountabilities and their information needs, we can draw some conclusions. First, both indexes are rather weak when measuring information in electoral accountability. IDEAS’ ex ante approach and Freedom House’s ex post approach could be combined so that a more comprehensive set of information indicators is available in electoral contexts. It is understandable to assume that when a free press and an active civil society exist, electoral information divulgence will be guaranteed. However, relying on social accountability for assuring electoral divulgence risks to exonerate the state from its responsibility to open up and disclose timely, independent and complete information
regarding political candidates, campaign financing, and voter registration, among others.

Another interesting element emerges from the way the indexes assess horizontal accountability. Again, what can be seen is a conspicuous disregard for critical and classical agents of horizontal accountability such as the ombudsman. In terms of information needs, as it has been stated earlier, there are too few indicators on information divulgence for interinstitutional control. Future research should establish if this fact affects the performance of interinstitutional horizontal agents.

Finally, the attention put on social accounting agents is remarkable. In the future, it should be established whether social accountability affects information divulgence and its quality. In other words, whether the pressure of social accounting actors can lead to a widening or shortening of state secrecy.

Furthermore, accountability and transparency scholars can learn form quality of democracy indexes. By observing how they try to assess accountability processes, we can begin to distinguish the complex and diverse pathways where information needs emerge. Neither those pathways nor the indicators used are obvious, as it has been confirmed when comparing the marked differences between the IDEA and Freedom House approaches.

IDEA and Freedom House encourage many insights. First and foremost, that access to information is not enough to guarantee accountability; when talking about quality of democracy, the quality of that information has to be kept in mind. For IDEA, this means having independent agents, which collect and produce that information. Freedom House emphasizes the timeliness and detail
with which that information is produced. The question on how public information is gathered, organized and divulged is crucial for the quality of accountability, especially for Latin American democracies whose modernization is still in process and where there is a remarkable lack of information protocols and systematization procedures.

For future research, an information for democracy regime could be drafted, in which all features that public information must have in order to satisfy the needs of a successful accountability process are systematically gathered. The building of this regime could help quality democracy scholars as well. By building a set of dimensions and indicators that fully reflect the various accountabilities and their information access and divulgence needs, we could contribute to the construction of a transparency index that thoroughly reflects the needs of each accounting actor in each accountability process.

So far, democracy indexes have been very concerned with the measurement of the legal frameworks that protect the right to access information, the right to petition and the right to freedom of speech. They are also worried about guaranteeing the independence of accounting actors, especially those coming from the civil society, including their effective protection. However, much more is needed to measure the information being accessed and the effective pathways being used to enjoy these rights. For instance, we need to understand how often journalists exercise their right to petition, or how much they just divulge hidden leaks coming from third sources. Likewise, we still need to assess and understand the way that information is being presented to any given accounting actor. Anyone who unsuccessfully tries to access and navigate Latin American legislatures’ digital files will
understand that we a long way to go. E-democracy and information science scholars can lend a helping hand on this task.

As we have seen, neither one of the indexes has a comprehensive conceptual framework to assess the various accountabilities. Consequently, it is still very difficult to assess thoroughly the quality of their “information regimes”. For future exercises, we need to invite other disciplines to the dialogue with accountability researchers in order to establish: a comprehensive list of accounting actors and accountable\(^9\) actors across the various accountabilities, as well as the set of their needs in terms of access and divulgence of information. So far we have seen the importance of independence and timeliness when public information is gathered and disclosed. Much more could be found in future research.

\(^9\) While IDEA explicitly states certain accountable actors: the executive, the congress, the armed forces, the police and even powerful corporations, Freedom House is much less detailed about that. Interestingly, neither of them mentions judiciary accountability, despite the crucial importance of judicial reform and openness in new democracies.
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<th>ACCOUNTABILITY TYPE</th>
<th>INFORMATION INDICATOR TYPE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Divulgence</td>
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| Electoral           | • Extensive and effective powers of the legislature to oversee the executive and hold it to account.  
|                     | o Laws governing legislative scrutiny, powers of disclosure and sanction.  
|                     | o Exclusion from the scrutiny process, record of significant failures.  
|                     | • Rigorous procedures for approval and supervision of taxation and public expenditure.  
|                     | • Effectiveness of the scrutiny process for public finances. The government’s international policy is subject to effective parliamentary oversight and public participation.  | • Rules and procedures for financing elections, candidates and elected representatives that prevent their subordination to sectional interests.  
| Horizontal          |                           |             |
|                     | o Laws on the financing of elections, expenditure of candidates and the expenses of elected representatives, including disclosure.  | • Extensive and effective powers of the legislature to oversee the executive and hold it to account.  
|                     |                           |             |
|                     | o Independence of government information and statistical services.  
|                     | • Rigorous procedures for approval and supervision of taxation and public expenditure.  
|                     | o Independence of auditing and accounting bodies.  | • Rigorous procedures for approval and supervision of taxation and public expenditure.  
<p>|                     |                           | o Lack of transparency in public expenditures.  |</p>
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<th>Social</th>
<th>Transversal</th>
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<td>influence.</td>
<td>The parliament or legislature have sufficient and timely information and adequate expertise for effective oversight.</td>
<td>Extensive procedures of the parliament or legislature for consulting the public and relevant interests across the range of its work.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Comprehensive and effective right of access to government information</td>
<td>• Open and systematic procedures for public consultation on government policy and legislation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Information access laws.</td>
<td>o Inclusiveness of procedures.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Operation of the laws in practice.</td>
<td>o Systematic exclusions or government bias.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Existence of secrecy laws.</td>
<td>• Extensive procedures of the parliament or legislature for consulting the public and relevant interests across the range of its work.</td>
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<td>o Significant failure to disclose.</td>
<td>o Legal basis for the responsibility of parliament or legislature to consult the public.</td>
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<td>• Effective media investigating government and powerful corporations.</td>
<td>o Inclusive practices.</td>
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<td>o Examine the extent to which the media are dependent for their information on official government or corporate channels.</td>
<td>o Systematic practices</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Effective and equal protection of freedom of expression.</td>
<td>• Open and systematic procedures for public consultation on government policy and legislation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Freedom of the press.</td>
<td>o Transparency of procedures.</td>
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<td>• Independent media from government, pluralistic ownership, and free from subordination to foreign governments or multinational companies.</td>
<td>• Extensive procedures of the parliament or legislature for consulting the public and relevant interests across the range of its work.</td>
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<td>• Effective and equal protection of freedom of expression.</td>
<td>o Transparent practices</td>
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<td>• Independence of media.</td>
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Source: Beetham, Carvalho, Landman and Weir (2008), own elaboration.
Chart 2  
Information indicators found in Freedom House Quality of Democracy Assessment

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<tr>
<th>ACCOUNTABILITY TYPE</th>
<th>INFORMATION INDICATOR TYPE</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electoral</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Divulgence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Registration of voters and candidates conducted in a transparent manner.</td>
<td>• Transparent vote count, reported honestly with the official results made public</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Transparent vote count, reported honestly with the official results made public</td>
<td>• The government publishes detailed accounting expenditures in a timely manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The government publishes detailed accounting expenditures in a timely manner.</td>
<td>• State ensures transparency when awarding government contracts.</td>
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| Social              | • Citizens have the legal right and practical ability to obtain information about government operations and the means to petition government agencies for it. | • Government publishes detailed accounting expenditures in a timely manner. |
|                     | • The asset declarations of officials are open to public and media scrutiny and verification. | • Whistleblowers, anticorruption activists, investigators, journalists enjoy legal protections that make them feel secure reporting cases of bribery and corruption. |
|                     | • Allegations of corruption are given wide and extensive airing in the media. | • Allegations of corruption are given wide and extensive airing in the media. |
|                     | • Freedom of expression. | • Freedom of expression. |
|                     | • Free and independent media¹. | • Free and independent media¹. |

¹ Freedom House has a thorough list of indicators to measure media independence:
Transversal

- Budget-making process is subject to meaningful public scrutiny.
- Government publishes detailed accounting expenditures in a timely manner.

Source: Freedom House (2010), own elaboration.

- Government directly or indirectly does not censor media.
- Absence of self-censorship among journalists, especially when reporting on politically sensitive issues, including corruption or the activities of senior officials.
- The government does not use libel and security laws to punish those who scrutinize government officials and policies through either onerous fines or imprisonment.
- If media outlets are dependent on the government for their financial survival, the government does not withhold funding in order to propagandize, primarily provide official points of view, and/or limit access by opposition parties and civic critics.
- The government does not attempt to influence media content and access through means including politically motivated awarding of broadcast frequencies and newspaper registrations, unfair control and influence over printing facilities and distribution networks, selective distribution of advertising, onerous registration requirements, prohibitive tariffs, and bribery.
- Journalists are not threatened, arrested, imprisoned, beaten, or killed by government or nongovernmental actors for their legitimate journalistic activities, and if such cases occur, they are investigated and prosecuted.
VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY


FREEDOM HOUSE. *Methodology*. 2010. Available on:
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