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A practitioner-based framework of power to enable people and communities to adapt

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Adaptation Futures 2016
SC 9.2 Issue 9. Institutions and governance
13.30 – 15.15, Wednesday 11th May



Context

Focus on adaptive capacity of the most vulnerable

- **Human-centred adaptation** – human choices and freedoms to choose adaptation pathways
- **Practical context for power:** How can adaptation projects be more effective and equitable?
- Our focus to date has predominantly been climate change adaptation **projects at the local/community level in the developing world**

The effects of power for adaptation

- What we know
- Role of power in terms of **distribution of vulnerability**; power relationships often underpin access and control over key resources relevant to people's adaptive capacity.
- Gap: **role of power in determining adaptation visions** and alternative pathways, determining options and obstacles for change

What do we mean by power?

- Start with a broad sense of power
- Power as a social force, positive and negative outcomes
 - Power as relationships between people that enable and constrain thought and behaviour
 - These are often institutionalised, and/or hidden
 - Power as empowerment
 - Power as a barrier to action
- Develop frames of power that are applicable to a diversity real-world contexts

Should we address power head on?

- Assumption: in one way or another, everybody considers the effects of power, or at least takes them into account
- What can one gain by addressing power head on?
- What can one do with that knowledge?
- How does one avoid putting people in danger?

What do we gain by speaking directly with practitioners?

- Practitioners have unique perspectives through different stages of adaptation projects
- Understand the extent to which practitioners are considering issues of power, and what means they are using to address the issues they identify
- This approach has precedent (e.g. powercube initiative), but also limitations

What do practitioners already have at their disposal?

- **Gender analysis** – and experiences from gender empowerment projects
- **Political-economy analysis**
- **Stakeholder mapping** and **influence mapping**

- What can explicit focus on power relations add to this 'toolbox'?

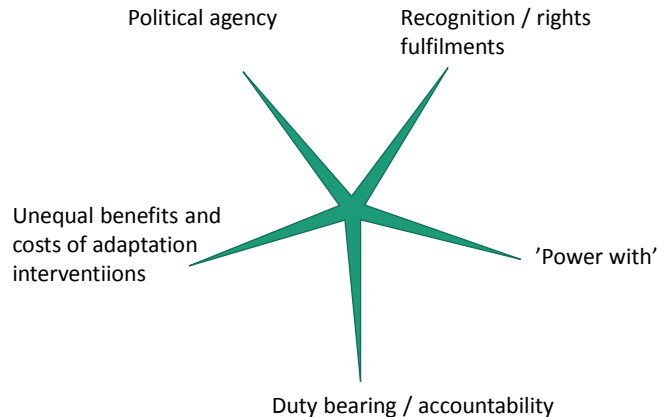
Our process

- **Literature review** – how have adaptation and power been linked in the scientific literature?
- **Semi-structured Interviews**
 - Start with focus on community-based projects and those with empowerment objectives in the developing world
 - Interviews cover a broad range of countries, social, political and economic contexts, on 3 continents.
- ***Co-production of knowledge: Co-analysis and dissemination materials design***

Method

Contributions from the literature

- Power cube – power analysis for social change
- Political economy of adaptation
- Previous systematic reviews



Method

Interview questions/methods

Why semi-structured interviews?

- Allow participants to reflect on elements of power within project work

Sampling technique: Who did we contact and why?

- Project managers and officers with project experience of community based adaptation
- Telephone interviews lasting between 40 – 60 minutes

What we asked?

- Part 1: Understanding power and power relations through different project stages from the practitioners perspective
- Part 2: How power relates to capacity to adapt

Understandings of power emerging

- Power permeates whether projects happen and how they happen
- Its why the most vulnerable people will be at risk from change incl. adapting projects
 - e.g. informal settlers, informal economy (rick shaw drivers)
- **Empowerment as a burden?** Focus on right to services, duties of care of the state, mechanisms of redress
- **Power as a cake?**
- **Power as a balloon?**
 - Difference between perceived and actual loss of power

Designing the framework 1

Key considerations

- Roles and relationships of NGOs, governments and donors
- Social differentiation (gender groupings, livelihoods groupings)
- Dependency on projects and natural resources
- Ownership
- Role of change-makers
- Role of knowledge and awareness in challenging incumbent power
- Reflexivity of adaptation project staff regarding power relations

Designing the framework 2

Key mechanisms for addressing power

- Introducing guiding principles
- Building trust
- Mechanisms for transparent identification of the most vulnerable
- Safeguard mechanisms for the most vulnerable
- Accountability and feedback mechanisms
- Introducing checks and balances
- Clear theory of change
 - Awareness / consciousness-raising
 - Demonstrated benefits

What we would like to do next...

- Get feedback from you
- Initiate process of collaborative analysis –
 - How to bound the results – what is this a study of?
 - What are the most important/neglected issues to focus on
- Collaboratively develop dissemination materials
- Test materials with interested parties

Thank you for listening

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