

Lessons in movement strategy from COPINH

- Strategy development relies on many layers of analysis and information gathering about power, which can be an important organising and leadership-building process in itself.
- Deep, continuous community building and involvement is vital for unity and united action.
- Forging local alliances, and ties with friends and allies around the world – inside formal structures of power, the media and in movements – are vital to the ability to mobilise support, build clout and have influence.
- Cultural strategies – in COPINH’s case, rooted in indigenous identity, practices, and cosmivision – feed and sustain a sense of community, shared commitment and unity.
- When analysing power, it is not enough to name a ministry or ‘the army’ in general. Rather, identify specific decision-makers and structures. As you further refine the targets of tactics and influence, explore where you might find allies and whether there are conflicts, contradictions, and opportunities among actors, particularly at regional or global level. These can provide strategic opportunities.
- Multi-pronged strategies offer more points of leverage and more pathways to challenge, resist and create change.
- Some actors and forces are hard to identify with a specific arena of power or may come up in more than one arena. Examples:

Corporate or privately-owned media companies are clustered as hidden power because they operate outside the formal arena of power to influence public discourse and perceptions. They may play both negative and positive roles and are essential to consider in strategies.

Police, military and public and private security forces may play both negative and positive roles in relation to upholding or challenging the status quo. While their actions tend to be in the visible power arena, they sometimes work in alignment with hidden, invisible and systemic power.

Digital media can play positive or negative roles. Many use social media for activism and as a source of information, organising, and connection, despite knowing that these tools are controlled by private, loosely regulated corporations that enable surveillance, polarisation, and misinformation.

Political parties can be difficult to categorise, but because they contest for formal power, they fit in visible power for analytical purposes.

The UN, World Bank, the IMF, and related trade mechanisms fit in visible power because they are part of the formal, public-funded governmental institutions that define rights and the 'rules of the game' and, sometimes, offer mechanisms for redress.