TWP 'HOW TO' NOTE #5

Actor and Institutional Analysis

The aim of actor and institutional analysis is to help KOMPAK teams understand how and why the political context around them in changing, and make politically-informed decisions in response.

KOMPAK's emerging approach to this analysis follows and adapts the DLP's **'everyday political analysis'** tool and Sida's **Power Analysis: A Practical Guide**, and involves a simple two step approach.

- Step 1: Understanding interests: What makes people tick?
- Step 2: Understanding change: What space and capacity do people have to effect change?

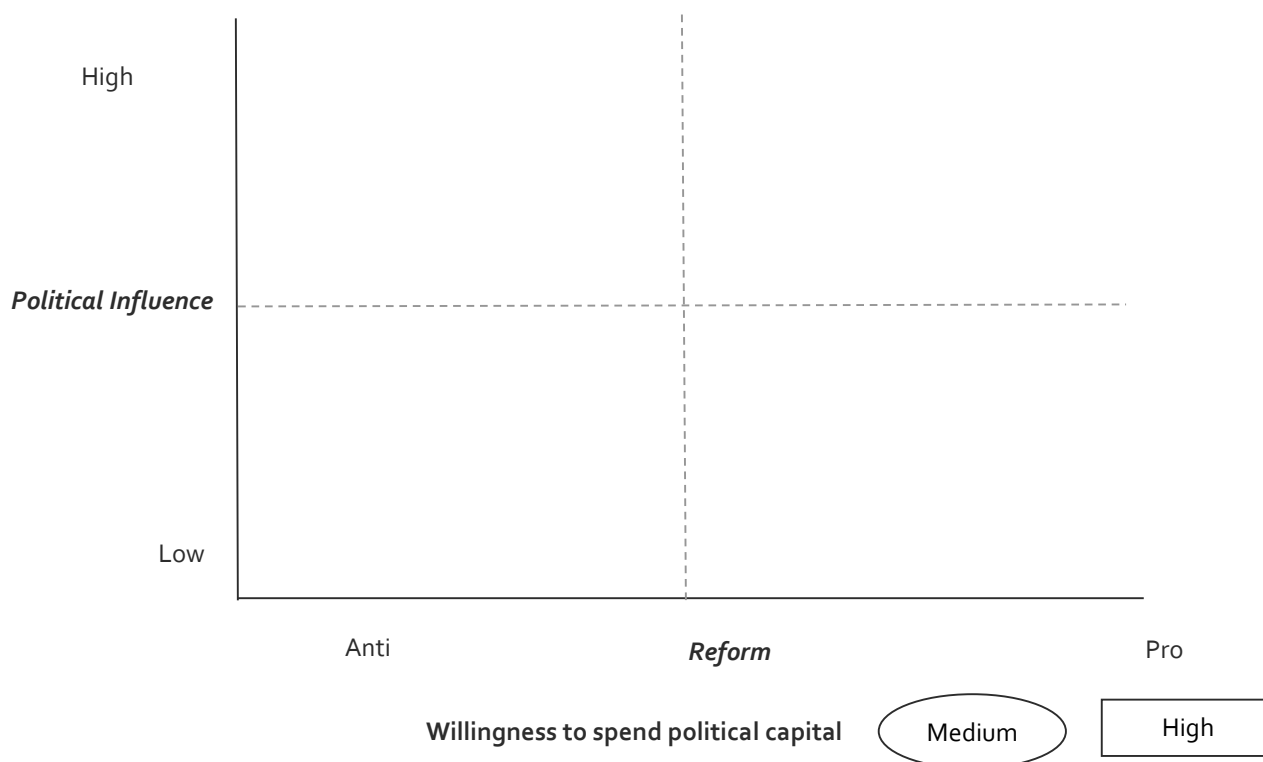**Step 1: Understanding interests: What makes people tick?**

As a first step, sit with your team and map (on the following diagram) who the key stakeholders are that have the potential to influence the problem you want to address.

Place them on the map according to how influential they are (left hand axis) or how supportive they are of the reform (right hand side of the axis). For example, if the CEO of a company was very influential but anti-reform, you would list them in the top left hand corner.

As you include these actors, put a square around those who you think are *very likely* to use their political capital to make a change, and a circle around those who are only *moderately likely* to spend their political capital. You may also wish to use lines or arrows to indicate where different individuals or groups have a connection to each other (e.g. the CEO of a company might be the sister or brother of a prominent academic).

While you are completing your map, keep in mind that your stakeholders can be both individuals (e.g. the President) as well as networks, organizations, groups and coalitions (e.g. a Government Ministry, a union lobby group, the media etc). They can come from a wide range of backgrounds: government, NGO, academia, international donor, private companies, the media, a CSO, a religious group, community leader etc.

Actor and Action Map[1]

High

Political Influence

Low

Anti   *Reform*   Pro

Willingness to spend political capital   (Medium)   [High]

Once you have completed your map, ask yourself the following questions to help you understand what is motivating the stakeholders on your map: what is making them 'tick'.

1.1 **What do they want?** "Is it to secure a source of income? To secure power? To repay a favour? To make the world a better place? Is the person pursuing short or longer term goals? Is the objective to block change or a reform/ action or actually inaction? And how confident are they in their position?"[2]

1.2 **What constraints do they face**? Are the constraints formal (e.g. policies, laws)? Are they informal (e.g. unwritten rules, such as social norms, religious norms, gender norms or cultural expectations of what they should do or not do)? Or is it more about structural factors – such as population pressures, the class system, land distribution or historic or cultural trends which over time have shaped their behavior?

1.3 **Who and what is influencing them**? "Does their behavior reflect the interests of others? How are the interests of those they work with, or other organisations of individuals, influencing

> **Best-Guesses are OK!**
> Remember that your answers is simply your best-guess at this point in time. It is OK if you don't fully understand what is motivating an individual or group, much of this you can only learn-by-doing when you build relationships and implement your activities.

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[1] Credit for this map – Jaime Faustino, The Asia Foundation, presented to DFAT in 2013 as part of PEA training

[2] DLP's **'everyday political analysis'** p2.

How to Note #5 **| Governance** Policy Brief Series, Issue 1

them? Is this through sources of money, access to or security or employment to other resources? Do others wield authority (traditional, political, religious) over them? Think outside their organization or ministry too:"[3] what about international actors including donors, or your own project or team? Do you have any influence over them?

1.4 **Where does gender fit in this picture**? How do gender norms reinforce the relationships between powerful actors on your map – *think here about not only formal relationships (e.g. Minister and his/ her department) but also informal relationships (e.g. intimate relations, domestic life, family etc)*? "Is legislation gender neutral, or do particular laws reinforce and sustain subordinate or discriminated gender roles?" What can be said about both the situation of women in general on this map, as well as the situation of particular groups of women (e.g. unmarried women, single mothers etc) or of disadvantaged men? And last but not least: *who have you left off your map and why* – the disadvantaged, marginalised or those without power – and what does this mean for your analysis?[4]

Step 2: Understanding change: What space and capacity do people have to effect change?

Now, given our best-guess at what is driving these individuals or groups, and the constraints they face, we must now assess how realistic it is that they can lead change.

As the DLP reminds us *"people will always weigh up the costs and benefits of any change to them, but this is almost never a mechanical process. There is almost always room for maneuver, and people can be creative in making the system 'work for them' within existing constraints or by renegotiating them. This space to maneuver is often found or created at considerable cost, and it will be for the individuals to decide whether they are willing to pay the price"*.

2.1 **Who are they key decision-makers on your map?** "Who gets to decide, vote, sign off, fund, chair the process? This is not just about the formal decision-making chain but those people / organisations that hold informal power over a decision. Who could veto it? Can they influence these people? Do these other people influence them? This is critical to a political view of the world; we need to look beyond our usual focus on the poor and their (claimed) representatives, and ask who or what is key to effective change".

2.2 **Do they have potential coalition partners?** "Are they trying to go it alone? Are there like-minded individuals or groups? Can they work beyond the usual suspects, e.g. private sector, the military, faith leaders? What's the glue that could hold the coalition together? Do you know if there's been a deal? Are interests aligned around an objective or values? Are they key brokers/'kingmakers' that hold different parts together?"

2.3 **What are their key decision points?** "What is the known timeline? Are there windows of opportunity? How many decision points need to be passed for them to achieve their objectives? Which decision points present the most risk to them achieving their objectives, and why?"

2.4 **How likely are the 'pro' side to succeed?** Is their framing of the issue likely to succeed? "Will they convince other powerful stakeholders that the change is in their interests? Does it resonate with local social and political norms? If it doesn't, is it likely to provoke antagonism and backlash? Are they doing so on purpose?"

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[3] Op cit.
[4] Adapted from Pettit, J. (2013) Power Analysis: A Practical Guide. Stockholm: Sida.

How to Note #5 **| Governance** Policy Brief Series, Issue 1