



Institute of
Development Studies

**Exploring Power for
Change**

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Power is a highly contested concept with multiple meanings

- Some see power as held by actors (powerful and powerless);
- Some see power as zero-sum (winners-losers)
- Some see power as 'negative' as in 'control'
- Some see power as structural
- Others see it as more pervasive and embodied in all relationships and discourses
- Others see it as more fluid and accumulative
- Others see it as more 'positive', as necessary for agency and positive action
- Others more on identities and relationships

Power may be seen as

- ✓ **Power ‘over’** – the ability of the powerful to affect the actions and thought of the powerless
- ✓ **Power ‘to’** – the capacity to act; agency
- ✓ **Power ‘with’** – the synergy of collective action, social mobilisation and alliance building
- ✓ **Power ‘within’** – a sense of self-dignity and self-awareness that enables agency

Linking Rights and Power

- ✓ Power relationships mediate the realities of rights
- ✓ Rights approaches involve the capacity to claim rights (inclusion) and the capacity to obstruct the claiming of rights (exclusion)
- ✓ ‘Empowered participation’, including ‘the right to be heard’ is necessary to attain rights
- ✓ Participation which is ‘transformative’ involves engaging with power relationships.

power is changing

- **Changing perceptions of governance**
 - *create new spaces for engagement, and new forms of power within and between them*
- **Changing relationships of the local, national and global**
 - *alter understanding of where power is located and where it may be exercised*
- **Changing role of knowledge and expertise**
 - *creates new boundaries which affect whose voices enter policy processes, and whose knowledge counts within them*

'...politics is no longer to the same boundaries as before, and is no longer tied solely to state actors and institutions, the result being that additional players, new roles, new resources, unfamiliar rules and new contradictions and conflicts appear on the scene. In the old game, each playing piece made one move only. This is no longer true of the new nameless game for power and domination'

Ulrich Beck(2005).

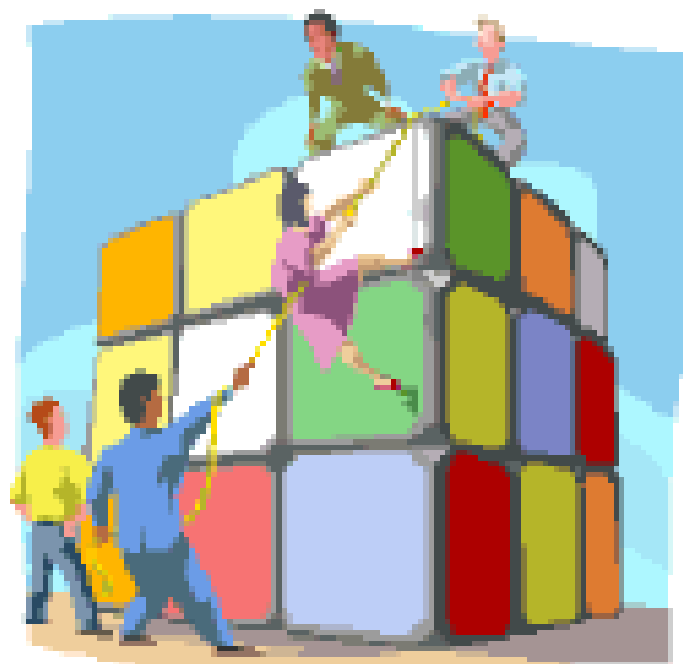
Our own experiences of power often affect how we see it

- **Much of my view shaped by my own history of engaging with power relations in a particular context**
- **Working with poor citizens in a remote mining valley of one of poorest parts of US to claim political, economic and social rights vis a vis government and a London-based corporate mine owner**
- **Conventional views of power in America failed to explain the reality I encountered**
- **Inspired by then current work of Steven Lukes – Power: A Radical View**

How do we assess power in order to bring about change?

What are the possibilities of effective, pro-poor citizen action?

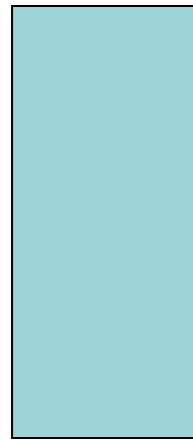
- *What forms of power?*
- *What levels of power?*
- *What spaces of power?*



The Power Cube – a tentative approach

Visible power

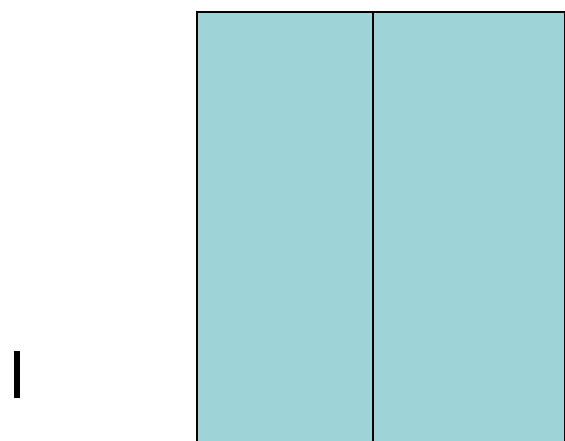
Contests over interests are assumed to be visible in public spaces, which are presumed to be relatively open



Visible

Power

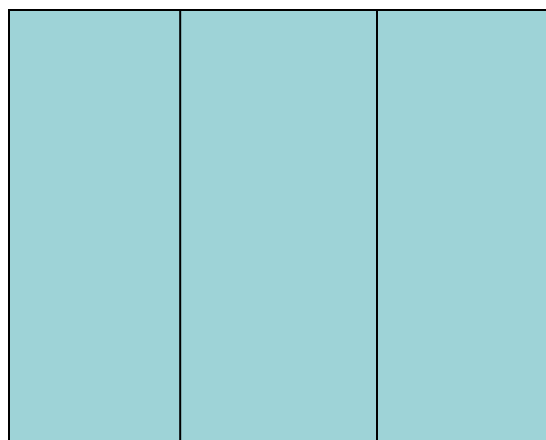
Hidden power
***barriers preclude the entry of certain actors
and issues***



Visible **Hidden**

Power

Invisible power
***Visible conflict is hidden through
internalisation of powerlessness or lack of
awareness***



Visible ***Hidden*** ***Invisible***

Power

*changing patterns of globalisation have changed
the territorial or spatial relations of power*

PLACES

<i>Supra- national</i>			
<i>National</i>			
<i>Sub- national</i>			
	<i>Visible</i>	<i>Hidden</i>	<i>Invisible</i>

POWER

Where do we engage?: How the space is created affects the power within it.

PLACES

Supra-national

National

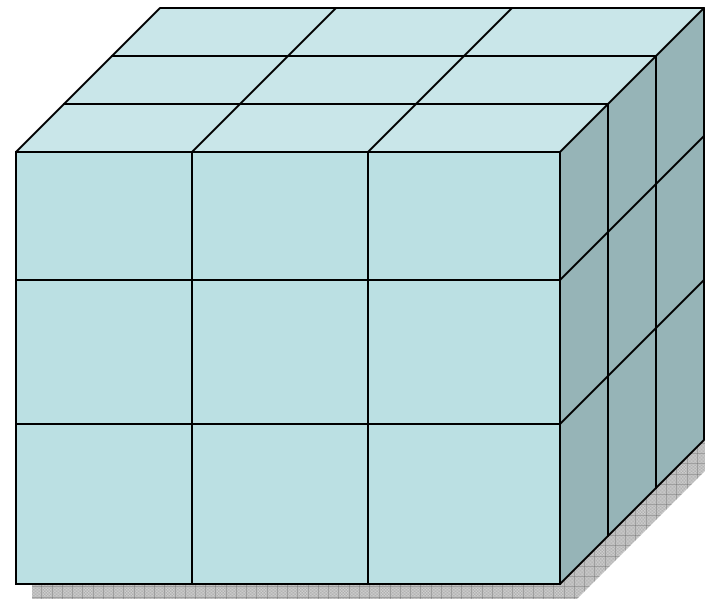
Sub-national

Visible

Hidden Invisible

POWER

SPACES of Engagement



Closed spaces:

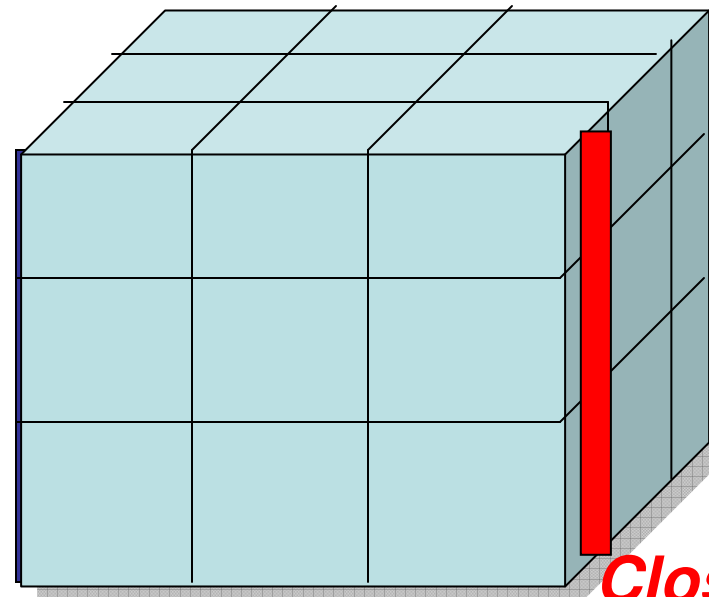
*bureaucrats, experts, elected representative
make decisions with little broad consultation or
involvement*

PLACES

*Supra-
National*

National

*Sub-
national*



SPACES

Visible Hidden Invisible

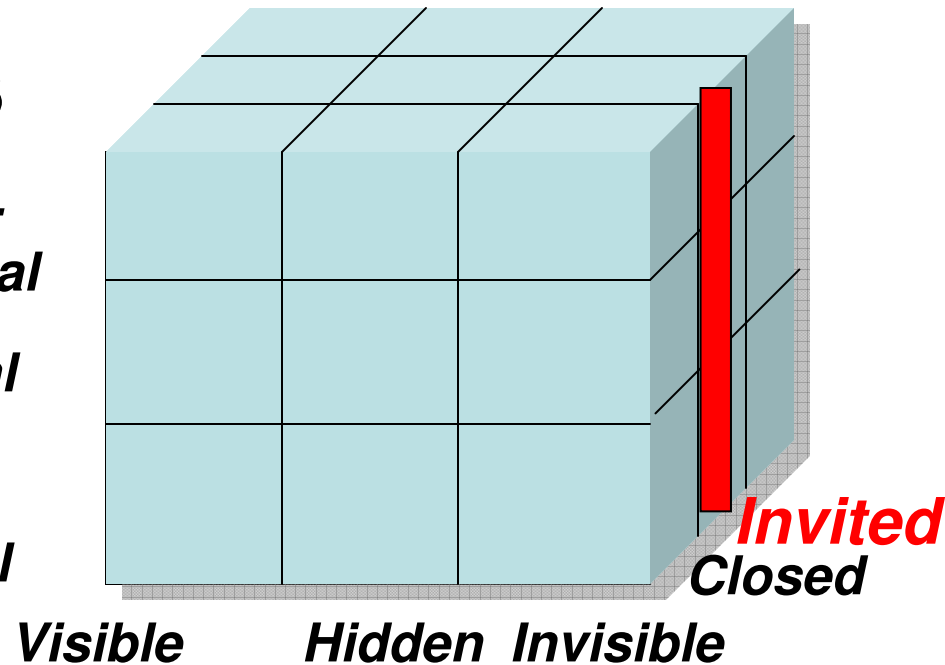
POWER

Invited Spaces:

People are invited to participate by various kinds of authorities

PLACES

Supra-national
National
Sub-national



SPACES

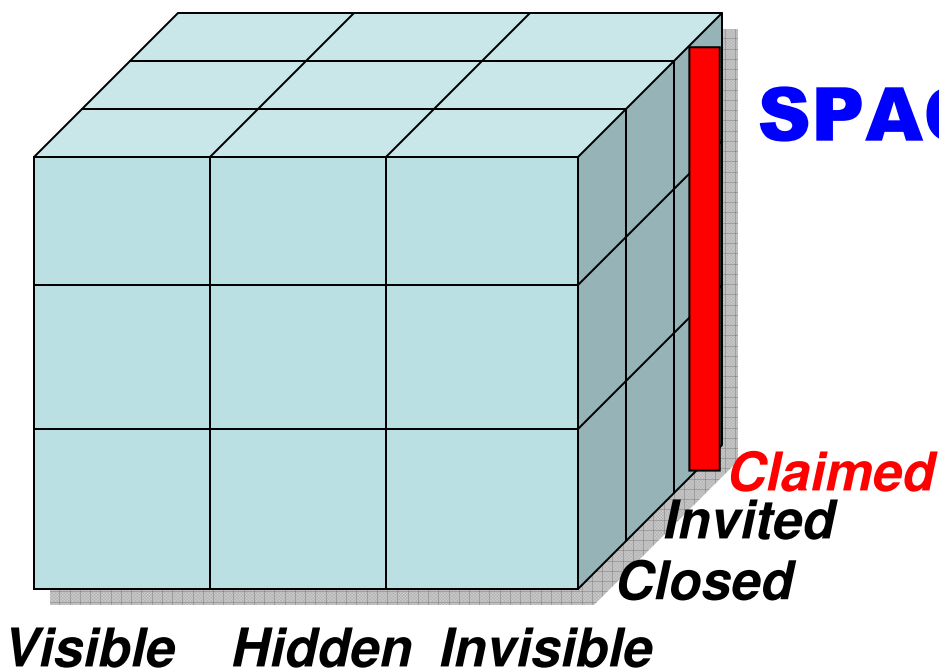
POWER

Claimed/Created Spaces:

Spaces claimed by less powerful actors from or against the power holders, or created more autonomously by them

PLACES

Supra-national
National
Sub-national



POWER

What goes on inside the spaces? ---Pearce and Vela, Colombia

- Decision-making
- Debate
- Building agreements
- Influence
- Interlocution
- Lobbying
- Protest
- Accountability
- Making visible
- Pressure
- Articulation
- Follow-up
- Formation of public opinion
- Scrutiny and recommendation
- Resistance
- Proposal
- Negotiation
- Peace-building
- Complaint
- Encounter
- Mobilization



The Power Cube

PLACES

Global

National

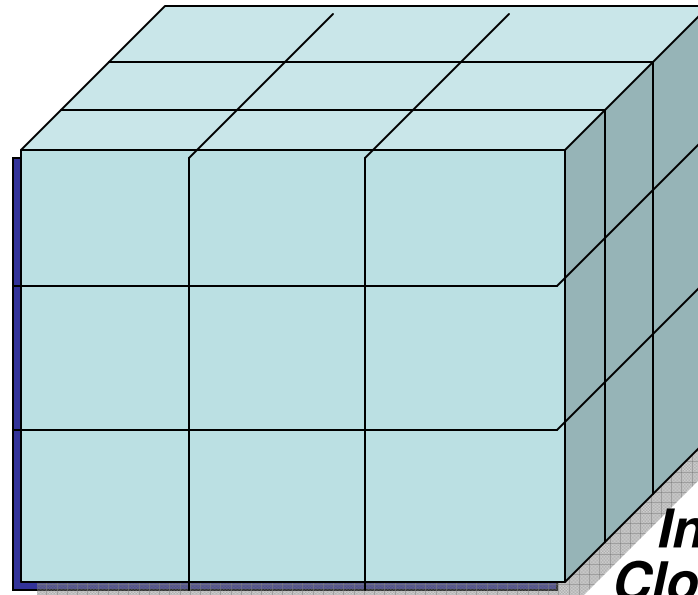
Local

SPACES

Claimed
Invited
Closed

Visible *Hidden* *Invisible*

POWER



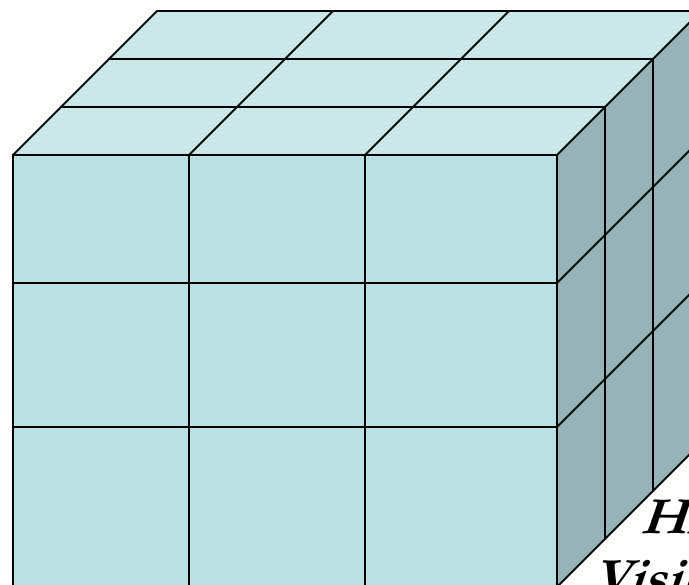
Inverting the cube – Seeing power through different lens

PLACES

*Supra-
national*

National

*Sub-
national*



POWER

*Invisible
Hidden*

Visible

Closed/ Invited Claimed/

SPACES

Increasing the rights of citizens to have power over their own lives requires change at every level and aspect of the power cube.

Strategies for mobilisation and action should

- ✓ **connect across all the spaces**
 - ***but how do civil society actors build alliances across the spaces and strategies?***

- ✓ **link vertically, as well as horizontally**
 - ***who represents whom across the levels? How are actors in one space held accountable?***

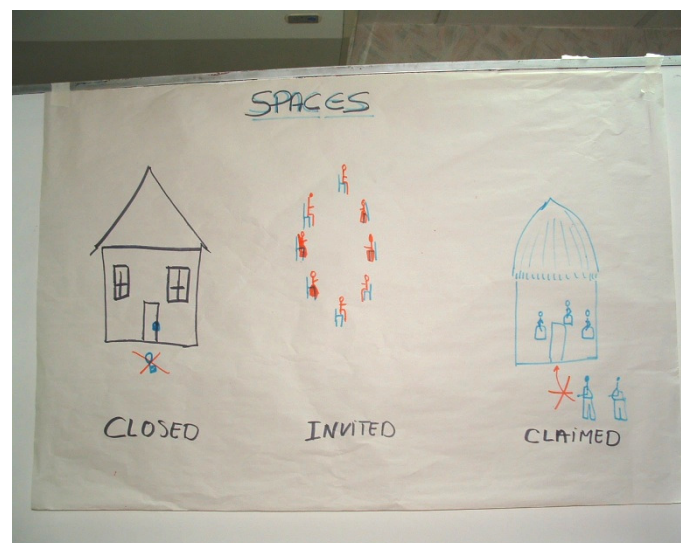
- ✓ **address the hidden and invisible forms of power in every space and level**
 - ***does ‘professional’ campaigning at one level re-enforce hidden and invisible forms of power at another?***

Applications of the Power Cube

- To map power and possible spaces for change around a given issue;
- To reflect how your organisation works on power? Where is it strong? What is it weak? Where are the blockages? e.g. Map your portfolio
- To map changes over time in power and approach to rights, in a given place or issue
- As a popular education tool to build awareness of power, within organisations, or with groups trying to change power
- Evaluation tool

Lessons from using the Power Approach – Civil Society Evaluation

- A valuable approach for reflection with civil society groups
- An approach, not a static tool – don't tick the boxes!
- Open-ended and popular uses



Spaces for poverty policy in Nigeria: Multiple but disconnected

	Official (Closed) Spaces	Invited Spaces	Created Spaces
External	Donor policies	Donor-civil society dialogue	Global social movements (oil; debt)
National	National Poverty Program	PRSP's	National trade unions; rights organisations
State	e.g. Jigawa State Poverty Policy	Jigawa State Peoples' Congress	Emirate and youth structures
LGA/ Community	Local government councils	Parallel structures – Emirates Oil companies	Zakkat committees; Home town Associations; youth movements

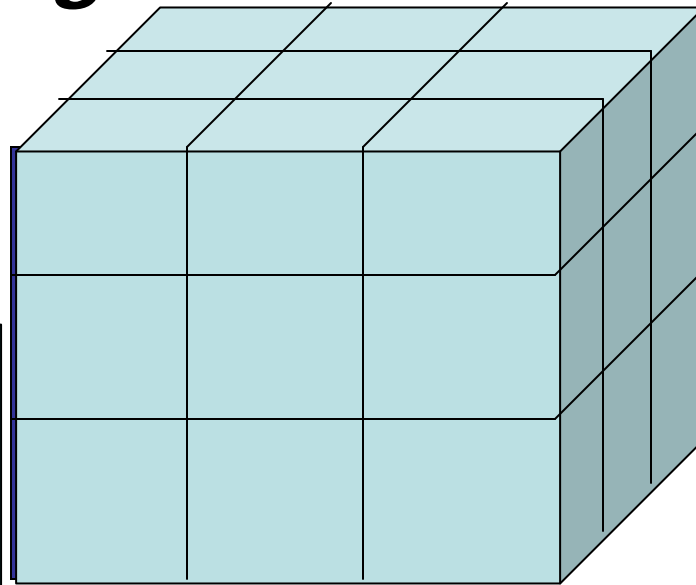


Where are the entry points for change?

Strategies which strengthen policy advocacy capacities? Strategies which build awareness and mobilisation of the unorganised?

PLACES

- Strategies which focus on global actors and policies,*
- or local capacities to claim their rights?*



POWER

SPACES

*Strategies which strengthen formal institutions of governance?
Create new inclusive spaces?
Support grassroots, local movements?*



The Power Cube

PLACES

Global

National

Local

SPACES

Claimed
Invited
Closed

Visible *Hidden* *Invisible*

POWER

Further Resources

- Just Associates **Making Change Happen** series, especially No. 3 on power. www.justassociates.org
- VeneKlasen and Miller (2006), **A New Weave Of People, Power and Politics**. ITDG Publishing
- Eyben, Harris and Pettit, **Exploring Power for Change**, *IDS Bulletin* 37.6. Institute of Development Studies
- Guijt, I. (2006), '**Assessing Civil Society Participation as supported in-country by Cordaid, Hivos, Novib and Plan Netherlands 1999-2004**'.
http://www.partos.nl/index.php?page=5_2_3