The Power Matrix

This matrix presents how different dimensions of power interact to shape the problem and the possibility of citizen participation and action. The distinctions among the different dimensions are not neat or clean. The arrows are intended to indicate the interactive nature of these various manifestations of power.7

### MECHANISMS

**Visible: Making & Enforcing the Rules**

Presidents, Prime Ministers, legislatures, courts, ministries, police, military, etc. United Nations, IMF, World Bank; World Trade Organization, Multinational corporations (Halliburton, Nike, Coca-Cola), private sector actors, chamber of commerce, businesses, etc.

Instruments: Policies, laws, constitutions, budgets, regulations, conventions, agreements, implementing mechanisms, etc.

**Hidden: Setting the Agenda**

Exclusion & delegitimization:

Certain groups (and their issues) excluded from decision-making by society’s unwritten rules and the political control of dominant and vested interests. They & their issues made invisible by intimidation, misinformation & co-optation

Examples: The oil-gas industries control energy/environmental policies & public debate about global warming and climate change; the Catholic Church’s influence on global reproductive health policy in Latin America and elsewhere, etc.

Often, formal institutions with visible power, also exercise hidden power

**Invisible: Shaping Meaning, Values & What’s ‘Normal’**

Socialization & control of information:

Cultural norms, values, practices, ideologies and customs shape people’s understanding of their needs, rights, roles, possibilities and actions in ways that prevent effective action for change, reinforces privilege/inferiority, blames the victim and “manufactures consent”. Dominant ideologies include neoliberalism, consumerism and corporate capitalism, patriarchy-sexism, racism, etc. Key information is kept secret to prevent action and safeguard those in power and their interests

### EXAMPLES

**Power Over**

Biased laws/policies (e.g. health care policies that do not address the poor or women’s reproductive needs)

Decision-making structures (parliaments, courts, IGO governance, etc.) favor the elite or powerful and are closed to certain people’s voices and unrepresentative

Principle of ‘equality’ may exist in law, but parliaments and courts are not fairly representative of women and minorities

International financial/trade bodies dominated by G-8 despite rising economic power of others

**Power With, Power Within, Power To**

Lobbying & monitoring

Negotiation & litigation

Public education & media

Policy research, proposals

Shadow reports

Marches & demonstrations

Voting & running for office

Modeling innovations

Collaboration

Etc.

### RESPONSES & STRATEGIES

Building collective power

Confronting, engaging, negotiating

Building individual and collective power

Transforming power