Who’s Benefiting?
Power Mapping for Strategies that Win

Derek Seidman
Research Analyst
LittleSis.org & the Public Accountability Initiative
derek@littlesis.org

Mothers out Front Annual Conference April 6-7, 2019
We’re a watchdog research group focused on corporate and government accountability.

- *LittleSis - opposite of Big Brother

We specialize in researching the 1% and mapping out its power networks.

We work with activists, researchers, and journalists.

We maintain resources for activists and researchers:
- LittleSis Database
- Oligrapher mapping tool
- Trainings & webinars

We also publish reports and have a news site, *Eyes on the Ties*
Today’s session:

- We’ll discuss how organizers like you who are waging campaigns or are about to wage campaigns can think more strategically about how to find points of leverage to organize around so you have a better chance of winning.
- We’ll mainly do this through an introduction into how to “power map” - in other words, how to research and visualize networks of power and influence that decide whether or not we’ll stay hooked on fossil fuels or transition to renewable energy.
- We’ll discuss some actual examples of how power mapping has informed strategy and led to some success - and we’ll go through and discuss a power map tied to a Mothers Out Front campaign.
Power = the ability an individual or entity has to get what it wants, even against opposition, and to shape politics and society along their interests and priorities

Power structure = the networks and relationships of people and institutions through which power and influence work

Power research & power mapping = Investigative research focused on revealing power structures (aka relationships!)
Major social movements have relied on power research in their organizing.

RIGHT: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) formed a Research Department (above) to map out the power structure behind Jim Crow.

LEFT: National Action/Research on the Military-Industrial Complex (NARMIC) showed who was profiting from the Vietnam War and helped shape organizing strategy for the larger antiwar movement.
Power mapping helps organizers find **LEVERAGE**!

- Power mapping helps you find strategic targets and points of leverage to create pressure on those targets
- Power mapping gives you a more accurate picture of what you’re up against and helps you identify “campaignable” opportunities
- Power mapping helps you think of creative direct action targets
- Power mapping shows new ways that campaigns and movements are connected

Feb 2018 protest against the opioid profiteering Sackler family at NYC Guggenheim Museum. In response to protests, several institutions are now rejecting Sackler donations.
Follow the Financing: Big Banks & Private Prisons

- Private prison industry especially dependent on ready access to cash - and just a few big banks provide the big bulk of lending arrangements & financial services
- Allied campaigns and organizations decided to target banks
- Protests + private prison = toxic + allies in Congress
- Mar 2019: JPMorgan and Wells Fargo announce they’re pulling out
- Moody’s downgrades private prison company bond rating + stocks plummet
Leveraging Hypocrisy & Conflicts of Interest: AES Corp & the SUNY Chancellor

- AES has dumped toxic coal ash in Puerto Rico. There have been many attempts to hold AES to account & publicize the issue.
- SUNY Chancellor Kristina Johnson says she’s a climate progressive… and also sits on the board of AES! Johnson makes $275K as a board member & owns $2.65 million in stocks
- March 2019: Map of Johnson & AES gets media attention
  - Published in *Albany Times Union*
  - SUNY union calls on her to step down from AES board
  - *Nation* article
- Johnson quietly steps down AES board a few days after story. All this brings new attention & pressure to the issue → opening up new organizing opportunities
- **Good example of using power mapping to find a narrative to create pressure and highlight an issue**
BREAKOUT DISCUSSION

1. Do you already use power mapping in your organizing? How so?
2. If not, could power mapping could help your organizing work? How so?
Power research checklist

1. Work positions
   a. Executive positions, corporate board memberships, advisory positions, directorships

2. Political donations
   a. Who do they donate to?

3. Nonprofit positions
   a. Think tanks, industry associations, chambers of commerce, cultural institutions

4. Philanthropy
   a. Personal foundation? Who sits on the board? Who do they give grants to? Major donors to area charities?

5. Memberships
   a. Where are they hanging out? Social clubs, country clubs, etc.
   b. Large membership orgs like the NRA

6. Family, Friends, Colleagues, and Mentors

7. Education
   a. Where did they go to school?
   b. Are they still active as an alumni? Do they give money?
   c. Do they hold a trustee positions?

8. Investments
Business ties

SEC Filings
- Details of business
- Top execs and directors
- Compensation and stock ownership

Lobbying
- Federal and State
- Who do they hire and what are their connections?
- What do they lobby on and how much do they spend?

Finance
- Investments: stocks & industry

Person!

Non-profit & Philanthropy

990 Filings
- Details on board of directors
- Donations
- Financial details

Events
- Fundraisers
- Speakers
- Donations/sponsors

Campaign Finance

Academic institutions
- Donations
- Trustee or director positions

Personal relationships
- Friends & family
- Social ties through clubs and other elite institutions
Question: If you’re starting to do a power map of Baker and his ties to the Weymouth Compressor Station, what kinds of relationships would you first try to look for?
Search Contributions and Expenditures

Criteria
- Report Item Type: Contributions
- Record Type (Optional): All Record Types
- Contributor: Last Name, First Name Or Name, Choose a MA city or town, State, Zip Code, Occupation, Employer
- Contribution: Start Date, End Date, Minimum Amount, Maximum Amount
- Recipient (Filier): Provide part of the filier's name: Search Phrase, then select a filier: Select a filier
- Group By: None, Show: 50 records at a time

Results contributions with an asterisk (*) are inkind contributions

Please provide search criteria above to view results below.

https://www.ocpf.us/Reports/SearchItems
BREAKOUT DISCUSSION

1. Can you identify any leverage points from this map that can help you strategize on how to try to pressure Baker on the Weymouth compressor station?

NOTE: In thinking about leverage, it’s important to also think about your target (Baker) and their goals and concerns. Does Baker want to be known as a climate hero? Does he have higher political ambitions? Is he sensitive to being portrayed as influenced by corporate money? Is he vindictive? Etc.
Final thoughts

- Power mapping can be really helpful as an organizing tactic - but it’s important to remember that it’s rarely a substitute for strong organizing itself!
- Power mapping is a really fun thing to do as a group! Mothers Out Front chapters can get together and power map together around campaign targets.
- Check out littlesis.org/toolkit for a basic guide on starting to do power research
- Sign up for a free LittleSis.org account. We also hold regular free webinars on how to use the LittleSis database and mapping tool. The next one is on April 17th at 5pm ET. To sign up, contact munira@littlesis.org