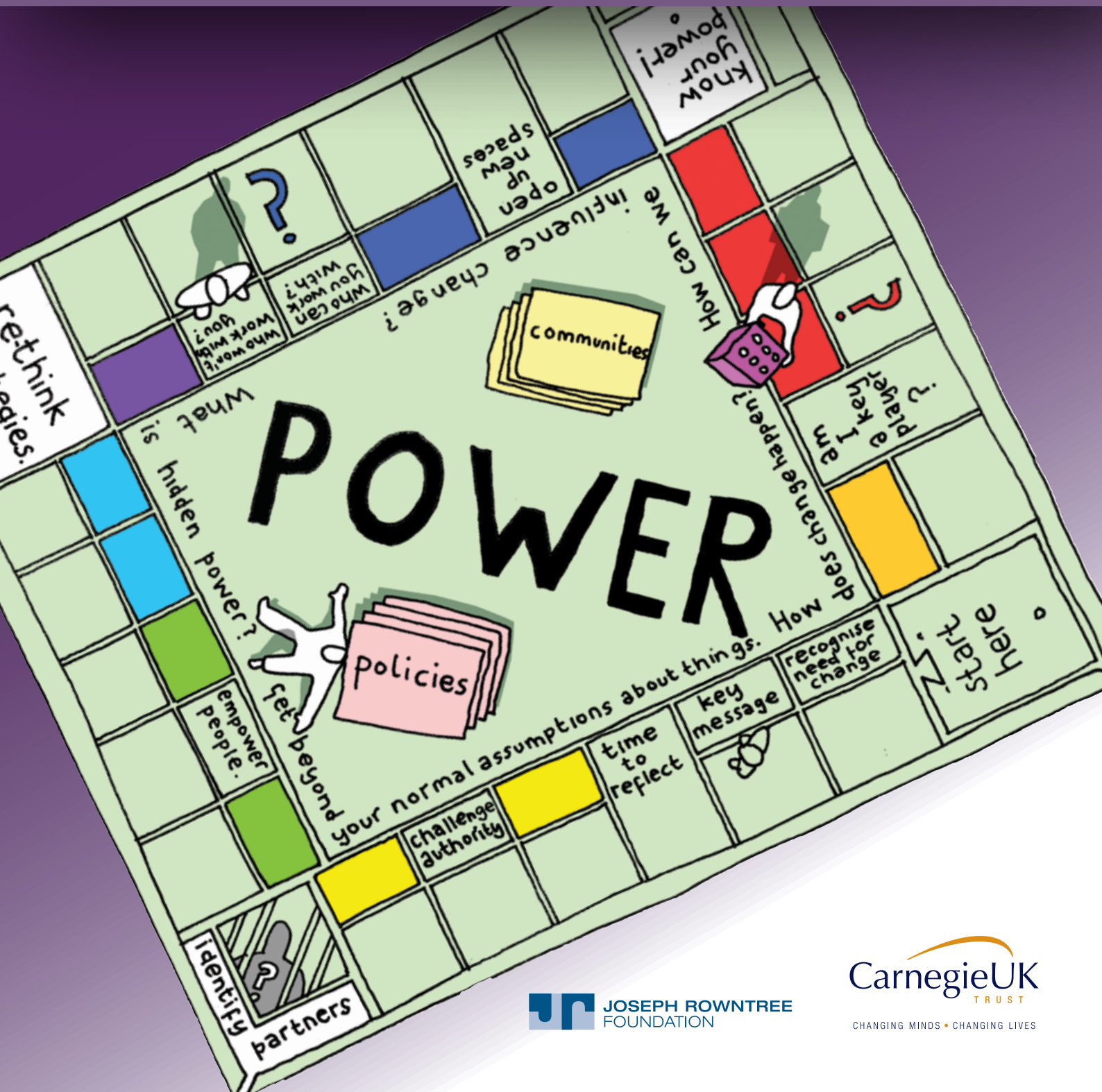
Democracy and Civil Society Programme

Raji Hunjan & Soumountha Keophilavong

POWER AND MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN



JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION

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CHANGING MINDS • CHANGING LIVES

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Foreword

Between 2008 and 2010, the Carnegie UK Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation undertook a programme of work to explore the link between analysing power and achieving social change. The key focus was to understand and demonstrate how those with least power in society could actively engage and exercise power in decision making processes.

The Carnegie UK Trust developed an action orientated programme to support organisations and their communities to achieve social change. Through this work we found that a practical understanding of power can be useful in helping groups and organisations to understand their own power and how it relates to the outside world.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation seeks ways to understand the root causes of problems faced by people experiencing poverty and marginalised in society and ways of overcoming these problems. In the last few years the Foundation has developed a new 'Empowerment' theme in its work recognising the need for people and communities to have more control of their lives.

This report is particularly welcome as it allows disadvantaged groups and communities to identify issues of power in their lives and to use it to their own advantage to achieve their goals. It is about changing mindsets from one of powerless victims to one of powerful groups that can act to influence positive change in their desired direction. It is about moving away from seeing power as a 'zero-sum' game of the powerful and powerless to one where power is dynamic, shared and developed within oneself and others.

This report provides a practical tool and framework for a 'power analysis' that allows groups, organisations and communities to explore different dimensions of power, the way it operates and the best strategic options to achieve the required change. It is about bringing people together and using their collective reflective expertise and energies to analyse the bases of power they possess and deciding on the best courses of action and channels to create or pursue. This is about true empowerment as it enables individual and groups to exercise their own power in the most effective ways.

This is not a theoretical report but a practical one that has been tried and tested on a variety of organisations facing issues of power inequalities in their work. This report brings power squarely onto the table and provides a potent tool to affect positive change over and above traditional strategic analysis and change management processes.

We expect this work to be of interest to other Trusts and Foundations, as well as to other large civil society organisations that have a commitment to building the capacity of those with less power.

Power is now on the map and here are practical ways to use it to one's own advantage.

Jane Steele
Trustee
The Carnegie UK Trust

Ashok Jashapara
Trustee
The Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Executive summary

"Whether concerned with participation and inclusion, realising rights or changing policies, more and more actors seeking change are also becoming aware of the need to engage with and understand this phenomenon called power."

John Gaventa[1]

"It is about finding our power and getting that ownership and that sense of we don't have to apologise, we don't have to engage with debates that are not relevant to us."

Membership organisation

This report is based on the findings of a project designed to support civil society to analyse power and, as a result, take action for social change. It describes how strategies for change can be strengthened when organisations and their communities have a better understanding of their own power and what they can achieve.

The project was conducted in the context of a global economic recession and during the last years of a Labour government in office in the UK. The report itself has been written since the recent change in government. The current coalition government is on the one hand implementing public expenditure cuts as a result of the recession, and on the other promoting the "Big Society" as a key theme. A government focus on empowering citizens may bring excitement and opportunity for those organisations working with communities, but this is tempered by the challenge of cuts in spending and how these will affect the poorest. The ability to analyse power and devise new strategies can contribute to helping organisations take action and influence social policy and practice in this changing context.

In a society still marked by social and economic inequalities there are clearly significant power differentials among individuals and communities which cannot be overlooked or ignored. However, in contrast to some commonly held views, we do not see power as being held solely by the few, but rather as something dynamic that can be found in the hands of many, and can manifest itself in both positive and negative forms.

This broader understanding of power is the foundation for what we have termed *power analysis*. Power analysis is an approach to working with communities and organisations to enable them to uncover and understand the strength that they have to achieve change. It is understood not as an academic exercise but as a way of bringing a "power lens" into organisational strategies such as campaigning, advocacy, community development and empowerment processes.

We worked with organisations that, like many others, were already working to address power inequalities in relation to issues such as trafficking and prostitution, domestic violence, sexual health, disability and old age, and migrant and refugee issues. Some were challenging the policies shaped by those in positions of authority, for example, legislation on trafficking; others were working on empowerment strategies among their constituents, for example, within a community to stop domestic violence.

We found that using power analysis helped the organisations – and could help many more – to understand the following issues and their significance for how effective their organisations can be:

The internal practices of an organisation: one community arts organisation reviewed its five-year strategy and generated a debate with its stakeholders on the relationship between advocacy and art. This in turn strengthened its ability to influence policy as well as its commitment to community arts.

External structures and institutions which shape social issues: one membership organisation analysed how policy agendas on migrant and refugee issues are shaped by government and the media, and found new strategies to start different conversations about the lives of migrants and refugees.

The motivations of different groups and individuals, and how they influence decision-making processes and outcomes: one campaigning organisation used power analysis to better understand how some parts of civil society had used their power to dominate the debates on prostitution and trafficking. It was then able to explore new ways of empowering the women it worked with to engage with the issue on a policy level.

The impact of power on the issues faced by different groups of people in society: one service delivery organisation deepened their understanding of the challenges faced by BME (black and minority ethnic) people living with HIV in accessing social care support. It explored how this issue related not only to government funding and health authority priorities, but also to cultural and community prejudices. This helped the organisation to design new research on the social care needs of its user group.

The long-term strategies that could be adopted in the interest of social justice and tackling social inequalities: one user-led organisation developed a strategy on domestic violence which centred on strengthening the community to understand better its power and ability to build an approach to family life without violence.

As the instigators of this research, the Carnegie UK Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation have found that using power analysis deepens our own understanding of the challenges organisations face in achieving long-term social change and this in turn can help us to identify our own strategies to address this.

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Introduction

In 2009, the Carnegie UK Trust came together with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, to devise a project on power and how it relates in practice to participation and social change. The purpose of the project was to help organisations to analyse how power operates and thereby be better equipped to achieve change.

This report explains how we used power analysis to support the organisations that took part and offers ideas for others with a broader interest in social change. It is written primarily for those who are looking to deepen their understanding of achieving change, while also strengthening other organisations and their communities to participate in decision-making, service delivery, campaigning and advocacy. This could include other trusts and foundations, umbrella and member organisations, as well as trainers and facilitators.

Section One explains how we linked different understandings of power to power analysis and the day-to-day practice of organisations. Section Two gives a detailed outline of how our project was designed, the different methods we used to apply power analysis and what we learned about what worked. Section Three gives an account of the impact of the project – in other words, what changed for the organisations as a result of their engagement with power analysis. The conclusion draws out ideas for moving forward.

The key people involved in the day-to-day process were the Director of the Carnegie UK Trust's Democracy Initiative, a researcher and an external facilitator. The findings in this report are based on our experience and learning from the project, our engagement with other organisations working on similar approaches, the observations we made, and the conversations we had with the organisations that participated in the project. For the purpose of maintaining some levels of confidentiality, we do not use the names of the organisations and their participants.

To accompany this report, we have produced short films which capture the learning and experiences of the organisations themselves and give the participants a space to explain the process from their perspective. These short films can be found at www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk.

Why power?

"There are a number of things I liked about the project, but I would say the overall benefit is just focusing on and thinking about power. And on both levels, individually how I relate to it and what does that mean for the organisation and then the impact for the organisation."

Project participant

Between 2006 and 2008 the Carnegie UK Trust undertook a series of scoping activities on the issue of power, with a particular focus on how public policy decisions are shaped. The purpose of this was to explore two issues, firstly how those with least power in society could actively engage and exercise power in decision-making processes, and secondly, how a greater understanding of how power is used could shed new light on wider concerns about the democratic deficit.[2] The Trust began its activities by commissioning a literature review,[3] written by Democratic Audit, to explore the issue of power. Other activities undertaken by the Trust included case studies on specific policy changes,[4] workshops in London and Newcastle with practitioners and activists, a series of conversations with academics and practitioners, and desk research on pre-existing ways to analyse power (this can be found on the Trust's website).[5]

During this scoping phase it became clear that while there is substantial theoretical literature on power, the empirical study of power in the UK is as yet, as the sociologist Anthony Giddens wrote 30 years ago, "almost uncharted territory". It was also clear that policy-makers and practitioners who are committed to participation and social change have an interest in how power operates, and in applying this to a range of different change strategies such as community development, community organising, advocacy and capacity building. However, the scoping phase also uncovered a potential for organisations to be better equipped to use their power more effectively to achieve the change they desire, rather than being directed by the interests of those who are already in a position of power.

Since the completion of this project there has been a change in government in the UK, which has brought with it two significant challenges – the rise of "Big Society" thinking and the reality of significantly reduced public service spending. Both of these will have a significant impact on the many voluntary and community organisations similar to the ones we worked with, and their ability to exercise real power. On the one hand, the rhetoric of national government emphasises the need to empower local communities to use their resources of energy, focus and vision to take on key areas of public concern. On the other, the impact of reduced public spending on marginalised groups is likely to be severe and will in turn increase the pressure on organisations working with these groups. A government which seems committed to transforming the relationship between citizens and the state offers real opportunities for those concerned with social justice, while the cuts may undermine the capacity to make change happen. This makes the understanding of power and its impact on long-term sustainable change more important in helping organisations respond to these challenges.

A summary of the power project

"We have (now) a new language to build our own power."

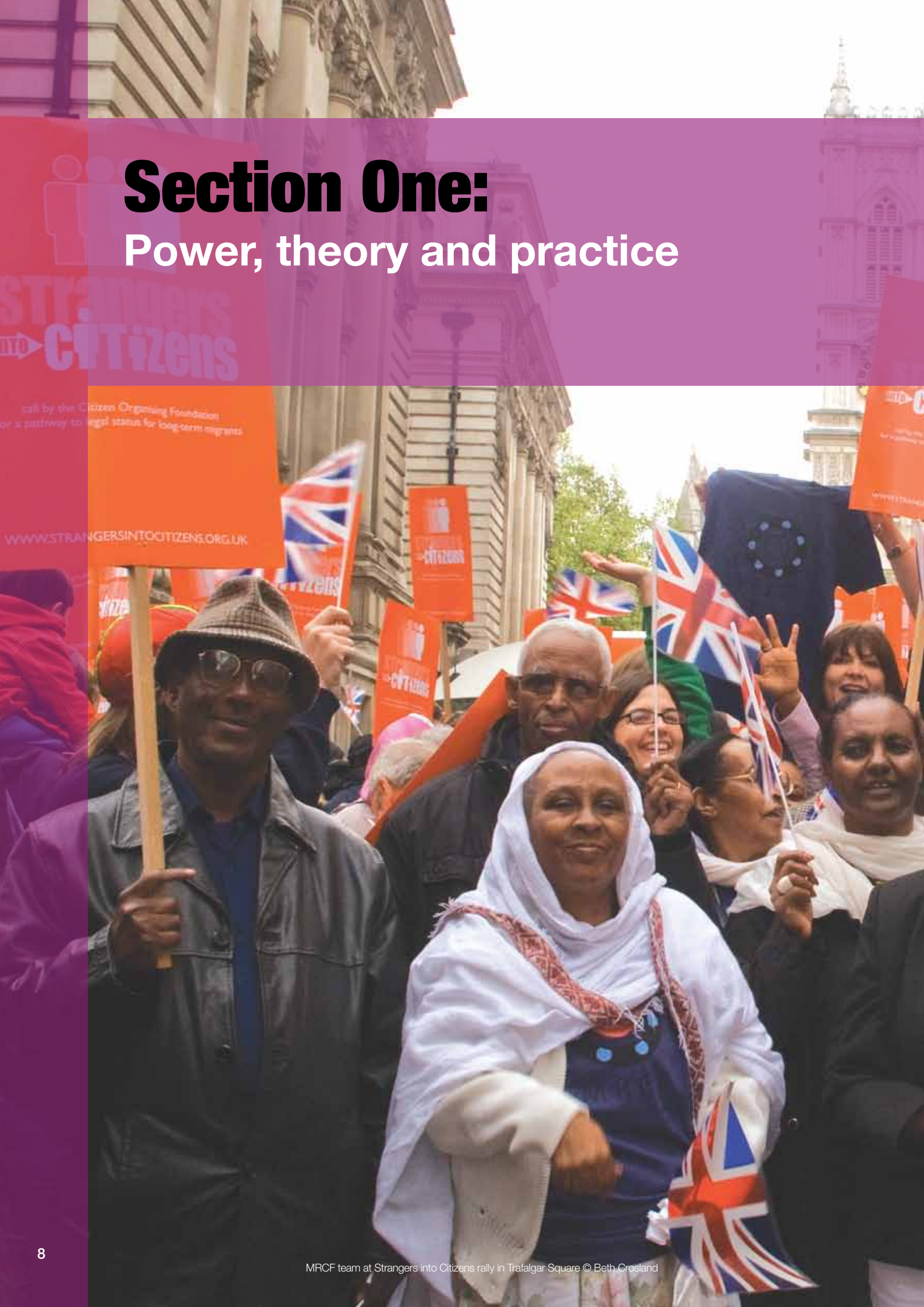
Project participant from a community arts organisation

The basis of our project was to use power as a lens through which organisations could think about their understanding of social problems, their strategic aims and practices for achieving change and how to take appropriate action as a result of this thinking. These strategic aims could include advocacy, lobbying, empowerment or community development among other strategies. We used the different frameworks (page 13-16) as the basis for analysing power. We call this process power analysis (page 12). The organisations in the project were all expected to have strong links to the groups or communities they were working on behalf of, so that each organisation could reflect on its own power and the power of the groups, as well as analysing the external environment within which it operates. To support each of the organisations to engage with power analysis, we used a range of methods over a period of nine months, including facilitated workshops, one-to-one support, and the use of tools – these are all described in Section Two. In addition to participating organisations, the project was designed to be reliant on organisations, such as trusts and foundations and membership organisations, hosting and convening the approach. These organisations are referred to throughout this report as host organisations.

Our aim was to work with at least two key people from each organisation, who would then be supported to share their learning with their internal and external stakeholders. The key people from these organisations are referred to throughout this report as participants. In this report, internal stakeholders include staff team, volunteers, boards, advisory groups and constituents. By constituents, we mean the people on whose behalf the organisations were working. The organisations themselves used a range of different words to describe their constituents – members, service users, beneficiaries, clients, individuals and grassroots groups. As much as possible, we have tried to use "constituents" throughout this report as a catch-all term to cover these different meanings. External stakeholders include other community groups, partner organisations, external consultants, etc.

We planned to work with the participants from different organisations as a group in the format of an action learning set, where participants support each other in their own learning. The process was designed so that learning would go hand in hand with doing, in order for us and the participants to be able to study our own actions and experiences while challenging and supporting other participants. Each organisation would be encouraged to focus on a concrete issue of social concern that it would want to work on during the project timeframe. These issues could include revisiting strategic plans, developing a new focus such as policy influencing or service delivery, or starting work on a new theme.

Section One:
Power, theory and practice



MRCF team at Strangers into Citizens rally in Trafalgar Square © Beth Crosland

This section is about theory and the relevance of understanding power in practice. It makes the links between various definitions and understandings of power, power analysis and the different frameworks that have been used to bring thinking about power to life. The section is divided into three parts:

- multiple definitions of power
- power analysis
- power and conceptual frameworks.

Multiple definitions of power

"Unlimited power is apt to corrupt the minds of those who possess it."[6]

We initially drew upon this negative way of understanding power because we wondered whether interpretations such as these could explain why some organisations may feel uncomfortable addressing power, and instead adopt alternatives such as participation and inclusion. Power is too often perceived as a negative concept, relating to the abuse of power, rather than as something that can be used to transform the lives of many. For example, one organisation that initially took an interest in the project withdrew from the process very early on because of a concern that power was a politically charged concept; instead, the organisation preferred to focus on education and engagement. If the concept was to have practical benefit, then an exploration of less static, more nuanced understandings of the ebbs and flows of power was necessary. We therefore explored other definitions that together could provide a more balanced understanding of what power is. We conducted a short review[7] of different definitions of power and identified the selection of ideas listed below as having the potential to support organisations to take action.

Ability to achieve

Democratic Audit, in a literature review originally written for the Carnegie UK Trust,[8] defined power as the ability people have to achieve their purposes, whatever these purposes happen to be. The authors argued that the extent of people's power depends on a combination of their capacities, the resources at their disposal and the opportunities they have. This was more helpful to our project as it suggested that power could be dynamic and not static, and could be found in the collective action of citizens and not just in the hands of a few. Power as defined by Democratic Audit is unequally distributed within British society, and we wondered whether organisations actually understood their power in terms of their capacities and the resources they had available to them.

We also explored a number of distinctions that are frequently made in the literature on power:[9]

Limited versus fluid

Power is often seen as a zero-sum game:[10] put simply, you either have it or you don't. In this view, power is a limited resource and there are only winners and losers, with no space for a "win-win" outcome. Alternatively, it is also seen as fluid, with the potential to gain more power for oneself without taking power away from others. In reality, we believed that power could be a zero-sum game in some situations, and more fluid in others. For example, organisations could identify zero-sum situations where there had been winners and losers – and most often where they were the losers. This included failed funding bids or campaigns that had not influenced policy as they had hoped. But they were also very interested in thinking about power as something they could have more of, without taking it from others. In particular, they were all open to sharing power with others, without feeling threatened that this would reduce their own power.

"Before we were asking who has the power to help us and not thinking about how we could engage users and other stakeholders differently to move them further into the structure and governance of our organisation and so have a stronger voice."

Project participant from a user-led organisation

Negative versus positive

Power could be seen as negative (a form of control and domination by a few) or it could be seen as positive and relational (a form of collaboration and/or an opportunity for those with least power in society to bring about social change). All the organisations we worked with could give examples of where they had experienced power used negatively by others to control them or the agenda they were working on. One organisation felt that it operated in an environment in which migrants and refugees in the UK were treated with contempt, and that debates tended to be dominated by a tabloid viewpoint. It chose to address this with positive forms of collaboration by working with their members and broader migrant and refugee communities to counterbalance this debate.

"There is a problem of a strong lack of power within NGOs and migrant and refugee community organisations and individuals as a result of a long-established hostile media and political debate."

Project participant from membership organisation

Powerful versus powerless

Power could be seen as contextual: a person may be powerful in one context and relatively powerless in another. One community arts organisation, for example, felt it was very powerful in how it worked with its constituents (older people and people with learning disabilities) through drama to help them find their voice. It felt less powerful when working with the institutions that provide services (e.g. care homes) for their constituents. This organisation was grappling with the extent to which it should be assertive in challenging these institutions to work with its constituents in far more empowering ways, or whether it should remain quiet, in order to maintain strong funding partnerships.

"We are a sector leader and ready to shake things, challenge people and find other partners."

Project participant

Structure versus agency

Power can also be explored through the academic debate about structure versus agency.[11] Structure implies that power lies within institutions and social norms and that this will determine the extent to which individual people will or will not be able to exercise power. Agency implies that power lies with people, and that people will have power in different contexts, which they may or may not choose to exercise. The organisations we worked with believed power existed in both structure and agency. One organisation, working on issues of prostitution and trafficking, talked about the difficulty in finding entry points into the House of Lords and the Commons, as institutions that may not be open to debating the issue of prostitution from the perspectives of the women this organisation was working with. The key participant from this organisation had, however, identified a small number of peers who were willing to raise the debate, despite the social norms and values that dominate the Lords.

Shpresa Programme: Launch of the campaign 'From Agression to Unity

For us, like the organisations we worked with, the distinctions stated above were not always as clear-cut as they might seem, and we believed that power could be all of these things.

"In reality, power is dynamic, relational and multidimensional, changing according to context, circumstance and interest. Its expressions and forms can range from domination and resistance to collaboration and transformation. This is good news for social justice promoters whose strategies depend upon new opportunities and openings in the practice and structures of power."[12]

This definition from Just Associates most reflected our own understanding because it gives organisations hope about the positive forms of power, while also encapsulating the reality that different manifestations of power will challenge those concerned with social justice. It also acknowledges that power is relational and contextual. Without a broader understanding of power any process of analysing power could be limited and potentially disempowering.

"To begin with, it was a little bit overwhelming, it was like 'Well what is power then if it's all these things?' But actually thinking about that and realising it's all these things it then gives you ten different ways of analysing a situation and deciding what's going to work."

Project participant from a membership organisation

We chose not to impose a definition of power on the organisations that we worked with, but instead used power analysis, to help them develop their own interpretations of power.

What is power analysis?

Power analysis is a process that helps organisations to navigate different dimensions of power, to understand how social issues are shaped and what change could be achieved to improve the lives of the communities those organisations are working with. Power analysis is facilitated by a series of frameworks that can be used to analyse power in different ways. We understand that a framework can be a conceptual way of understanding power, but can also be a tool[13] or a technique that can be used by organisations and communities to make sense of the challenges they face.

"We have never looked at our organisation through a power lens but rather focused on the power of funders. But through this work we changed our strategy."

Project participant from a user-led organisation

Power analysis is not a change strategy or a tool in itself, but a process that can be applied as part of other change strategies. These other change strategies vary and could include community development, campaigning, advocacy or empowerment processes. At the start of the project, we had our doubts about using the term "power analysis", as we felt that it could be perceived by the participants as too theoretical and inaccessible. However, we saw in our short review that the term had been used practically by many others to work with marginalised groups in international contexts:

What is a power analysis?

"Doing a power analysis means identifying and exploring the multiple power dimensions that affect a given situation, so as to better understand the different factors that interact to reinforce poverty. As power is not static, it will often cut across the different forms, spaces and levels, and show itself in more than one way. Having a more complete understanding of the power relations at play will help us to identify appropriate strategies and entry points for our programmes.

The complexity of power means that there is no "one size fits all" solution to transforming power relations. Often we will need to act at more than at one level and address more than one dimension of power simultaneously to bring about lasting change. For example, civil society actors may successfully influence national government policy, but this will not automatically translate into improvements in the lives of poor men and women if steps aren't also taken to ensure implementation of the new legislation, which may include addressing the ideas and beliefs that sustain the practice."

Oxfam[14]

Power analysis was a term that all the organisations we worked with felt very enthusiastic about. They all worked with constituents that are perceived to be among the most powerless and recognised that power analysis would help their organisations and their constituents to have greater influence over the policies and structures that shape their lives.

Power analysis and power frameworks

We used the pre-existing frameworks listed below as the basis of our approach to help organisations to analyse power and take action. The frameworks were all developed originally to bring to life different theories and understandings of power, and to be relevant to civil society and people working within communities to achieve change. They have been used by organisations and coalitions – mainly in the global South – for different objectives: strategy development, campaign planning, improving internal communications, community development, partnership building, academic research, and training.[15]

The following two frameworks specifically look at where power comes from.

1. Sources of power[16]

Power is gained by drawing on various sources which include capital (financial, natural, physical, social, human), labour power, consumption, culture, location and geography, information, knowledge, networks, technology, physicality (e.g. age, sex, health or physicality ability) and personality (e.g. charisma). This understanding challenges the view of power as limited to a zero-sum game – in other words, a finite resource that needs to be taken away from others.

2. Positions of power[17]

When thinking about positions of power – and about "who has" power – it is helpful to think of power as contextual. In other words, where power lies and who has power will always change according to the context and setting. Someone can be in a dominating position on one issue and be relatively weak on another matter. Similarly, someone who appears marginalised from national decision-making can be the most influential person in his/her local area.

Frameworks in Practice

These two frameworks proved to be good starting points for introducing organisations we worked with to power analysis. The frameworks helped the participants to think about their own power as well as the power of their organisation. Both frameworks raised the issue of identity and where people draw their personal power from. This was particularly relevant to participants who did not see themselves as professionals, but rather as members of the community they were working with. One woman, for example, came from a migrant background, and she talked about times when she had felt powerless when invited to speak on public platforms with "experts". The frameworks helped her to think about her own sources of power more broadly, and in relation to situations where her background could be an advantage.

On an organisational level, one organisation used these frameworks to help it rethink its partnership building from two distinct angles. Through identifying its own sources of power, it gained confidence in seeing itself as an equal partner, rather than prioritising the expertise of others over its own experience.

The following two frameworks help to analyse the complex ways in which power operates.

1. Expressions of power: power over, power to, with, within[18]

As noted above, power is often thought of in a negative and coercive manner ("power over" being seen as domination or control of one person, group or institution over another). However, there are alternative expressions of power that pave the way for more positive thinking and action.

Expression	What does it mean in practice?
"power to": individual ability to act	Citizen education and leadership development is rooted in the belief that every individual has the power to make a difference.
"power with": collective action, the ability to act together	Power with helps build bridges across different interests, experiences and knowledge.
"power within": individual or collective sense of self-worth, value, dignity	Increasing the power within individuals builds their capacities to imagine and raise aspirations about change.

This way of analysing power encourages thinking about power as not only negative but also as something that can be utilised to create positive strategies and create multiple opportunities for change.

Frameworks in Practice

The *Expressions of power* framework was used by all the organisations as a tool to think through how they related to their stakeholders and constituents, and also what actions they could take to achieve change. It was useful, in particular, in helping them to think through the extent to which they were building the "power within" their constituents through their empowerment strategies; how they thought about "power with" and how they could identify more allies to support their issues, particularly beyond the specific sector they were already working in.

2. Forms of power: visible, hidden, invisible[19]

Power analysis is not simple because most of the time power does not operate in visible and tangible ways.

Visible power includes the aspects of political power that we "see" – formal rules, structures, institutions and procedures informing decision-making. In other words, it is about how those people with power use existing procedures and structures to control the actions of others. Examples include: elections, political parties, Budget, laws, etc.

Hidden power is exercised when powerful people and institutions maintain their influence by setting and manipulating agendas and marginalising the concerns and voices of less powerful groups. Those with power see and understand these rules of the game; others don't. Examples include: quality of some consultation processes that exclude some voices; and when decisions are made prior to the consultation

Invisible power can be seen in the adoption of belief systems that are created by those with power. Problems and issues are kept away not only from the decision-making table but also from the minds and hearts of different people, including those affected by these

It is often easier to engage with visible power holders such as policy-makers than to engage with power that is exercised behind the scenes, or is embedded in cultural and social norms and practices. However, ignoring hidden and invisible forms of power is likely to lead to a limited understanding of how change could happen, how alternative sources of power could be mobilised, and which change strategies should be developed.

Frameworks in Practice

The *Forms of power* framework was one of the most difficult frameworks to grasp. All of the participants could see how visible and invisible power operated, but they were less clear about hidden power – by its very nature it is difficult to identify. For example, the organisation examining the issue of a reduction in public funding to address the social care needs of BME people living with HIV could articulate that the Department of Health and the Primary Care Trust commissioners were examples of visible power. It could also understand invisible power, in that its constituents might not speak out because of the attitudes of others from the same cultural background concerning sexuality and because of assumptions in wider society that may include a belief that contracting HIV was their own fault. What this organisation found more difficult to understand was hidden power on this issue. We challenged them to think about (for example) the role that drugs companies might play in ensuring that funding goes to health care and cure rather than social care, and about whether mainstream HIV charities were exercising their hidden power by choosing not to address this issue, as it was of specific concern to BME groups (this was our challenge presented to this organisation; we do not comment here on whether it agreed with this).

As the *Forms of power* framework proved to be challenging for the organisations we were working with, we introduced a tool called the Power Matrix[20] to make it more useful. The Power Matrix is designed to help the user to understand how different dimensions of power interact to shape a problem, and what actions can be taken to address this. It combines the two frameworks above and can help with understanding the benefits of existing strategies and with exploring new ways of taking action. All the organisations we worked with gave examples of how this tool helped them. For the community arts organisation, for example, the Power Matrix helped to plot different strategies and activities and clearly map out the extent to which the advocacy element was key in some of the work it was undertaking. This then helped it to question itself to think through what else it could do.

"At this point the **Power Matrix tool** *came into play, whereby an analysis of the forms of power reveals that we operate for the most part through invisible mechanisms (skills building, volunteer placements, arts workshops, negotiations with agencies, families, individuals) and hidden mechanisms (theatre that is not just about art but also challenges social prejudice). But we work less with visible power to affect policy and cultural practices. How can we address this? Is it by putting on very visible shows, or by being seen sitting on panels, boards, conducting and publishing research?"*

Project participant

ESCOL funding rally in Trafalgar Square © Beth Crosland

The following three frameworks look at where power is being exercised.

Power is exercised by various people in different ways in any given context. Understanding the characteristics of arenas in which different people exercise their power is key to identifying the different entry points for change.

1. Closed, invited, created/claimed spaces[21]

"Spaces" is understood in this framework as the places where opportunities for formal and informal interaction help people to shape the decisions and rules that affect their lives.

2. Public, private and intimate realms of power[22]

The public realm of power concerns aspects of one's public life – what is visible, such as:

- employment or role in the community, etc.
- the private realm of power includes family, relationships, friends, marriage.
- the intimate realm of power means the psychological – such as self-esteem and confidence.

This framework builds upon the work of gender theorists and advocates who argue that power takes shape on three interacting levels of a woman's life with women often having contradictory experiences of power in these three realms.

3. Power is also exercised at different levels

In today's world, power is increasingly seen as multi-layered and multi-faceted; it is found across various levels among state and non-state actors and there are long-standing debates among activists and academics alike about which levels of power are the most important to address. Indeed, as suggested by Gaventa,[23] "some argue that participatory practice must begin locally, as it is in the arenas of everyday life in which people are able to resist power and construct their own voice. There are others who argue that power is shifting to more globalised actors, and struggles for participation must engage at that level. In between there are debates on the role of the nation state, and how it mediates power…"

Power works at all these levels (global, regional, national, local, community, household, etc.) and it is therefore a challenge for civil society groups and ordinary people to assess how they are linked and which levels and entry points they want to act upon.

Closed	Invited	Created/claimed
Spaces are **closed** when decisions are made behind closed doors – often without providing opportunities for inclusion.	Spaces are **invited** when various kinds of authorities invite people to participate in decision-making processes as citizens, beneficiaries or users. Although these spaces could become opportunities for genuine collaboration, agendas are often pre-determined.	Spaces are **created/claimed** when less powerful people come together to create their own space, and set their own agendas.
e.g. Cabinet meetings, boards of directors	e.g. public consultations	e.g. grassroots campaigns, neighbourhood meetings, social movements

Frameworks in Practice

All the organisations engaged very quickly with the Spaces framework, and appreciated its simplicity. What is important to note here is that this framework reminded organisations about the structure versus agency debate we referred to earlier. They could all give examples of spaces in which the views of the most powerful dominated the discussions.

The *Realms of power* framework proved to be more difficult for participants to grasp when first introduced to it – particularly in understanding power in relation to the intimate realm and what this meant in terms of exercising power to achieve social change. As the participants became more comfortable with one another and with the frameworks, one or two participants began to make sense of this framework. A participant from one organisation began to reflect on how it had been encouraging its constituents to be more vocal in the public realm, for example as spokespeople for others, without paying attention to how this might conflict with their sense of power – or powerlessness – in their private or intimate realms.

Not all the frameworks we refer to above appealed to all the organisations and neither did we expect them to. Nor were they utilised in the same way. We encouraged all of the organisations to interpret the frameworks in ways that were relevant to them. For example, while most organisations used the *Spaces* framework to understand where power lies in the external environment, some also used it to question how they themselves might have closed and invited spaces within their own organisations – for example, whether as organisations committed to empowerment it was necessary to exclude constituents' representation from board meetings.

We also hoped that the organisations would gain the confidence to combine these frameworks to deepen their analysis – as the Power Matrix referred to above encouraged them to do. We did not see this happen to a great extent during the course of this project, but we do believe this should be encouraged in the future.

Rehearsals for Spare Tyre's 2009 production *Feeble Minds*. © Patrick Baldwin

Section Two:

An outline of how we used power analysis

Rehearsals for Spare Tyre's 2009 production *Feeble Minds*. © Patrick Baldwin

This section explains the process of the project in detail and what lessons we learned to help us to develop the process further. It is divided into two parts:

- An outline of the power analysis process
- Successes and challenges.

The power analysis process

The process of power analysis that we undertook was iterative and its design and delivery were constantly revised to ensure that it met the needs of the participants as their needs and priorities and understanding of power developed. However, building upon the lessons learned from our scoping work and from our commitment to exploring different dimensions and definitions of power, we had always envisaged that the process would be made up of some key elements:

1. Selection criteria for recruiting organisations

We were quite clear that we wanted to recruit organisations that had a full commitment to the process, and to finding ways of sharing the learning with other stakeholders and the communities that they worked with. We recognised that this could exclude on the one hand larger organisations that would find it difficult to share learning across the whole organisation, and on the other hand more fragile organisations that would not necessarily have paid staff that could commit themselves to the project. However, we felt that to help us develop an approach to power analysis that had the potential to be replicated, we needed to ensure that we worked with organisations that could remain part of the project for up to a year, and that the participants were in a position to share learning.

2. A series of workshops

Participants from each organisation were expected to attend four workshops. At the start of the process, we agreed to design each workshop in detail as our understanding of the organisations' areas of interests developed. However, the workshops would focus on four key elements – an introduction to power, a focus on problem analysis, developing a strategy and sharing learning.

Workshop using open space methodology for MRCF member organisations

3. One-to-one support

All participants received one-to-one support. In the context of this project, this would support participants to use the power analysis, to explore their needs, motivations and aspirations and to develop skills to assist them and their organisations in making real, lasting change. This could be done through questioning, helping to set goals, being critical friends and providing supportive and non-judgmental feedback. At the start of the project, we were unclear as to how much one-to-one support would be needed. However, one of the specific purposes of the support was for the participants to reflect on what would be learned in the workshops and to set targets for moving forward. It was also intended that one-to-one sessions would support participants to develop their own understanding

of power and not to become dependent on us for knowledge and expertise. From our point of view, the one-to-one support was important for us to better understand the challenges organisations face in turning ideas for change into actions.

4. Linking the frameworks with tools

Alongside the power frameworks (page 13–16), participants were introduced to analytical tools to support analysis and strategy development. A tool, as referred to in this report, is a specific practical technique (e.g. mapping exercises), tactic (e.g. negotiation tactics) or aid (e.g. testing of analysis with peers) that can be applied in different contexts. In our project, we were mostly concerned with tools for analysis. However, we recognised that a tool is not:

- prescriptive but should spark reflection and experimentation
- a solution but both a starting point and a reflective process
- unbiased; all methods, tools and techniques including those promoting participation can become manipulative. In the hand of the powerful, a "tool" can further disenfranchise people.
- a "one-size-fits-all" and sure-fire method; indeed, although tools aim to be transferable and generic, they are often context-specific

5. Stakeholder workshops

Participants were encouraged to work with their constituents and internal and external stakeholders, through different processes, including stakeholder workshops to share their own learning. These workshops were an opportunity for the organisations to work with their own stakeholders to analyse together the problem they were addressing and the pros and cons of different strategies for change. To help the organisations to do this, we allocated each a small grant of £4,000 specifically for stakeholder engagement activities.

6. Self-documentation

Participants were encouraged to track their own learning and development through self -documentation. This could be in written, video or audio form. The purpose of this would be to help participants to set their own goals and criteria for measuring success.

Shpresa Programme: Launch of the campaign 'From Agression to Unity

Successes and challenges

In this part we discuss the successes and challenges of the different elements described above and how they worked together to form the basis of a process for using power analysis to better understand specific social problems and achieve change.

The selection criteria and a diverse range of organisations

While the selection criteria were very specific, we were still able to recruit organisations that were ready to use power analysis to change their practices and strategic actions. They were also at different stages of organisational development, had different governance cultures and processes, and a range of different sizes, with one organisation having no more than three paid staff and another having 50. The participants too were from a range of backgrounds, with some seeing themselves as professionals, and others as part of the communities they were working with. Through the methods we used for engaging with the organisations – mainly workshops and one-to-one support – we were able to help the organisations to share learning and practice.

The workshops

The importance of the workshops was that they gave the space to explore the frameworks that formed the basis of our approach to power analysis. The focus on power and the frameworks created a common language between participants and other staff in their organisations, thus preparing the ground for collaborative analysis and reflection.

The frameworks worked because they were broad enough to be interpreted, adapted or combined in ways that were relevant to the individual organisations. All the participants reflected on and identified the frameworks which were most appropriate to their organisation, and they were often able to turn these into analytical "tools".

However, the challenge of working with such a broad range of frameworks was that it then took time to apply the frameworks to the organisations' individual problems. The tension in the first workshop, in particular, was that the frameworks could seem quite theoretical when introduced and until they could be applied to concrete issues. During the course of this project, we did not find an easy answer to this. It may be that this challenge is an integral part of the process, with some participants needing more time than others to understand the practical value of the frameworks.

It should be noted that while we had planned for four workshops, the participants themselves asked for an extra workshop. They used this extra workshop to challenge one another to move forward with the issues they were working on.

"This workshop was a key moment for us, in remembering that we are the experts, it is our space and we should start from our own experience".

Project participant during the last one-to-one session

One-to-one support

The importance of the one-to-one support was that it provided a space for turning the analysis which participants worked on in the workshops, through the frameworks, into concrete action. It was an opportunity to take the learning from the workshops and think through in more detail how this related to the organisation and its individual challenges. In the workshops, all participants quickly grasped the complex ways in which ideologies, prejudice and social norms could further disenfranchise the people they worked with – for example, how public policy debates fed a fear of refugees and migrants. What was more difficult in the early stage of the process was to envisage what they could do about this in practice, particularly given their limited resources and pressures to survive in an increasingly challenging funding environment.

The main challenge in designing the one-to-one support was the extent to which we pushed participants to take actions, particularly as they were all so busy in their regular work. We felt that, in the future, one way to address this would be to use the one-to-one sessions to help the participants to set targets, actions and milestones for them to follow through. While some participants thrived on the freedom and flexibility to set their own milestones and targets, others could have benefited from additional encouragement and support. It may also be helpful in the future to include more staff members from each organisation at these sessions, to ensure that the learning is shared.

The one-to-one support is an important part of the process, and we would recommend to others who may be interested in adopting this approach that they ensure some level of support is provided. Though time-consuming, its benefits in developing better relationships and knowledge of organisations working closer to the grassroots, and its potential for supporting these organisations, should not be underestimated. From our point of view, we benefited from this, because it gave us a deeper insight into the day-to-day challenges faced by organisations working closer to the grassroots. We began to view participants as critical friends, who were able to give us feedback on the process and how we could improve on our own understanding of power analysis. The participants also referred to us as critical friends or "expert witnesses" giving objective feedback, and providing a safe space in which to be challenged while also receiving positive encouragement.

"As a team, you have always been encouraging, you make things sound possible. You make it [change] seem possible."

Project participant in a one-to-one support session

Working with internal and external stakeholders

We encouraged all the organisations to run separate workshops and set up processes for engaging their own stakeholders in power analysis. These processes ranged from one-off consultations about a specific issue (for instance, the social care needs of BME people living with HIV) to an "open space" event in which women who had survived trafficking could raise any issue they wanted. There were initial concerns from some participants about "asking too much" from their constituents, and this had to be addressed many times throughout the project. It was found that the organisations that already had well-established relationships with their constituents (for example, where service users were represented on the board or in committees) were the ones that were the most confident in engaging them in activities related to the power analysis process. For example, one of the organisations that described itself as user-led quickly set up a think-tank group, made up of service users and some external experts, to help it address the issue of domestic violence in the community.

The organisations that saw themselves as service providers, however, found this more of a challenge. One organisation, for example, questioned the benefits of engaging service users at a strategic level and therefore took much longer to draw on its service users' expert knowledge to help develop a research project. When this organisation ran a workshop with its service users, facilitated by us, the service users themselves fed back the importance of the space for sharing knowledge between each other. However, on the day of the workshop, all the workers from the organisation who were expected to attend the workshop were called away to other meetings unexpectedly. This reminded us of the level of commitment which is required from organisations to prioritise stakeholder engagement. It was also a reminder to us that, even though we had offered each of the organisations a grant of £4,000, we could not push them to involve stakeholders if they were not ready and/or did not have the time.

While all the organisations experimented with different ways of engaging with their stakeholders, our judgment by the end of the project was that more could have been done to support the organisations in doing this more effectively. On reflection, it may be that the approach that we have developed, in the timeframe in which it was delivered, did not allow sufficient space for organisations to look deeply enough at their stakeholder engagement processes. It may be that another approach to power analysis needs to be developed, to look specifically at issues such as sharing power with stakeholders – and in particular with constituents.

Linking frameworks and tools

In addition to the frameworks, we aimed to introduce organisations to a range of tools that would help them to draw on the frameworks to deepen their analysis. There were two tools[24] in particular that appealed to the participants – the Problem Tree Analysis[25] and the Power Matrix[26] (page 15). Both of these tools were introduced in the one-to-one sessions. The Problem Tree Analysis is a very simple tool that helps the user to understand the root causes of a problem and its consequences.

On the whole, it proved challenging to make the connections between the power frameworks and the vast range of pre-existing tools that we could have drawn upon. In Workshop 2, we introduced participants to a range of different tools that they might have found useful, but there was an overwhelming feeling of "overload" from the group. On reflection, we recognised that these tools may not have been introduced at the right moment in the process, and that more needed to be done to help participants make the connection between these tools and the power frameworks, which they had all found so much more energising.

Self-documentation

The least successful aspect of the process was participants' documentation of their own learning and reflection as the project progressed. This failed to happen for various reasons – lack of time, lack of confidence in the methods suggested by the team (video or audio recordings, wikis, diaries, etc.), and a lack of experience in self-documentation. It would also be fair to say that we could have been clearer about why self-documentation was important and could have given the participants more guidance. For similar projects in the future we would explore how we could support participants to self-document their journeys and we now appreciate the need to emphasise the benefits for their own learning.

In terms of the overall process, we recognise that for both participating organisations and host organisations, a process that involves engaging with different frameworks through different methods such as workshops, one-to-one support and stakeholder engagement can seem like a very intense process. However, in reality all the participants told us that the benefits of being involved outweighed the time commitment. All five of the organisations began the process by committing only one participant to be involved in the workshops. After the first workshops, four of the five organisations brought two participants to each of the next workshops. Two of the organisations used some of the frameworks and tools to engage more staff to embed learning further into the organisation.

Section Three:

What changed for the organisations as a result of power analysis?

Spare Tyre's 2009 production *Feeble Minds* at the Albany, Deptford. © Patrick Baldwin

In this section we focus on the impact of this work: what changed for the organisations that we worked with and the actions they took as a result of their involvement? It draws on evidence, based primarily on a cross-case analysis of the individual journeys experienced by the project participants and their organisations, conversations with our Joseph Rowntree Foundation colleagues and meetings with our Power Advisory Group.

It is split into six parts:

- Internal organisation practices
- External structures and institutions
- How people and groups are motivated to influence decisions
- The impact of power on social issues
- Long-term strategies for change
- The impact of power analysis on the host organisation.

We recognise that this is a one-year project and that the findings are not about what these organisations will achieve in the long term but about how we saw participants engage with the issue of power. We also recognise that while we have tried to capture changes that were a direct result of participants' engagement with power analysis, participants and their organisations had already started a journey of thinking through their existing strategies, and it would be presumptuous to claim all the credit for these developments. However, the project supported each of the organisations to re-evaluate the issues they were focusing on and to think more broadly about the strategies they could use to achieve change.

Internal organisation practices

Power analysis helped participants to reflect on the power of their own organisations, and how they used this power; this was something they told us they did not previously have either the space or the tools to do. The participants all felt that their organisations and the constituents they were serving had limited influence and still operated at the margins of key decision-making processes. However, they talked about this largely in relation to the ways in which others whom they saw as having more power needed to change, and not necessarily in terms of how their organisations could be better at influencing decision-makers.

> *"The perception of ourselves was that we were in hiding; we don't even have flyers to talk about ourselves."*
>
> **Project participant during a workshop**

The community arts organisation that we worked with was particularly interested in thinking about its own power. It reviewed its strategy and generated a debate with its stakeholders on the relationship between advocacy and art. This organisation was keen to think through its strengths and weaknesses, including its own power and ability to change its relationships with the institutions it worked with to provide arts programmes. To help this organisation think through its own strength in dealing with these issues, three stakeholder workshops – one each for constituents, volunteers, and freelance artists – were facilitated. The workshops were successful not just because they engaged stakeholders in the organisation's work, but also in helping the organisation to change its relationship with its stakeholders – now seeing them as its advocates. The organisation learned that its strength lay in being both a community arts and a political organisation, engaging with and utilising the power of its stakeholders.

We found that both the size of the organisation and its organisational culture were important factors in terms of the extent to which they reflected on internal practices. For example, we found that the smaller ones were much more responsive to new ideas and able to take action based on power analysis much more quickly. It was not just the

pace of change but also the extent to which actions were being taken. For example, one organisation reviewed its operations and strategic activities, including the issue of how staff job descriptions and roles reflected the needs of the organisation as well as meeting the conditions set by the funder.

"We have reviewed our job description roles, our organisational chart from a power perspective. We analysed all our projects, all processes and linked them together. The aim was to think how best to achieve our objectives rather than a culture of 'my project'."

Project participant during a one-to-one session

Although size may be important, we found that the organisational culture and the governance structure of participating organisations were also relevant. Organisations which positioned themselves as "service user-led" organisations or "brokers" for their constituents engaged in more depth or more rapidly with the process and its implications, while those which traditionally saw themselves as providers of services or representatives of their service users presented more resistance at the beginning of the process.

It should be noted that challenging organisations' preconceptions about how social problems are constructed sometimes overwhelmed participants, and it was important that they were able to express their frustrations and ask us to give them the time and space to process their learning. It was the time participants took to reflect and discuss their learning with others in their organisation that helped them to begin to reflect on their internal organisational and individual practices.

"It helped me realise the way I do problem solving and get to the practical solutions without being reflective enough and grapple with different options more confidently, break things down, break down the cycle of problem solving ('here's the problem and here is the easy solution'). Hopefully it is something, an attitude that I will carry for the rest of my life."

Project participant at a one-to-one session

External structures and institutions

At the start of the project, the participants brought with them some analysis about the environment and the context in which they worked, and what the barriers might be to achieving the change they desired. Power analysis helped with this by shedding new light and bringing about a fresh outlook on age-old issues and problems. For example, power analysis challenged one organisation to think about the problem of violence against women in some communities as being a problem linked not only to culture but to also external power structures relating to the economic, political and social environment. This helped them to make connections between domestic violence and mental health and unemployment, which in turn helped the organisation to think through strategies that addressed the impact of all these issues on family life.

Another organisation, as mentioned previously, already had a strong understanding of how those within government and the media dominated in migrant and refugee issues.

However, what the process threw up was how other, more powerful civil society organisations and actors are also shaping these issues. For example, the lack of co-ordination between funders and policy-makers has led to additional pressure on the resources of migrant groups and their ability to respond to ever more varied positions and agendas. Shortages in funding and the absence of a common language for engaging in public debates were seen as key challenges for migrant and refugee organisations.

"We need to raise our voices and shout about what we do in our work more. And the way we want to do this is to create a website which will give us that space to talk about our issues and not respond to everybody else's agenda… One of the key things that came out of that was an understanding that we were creating our own space, the idea of created space and not invited space. We are asked into invited spaces a lot but does it change anything? The idea is that this website is about us [migrants and refugees groups], this is who we are and you can join us. It is not about responding to everybody else and that our experience makes us experts."

Project participant from a membership organisation

Naz Project London: Mobilising Latin American communities for sexual health

How people and groups are motivated to influence decisions

One participant from a campaigning organisation used power analysis to better understand how other civil society groups – particularly the pro-sex-worker lobby – had used their power to dominate the debates on prostitution and trafficking. During the workshops and the one-to-one support sessions, we encouraged this participant to deepen her understanding of the debate around prostitution and trafficking. We encouraged her to think about the hidden and invisible, as well as the visible, forces that worked to shape the problem. Exploring invisible power made her think about how a sense of powerlessness that trafficked women feel may come from a sense that somehow society blames them for the situation in which they have found themselves. This reinforced the need for empowerment strategies that would enable her to think about how the organisation worked with its trafficked women constituents to argue that not all women go into prostitution willingly, and that those who have been forced should not simply be treated as a small number of victims, but as women who have the right to be heard.

Participants also felt that actors beyond government were (either consciously or not) exercising their power and influence in ways which further marginalised the issues that their organisations were working on. We have already given the example above of an organisation working with migrant and refugee communities recognising the power of other civil society organisations. This organisation also expressed concern about the lack of unity between organisations working on similar issues in the same sector, with each competing for scarce resources and public attention. It recognised the growing tension between the extent to which migrant and refugee organisations focus on service delivery and the time spent on policy influencing; plus the lack of a unifying identity, with organisations focusing more on cultural and ethnic identities than on rights and collective issues. This made the participants from this organisation think about other forms of partnership they could pursue. However, all the organisations recognised that sharing resources with others could be a challenge in reality.

The impact of power on social issues

All the organisations began to think more deeply about the social issues they were addressing and the impact of power on their constituents. The majority of the organisations expressed a clear concern about how they could better support their constituents to participate in both external and internal (organisational) decision-making processes, and recognised the challenges of doing this. By the end of the project they had either strengthened their existing practices or explored new ways of working with their constituents.

The organisation working with trafficked women, for example, wanted to use its new understanding of the importance of empowerment strategies as addressed earlier in this report, to engage the women in influencing policy at a national and an organisational level. One way of doing this would be to empower and involve their users in shaping and influencing the work of the organisation itself. The main participant from this organisation was particularly struck by the spaces framework. She began to see that the spaces that the organisation provided for its service users tended to be "invited" spaces, where the parameters of the conversation could often be set. While she saw the benefits of invited spaces, she also started to understand their potential limitations, and therefore became interested in "created" spaces, where the service users themselves could set the agenda and discuss the issues that most concerned them. She also recognised the challenge in doing this – for example, the implications if the main concern for the women differed from the concerns that their organisation was focusing on.

"The challenge was to move from pockets of empowerment to a culture of empowerment with both internal and external stakeholders. We decided to do an open space with the service users: what changes do you want to see in your lives? It was a difficult exercise but also positive. It gave the clarity about the importance of being heard and that there are not enough spaces in our organisation for that, not enough processes for asking questions and solutions together."

Project participant

This organisation ran an open space[27] event for the trafficked women with whom it worked. The event was promoted – through the women's support workers – as an opportunity to talk about the issues that mattered to them. In reality, only five women attended the event and on the day, they did want to talk about issues that the organisation did not feel it could address. However, what was interesting was that the women wanted to talk more about their experiences as mothers, girlfriends and wives, and providers for their families, rather than as victims of trafficking. The participant from this organisation did not think that the event was a success in terms of numbers and issues raised, but she did recognise how the event reinforced the importance of "power within" and the need to explore issues that the women may have internalised – for example, putting their gratitude for being "rescued" before their aspirations as breadwinners and mothers. This organisation has gone on to develop a small grants initiative, through which constituents can come forward, with their ideas being assessed by other constituents before the grant is awarded.

Long-term strategies for change

Power analysis enabled all the organisations to revisit their strategies and to explore new ones that were more long-term. The variety of power frameworks helped them both to better understand the problems and issues they were addressing in their organisations, and also to critique the ways in which they were responding to these issues. Participants started to understand why their existing strategies may or may not have contributed to the change they were hoping to achieve – which in turn helped them to rethink their strategies.

The user-led organisation used the process to think through a strategy to address the problem of domestic violence in the community of which it was a part. This organisation was feeling powerless to address this issue – particularly as the staff were a part of the community they were working with, and felt that they would be seen to be betraying their own culture. However, more and more women within the community were asking the organisation to address the issue. A process of analysis helped the organisation to understand the different factors that may have led to the problem of domestic violence, and what power issues were at play. It then repeated this process of analysis with its stakeholders, including people from within the community. The organisation and the stakeholders agreed that they should work in partnership with women's organisations that are better placed to support women dealing with the problem. This would free up the organisation itself to take a different approach, which would focus on "happy families" and positive parenting – celebrating what is good about the community, while also making a safe space for people to talk about issues such as domestic violence and why it is wrong.

All the organisations started to establish new ways of working or engaging with as many stakeholders as possible in the course of the project. Participants planned new strategic partnerships for different reasons. Some looked for stakeholders working on similar issues (e.g. domestic violence) or stakeholders who, while not necessarily working on similar issues, could give them access to groups and individuals they had never worked with and would otherwise not have any access to.

It is important to note that the power analysis did not just help organisations to think through how they needed to change, but also confirmed what they were doing well and what achievements they should celebrate. These participants seemed to have developed a stronger sense of what they wanted to stand for and the ability to say no – for example, not accepting all the conditions put on them by potential funders or journalists. They gained a self-belief that change is indeed possible and that they can significantly contribute to this. It also gave them the confidence to explore how to do things differently.

The impact of power analysis on the host organisation

The process of power analysis did not just impact on the organisations that we worked with. We too were part of this learning journey, and we shared this learning with our colleagues at the Carnegie UK Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Power analysis was a lens through which to look at the ability of organisations and their stakeholders to influence and achieve change. It helped us to understand the power of organisations and their ability to achieve the change they desired in the face of all the challenges they come up against on a day-to-day basis – from funding issues right through to receiving hate mail. We learned that understanding power could help organisations to achieve breakthroughs by thinking about their own power differently. The process also helped us to connect with the issue of power and the wider social policy context and understand what we could contribute to enhancing participation and access to decision-making processes.

Conclusion

"Support has been phenomenal. It is so difficult to have reflective time and on top of that you are sharing the learning with others involved in the project, while trying to make sense of this thinking. It was a very unique and unusual process."

Project participant

There is no doubt that the approach we have developed to power analysis takes a great deal of time and energy and, as described in Section Three of this report, that it can really challenge participants' and their organisations' assumptions about the underlying causes of problems and how change happens. The approach is not a "quick fix", but more about long-term change. Our experience shows that organisations need support which goes beyond conventional training or consultancy to better understand how power operates within the complex environments within which they work. Power analysis provides the framework for also helping organisations to analyse the power they have, rather than focusing on their sense of powerlessness. This in turn will enable them to exercise their own power more effectively to achieve change.

"We are seeking to redefine conversations about empowerment not as something we are waiting for to happen to us, but instead we want to talk about the power we already have and how we use it to achieve our aims."

Project participant

How the approach is new

We found ourselves on a number of occasions debating with our own internal stakeholders about whether the approach was new, particularly as it relied so much on traditional methods of capacity building, such as workshops and one-to-one support. The issue of power and theories of power are of course longstanding; the power frameworks we used as the basis for power analysis are more recent and have been developed by academics, activists and social policy thinkers over the last two decades or so to bring those theories to life and apply them to the real world. What this project has added to this endeavour is a demonstration of how these power frameworks can work in practice to support organisations with concrete issues and problems. The process was new because it was the first time power analysis had been used so systematically, with such a variety of frameworks and tools, in a UK setting. The familiarity of the workshops and the one-to-one support contrasted with the unfamiliarity of the frameworks and the process of analysing power. The workshops provided a safe space in which to support the participants to understand power analysis and how it can help them to achieve the changes that they are working towards.

Our partners, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, wondered whether power represented the missing or forgotten link between participation and social change. We were reminded about the Commission on Poverty, Participation and Power,[28] funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which found that people experiencing poverty were often very disillusioned by processes labelled as participatory, but in which the spaces for consultation and discussion were often dominated by those who were not living in poverty; this experience could leave them feeling powerless. The members of the Commission with direct experience of poverty insisted that the word "power" was included in the title of the Commission – as they believed that it is crucial to recognise and address the issue of power in order to make participation work for a diverse range of people.

By the end of this project, we found that we were less concerned with whether this approach is new and more with the practical relevance to organisations and communities in the current political and economic climate. Like others,[29] we believe that power could be the missing link between how people envisage the change that they want in theory and how they go about achieving that change in practice; and the examples we give in this report demonstrate the practical outcomes of analysing power. All the participants talked about the importance of addressing the issue of power and felt liberated by a process that focused on their power rather than their powerlessness.

Additional outputs

This report is accompanied by a series of short videos which document the learning journey from the point of view of the organisations involved in this project. There is also a handbook that can be used by facilitators and development workers to introduce organisations and their communities to power analysis, these can be found at www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk

Final note

The project described in this report reinforces the importance of connecting with the issue of power, and reassessing participation and empowerment strategies that go beyond toolkits and "quick win" forms of consultation, which often measure success by the number of people involved in the process rather than the quality of the discussion and the extent to which change happens as a result.

Power analysis provides an additional layer to other capacity-building methods. It offers a framework for deepening our understanding of social problems, and what strategies can be used to help organisations and their constituents to achieve the outcomes they desire.

Power analysis could be used by large organisations, such as grant-giving trusts and foundations, as a relatively cost-effective way of providing grantees with additional capability-building support, to embed long-term strategic change into organisations' practices.

It supports organisations to identify and build new partnerships, looking beyond those stakeholders with whom they may normally connect. It is also about sharing power with existing stakeholders, including their members, users and communities with whom organisations work.

Most importantly, it recognises that an analysis of power can provide the link between understanding the causes of social problems and taking action to achieve long-term social change. As competition for funding becomes tougher, and spaces for exerting influence become more crowded, it is essential that organisations, and the groups that they are working with, are able to address the issue of power and achieve change in the interests of achieving social justice.

Naz Project London: celebrating ten years of services for lesbian, bisexual and questioning women.

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This report was written by Raji Hunjan, Democracy Director, Carnegie UK Trust and Soumountha Keophilavong, Research Analyst, Carnegie UK Trust.

Endnotes

[1] Gaventa, J. (2006), "Finding the spaces for change: a power analysis" in Eyben, R., Harris, C. and Pettit, J. (eds), Exploring Power for Change, IDS Bulletin, 37:6, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

[2] The Power Inquiry, established in 2004, focused on political participation and involvement and found that the key reasons for disengagement were that: citizens do not have enough influence over political decisions; the main parties are too similar and lack principle; the electoral system leads to wasted and unequal votes; parties and elections require citizens to commit to too broad a range of policies; there is a lack of information and knowledge about politics; and voting procedures are inconvenient and unattractive. http://www.powerinquiry.org/

[3] Beetham, D., Blick, A., Margetts, H. and Weir, S. (2008), Power and Participation in Modern Britain: A Literature Review by Democratic Audit, Carnegie UK Trust, available online at http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/files/Democratic%20Audit%20power%20literature%20%20review.pdf

Carnegie UK Trust (2008), Power Moves, London: Carnegie UK Trust.

http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/democracy/power_tools

[6] William Pitt in a speech to the House of Lords in 1770.

[7] This was based on the findings of our scoping phase, as well as broader conversations with academics and practitioners such as John Gaventa and Jethro Pettit at IDS, Jo Rowlands at Oxfam and our power advisory group. We also attended a three-day workshop at IDS, with academics and activists across the globe, including Robert Chambers from IDS, and Lisa Veneklassen and Valerie Miller from Just Associates.

[8] For a literature review, see Beetham et al. (2008), Power and Participation in Modern Britain, available online at http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/files/Democratic%20Audit%20power%20literature%20%20review.pdf

[9] Gaventa (2006), "Finding the Spaces for Change".

[10] Zero-sum, a term borrowed from Game Theory, describes a situation in which a participant's gain or loss is exactly balanced by the losses or gains of the other. If you take a larger slice of the cake it leaves less cake for everybody else. It assumes the resource (cake) is limited. See Dowding, K. (1996), Power, Buckingham: Open University Press.

[11] http://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/exploring_power_for_change_intro.pdf. We are also grateful to Jethro Pettit, IDS, for facilitating workshops on our behalf in 2010 and giving us access to PowerPoint files which summarised this debate.

[12] Just Associates (2006), "Making change happen: power, concepts for revisioning power for justice, equality and peace", Making Change Happen, 3, Washington: Just Associates.

[13] The International Institute for Environment and Development has gathered a range of tools for analysing power which focus on four topics – tools for understanding, organising, engaging and ensuring change – www.iied.org

[14] http://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/quick_guide_to_power_analysis_external_final.pdf

[15] Case studies can be found at http://powercube.net

[16] This draws from: VeneKlasen, L. and Miller, V. (eds) (2002), A New Weave of Power, People & Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation, Oklahoma City: World Neighbors and Washington DC: Just Associates; reprinted 2007 by Practical Action, UK; Vermeulen, S. (2005), Power Tools: Handbook to Tools and Resources for Policy Influence in Natural Resource Management, London: IIED.

[17] This draws from: Chambers, R. (2006), "Transforming power: from zero-sum to win-win?" in Eyben et al. (eds), Exploring Power for Change; Vermeulen (2005), Power Tools.

[18] This framework can be found in VeneKlasen and Miller (2002), A New Weave of Power, People & Politics; it has been used previously in analysis of power in gender relations, for example Rowlands, Jo (1997), Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras, Oxford: Oxfam Publications.

[19] Versions of this framework can be found in the following works: VeneKlasen and Miller (2002), *A New Weave of Power, People & Politics*; Lukes, S. (1974, reprinted 2005), *Power: A Radical View*, 2nd edition, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan. The framework originates in Lukes' work, but using the labels of "three faces" or "dimensions" of power, rather than visible, hidden and invisible; Gaventa, J. (1980), *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. See also Gaventa (2006), "Finding the Spaces for Change".

[20] A copy of the power matrix can be found at Just Associates (2006), "Making Change Happen".

[21] This framework was developed by John Gaventa, Andrea Cornwall and the Participation, Power and Social Change team at IDS, and versions can be found in the following works: Cornwall, A. (2002), "Making spaces, changing places: situating participation in development", IDS Working Paper 170, Brighton: IDS; Cornwall, A. and Coehlo, V. (eds) (2006), Spaces for Change? The Politics of Citizen Participation in New Democratic Arenas, London: Zed Books; Gaventa, J. (2006), "Finding the Spaces for Change".

[22] This framework is based on the work of gender scholars, practitioners and activists and can be found in VeneKlasen and Miller (2002), A New Weave of Power, People & Politics.

[23] Gaventa (2006), "Finding the Spaces for Change"

[24] A list of tools can be found on the Carnegie UK Trust website: http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/democracy/power_tools

[25] A copy of the Problem Tree Analysis can be found at VeneKlasen and Miller (2002), A New Weave of Power, People & Politics.

[26] A copy of the Power Matrix can be found at Just Associates (2006), "Making Change Happen".

[27] Open space events bring together a range of people, to discuss issues around a central theme. The events are based around workshops that participants create and manage themselves.

[28] Commission on Poverty, Participation and Power (2000), Listen Hear: The Right to be Heard, Bristol: Policy Press.

[29] http://www.powercube.net/an-introduction-to-power-analysis/why-power-why-now/?submit=Go

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