

# Transforming Power: From Zero-Sum to Win-Win?

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## 1 Personal journey and predispositions

Being asked by the editors to describe my personal journey to a current focus on issues of power, and striving to do this in a spirit of critical reflection, has startled me with what I have found and how it has influenced the argument of this article. At some level, I already knew this but never before have I seen so clearly how it coheres. Four influences and tendencies appear to have intermingled.

The first is the exercise of authority at several stages during my schooling, again during my National Service in the British Army, and then as a District Officer and trainer of administrators in Kenya. As a researcher later, this led me many times to see situations from the point of view of the powerful rather than the powerless. Despite a long convalescence traces of this orientation remain.

The second is the fascination with how we learn and mislearn in development, and especially why development professionals are so often wrong: this has led repeatedly to the idea of power as disability, summarised, with apologies, to Lord Acton, as 'All power deceives'.

The third is the experience of the innovations and practices which were part of the flows and transitions from RRA (rapid rural appraisal) to PRA (participatory rural appraisal) and then to PLA (participatory learning and action). The attitudes, behaviours, roles and mindsets of researchers and then of facilitators emerged as key dimensions, shifting as they did from extracting information from local people to empowering them to do their own appraisal, analysis, planning, action, monitoring and evaluation.

Fourth, I tend to see the world through rose-coloured spectacles, and to search for and argue for win-win solutions to problems. These are, I happily

believe, more common than many suppose. This means that I may underestimate the degree to which conflicts of interest are truly zero-sum.

If we take 'mindset' to refer to the ensemble of a person's ideas, attitudes, values, beliefs, mental categories and predispositions, then these four influences and tendencies are part of mine. They show in the arguments I present and the conclusions I believe these lead to. In writing and reflection, I have questioned them and the conclusions they lead to, but they are still there. We all have predispositions. I believe that it is good that a diversity of views, whatever their origins, enables us to come to problems from different angles and to identify different solutions. So I ask readers not to dismiss what follows because I have shown where some of it comes from, but to treat the points and arguments on their own merits.

## 2 Words, meanings and usage

These life experiences and mindset, and discussions with Jenny Chambers, led to the concept of 'uppers' and 'lowers', common words of deceptive simplicity because of the complex, shifting, subtle and nuanced relationships they represent, at the same time diverse, intangible and elusive. *Upper* can refer to a person who in a context is dominant or superior to a lower in that context. *Lower* can refer to a person who in a context is subordinate or inferior to an upper in that same context. Being an upper or a lower is, to use current language, situational and positional, summarised by 'in a context'. It is common experience, especially in gender relations,<sup>1</sup> that a person can be an upper to another in one context, and a lower to the same person in another, and that many reflexes and habits, tacit agreements, mirrorings of views, concealments, evasions, lies and unspoken understandings can be at play, sometimes known only to the actors and not always even consciously to them. There are resonances with the

insights and theoretical frameworks of various writers, both post-modern and others, but they are not needed for the analysis and discussion which follow.

'Power' has been given many meanings and interpretations. In this article, I take power to be, as described by Vermeulen (2005: 12) '... generally understood as an ability to achieve a wanted end in a social context, with or without the consent of others' and '... one reason why 'power' is a useful term is because it has a commonsense meaning rather than a difficult academic definition' (ibid.: 11). I take its sister word 'empowerment' to mean 'enhancing an individual's or group's capacity to make purposive choices and transform that choice into desired actions and outcomes' (Alsop 2005: 1).

In distinguishing types of power, the most useful framework I have found for this article is that of VeneKlasen and Miller (2002: 45) who have four categories which can be described as follows:

- 1 Power *over*, meaning the power of an upper over a lower, usually with negative connotations such as restrictive control, penalising and denial of access.
- 2 Power *to*, also agency, meaning effective choice, the capability to decide on actions and do them.
- 3 Power *with*, meaning collective power where people, typically lowers, together exercise power through organisation, solidarity and acting together.
- 4 Power *within*, meaning personal self-confidence.

Concerning common usage, three tendencies can be noted in how discussions of power are framed.

First, usage and mindsets often support meanings in which power sounds like a commodity, so that having more is better. People are empowered (good) or disempowered (bad). We talk of gaining, acquiring, seizing and enjoying power and negatively of losing, surrendering, abandoning, relinquishing and abdicating it. People are driven from power, are deprived of it, excluded from it and stripped<sup>2</sup> of it. Less negatively, power can be handed over or shared. Even then, as with the earlier usages, the mindset tends to be zero-sum: one's gain sounds like another's loss.

Second, power is often spoken of as bad. It is associated with a Hobbesian pessimism about human nature. Power goes with authoritarianism, bossing, control, discipline, domination – and that only reaches 'd' in an alphabetical listing. In these negative usages, power is abused and exploited. All power corrupts. All power deceives. Bad people are power-hungry, intoxicated with power, obsessed with it, and use it for their own ends.

Third, the discourse about power in development has been and remains predominantly about transformations which are bottom-up. The view taken by activists, advocates and radical academics starts with the realities and interests of the powerless. It may stay there, or it may extend upwards to seek to influence the powerful. Typical strategies for change involve those who are marginalised and powerless gaining power *with* and power *within* and then applying these against power *over*. Power *with* is achieved through activities like group meetings and discussions, protests, collective resistance, collective action through marches and demonstrations, and lobbying. The power *within* comes from awareness and self-confidence. These combine as power to influence and change the power *over*, through which people are oppressed and kept down.

In this article, I question and qualify all three of these usages and mindsets. I argue that for the powerful, power *over* does not need to be like a zero-sum commodity; that there is nothing inherently bad about power *over* – it all depends on how it is used; and that the importance of bottom-up power *with* and power *within* strategies, vital and often primary though they are, should not distract from the potentials of top-down transformations using power *over* in ways which are win-win, with gains for the powerful as well as for those who are empowered.

### **3 Reversing pathologies of power**

The pathologies of power are so manifest and commonplace that they scarcely bear enumerating. They include most of the bad conditions and experiences of social life – expressing domination, greed, exploitation, violence and intimidation by the powerful, and with the experience of subordination, deprivation, expropriation, fear, pain and insecurity for the powerless. A host of bad relations have dimensions of social power through patriarchy and age, of physical power through strength, weapons

and violence, of legal power through laws and conventions, and of links with and between economic and political power. The pathologies of power also include syndromes of deception, delusion and myth.

Normatively, against this background, good change entails transformations of many power relations. Often these can be seen as reversals, turning what is common and normal on its head. These have been extensively treated in organisational and political theory and practice, and in work on gender, but less at a more general level of the behaviour, attitudes and mindsets of uppers. Pervasively then, good change means changing interpersonal power relations and the processes which mediate them. This is so embarrassingly obvious, it is strange that until recently its generality and relevance has been largely overlooked in development thinking and practice.<sup>3</sup>

For many years, binary lists have been made and published for top-down and bottom-up, and the term reversal is not new. But except with gender, patriarchy, and local elites, the word 'power' referring to interpersonal relations has scarcely been there at all. We have had, for instance, oppositions like these:

<b>Normal</b>	<b>New</b>
Top-down	Bottom-up
Centralised	Decentralised
Blueprint	Process
Closed	Open
Time-bound	Open-ended
Target-driven	Process-led
Pre-planned	Participatory
Preset	Emergent
Standardised	Diverse

Advocates of participation tend to hold that good change has to come much more from the 'new' bottom-up column than from the 'normal' top-down, especially when the change concerns people rather than things. To the extent that the top-down mode is normally found in bureaucracies, the case is made for reversals, that is, for countervailing and balancing shifts from top-down towards bottom-up.

Reversals have also been implicit in the rhetorical 'Who?' and 'Whose?' questions referring to uppers and lowers, and concerning power and ownership. Some of the most common are:

- Whose reality?
- Whose knowledge?
- Whose appraisal?
- Whose analysis?
- Whose planning?
- Whose action?
- Whose M and E?
- Whose indicators? *and*
- Who participates in whose project?

There are many others. In *Critical Webs of Power and Change*, Chapman and Mancini (2005: 5) said: 'We need to give a lot more attention to who is involved, who assesses, who learns, whose opinion counts and who has access to information'. For the new field of Participatory Geographic Information Systems (PLA 2006), a total of 42 'who?' and 'whose?' questions have been listed (Rambaldi *et al.* 2006) including, for example:

- Who decides on who should participate?
- Who participates in whose mapping?
- And who is left out?
- Who has visual and tactile access?
- Whose map legend?
- Who gains?
- Who loses?
- Who is empowered and who is disempowered?

A further step is to ask: Who determines the 'Who' questions?

The normative implication of these rhetorical questions is that the answers should be lowers – those who are poor, excluded, marginalised, subordinate and powerless. And this leads to asking how power can be transformed, how they can empower themselves or be empowered. Two main modes or fields can be identified: those which start from below, more with organisation, and those which start from above, more with the personal, in each case moving into and overlapping with the other mode or field.

#### **4 Starting with the powerless: a zero-sum?**

Many of the better-known successful initiatives in development have been initiated working from below and then spreading laterally and vertically, for example the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India; Integrated Pest Management in Indonesia and now in many countries; the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, spreading similarly; and the Reflect movement, now with at least 300 organisations in over 40 countries. To varying degrees, these have

sought to empower through *power within* and *power with*. These are widely characteristic of social movements and of women's groups. Starting and organising from below is also the orientation of recent writings and source books on power, rights, advocacy and action like the four cited below. These are rich in their reviews of ways in which power has been and can be transformed bottom-up. The examples are many and inspiring, where oppressive and abusive power has been overcome by countervailing and ultimately stronger power from below.

This orientation has been reinforced as rights-based approaches have come to complement and to varying degrees, replace service-delivery approaches, notably among international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). Thus, for example, ActionAid International in its mission statement 'Rights to End Poverty' point out:

We believe that poor and excluded people are the primary agents of change. Poverty and injustice can be eradicated only when they are able to take charge of their lives and act to claim their rights. (ActionAid International 2005: 17)

The means and modalities are many (see for example VeneKlasen and Miller 2002: 50). Typical examples are education for confidence, citizenship and collaboration; affirming resistance; speaking out and connecting with others; participatory research and dissemination; building active constituencies around common concerns; mobilising around shared agendas; litigation; voting; and running for office. Confrontation and conflict are recognised as often integral to success. Power has to be contested. The mindset and orientation are that those with power have to be induced to lose, implying a zero-sum situation.

Nothing in what follows should be taken as an alternative to these approaches from below. In my view, they are primary and should remain so. At the same time, a complementary discourse and strategy can start with closer engagement with and understanding of powerful people and organisations themselves.

### **5 Starting with the powerful: the limits of 'normal' approaches**

In a search for sources of methods and approaches for transforming power relations that are contemporary and authoritative, four stand out:

- 1 *A New Weave of Power, People and Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation* (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002)
- 2 *Critical Webs of Power and Change* (Chapman and Mancini 2005)
- 3 *Tools for Influencing Power and Policy* (PLA 2005)
- 4 *Policy Powertools*, [www.policy-powertools.org](http://www.policy-powertools.org), a website of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), London.

These have enough in common in their approaches to decision-makers and policymakers to be described as normal. All four sources go some way towards including the powerful, especially decision-makers and policymakers in organisations, in their analysis and prescriptions. The issue is how far they go, and whether as practical guides they could and should go further.

Let us start with how far they do go. Identifying power-holders and their interests and engaging with them are recurrent themes.

VeneKlasen and Miller devote thought and space to identifying forces, friends and foes (2002: 211–27), including detailed mapping of power. They mention the importance of knowing about government or economic and international decision-making structures and officials. In forcefield analysis, the short-term and long-term interests of each actor in relation to the issue are to be charted. The viewpoints of identified players with respect to the issue are to be noted. Questions to be asked include why opponents oppose. But while they go a long way in their comprehensive analysis, there is scope for more when it comes to incentives, mindsets, and institutional cultures. The text teeters tantalisingly on the edge of the further step of standing in the shoes of decision-makers, or sitting on their chairs, and seeing things their way round from their stance or seat, and weighing gains and losses from their point of view.

Similarly *Critical Webs of Power and Change* states that 'Strengthening ... collective action, critical consciousness and leadership should always be a crucial strategy within people-centred advocacy, but will rarely be the only strategy' (8). It has a section (18) on analysing context and power. This includes

identifying and mapping the major players and their real and expressed interests. It also asks: 'Who do you consider your allies and opponents?' (18) and, 'Who in power can make the decisions that will help bring about these changes?' (41). On its CD ROM there is a section on 'Naming the powerful' and sections such as 'Mapping the Policy System and Mapping Power', and a whole chapter on 'Manoeuvring on the Inside: Lobbying and Negotiating'. Primary targets are the decision-makers with the most power to address an issue, and secondary targets are individuals who do not have the power to solve the problem but who are close to the primary target.

Similarly, in *Tools for Influencing Power and Policy*, the editor wrote:

Many of the policy tools in this special issue aim at engaging with rather than resisting powerful bodies such as companies and government agencies, albeit engaging tactically rather than playing along with the naïve idea that if stakeholders just sit down and talk, it will be all right. (Vermeulen 2005: 14)

The tools in that issue are grouped under three headings: build power to act; claim the tools of the powerful; take hold of participatory processes. The authors are careful to recognise and warn against the armoury of the powerful that can be deployed, including cooptation, deception, renegeing on agreements and resorting to force.

Finally, a similar orientation and emphases are also found on the IIED website (2006). This lists 26 tools for influencing decisions and decision making about natural resource management. Four groups of tools are identified – for understanding, for organising, for engaging and for ensuring. Understanding the motives and language of the powerful, and building alliances with sympathetic partners and possible champions are mentioned, but the orientation of the tools, as with the other three sources, is mainly bottom-up with 'well informed and well organised groups of marginalised people'.

In all these sources, the dominant strategy is to build countervailing power and to penetrate and influence upwards. All recognise the need for allies and friends. But more so, all see opponents who have to be confronted and tackled. As *The New Weave ...*

(VeneKlasen and Miller 2002: 225) has it, 'Rarely does anyone give up power without a fight'. Accepting and embracing conflict, the model and mindset are framed into a game which is predominantly zero-sum. Practical and realistic while this often is, it sees things only one way round. The question is whether it tends to obscure and undervalue opportunities which start with the realities and contexts of the powerful.

## 6 A complementary agenda

Seeing things from the decision-maker's point of view, and analysing how they can be influenced and helped, needs a leap of the imagination. This can generate a complementary agenda. While this is not absent from the four sources, it can go further than they do.

One approach is 'practical political economy'. For different measures or courses of action, key players are analysed for degree of gain, loss or neutrality. For 22 measures concerning water and trees in India, this was done in a matrix for the rural rich and less poor, field-level officials, and poorer rural people, enabling judgements about relative feasibility and degrees of win-win or win-lose (Chambers *et al.* 1989: 231–3).

Another approach is to support those of the powerful who are either allies or opponents and potential allies, for example providing them with information and arguments they can use. Treating those who are undecided, sitting on the fence, or even hostile, as allies can be self-fulfilling. People who are assumed to be going to act well are sometimes induced to do so by the expectation. It may be harsh to describe naïve optimism as Machiavellian but it can be worth trying: face-to-face confidence and assumptions that those with power will behave well gives them an opportunity to change and do so without loss of face.

These are elements of approaches to complement or even substitute for confrontation. To further illustrate, three more specific activities as part of what can become a much fuller repertoire are:<sup>4</sup>

- Search official statements of policy, mission statements and the like, and arm and reinforce policymakers with the rhetoric of their own organisations, agencies or governments to strengthen their power to argue within their bureaucracies

- Provide them with information in forms which they can use, in the language suiting the style of their organisations. This may best be done by an ally who has worked in the organisation or in a similar one
- Consult them informally about the most effective ways to proceed, and what pressures from outside could strengthen their hands internally.

On this last point, some NGO representatives for a large meeting on participation in a multilateral organisation were, over a decade ago, asked to come half a day early. The purposes included an informal request that they would not give too much praise to the progress made in the organisation. Those who had invited them wanted their colleagues to hear forceful criticism to strengthen their hands.

### 7 Power to empower: a win-win

Underpinning these points, and going further than them, is the argument that there is extensive unrealised potential for win-win solutions through uppers using their power over to empower. For those with power over in organisations, three main gains stand out. Although each deserves careful qualification, the main elements stated baldly are:

- 1 *Realism and knowledge.* All power over deceives (Chambers 1997: 76–101). Such power exercised as punitive control feeds fear, provokes prudent concealment and dissembling, and leads to error, myth and mutual deception. Conversely, democratic empowerment in a non-punitive learning mode allows and encourages realism.
- 2 *Efficiency and effectiveness.* This is a commonplace of management theory and practice. Power over with detailed top-down controls is inefficient and ineffective. Centralisation overloads uppers and the capacity of the centre, demotivates lowers, misses opportunities for lowers and peripheries to realise their potentials, and imposes standardisation which often misfits local diversity. Conversely, decentralised decision making decreases pressures on uppers and the centre, motivates lowers, and allows lowers and peripheries to realise more of their potentials, fitting local diversity.
- 3 *Responsible well-being.* Uppers and centres of authority often suffer overwork, anxiety and stress

from their responsibilities, their roles, and tense and conflictual relationships. Conversely, when lowers are empowered, stress for uppers is often replaced by satisfaction and the experiences of well-being, which flow from fair and good actions and relationships.

A wealth of common experience and evidence from cases could be adduced to support these points. A recent cameo is the research project *Children Decide: Power, Participation and Purpose in the Primary Classroom* (Cox et al. 2006). Children were facilitated to use PRA visual methods to analyse school and classroom decision making, and given space to make more decisions themselves. Typically, one teacher wrote:

One of the first things I realised ... was that the children had very little opportunity to make meaningful decisions in my class ... I reflected on the possibility that I was too used to making decisions for the children so I, as their teacher, could feel in control of my class and their behaviour. I became much more aware of the power structure within my class and started to think of more ways of distributing it throughout the class. I began to consider how many decisions I was needlessly making for the children ... My role as educator became more focused on enabling children to make informed decisions about how and what they wanted to learn. The relationship between the children and myself became much more of a partnership with the feeling that education was not done to my students but with them. (Cox et al. 2006: 195)

The teachers reported that they '... saw the changing relationship between teacher and children in terms of leading, guiding, coaching, rather than directive teaching' (Cox et al. 2006: 49).

There are indeed many ways in which those with power over can use it as power to empower. What follows draws especially on the personal experiences of facilitators, and appears widely applicable. The many actions which can empower include to:

- *Change behaviour and relationships.* This covers a huge range of personal behaviour and interaction, and includes many forms of encouragement and support

- *Convene and catalyse.* Uppers or others<sup>5</sup> bring lowers together. In practice, this is often done so that the upper exercises power over, in order to dominate, exploit, direct, organise or teach those who are convened. But convening can also be to empower. If the other behaviours are followed, the meeting which is convened can lead to sharing, analysis, learning, solidarity and both power within and power with for those who are, or were, lowers in the situation. Convening provides opportunities to catalyse. This entails initiating or accelerating processes, sometimes described as igniting. (In chemical catalysis the catalyst does not change, so the metaphor is not wholly apposite because catalysts (facilitators) in this mode themselves are changed by the process.)
- *Facilitate.* Uppers do not impose their ideas, or even agendas, but encourage lowers to do their own appraisals, analysis and planning, and come to their own conclusions. The slogans used in PRA apply here – hand over the stick, sit down, listen and learn, and shut up!, as do the many do's and don'ts for good facilitation (see for example Kumar 1996; Kaner *et al.* 1996)
- *Coach and inspire.* A team leader, a committee chair, a teacher, a trainer or other upper sees herself less in the image of a military officer who commands and controls, and more as a football coach who trains, encourages, supports and inspires
- *Ask questions.* Asking questions and leaving people to answer them can be an empowering way of opening up issues. For example, in transforming gender perceptions and relations (Harris, this *IDS Bulletin*) 'Ask them' in a PRA mode has been at times dramatically effective: asking lowers for their ideas and more so for their advice
- *Broker.* This entails acting as an intermediary, connecting people and organisations, supporting negotiations, and making minimum interventions to assure fair outcomes
- *Make enabling rules.* As in computer theory and practice, so in human organisation, minimum rules can enable complex and diverse emergent behaviour. On a computer and in human organisation the resulting behaviour can be in

practice unpredictable: three simple rules for random blobs on a screen lead them to form a flock and fly around; two rules – accurate and open accounting, and rotating leadership – lead to women's savings groups deciding their own norms, procedures and actions (Aloysius Fernandez 1996, pers. comm.).

Facilitation that empowers in modes such as these can transform the three disabilities of power over, turning an upper's power over from a problem into an opportunity: the deceptions of power may diminish or disappear, replaced by openness and realism, with scope for learning and keeping more up to date and in touch with a changing world; efficiency and effectiveness may be enhanced as lowers realise more of their potentials, and act more creatively and diversely with better local ownership and fit; and in place of overload, stress, anxiety and hostility, there may be better relationships, fulfilment and even fun.

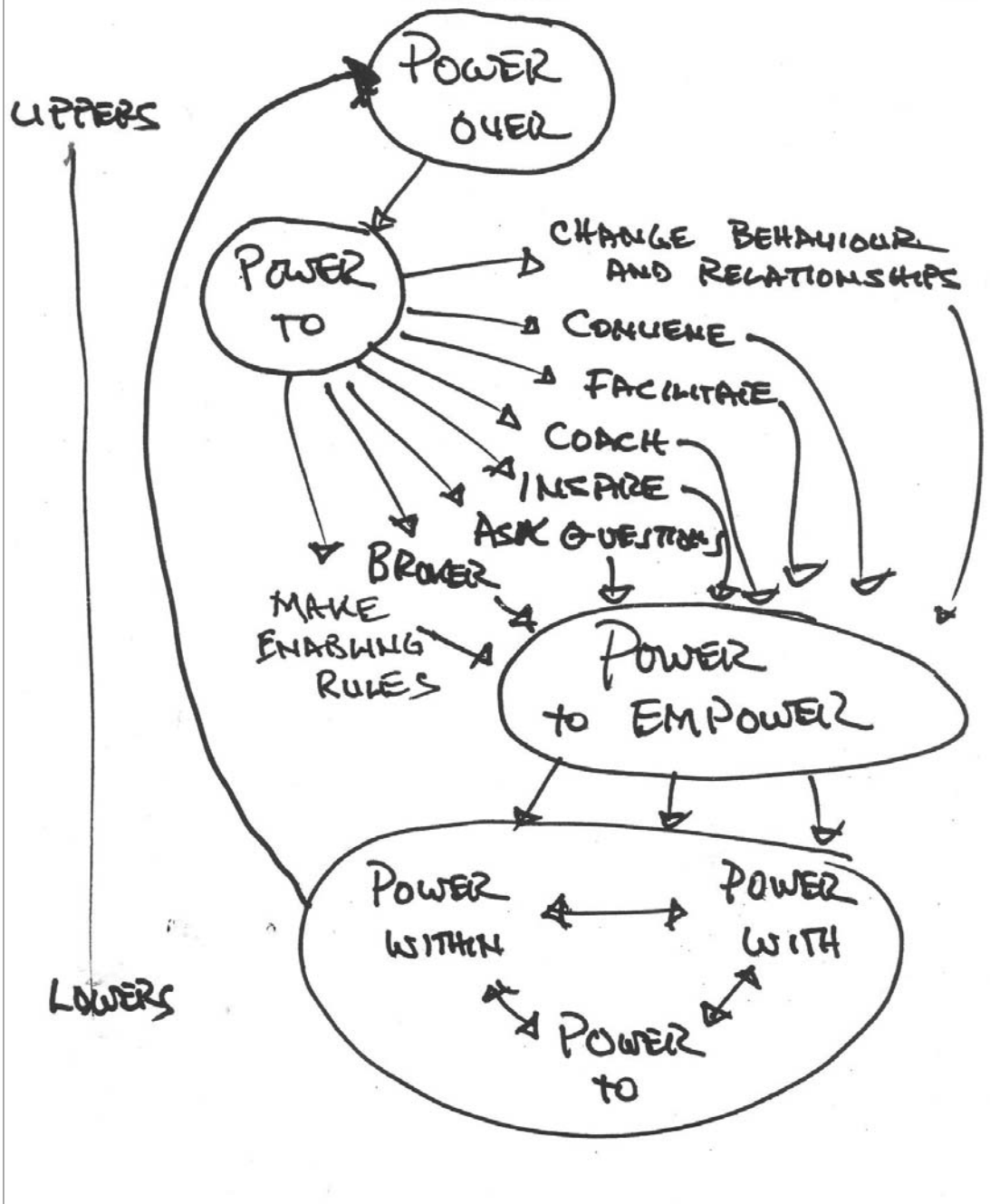
Beyond this, there is a realm of paradox. Aneurin Bevan said: 'The purpose of getting power is to be able to give it away', not a dictum many politicians have acted out. Going even further, one of the principles from the ActionAid workshop on Transforming Power was deliberate self-disempowerment expressed as:

We will help coalitions and networks of partners to develop the strength to challenge us. (ActionAid 2001: 22)

But even with that, there is a further paradox, expressed as: 'We are powerful when we question ourselves ... when we are self-critical. It is strange, but when we can really list and face our problems we have a new source of power' (ActionAid 2001: 10).

However, such reflections and actions by power-holders are scarcely on the development agenda. Yet if power is to be transformed, those actors who are powerful would seem to be crucial. In gender relations, this is recognised, with more attention paid now to working with men (Cornwall and White 2000; Harris, this *IDS Bulletin*). We have source books for those who work with the powerless. We do not have similar source books<sup>6</sup> for working with the powerful, to help them act and change. Has their time come? Are such source books overdue?

# TRANSFORMING POWER FROM ABOVE





## **8 A pedagogy for the powerful?**

All this points towards what appears a largely overlooked frontier in development thinking and practice. This is to evolve and apply a pedagogy for the powerful. This can include all who are upper in a context, but especially multiple uppers – the staff of aid agencies and NGOs, government officials, political leaders, priests, teachers, professionals of many sorts, and pervasively men. The methodological challenge is to find ways to enable powerful people like these to reflect and change. Any such pedagogy may be in its infancy, but there are promising practices. As a start, five areas of activity and innovation can be suggested below.

### **8.1 Workshops, retreats and reflection**

Reflective practice, as Pettit points out (this *IDS Bulletin*) has been increasingly accepted as a professional norm. Yet for people in powerful positions in development organisations, times and spaces for personal and joint reflection and learning, in quiet places far from offices, are astonishingly rare. If they do go to retreats or workshops, it is often only for part of the time, and 'Blackberries', mobile phones and the internet will not give them peace. Yet the irony is that such experience may matter more for them than for others.

A pioneering attempt to do this was as an eight-day ActionAid workshop for 40 people convened in Dhaka in 2001 (ActionAid 2001). We thought we had gone to share our experiences with participatory approaches and methods. Had we known it was going to be about power and relationships, we might have been less willing to take part. Some who were more powerful might have felt this would be a waste of their time, or a challenge to their authority. The experience was both traumatic and transformative. Those of us who were usually multiple uppers were repeatedly induced to acknowledge and offset our power. While there can be no substitute for the personal experience of such a workshop, the record and review of this one is an eloquent and challenging source of insight (ActionAid 2001).

### **8.2 Training to facilitate**

Arguably, all development professionals should be facilitators, and all should be trained in facilitation. The three days of training in facilitation for staff from International Agricultural Research Centres were inspiring and seminal, and reportedly led to changes

of behaviour, the way meetings were held and relationships.<sup>8</sup> Training may, indeed, be an inappropriate word, for it can carry associations with didactic teaching and even Pavlov's dogs, while processes of learning and changing are more personal, experiential and evolutionary. Neither should this be limited to one or a few categories of people. It is in the spirit of participatory and non-dominating relationships that in some sense, everyone is a facilitator, everyone including, and especially but not only, the powerful.

### **8.3 Face-to-face direct experience**

Approaches have been evolving to enable senior and other development professionals to listen and learn from poor and marginalised people, and to experience and understand something of their lives, realities and priorities. Participatory action research (Jupp 2005) and week-long periods in the field listening to and learning from 'people of concern' (Groves 2005; UNHCR 2006) are two examples. The most common and spreading are immersions and facilitated immersion workshops, typically with a few days and nights in a community (ActionAid International 2006; Irvine *et al.* 2006 cited in Eyben 2006). These have already proved valuable for general exposure, and have also been tailored for specific contexts and purposes. There is a potential here for empathy and insight, for feeling as well as thinking, and for direct experiential learning.

### **8.4 Peer influence between the powerful**

To gain the attention of the very powerful and influence them can demand prestige, credibility and courage. These have been characteristics of Bono and Geldof. Bono has been remarkably successful with some of the world's leaders. In 2002, he took the US Treasury Secretary, Paul O'Neill, on a four-country tour of Africa (Vallely 2006). Geldof remains prominent in trying to hold the G8 nations to their 2005 Gleneagles commitments. Both continue to challenge governments, not just on debt and aid, but especially on trade. It is now for other individuals, and for more organisations, to 'do a Bono' and 'do a Geldof' and affirm ideals with actions.

The same applies to philanthropy with the examples of George Soros, Bill Gates and now Warren Buffett, and many others on a lesser scale, some of whom seek to remain unknown. Whatever reservations and criticisms there may be of the origins of the money or its uses, even a cynic accomplished in casuistry

would find it difficult to argue that the world would be a better place without, for example, the Gates Foundation. And the best people to encourage others among the wealthy to do likewise are precisely those who are philanthropists already.

### 8.5 Well-being

Acknowledging and transforming personal power as an upper can be difficult and painful, but also liberating. The resulting changes in behaviour and relationships can bring long-term gains to well-being and fulfilment for uppers as well as lowers. The opportunity is then for win-win solutions with better relationships for all, reducing their disabilities and realising more of their potentials. For uppers, with the exercise of less controlling power *over* can come a better experience of life.

If the bottom line in development is equity and the good life, a key power-related question to ask is what is a good life for a powerful person. A 54-year-old man from the town of Kok Yangak, Jalal Abad Region was reported to have said:

If somebody's well-being is based on the ill-being of someone else it is not a true well-being.  
(World Bank 1999)

Arguably, this can be applied to all exploitative upper-lower relationships. Much of the material well-being of those who are 'better off' is based on the ill-being of others. But the other side of the coin is the scope for offsetting that ill-being when those who are better off use their resources and power to work on the side of the poor, marginalised and weak. They then gain the well-being that comes with responsible action. A man who beats his wife is not a happy man. If he changes, he stands to gain, as does the woman he beats, in many social and psychological ways.

On these lines, for Jung (1916) there was a dialectic of power and love. At the personal level:

Where love rules, there is no will to power, and where power predominates, love is lacking. The one is the shadow of the other.

Is Jung's opposition of power and love a profound aspiration and challenge? In gender relations, between parents and children and also more widely in family, community, society, organisations and politics? And can a will to power be transformed, in a spirit of love, into a will to empower?

Answers to these questions may usually be affirmative but they have to be conditional to context. In organisations, in politics and in conditions of danger and insecurity, the will to power cannot be so clearly opposed to love: for some, exercise of power and control are needed. The key distinction is between the will to power and the responsible exercise of power. We need organisations with structures of power, political leadership, which exercises power on behalf of citizens, and power and control as one means of providing protection in danger and insecurity, but in each case exercised with humane responsibility.

The theme of this article endorses and flows from making power and relationships central to development, as argued in *Relationships for Aid* (Eyben 2006). Power and relationships are pervasively implied by concerns with gender, empowerment, participation, ownership, accountability, transparency and partnership. All these words have been mainstreamed in the development lexicon but without realising their implications for mindsets, behaviour and attitudes. The Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness (OECD 2005) uses the words partner and partnership 96 times,<sup>9</sup> but neither power nor relationship once. What is going on? Are power and relationships, and what these two words represent, an elephant in the room, so large, occupying so much space, that it is not seen? Is one of the biggest challenges for the twenty-first century to recognise, tame and transform that elephant? And if so, is the place to start with a pedagogy for the powerful, enabling them to understand how they are disabled by power, and how in many ways they can gain if they use their power to empower those weaker than themselves?

## Notes

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- 1 Power relations are often gendered, for example by space and activity, with men 'uppers' to women in some (and often most) but women 'uppers' to men in others, even in strongly patriarchal cultures.
  - 2 Being stripped of power evokes an image of sudden, humiliating nakedness of a priest who is unfrocked.
  - 3 See for example, Groves and Hinton (2004), Gaventa, Eyben and the other articles (2006) in this *IDS Bulletin*.
  - 4 See for example Holland and Blackburn (1998) *passim* for other actions.
  - 5 The others besides 'uppers' who can bring people together can include peers, strangers, even 'lowers' themselves. In this discussion we are concerned mainly with 'uppers'.

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- 6 I shall be grateful to anyone who can provide examples to show this statement to be false.
- 7 For an earlier and fuller treatment, under the rubric 'A pedagogy for the non-oppressed' (with apologies to Paulo Freire), see Chambers (1995).
- 8 The training was conducted by Sam Kaner, the author with others of *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*.
- 9 I have not checked every noun, but I think that with their 96 mentions, 'partner' and 'partnership', counted together, are the most frequently used nouns in the Paris Declaration, the next two being 'donor' with 70 and 'aid' with 61. The adjective 'effective' has 38 mentions, but 'efficient' and 'efficiency' are strikingly absent. Rosalind Eyben has pointed out that this will be because efficiency is so fundamental that it does not need to be named. Power and relationships, I would argue, are even more fundamental but are not named for the opposite reason, that they are not recognised, and if they were, it would embarrass and threaten the powerful.

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