

# Looking at Poverty Policy Through a Political Economy Framework

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## **Definition**

The political economy framework, developed by Peter Andree (Carleton University), tries to understand policy in terms of inter-relationships between governments, the economy and the rest of society. It is designed to help activists think strategically.

## **Three Realms**

In this approach, there are three realms that illustrate these inter-relationships.

### **1 – Ideas**

- Ability of the groups who support an idea to convince others in society to accept it.
- Ideas are most powerful when they are widely adopted and accepted as common sense.
- Points out that cultural processes like the media can be as important for creating change as formal governmental processes.
- Questions identified
  - What ideas are being circulated in policy circles and the media? Where have they come from? Whose interests do they appear to serve first and foremost?
  - What power do the ideas have in shaping particular debates and policy outcomes?
  - What ideas are they replacing or pushing aside?

### **2 – Organizations**

- Individuals and groups organize around specific agendas and against others.
- Includes informal dynamics of civil society.
- Factor in individual organizations' policies, agendas, decision-making processes, resources, etc.
- Questions identified
  - What organizations support particular policy options?
  - What is their capacity (financial, social, etc) to shape policy?
  - Who are their allies?
  - Who opposes them?
  - What are the mandates and goals of institutions that appear to have a role in establishing policies relating to the issue?
  - How are they structured and how do these structures affect their ability to make decisions, be influenced by outside groups, etc.
  - How do these institutions overlap with one another in their mandates and goals?

### **3 – Economic Relations**

- Considered a realm of power relations in its own right
- Not just how physical things are produced, distributed and used, but also how these things are controlled.
- Relationship that individuals of different groups in society have to one another with regards to the labour process (i.e. owners vs. labourers).
- Questions identified
  - What are the economic relations that underpin particular policy directions?
  - Which actors have the greatest economic clout, and what are their interests in relation to this issue?
  - How do larger trends in the economy affect the possibilities for advancing specific kinds of policy around this issue?

### **References**

Andree, Peter. 2007. *Genetically Modified Diplomacy*. University of British Columbia Press.

Clement, Wallace. 2001. Canadian Political Economy's Legacy for Sociology. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*. 26 (3): 405-420.



Framework Diagram

**Problem:**

**Desired Short-Term Policy Outcome:**

**Desired Long-Term Policy Outcome:**

**The Initiative:**

**The Analysis:**

<b>Realm</b>	<b>Forces For</b>	<b>Forces Against / Neutral</b>
Ideas		
Institutional Forces		
Economic Forces		

**Summary:**