

# Context Assessment: Influence Mapping - Resources - Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

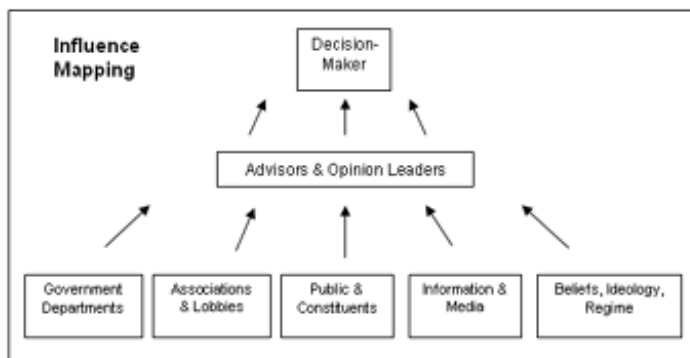
<http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/details.asp?id=5697&title=influence-mapping-stakeholder-analysis>

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Influence Mapping identifies the individuals and groups with the power to effect a key decision. It further investigates the position and motives of each player and the best channels through which to communicate with them. The approach is also known as Stakeholder Influence Mapping, Power Mapping or the Arena of Influence. In the business sector it is similar to the Market Segmentation which analyses the structure of the market and details consumer interests and behaviours. By its careful application, think tanks can tune their messages and arguments to different audiences, and better understand how to channel their efforts.

## Detailed Outline of the Process

Influence Mapping builds naturally on Stakeholder Analysis (and, to a degree, has similarities with the drivers or influences identified in Force Field Analysis). Be clear over the policy issue or change being analysed and single out those in high positions of power. First differentiate between the decision-makers who have the actual responsibility to make the decisions in a specific policy area, and their opinion-leaders who can influence them or lead their opinion, and who are generally more accessible. Remember, absolute power is a myth. Every executive depends on a group of advisors or with whom they cannot operate. They are accountable to, a wide group of interest groups, constituencies and lobbies. Further they may be influenced by the nature of the information and research they receive, how it is reported in the media, the political regime, not to mention their own beliefs and ideologies. It is often helpful to map the information as a pyramid of actors and influences (see example).



The construction of this interest map or 'pyramid' brings about rich discussion. The distance from the bottom represents how influential the factor is and, critically, the route by which this influence reaches the decision-maker. It's worth trying to detail the key individuals and institutions that carry the influence - whether they be specific people, newspapers, churches or so forth. This allows the group to analyse possible Influence Channels - entry points to effect change.

Once key channels have been identified the group should analyse their position on the topic, their key motives and their accessibility. Are they a supporter, an ally or an uncommitted 'fence sitter'? Sometimes they can have a different status on different issues. What are their interests and motives for a particular position on the issue? What is their agenda, either stated or implicit? What drives them to take this position, and what constraints do they face that might make it difficult for them to move from this position. This may be ideological or personal (e.g. a belief in the primacy of the market), it could be cultural or social (e.g. the belief that alcohol is bad and should not be legal), it might be financial (e.g. for monetary gain) or it may be political, based on the views of their interest groups, supporters, patrons and voters, the constituents who give them their position of power. Finally assesses how easy it will be to gain access and present the evidence or case.

## A Good Example

The British Parliament is a good example of a government body that actually has very little actual control over the decisions that are made, but has a high degree of influence over Ministers (the main decision makers) through debates, questions, select committees or high status and well-connected individuals. A think tank can therefore justify targeting parliament in order to influence the

appropriate Minister, because the influence will be carried through the influence pyramid to the decision-maker. On some issues, and at certain points in the policy process, Parliament does have real decision-making power. Their influence channels might be public opinion (particularly in their constituency) or media editorials. A think tank might then decide to focus its energies on informing the media or the public.

DFID's policy processes during the making of the 1997 White Paper on Poverty and International Development illustrate these key influences at work. Clare Short, Gordon Brown, Tony Blair and the writer David Batt were highly influential. Within DFID, economists were the most influential of the DFID advisers. The OECD/DAC had a major influence through the International Development Targets. The very low influence of poor people remained, and developing country governments were less influential than those in developed countries. Public opinion in the UK remained much less influential than commercial interests. Some key moments were noted in the period, such as Clare Short recognising the need to 'ride the dragon' of economic growth. Economists were strong in the years before the first White Paper - then shrunk into the background only to return centre-stage with the second White Paper's emphasis on well- channelled growth.

This tool first appeared in the ODI Toolkit, *Tools for Policy Impact*