

Power and Accountability

A retreat-style meeting at the University of Sydney



Funded by a USYD 'Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Collaborative Research Network' grant (2015-2016) for interdisciplinary research on accountability, and its relation to power; co-sponsored by the Sydney Democracy Network.

When we hear the words 'power' and 'accountability' our thoughts may go first to high-stakes political and legal realms. Edward Snowden's recent actions, whose global consequences are still playing out, were motivated by his dismay at the 'divorce of power from accountability' in state-sanctioned behaviour. Our simplest moral intuitions tell us that it is wrong to operate freely without ever having to reveal or explain one's reasons for action. This is true not only at macro scales of history and state, but also in realms of human agency at micro levels.

What is accountability? Who should be accountable, for what, and to whom? Why is there a moral intuition that power and accountability should go together? What are the proper units of accountability?

The goal of this retreat-style meeting is to spark constructive debate on the relation between power and accountability, with participants who think about and work on questions of accountability from a range of perspectives. The mode of the meeting is dynamic and informal: quick-fire presentations of current projects and positions, with in-depth discussion the priority. Participants are working on issues as wide-ranging as aircraft accidents, torture prevention, climate change, social interaction, community activism, disability, journalism, personhood, Internet governance, and representative democracy.

All are welcome to attend, though please note that places are limited: please register at <http://bit.ly/power-accountability>

Thursday 5 November
9:00am-5:00pm

Darlington Centre
174 City Road
Darlington NSW 2008
Thursday 5 November



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Power and Accountability

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- 9:00-9:15** **Welcome and Introduction** *Nick Enfield (University of Sydney)*
- 9:15-10:45** **Tanya Stivers (Keynote speaker)**
Professor of Sociology, Director of the Center for Language, Interaction and Culture, UCLA
- Dr Ilan Dar-Nimrod**
Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology, University of Sydney
- Kate Macdonald**
Senior Lecturer, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne
- COFFEE BREAK**
- 11:00-12:30** **Angela Daly**
Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Swinburne Institute for Social Research
- Gerard Goggin**
Professor of Media and Communication, University of Sydney
- Giovanni Navarra**
Postdoctoral Research Associate, Sydney Democracy Network
- John Watson**
Politics and Society Editor, The Conversation
- LUNCH** (lunch provided to all attendees)
- 13:30-15:00** **Danielle Celermajer**
Department of Sociology and Social Policy
- Vivianna Rodriguez Carreon**
Visiting Scholar, Lecturer and Researcher, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
- Wendy Lambourne**
Senior Lecturer, Deputy Director, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
- Jessica Cadwallader**
Advocacy Projects Manager, Violence Prevention, People with Disability Australia
- COFFEE BREAK**
- 15:15-16:30** **Alana Mann**
Senior Lecturer, Media and Communications, SLAM
- Peter Hobbins**
Department of History, University of Sydney
- Susan Park**
Associate Professor, Department of Government and International Relations
- 16:30-17:00** **General Discussion and Close**
- 18:00-20:00** **Sydney Ideas Panel and Reception**



Dr Jessica Cadwallader

Advocacy Projects Manager, Violence Prevention, People with Disability Australia

Jess Cadwallader completed her PhD in 2009, and a postdoctoral project in 2012. Her academic work focusses on the political and social significant of trauma, memory and forgetting, using feminist theories of the body, critical disability studies and ethics. She made the move into policy work in 2013, joining a national peak representative body for people with disability, People with Disability, Australia. In this role, she has focussed particularly on violence against people with disability, making substantial contributions to the ongoing work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Senate Inquiry into Violence against People with Disability in Institutional and Residential Settings.

On Accountability: "It is difficult to bring the issue of violence against people with disability into the foreground when there is almost no robust available quantitative data, and where there is resistance to seeking this data. This indicates both the problems with counting – who counts, how do they count, and who do they count for? – and the problems with a political system tightly focussed on only responding to those issues which have been quantified. What happens, effectively, when accountability is limited to those things we are prepared to count?"



Professor Danielle Celermajer

Department of Sociology and Social Policy

Dany Celermajer has recently completed a three year European funded project on the prevention of torture in the military and police focusing on Sri Lanka and Nepal, prior to which she was founding director of the EU funded Masters of Human Rights and Democratisation (Asia Pacific). Prior to completing her doctorate in political theory and international law at Columbia University she was head of Indigenous Policy at the Australian Human rights Commission. Her publications include *Power, Judgment and Political Evil: Hannah Arendt's Promise* (Ashgate, 2010) and *Sins of the Nation and the Ritual of Apology* (Cambridge, 2009).

On accountability: 'We remain trapped in discourses of accountability that belie realities and in fact impede our seeing clearly how power is circulating.'



Dr Angela Daly

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Swinburne Institute for Social Research

Angela Daly is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Swinburne Institute for Social Research, affiliate of the Swinburne Law School and a research associate at the Tilburg Institute for Law, Technology and Society (Netherlands). Her specialties lie in the interaction between law and new technologies, encompassing a range of areas including privacy, free expression, data protection, intellectual property, and competition and regulation. In 2016, she will join Queensland University of Technology's Law Faculty as Vice-Chancellor's Research Fellow.

On Accountability: 'I'm working on Internet governance, power and accountability. I'll be talking about the emergence of concentrations of power vis-à-vis the Internet, both public and private & the interaction between the two. How is this power being kept accountable (or not)? I will explore this through methods including geopolitical manoeuvres, legal cases, transparency reporting.'



Dr Ilan Dar-Nimrod

Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology, University of Sydney

Ilan Dar-Nimrod is a Senior lecturer at the School of Psychology, University of Sydney. He received his B.A. degree from Haifa University, and his M.A. and Ph.D. in social psychology from the University of British Columbia. Before joining the faculty at the University of Sydney, he completed a NIMH fellowship at the University of Rochester Medical Center. His program of research utilizes descriptive and experimental methods to understand the social, cognitive, and behavioural effects of exposure to scientific claims and reports, as well as research on genes-by-environment interaction effects and health.

On Accountability: 'Agency seems to be a necessary condition to address before one raises questions about accountability. Research in social psychology invites reflection about the dynamics of perceptions of agency and how they affect elements such as blameworthiness and praiseworthiness.'



Professor Nick Enfield

Chair, Department of Linguistics

Nick Enfield is Professor and Chair of Linguistics at the University of Sydney. His research is based largely on fieldwork in mainland Southeast Asia, especially Laos. He studies the social functions of language and ask what they can tell us about cultural and cognitive diversity in our species. Publications include 'The Utility of Meaning' (Oxford 2013), 'Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology' (2014, with Paul Kockelman and Jack Sidnell) 'Relationship Thinking' (Oxford 2013), and 'Roots of Human Sociality' (Berg 2006, with Stephen C. Levinson).

On Accountability: 'To understand the anatomy of accountability, it is necessary to break it down in terms of the dynamics of social agency: what is done, for what reasons, who knows about it, who has the right or duty to share this knowledge, and what must happen next.'



Professor Gerard Goggin

Professor of Media and Communication, University of Sydney

Gerard Goggin is Professor of Media and Communication and ARC Future Fellow, the University of Sydney. He has published widely on power in relation to media and culture, especially relating to digital technology, disability, and human rights (the subject of his current major project).

On Accountability: 'Accountability depends on communication; not just on voices and speaking out, but on new concepts of listening – that we can see, for instance, in the emergent politics of disability, diversity, and difference'.



Dr Peter Hobbins

Department of History, University of Sydney

As a historian of science, technology and medicine, Peter Hobbins is fascinated by how knowledge is generated and applied, especially through interactions with non-humans. Having worked on venomous animals and quarantine, his latest research explores aviation medicine, airways safety and crash investigations. Peter's monograph, *Venomous Encounters: Snakes, Vivisection and Scientific Medicine in Colonial Australia*, will be published by Manchester U Press.

On Accountability: 'Technological systems such as air travel often enhance what humans can achieve, but also regularly magnify the consequences of lapses, mistakes and omissions. How far can non-human contributors - from weather patterns to metal fatigue - be truly held accountable for systems 'controlled' by humans?'



Dr Wendy Lambourne

Senior Lecturer, Deputy Director, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

My research applies a peace and conflict studies lens to analysing transitional justice and peacebuilding after genocide and other mass violence, and has taken me to Cambodia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Timor Leste and Burundi to conduct field research. Most recently, I have been exploring the role of trauma healing and other psychosocial interventions in building community resilience and social cohesion. My publications include a chapter on transformative justice in *Transitional Justice Theories* (Routledge, 2014) and numerous other book chapters and journal articles.

On Accountability: 'After genocide and other mass violence, who has the power to hold the perpetrators to account? And what does accountability mean in this context? How is justice being defined and by whom? And what are the implications for effective means of dealing with the past and building peace for the future?'



Dr Kate Macdonald

Senior Lecturer, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne

Kate Macdonald is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Melbourne, having held previous positions at the London School of Economics and Political Science, the Australian National University, and Oxford University. Her research focuses on transnational governance and accountability, with a particular focus on social, labour and human rights regulation of global business. Recent publications include *The Politics of Global Supply Chains: Power and Governance Beyond the State* (Polity Press, 2013).

On accountability: "Accountability might usefully be thought of as a kind of 'shell' or umbrella concept. It can be understood generically as a moral or institutional relation in which one agent (or group of agents) is accorded entitlements to question, direct, sanction or constrain the actions of another. But there is nothing in the concept of accountability itself that tells us who may rightfully demand particular reasons or actions from designated others, on what grounds, or what recourse accountability-holders are entitled or empowered to call upon if such responses are not forthcoming. Such substantive questions can only be resolved with reference to the distinctive social and moral context in which particular claims of accountability are invoked."



Dr Alana Mann

Senior Lecturer, Media and Communications, SLAM

Alana's research interests include the engagement of social movements and other civil society actors in policy debates regarding food and agriculture. She is an active researcher in the Sydney Environment Institute (SEI) and the Charles Perkins Centre, and sits on the executive committee of the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA).

On Accountability: 'Corporate accountability in global food politics must be addressed by Extraterritorial Obligations that trace responsibilities for actions and omissions of transnational corporations and their international supply chains back to nation-states.'



Dr Giovanni Navarria

Postdoctoral Research Associate, Sydney Democracy Network

Giovanni Navarria is working on the effects communication media have on prevailing power-dynamics between state and citizens in China. Previously he has worked on the changing dynamics of Citizens' engagement in media-saturated societies. He is co-editor of the Democracy Futures series, a joint global initiative between the Sydney Democracy Network and The Conversation; and convener of SDN fortnightly research seminars series. He has a PhD in Politics and Media from the University of Westminster and a Degree in Philosophy from the University of Catania.

On accountability: 'Does the Internet make power more accountable? Can blogs, tweets, YouTube videos or other social media platforms be effective antidotes against the hubris of power in democratic as well as non-democratic regimes?'



Dr Susan Park

Associate Professor, Department of Government and International Relations

Susan Park is an Associate Professor in International Relations at the University of Sydney. She focuses on how state and non-state actors influence international organizations, particularly the Multilateral Development Banks, to be greener and more accountable. Susan is currently co-investigator of a research project on Accountability in Global Environmental Governance.

On Accountability: 'Accountability can have both positive and negative effects.'



Dr Vivianna Rodriguez Carreon,

Visiting Scholar, Lecturer and Researcher, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

Dr Vivianna Rodriguez Carreon is a visiting scholar, lecturer, tutor, and researcher in various departments within the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Sydney. Her interests include interdisciplinary theories and methods relating to gender, consciousness, human development, human security and transitional justice. She recently completed a book manuscript Dynamics of Human Agency: Women's War Journeys in which she develops a theory of human agency.

On Accountability: 'How does our accumulation of experience—our consciousness—shape our human agency? How do we identify accountability of the repressed self (particularly in the poverty and war context)?'



Dr Tanya Stivers

Professor of Sociology, Director of the Center for Language, Interaction and Culture, UCLA

Tanya examines recordings of spontaneous naturally occurring social interaction in order to uncover the underlying structures of interaction at the micro-level. Studying how and when people use particular conversational practices, and to what effect, helps us to explore boundaries whether they be, for instance, cultural, language-based, socioeconomic or ontogenetic.

On accountability: 'Accounts for our opinions, decisions and behavior are omnirelevant.'



John Watson

Politics and Society Editor, The Conversation

John's interests in politics and social justice first drew him into journalism in apartheid-era South Africa. His residence visa was revoked, however, forcing him to return to Australia in 1986. John worked at regional newspapers in the Latrobe Valley and Geelong, before joining The Age in Melbourne in 1995. He occupied a variety of editorial positions over the next 19 years, culminating in the roles of chief leader writer and columnist. He moved to The Conversation in December 2013.

On Accountability: 'There is a conflict in the relationships between journalists and their powerful sources, and journalists and their readers. A core problem with being a proxy for holding the powerful accountable to the public is that few journalists function as outsiders – they become part of what can be a very incestuous circle of movers and shakers. It is independent journalists outside the institutional media – the likes of Glenn Greenwald and John Pilger – who have been most effective in holding the powerful to account for abuses of power.'