



Global Data
Barometer

The Accountability Gap

Data Governance and
Democratic Oversight in
Nigeria, Colombia, and Brazil



NIGERIA



COLOMBIA



BRAZIL



DEMOCRACY



TRANSPARENCY



ACCOUNTABILITY

EVIDENCE.
COMPARISON.
IMPACT.

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Abstract

Governments have expanded data governance frameworks, open data programs, and digital public infrastructure, often with the expectation that greater transparency will also strengthen accountability. Yet more data and stronger digital capacity do not necessarily make public action easier to scrutinize.

Drawing on the second edition of the Global Data Barometer, this article examines this problem through Nigeria, Colombia, and Brazil. The three countries have very different levels of digital and institutional capacity, but across them, information needed for oversight is often unavailable, fragmented across sectoral systems, or difficult to connect.

The comparison points to an important distinction between making information available and making it useful for accountability. Public data can support scrutiny only when relevant information exists, can be connected across systems where necessary, and can be used by actors and institutions able to demand explanations or trigger a response.

The cases also reveal a more specific pattern. Governments may develop considerable capacity to manage and connect data for administrative purposes while politically sensitive information remains unavailable or disconnected. This suggests that the accountability gap is not simply a problem of limited digital capacity. It also depends on which information is made visible, which systems are connected, and for what purposes.

Introduction¹

Data has become central to the operation of the state. Over the past two decades, governments have increasingly relied on data to manage public services, regulate markets, monitor populations, and meet transparency requirements (Fumega, 2016; Yu & Robinson, 2012). Political finance disclosures, procurement platforms, company registers, digital identity systems, and administrative databases are now part of everyday public governance. This growing reliance on data is often described as datafication: the process through which social activities, relationships, and institutional processes are recorded and managed as data (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2013).

Much of this expansion has come with an expectation that more information will make governments easier to scrutinize. Open data, access to information, anti-corruption reforms, and digital government strategies have all been promoted, to varying degrees, on this premise. The expected sequence is familiar: governments collect and publish information, citizens and oversight bodies use it, and public institutions become more accountable (Janssen, Charalabidis, & Zuiderwijk, 2012; Meijer, Curtin, & Hillebrandt, 2012).

In practice, that sequence frequently breaks down. Information may not be collected or published, or it may be incomplete, outdated, or difficult to use. Even good-quality

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information does not produce accountability on its own. It needs to reach actors able to scrutinize public action, and there need to be institutions through which questions, findings, or demands can generate a response (Peixoto, 2013). Oversight bodies and civil society organizations may lack the authority, capacity, or resources to act on what the data reveal. Public officials may be required to disclose information without being required to explain their conduct or correct a problem (Fox, 2007; Heald, 2006).

This is why transparency and accountability need to be kept distinct. Transparency can make government activity visible. Accountability requires the possibility of asking questions about that activity, identifying responsibility, demanding explanations, and, where necessary, obtaining correction, remedy, or sanctions (Bovens, 2007; Fumega, 2026).

As governments become more digital, the relationship between transparency and accountability increasingly depends on how information is organized across different systems. Public information is no longer contained mainly in reports or files. It moves through databases, platforms, registries, and automated systems managed by different public bodies. Whether information from those systems can be connected increasingly shapes what governments themselves can know, but also what oversight institutions, journalists, civil society organizations, and citizens can investigate.

Governments have strong incentives to make systems interoperable for some purposes. Connecting data can simplify services, verify eligibility, reduce costs, or improve coordination between agencies. Comparable connections do not necessarily exist when they would support public scrutiny. Procurement data, for example, may be available without being linked to company ownership, political finance, lobbying, or asset declaration records.

The difference matters in practice. Knowing that a company received a major public contract tells us something about the use of public resources. Assessing that contract may also require knowing who ultimately owns the company, whether the company or its owners financed political campaigns, whether they lobbied the agency responsible for the contract, or whether a public official has a financial interest in it. None of these facts necessarily indicates wrongdoing. Examining them together, however, can bring conflicts of interest, self-dealing, or other relationships requiring further investigation into view.

This article examines how these problems appear in Nigeria, Colombia, and Brazil, drawing primarily on the second edition of the Global Data Barometer. The countries differ considerably in their digital and institutional capacity, making it possible to examine whether greater capacity changes the relationship between transparency and accountability, and in what ways.

It asks three questions:

1. Where do legal and policy commitments fail to produce publicly available and usable data?
2. How do fragmented systems, weak interoperability, and limited institutional coordination constrain public oversight?
3. What do Nigeria, Colombia, and Brazil reveal about the relationship between digital government capacity and democratic accountability?

The cases point to different versions of the problem. In Nigeria, important transparency reforms have developed unevenly and remain weakly coordinated. Colombia has stronger digital foundations and well-developed sectoral platforms, but important links between policy areas are missing. Brazil has much greater capacity to connect and share public-sector data, yet important gaps remain in information relevant to political oversight. Taken together, the cases raise a broader question about datafication: not simply how much information governments collect or publish, but what they make possible to see, connect, and scrutinize.

Transparency, accountability, and connected public data

Keeping the concepts distinct

Transparency and accountability are closely related, but they describe different things. Transparency concerns whether information about government activities and decisions is publicly available and can actually be used. Publication alone is not enough: format, quality, coverage, and timeliness all affect whether information can be understood and analyzed (Heald, 2006; Janssen et al., 2012).

Accountability goes further. It involves a relationship in which public actors may be required to explain and justify their conduct to a forum able to question them, assess their actions, and impose consequences (Bovens, 2007). Those consequences can take different forms, from correction or remedy to administrative, political, or legal sanctions.

Information becomes relevant to accountability when someone can use it. That may be a state institution, such as an audit body, regulator, legislature, court, or anti-corruption agency. It may also be a journalist, civil society organization, researcher, or citizen. These actors have very different powers and resources, but both state and non-state actors can play a role in turning information into scrutiny and pressing institutions to respond.

Data governance shapes what is possible at each stage. It determines, among other things, what governments collect, how information is documented and protected, who can access it, and how it can be shared (OECD, 2019). As more public information is held in separate digital systems, one part of data governance becomes particularly relevant to accountability: whether information from different sources can be connected.

Interoperability is usually understood as the ability of organizations and their information systems to exchange data and use the information exchanged. In practice, this may depend on shared standards and identifiers, compatible formats, legal rules for data exchange, and coordination between the institutions responsible for different systems (European Commission, 2017; World Bank, 2022). It is therefore not simply a technical feature. Decisions about which systems are connected, what information is exchanged, and for what purpose are also institutional and political choices (Pardo et al., 2012; World Bank, 2022).

How transparency can support accountability

For transparency to contribute to accountability, the relevant information first has to exist and be accessible. A law requiring disclosure does little for public scrutiny if the resulting data are missing, incomplete, outdated, or published in a form that cannot realistically be analyzed.

Availability may still not be enough. Many accountability questions depend on relationships between records held in different systems. Political finance data may show who contributed to a campaign, for example, but examining possible conflicts of interest may also require information about company ownership, lobbying activities, or the assets and interests declared by public officials. Shared identifiers, standards, and other mechanisms for matching records can make those relationships easier to examine.

There is also an institutional dimension. Information has to reach actors with the capacity to scrutinize it, and there must be some route through which their findings can generate a response. As Peixoto (2013) argues, disclosure contributes to accountability when relevant publics receive information, are able to process and react to it, and institutional mechanisms exist through which those reactions can produce consequences. For formal oversight bodies, this also requires adequate mandates, authority, and investigative capacity.

These conditions will rarely be equally strong. A country may have detailed disclosure requirements but poor implementation. Another may publish substantial amounts of data while making it difficult to connect records across agencies. Governments can also build highly integrated administrative systems without providing comparable possibilities for oversight institutions or the public to examine how data are used and decisions are made. The question, then, is not simply whether governments are becoming more data-rich, but what those data arrangements allow different actors to know and do.

Uneven priorities across government

Public data systems do not develop evenly. Some areas of government provide strong administrative reasons to standardize information and connect systems, including procurement, budgeting, and service delivery. By contrast, the cases examined here show recurring gaps in politically sensitive data. In this report, this refers to information that can reveal relationships between public officials, political actors, private interests, and public resources, including political finance, lobbying, beneficial ownership, and asset declarations.

This unevenness matters for accountability because oversight questions often cross institutional and sectoral boundaries. Information that is useful on its own may reveal much more when examined alongside other records. When relevant sources cannot be examined together, substantial amounts of information may be public while important political and economic relationships remain difficult to trace.

The country comparison examines how this problem takes different forms. It looks at whether formal rules result in data that can actually be used, where connections between relevant datasets exist or are missing, and how those arrangements shape the possibilities for oversight.

Data and method

The analysis draws on the second edition of the Global Data Barometer (GDB), a comparative study of the governance, capabilities, and availability of public data in 43 countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (Global Data Barometer, 2025). The GDB assesses both the rules that govern data and the extent to which data are actually available. It also examines features such as structured formats, common identifiers, and standards that can support the connection and reuse of information.

This article focuses on areas that are particularly important for public oversight: public procurement, budgets and spending, company information, beneficial ownership, political finance, lobbying, asset declarations, and land. It considers the governance and capability indicators associated with these areas alongside the availability of the data themselves.

Nigeria, Colombia, and Brazil were selected as illustrative rather than representative. The purpose is not to rank the three countries or treat them as stages on a single path of digital development. They differ substantially in digital-government capacity while providing comparable GDB evidence across the policy areas examined here, allowing the analysis to explore whether similar oversight gaps persist under different institutional conditions.

The comparison looks at the relationship between formal governance commitments and actual data availability, as well as the extent to which relevant information can be connected across institutions and policy areas. It also considers how the organization of data and institutional responsibilities affects the possibilities for public oversight. GDB results are read alongside country studies and expert evidence on the implementation of relevant reforms.

The analysis does not measure accountability outcomes directly, nor does it claim that a particular data arrangement causes a particular accountability result. Its purpose is more limited: to identify features of public data systems that can make scrutiny easier or harder. This includes where relevant information is available, where connections between systems are missing, and whether existing arrangements allow information from different areas of government to be examined together.

Overview of the three cases

The three cases reveal different combinations of progress and persistent gaps. The table below provides a brief overview before examining each country in more detail.

Country	Main area of progress	Main limitation	Implication for oversight
Nigeria	Stronger procurement and beneficial ownership data	Major gaps in political integrity, land, and company data; weak links between systems	Useful reforms remain fragmented and cannot easily support oversight across sectors

Colombia	Strong digital government foundations and a mature procurement platform	Strong sectoral systems remain disconnected from ownership, lobbying, political finance, and asset data	Transparency within individual sectors does not provide a complete view of political and economic relationships
Brazil	Broad data availability and more developed data sharing arrangements	Politically sensitive areas remain unavailable or disconnected despite strong administrative capacity	Extensive administrative data-sharing capacity coexists with limited connections in areas relevant to democratic oversight

Nigeria: uneven progress and fragmented systems

Nigeria has adopted a wide range of transparency and anti-corruption reforms over the past two decades, including procurement modernization, freedom of information legislation, participation in the Open Government Partnership, and reforms on beneficial ownership. These initiatives have strengthened the country's formal rules and produced important progress in some areas (Open Government Partnership, 2023; Achonu & Ime, 2026). But progress has been uneven, and in several areas the information needed for public scrutiny is still unavailable.

Public procurement is a relative strength, with a data availability score of 76.9 and a governance score of 55.0. Beneficial ownership also performs comparatively well, with scores of 78.8 for availability and 65.0 for governance (Global Data Barometer, 2025). The public beneficial ownership register, supported by the Companies and Allied Matters Act and later reforms, represents a significant advance in corporate transparency (Achon & Ime, 2026).

Political finance and asset declarations present a very different picture. Nigeria has relatively strong formal frameworks in both areas: political finance governance scores 64.5 and asset declaration governance 68.0. Right to information performance governance scores even higher, at 85.0. Yet political finance and asset declaration data both score 0.0 for availability, as do lobbying data. In these areas, formal commitments have not translated into information that can be used for public scrutiny.

Other gaps reinforce this uneven picture. Land data score 0.0 for availability, while basic company registration data score only 22.9. The contrast with the stronger beneficial ownership register is particularly notable. Reforms have advanced in some areas while information that would allow those advances to be used alongside other forms of public oversight remains weak or absent.

The problem is not only what is published. Political integrity interoperability scores 0.0, indicating that the GDB found no evidence of the shared identifiers or common standards needed to systematically link procurement and beneficial ownership data with political finance, asset declarations, land, and other relevant records. Even some of Nigeria's

strongest datasets are therefore difficult to use together to trace relationships between companies, political actors, and public resources.

Evidence from the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative points to similar problems. Disclosure has expanded, but enforcement, coordination, and follow-up remain limited (Ejiogu et al., 2025; El Hamad, Moerman, & Pupovac, 2026). Assessments of beneficial ownership reform likewise recognize substantial progress while emphasizing the need for better verification and closer links with procurement, taxation, licensing, financial intelligence, and law enforcement systems (Achonlu & Ime, 2026).

Nigeria presents an uneven landscape rather than a simple lack of transparency. Procurement and beneficial ownership reforms have produced useful information, while major gaps remain in political finance, asset declarations, land, and lobbying. The result is a system in which important advances exist, but the information needed to examine relationships across sectors remains difficult to assemble.

Colombia: strong sectoral systems with limited connections

Colombia has invested substantially in digital government, open data, public procurement reform, and institutional modernization. The GDB reflects these foundations: data management scores 90.0, open data policy 80.0, and government support for data reuse 80.0 (Global Data Barometer, 2025). These are strong results, but they coexist with significant gaps in some of the information most relevant to public oversight.

Public procurement illustrates Colombia's progress. SECOP II provides structured information across the procurement cycle and supports administrative monitoring, market participation, and public scrutiny (Open Contracting Partnership, 2023).

The picture is different in other areas. Beneficial ownership data score 0.0 for availability, lobbying data 11.77, and asset declaration data 33.50. The contrast with the formal frameworks is striking: governance scores reach 77.86 for political finance, 80.0 for asset declarations, and 85.0 for beneficial ownership (Global Data Barometer, 2025). As in Nigeria, stronger rules do not always translate into information that is publicly available and usable.

There is an additional problem in Colombia: the GDB finds little evidence of systematic connections between these areas. Political integrity interoperability scores 0.0. SECOP II can reveal a great deal about a procurement process, but examining relationships between suppliers, company owners, political donations, lobbying activity, and public decision-makers requires information held elsewhere. Where those sources are unavailable or cannot be systematically linked, the picture remains incomplete.

This is not primarily a story of weak digital government. Colombia has developed strong platforms for particular purposes and within particular institutional mandates. The difficulty appears when an oversight question crosses those boundaries. A procurement platform can work very well as a procurement platform without providing the information or connections needed to investigate relationships involving ownership, political finance, lobbying, or public officials.

Colombia's 2022 electoral process offers a different example of the same broader difficulty. Fundación Karisma's technical observation identified obstacles to auditing technologies used at different stages of the electoral process. Different contractors and institutions were responsible for different systems, while an independent, technical, and public audit was not available. The presence of digital systems did not necessarily make the process easier for citizens and observers to understand or verify (Fundación Karisma, 2022).

For oversight institutions, journalists, and civil society, the challenge is often not finding a functioning government platform, but bringing together information held under different mandates and in different systems when the question they are investigating crosses those boundaries.

Brazil: mature digital government with persistent gaps in oversight

Brazil has the most extensive digital government and public-sector data-sharing arrangements of the three cases. It combines broad data availability, developed legal and institutional frameworks, and a long history of investment in e-government, shared systems, catalogues, interoperability, and coordination. This makes Brazil a particularly useful case for examining what happens when substantial capacity to manage and connect public data already exists.

The GDB results reflect this capacity. Brazil records relatively high data availability in public procurement (71.36), budgets and spending (87.20), company registers (63.10), and political finance (83.67). Its broader governance foundations are also strong, including right to information performance (90.0), open data policy (72.0), data protection (90.0), and procurement governance (77.50) (Global Data Barometer, 2025).

Brazil's data-sharing arrangements developed through several periods of public-sector reform rather than through a single policy. Centralized information systems were followed by e-government, access to information and open data reforms, broader data-sharing rules, and more recent work on a National Data Infrastructure. Government programs have developed catalogues, shared services, common standards, and mechanisms for coordination across federal institutions (Magalhães Santos, 2025).

Yet this capacity is uneven when viewed from the perspective of public oversight. Lobbying data score 0.0 for availability, as do beneficial ownership data, while political integrity interoperability also scores 0.0. Procurement, company, budget, and political finance data may be available as separate sources, but the GDB finds little evidence that they can be systematically connected with information on beneficial ownership and lobbying to examine relationships between contracts, companies, political financing, and public decisions.

Brazil has extensive capacity to connect data for administrative purposes, while comparable connections remain limited in areas relevant to democratic oversight. Interoperability has different possible uses. Public bodies may connect information to simplify services, support internal management, or reduce duplication without necessarily creating equivalent possibilities for public scrutiny. Which systems are connected, and under what conditions,

depends not only on technical capacity but also on legal mandates, institutional responsibilities, resources, and policy priorities.

Research on access to information in Brazil provides additional context. Michener, Contreras, and Niskier (2018) document the coexistence of formal openness with uneven implementation, particularly in politically sensitive areas. Research on data sharing similarly points to overlapping responsibilities, coordination problems, and the need for stronger participation and oversight even within Brazil's comparatively developed system (Magalhães Santos, 2025).

Brazil is therefore interesting precisely because limited technical or institutional capacity cannot explain the whole pattern. Extensive data infrastructure and relatively strong availability coexist with important gaps in areas relevant to political oversight. The case shifts the question from whether government has the capacity to connect data to where that capacity is being developed, for which purposes, and with what possibilities for public scrutiny.

Comparative findings

Formal commitments do not guarantee public information

Across the three countries, formal rules are consistently stronger than the availability of some of the data needed for public scrutiny. Nigeria has governance frameworks for political finance and asset declarations, yet the corresponding data score 0.0 for availability. Colombia combines comparatively strong governance frameworks with very low availability in beneficial ownership, lobbying, and asset declarations. Brazil has much broader digital capacity, but lobbying and beneficial ownership data are also unavailable.

The gap between adopting rules and making information usable therefore appears under very different institutional conditions. Legal requirements matter, but they do not tell us whether the information they cover is actually being produced, published, and maintained in a form that can support scrutiny.

Strong sectoral systems do not automatically support oversight across government

Procurement is comparatively strong across all three cases. Nigeria has relatively good procurement data, Colombia has the highly developed SECOP II platform, and Brazil has broad procurement and budget information. These systems provide substantial transparency within their own domains.

The difficulty appears when the question being asked crosses those domains. A strong sectoral platform can make one area of government highly transparent while leaving the relationships between that area and other public information difficult to examine. Strong

sectoral transparency can therefore coexist with a much more fragmented view of political and economic relationships.

Data integration is uneven across policy areas

One result is particularly striking: political integrity interoperability scores 0.0 in Nigeria, Colombia, and Brazil. The same result appears despite substantial differences in the countries' overall digital capacity and in the maturity of their public data systems.

This matters because interoperability does not simply emerge as digital government becomes more sophisticated. Brazil's much greater experience with shared systems and data integration, for example, does not translate into a stronger score for interoperability in political integrity. Nor do Colombia's strong digital-government foundations overcome the separation between procurement and other information relevant to oversight.

Across the cases, stronger data systems are visible in areas with clear administrative uses, particularly procurement and public finance. At the same time, lobbying, beneficial ownership, political finance, and asset declarations repeatedly appear among the areas where information is missing, limited, or difficult to connect.

The comparison cannot establish why each of these gaps exists, and the pattern should not be read as evidence of deliberate efforts to prevent scrutiny. It does, however, point to an uneven pattern in the development of public data systems. Capacity is not distributed or applied evenly across government. Some information becomes easier to collect, standardize, exchange, and use, while other information remains considerably harder to bring together.

This is important for how interoperability is understood. It is not only a question of whether a government has the technical capacity to connect data. It also raises questions about which connections are built, which remain absent, and what kinds of public action become easier to examine as a result.

Institutional maturity changes the problem but does not remove it

The three countries do not represent stages on a single path toward a more mature digital government. Their differences nevertheless help show how accountability problems change as public data systems develop.

In Nigeria, some important reforms coexist with major gaps in data availability and weak connections between systems. Colombia has stronger digital foundations and sophisticated sectoral platforms, but information relevant to oversight remains uneven and difficult to bring together across institutional boundaries. Brazil has the broadest capacity to manage and share data of the three, yet important politically sensitive information remains unavailable or disconnected.

Greater institutional maturity therefore changes the nature of the problem without necessarily resolving it. As governments become better at collecting, managing, and exchanging data, the relevant question increasingly becomes not whether integration is technically possible, but which information is integrated, for what purposes, and whether those arrangements also make public action easier to scrutinize.

Policy implications

Publish the information that oversight requires

Where disclosure requirements already exist, the priority should be implementation. The focus should be on whether the required data are actually produced, published regularly, documented, and made available in formats that allow analysis and reuse. Nigeria illustrates this particularly clearly, as relatively strong governance frameworks for political finance and asset declarations coexist with availability scores of 0.0 in both areas. Similar gaps appear in Colombia and Brazil, although in different domains. Responsibility for publication also needs to be clear enough that persistent gaps can be identified and addressed.

What is published matters as much as how much is published. Political finance, lobbying, beneficial ownership, asset declarations, company, and land data each reveal different aspects of the relationship between political power, private interests, and public resources. An assessment of transparency should therefore consider whether the information needed to investigate those relationships is available, rather than relying primarily on the volume of data a government publishes.

Design systems so relevant data can be connected

Interoperability should be considered when public data systems are designed or procured, rather than addressed only after separate platforms have been established. Colombia's experience with SECOP II illustrates the problem. A sophisticated procurement platform can provide detailed information about contracts while still offering limited possibilities for connecting that information with ownership, political finance, lobbying, or asset declaration records.

This does not require every government dataset to be combined or made public. Some information cannot and should not be openly linked because of privacy, security, or legitimate confidentiality concerns. The more practical question is which connections are necessary for particular forms of oversight, who should be able to make them, and under what conditions.

Shared identifiers, common standards, and adequate documentation can make those connections possible where they are justified. These foundations also have uses beyond accountability. Reliable identifiers for companies, contracts, properties, and other key entities can support taxation, law enforcement, investment, and service delivery while reducing the cost of matching records across government. The same infrastructure can serve different public purposes, provided that its use is governed by appropriate legal, privacy, and security safeguards.

Assign responsibility for coordination and follow-up

Technical standards alone will not resolve institutional fragmentation. Someone needs to be responsible for maintaining data quality, coordinating across agencies, and addressing gaps when information that should be available or connected is not.

This is also true on the oversight side. Audit institutions, regulators, legislatures, anti-corruption bodies, and other responsible institutions need the authority and capacity to obtain relevant information across policy areas. Publishing data or making systems technically interoperable will have limited effect on accountability if no institution is able to investigate what the information reveals, require an explanation, or pursue corrective action.

Responsibility for data governance and responsibility for acting on the resulting information should therefore be considered together. Otherwise, governments can improve the infrastructure for producing and exchanging data without strengthening the institutional pathways through which those data become consequential.

Subject data integration decisions to public scrutiny

The ability to connect public data creates opportunities for better services and more effective administration, but it also involves choices about power, access, and visibility. Brazil makes this particularly clear. It has much greater experience with data sharing and integrated public systems than the other two cases, yet important gaps remain in politically sensitive areas.

Governments should therefore be transparent not only about the data they publish, but also about how their data infrastructures are being built. Decisions about which systems are connected, for what purposes, under what legal authority, and with what safeguards should be open to scrutiny. Oversight bodies, civil society organizations, technical experts, and affected groups should have meaningful opportunities to question those choices.

This becomes increasingly important as governments invest in digital public infrastructure and artificial intelligence. Systems being built now may shape how public institutions use and exchange information for many years. Design and procurement decisions should consider from the outset what information future oversight will require and how it can be accessed, alongside concerns about efficiency, service delivery, privacy, and security.

Conclusion

The comparison of Nigeria, Colombia, and Brazil shows that the accountability gap does not disappear as governments develop stronger data systems. It changes shape. Missing information remains a major problem, but so do the boundaries between systems and the purposes for which data are connected. Even governments with substantial digital capacity may make it much easier to use data for administration than to bring together the information needed for public scrutiny.

The comparison also points to an uneven pattern. Procurement and public finance benefit from relatively stronger data systems, while several areas relevant to political oversight remain harder to access or connect. The cases cannot explain every gap or establish why particular connections have not been made. They do show, however, that greater digital capacity alone is not enough to make political and economic relationships more visible.

This matters for the next generation of digital government reforms. As governments invest in digital public infrastructure and artificial intelligence, accountability cannot be treated as something that will follow automatically from better data or more integrated systems. Decisions made at the design and procurement stage can determine what can later be audited, connected, challenged, or explained. The question is therefore not only how effectively governments can collect and exchange data, but whether the systems they build also make public action easier to scrutinize and institutions easier to hold to account.

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