

FTAO webinar – 6th April 2020

Taking local campaigns forward

Tools to understand power and evaluate change

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Here we provide a brief outline of the main features of power analysis and present three examples of methods to apply it.

Power analysis

Power analysis is based on the “powercube” framework, developed by John Gaventa at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex (Gaventa, 2006). The powercube was originally designed to investigate actions in international development contexts but it has proved to be a fruitful method of analysis of community level campaigning.

The powercube analyses three interrelated dimensions of power, namely spaces, levels and forms.

“Spaces of power” refers to the opportunities for citizen participation and action, including closed, invited and claimed spaces. This dimension is used to analyse how FTT campaigns have been set up and emerging challenges about boundaries, identity and inclusivity.

“Levels of power” acknowledges that in a globalized world, power is multi-layered and found across the interrelated locations of local, national and global arenas. This is particularly relevant to FTT campaigns, which bundle together local and global concerns.

“Forms of power” distinguish between the visible, hidden and invisible forms of power. This dimension is used to analyse norms and beliefs that shape FTT campaigns and may also present social and cultural barriers.

Power takes different forms

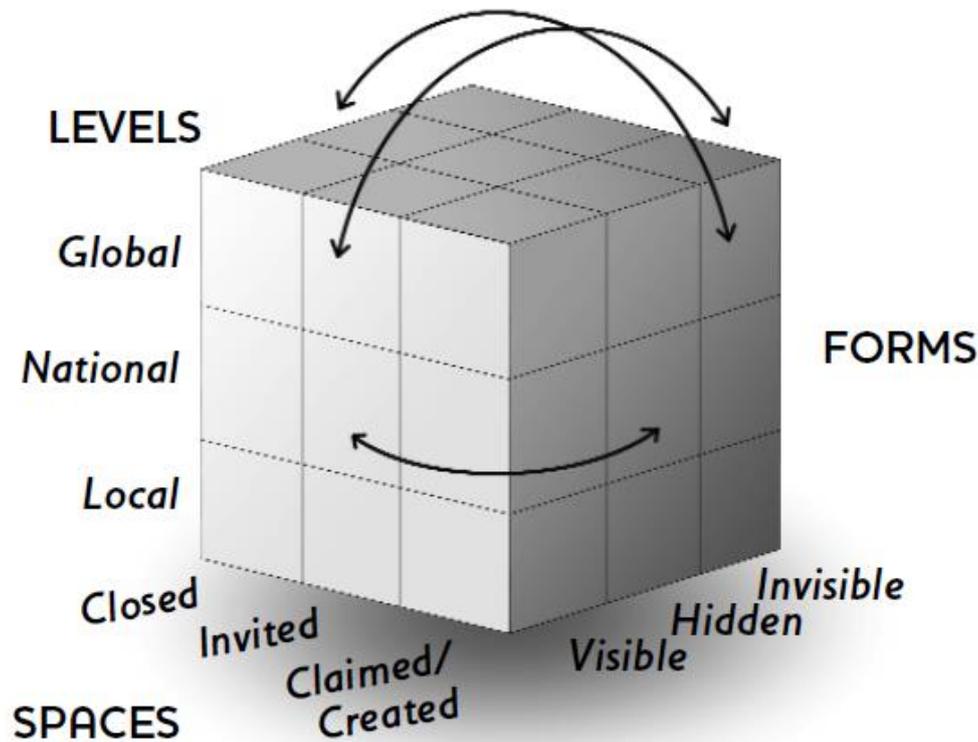
- Visible: observable decision-making mechanisms
- Hidden: shaping or influencing the political agenda behind the scenes
- Invisible: norms and beliefs, socialisation, ideology

Power is acted out in different spaces

- Closed: decisions made by closed groups
- Invited: people asked to participate but within set boundaries
- Created: less powerful actors claim a space where they can set their own agenda

Power occurs at different levels

- Household
- Local
- National
- Global



“Ultimately, power analysis isn’t an end in itself, but a tool to leverage change. Yet as we know, tools can be used for many purposes, both progressive and regressive. The powercube and other tools can be valuable starting points, in which we can ground our work for change. But equally important, we must complement the powercube analysis with this final question: **what is the world that we wish to see? What is our vision of the norms, values, and institutions which we hope to achieve through challenging existing power relations?** With this compass, we are more likely to be able not only to analyse power, but to use such analysis to contribute to a more just and sustainable world.” (Gaventa, 2019)

References

Gaventa, J. (2006). Finding the spaces for change: a power analysis. *IDS bulletin*, 37(6), 23-33.

Gaventa J., Applying power analysis: using the ‘Powercube’ to explore forms, levels and spaces, in McGee, R., & Pettit, J. (Eds.). (2019). *Power, Empowerment and Social Change*. Routledge.

Forms of Power: Peeling the Onion

Source: Adapted from Action Aid Networked Toolbox

This activity aims at investigating different levels of power; peeling the onion is a metaphor for this way of investigating.

Practical steps: **draw the three layer onion** with: the outer layer of onion contains the **visible power** that can be seen publicly for all to see and hear. Underlying these there is often **hidden power**, power to influence political agendas and decisions that are difficult to see and influence. Finally deep within is the **invisible power**, this most often operates at the personal level and can limit one's ability to challenge the other types of power.

This activity encourages to think about what changes (shifts in power) local campaigns have seen or experienced related to the three forms of power described above.

Guiding questions for this activity:

To probe around **visible power**:

- What are the most important decision making spaces in both the public and private spheres?
- Which actors have the power to make decisions or influence how decisions are made in those spaces?
- What strategies have we used to influence this visible power? What have we learnt from using these strategies? What other strategies can we think of?
- What shifts in power have we experienced?

To probe around **hidden power** (these questions are difficult to answer; as the nature of this type of power is that it is hidden so reflection around this space may be limited):

- Do we have a sense that there are types of power that cannot be seen? What examples can we think of?
- What sort of groups are able to use hidden power to further their own agendas?
- Are there any strategies to influence this hidden power? Have we used any strategies to influence hidden power? What did we learn from using these strategies?
- Have we seen any power shifts at this level?

To probe around **invisible power**:

- What factors influence how we understand our own power? Are there forces influencing how we see our own power that may not be obvious to us, for example our culture or family background?
- What strategies have we used to address the invisible forces that limit our power? What have we learnt from using these strategies? What other strategies can we think of?
- What shifts in power have we experienced?

Levels of Power: 3Ps Power Circles

Source: Adapted from Action Aid Networked Toolbox

This activity aims at investigating power shifts across three dimensions: local, national and global. This can be implemented through the activity of the “3Ps Power circles”.

Practical steps: **Draw three large concentric circles and split with a straight line.** Title one side as past and other as present. Title the three layers as **local, national** and **global levels** with local level in inner circle, national in the centre circle and the global in the outer circle.

This activity encourage discussion about how power is claimed and used at each level and what are differences in time.

Guiding questions for this activity:

Local level

- What kind of shifts in power have happened at the local level? How and why?
- How has relationship between local authorities and Fair Trade Towns developed?
- How have Fair Trade Towns used local networks to claim spaces for participation?

National level:

- What kind of shifts in power have happened at the national level? Why?
- What changes have occurred at the national level?
- How has it enabled the Fair Trade movement to raise their concerns?

Global level:

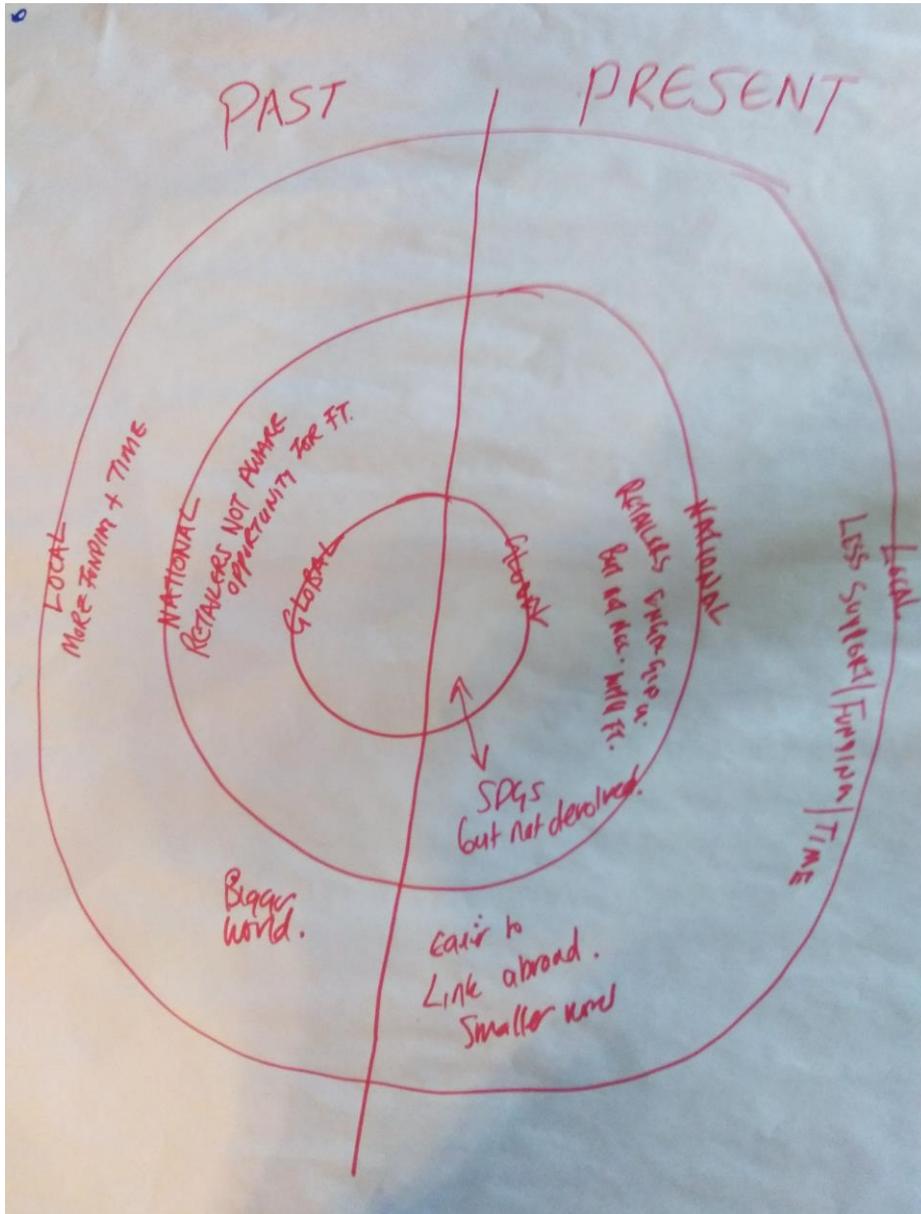
- What kind of shifts in power have happened at the global level? Why?
- How were global actors engaged? How did their behaviour change?
- How was the power of the most powerful challenged?

Reflection across levels:

- How have individual and collective power (groups, organizations, networks, alliances, movements, etc.) helped to change the rules at different levels?
- How are the changes at the three levels inter connected?
- What were the strategies used and how effective do you think they are?
- What challenges and obstacles have been overcome? What strategies have helped to overcome these difficulties, challenges and obstacles?

Example of 3Ps Power Circles:

(From our workshop in the International Fair Trade Towns Conference in Cardiff, October 2019)



Spaces of Power: Chapatti Diagram

Source: Adapted from Action Aid Networked Toolbox

This activity aims at exploring how power is experienced in different spaces.

Practical steps: **draw circles of different sizes to represent each of the identified spaces of power. Small** = institutions with **closed space**; **Medium** = institutions with **invited space**; **Large** = institutions with **claimed space**.

This activity encourages discussion about how institutions operate, how they restrict participants' access to decision-making processes and/or resources; where local campaigns are **invited to participate** and how they access invited spaces; lastly where are the opportunity for **claimed and self-created spaces** and make local groups' voices heard.

Guiding questions for this activity are:

What closed, invited and claimed spaces are identified?

What experience does the group have of participating in / accessing invited spaces?

What experience does the group have of participating in / accessing closed spaces?

Were they able to make their voice heard / influence decision making?

What shifts in power has been experienced by them in any way?

What strategies have they used to gain access to closed and invited spaces?

What strategies have they used to increase their influence in these spaces?

Example of a Chapatti Diagram:

(From our workshop in the International Fair Trade Towns Conference in Cardiff, October 2019)

