

Annex 6

The power cube: Levels, spaces and forms of power

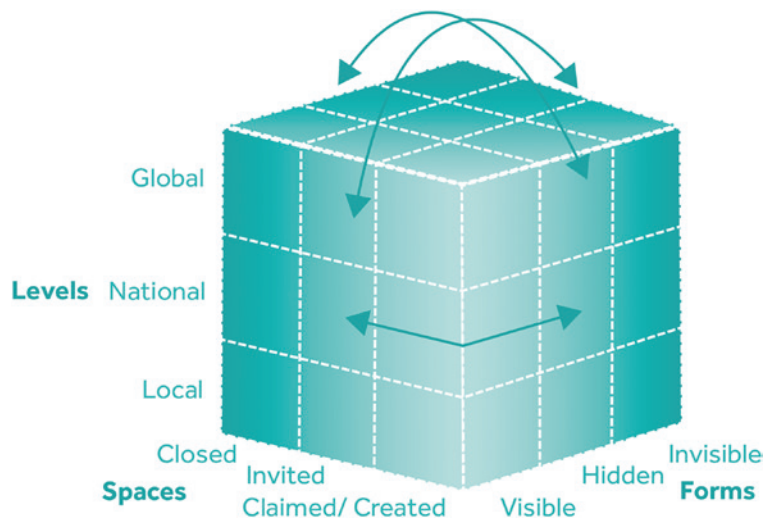
Gaventa's power cube (see Figure A6.1) represents three dimensions that determine power levels, spaces and forms.¹

Levels are levels of governance – global, national, local etc.

Forms refer to different levels of visibility of the wielded power. Visible power refers to the more observable aspects of the political process; hidden power is where certain key actors (e.g. economic powers) may exercise control through shaping what issues and decisions enter the public arena in the first place; and invisible power (norms of beliefs of legitimacy) includes the psychological aspects of power such as how it can influence people's perceptions of what constitutes a legitimate grievance or issue for action.

There are three types of spaces where power is exercised. These are closed, invited and claimed/created spaces. In closed spaces, deliberations are closed to the public and decisions are made

Figure A6.1 The power cube: the levels, spaces and forms of power



Source: Gaventa and Martorano (2006). See also www.powercube.net for other presentations.

by bureaucrats or economic elites. In invited spaces, the public and policy-makers come together for consultation and public dialogue. In claimed spaces, citizens exercise power through small-scale acts of resistance or larger-scale protests and social movements,² or indeed by claiming, rather than being invited to, spaces in formal policy domains.

Notes

- 1 Gaventa and Martorano 2016.
- 2 For a fuller discussion, see Gaventa and Martorano 2016, 14–22.

Reference

Gaventa, J and B Martorano (2016), 'Inequality, Power and Participation: Revisiting the Links', *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 47 No. 5, 11–30, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.19088/1968-2016.164>.