

Visual actor mapping – part 1

Purpose & Output The idea of this exercise is to begin a process of visualising yourself, your group or organisation, and your relationships to the other actors around you, including direct, indirect and potential future connections.

In this part, we suggest that you focus on brainstorming who the actors around you are and the intensity of your relationship with them (direct, indirect, or potential).

In the next step of the exercise, you will extend the visualisation or map to include the types of relationship you have with them.

Input & Materials If you want to carry out this activity in a group, you will need:

- butcher-block or flip-chart paper
- coloured markers or pens
- sticky-notes / Post-its.

Format & Steps **Written/drawn visualisation**

In this exercise we suggest that you use sticky-notes or post-its, each with the name of one actor in your context, to visually map them and the relationships between them.

1. Start with yourself or your organisation as an entity and brainstorm and identify as many actors related to your work as possible. This can include individuals, groups, organisations or institutions. Consider local, regional, national and international actors where necessary.

2. Once you have identified as many of the actors as you can, place them on the wall or sheet, with yourself (and/or your target group, if they are identifiable) in the centre.

3. Consider the following categorisations for these actors:

Direct: People, groups, organisations, institutions that have direct contact with you on the issue you are trying to impact. For example, you probably have a direct relationship to the target-group you work for, and some entities directly opposed to your work who directly challenge or confront you.

Format & Steps

You may also want to include members of the community around you including your family and friends who may support or oppose your work in one way or another.

- **Indirect:** These can include people, groups, organisations or institutions that are one step removed from you. In the example above, if your target group has a direct relationship with you, they may be in direct relationship with others. These become indirectly connected to you.
- **Potential/Peripheral:** People, groups, organisations and institutions which relate to the issue, but with whom you don't (yet) have a connection or relationship. Examples of these include international bodies which are supportive of your issue, but aren't (yet) active in your context.

Note: Actors and information

Although it may not have occurred to you, you may want to include actors on whom you rely to manage your information and communication. These can include:

- your telephone service provider
- your internet service provider
- social media account providers
- email account providers.

We will explore these actors in more detail in the next exercise.

Remarks & Tips

In the next and subsequent Chapters, we will expand our knowledge of these actors and use them to build our analysis of threats. Once you have finished this exercise, it's a good idea to keep a list of these actors for future reference and elaboration.
