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**THE PRACTICE OF INDEPENDENT ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS AT
DEVELOPMENT BANKS: TOOLS FOR STUDYING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS
IN CONTEXT**

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International development law, defined as the field within IEL that sets out the rights and obligations of all actors involved in the development process (Bradlow 2005), seldom receives the same degree of research and teaching focus typically dedicated to areas involving trade, investment and monetary regulation (compare e.g., Lowenfeld 2002; Adinolfi et al. 2017). Yet, the importance of an intensified focus on international development law should be evident given, for instance, the global prioritization of the Sustainable Development Goals. That said, it is equally important that the development process be studied as situated in its transnational context – that is, a context marked by dynamic complexity: involving multiple actors (participating in varying capacities), different layers of governance and intersecting normative systems (national law, international law and other global normative schemes).

This paper argues that the growing body of practice generated by independent accountability mechanisms (IAMs) institutionally affiliated with MDBs (and, increasingly, also with public sector development institutions) provides a unique window onto the transnational development process – given IAMs’ ability to receive claims directly from project-affected individuals and their broad mandates involving dispute resolution, compliance review, advice and monitoring of outcomes. The paper presents cases from IAM practice that illustrate how they can serve as research and teaching tools for studying the dynamic complexity of the transnational development context. Particular emphasis is placed on how they provide new avenues for engaging and enabling the

narratives and voices of those traditionally neglected, who are often disproportionately adversely affected by the transnational development process.

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