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Tales of accountability: a Q-method study of discourses amongst Tanzanian members of parliament*

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Abstract
The hallmark of accountability in a democracy centres on the way the elected parliament holds the executive to account. If the parliament does not perform its oversight role effectively, lower authorities would have fewer incentives to do the same vis-à-vis local executives. In this article we therefore ask whether or not different meanings of accountability can be discerned amongst Tanzanian Members of Parliament (MPs). In our Q-method research we found four clearly identifiable discourses on accountability amongst Tanzanian MPs: Partycrats; My Electorate’s Advocates; Frustrated Account Holders; and Pragmatic Account Holders. We understand MPs discourses within the broader context of political clientelism and we argue that this combination of discourses, or accountability culture, enables the executive to rule in semi-autocratic ways. Even if opposition parties would obtain a parliamentary majority, this accountability culture stands in the way of achieving greater democratic responsiveness.