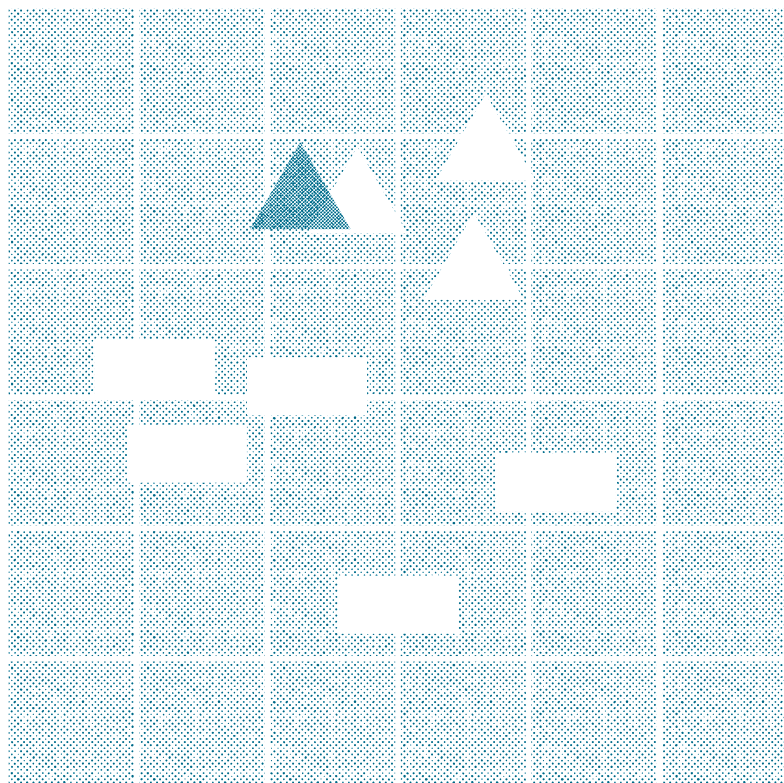


POWER POINTS



**A Llano Del Rio Guide to
Power in Los Angeles**

by Rosten Woo

This Llano Del Rio Guide to Los Angeles shares the *Power Analysis* toolkit developed by the community organization SCOPE. After developing this tool in 1990s Los Angeles, SCOPE adapted it for national and international use. *Power Analysis* is offered as an example of activist design—a visualization technique that is by nature collaborative, social, and knowledge producing. *Power Analysis* is presented in this guide alongside two related tools, *Force Field Analysis* and *Network Diagramming*.

So, you want to see how Power works in Los Angeles?

Bad news first, you're going to have to draw it yourself. The good news is that this guide provides a structure to help you do it.

But first, a little background. Twenty years ago, Los Angeles erupted into violence hours after police officers were acquitted of brutally beating Rodney King, an event that was captured on video and spread across media outlets worldwide. The image of the assault, as well as a city on fire, caught the world's attention. But the tragic moment didn't tell the world about the decades that preceded it—decades of disinvestment and neglect—which left South L.A.'s families powerless, without a voice in government or much hope for the future.

The group Action for Grassroots Empowerment and Neighborhood Development Alternatives (AGENDA) emerged from this event with a long-term systemic analysis, applying it as a vehicle for rethinking community organizing. AGENDA later became Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE).

The *Power Analysis* tool was designed by SCOPE's founder, Anthony Thigpen, who got his start in organizing with the Black Panthers in Oakland. In the 1980s, he worked with Jobs With Peace, a crucible for much of Los Angeles' progressive leadership from the nineties til today.

Thigpen was interested in making community organizing more scientific, systematic, and structured. He wanted trackable results. The idea of mapping a constellation of power players was influenced by both the *Art of War*, and *Force Field Analysis*; a graphical tool developed by the social and organizational psychologist Kurt Lewin as a way to break down complex problems into their constituent parts. Lewin, a founder of modern social psychology, had fled to the U.S. from Nazi Germany, later becoming the director of MIT's Center for Group Dynamics. He coined the terms "action research" and "group dynamics".

In *Force Field Analysis*, the *status quo* is defined as the point in-between two opposing forces. The subject undergoing analysis then understands how to change the *status quo* by changing the forces, or relative weights of the forces, acting upon it. This tool, in turn, relied on the concept from gestalt psychology of "The Field"—a space where problems and relationships play out.

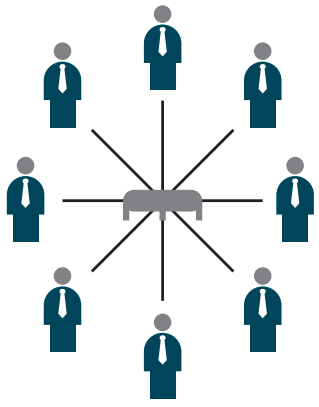


EXERCISE 1: FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

1. Write down a proposal for a change you'd like to make in the world. For example, you may write, "close the Chevron refinery in my neighborhood" or "world peace".
2. Write out all of the forces working in favor of this change (Driving Force), and all forces that you feel restrain this change.
3. Give each force a rating between 1 and 10, basing the figure on the amount of power you imagine this force exerts on the current situation.
4. Add up the #'s in each column to compare how you weigh the driving and restraining forces.

Proposed Change:

DRIVING FORCE	RATING	RESTRAINING FORCE	RATING
→		←	
→		←	
→		←	
→		←	
→		←	
→		←	
→		←	
→		←	
→		←	
→		←	
→		←	
TOTAL		TOTAL	



Having completed Exercise One, did anything surprise you about the agenda that you made? Did it turn out the way you thought? Did it clarify anything about the situation? Did it obscure anything?

While Thigpenn was influenced by Lewin's model, he also thought it needed to be changed to be useful when applied to community organizing.

Force Field Analysis was intended to be applied at the scale of a human being—to describe the equilibrium point that explained a person's current state in a continuum of personal change. When applied to a larger social system some shortcomings become clear: How do you account for multiple actors? What if there is more than one decision-maker?

On its own, *Force Field Analysis* doesn't help elucidate these aspects of a social power dynamics.

The *Power Analysis* takes the idea of the field and expands it from the individual to the social and political realm. Instead of a single decision-maker acted upon by outside forces, the tool imagines *many* decision-makers, many proponents and opponents, each with their own possible levels of influence and agreement.

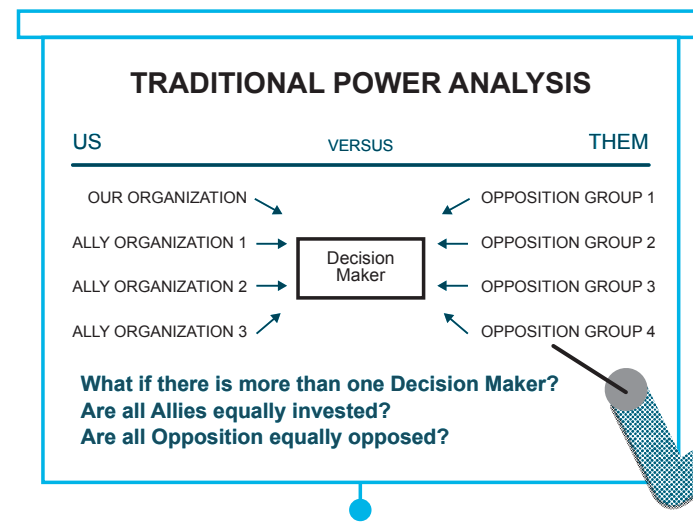
The *Power Analysis* looks beyond the "Us vs. Them" mentality of *Force Field Analysis*. It encourages groups to ask who has a stake in a situation beyond the obvious opposition? Who can influence the decision-makers? Who has resources to bring about the necessary change? How invested are power players in addressing change?

Before continuing further, please spend ~5 minutes on Exercise 2, below.

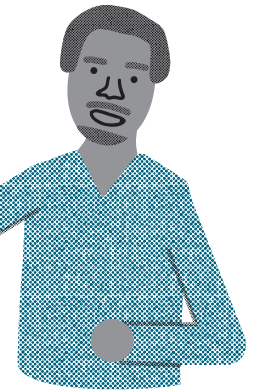
A *Network Diagram*, like the one you just created, is frequently the kind of "picture of power" associated with television crime shows, conspiracy theorists, and political artworks like Mark Lombardi's drawings, Josh On's *They Rule* or the work of Bureau D'etudes. This kind of diagram emerges from the notion of "interlocking board directorates"—networks of powerful elites that rule society through overlapping appointments in public and private organizations.

The *Power Analysis* (on next page) is different, it's not a distant view of "Them"—those who hold power. Instead it is a kind of expanded self-portrait. This form of representation forces the people who construct it to reckon themselves as agents—people who might have influence and an agenda. It does not assume the role of victim or subject.

Instead of creating a web of relationships (a practice that may work for charting organized crime, mapping real estate holdings, or identifying the chain of command in paramilitary organizations, but rarely clarifies power as practiced in the real world), the *Power Analysis* suggests relations by plotting



**What if there is more than one Decision Maker?
Are all Allies equally invested?
Are all Opposition equally opposed?**



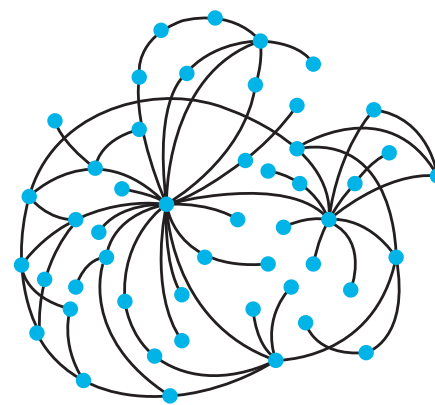
actors on the same field. Proximity shows similarity in influence and position—not the nature of actors influence on one another.

One of the critical aspects of SCOPE's approach to *Power Analysis* is that it is established by organizing a personal analysis around an agenda. You have to have a point of view in order to use the tool. Once this point of view is established, you place yourself and your allies within the same field of operations as your opponents. You cannot construct

the *Power Analysis* without first forwarding your own idea of how the world should be.

The *Power Analysis* tool can be done alone, but is most often used in group settings with a facilitator. All you need is something to write on. The *Power Analysis* is meant to help a group hold a conversation. The conversation identifies problems and conditions, as well as community-led solutions. It facilitates the creation of a strategic campaign and organizing plan.

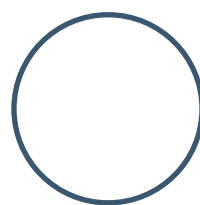
The *Power Analysis* is designed to be redrafted at many different points in an organizing campaign. It is a living, breathing tool that needs to be revisited to track the changes in the landscape.



EXERCISE 2: NETWORK DIAGRAM

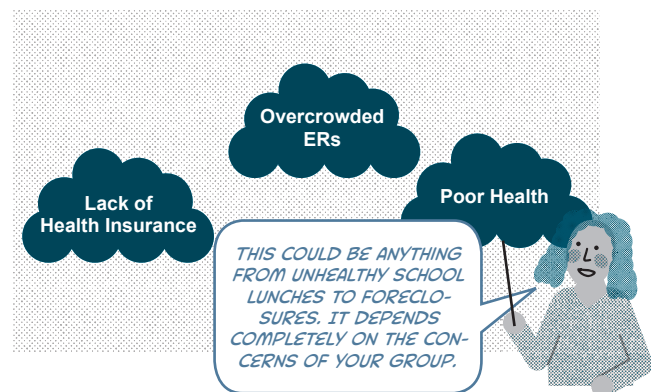
In the circle at the center of this diagram write the name of a central actor or decision-maker in the situation you considered in Exercise 1.

Next elaborate a "network" by placing key allies and opponents in your situations into the diagram. Write their names and circle them. Finally, draw lines connecting any actors that you believe have significant interactions.

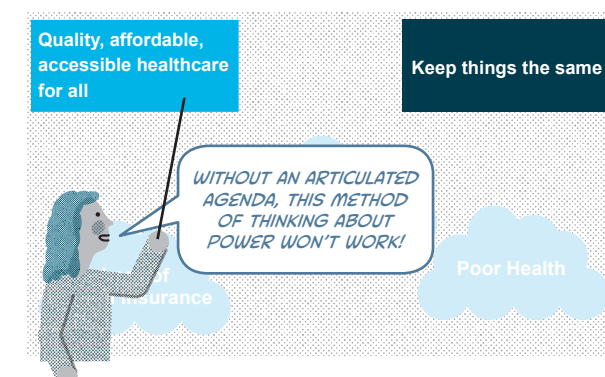


EXERCISE 3: POWER ANALYSIS

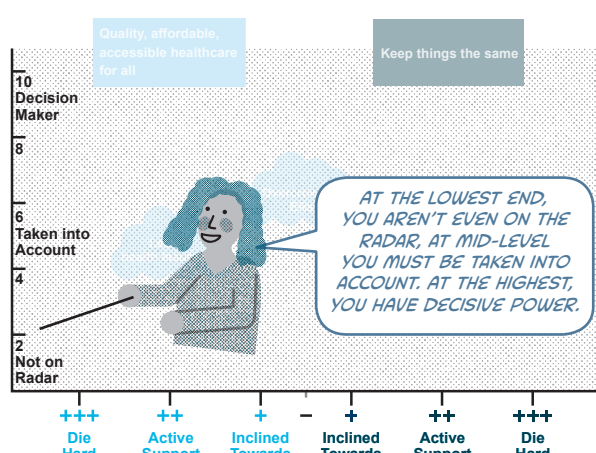
1. To focus your conversation, identify the problems and conditions you or your group seeks to change. Place them in the center top of the grid on the right side of this page. Limit yourself to the top two or three that you would like to focus on at this time.



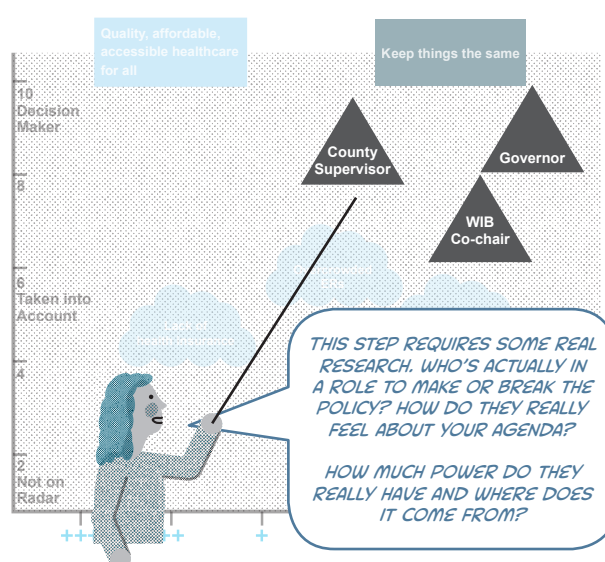
2. Next, place your own agenda in the top left corner. Your agenda should be your response to the current problems and conditions. (This should be the same agenda you formulated in Exercises 1 and 2.) Place the opposing agenda in the top right. The opposing agenda should include what motivates the opposition to keep things as they are.



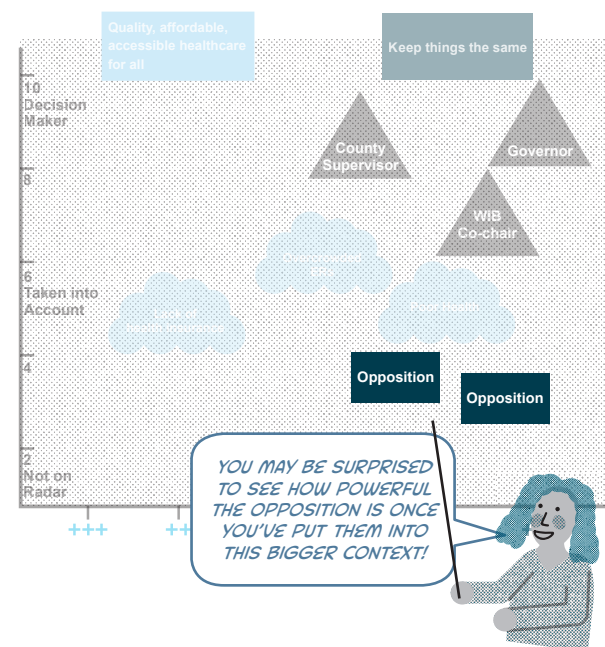
3. Now define the axes. The left-right axis defines whether someone or something is in agreement or in opposition to your agenda. The Y-axis is how much influence they have. You will use these axes to place the decision-makers, opposition, allies, and unorganized social groups onto the grid.



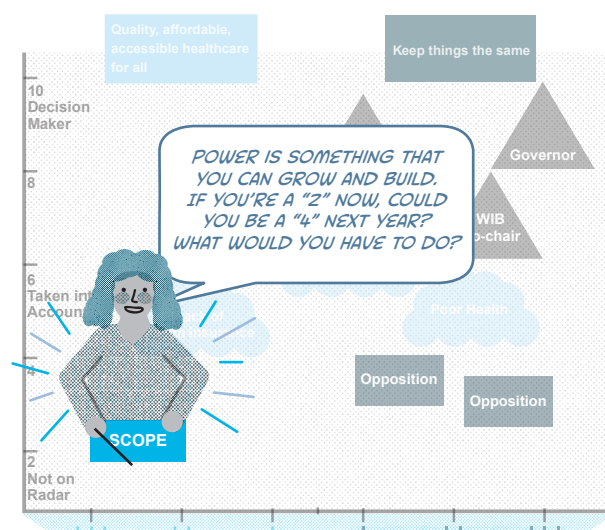
4. Next, identify key decision-makers in this particular struggle. Given what you know, where do you think they fall in the spectrum of the opposing agendas? These decision-makers are your ultimate targets—the people that you want to influence and bring towards your agenda.



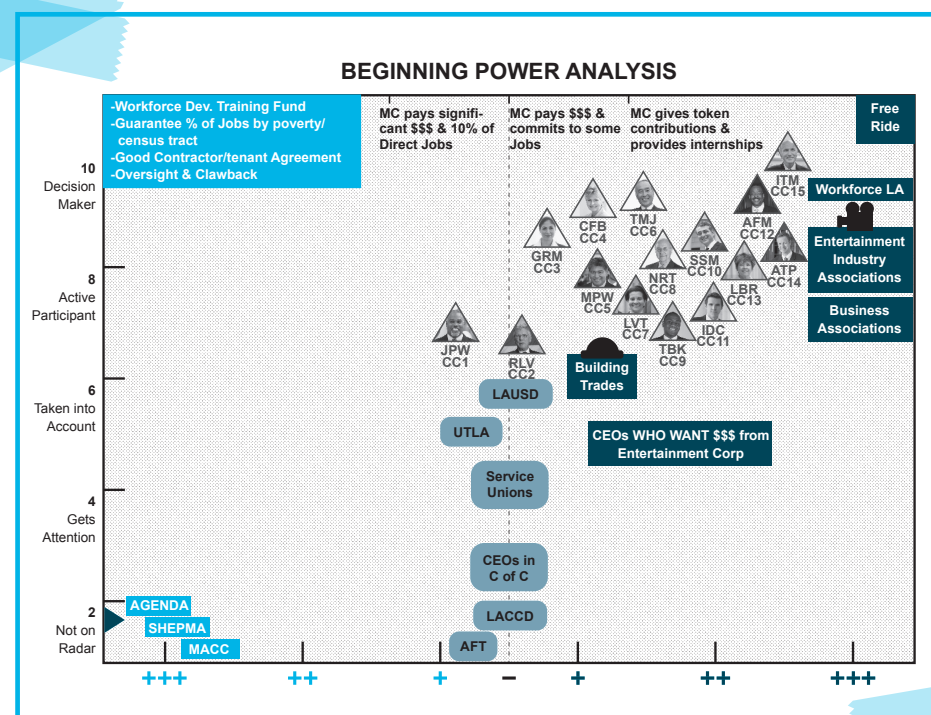
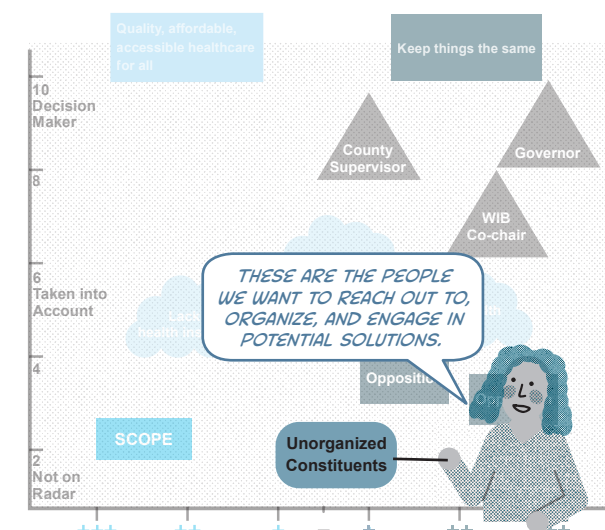
5. Figure out who the organized opposition is. These are not individuals or generalized groups of people but ORGANIZATIONS with proper names who have organized power.



6. This next step is crucial. Place yourself and your allied organizations into the grid. How much power do you hold? Are you on the radar? Are you taken into account? Be realistic about how powerful your allies really are. It's easy to be overly optimistic—power takes time to grow!



7. Finally, you can add in "unorganized constituencies" or social groups. These are groups of people who are not yet organized but who have a stake in the issue—the people who will be impacted by the outcome of your work whether they know it or not.

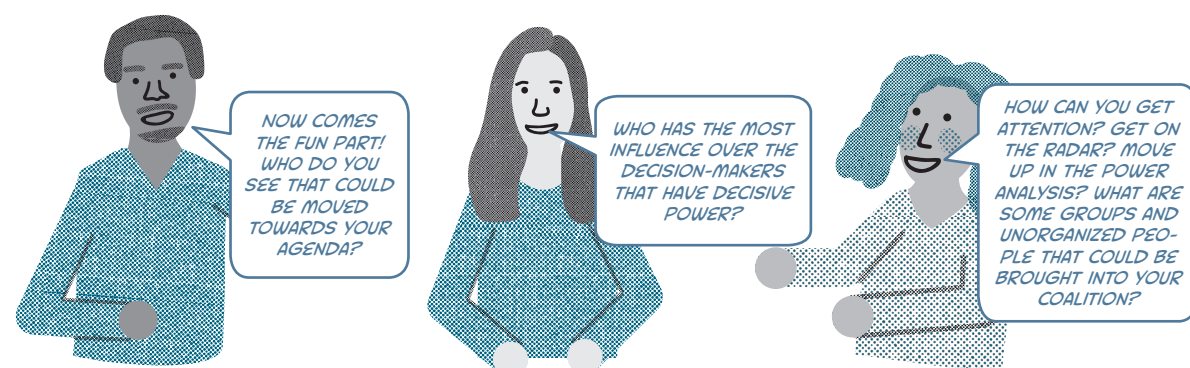


8. Analyze! Perhaps an opponent is not as powerful as you first imagined now that you see them in this larger context? Maybe you've discovered a possible ally that you hadn't considered before?

What does the landscape tell you about challenges you face? How about the opportunities you have? What kind of research must you do? What does it tell you about who you need to engage and where you need to build power? Is there an opportunity to build upon past or existing work? Does your fight have a potential to create long-term systemic change?

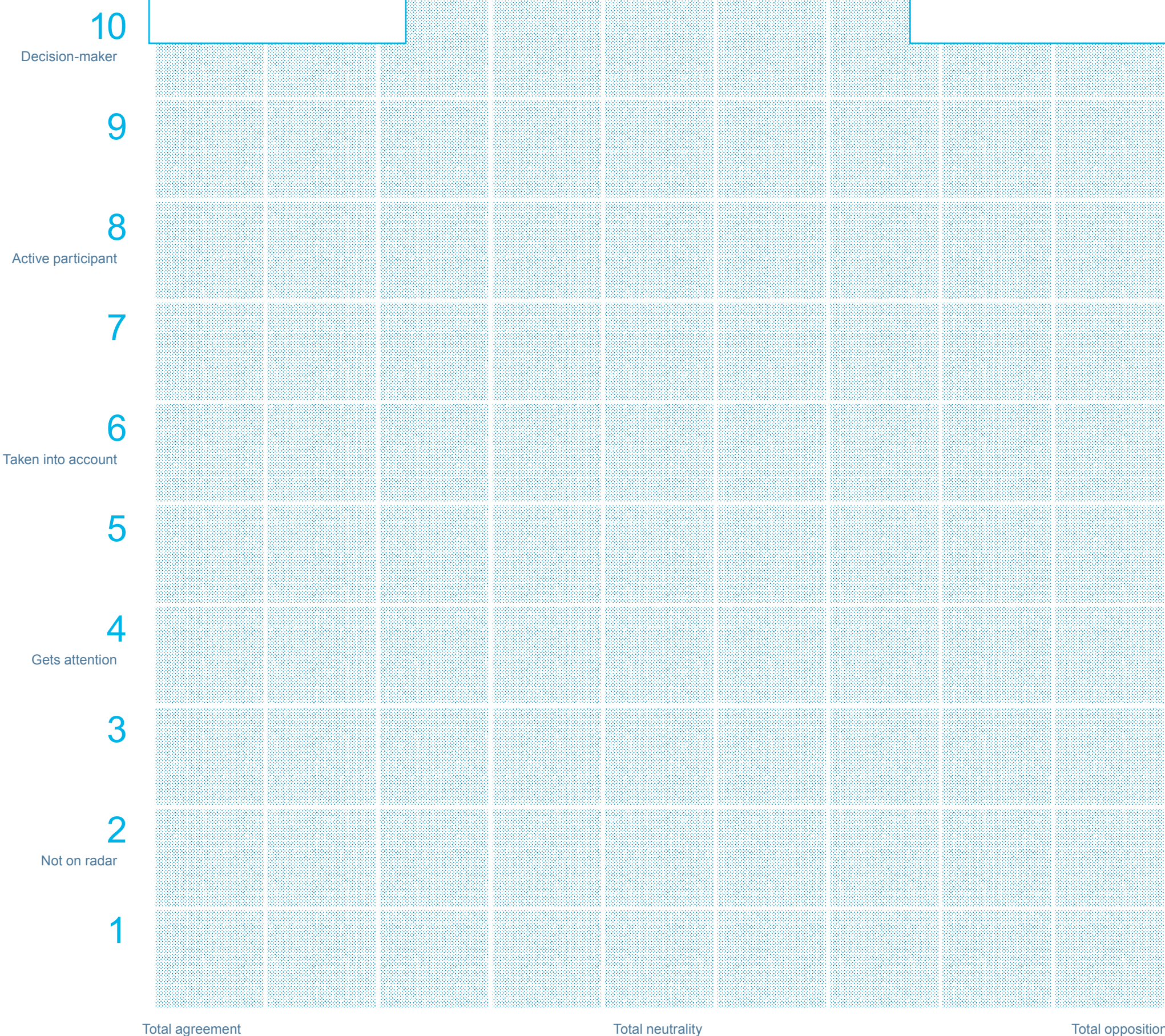
This exercise is sometimes best constructed on a wall so there is room to get up and move around—move targets, allies, and oppositions physically. Here you might be able to figure out groups that you could bring into your coalition, imagine ways to influence certain decision-makers, or neutralize the power of opponents.

This picture you've made is an opportunity to have a strategic conversation about next steps. An initial Power Analysis is meant to incite more questions than answers—what more do we need to know? What level of power do we need to build in order to win and to create change?



YOUR AGENDA

OPPOSING AGENDA



SCOPE defines power as the capacity to achieve a collectively agreed upon goal.

This definition of power elevates the need for a community to come together and agree upon what is the best solution to the conditions that impact their daily lives. This is not the traditional definition of power that has been exerted on disenfranchised communities. This definition speaks to the collective well-being of those most impacted by years of disenfranchisement.

SCOPE's Power Analysis is based on the following basic assumptions.

1. Power relationships are unequal, and this is one of the primary reasons for the conditions and problems our communities face.
2. In order to permanently change the conditions in our community we must build collective power to create long-term systemic change.

3. We must build a strong grassroots base of those most impacted by the problems and conditions we seek to change.
4. A more systematic way of understanding power is essential in our efforts to win social change.

The Power Analysis doesn't just display an analysis, it makes one.

The Power Analysis tool is, more than anything else, a tool for giving structure to conversations and inquiries. The value of the tool emerges for the participants as they construct it. In order to locate a single actor on the chart you must assess to what extent they agree with your agenda, and to what extent they hold influence. By organizing, acting, and being in the world, the analysis produced by constructing this chart is tested. The Power Analysis is the armature that gives you or your organization a means to collect your thoughts.

A critical piece of the practice of Power Analysis is to revisit, revise, and redevelop it over the course of the campaign or an organization's life. It highlights that power is built in the process of waging campaigns, and not only in winning individual demands. Framing the struggle as a long-term project of building power helps communities create a vision beyond short-term wins.

This aspect of the chart relates to the central worldview of SCOPE—which is that disempowered communities must build power over time. It's tempting to use the Power Analysis as an organizational chart, static and pasted up on the wall, but it is more like a chess board, constantly renegotiated.

The Power Analysis tool is above all flexible. An analysis can be done at any scale. A "landscape analysis" can look at the overall political climate of the United States. A "micro-analysis" may help a group strategize ways to get language changed in a single piece of legislation, a tactical move in a larger campaign. The tool merely asks the user to be systematic and methodical in

defining targets, tracking progress, and holding themselves accountable to the change they are trying to create.

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The Power Analysis reminds us that visual works can have a role beyond communicating a "message" or "political intent". They can destabilize, expand, and develop political analysis, even (or especially) within the groups that share our hopes.

Many thanks to the SCOPE allies and staff who contributed their time to this publication: Elsa Barboza, Jen Ito, Deepak Pateriya, Gloria Medina, Alex Tom, and Gloria Walton. Additional thanks to the archive of the Southern California Library.

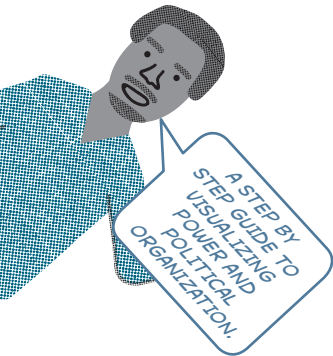
To learn more about Power Analysis and other training & tools visit the SCOPE website at www.scopela.org or call SCOPE training staff at (323) 789-7920 EXT 106.

Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE)

builds grassroots power to create social and economic justice for low-income, female, immigrant, black, and brown communities in Los Angeles. To do this, SCOPE organizes communities, develops leaders, collaborates through strategic alliances, builds capacity through training programs, and educates South L.A.'s residents to have an active role in shaping policies that affect the quality of life in our region. Justice, respect, responsibility, integrity, and voice: These are our core values.

The Llano Del Rio Collective

aims to expand cultural, social, and political imagination of Los Angeles through the production of thematic guides, related events and the hosting of a speakers bureau. We aim to frame practices, rather than be a practice.
ldrg.wordpress.com
llanodelrio@gmail.com



LLANO DEL RIO GUIDES
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An Introduction to SCOPE—
L.A.'s Power Analysis Tool

