

Glimpses of the Political Economy**Actors: Power Analysis¹**

1. What is Power Analysis?

Power analysis is a general term used to describe the approaches used by development practitioners to better understand the ways in which different actors apply different power resources to reinforce political reform processes. It helps to identify entry points and positive forms of power that can be mobilised in favour of desired institutional changes. Power analysis has multidisciplinary roots, drawing broadly on the fields of social theory, political sociology and anthropology. It complements the strong actor-orientation of Political Economy Analysis by giving greater attention to the role of socialised and structural dimensions of power, how these may enable and constrain actors, and how they change over time: What are the characteristics of the stakeholders? Who is taking decisions? What is their legitimacy? How is participation shaped? Who is not able to participate in the reform process? Who is excluded and should be empowered to get engaged? How is public debate facilitated and shaped? What power resources are engaged?

Power analysis seeks to determine how power is distributed and exercised and what factors are likely to drive or impede political reform processes (Haider and Rao, 2010). It has been used by cooperation agencies primarily for context analysis, country strategies or designing a programme, but also in reviews, evaluations and learning processes. Many CSOs use similar multi-dimensional approaches to analyse interlinkages between structures, institutions and actors through the lenses of formal and informal manifestations of power.

2. Drivers of Change at a glance

In practice, power analysis is mostly undertaken as a Drivers of Change (DoC) approach. This approach was developed by DFID and SIDA to address the lack of linkages between a country's political framework and the work of development agencies. The approach focuses on the **interplay of economic, institutional, social and political factors** that support or impede poverty reduction.² The evolution of this approach has gone hand-in-hand with an approach to development that emphasises that: (i) the way development happens, or does not happen, is shaped by political will and institutions; and (ii) to be effective, donors' country strategies must be based on a sound understanding of historical and political context. More specifically, DoC is rooted in a concern to better understand how to make change happen in specific country contexts: "It's this black box of lack of political will that DoC analysis unpacks."

Each DoC report identifies specific **driving and resisting factors**. **Both influencing forces** (in favour or against the reform process) may be attributed to structure, institutions and stakeholders³. Political will and participation don't arise out of the blue, they emerge from shifts and influences of the structural context, e.g. arising new technologies and market competition, and they also emerge from the discontent of stakeholders about extractive institutions. In particular powerful and dominant

¹ Sources: among others SDC PED Network, GIZ, DFID, SIDA, WB PSIA Group.

² OECD DAC (2005) Lessons Learned on the Use of Power and Drivers of Change Analyses in Development Cooperation, DAC Network on Governance (GovNet), OECD, Paris, online at <http://www.gsdr.org/docs/open/DOC82.pdf>

³ See: Basic Tolls 01: SIA

stakeholders are aware what they could lose by institutional reforms.⁴ Certain themes recur frequently in the DoC reports. These include institutional factors like corruption and elite capture, the weak role of civil society organizations, the low quality of public debate, the role of the media, and the importance of political opposition and the middle classes.

The approach recognises that there are context-specific foundational factors that affect the capacity for reform and opportunities for change. It strives to capture the interaction between the actor's behaviour and economic, social and political factors that support or impede political reforms. The DoC approach focuses on the power relationships and the institutional factors affecting the political will for transformation processes, particularly pro-poor policies at country level. Change drivers are not simply individual champions of reform (a common assumption) but rather the interaction between structural features, institutions and actors⁵ (the same holds true for spoilers of change and passive actors). The outcome of a DoC research will thus look at reform processes in the past and at spaces for development in the interaction between structure, institutions and actors. Summed up, in applying a DoC approach, one has to keep in mind that it is precisely not designed to be a single, overarching conceptual framework. Rather, it permits asking a structured, but country-specific and flexible set of questions which allow for a thorough understanding of the historical, political, social, economic and institutional context. A few fundamental elements should be kept in mind:

- The timing of the analysis is paramount: the spaces for change processes that offer the chance to impulse reforms are constantly evolving.
- Have a clear focus and keep the operation implications in mind from the on-start. Both in the analysis of institutions and kinds of socio-economic problems that are to be tackled and a clear idea of the future facilitate the analytical work.
- Make sure the studies come with a determined participation of country stakeholders. If purely outside driven, the likelihood of over-looking important factors and repeating conventional wisdom are high.
- Challenge conventional wisdom and be aware of your biases. Critically think about the key stakeholders and their short- and long-term interests and incentives. Avoid a bias towards specific actors. Successful reform processes will most probably be result from an alliance of a variety of state and non-state actors. Keep in mind that in a reform process, particularly in developing countries, cooperation agencies are not simple static watchers, but active stakeholders whose actions have repercussions.
- From the onset, there should be a decided strategy for dissemination and engagement upon the completion of the study, especially geared towards the partner country. Keep in mind the different audiences the study will have to address (this might entail producing several, audience-tailored reports). Also, strive to avoid jargon and language that creates unnecessary barriers to dialogue and strive for a frank document where possible.
- In a capacity-building perspective for partner countries, the analytical process should strive to create local capacities for evidence based analysis. Creating possibilities of an evidence based debate can be an important contribution to the improved quality of a reform process.

⁴ Better Government for poverty reduction: more effective partnerships for change. DFID, 2004

⁵ See: Basic Tools 01: SIA

3. Five Instruments

The DoC approach is based on a descriptive analysis of structural features and the institutional processes⁶, in particular the characteristics of extractive and inclusive institutions.⁷ This ground work can be summarized in some working hypothesis about the **available spaces for development** the possible role of actors inside these spaces. The following five instruments have proven to be practical for participatory analytical work. It depends on the context which of the instruments - adapted to the specific circumstances - are necessary for understanding the power play.

3.1 Learning from Past Change Processes

3.1.1 Focus Group Discussion and working with Collective Biographies

An analysis of pre-existing and current reform processes, be they at the institutional level or the policy of a specific sector, reveals the change dynamics between forces in favour and against the reform process and reflects the mechanisms that have led to the current situation. Learning from the past includes looking at the following key questions:

- What were major change project in the near past? (for example institutional and fiscal reforms, sector reforms, reform programs, implemented development plans)
- What triggered the reform? Who initiated the process?
- Who/what turned out to be drivers of changes?
- How and by whom was the process structured, conducted and coordinated?
- What strategies have the stakeholders applied?
- What were the major success factors? Why change did not happen? What were the potential drivers or impediments of change? How were change coalitions produced and sustained?
- What should be considered in a future reform process?

These key questions can be discussed thoroughly in the setting of a focus group of experts who have participated in the reform process in different roles. The focus group should integrate a balanced mix of persons and representatives from government, civil society organizations, the private sector, political parties, social movements, media and academia, also considering diversity criteria such as gender, age, ethnic groups. In addition to the seven key questions, the focus group should also examine the question of **participation** in the transformation process, considering different **structures**, **measures** and **spaces** for participation.

Participation in the reform process ...			
1 Stakeholders	2 Structure	3 Measures	4 Spaces
Actor 1			
Actor N			

⁶ To unpack the basic structural and institutional features, the following analytical work may be useful: A sound literature review, discussions with thematic focus groups of experts and a Delphi survey. The Delphi method relies on an interactive work with a panel of experts, in which the experts answer questionnaires in two or more rounds. After each round, a facilitator provides an anonymous summary of the experts' evaluation and forecasts from the previous round as well as the reasons they provided for their judgments. Thus, experts are encouraged to revise their earlier answers in light of the replies of other members of the panel.

⁷ See: Basic Tools 03: Institutions

Explanation of the figure

1 = cf. Basic Tool 04 Stakeholder Analysis.

2 = Structure refers to the governance of participation, i.e. the formal existing institutions (legal frameworks, norms, regulations) and informal rules of the game, for example the right to vote, legally prescribed consultations, the right to get access to information, ways to voice views and interests, and demand the access to rights and resources. Are these rules stable over time or predictable, legitimized or widely accepted, effectively applied? If not, why? Do the rules represent the views, values or interests of a particular group? Who participated in drafting the rules of the game? At what point in time where these rules decided?

3 = Measures are concrete practices and applied mechanisms of participation, for example: Getting information, being heard and consulted, participating in public debate, being heard by parliamentary commission, influencing the agenda of public debate, official reporting (announcement), facilitating political negotiation among stakeholders, participating in decision making. What are the existing practices that define how the game is actually played? Do these practices seek to expand, complement, or contradict the existing formal and informal rules of the game? Are these practices stable over time or predictable, are they legitimized or widely accepted, are they effectively applied? If not, why?

4 = Spaces refer to three different arenas where participation unfolds:

(i) Formal institutional spaces which limit the opportunities for citizen participation outside established procedures (for example, council member meetings include members previously elected for that role but not others), limited information of the public through official channels, hearings with selected experts, guided consultancies by bureaucrats, elected representatives making decisions without consultation or involvement.

(ii) Invited spaces: Citizens can permeate decision-making bodies and authorities to voice their concerns (for example, prior consultations⁸, referendums, public consultations), but remain excluded from the formal decision making process.

(ii) Created and claimed spaces: Citizens and their organizations create alternative arenas for engagement and action (for example, formation of new organizations and street protests). Usually these spaces are claimed by less powerful actors against the interest of power holders.

By looking at different arenas and the rules that shape them, the analysis can identify political opportunity structures or entry points to effectively influence decision making.

Example of a summary of lessons learnt from the past:

DFID and NORAD tasked ODI and IPRAD with drafting an analysis of *Drivers of Change and Development in Malawi*. The first part of the document was looking at past and current processes, revealing basic structural, institutional and actor specific social and institutional features that are barriers to democratic change.

- To get more insight, the development was divided into phases and sub-segments, each containing different institutions, strategies, policies, and change capacities of the stakeholders.
- The document pointed out the persistence of a patrimonial state and ingrained authoritarian beliefs (the so-called big-man syndrome) affecting the country's politics by frustrating democratic institutional development.
- The study noted how social traditions impacted negatively on the political system: Colonialism superimposed elements of a modern state on hierarchical but communal societies, generating powerful legacies including an ambiguous moral attitude towards laws and administrative rules requiring honesty and professionalism in public service.

⁸ For example, international law, ratified and adopted on national level, specifically requires the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples to be obtained before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them, e.g. in the defence of their natural resources in competition with mining and land grabbing.

- The analysis helps to understand how the deeply rooted patterns of a traditional society persist over time, for example explaining why abuses by traditional leaders are tolerated even when very few of the benefits filter down to ordinary people.

In addition to Focus Group Discussions the **Collective Biography** method may be a valuable way to capture and understand applied strategies of stakeholders. The method is based on people's life histories. It pursues a constructivist approach: People experience awareness and self-awareness, and bear responsibility for their actions. They construct reality within their minds, and act according to the narratives that they develop, and the incentives that they see. This is manifested quite evidently in the stories people constantly tell each other. A person's own life history for instance is made up of malleable material that is reworked and narrated afresh during each phase of its life, as we move on and become able to look back from a new standpoint.

The narrative plots cover all aspects of the political economy issues of a society and depict also the less visible and culturally embedded forms of relations, dependencies and power and facilitate understanding of how social norms, institutions, hierarchies and patterns of behaviour are unconsciously reproduced. They disclose motivations and *deliberate strategies* of powerful actors, reveal how less powerful actors learn to accommodate and subordinate oneself, finally accepting their destiny, or inform about strategies of resilience⁹ in adverse life circumstances. Biographies provide signs and leave tracks to answer lots of question, for example

- How do the narratives picture relations and dependencies?
- What are the explanations for power resources and the justifications of inequalities?
- How do the narratives depict state institutions and their performance?
- To what extent do the discourses contribute to reinforcing social hierarchies or exclusion?
- How do these narratives build on beliefs, norms and cultural practices and legitimize or reinforce material power structures?
- Are the narratives used to advance reforms or legitimise the status quo?
- How does change happen and who are the drivers?
- What is the individual theory of change about?
- How the discourses display the actions of civil society organizations?
- How are different narratives built into common development discourses?

The **Collective Biography** method presented here has often been tested in practice. Essentially, it pursues to construct a (fictional and anonymous) collective biography from a small number of (real) short biographical narratives. The method is based on the assumptions (i) that the narratives unfold institutional settings and actor specific constraints and potentials, and (ii) that the biographies and action strategies of the various actors are bounded by paths or corridors. The path dependency (PD) is based on the hypothesis that average humans prefer the familiar and well-known, i.e. avoiding uncertainty instead of taking the risk of doing something new. Therefore, the path dependency arises from the fact that a path change - as opposed to maintaining continuity - involves an unusually high risk of failure. Examples of this kind of path change would be when an individual migrates or changes their occupation.

⁹ The concept of resilience is interesting in the context of extractive institutions which create a rather difficult environment for democratic development. Resilience is the capacity of people to cope with stress and adversity. Given the many risks that vulnerable groups are facing, people develop protection and coping capacities across different cultures and contexts. They produce a social fabric and strengthen resistance against adverse influences such as limited access to right and resources, discrimination, unemployment, criminality and drugs. Resilience generates social capital in terms of stable social relationships and confidence. The development of resilience is best understood as a process of strengthening mental toughness and emotional stability to overcome obstacles in a rather difficult environment.

Step 1: Exploration of life paths

In a first step, several exploratory interviews are held with a small group of selected actors to ascertain their preparedness and ability to tell their life stories. Second, these pilot talks provide a rough idea about their path dependencies. These interviews enable the researchers both to check the selection of actors, and to form hypotheses concerning their life paths. Usually these meetings last about an hour, and involve a pair of one researcher and one actor. The interlocutors must be prepared for their task and get a set of guiding questions. In particular, they must be able to explain comprehensibly the purpose of the exercise, to convince people that the information provided will not be published, and they must be willing to say something about themselves to create a climate conducive to open discussion. Here is an example of identified life paths from a development programme to promote sustainable watershed management:

- Intensification of irrigated agriculture. Path dependency: access to credit, property rights and farm tenancy titles, new capacities in technical and managerial features, investment management, access to the market.
- Diversification of income sources. Path dependency: leasing or sale of land or water rights, gainful employment in the city, credit and investment in the establishment of subsidiary earnings.
- Migration (also abroad) and access to remittances. Path dependency: payment of organizers of migration, dependency on timely paid remittances, risk for sustaining partner relationship.
- Struggle for rights and legal redress. Path dependency: bonding with those of a similar conviction, access to advocacy organizations, getting assistance in law enforcement, slow organization building processes, lack of transparency of judicial procedures.
- Indifference and resignation. Path dependency: fatalism, hopelessness, marginalisation, multiple disadvantage.

Step 2: Interviews

Once the possible paths are identified, in-depth interviews are held with selected individuals that may last around two hours. For this purpose a simple format involving key questions can be developed that both captures certain biographical data (age, sex, domicile, occupation, family status), and includes qualitative questions that invite the interviewee to expound freely, for instance: What does a normal day look like for you? What do you like watching on TV? What has changed recently in your neighbourhood or workplace? What has stayed the same? What has changed recently in your life or your family, or fortunately has stayed the same? How many times do you see your neighbours? Where are your parents and brothers and sisters living? Who has intentionally pushed for change? What have you been most pleased or disappointed by recently? Where would you most like to live? What are you hoping for next year? What needs to get done round here so that things can change? What should we avoid doing? Who calls the shots here? If you had the money, what would you like to change tomorrow?

Immediately after the interview, the researcher works out a concise two-pages-report of the interview which includes a photograph of the interviewed person in front of his/her house. The summary should also display significant direct quotations.

Step 3: Analysing and condensing the material into a collective biography

The collective biography consists of one life history per life path. This collective biography per path is constructed from the various interviews, i.e. is a fictitious life history meant to serve as an example, though, putting together narrative pieces out of the individual life histories, it is certainly realistic. A collective biography should not be more than one or two pages in length.

Later on, the collective biography pictured for each path is discussed with a mixed group of individuals more or less informed about the life circumstances. When the histories are presented this usually draws laughter. When a collective biography is presented, instantly people react, they agree

and criticise, comment and explain, add to it or even produce new versions. By this means the history becomes richer, more realistic, more authentic and more substantial. At the same time, the history invites the listeners to switch perspectives, and in so doing stimulates creative energy for developing proposed solutions and strategic options for reform processes. The collective biographies enriches the learning from the past and offers an authentic outlook to the future.

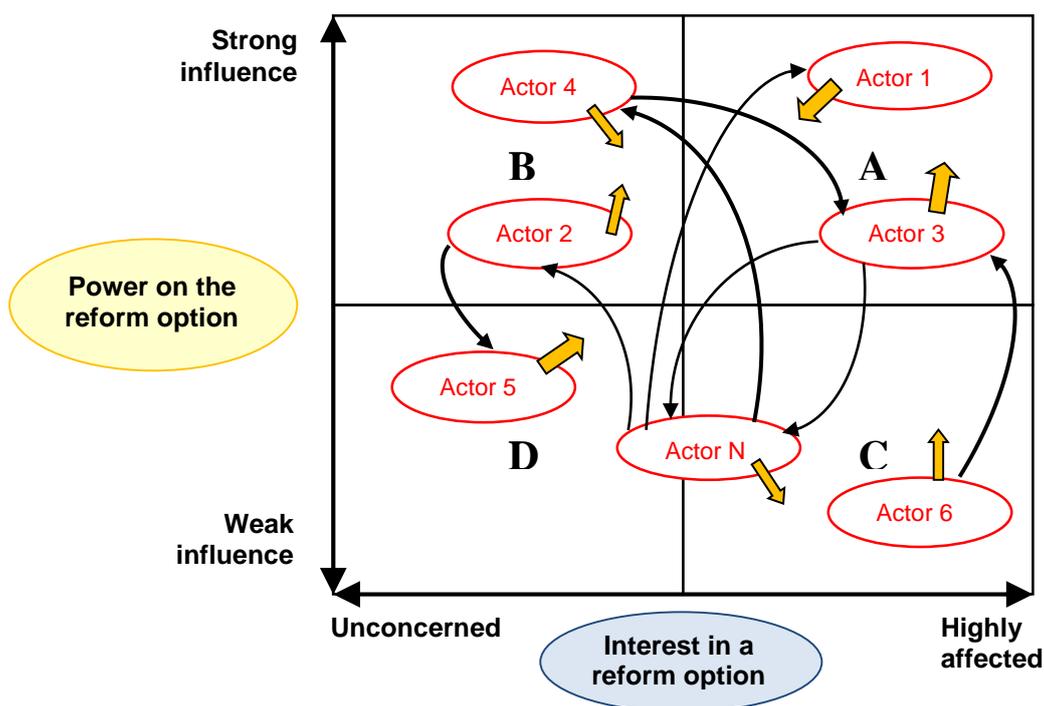
3.2 The Power-Interest Matrix

To facilitate the reflection on power and involvement of the stakeholders working with the following matrix may be helpful. The matrix may refer to a specific reform process or to different reform options. It is a kind of a condensed stakeholder map.

In a first step, important actors (stakeholders) are placed in the four squares of the matrix. The key question is: What are the interests and the power of the relevant stakeholders regarding proposed transformation process? Interest measures the degree the stakeholder is likely to get involved in the process because he/she feels concerned and in his/her perception the transformation will affect his/her self-interests. Power measures the influence the stakeholders exercise over the objectives and contents of the reform process, and to what extent they can help achieve, or block the change process. Both categories help to better understand why stakeholders take certain stands and how they change their positions during a reform process.

The second key question is: In what direction move the stakeholders presumably during the transformation process? The direction of a shift is indicated with an arrow and the size of the arrow indicates the probability of the movement. ➡ ➡

As an optional complement, one may add a third key question: Who is triggering and influencing the shifts of other actors? In the matrix this can be depicted by connecting arrows. The width of the lines indicates the intensity of the influence.  The analysis can be recorded on the Power-Interest Matrix:



Explanation of the four quadrants

Square A: Powerful stakeholders with a high interest in a reform process are key stakeholders and should get engaged to participate actively. For example, Powerful drivers of change and so-called champions fall in this category. Avoid supporting them because this may trigger the resistance of other stakeholders. These stakeholders may be interested in an ex-ante political analysis of possible impacts of different reform options. They are also strongly interested in agenda setting and structuring of the negotiation process.

Quadrant B: Powerful stakeholders with a low interest in a transformation process may turn into powerful blockers of change. As they have a lot of power, they should be kept satisfied through the provision of sound information about the relevance of the reform process. Their behaviour is unpredictable, unstable and volatile. They wait and see. They get more involved when power shifts arise that may affect their interests.

Square C: Powerless stakeholders with a high interest in a reform process should be kept informed and probably empowered. For example, Drivers of change of CSOs with limited power fall in this category.

Square D: Powerless stakeholders with low interest in the reform process should be monitored closely. Sleepers fall in this category, who may wake up during the process when an issue appears that affects their interests.

If time and resources allow, further analysis can be carried out which explores in more detail some questions:

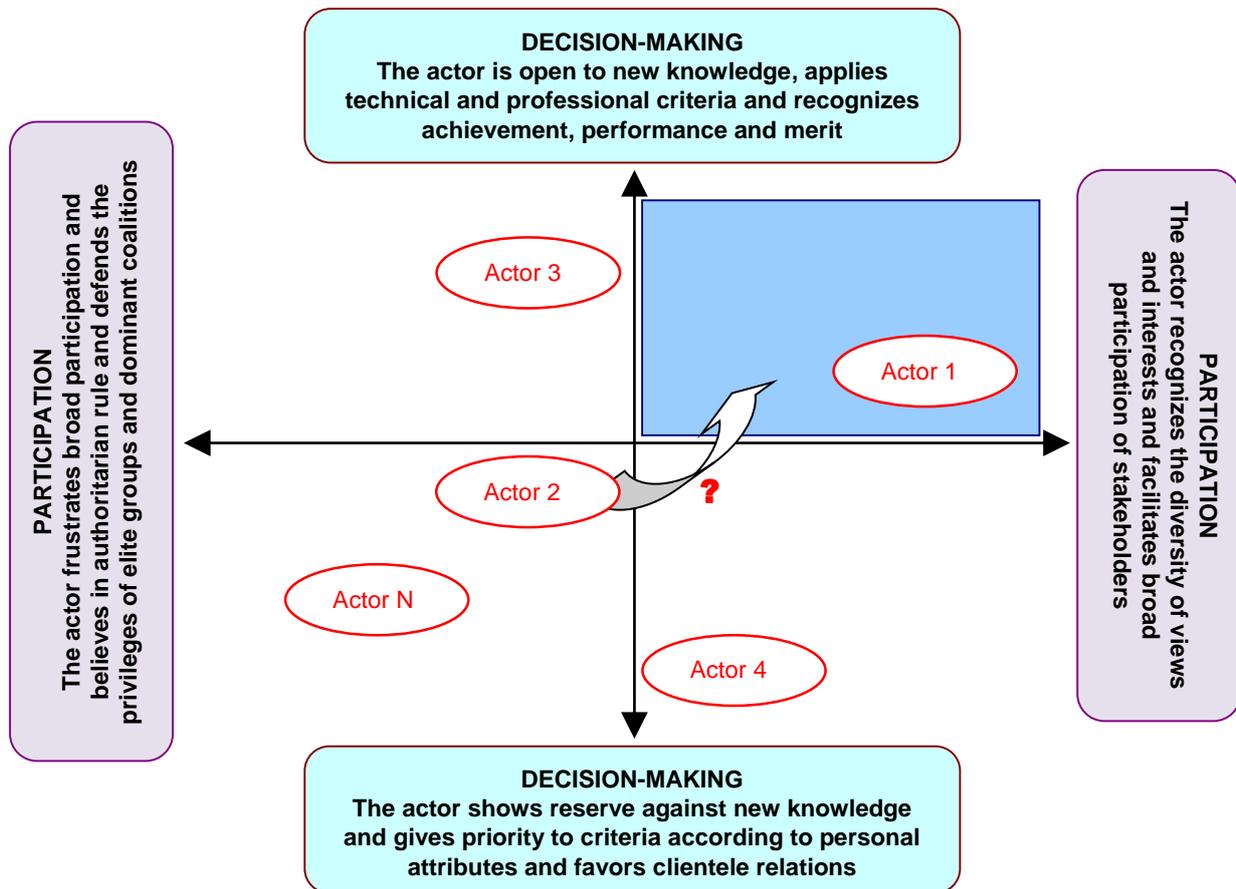
- What are common features of the stakeholders located in one square?
- How can different stakeholders complement each other?
- What are the applied strategies to influence the reform process?
- How can acceptance and recognition of diversity of views and interests be strengthened?
- Why do certain stakeholders (not) shift to a different square over time?
- What kind of power resources do the influence of stakeholders use?
- What information and knowledge needs have the stakeholders?
- What fears and threats or anticipated disadvantages govern the conduct of the stakeholders?
- How can powerless stakeholders be integrated?
- What kind of conflicts between divergent interests are likely to arise?
- How should the participation in decision making be shaped?
- How can the stakeholders enhance their capacity to negotiate constructively?

With repeated and periodic applications of the Power-Interest Matrix the instrument turns into a monitoring tool of reform processes. The matrix can be the entry point to develop a strategy for how to engage best the different stakeholders in the negotiation of a reform process. Such a strategy may cover at least four different issues: (i) the access to relevant knowledge about the reform options; (ii) the structuring of the relationship and participation of different stakeholders in the process; (iii) the design and facilitation of the negotiation process; and (iv) the public debate on reform options.

3.3 Decision-making and participation

In the negotiations on a political proposition, the stakeholders defend their interests and implicitly reveal their attitudes and preferences. Participation molds the riverbed in which the negotiation

pursues its way and in which the stakeholders apply their capacities, applying different, more or less transparent strategies. The play of human relations and negotiation has a hidden backstage scene where stakeholders defend their interests and strive for influencing the process through crafty information management, hidden alliances and malicious intrigues. The following matrix does not reach and depict this hidden features; it only serves to analyze the preferences for patterns of decision-making and participation.



The location of the stakeholders in the matrix allows to draw a serie of conclusions:

- What are the actors with a high interest in new knowledge and with an openness to participation?
- How can the actores in the blue quadrant be tied to the other actores?
- How can the negotiation process be strengthened through evidence based knowledge?
- What actors should be involved to negotiate the participation structure, measures and spaces?
- How can functional participation be structured and regulated?
- Which concrete measures can help to slowly move the actors towards the blue quadrant?

3.4 Power resources

Stakeholders use their individually acquired power resources, such as knowledge, negotiation skills and expertise to influence decision-making. They use these capacities and act on the basis of their individual **position power**, the power that arises from the interaction between people and institutions, i.e. the ascribed socio-economic and political position, not necessarily related to performance and professional merits, for example as government official, leader of a political party, president of a CSO, or manager of an international enterprise. Essentially, position power derives from unalterable characteristics like origin, economic power, belonging to influential and dominant groups. These features are reinforced by some soft factors like reputation and sociability, official status and titles, authoritarian practice and leadership image.

A strong and consolidated power position enables and enhances the access to **individually acquired power resources**. Weak and unstable position power can't easily take advantage and exploit individual power resources. Power resources can be typed and be used to customize, for example, comparative power profiles in terms of the importance and weight of the involved stakeholders for certain aspects of reform process. To compare different stakeholder profiles, at least the following interlinked power resources are brought in to strengthen the influence over a given reform process:

1. **AP – Ascribed Position Power:** Influence derived from origin and family links, property and wealth, institutionally ascribed position to assign and withdraw resources, related attributes like authority, charisma and leadership. Access to influential dominant groups and useful informal networks to defend interests, the capacity to deprive rights, with or without means of violence. Includes also the influence on agenda setting, definition of objectives, roles and responsibilities, decision making on the distribution of rewards and sanctions, influence over the access to information and knowledge and opinion formation in mass media and public.
2. **IP - Information Power:** The capacity to influence and control the information flow and define the information content, key messages, media, dissemination channels, and audiences. Includes the access to editors, opinion leaders, social media, presence and participation in public debate, shaping the ways and measures of communication.
3. **FP - Financial Power:** Achieving influence through the decision on the allocation and use of financial resources and related incentives and pressures. Includes the influence over different formats of funds and their governance.
4. **EP - Expert Power:** Influence through knowledge and experience. The capacity to manage and relate concepts (read the context, questioning, and comprehensive view). Also derives from the disposal of specific knowledge, capacity to translate strategy into action, and practical problem solving skills. Includes the innovative power that comes from the ability to create new solutions and transform knowledge into new ideas and concepts.
5. **NP - Negotiation Power:** Achieving influence through sound understanding of the issues at stake, interpretive and solid and effective communication and social skills to convince others; ability to make alliances. It includes self-critical awareness (systematic self-analysis of failure and error), diplomacy, empathy, conflict management skills, cultural sensitivity, and convene power in a context of diverse interests.
6. **SR - Social Relations Power:** The capacity to build up and use social networks and achieving influence through developing alliances. The power that emerges from group membership, sociability and closed circles of influence based on loyalty, common identity and interests and reciprocal services. Achieving various forms of formal and informal partnerships. Relations to influential people and power holders that can be easily activated.

7. **PS - Power to structure participation:** The capacity to influence and shape the participation of different actors, rules of inclusion and exclusion and the measures and spaces for participation from information, consultation to participation in decision making.

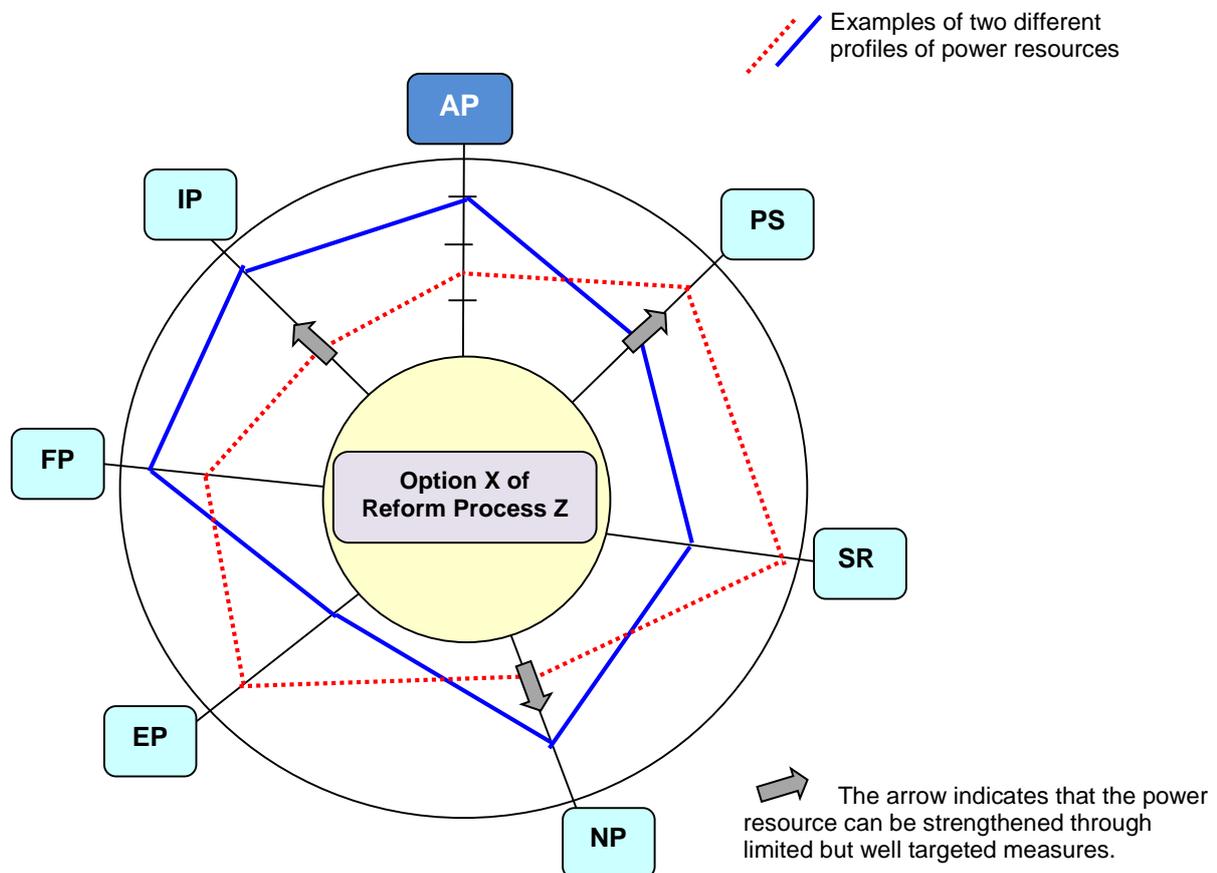
These eight criteria can be used to put together the so-called power resources wheel:

Step 1: Identify the power resources

Guiding question: Which power resources does each one of the stakeholders have? In a first step, the application can focus on three to five actors so as to unify the criteria on power resources.

Step 2: Visualize and compare the resources

To visualize the profile of the different actors, classify the different criteria on the scale 0 to 4 (= significant power) and record the result on the power resources wheel.



Of course the profiles of power resources depend on the persons who apply the criteria. Therefore, the comparison of different evaluations may prove to be useful. The discussion of the profiles can treat the following questions:

- What are the major differences that appear in the wheel?
- What are the reasons for these differences?
- Which stakeholders have complementary power resources?
- What are the main power resources of dominant stakeholders and groups?
- Which power resources can be strengthened through temporary well targeted measures?
- How do different stakeholder explain their own profile?
- What stakeholders should embark the reform process?

- How should stakeholder participation be structured?

Three points to keep in mind when assessing power resources and influencing power:

1. Financial and position power are necessary but not sufficient conditions for influence. The extent of influencing power requires far more strategic precision and flexibility in the use of other types of power that are less tangible – expert, relations and negotiation power.
2. All the capacities needed in policy influencing are very unlikely to be found in only one person, no matter how brilliant she/he might be. Strong policy influencing work thus requires a combination skills available in a group of persons, reflecting the whole range of different power resources.
3. It would be innocent not to mention the hidden side of power resources as analysed by the social anthropologist James C. Scott.¹⁰ In negotiation processes beneath the surface of open, evident and public interactions stakeholders use hidden and invisible power resources. A useful entry point for understanding political decision-making and participation is to look at the typology of three different expressions of power¹¹: The visible power of open negotiation and decision making, the hidden power of organised biases and agenda-setting behind the scenes, and the invisible power of forces that shape people's consciousness and felt needs.

Visible power: Visible power describes the formal rules, structures, authorities, institutions and procedures of political decision making. It also describes how those in positions of power use such procedures and structures to maintain control.

Hidden power: Powerful actors maintain influence by controlling who gets to the decision-making table and what gets on the agenda. These dynamics operate on many levels to exclude and devalue the concerns and representation of less powerful groups, including the mobilisation of bias and non-decision making.

Invisible power: Probably the most insidious, invisible power shapes the psychological and ideological boundaries of participation. Significant problems and issues are not only kept from the decision-making table, but also from the minds and consciousness of those affected. By influencing how individuals think about their place in the world, this level of power shapes people's beliefs, sense of self and acceptance of the status quo and even of inferiority. Processes of socialisation, culture and ideology perpetuate exclusion and inequality by defining what is normal, acceptable and safe.

In practice, the three types of power will overlap. However, it is important to combine the visible and hidden or informal dimensions of power with the underlying cultural and social norms and practices in order to identify how changes take place.

3.5 Awareness for diverse interests

Usually at the beginning of a negotiation process on reform options the interests of the stakeholders differ widely, deep contradictions are normal. This is logical, given their different interests and expectations vis-à-vis the political proposal on the table. At the same time the stakeholders depend on each other to find a viable agreement. Any negotiation raises reservations, silent or open opposition or scepticism. At the latest, actors discover their mutual dissonances when asked to express their interests. The motives for opposition are diverse and closely linked to institutional and power relations: the proper interests and fears of the stakeholders (e.g. regarding the loss of power) are reinforced by mutual distrust. It is thus imperative to structure the process through various interventions, among which are:

- Facilitate the transformation of hard positions into concrete, soft and movable interests.
- Learning to deal with antagonism, turning silent reservations into open expression.

¹⁰ James C. Scott: Domination and the Art of Resistance. Hidden Transcripts. Yale University Press, 1992 / James C. Scott: Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. Yale University Press, 1985

¹¹ Jon Gaventa: Finding the spaces for change; a power analysis. IDS Bulletin 37, 2006

- Making sure the actors have clear and transparent information on the political proposal and are getting equal access to evidence based knowledge about possible effects of different reform options.
- Creating spaces for informal meetings and mutual confidence-building.
- Creating a favourable environment based on minimal negotiation rules, a common agenda and a functional negotiation schedule according to the issues.
- Focalizing the interest on possible effects of the reform options, keeping in mind that political change implies benefits and shifts of power.

The following figure helps in identifying the different interests:

Political theme / reform proposal:				
1 Stakeholders	2 Explicit and palpable needs, concerns and interests	3 Grade of accordance with the reform objectives	4 Assumptions on competing interests of other stakeholders	5 Concrete strategies in the negotiation process

Explanation of the graph

1 = cf. Basic Tool 04: Stakeholder Analysis

2 = Interests which the actors express in public statements and in the negotiations, but also the basic needs and expressed concerns about the issue at stake.

3 = 0 (no coincidence with the objectives of the reform objectives) to 3 (the actor coincides fully). Indicate the most important deviation.

4 = What are their explicit and palpable needs, concerns and interests?

5 = Observable behavioural patterns and concrete measures regarding:

- (i) Increase level of information and knowledge about the reform options;
- (ii) Structuring of the negotiation process; focus on achieving a common understanding of proceedings, spaces and modalities for participation, timetable and agenda;
- (iii) Strengthening the relations between the stakeholders and the recognition of their mutual interdependence;
- (iv) Empowering specific actors so they can actively participate; facilitate their participation alongside the crucial political issues;
- (v) Creating mutual trust and spaces for informal personal contacts, field visits to know concrete examples;
- (vi) Opening access to new knowledge; panels and workshops with experts on specific topics;
- (vii) Facilitation of negotiation processes;
- (viii) Monitoring of progress.

The matrix – a way of simplifying reality – helps to better understand the negotiation process. First and foremost, it is useful to ask the following questions:

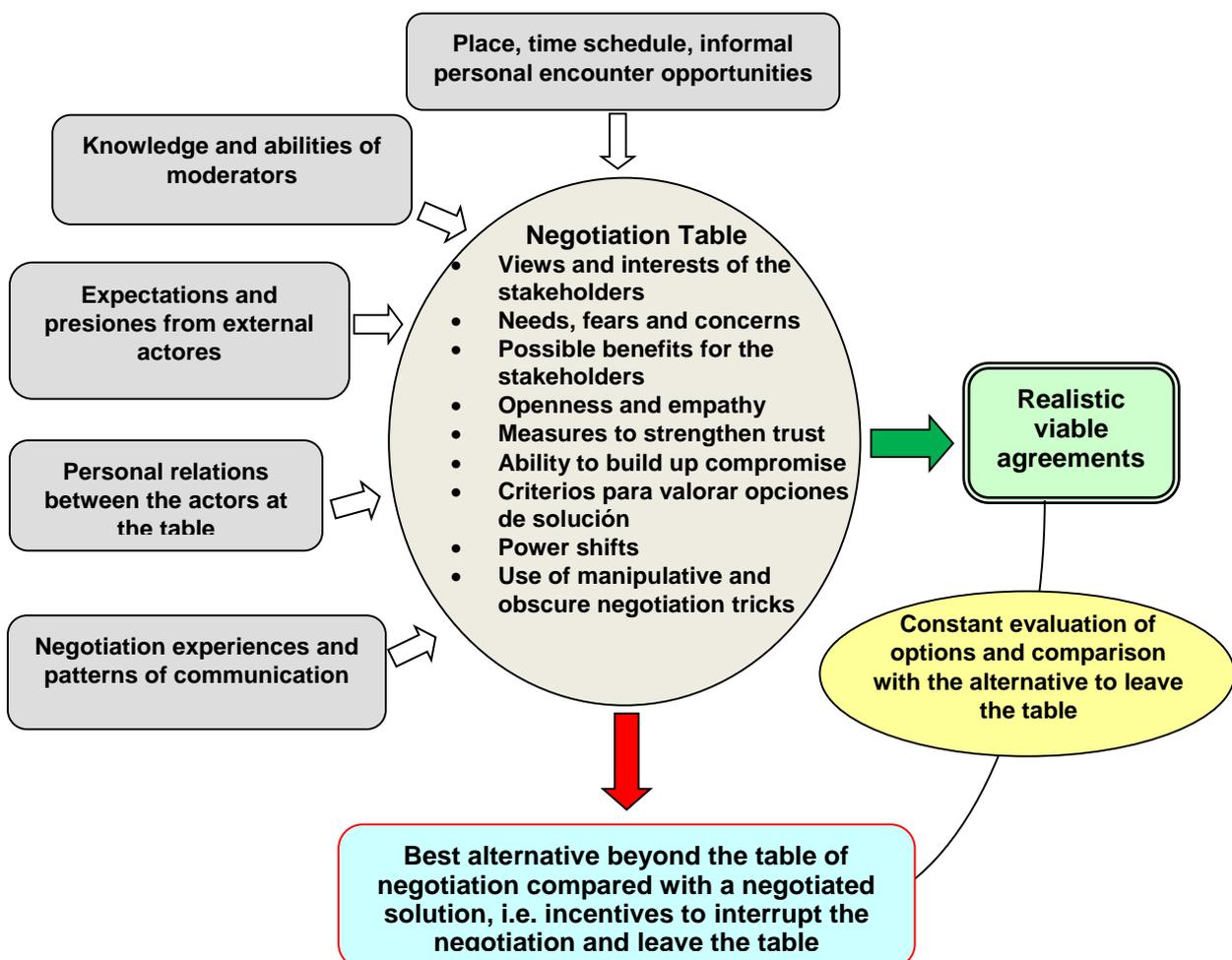
- What interests do the stakeholders have vis-à-vis the political reform options?
- How can the knowledge on the political reform options be levelled?
- How do the interests coincide with the interests of other stakeholders?
- How can the stakeholders create new reform options?
- What effects have disparities and coincidences?
- Which possible effects does the negotiation style have on the results?
- Which are concrete measures to facilitate the negotiation process?
- How can the stakeholders themselves monitor progress?

Of course, besides this short insight there are a lot of concepts and tools dealing with the structuring and the facilitation of political negotiation processes and the organization of round tables. Negotiation

arrangement can be best understood as special, time limited organizations. Unlike closed organizations that govern their actions through rules, roles, responsibilities and goal setting, in negotiation arrangements the stakeholders themselves set the rules and each involved stakeholder pursues his/her own objectives and has his/her own preferences for negotiation, which are only partly visible and understood by other involved stakeholders.

One can assume that these preferences also include destructive practice, such as fraud, rivalry and the desire of power – a **colorful and toxic parallel world** of negotiation practice - such as malicious intrigues, simulated and fake participation, secretly exclusion of certain stakeholders, the insistence on fixed positions or the straight rejection of an open dialogue. Therefore, in the first instance involving in negotiation processes is blind flying, foggy weather and uncertainty are prevailing. Those involved make constantly their own assumptions about the views and interest of others and project their own preferences and concerns on the others.

The more uncertain the negotiation process may be, the greater the importance of those basic elements that generate a good atmosphere for negotiation as personal meetings, listening skills, willingness to compromise and empathy. Factors that shape the negotiation process are:



Negotiation processes are not a quick fix. The design of interdependent relationships are essentially based on the way the stakeholders are gradually approaching each other, how they exchange views and interact, and how they seek and evaluate acceptable options of solutions. This takes time.

The imbalances in participation in negotiation arrangements and subsequently in benefits, lead to higher discontent and frustration of excluded stakeholder, which by itself affect the culture of dialogue. Only if negotiations deepen over time relationships and trust and therefore lead to a balance in participation, the process gains in stability. It's a cheap trick and rather naive to believe that all negotiations can be molded to achieve a so-called win-win situation. There are **winners and losers**, particularly in political issues and the construction of more inclusive institutions. The question is how to deal with losers in a constructive way. For example, factions of elite losers may be willing to accept to lose privileges when they realize that they get in turn more stability and improved frame conditions for business. The essential thing is to see how the negotiation process can be handled in the short and long run, and finding the balance between different issues at stake.

The stakeholder have **different but legitimate interests**. From their own standpoint, they think that they are right. Therefore, the culture of negotiation should ensure that each stakeholder can present his interests without restrictions. In addition, the climate for negotiations can be improved, if we create space for personal encounter and informal meetings. The basis of any negotiation is the recognition of the legitimate concerns and diversity of views and interests. The cold indifference or complacency tolerance for the views of others is not enough. It is the expressed recognition of diversity that counts.

But this recognition is not enough. The stakeholders have **to make bigger the pie** before cutting it into pieces and distributing it. Only if concerns and interests are visibly listed, there is the possibility of exploring new ground in the direction of new possible solutions. The entry of new stakeholders, gathering new information and fair compensation for a handicap recognized as such, for example, broaden the options. A constructive and pragmatic negotiation takes into account:

- Desarrollar soluciones que son mejores para los involucrados, de lo que sería no llegar a ninguna solución o la salida del sistema de cooperación.
- Recognize the diversity of views and interests
- Awareness for discrete signals of opposition: distrust, distance, skepticism, fear of losing power. If the opposition remains silent in terms of assumptions and speculations which cannot be expressed and therefore not taken seriously, the behaviour becomes more difficult and acute to address.
- Ensure that all stakeholders have an equitable and transparent access to relevant information.
- Set some ground rules for negotiation, for example on participation, agenda and deadlines.
- Create a friendly and relaxed negotiation climate, observe places and time.
- Generate openness towards new possibilities and new perspectives.
- Promote consultations with external experts, resource persons and CSOs.
- Make sure that interests are specified and illustrated with examples.
- Facilitate common reflection on the pros and cons of different options.
- Establish agreed criteria for assessing the options.
- Develop solutions that are pragmatic best-fit solutions that may be improved later on.

Although it would seem obvious, no real bargaining takes place exactly according to this model. Negotiations will always be influenced by **unspoken and hidden expectations and strategies**. Diverse cultural orientations are in play, for example the striking differences between a CSO representative, an official of the public bureaucracy and a manager of big enterprise. Much of the

success depends on smart and clear process structuring, without the eagerness to set everything in advance. The agreement on a few basic rules might be more appropriate than insisting in clarity of details. What really matters are the following five points:

- **Recognizing and accepting the various interests:** Initially, the involved stakeholders are not aware of the full range of existing interests. They put their own interests in the center and are convinced they are right. They are reluctant to give arguments to sustain their interests, because at the tactical level transparency may weaken them. Cultural orientations or the felt need for harmonization can also lead to the simulation that all involved stakeholders have the same interests. Therefore, the recognition and the expression of different interests is crucial to see differences and common features. Usually, the stakeholders reflect and doubt constantly about the alternatives they have to the heavy and slow negotiation process, and, under circumstances, they leave the negotiating table. However, the way to a negotiated settlement and compromise cannot bypass the exchange of interests and related proving arguments. The more the stakeholders really feel that their interests are taken seriously, the more strengthens their commitment with the process.
- **Transform hard positions into movable interests:** Generally, the involved stakeholders tend to attribute problems to persons (including fuzzy interests of others, lack of resources, power shifts, unclear roles, dysfunctional institutions). This undermines personal relationships and trust building. When the negotiation concentrates on fixed positions, instead of dealing with movable interests, the stakeholders tend to try to change each other. When this pattern escalates, the stakeholders will end up in serious disputes, and there is very little space for the search of options. However, this is contrary to the fundamental thought of negotiation between different stakeholders that pursue different interests, legitimately. The transformation of positions into interests should be in the center of attention. There is no straight path to reach it. Usually, it's necessary to invest time that the stakeholders can first communicate their perceptions and views by giving illustrative examples. These narratives reveal specific and concrete interests.
- **Effective use of evidence:** When negotiation remain guesswork and opinion sharing, it is most probable that powerful stakeholders will impose their solution. The quality of political decision making increases considerably when the process is nurtured with evidence based knowledge. In this regard partnering with universities and social research institutes is important. The comparative assessment of possible effects of different political reform options should become a routine. To improve the quality of the negotiation process and the public debate in general, political and research agendas should be harmonized and providers of evidence based knowledge, i.e. the social science and research sector, should be strengthened.
- **Enlarge the pie before sharing it:** The more accurately the purpose of negotiation is reviewed, from different angles, the more information will be available to nurture the negotiation process. For example, it may be useful to hear external experts who offer a reframing of the issues under new perspectives, leading to new options. Thus the solution options expand, and the assumptions about the only possible solution is removed. By expanding the number of options (systemic contingences), the probability of consensus increases. The evaluation of these options requires transparent assessment criteria that should be developed by the stakeholders themselves.
- **Agree on evaluation criteria:** The joint evaluation of possible solutions is a strong tool to strengthen commitment and build compromise. To assess different options, the stakeholders must agree on an open list of evaluation criteria. These criteria include undoubtedly the potential benefits of each option, the effects on specific groups and the society at large. Finally, transparent criteria facilitate the consideration of possible compensations to reach a fair burden sharing.