

# *The Inaccessibility of Governance*

## *Why Strengthening Control Fails When the Conditions of Governance Collapse*

**Author:** *Shuqin Amberg* [shuqinamberg@proton.me](mailto:shuqinamberg@proton.me)

**Affiliation:** *Independent Researcher, Germany*

**Related Initiative:** *ASSIA* (<https://assia.world>)

### **Abstract**

Governance is commonly invoked as the primary response to the risks posed by increasingly complex artificial intelligence systems. Calls for stronger regulation, tighter oversight, and more comprehensive control mechanisms assume that governance remains an intelligible and effective instrument. This paper challenges that assumption.

It argues that under specific conditions, governance itself becomes inaccessible—not because of insufficient effort or political will, but because the conceptual conditions that make governance meaningful have collapsed. When interpretive mediation, attribution, and contestability can no longer be stably located, the language of governance loses its grip. Strengthening governance mechanisms under these conditions does not restore control; it produces procedural motion without corresponding normative authority. This paper offers a negative analysis of governance limits, without proposing alternative mechanisms or future pathways.

### **Introduction: When Governance Becomes Inaccessible**

Governance is frequently invoked as the primary response to the challenges posed by increasingly complex artificial intelligence systems. When uncertainty grows, the prevailing instinct is to strengthen control: to expand oversight, refine rules, and intensify regulatory mechanisms. These responses rest on a largely unexamined assumption—that governance remains an intelligible and accessible practice, capable of reaching its object if applied with sufficient rigor.

This paper questions that assumption.

Rather than asking how governance might be strengthened, it examines a prior and more fragile condition: whether governance remains accessible at all. It argues that under specific structural conditions, governance ceases to function not because of inadequate effort, institutional weakness, or political resistance, but because the conceptual prerequisites that make governance meaningful no longer obtain.

Governance, in this sense, is not merely a set of procedures or institutions. It is an intelligible practice that presupposes stable attribution, contestable decisions, and interpretable authority. When these conditions collapse—when responsibility cannot be coherently located, reasons cannot be accessed, and appeals no longer reach operative grounds—governance does not gradually weaken. It becomes inaccessible.

Inaccessibility here does not mean opacity in a technical sense, but the absence of any stable point at which governance language can meaningfully attach.

The central claim of this paper is therefore negative and diagnostic. It does not propose alternative governance mechanisms, new regulatory frameworks, or corrective policies. Instead, it identifies a boundary condition: situations in which intensifying governance efforts produces procedural activity without normative access, resulting in the appearance of control without its substance.

This analysis forms part of a broader sequence examining the foundations and limits of contemporary AI governance. If earlier analyses establish the instability of the object of governance and the non-transferability of responsibility, this paper focuses on the intermediate moment at which governance language itself loses traction—when governance continues to operate formally, but no longer reaches the phenomena it claims to regulate.

Recognizing this condition is not an argument against governance. It is an analytic necessity. Before asking how governance should be improved, it is necessary to ask whether governance remains intelligible under the conditions it is expected to address.

## **1. Governance as an Intelligible Practice**

Governance is not merely a collection of rules or institutions. It is an intelligible practice grounded in shared assumptions about agency, responsibility, and contestation. For governance to function, several conditions must hold: actions must be attributable, decisions must be contestable, and authority must be interpretable within a recognized framework.

Historically, governance has evolved alongside new forms of power by redefining its objects—markets, corporations, states—until regulation became meaningful. In each case, governance succeeded not by increasing force, but by stabilizing intelligibility.

This paper examines what happens when that stabilization fails.

## **2. The Presumption of Governability**

Contemporary discourse often treats governance as infinitely extensible. When problems arise, the response is to add layers: more oversight, more audits, more rules. This presumption rests on an unexamined belief that governance can always reach its object if sufficiently strengthened.

Yet governability is not a given. It depends on the continued alignment between governance language and the phenomena it seeks to regulate. When that alignment dissolves, governance does not become weaker—it becomes incoherent.

## **3. Attribution Without Anchors**

A central condition of governance is attribution: the ability to identify who or what is responsible for a given outcome. Attribution enables accountability, enforcement, and redress.

When decision processes are mediated through distributed interpretive structures that cannot be localized or reconstructed, attribution becomes unstable. Responsibility diffuses without

disappearing, creating a paradox: outcomes occur, but no locus of responsibility can be coherently assigned.

Under such conditions, governance procedures persist, but their normative force erodes. Rules exist, yet their application becomes symbolic rather than operative.

#### **4. Contestability and the Loss of Appeal**

Governance also presupposes contestability—the possibility that decisions can be questioned, appealed, or revised. Contestability requires that reasons be accessible and that alternative interpretations remain meaningful.

When interpretive mediation itself becomes opaque, contestability collapses. Decisions may still be reviewed, but reviews no longer engage the actual grounds of action. Appeals address surfaces while the operative structures remain unreachable.

Governance without contestability becomes ritualized compliance rather than substantive oversight.

#### **5. The Illusion of Stronger Control**

In response to governance failure, institutions often escalate control. Metrics multiply, procedures intensify, and oversight expands. These measures create an appearance of action and reassurance.

However, when the conditions of governance are absent, escalation produces only procedural density. Control mechanisms operate, but they no longer correspond to the phenomena they are meant to regulate. Governance becomes busy but ineffective—active without access.

This illusion is dangerous precisely because it masks loss of control with visible effort.

What is lost in this process is not efficiency or effectiveness, but the civilizational capacity to know when governance no longer reaches.

#### **6. Governance Language and Abstraction Mismatch**

A recurring symptom of governance inaccessibility is abstraction mismatch. Governance language continues to operate at a level that presumes stable agents and interpretable decisions, while the phenomena under governance operate at a different level altogether.

This mismatch cannot be corrected by refinement alone. When language no longer maps onto its object, precision increases confusion rather than clarity. Governance discourse proliferates while its referent recedes.

#### **7. Negative Proof: When Governance Cannot Be Restored**

This paper does not argue that governance is undesirable, nor that regulation should be abandoned. It advances a narrower claim: **there exist conditions under which governance cannot be restored by intensification alone.**

In such conditions, the failure of governance is not contingent but structural. Efforts to govern do not fail because they are weak, but because the conceptual prerequisites of governance are absent. Recognizing this limit is not defeatism. It is an analytic necessity.

## **8. The Cost of Ignoring Inaccessibility**

Persisting in governance discourse when governance is inaccessible carries significant risks. It creates false confidence, delays recognition of deeper problems, and displaces responsibility onto procedures that cannot fulfill their function.

Most critically, it prevents the identification of the true site of breakdown. By insisting on governability, institutions may overlook the need to reassess the object, language, or assumptions that governance relies upon.

## **9. Conclusion: Knowing When Governance No Longer Reaches**

This paper offers no prescriptions and proposes no replacements. Its purpose is diagnostic. It seeks to identify a boundary beyond which governance language loses traction.

To recognize governance inaccessibility is not to abandon responsibility, but to refuse procedural simulation. Governance cannot be repaired where its conditions do not obtain. Before asking how to govern more effectively, civilization must ask whether governance remains intelligible at all.

Only by acknowledging this limit can meaningful responsibility be recovered.