

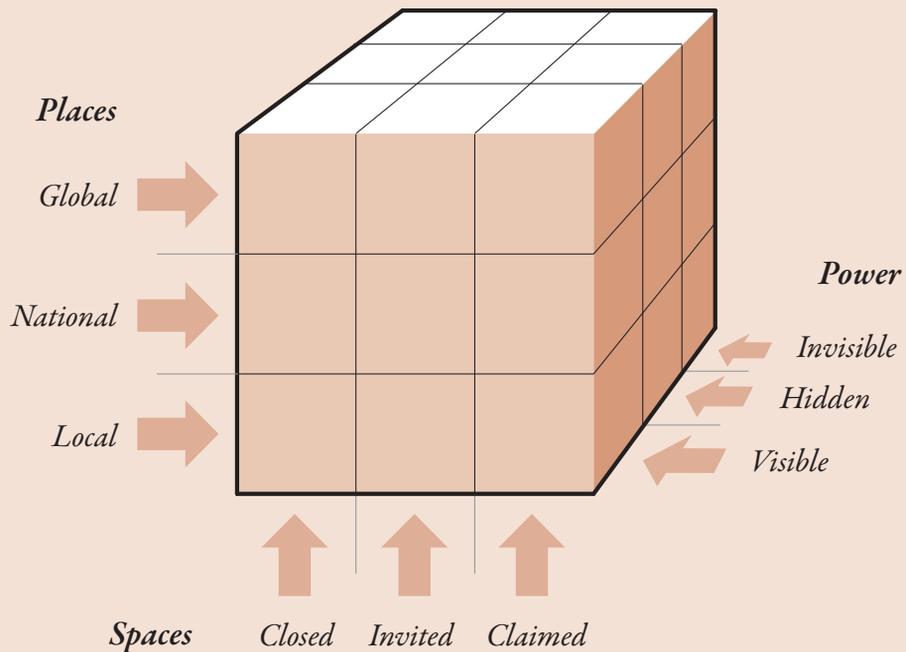
POWER AND DEMOCRACY

The contextual description and the source criticisms reveal, or expose, the powers that the partner organisations have to work with and against. Discrimination and the violation or denial of people's rights is a matter of both invisible and visible power as well as informal and formal power. More information about different types of power and why power is an issue of concern to democracy can be found on page 36.

The Power Cube

The Power Cube is a model that can be used to reveal power structures and that provides a point of departure from which to change them. It has been developed by the Institute of Development Studies in Britain.

The cube has been chosen as a model as it reflects the three dimensions of power. The first is 'places', and includes local, national and global. The second is 'spaces', which can be claimed/created, spaces to which participants are invited, or closed. The third dimension is 'power', which can be invisible (power over thought), hidden, or visible.



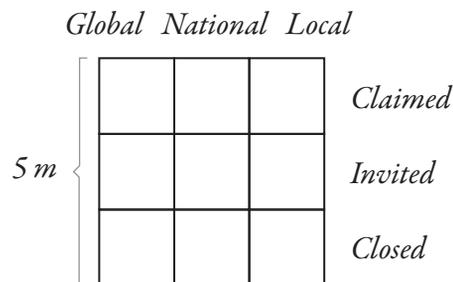
The exercise overleaf can expose the kind of power that your own and other organisations work with, as well as the spaces and places they work in. The purpose of such an analysis is to see how the organisations can work alongside other organisations against discrimination and for human rights.

Exposing the power that you work with and against

- *Material: Some string, paper (preferably thick), and safety pins or sewing pins for attaching the paper to clothing.*
- *Duration: The time needed for the review and the ensuing reflection depends on the size of the group. Remember to give time for everyone to share their thoughts and ideas.*

Preparation

A. Plot out a 3x3 grid on the floor with the string.



- B. The grid should be about 5 meters square, big enough for a person to stand in each of the cells or perhaps to span two cells. The point is that it should be difficult to stand in more than two cells.
- C. Clearly label the two dimensions on A4 sheets of paper: GLOBAL, NATIONAL, LOCAL and CLOSED, INVITED, CLAIMED.

Instructions

1. Recap the terminology and make sure everyone in the group understands what the three dimensions represent and the meaning of the terms: visible, hidden, invisible, global, national, local, closed, invited and claimed.
2. Decide whether the power you will be analysing will be one that you work with or one that you work against. (It can be confusing if some people choose with and some against.)
3. Let the participants think about which power their organisation works with (or against): VISIBLE, HIDDEN, INVISIBLE. Ask them each to write their answers down on a sheet of paper.
4. Have each participant stand in the cell in which his or her organisation works (e.g. on a national level in an invited space).

Review

What do the participants see? What conclusions can we draw? What can be improved on? Could we prioritise differently? Why? And if so, how?



We strongly recommend that you leave ample time for discussion and reflection. When this exercise was done with members of CSOs working with development cooperation and participants from Sida (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency), the result was as follows:

	<i>Global</i>	<i>National</i>	<i>Local</i>	
		○	○○	<i>Claimed</i>
	●●	●●	○	<i>Invited</i>
	●●	●		<i>Closed</i>

The CSO workers (rings) worked mostly at a local level and in claimed or created spaces, while the Sida workers mostly acted on a global and national level in invited and closed spaces. The ensuing discussions included such opinions as:

- We work here, and that’s where we’re meant to be. We also have to collaborate so as to reach other cells.
- It’s important to create alliances both within and between cells.

This was followed by a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of the different spaces, places and powers. This kind of discussion is important for the participants to have. Ask questions like: What are the advantages of your current way of working? What are the disadvantages? What is a possible strategy for achieving more together?

Allocate assignments

The Power Cube can also be used when a network of organisations working with the same theme want to review their strategy and perhaps reallocate assignments. If, for example, the participants discover that their organisations are fighting on the same local level and only in claimed spaces, they will need to discuss matters together. Perhaps it is time to draw up a joint strategy for reaching other places and other spaces. Perhaps the network should try to create strategic collaborations with other organisations.

Global National Local

	<i>Global</i>	<i>National</i>	<i>Local</i>	
		✗	✖ ✖ ✖ ✖ ✖ ✖	<i>Claimed</i>
				<i>Invited</i>
				<i>Closed</i>

The dimensions of visible and hidden power also need some reflection. The work with visible power is often external. Visible discrimination must be talked about. Different organisations have different ways of working: some file a report with a human rights or anti-discrimination ombudsman, others with the media; some work with demonstrations, lobbying, or committee and investigation activities, others with drama, film, lectures or exhibitions.

Hidden discrimination is often addressed in work on visible discrimination, and its exposure usually empowers discriminated people and affirms their identities and rights. And what was once hidden is brought into the open.

External work

To give your work more widespread impact, it is often a good idea to make a joint inventory of all the external players that the partner organisations reach.

Those that the organisations want to reach are listed in the left-hand column of the table, and the participating organisations aligned along the top as column headings. The chart will then show up any gaps, and can thus form the basis on which to plan further strategies. Who is able to reach local officials through their activities? Or political parties?

Similar charts can be drawn up of the type of projects being done and those that need doing.

	<i>Organisation X</i>	<i>Organisation Y</i>	<i>Organisation Z</i>	<i>Nätverk ÅÄÖ</i>
<i>Local officials</i>				
<i>Media</i>		X		
<i>Political parties</i>				X
<i>Schools</i>				
<i>Churches</i>	X		X	
<i>Women's groups</i>		X		

The ensuing reflection is the most important part of the exercise:

- None of us work with local officials. What does this imply? Is it something we should act on? Which organisations would be able to do so?
- Only one organisation works with the media. Is that enough? Would we be able to get more of our message out if more organisations worked with the media?
- Is it important to work within schools? What could we do there?

Raising awareness

Awareness-raising is a strategy to counter hidden and invisible power (i.e. power over thought). In Sweden, the term first came to be widely used in the 1970s with the women's movement, the green movement, the disabled movement, the peace movement and other alternative movements.

During equality work, it is common for both women and men to discover that what they thought were individual choices were in fact merely part of a larger picture of power inequality. When working with children's rights it is common for adults to feel threatened as their 'right' to decide in the family and to prioritise in society are challenged. Taking for granted the idea, for example, that children are to obey and subordinate themselves is one aspect of the power that culture and tradition have over thought.

Hidden power is usually exercised in secret and usually relates to something the wielders or power wish to hide; this includes, for instance, agreements amongst members of parliament and industrialists that affect people's environments, purchased votes, or undisclosed transfers of pension funds to a mayor or presidential candidate.

Awareness-raising methods around the world

The Brazilian education theorist Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed became a well-known method of education the world over in the 1980s. Freire is still used as an example of how work with poor women and men is made most effective when it is based on the participant's own realities. The perspective can be summed up as 'Dig where you stand'. In Kenya and Tanzania, Popular Education has been a long standing method.

Here are some useful addresses and websites:

■ *Alfalit*

A literacy organisation operating mainly in Latin America but also in Portuguese-speaking African countries. The organisation is supported by the Swedish Medical Mission. www.alfalit.org

■ *Association for Women's Rights in Development*

An international organisation that connects, informs and mobilises people in an effort to bring about policy, constitutional and individual change. www.awid.org

■ *Education and Training Unit for Democracy and Development*

A South African organisation, whose founders helped to educate and inform voters ahead of the country's first democratic election in 1994. www.etu.org.za

■ *Equipo Maíz*

A Salvadorian awareness-raising organisation. www.equipomaiz.org.sv

■ *Rooftop Promotions*

A Zimbabwean drama group that uses drama and other means to raise voter awareness. www.rooftop.co.zw



Example

Master suppression techniques

An important aspect of awareness-raising and anti-discrimination work is to bring an end to oppression and dominating behaviour within organisations. A useful tool for examining the exercise of power are the so-called 'master suppression techniques'.

The master suppression techniques were developed by the Norwegian social psychologist Berit Ås. Feminist organisations have extended the original five techniques to seven or eight.

Her successors have also developed five strategies to oppose the different master suppression techniques. Although the techniques and the counter strategies have mainly been used to describe the exercise of power and resistance within gender power structures, they arise in all forms of power structure. Here is an overview:

Master suppression techniques and counter strategies

Master suppression technique

1. Making invisible
2. Ridiculing
3. Withholding information
4. Damn if you do and damn if you don't. *Example: If a girl gets deeply engaged in something she's considered too pushy. If she doesn't, she's passive and unwilling to take responsibility.*
5. Heaping blame and putting to shame
6. Objectification
7. Violence and intimidation
8. Splitting

Counter strategy

1. Making visible
2. Questioning and claiming the right of interpretation
3. Exposing inequalities in access to information between different parts of the organisation or members.
4. Making unconscious values visible
5. Exposing the language and seeing structures
6. Challenging traditional roles as well as sex, age and power
7. Explaining that it is unacceptable within the organisation, making it visible, being open towards each other
8. Acting cohesively, and being aware of divisive behaviour

Mer om härskartekniker och motstrategier finns i Ungdomsstyrelsens bok *Genvägar till jämställdhet – Metoder och strategier inom ungas fritid och föreningsliv*.



Method

Master suppression techniques are used at all levels, global, national and local. For Berit Ås, it was necessary to make visible the techniques that were used against her when she was Norway's first female party leader. If there are members or personnel within the organisation that oppress others by ridiculing them or withholding information, any talk

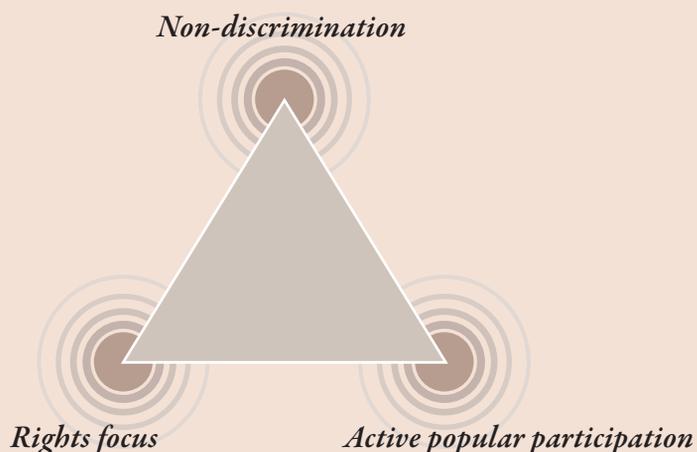
of realising democracy will sound hypocritical. Similarly, the credibility of the organisation's pro-democracy activities will be seriously undermined if members or personnel use violence or intimidation.

Hidden power and master suppression techniques must be identified before any counter measures can be taken.

DEMOCRACY AND RIGHTS

The democracy and rights triangle is a tool that helps to separate the parts from the whole in the analysis and planning process. When planning or following up a project, the participants often have to change perspective and see their work from another angle.

Forum Syd has developed a democracy and rights triangle in the hope that CSOs will find it useful for making more in-depth contextual analyses and exposing power relations, and when planning, following up and evaluating projects and programmes promoting democracy and rights.



Non discrimination

It is useful to work through or review contextual description material, and project planning and follow-up material, from a non-discrimination perspective. The questions below can be used in several contexts: a meeting between the partner organisations; a meeting between staff and participants in a project; or a meeting with project participants and representatives of the local community that the project is designed to influence.

Be observant of the visible and invisible power relations in each group of people. In a group of people with disabilities, there are those who live in extremely poor homes and those who have supportive sisters and brothers with jobs. A group of poor peasants comprises individuals of all ages, from very young to very old.