Discourse journal on Law and Society
E-ISSN: 3089-6797
P-ISSN: 3089-6789

From Formal Hearings to Consequential Oversight: Translating Bovens's Actor–Forum Accountability Framework for Justice-Sector Oversight

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Abstract. Legislative oversight of law-enforcement and judicial institutions must combine democratic answerability with safeguards for legality, independence, due process, confidentiality, and operational integrity. This article examines how Bovens's actor–forum public accountability framework can illuminate that challenge in the oversight environment of Commission III of the Indonesian House of Representatives. It uses a conceptual review design and a theory-focused narrative literature review with a theory-to-practice orientation. Six documented Scopus search runs produced 1,135 raw records; after removing 132 duplicates, 1,003 unique records were screened. Full text was sought for 60 articles, nine were unavailable, and 51 Scopus-identified journal articles were verified and included. Bovens's primary framework article was verified separately through citation chaining, producing an analytical corpus of 52 full-text journal articles. Qualitative-interpretive synthesis reconstructed the actor–forum relationship, compared legislative and justice-sector applications, examined accountability deficits, overloads, and boundary conditions, and traced domain formation. The synthesis shows that formal powers, hearings, disclosure, and sanction threats do not by themselves create meaningful accountability. Consequential oversight depends on mandate and role alignment, usable evidence, active and capable forums, traceable follow-up, and proportionate safeguards. These findings are translated into five domains: mandate and role alignment; information and evidence architecture; deliberative scrutiny and forum capability; consequential follow-up and inter-institutional handoffs; and safeguarded accountability. The contribution is conceptual and translational rather than theoretical, and the framework remains a diagnostic guide whose effectiveness requires contextual field validation.

Keywords: Accountability Forums; Justice-Sector Institutions; Legislative Oversight; Public Accountability; Public Administration.

Received: March 15, 2026
Revised: May 12, 2026
Accepted: July 15 , 2026
Published: September 02 , 2026
Curr. Ver.: September 02, 2026

1. Introduction

Legislative oversight of law-enforcement and judicial institutions is a core public-administration problem because it joins democratic control, constitutional restraint, organizational learning, and the stewardship of coercive public authority. In Indonesia, the House of Representatives' standing orders establish oversight as a formal parliamentary function alongside legislation and budgeting. The rules locate supervision of statutory implementation, public finance, and government policy within parliamentary mechanisms and provide that commission-level oversight results enter deliberation and follow-up pathways (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Republik Indonesia [DPR RI], 2020, arts. 4–5, 174–176, 207–208). The current framework must be read together with DPR RI Regulation No. 1 of 2025, which amended the 2020 Rules of Procedure and introduced an additional evaluation and follow-up mechanism (DPR RI, 2025, art. 228A). These provisions establish an accountability

architecture; they do not, by themselves, demonstrate that every hearing produces substantive scrutiny, defensible judgment, or institutional correction.

Commission III operates within this architecture in relation to institutions associated with policing, prosecution, anti-corruption, adjudication, and narcotics control (DPR RI, 2024). These institutions perform legally differentiated roles: investigative, prosecutorial, anti-corruption, judicial, and narcotics-control responsibilities cannot be treated as a single undifferentiated accountability object. An official DPR communication illustrates the commission's contemporary position by describing oversight as accountability-oriented control while explicitly distinguishing it from intervention in legal proceedings and interference with judicial independence (DPR RI, 2026). As an institutional communication, that source establishes a stated position rather than evidence of consistent practice. This distinction creates the practical puzzle examined here. Parliamentary authority must be consequential enough to obtain explanations, test institutional conduct, and follow up public commitments, yet sufficiently bounded to protect legality, due process, operational integrity, personal privacy, and the independence of adjudicative or prosecutorial functions.

The presence of hearings, reports, and formal powers is therefore an inadequate measure of accountability. Legislative-oversight research shows that committees enact authority through preparation, evidence use, questioning, participation, judgment, and persistence. Formal constitutional powers may remain dormant under dominant-party incentives, resource constraints, weak committee engagement, or institutional stress (Fagbadebo, 2019; Friedberg, 2013; Geddes, 2019; Grenfell et al., 2024). Conversely, routine hearings, independent audit inputs, and proactive agenda formation may create sustained scrutiny, although attention often shifts toward salient alarms and away from less visible risks (Leidorf-Tidå & Busuioc, 2026; Lynch, 2023; Santos, 2025; Stephenson, 2025). The relevant question is not merely whether a forum exists, but whether it is activated and capable of completing an accountability relationship.

Law-enforcement and security settings make this question especially difficult. Accountability may involve legislatures, courts, audit bodies, executive principals, professional organizations, citizens, media, and specialized review institutions. These forums do not hold identical mandates or access rights. Police accountability can be paralyzed by mistrust, passive panels, or blurred role allocation; security oversight can be weakened by secrecy or narrow remit; and hybrid or private policing can diffuse public responsibility (Bolto, 2019; Cooper, 2023; Davis et al., 2003; Murphy et al., 2017). At the same time, excessive publicity or mandate-insensitive pressure can prejudice proceedings, expose sensitive information, or turn institutional scrutiny into personalized blame (Newkirk et al., 2001; Woods et al., 2021). Accountability in this domain thus requires differentiation rather than the indiscriminate maximization of disclosure, hearings, or sanctions.

Bovens's actor–forum public accountability framework provides a suitable analytical foundation because it defines accountability as a relationship in which an actor is obliged or expected to explain and justify conduct to a forum that can question, judge, and potentially attach consequences (Bovens, 2007). The framework distinguishes accountability as a relational mechanism from accountability as a broad virtue. It also separates descriptive questions about who accounts to whom from normative assessment under democratic, constitutional, and learning perspectives (Bovens et al., 2008). Later scholarship has extended the approach to landscapes of multiple forums, voluntary accountability, watchdog capacity, account-holding intensity, reputational behavior, collaborative governance, and synchronous hearings (Bovens & Wille, 2021; Busuioc & Lodge, 2017; de Boer, 2023; Jacobs & Schillemans, 2016; Lee & Ospina, 2022; Leidorf-Tidå & de Boer, 2023; Mesquita & de Azevedo, 2022).

Despite this development, the literature remains fragmented across theory reconstruction, general public administration, legislative committees, police and security accountability, and studies of overload or dysfunction. Existing applications frequently isolate formal authority, information provision, hearing behavior, or sanctions. They less often provide a single traceable translation showing how mandate fit, evidence architecture, deliberative capability, follow-up, and safeguards connect in the Commission III setting. A synthesis is needed that preserves the original actor–forum mechanism while adapting its diagnostic use to a multi-institutional and legally bounded workplace context.

This article addresses three questions: RQ1, what are the origins, core constructs, mechanisms, assumptions, and boundaries of Bovens's actor–forum public accountability framework? RQ2, how has the framework been applied, adapted, and criticized, and what boundary conditions follow for legislative oversight of law-enforcement and judicial institutions? RQ3, how can the framework be translated into a parsimonious and traceable diagnostic model for Commission III without overstating theoretical contribution? The article makes a conceptual and translational contribution. It reconstructs the framework, integrates application and criticism evidence, and derives five context-sensitive domains: mandate and role alignment; information and evidence architecture; deliberative scrutiny and forum capability; consequential follow-up and inter-institutional handoffs; and safeguarded accountability. These domains organize diagnosis and conditional practice options; they do not constitute a new theory or a claim of field-validated effectiveness.

2. Methods

Research Design and Rationale

This Conceptual Review Article used a theory-focused narrative literature review with a theory-to-practice orientation. The design was selected to reconstruct the conceptual architecture of Bovens's actor–forum public accountability framework, compare its application across institutional settings, evaluate criticisms and boundary conditions, and translate the resulting synthesis into an auditable workplace framework. The study was qualitative and interpretive. It was not a field study, systematic review, meta-analysis, or bibliometric analysis. No primary data were collected. The analytical task was to connect verified source findings through explicit interpretive chains while retaining distinctions between the focal framework, later development, contextual application, and authorial translation.

Literature Search and Corpus Construction

Scopus was the sole bibliographic database used to identify the peer-reviewed journal corpus. Six documented search runs were completed on 17 August 2026 using TITLE-ABS-KEY combinations designed for complementary source roles: framework origin and development; actor–forum anatomy; criticism and boundaries; public-administration applications; justice-sector accountability; and legislative-oversight translation. Searches were limited to articles or reviews published through 2026 in English. The six runs returned 542, 336, 122, 54, 56, and 25 records, respectively, for an aggregate raw count of 1,135 before cross-run deduplication. Exact rerunnable queries, filters, dates, and result counts are reported in Supplementary Table S1. Backward and forward citation chaining was used separately to verify and recover the seminal framework source (Bovens, 2007); it was not represented as another database search.

Eligibility and Source Verification

The 1,135 raw records contained 132 cross-run duplicates, leaving 1,003 unique records for title-and-abstract screening. Of these, 943 were excluded because they did not satisfy the theory, application, criticism, legislative-oversight, or law-enforcement evidence roles. Full text was sought for 60 candidates. Nine could not be obtained, leaving 51 Scopus-identified journal articles assessed in full text. Because substantive role-based eligibility had already been applied during title-and-abstract screening, the full-text stage functioned primarily as source verification and claim-scope confirmation. All 51 retrieved articles remained eligible, and none was excluded at that stage. Bovens's (2007) primary theory article was verified separately through citation chaining, bringing the analytical reference basis to 52 journal articles. Abstract-only and unavailable records remained discovery leads and were not cited, counted as included evidence, synthesized, or used in domain formation.

Eligibility required a substantive role in at least one of four areas: framework anatomy and development; empirical or conceptual application; criticism, dysfunction, or boundary conditions; or translation to legislative oversight and law-enforcement and judicial institutions. Full-text verification recorded the file identity, readable status, sections checked, theoretical role, application context, findings, limitations, and eligible claim scope. Inclusion was based on substantive relevance and source-role coverage rather than a numerical quota. Four official DPR source records were separately verified for the workplace phenomenon; these provided legal and institutional context but were not counted as journal evidence. Their identities, functions, and evidentiary boundaries are reported in Supplementary Table S2B.

Qualitative-Interpretive Synthesis

Synthesis proceeded in four linked stages. First, the primary framework and full-text development literature were coded for framework identity, chronology, constructs, mechanisms, assumptions, evaluative perspectives, and boundaries. Second, 35 application records were compared across legislative, law-enforcement/security, and adjacent public-sector settings, while ten criticism records captured overload, passivity, political blame, information failure, procedural fixation, multiple-forum trade-offs, and digital implementation conditions. Third, claim–evidence maps linked each substantive statement to eligible references and a conceptual warrant. Fourth, workplace translation records traced phenomenon element → framework construct or mechanism → application evidence → contextual interpretation → conditional practice option → boundary or caution.

Seven preliminary clusters were considered during domain formation. Actor identification and mandate fit were combined; transparency and information quality were combined; questioning, judgment, and forum capability were combined; consequences, follow-up, and institutional handoffs were combined; and independence, secrecy, privacy, and due process were retained together as a visible cross-cutting safeguard domain. The final five-domain solution passed tests of distinctiveness, evidence convergence, alignment with the original framework, analytic utility, and nonredundancy. Fewer domains would collapse different failure mechanisms, whereas additional domains would fragment components that operate jointly. A contribution audit confirmed that the synthesis changes no constructs, relations, mechanisms, propositions, or boundary conditions. The study is accordingly classified as conceptual and translational. The framework has not been validated through field implementation, so practical statements are expressed as conditional options rather than effectiveness claims.

3. Conceptual Foundations and Development

Origins and Intellectual Context

Bovens (2007) developed the focal framework to clarify a concept that was increasingly used both as a normative ideal and as a description of institutional practice. The central analytical move was to define accountability narrowly as an actor–forum relationship rather than equating it with transparency, responsiveness, responsibility, integrity, or good governance. An actor provides information and reasons about conduct; a forum can interrogate and judge that account; and the actor may face consequences. This formulation makes the relationship empirically observable and allows separate evaluation of its democratic, constitutional, and learning value.

The framework belongs to a wider public-sector accountability tradition that emphasizes different sources of authority and control. Romzek (2000) showed that public managers operate under dynamic hierarchical, legal, professional, and political expectations. Curtin (2007) examined the problem of holding quasi-autonomous administrative actors to public account, while Choudhury and Ahmed (2002) demonstrated how governance shifts complicate accountability for third-sector organizations. These works reinforce the need to identify the actor, forum, conduct, standards, and consequence channel rather than assuming a single vertical principal–agent chain.

Core Constructs, Mechanisms, and Relations

The first constructs are the account-giving actor, the account-holding forum, and the obligation or expectation to render an account. The actor may be an officeholder, organization, unit, or collective, but responsibility must be mapped carefully when decisions are distributed. The forum may be a parliamentary committee, court, audit institution, ombudsman, professional body, or public audience; a passive information recipient is not automatically an accountability forum. The account-giving expectation may be legal, hierarchical, professional, political, social, or voluntarily assumed (Bovens, 2007; de Boer, 2023).

The mechanism then moves through information and justification, debate and interrogation, judgment, and possible consequences. Information becomes accountability only when it is relevant to questions and available for contestation. Debate tests inconsistencies and permits clarification. Judgment evaluates conduct against legal, procedural, financial, professional, performance, or public-value standards. Consequences may be material, procedural, reputational, political, corrective, or learning-oriented; they need not be punitive. These stages form an analytical cycle, although different forums may perform different parts of it (Bovens, 2007; Jacobs & Schillemans, 2016; Wille, 2016).

Later concepts improve diagnosis without replacing the original relationship. Bovens and Wille (2021) distinguish the accountability capacity of watchdog institutions—the powers and resources to obtain information, discuss, judge, and mobilize consequences—from actual exercise. Leidorf-Tidå and de Boer (2023) conceptualize account-holding intensity as both frequency and diligence. Overman (2021) shows that accountability depends on alignment between information demand and supply when goals are ambiguous. Together, these additions imply that formal jurisdiction, frequent meetings, or voluminous reporting cannot establish meaningful scrutiny unless authority is used competently and persistently.

The actor and forum also co-produce outcomes. Public managers interpret and prioritize competing demands, sometimes through coping strategies (Schillemans, 2015). Reputational considerations influence what actors disclose and what forums emphasize (Busuioc & Lodge, 2017). Accountability forums may be designed around consensus or confrontation, with different implications for participation and judgment (Amsler & Sherrod, 2017; Brummel, 2021). In collaborative governance and public hearings, participation rules, information sequencing, synchronous exchange, and post-forum follow-up influence whether discussion becomes accountable scrutiny or public theater (Lee & Ospina, 2022; Mesquita & de Azevedo, 2022).

Assumptions, Boundaries, and Theoretical Evolution

The framework assumes that an actor, a forum, the conduct at issue, and applicable standards can be identified with sufficient precision. Where responsibility is dispersed, mapping must precede judgment. It also assumes a plausible connection among information, interrogation, judgment, and consequences. One forum need not perform every stage, but distributed accountability must retain traceable handoffs. Finally, normative assessment is purpose-specific: an arrangement that strengthens democratic control may burden learning, while strong constitutional restraint may limit immediate political responsiveness (Bovens et al., 2008).

Several boundaries follow. One-way transparency is insufficient; more information can increase overload or enable evasion. Formal power requires capacity, motivation, diligence, and legitimate use. Reputational incentives, political salience, and defensive coping can distort both the account and the forum response. Dyadic assumptions require adaptation in multilateral, horizontal, networked, or hybrid governance, where different forums hold partial mandates. Most importantly, a complete accountability cycle is a diagnostic condition rather than proof of improved performance, legality, public trust, or justice outcomes.

4. Applications, Criticisms, and Boundaries

Applications Across Public and Workplace Contexts

Legislative research consistently separates formal authority from enacted scrutiny. Committees may facilitate administrative learning, but public drama and blame incentives can encourage defensive behavior (Grube, 2014). Scrutiny depends on members' practices, evidence choices, internal process, and the ability to formulate recommendations (Geddes, 2019). Constitutional authority may be weakened by dominant-party structures, limited resources, or political and institutional stress (Fagbadebo, 2019; Friedberg, 2013). Courts should therefore be cautious when presuming that parliamentary scrutiny is effective merely because a formal process exists (Grenfell et al., 2024).

The literature also identifies enabling configurations. Ireland's Public Accounts Committee benefits from active practice and independent audit inputs, although a wide remit and finite resources constrain attention (Lynch, 2023). European parliamentary committees have institutionalized engagement with audit evidence to support retrospective policy scrutiny (Stephenson, 2025). In agency hearings, routine police-patrol oversight coexists with salient fire alarms; member attention may favor the latter even when routine hearings are more common (Leidorf-Tidå & Busuioc, 2026). Legislatures can also manufacture salience proactively rather than waiting for an external alarm (Santos, 2025). These findings support a balanced calendar combining routine risk review with responsive hearings.

Oversight consequences are not necessarily benign. Legislative participation can affect administrative discretion and resource allocation in strategically distributive ways (Duffin, 1999). Security oversight may evolve gradually from executive dominance toward dialogue, with courts and publics operating as additional forums (Friedberg & Hazan, 2009). Transnational or joint parliamentary arrangements can become accountability forums during crises, but their authority and maturity vary (Borońska-Hryniewiecka & Kinski, 2022). Oversight of Europol and Eurojust further shows that forum design must respect distinct institutional mandates rather than applying a uniform control template (Schinina, 2020).

Police and security studies reveal a multi-forum accountability landscape. Reforms that add elected actors and online information can blur public understanding of who is responsible (Murphy et al., 2017). Relational mistrust and weak panels can paralyze the relationship between police leaders and oversight bodies (Cooper, 2023). Europol's experience indicates that accepted and tailored accountability may reinforce autonomy, while contested arrangements can stifle it (Busuioc et al., 2011). Intelligence oversight studies similarly stress institutional integrity, clear rules, continuous review, inter-forum cooperation, proportionality, records, and redress (Bolto, 2019; Cepik, 2021; Constantino & Wagner, 2024).

Secrecy and emergency conditions complicate but do not eliminate account-giving. Indirect forums and trusted intermediaries can make classified scrutiny possible, although they may also normalize exceptionalism unless constitutional purposes remain explicit (Woods et al., 2021). Nordic legal overseers experienced divergent pressures from caseload, expertise gaps, politicization, and conflicting crisis mandates (Erkkilä et al., 2024). Accountability for private police demonstrates that public obligations can extend to hybrid providers performing coercive functions (Davis et al., 2003). Judicial forums may impose structural consequences after systemic rights violations, but their intervention changes managerial strategy and raises distinct legitimacy questions (Bertelli, 2004).

Adjacent regulatory evidence supplies transferable boundaries. Organizational independence does not guarantee neutrality or effective accountability, as stakeholder marginalization can persist within forum networks (Houlihan & Preece, 2007). Enforcement transparency can conflict with individual privacy when disclosures contain sensitive personal information (Newkirk et al., 2001). These studies do not map directly onto Commission III, but they support the more general proposition that independence, confidentiality, privacy, and due process should calibrate access, publicity, timing, attribution, and consequence—not create blanket immunity from answerability.

Criticisms, Contradictory Evidence, and Limitations

A central criticism is that more accountability can become counterproductive. Multiple forums create competing priorities, and actors respond selectively to material or reputational sanction threats (Aleksovska et al., 2022). Dense mechanisms can generate duplicated reporting, compliance burdens, and demotivation (Mukinda et al., 2020). Procedural pressure may displace product or outcome accountability and induce risk aversion (Nakanishi, 2023). Yet overlap is not uniformly dysfunctional: multiple accountability relationships can incorporate conflicting public values or sustain improvement through triangulation among citizens, managers, and frontline actors (Caseley, 2006; van de Sande et al., 2022). The design problem is thus to distinguish redundant duplication from legitimate differentiation.

Reporting quantity is another misleading proxy. Quality reporting and institutionalized evaluation can reduce accountability deficits and overload, whereas misaligned information encourages unanswered questions, unsolicited answers, or data dumping (Han & Tang, 2022; Overman, 2021). Digital tools do not resolve this problem automatically. Integration, participation, planning, interoperability, and risk management are needed if e-government is to support rather than disorder accountability relationships (Al-Shbail & Aman, 2018). The implication for hearings is to specify evidence definitions, periods, indicators, legal basis, and confidentiality level before information is requested.

Legitimacy and behavior also matter. Controls become questionable when detached from an organization's multidimensional mandate (Eriksen, 2021). Managers may experience designated forums as passive, under-informed, or illegitimate, and independence may be interpreted as exemption from account-giving (Maggetti & Papadopoulos, 2023). Populist or anti-elite rhetoric can transform scrutiny into personalized blame and defensive routines (Wood et al., 2022). These tensions caution against judging accountability by visibility or harshness. Evidence standards, fair opportunity to answer, institutional attribution, and reasoned findings are conditions for legitimate judgment.

5. Theory-To-Practice Translation Framework

The synthesis translates the accountability cycle into five domains for Commission III. Each domain captures a distinct failure point, maps to established theory components, draws on convergent full-text evidence, and includes boundaries. The domains are sequential for diagnosis but interdependent in practice. Safeguards operate across the entire cycle.

Table 1. Theory-to-Practice Translation Matrix for Institutional Accountability

Workplace phenomenon element	Framework construct or mechanism	Application evidence	Practice implication	Boundary or caution
Mandate and role alignment	Actor, forum, obligation; evaluative perspectives	Eriksen (2021); Busuioc et al. (2011); Murphy et al. (2017); Schinina (2020)	Map actor–forum relationships and link each question to a legal mandate and explicit evaluative criterion.	Institutional oversight must not direct individual investigations, prosecutions, or adjudication.
Information and evidence architecture	Information/justification; cycle completeness; information fit	Han and Tang (2022); Lynch (2023); Bovens and Wille (2021); Lee and Ospina (2022); Overman (2021)	Use scoped evidence requests, common definitions, independent inputs, differentiated access, and an answer register.	More disclosure is not automatically better; protect privacy, operations, and ongoing proceedings.
Deliberative scrutiny and forum capability	Debate, judgment, intensity, capacity	Geddes (2019); Leidorf-Tidå and Busuioc (2026); Leidorf-Tidå and de Boer (2023); Maggetti and Papadopoulos (2023)	Prepare issue briefs and question trees; state judgment standards; balance routine and reactive hearings.	Frequency, publicity, or confrontation does not establish diligence, quality, or impact.
Consequential follow-up and handoffs	Consequences; cycle completeness; distributed forums	Bovens (2007); Jacobs and Schillemans (2016); Wille (2016); Stephenson (2025)	Record each commitment or referral with owner, deadline, required evidence, escalation route, and closure reason.	Consequences must be lawful and proportionate; closure may occur through another authorized forum.
Safeguarded accountability (cross-cutting)	Deficit/overload; evaluative perspectives; boundaries	Bolto (2019); Woods et al. (2021); Constantino and Wagner (2024); Newkirk et al. (2001)	Classify open, closed, redacted, and trusted-review materials; record reasons and publish non-sensitive summaries.	Preserve independence, due process, privacy, witnesses, operational integrity, and lawful confidentiality.

Note. Practice implications are conditional translations of established theory and verified application evidence; they are not claims of causal effectiveness.

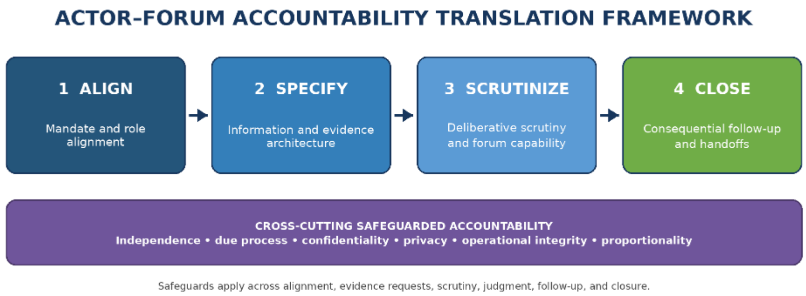

Figure 1. Actor–Forum Accountability Translation Framework

Domain 1: Mandate and Role Alignment

The first domain asks who is accountable, to which forum, for what conduct, and according to which mandate. It responds to role ambiguity, many-hands problems, and the risk that politically salient questions become detached from differentiated institutional responsibilities. A practical option is an actor–forum map paired with a mandate-to-question matrix. Each planned inquiry would identify the institution or office responsible, the statutory or policy basis, the evaluative perspective, and the boundary between institutional accountability and individual-case autonomy. Signals of misalignment include repeated responsibility shifting, inconsistent standards, collective blame, and demands that cannot be reconciled with the forum's authority.

Domain 2: Information and Evidence Architecture

The second domain concerns the account itself. Diagnostic questions ask whether evidence is timely, relevant, comparable, verifiable, responsive to questions, and lawfully accessible. Structured pre-hearing requests may specify indicators, periods, denominators, definitions, legal basis, and confidentiality classification. Independent audit, research, or expert inputs may reduce asymmetry. An answer register can distinguish complete responses, partial responses, deferred evidence, lawful non-disclosure, and non-response. The boundary is proportionality: indiscriminate disclosure can damage privacy or operational integrity, while indiscriminate secrecy prevents interrogation.

Domain 3: Deliberative Scrutiny and Forum Capability

The third domain assesses whether information is converted into substantive questioning and reasoned judgment. Capacity includes jurisdiction, staff expertise, access, time, and procedures; intensity concerns frequency, preparation, depth, persistence, and follow-up. Practice options include issue briefs, question trees, member role allocation, explicit standards, and findings that state both evidence and reasons. A mixed routine/reactive calendar can preserve attention to mundane systemic risks while retaining responsiveness to public alarms. Cautions include partisan pre-judgment, salience bias, intimidation, ceremonial exchange, and the assumption that hearing visibility equals accountability quality.

Domain 4: Consequential Follow-up and Inter-institutional Handoffs

The fourth domain addresses the recurrent disappearance of findings after the hearing event. A commitment register may record the issue, actor, action or explanation required, due date, completion evidence, receiving forum, escalation path, and closure reason. This makes distributed accountability auditable when implementation belongs to an agency, court, audit body, internal inspectorate, or other authorized institution. Consequences may include correction, referral, policy adjustment, explanation, reputational effects, or organizational learning. They should not be equated automatically with punishment, and they must not become unlawful pressure on independent decisions.

Domain 5: Safeguarded Accountability

The fifth domain is cross-cutting. It asks what degree of access, publicity, timing, attribution, and consequence is lawful and proportionate. Practice options include an open/closed classification, secure handling, trusted intermediaries, proportionate redaction, reason logs, non-sensitive public summaries, and review or redress procedures. Blanket secrecy is a signal of under-accountability; unrestricted disclosure or case direction signals harmful overreach. Keeping safeguards visible as a separate domain prevents independence, due process, confidentiality, and privacy from being treated as afterthoughts.

6. Discussion

The review clarifies why formal hearings can coexist with weak accountability. The actor–forum framework locates the decisive mechanism not in the event itself but in a relational sequence. Commission III's legal authority creates the possibility of account-giving;

it does not ensure relevant evidence, substantive interrogation, explicit judgment, or follow-up. The five-domain framework translates this sequence into observable design and practice questions. Its value lies in diagnosing where a cycle fails and which conditions or safeguards should be considered before action.

The synthesis also deepens understanding of consequential oversight. Consequentiality is not synonymous with severe sanction. It means that a reasoned judgment has a credible pathway to correction, referral, monitoring, learning, political response, or another lawful consequence. This view is particularly important where parliament does not and should not control individual investigations or judicial decisions. Accountability can be distributed across institutions if ownership and handoffs remain visible. A commitment register and closure logic operationalize that principle without collapsing separate mandates.

The conceptual synthesis reconciles two tensions. First, autonomy and accountability are not necessarily opposites. Tailored, accepted, and mandate-sensitive accountability may support legitimate autonomy, whereas contested or intrusive control may stifle it. Second, multiple forums can generate overload, but overlap can also protect plural public values. The appropriate response is not to minimize or maximize accountability in the abstract. It is to coordinate duplicative demands, preserve legitimate differentiation, and evaluate arrangements against democratic control, constitutional restraint, and organizational learning.

The framework's contribution is conceptual and translational. Theoretical clarification separates accountability from transparency and formal oversight. Conceptual synthesis integrates capacity, intensity, information fit, behavioral mediation, distributed stages, and overload. Contextual interpretation applies these ideas to a parliamentary forum interacting with legally distinct law-enforcement and judicial institutions. Practical translation expresses the synthesis as diagnostic questions, observable records, conditional options, enabling conditions, risks, and non-applicability signals. No original construct, relation, mechanism, proposition, or boundary is altered.

Transferability is plausible but conditional. The domains may be useful for other parliamentary committees, inspectorates, audit institutions, ombuds offices, regulatory bodies, and inter-organizational oversight arrangements because they represent general accountability failure mechanisms. Adaptation is nevertheless required for jurisdiction, constitutional structure, information law, committee resources, political incentives, professional norms, and sector-specific risks. Settings dominated by collaborative value creation rather than account-holding may require complementary collaborative-governance or public-value theories. Questions about whether the framework improves outcomes require field research, process evaluation, and stakeholder validation.

7. Conclusion

RQ1 asked what Bovens's actor–forum public accountability framework contains. The framework conceptualizes accountability as an actor–forum relationship moving from an obligation or expectation to information and justification, interrogation, judgment, and possible consequences. Later scholarship adds forum capacity, account-holding intensity, information fit, landscapes, voluntariness, and behavioral mediation while retaining the original mechanism. Its principal boundaries are role identifiability, stage linkage, purpose-specific evaluation, capacity, information quality, multiple-forum complexity, and the distinction between diagnostic completeness and substantive effectiveness.

RQ2 asked how the theory has been applied and criticized. Legislative and law-enforcement studies show that formal powers and disclosure do not ensure accountability. Forum preparation, expertise, evidence quality, active questioning, role clarity, credible follow-up, and legitimate safeguards shape practice. Criticism warns that multiple demands can create overload, procedural fixation, selective responsiveness, blame, and theater, although differentiated forums can also preserve plural values and distributed control.

RQ3 asked how the theory can be translated for Commission III. Five domains provide the parsimonious answer: mandate and role alignment; information and evidence architecture; deliberative scrutiny and forum capability; consequential follow-up and handoffs; and safeguarded accountability. The resulting framework may help move oversight from formal hearing occurrence toward traceable and proportionate accountability. Its contribution is conceptual and translational, not theoretical. Because it has not been field validated, the framework should guide diagnosis and design while its effects remain an empirical question.

Limitations

This review is limited by the interpretive judgment inherent in narrative synthesis. Scopus was the sole database, and searches were restricted to English-language articles and reviews published through 2026. Nine potentially relevant full texts could not be obtained and were not used. Although the final corpus spans theory, legislative oversight, law enforcement, security, regulation, health, procurement, and service delivery, evidence density varies across domains and jurisdictions. Some transferable mechanisms are drawn from adjacent sectors rather than direct studies of Commission III.

The primary framework was verified and supported by extensive later scholarship; all analytical claims remain bounded by the verified full-text corpus and the source roles documented in the supplementary material. Official DPR materials verify the formal oversight architecture and an institutional nonintervention position; they do not establish how consistently those principles operate. No interviews, observations, hearing transcripts, or implementation outcomes were analyzed. Consequently, the framework cannot demonstrate causal effectiveness, institutional acceptance, or feasibility. These limitations constrain the strength and scope of claims without negating the value of a traceable conceptual translation.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary Tables S1–S3 accompany the article. Table S1 documents the six Scopus search runs, exact queries, filters, result counts, and reconciled selection flow. Table S2 lists the 52 included full-text journal articles and the four official contextual sources. Table S3 presents the five-domain derivation, evidence chains, practice outputs, and boundaries.

Data Availability

No primary dataset was generated or analyzed. The documented search runs, full-text selection flow, included journal corpus, and domain-derivation matrix are provided in Supplementary Tables S1–S3 accompanying this article.

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