

# Power Dynamics in Research

## Considerations for Applied Research in International Development

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# Power Dynamics

What is power?

- It is a relative construct that relates to the ability of one actor to influence or even control another

Definition of Power Dynamics:

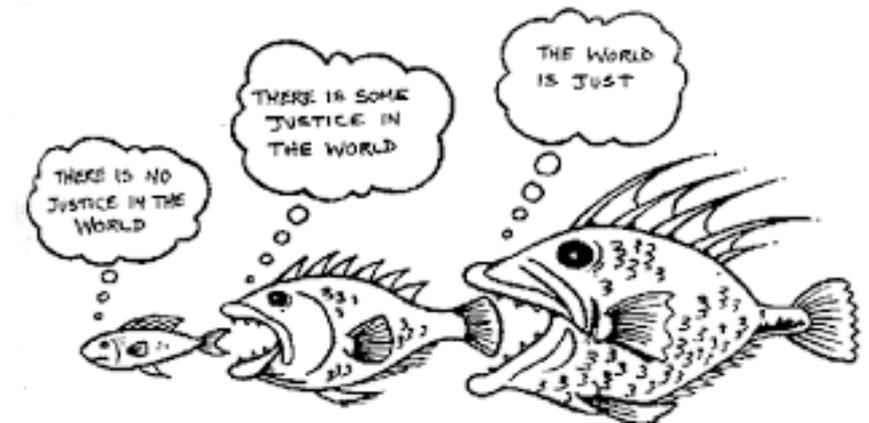
The specific ways in which power is exercised or experienced in a given context and/or interaction



# Things that convey/affect power

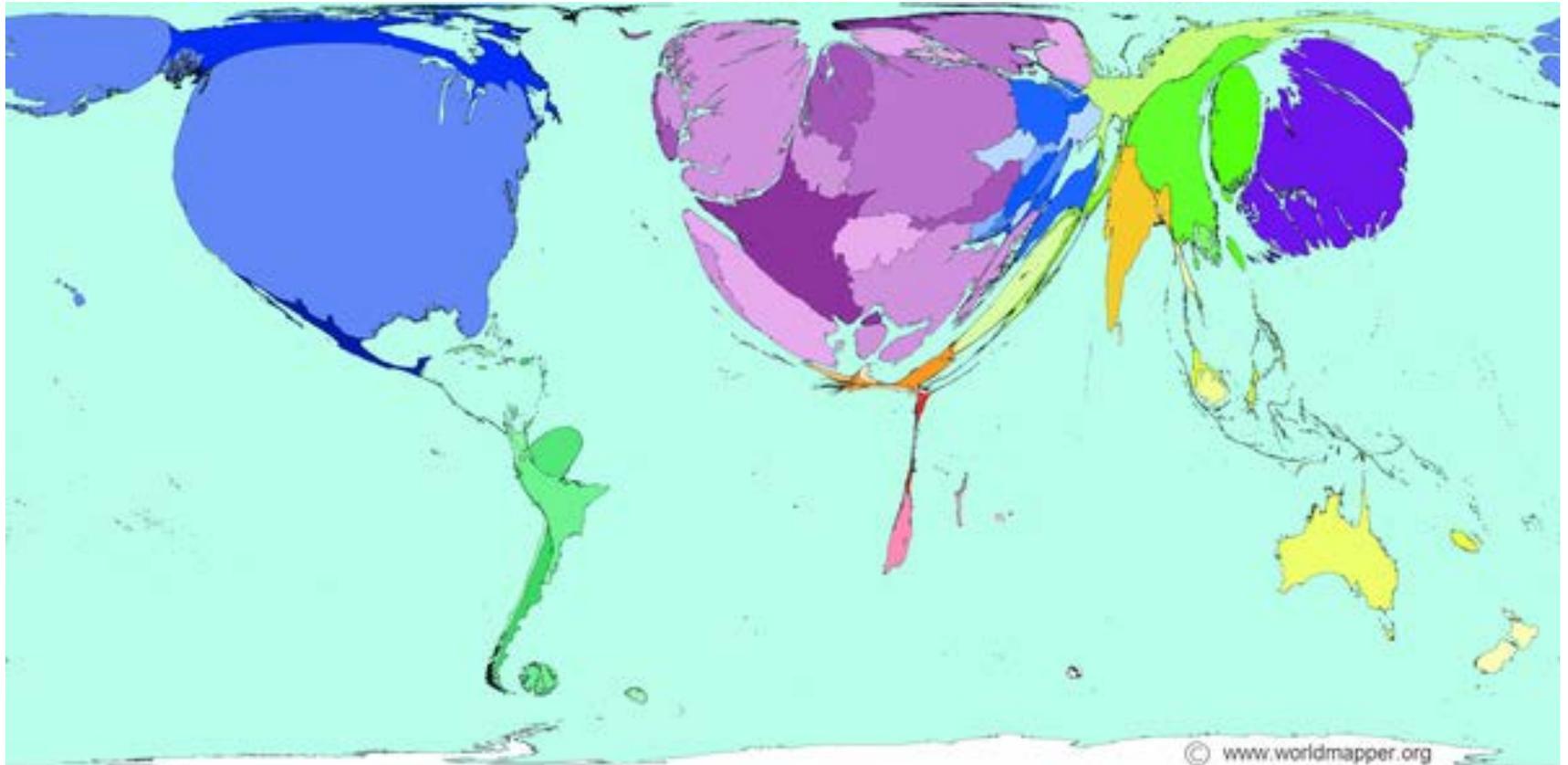
- Control over resources
- Subject matter expertise
- Institutions
- Societal norms
- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Class

## What else?



# Power Dynamics in Research

## “The World of Science”



Source:

# Some things to consider

- The history and context of the location and community in which the research is taking place
- Relationship between researcher and community
  - Research subjects/participants often have a lower status than researchers
    - This is especially true in international development
- Who determines what is valuable/meaningful results of the research
- Participatory research methods becoming increasingly popular
  - try to reduce the power imbalances through collaboration with research participants
  - *Critique*: are researchers really able to sustainably maintain equal collaborations with conditions of unequal power, access to resources, skills and time?

“[An] issue for us as professionals is to recognize the difficulty of engaging community members as partners on an equal power basis.

If we, as researchers, are interested in [community] oriented research and empowerment, then we need to understand our personal biographies of race, educational or social status, gender and other identities; how these characteristics inform our ability to speak and interpret the world and how they inform power dynamics within the research relationship itself.”

N. Wallerstein (1999)

# Discussion Questions

- How have you considered power dynamic in your own research or project?
  - Times things worked well
  - Times they didn't
- What challenges related to navigating power dynamics have you faced?
- Advice and/or comments
- Como consideran dinámica de poder en su propio investigación o proyecto?
  - Ejemplos cuando funciona muy bien
  - Ejemplos cuando **no** funciona bien
- Cuales retos acerca de dinámica de poder se enfrentaron?
- Consejos y/o comentarios

# References

- Czerniewicz, L. (2013, April 29). Inequitable power dynamics of global knowledge production and exchange must be confronted head on. Article. *LSE Impact Blog*. <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/04/29/redrawing-the-map-from-access-to-participation/>
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