



Accountability and Democracy: The Pitfalls and Promise of Popular Control

Craig T. Borowiak

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Few political concepts are as emblematic of our era as democratic accountability. In a time of political and economic turmoil, in which global forces have destabilized conventional relations of political authority, democratic accountability has come to symbolize both what is absent and what is desired in our polity. Situated at the intersection of democratic theory and international studies, *Accountability and Democracy* provides an in-depth critical analysis of accountability. Through an engagement with several key democratic traditions, both ancient and modern, the book paints a rich picture of democratic accountability as a multi-dimensional concept harboring competing imperatives and diverse instantiations.

Contrary to dominant views that emphasize discipline and control, Craig Borowiak offers an original and refreshing view of democratic accountability as a source of mutuality, participation, and political transformation. He both creatively engages conventional electoral models of accountability and moves beyond them by situating democratic accountability within more deliberative, participatory and agonistic contexts. Provocatively, the book also challenges deep-seated understandings of democratic accountability as an expression of popular sovereignty. Borowiak instead argues that accountable governance is incompatible with all claims to ultimate authority, regardless of whether they refer to the demos, the state, or cosmopolitan public law. Rather than conceiving of democratic accountability as a way to legitimize a secure and sovereign political order, the book contends that destabilization and democratic insurgence are indispensable and often neglected facets of democratic accountability practices. For contemporary scholars, practitioners and activists grappling with the challenge of building democratic legitimacy into world politics, the book urges greater reflexivity and nuance in how democratic accountability is evoked and implemented. It offers insights into the myriad ways democratic accountability has been thwarted in the past, while also cultivating a sense of expanded possibility for how it might be conceived for the present.

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