



Institute of  
Development Studies

**Participation and  
Citizenship:  
Exploring Power for  
Change**

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January 22, 2007  
ODI/IDS Development  
Horizons Seminar

**‘Power’ is increasingly re-entering the development vocabulary  
And is critical to meaningful citizenship and democracy**

- ***‘Development is about giving people power over their own lives. This empowerment cannot be achieved without democracy and a society which gives its citizens the rights to influence decisions about their own future...’***  
---‘Sweden’s policy for global development’
- **DFID – research on power, politics and the state**
- **INGOs – challenging power and poverty relations**
- **UK – The Power Commission**

## **Understanding and challenging power relations is an important part of IDS values and vision**

- **IDS Strategy 2005 – 2010**
  - a concern for equity and social justice as well as for poverty reduction
  - an explicit recognition of the power relations that shape development processes
  - a vision of a world in which ‘citizens have greater power to influence the state and private institutions to work in ways that accelerate poverty reduction and promote social justice’
- **Recent work by the Participation, Power and Social Change team**
- **IDS Bulletin – Exploring Power for Change**

## Power is itself a highly contested concept

- Some see power as held by actors (powerful and powerless);
- Some see power as zero-sum (to gain power others must lose)
- Some see power as 'negative' as in 'control'
- 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

## **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**

## And yet power is changing

- **Changing perceptions of public authority**
  - *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 in a globalised world**
  - *creates new boundaries which affect whose voices enter policy processes, and whose knowledge counts within them*

## **A proliferation of spaces for citizen participation in governance**

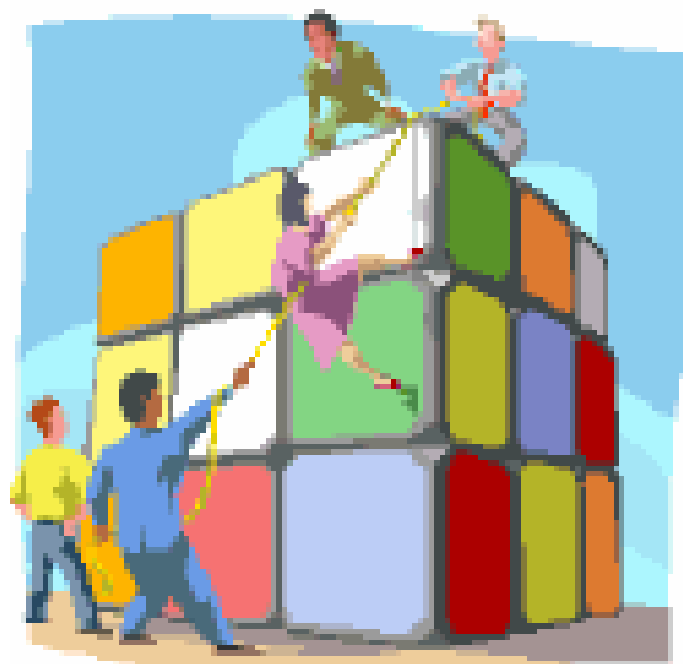
- **Local level**
  - programs of democratic decentralisation
- **National Level**
  - sectoral programmes
  - poverty policies and poverty reduction strategies
- **Global Level**
  - policies of global governance – e.g. trade
  - treaties and conventions and summits

***Yet increased participation in itself does not  
alter power, nor change the status quo.***

**How do we assess the transformative potential of new democratic spaces?**

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

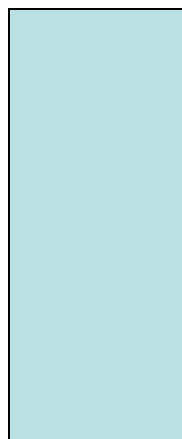
- ***Whose spaces?***
- ***What levels of power?***
- ***What dimensions of power?***



**The Power Cube – a  
tentative approach**

**Closed or uninvited spaces:**

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

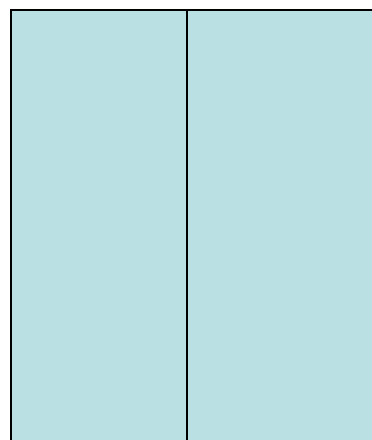


*Closed/  
uninvited*

SPACES for participation

## Invited Spaces:

*People are invited to participate by various kinds of authorities*

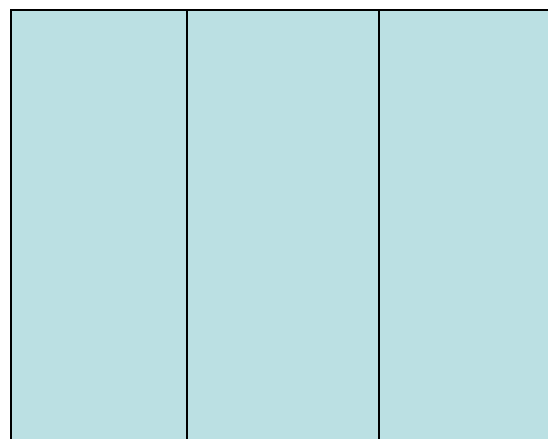


*Closed/ uninvited*      *Invited*

SPACES for participation

## Claimed/Created Spaces:

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



*Closed/  
Uninvited*     *Invited*     *Claimed/  
Created*

SPACES for participation

## PLACES of participation

<i>Global</i>			
<i>National</i>			
<i>Local</i>			
	<i>Closed/ Uninvited</i>	<i>Invited</i>	<i>Claimed/ Created</i>

SPACES

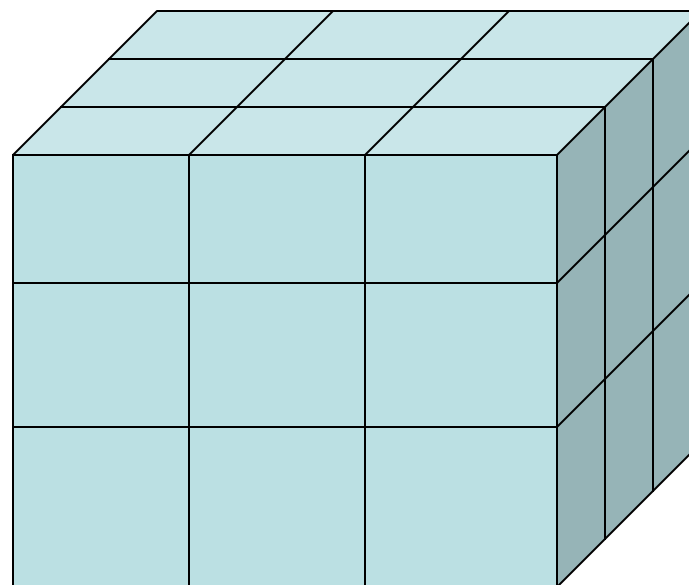
# POWER relationships

PLACES

*Global*

*National*

*Local*



*Closed/  
Uninvited*      *Invited*      *Claimed/  
Created*

SPACES

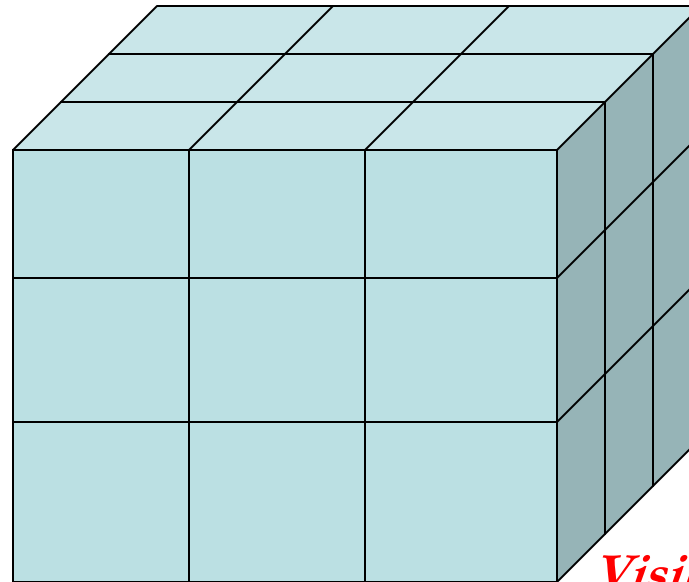
*Visible: Contests over interests are assumed to be visible in public spaces, which are presumed to be relatively open*

PLACES

*Global*

*National*

*Local*



POWER

*Closed/  
uninvited*

*Invited*

*Claimed/  
Created*

SPACES

*Visible*

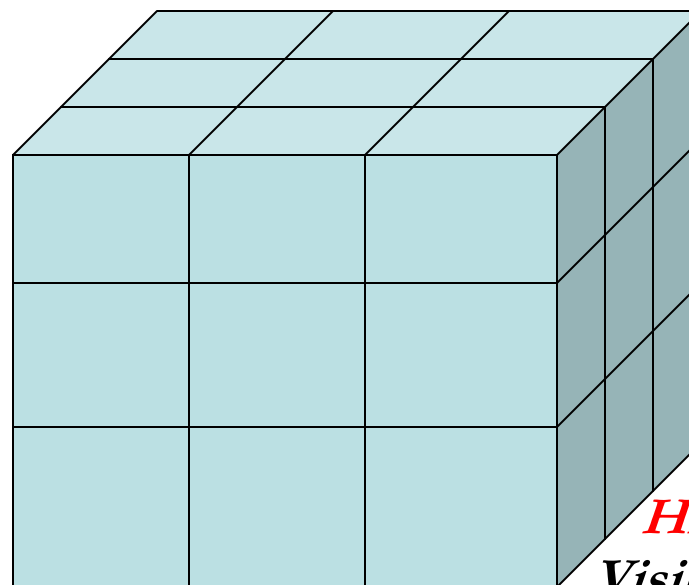
*Hidden:*  
*barriers preclude the entry of*  
*certain actors and issues*

PLACES

*Global*

*National*

*Local*



POWER

*Hidden*

*Visible*

*Closed/  
uninvited*

*Invited*

*Claimed/  
Created*

SPACES

*Invisible:*

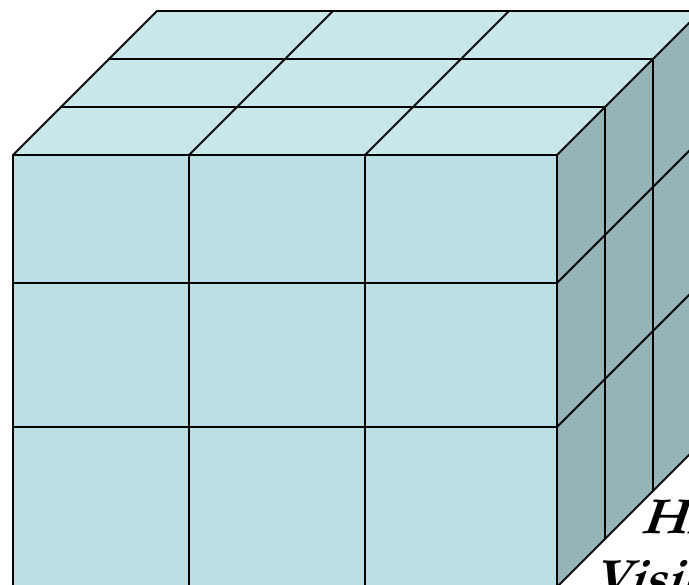
*Visible conflict is hidden through  
internalisation of powerlessness or lack  
of awareness*

PLACES

*Global*

*National*

*Local*



POWER

*Invisible  
Hidden*

*Visible*

*Closed/  
uninvited*

*Invited*

*Claimed/  
Created*

SPACES



Inverting the cube –  
Seeing power through different lens

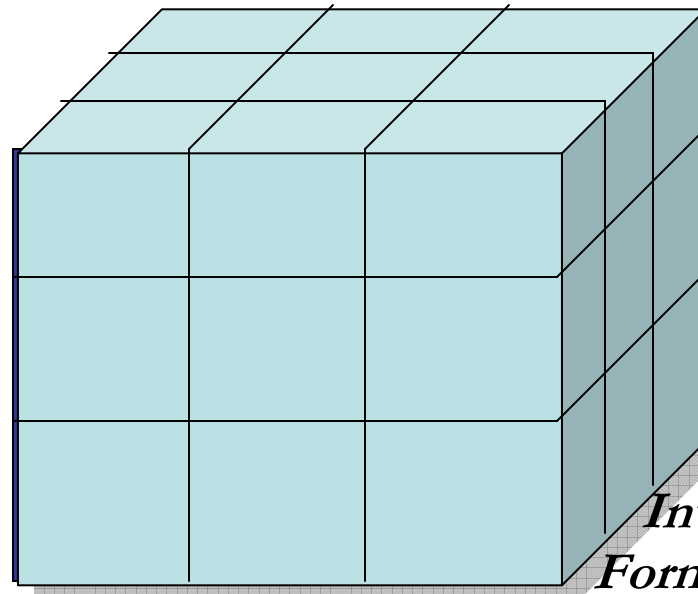
PLACES

*Global*

*National*

*Local*

*SPACES*



*Claimed/Created*

*Invited*

*Formal*

*Visible*

*Hidden Invisible*

POWER

## 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

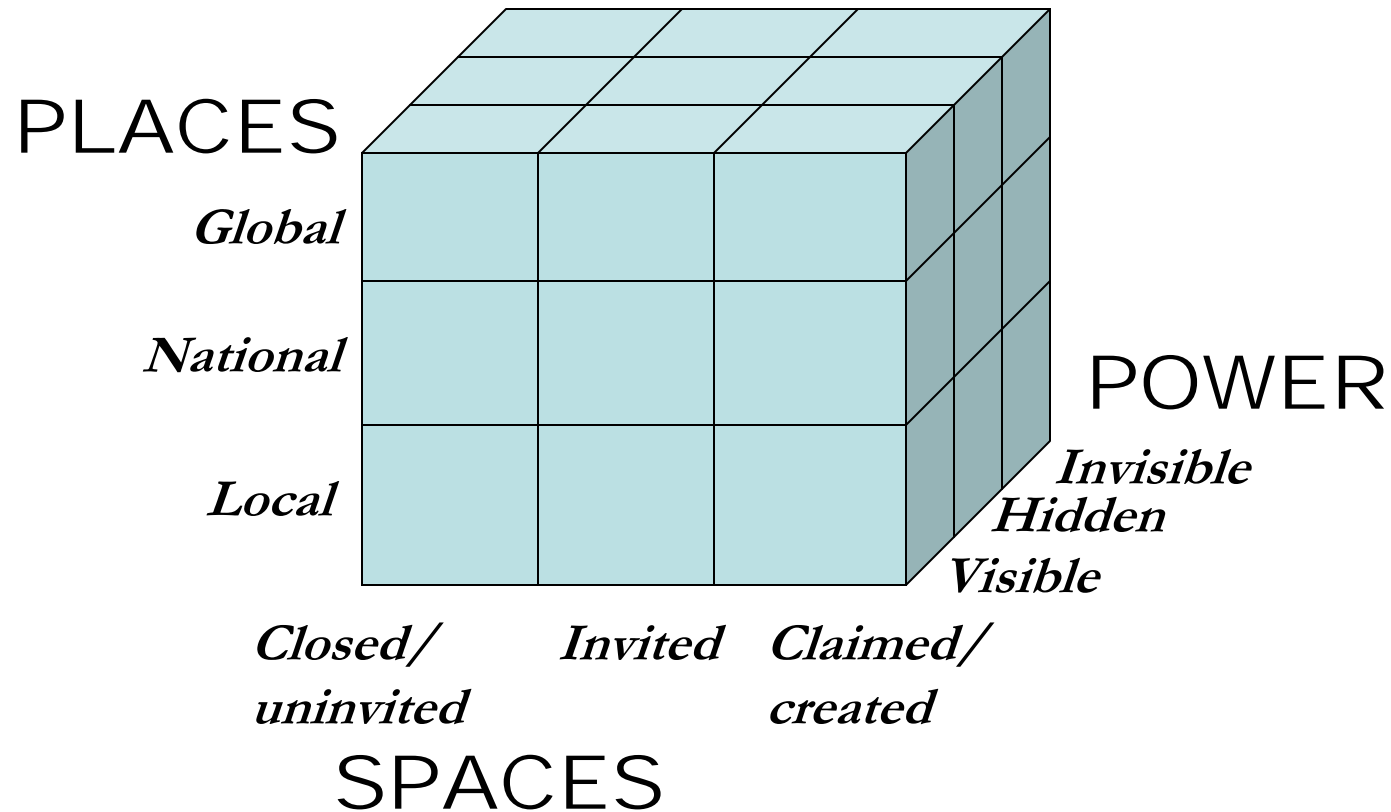


## Spaces for poverty policy in Nigeria: Multiple but disconnected

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



## Power in advocacy campaigns – Aligning our strategies



*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?*