JUST POWER

A Guide for Activists and Changemakers

JASS
JUST POWER

Introduction

We are living in unsettled and unsettling times. People and the planet are under incredible strain as the result of excessive greed, and the corruption and violence it generates. A parade of authoritarian and repressive autocrats seek to consolidate power in many corners of the globe. And, alarmingly, right-wing populist and fundamentalist movements echo a similar mix of patriarchal, racist, and imperialist narratives intended to generate fear and division, and turn back hard-won gains. And yet, against these threats, people in many places around the globe are taking action to demand accountability, democracy, and a liveable future rooted in care for people and the planet.

In this spirit, we take inspiration from the old organising adage from labor activist Joe Hill: "Don't mourn, organise!" This Guide, based on decades of experience in and alongside movements, is by and for change-makers of all kinds. If you are an organiser, a movement builder, a community leader, an 'artivist', a student, a social justice NGO worker, a philanthropist, or someone from any other part of the social change ecosystem – this Guide is for you!

How to navigate this Guide

Here's how to find your way around this e-book.
https://youtu.be/nJ3xRwLpBCU

Why this Guide?

The idea for this Guide arose from a series of regional and global gatherings of activists and allies convened by JASS and the Fund for Global Human Rights aimed at understanding the drivers of intensifying levels of repression and crack downs on activists, dissent, and human rights defenders. We took hope in the emergence of new social-justice movements in many parts of the world and lessons from movement history, but our conversations underscored the need for deeper thinking about power and about strategy. This Guide reflects the consolidation of reflection, learning, and experimentation that were set in motion from that initial spark. It draws on our two decades of work with and alongside activists and movement builders in dozens of countries. It is our offer to you.
https://youtu.be/OJIipng4ARE

Our starting point

Here is what we know: It is not enough to be outraged. It is not enough to be right. It is not enough to speak truth to power. It is not even enough even to be organised. We need a vision of the change we want, or we risk becoming reactive or rudderless-ness. We need to build collective power and momentum for that change, or we risk irrelevance. And we must be very strategic, or we risk hopelessness, danger, and failure.

Our hopes for the Guide

Because JASS believes in the need for sustained feminist movement building which centers intersectional feminist politics and leadership across social movements, our practice is always to

share back the knowledge and tools gained in our own work with others who could use them. It is our hope that this guide finds its way into many hands – community activists, movement builders, popular educators, networks and formations of change makers, allied NGOs, donors, and others committed to the work of liberation, justice, equity, joy, and collective thriving. If the guide has found its way to you – then we are glad. If you find it useful, we will feel successful.

Who you are

This Guide is intended for use by a wide range of people and groups. We believe that there are many roles to play in terms of creating change. We think about this in terms of an ecosystem, in which movements define and lead change and many others contribute and play important roles. As you think about how you want to use the Guide, it is important to start with what you bring, what you want to learn more about, and what you want to change in the world. Chapter 1: Getting Started will help you think about how best to use and adapt the Guide for your interests, context, and group.

We hope that this Guide will provoke thinking and questioning – some that may be uncomfortable – about received ideas about change, about power and relationships, about movements, about who has expertise, and about strategy. This is the nature of critical thinking and critical consciousness – to expand the parameters of our understanding and deepen our practice of liberation.

Who we are

JASS began as a network of popular educators, organisers, movement builders, and accompaniers from various parts of the world who were committed to strengthening and supporting movements, movement leadership, and other social-change formations. In the thick of movement organising, this founding network published a first iteration of power analysis and power-building tools – A New Weave of Power, People and Politics – rooted in the 'global south' or majority world and in an internationalist, feminist, and decolonial politics. Today, JASS continues to innovate and adapt powerful ideas and strategies in this spirit as a movement-support organisation dedicated to strengthening and amplifying the voice, visibility, and collective power of women for a just and sustainable world.

Our politics and practice

At the core of our work is a practice of movement building rooted in feminist popular education. This Guide draws both on two decades of JASS' work, and on learning from hundreds, thousands, of activists working in the traditions of popular education around the world.

Our work begins with a commitment to liberation and justice. Popular education is the approach we use because of its political roots. Popular education and similar liberatory political and participatory education traditions form a thread through liberation and anti-colonial movements across at least the last century. Originally rooted in class struggle, popular education evolved to incorporate broader thinking on the intersections of oppression and of liberation, and by forging shared analysis, demands and collective leadership it served as the basis for organizing. Feminists specifically incorporated gender and the ways in which power inequities permeated intimate and personal spheres of life, proposing that liberation must therefore involve gender too. In this vein, we call our work feminist popular education (FPE). In keeping with the FPE traditions within which we work, we hold a set of foundational assumptions about creating progressive social change.

Questions and questioning. The Guide is based on collective reflection and analysis to dig into what you know, what you want to learn, and what you need to challenge and unlearn – all in the service of bolder change and bigger visions for transformation.

No recipes. Rather, we invite exploration, questioning, and adaptation of what you find in the Guide – tailoring it to what you need for where you and your group are, who you are, and what you are doing.

Context matters. Where you are and who you are working with matters and will guide how you use the Guide, along with other strategic choices.

Power matters. At the core of the work of liberation is the intention to challenge and transform the systems and structures that maintain oppression and inequity. In using this Guide, you will find many ways to reflect on power as both a oppressive and liberating force that shapes your contexts and your own lives from the most intimate to the most public aspects. Power also shapes what you build, and how you work together.

Collective knowledge building. We value and draw on lived experience and our bodies, hearts, and minds as sources of knowledge and wisdom. FPE practices often employ experiential learning and exploration – such as skits, drawing, games, and participatory activities. These can be misunderstood as simply energising or fun activities. While they do stimulate the group, the actual intention runs deeper.

Embodiment and creative expression. FPE recognises the extent to which people carry vital knowledge in their bodies, hearts, imaginations, histories, and experiences – knowledge that is often treated as illegitimate, unimportant, or merely 'personal'. But in truth, when we fail to connect to that level of knowing, we lose the power that can be unleashed by our anger, outrage, longings, creativity, dreams, analysis, and brilliance. Our poetry, songs, dancing and other forms of creative expression are often the richest ways of knowing and connecting with one another. They can bring joy and humour to what can sometimes be difficult and painful work for change.

Action for change. FPE is not just about thinking; it centres on how we come together for collective action for change. Individual and collective reflection form the basis for shared agendas, strategy and action. The entire Guide is oriented to helping you and your organisation navigate and build power, make strategic choices, and take action for change.

As a facilitator

As you review this Guide and decide what you could do with it and how it might help you design a session, a workshop, or an action-learning journey, here are some points to consider.

Be adaptive. This guide is not a recipe to follow. Like good cooking, it will invite you to spice it up, and adapt it to your own context, issues, and participants. We offer a sequence of chapters, tools and activities built on our experience, but you will want to choose what you want to do, how you want to do it, and in what order.

Be experiential. Popular education is most effective when grounded in people's own experience and practice, through cycles of storytelling, critical reflection, and action. Three case studies are offered to help deepen and apply learning, but you can substitute your

own cases and issues, and of course circle back to practical implications for action in your context.

Be creative. Deep and transformative learning is not only about cycling between action, reflection, theory, and experience, but also about allowing ourselves to feel and understand with our full beings, including our hearts, minds, and bodies. We invite you throughout to use creativity, art, storytelling, music, dancing, and drama to deepen analysis and learning.

Be power-aware. The design and facilitation of learning is never power-neutral. Develop practices of personal and group reflection to become aware of the power you carry, the power dynamics and relationships in the groups and organisations involved, and the power and leadership you seek to invite, catalyse, and nourish through the learning process.

Finally, a note on virtual vs in-person facilitation. The Guide is designed primarily with face-to-face workshops in mind, as there are many benefits to being physically present in FPE processes, to deepen collective understanding, solidarity, and action. Yet, as the Covid pandemic first demonstrated, many activities can be adapted to virtual spaces. We include links to some virtual resources but not instructions for various forms of on-line adaptations, which can include online breakout groups, white boards, multi-media content, and other ways to shape virtual engagement and learning.

Acknowledgements

This Guide is the work of many – more than we can name, many whose names we do not even know. Like hip-hop, popular education – the foundation of our movement building practice – is a forever riff, iterative and adaptive, borrowing and mixing from the work of others across time and borders. In JASS' more than two decades, we have worked with thousands of activists, organisers, NGOs, popular educators, donor allies, and movement scholars in dozens of contexts and on many different issues. Each of those people has contributed to our learning about power and movement strategy. We can't name them all, but this Guide is a tribute to that collective learning and commitment to strong feminist movement-builders and the transformative gender, economic, climate, and social justice movements they shape.

And there are also many people who have played direct roles in this Guide.

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Very importantly, we want to lift up the invaluable contributions of the many grassroots community and movement partners with whom we discussed, developed, tested, and consolidated thinking and methodology on power, change, and strategy. This Guide is for you most of all.

Thank you to our donor partners who invested in translating our practical experiences and innovations with these concepts and methodologies into this Guide, with gratitude for your patience with various iterations over several years. Special thanks to the Fund for Global Human Rights, who encouraged and accompanied this process from the beginning, Open Society Foundations, the Ford Foundation, Channel Foundation, Count Me In! Consortium funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oak Foundation, and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

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GETTING STARTED

We need imaginative spaces, because we can't build what we can't imagine. Without the ability to imagine something different, we are trapped within the parameters that the system has set for us.

- Walidah Imarisha[1]

A key starting point for this Guide's power journey is to ground ourselves in both who we are and what we want. We take time to envision the future we want to create, as it is the driving logic, the 'why', that shapes our social justice efforts. From experience and evidence, we know that to make systemic change we must build movements – the networks and communities, both physical and virtual, that advance our agenda to make a better world possible for everyone. Within our movements, we can:

Learn, collaborate, and take action together.
Create a sense of belonging and believing.
Embody our principles in the ways that we organise and lead.

In order to use the Guide most effectively, it is important that we locate ourselves and our organisations in relation to the issues, power dynamics, politics, and movements of our context. We situate ourselves in a larger ecosystem of social justice to which we want to connect. There are many ways to contribute to change, and it is vital that we each know what we have to offer and how that could complement the work of others.

Because this Guide is at its heart about creating transformational change, it centres questions of power and strategy, looking at them from a variety of angles, and offering practical and conceptual resources for activists and changemakers of all kinds. Here and throughout this Guide, our approach is Feminist Popular Education. As a political methodology, FPE guides people – individually and within communities and organisations – to recognise and share their experience and knowledge, build connections and common purpose with others and activate their collective power for change. Across the Guide, we begin with individual reflection and build toward shared understandings and analysis that focus and inform collective strategies.

Safe and brave spaces

We begin any process by creating a safe and brave space – one that is collectively defined and maintained by the group working together – to enable everyone to bring their 'full selves' (heart, mind, and body) without having to filter what they say. Because the jumping off point for feminist popular education is people's experiences – with power, inequity, and oppression – the process can surface emotion. A safe and brave space is one that honours that emotion, recognising that much untapped power lies in breaking silence and finding common cause with others, and helps the group move toward action. Another aspect of safe space is that our activism can put us at risk – we must make sure that in designing safe spaces we think about this and put in place strategies to mitigate threats. Other

considerations in creating safe and brave space include: the security of the location; collectively created ground rules including on consent for photos and social media sharing; language and other forms of accessibility; the feel, look and comfort of the space; the availability of smaller group breakout areas; and the level of care and trust needed. For more, see We Rise on Creating Safe Space.

The intention of a safe space is to create the conditions for courage – courage to break silences, courage to share life experiences so we can find common ground, courage to seek common purpose with others different than yourself, courage to imagine and act for change. It is the combination of safety and courage in a group that can unleash power for transformative change.

Remember that:

- Participation is optional – anyone can step out any time.
- People should share only what they choose to.
- Difficult issues may emerge, such as experiences of violence, fear, or discrimination, when it's important to pause.

The Politics of Heart–Mind–Body

> **Integrating Heart–Mind–Body into ongoing work at the most basic level means raising consciousness and centring care - sharing simple practices and skills for self-care that do not cost a lot, strengthening community networks, thinking proactively about security and safety planning where necessary to mitigate risk, threats, and violence, and ensuring that women can work together to build strategies and mobilise collectively for the other forms of care.**
>
> *- Shereen Essof*[2]

This Guide engages the question of power and change from a decolonial feminist and movement building perspective. A critical dimension of this approach is the value placed on the many forms of knowledge that come from life experiences and are carried in our hearts, minds, and bodies. Our commitment to what we call "Heart-Mind-Body" reflects a belief that, without such a holistic approach, we will not only miss key insights but also risk creating fragmented strategies that only speak to one part of our lives. The activities in this Guide engage multiple forms of learning in keeping with this political orientation.

Some activities, such as "Rivers of Life" and "Body Mapping", involve storytelling and deepen people's understanding of the realities of each other's lives, an important building block for trust and joint action. They can also surface uncomfortable memories – so be prepared to offer some support in the moment. You might bring the group together to stand or hold hands in solidarity, take time for collective centring and breathwork, or offer other forms of culturally appropriate emotional support. Empathy and care are fundamentally important in creating spaces for learning. And in case more is needed, you may want to have links to resources and contacts with support networks such as counselling, medical, and legal services.

Theme 1: Starting with Ourselves
How can we create knowledge together from our experience and the information we gather around us? How do we integrate what we know in our hearts, minds, and bodies? How have our lived experiences shaped who we are as activists and change makers, beyond our formal education? And how can greater critical awareness about how what we learned has shaped us, enable us to engage with others in more intentional, liberated, and liberating ways?

Theme 2: Reimagining the Future
What is the future we dream of and work toward? What values and beliefs guide our ways of working? How will we move toward the future?

Theme 3: Roadmaps to Change
As we imagine the path toward our vision, what hurdles and twists do we foresee? What are our assumptions about how change happens and how people change? How do we understand movements and movement building?

Theme 4: Who are 'We'?
How do we situate ourselves in the larger ecosystem of movements for justice? What do we stand for? What do we bring and offer? Where do we have access and relationships, and where not?

Theme 1:
Starting with Ourselves

Open the session with an activity to encourage people to bring their whole selves and their stories into the room. "How do we know what we know?" and "Rivers of Life" are activities that invite each person to open up, connect, understand each other's contexts, and validate broader sources of knowledge and power. Use these or other activities as a jumping off point to get to know each other and build trust.

ACTIVITY 1:

How do we know what we know?

We all learn in different ways. In this activity, we think about our formal education and the various ways we have learned through life experience. We introduce how feminist popular education can contribute to liberating forms of learning.

Materials: Coloured markers, sticky notes or coloured cards, flipchart paper, tape, copies of handout: *Listening beyond words*

Plenary: Introduce the activity. Read Listening beyond words aloud and then invite people to brainstorm answers.

- What did the organisers fail to see in this case? Why?
- What assumptions lay behind their decisions?
- How does such a lack of awareness impact power dynamics within the group? And externally?
- What was learned in the story? Was anything unlearned?

The framework reveals how power is operating and where opportunities exist to expose, contest, and change power in relation to real contexts and issues.

Reflect on different ways of learning and knowing. We all learn in different ways – not only with our minds but also with our hearts and bodies. Some learn through reading and some through doing, while others are visual learners. Feminist popular education encourages us to critically question what we have learned and the underlying assumptions we carry, and to integrate our different ways of knowing the world.

Next, distribute post-its or cards and sheets of flipchart paper. Explain that the next step is for personal reflection and won't be shared with the group.

Individually: Draw the outline of a person on your sheet. Ask yourself:

- What are the different ways of learning in all parts of my life?
- Which do I value most now and why? Anything I have had to "unlearn" or question?
- What conditions enable me to learn best?

Write your thoughts on post-its or cards. Place each one on the heart, mind, or part of the body on your outline.

Small groups: Each of four small groups focuses on a different question. Groups select a moderator, a person to take notes, and a person to share in plenary.

- Group 1: Did our formal education take our lived experience into account?
- Group 2: How did our formal education portray the value and history of our communities, country, and the world?
- Group 3: What values and beliefs were reinforced by our formal education, and what values and beliefs were discounted?
- Group 4: What does our formal education say about who teaches, who has knowledge, and who learns?

Plenary: Groups take turns to share their thoughts. Invite discussion about formal education, drawing out the ways in which it can discount our lived experiences, distort history, reflect patriarchal and racist beliefs, and replicate colonial and capitalist values. Ask:

- What assumptions lay under the surface about who has knowledge, who doesn't, whose knowledge counts, and what knowledge is and what it isn't?
- How do these assumptions relate to and reinforce inequities of power and privilege?
- What are the implications of this kind of formal education (sometimes called banking education for 'depositing' knowledge in people's minds) for those seeking liberation from oppression?
- How can we educate ourselves in ways that are liberating?

Note key points on flipchart. Point out that, without bringing consciousness in this way to what we "know" and why we know it (particularly as that is shaped by our identity – class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc – and how that positions us in the world), we may easily replicate power inequities and other oppressive dynamics within our communities, organisations, and movements. (We will go into this more fully in Chapter 4.) To close, introduce or remind the group about feminist popular education, particularly its focus on learning and unlearning in a way that catalyses change and liberation. Connect ideas on the flip chart summary to ways that feminist popular education as a political practice is liberating.

Listening beyond words

An experience shared by Patricia Ardón, JASS

María Patricia Ardón Quezada

Many years ago, when I was very young, I worked in an organisation that was introducing household taps (faucets) for drinking water for rural and Indigenous communities. To raise awareness and encourage community participation, the organisation used popular education processes. With the community members, the organisation chose a specific community in which to introduce this scheme for potable water. Male and female promoters from this community participated in the process.

We held a series of meetings with leaders and with community members via assemblies. As in the past — and as still happens in many communities — men dominated the

conversation. Women rarely spoke, except when specific women's spaces were created, which was infrequent at the time. Both women and men, albeit fewer women than men, also conducted community surveys. Finally, after months of work, it was decided that conditions were ripe for introducing household faucets. The premise was that putting faucets in the houses would benefit the women, as this would lessen their workload, since they had to walk to the public water collection tank — or sometimes even to the river — to collect water. At that time, the concept of gender-differentiated impacts was practically unknown to most people, but we had already gone through some basic training and sensitization on the subject.

When the faucets were installed, our great surprise was that most of the women were unhappy with this modality. Upon further investigation, we realized that the women felt they had lost the only space where they could socialize with each other, talk about what was happening in their lives, what they were going through with their partners, their joys and sorrows, their children, and their families. The public water collection tank — and sometimes the river –were their only places of coexistence and exchange. And it was also the only space — or one of the very few spaces — where they had the possibility of mingling beyond the control of their male partners. And of course, most of the men were happy that they did not leave their homes because (among other reasons) when they did go out, they found out about things like the men's "infidelities."

This experience impressed me profoundly and has stayed with me. It led me to reflect more deeply not only on how we sometimes get carried away by appearances or by what may be beneficial (or not) for other groups of people, but also on the importance of investigating what is behind what we are seeing and hearing — beyond the words themselves — especially in the lives of women. Furthermore, it has helped me to reflect on the different ways we learn — some of us learn more through concrete experience or observation; others learn more through study, or in many other ways.

Find out more about Feminist Popular Education.

ACTIVITY 2:

Rivers of Life

Materials: Large pieces of paper (A3 or half of flip chart) and coloured markers for each person.

Plenary: Introduce the activity. Invite people to draw a river to show the key moments that have shaped your lives and the pivotal experiences (positive or negative) that have awakened you to injustice, inequality, power, or liberation.

Individually: Think about the experiences that have shaped your life and made you who you are. Draw a river that traces your life journey. Zoom in on four or five key moments of awakening about oppression, injustice, inequality, power, struggle, or liberation.

These experiences may have been difficult or joy-filled; they may have been individual or collective. Show these pivotal moments either along the river itself (for example, as streams flowing into it, bends, rapids, waterfalls, dams, swamps, or reflective pools) or along the shore (for example, people, experiences, conflicts, bridges, turning points). Use images, colours, and as few words as possible.

Small groups – or if time allows in plenary: Take five-minute turns to show and discuss your river. Only share what you want to and hold each other's words in confidence.

- What was it about each experience that was so important?
- How did these experiences impact and change you?
- How have they shaped who you are today?
- What insights, values, and visions do you bring from these experiences to this collective?
- Are there any particular cultural symbols that represent this for you?

Agree on moments or experiences that you found in common to share with the larger group.

Plenary: Each group briefly shares insights or common experiences. You can keep details confidential.

- What did you learn about yourself in this activity?
- Did you have any 'aha' moments listening to other people's stories? (Don't give details of someone else's story – only your own moment.)

As a facilitator, draw out the ways in which the heart, mind, and body all shape our experience, memory, and knowledge.

- How do these experiences in our hearts, minds, and bodies affect our leadership and change work now?
- How do they affect our wellbeing, spirit, and energy?
- What insights can we draw from this about our particular contexts and histories?

Repeat or continue this exercise if you like, to enable people to show where their rivers are heading, for example by drawing many streams joining together towards the ocean or diverging streams forming a delta with many ways forward.

Theme 2:
Imagining the Future We Want

**How about we begin to exercise the never-proclaimed right to dream?
How about we rave for a moment?**

- Eduardo Galeano[3]

What is the world we want to bring into being? Let's imagine a world without systemic inequities, injustices, and violence. Let's name the values and ways of being that will take us there. What is our vision? These are not frivolous questions. If we take our vision seriously, it becomes a guiding star, helping us discern and make strategic choices that move us closer to the deeper change we seek. A visioning process can embolden us to ask more fundamental questions about the conditions in which we are living and why things are the way they are. Activating our radical imagination can open up a sense of possibility and invite more interesting proposals that upend power and go beyond conventional statements of vision and mission.

We need... a new vision, a new definition of power and leadership. We must go away from the old model and toward one of creative cooperation on our small and threatened planet.... toward a sane and sustainable culture. A culture of soul. A culture that values life more than war. People more than profits. And hope more than despair.

- Johnnetta Cole[4]

Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly."

- Langston Hughes[5]

Every time we try to imagine a world without prisons, a world without oppression, a world without war, without borders, that is science fiction, because we've never seen that world. But we need imaginative spaces, because we can't build what we can't imagine. Without the ability to imagine something different, we are trapped within the parameters that the system has set for us."

- Walidah Imarisha[8]

ACTIVITY 3:

Dreaming the Future

Any process to spark new ways of seeing, thinking, and acting needs to take us beyond our usual thought processes to touch our emotions, beliefs, longings, and dreams. These drew us to this work in the first place and will animate new thinking, approaches, and ever stronger relationships. Here we explore our dreams and collective visions for the future.

Materials: Flip charts, post-its or cards of four different colours, markers, tape, letter-size paper, different coloured paper and tissue paper, written instructions, and relevant quotes.

Plenary: Read the quotes aloud to draw people from day-to-day thinking into a mode of imagining. While some were written in particular moments such as the beginning of the COVID pandemic, they speak to any crisis that triggers the necessity of rethinking and imagining other ways of being. Feel free to use quotes from your context to invite reflections on dreams of a better future.

Our dreams have been important in inspiring change and sustaining hope and community. The simple process of envisioning a better future is a critical action in itself. As we confront the violent systems around us:

- What do we centre in our work?
- How do we shape our vision and stay true to our values?
- What stars guide us along the way to making our dreams a reality?

Step 1: Dreaming

Individually: In order to invite a creative mindset, take a walk outdoors and really pay attention to what you see, smell, and hear; or listen to music or sing; or choose another activity that takes you out of the strictly rational brain. Allow yourself to visualize your desired future.

- What is the future you dream about?
- Where are you? Who are you with?
- What are you and people around you doing?
- What is the environment like? What do you see? What colours? What sounds? What smells?
- How are you feeling?

In two to three words, fill the gaps on colour-coded post-its, one colour per phrase:

> I have a dream of a future where everyone will_____ (colour 1), where no one will_____ (colour 2), and where the land and environment will _____ (colour 3). One idea or belief that feeds my dream and my work toward it is _____ (colour 4).

Using markers, pencils, coloured crayons, and/or collage, create a "quilt square" – an image on letter-size paper (of different colours, if possible) – to represent the future you have imagined.

Plenary: Each person shares their image, and these are placed one-by-one together on a

wall, floor, or table to make a quilt. In turn, each person reads their colour-coded dream statements and idea or belief. As they read, group the statements on a wall into similar themes and open a short discussion.

- What do these different images and cards say to us about our visions for the future?
- What are the ways we want our lives and the world to change?
- Do you see common sources of hope? How can we use these sources of hope and possibility in our organizing and change-making work?
- What brings us together? What are some of the differences?
- What do they say about our guiding values and purpose, what we stand for?
- What do they say about our hearts and feelings?

Step 2: Reimagined futures
Our individual dreams inspire us and others but to make change we must pool our dreams and collectively reimagine the future. Imagine that you've teleported to 2060, a time when a better world has arrived.

Options that might invite inspiration:

> Watch the video: Message from the Future
> Read selections from In a Time Not So Far Away
> Watch a video from the Movement for Black Lives: Black Futures – Ode to Freedom Summer

Alternatively, find examples in other languages or from other contexts.

Small groups: To show a radically reimagined world, create a five-minute role play, make a short video on a phone, or describe four scenarios that allow others to see what you see.

- What do we see?
- How do we feel?
- What are people doing differently? For economic well-being? For political and social problem-solving?
- How are communities organised?
- How do people relate to their environment?

Plenary: Each group presents their vision of the future. Discuss the futures you imagine. How do they connect to your dreams from Step 1?

Step 3: How will we get there?
Plenary: Re-read the Arundhati Roy quote. Repeat the last phrase: "We can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it".

Display a new flip chart or screen entitled "Travelling to the Reimagined Future" with two columns headed "In order to get to this vision, what will I take? and what will I leave behind?"

Individually: Write two or three post-its in answer to each question and post them in the columns.

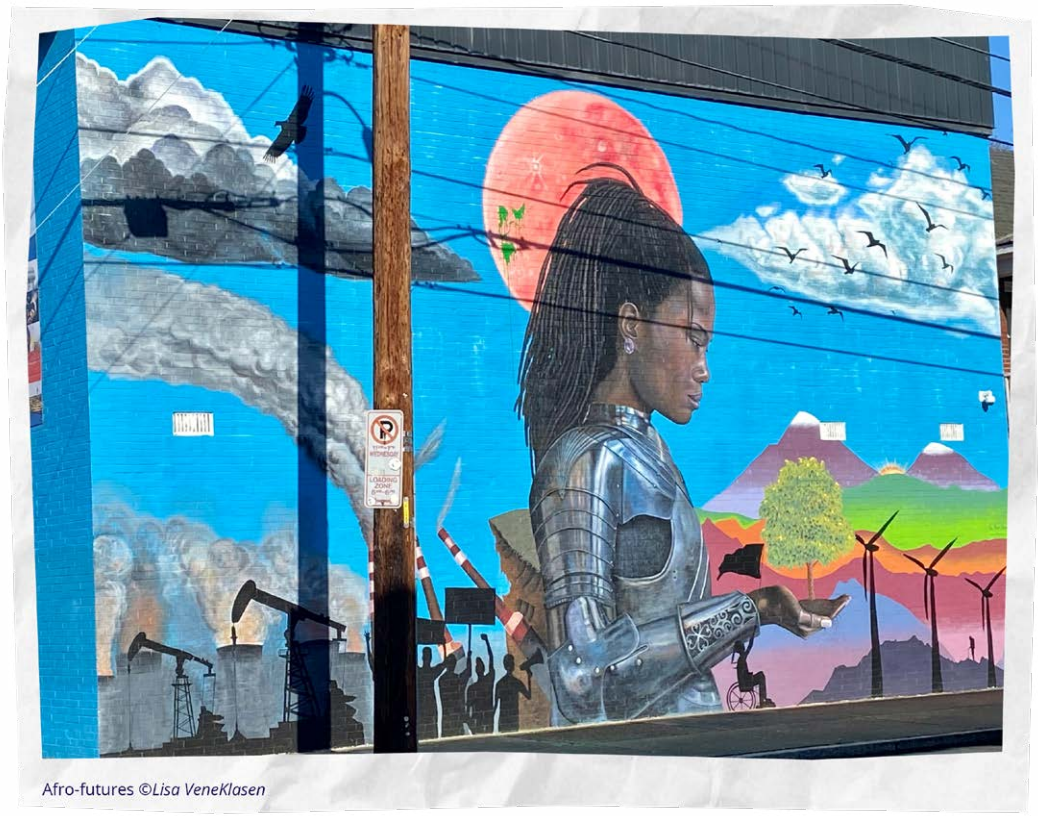
Plenary: Invite people to share what they posted and discuss what we're leaving behind and what we're taking with us. What do we learn about our visions looking at these lists?

Step 4: Values, principles, and ways of working
Building on the previous discussion, identify the core values, principles, and ways of working – both individual and collective – that will guide us toward our imagined future.

Individually: On two stickies, write:
One important value or principle that will be essential for living our visions.
One way of working or leading, or one practice that must change to enable us to realise these values.

Plenary: Cluster responses and invite discussion.
- What do we find in common?
- Are there any notable differences?

Summarise the discussion and read out the quotes from Johnetta Cole and Langston Hughes (see Theme 2).



Afro-futures ©*Lisa VeneKlasen*

> **Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one [Covid] is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.**
>
> *- Arundhati Roy*[6]

ACTIVITY 4:

Bringing visions to life

Step 1: Visions for social change that can inspire us
If our vision feels stale or too limited, or if we don't have one, we can gain inspiration from looking at those of others. You may want to explore a selection of bold visions from *Visions and values in action*.

Plenary: Use these examples or brainstorm examples of other organisations or movements – past or present – whose vision, values, and ways of working inspire you. Ask:

- What is appealing about how they lay out their vision and how they live their values in their activism and leadership?
- What are some of the challenges of putting values and principles into practice?

Step 2: Bringing visions to life
Here, we contrast the what and the how to judge how our values, principles, and ways of working align with our vision. Use Option 1 if people are all from the same organization, or if they can be grouped by organization. Use Option 2 if people are mostly from different organisations or as a follow-up to Option 1.

Option 1: Same organisations
Small groups: What is your organisation's vision? This may be an existing vision statement, or you may need to take some time as a group to write down the vision as you all understand it.

- How do you feel about your organisation's vision?
- Could the vision be improved or stretched? If yes, what would you change?
- Does the vision reflect the values, principles, and ways of working you identified?
- If yes, how?
- If not, how could your values, principles, and ways of working bring the vision to life? Or how could the vision be changed to better reflect your values and ways of working?

Pick three insights to share in plenary.

Plenary: Groups share insights.

- What does this tell us about the connection between our visions and our ways of working?
- What needs to change to align our practices with our visions?
- Where do we need to stretch or challenge ourselves?
- Is it about the what or the how or both?

The purpose of this discussion is not to find answers, right or wrong, or to decide now what needs to change, but to stimulate thinking. Remind people that they will return to these questions later, enriched with other perspectives.

You could go back to the inspiring organisations or movements named in Step 1. How did they align their what with their how?

Option 2: different organisations
Go back to the inspiring organisations or movements named in Step 1, or name examples familiar to the group, or draw on the handout. Each small group discusses a different organization or movement.
Small groups: For the organisation or movement you are looking at:

- What is the vision? Find their vision statement or describe your understanding of it.
- How do you feel about this vision?
- What do you think are or were their core values, principles, and ways of working?
- Does the vision reflect these values, principles, and ways of working?
- If yes, how?
- If not, what values, principles, and ways of working could help bring the vision to life? Or how could the vision be changed to better embody values, principles, and ways of working?

Pick a reporter and three insights to share in plenary.

Plenary: Groups share insights.

- How does looking at these visions make you feel? What questions or reflections do they surface for you and for your own work?
- What does this tell us about the connection between an organisation or movement's vision and its ways of working?
- What challenges were involved, if any, in aligning vision with principles, purpose with practice – the what and the how?

Vision and values in action
What people believe to be valuable guides their actions, whether these values are unspoken and unacknowledged or spelled out clearly. When people express their values and weave them together, they are creating a coherent vision or philosophy. With a shared vision, a movement or collective can advance together.
Here are five examples of deeply considered and coherent visions to guide short- and long-term strategies and action. Find, share, and discuss examples from your own context.

Principles of Earth Democracy
Vandana Shiva is described as "an Indian scholar, environmental activist, food sovereignty advocate, ecofeminist, and anti-globalization author". This set of principles, summarised from her books, presents an overall philosophy and vision as a rich basis for activism.

1. Ecological democracy – democracy of all life
We are all members of the Earth community. We all have the duty to protect the rights and welfare of all species and all people. No humans have the right to encroach on the ecological space of other species and other people, or treat them with cruelty and violence.

2. Intrinsic worth of all species and peoples

All species, humans, and cultures have intrinsic worth. They are subjects, not objects of manipulation or ownership. No humans have the right to own other species, other people, or the knowledge of other cultures through patents and other intellectual property rights.

3. Diversity in nature and culture

Defending biological and cultural diversity is a duty of all people. Diversity is an end in itself, a value, a source of richness both material and cultural.

4. Natural rights to sustenance

All members of the Earth Community including all humans have the right to food and water, to safe and clean habitat, to security of ecological space. These rights are natural rights, they are birthrights and are best protected through community rights and commons. They are not given by states or corporations, nor can they be extinguished by state or corporate action, through privatisation or monopoly control.

5. Earth economy is based on economic democracy and living economy

Earth democracy is based on economic democracy. Economic systems in Earth Democracy protect ecosystems and their integrity, they protect people's livelihoods and provide basic needs to all. In the earth economy there are no disposable or dispensable species or people. The earth economy is a living economy for the benefit of the common good.

6. Living economies are built on local economies

Conservation of the earth's resources and creation of sustainable and satisfying livelihoods is most caringly, creatively, and efficiently and equitably achieved at the local level. Localisation of economics is a social and ecological imperative. Only goods and services that cannot be produced locally, using local resources and local knowledge, should be produced non-locally and traded long distance.

7. Living democracy

Earth democracy is based on local living democracy with local communities – organised on principles of inclusion and diversity and ecological and social responsibility – as the highest authority on decisions related to the environment and natural resources and to the sustenance and livelihoods of people. Authority is delegated to more distant levels of governance on the principle of subsidiarity. Earth democracy is living democracy.

8. Living knowledge

Earth democracy is based on earth-centred and community-centred knowledge systems. Living knowledge is knowledge that maintains and renews living processes and contributes to health of the planet and people. It is also living knowledge in that it is embedded in nature and society, is not abstract, reductionist, or anti-life. Living knowledge is a commons, it belongs collectively to communities that create it and keep it alive. All humans have a duty to share knowledge. No person or corporation has a right to enclose, monopolise, patent, or exclusively own as intellectual property living knowledge.

9. Balancing rights with responsibility
In earth democracy, rights are derived from and balanced with responsibility. Those who bear the consequences of decisions and actions are the decision makers.

10. Globalizing peace, care, and compassion
Earth democracy connects people in circles of care, cooperation, and compassion instead of dividing them through competition and conflict. Earth democracy globalises compassion, not greed, and peace, not war.

The Care Collective
This vision and manifesto circulated widely when 'care' emerged as a central political agenda in 2020 during the Covid pandemic. This short version gives a sense of the principles and practice at its core.

Interdependence: To imagine a world organised around care, we must begin by recognising the myriad ways in which our survival is always contingent on others. A caring politics must first and foremost acknowledge our interdependence alongside the ambivalence and anxiety these connections routinely generate. Recognising our needs both to give and receive care not only provides us with a sense of our common humanity, but also enables us to confront our shared fears of human frailty rather than project them onto others.

Caring kinships: The traditional nuclear family with the mother at its centre still provides the dominant prototype for care and kinship… Yet it is only by proliferating our circles of care – in the first instance by expanding our notion of kinship – that we can achieve the psychic infrastructures necessary for building a caring society that has universal care as its foundation. Diverse forms of care between all human and non-human creatures need to be recognised and valued. This is what we call 'an ethics of promiscuous care'. Promiscuous care means caring more and in ways that remain experimental and extensive by current standards. It means multiplying who we care for and how.

Caring communities: Questions of care are not just bound up with the intimacy of very close relationships. They are also shaped in the localities we inhabit and move through: in local communities, neighbourhoods, libraries, schools, and parks, in our social networks, and our group belongings. But the deliberate rolling back of public welfare provision [where this exists at all], replaced by global corporate commodity chains, have generated profoundly unhealthy community contexts for care.

Communities that care stop the hoarding of resources by the few. Instead, caring communities need to prioritise the commons. Communities based on care ensure the creation of collective public spaces as well as objects: they encourage a sharing infrastructure. This means reversing the compulsion of neoliberalism to privatise everything.

Seven Principles of Zapatismo
This example comes from a resistance movement in Chiapas state in Mexico in 1994 and draws on the deeper history of the ancestors to guide community-building.

The group primarily consisted of Indigenous tribes with their own customs including Ch'ol, Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Tojolobal, Mam, and Zoque. The event made headlines worldwide and sparked a movement for Indigenous rights, autonomy, and social change. The Zapatista Revolution's uprising, which occurred on the day the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect. Zapatistas, as they are commonly known, emerged from decades of organizing among Indigenous peoples to address the systemic issues of poverty, discrimination, and lack of representation faced by Indigenous communities in Mexico.

The Zapatistas' uprising was a call to action for marginalized communities worldwide and continues to inspire movements for Indigenous rights and social change. Since 1994, the Zapatistas have focused on building autonomous communities that are centred around their Indigenous traditions while seeking to create 'Un Mundo Donde Quepan Muchos Mundos' ('A World Where Many Worlds Fit'), emphasising the dignity of 'others,' belonging, and common struggle, as well as the importance of laughter, dancing, and nourishing children.

1. ***Obedecer y No Mandar (to obey, not command)***
Execute the will of the people, while holding a position of leadership. In Zapatista autonomous communities, leadership positions are short-lived. This reflects the need for leaders to obey the collective desires of the community rather than command them from a position of power.

2. ***Proponer y No Imponer (to propose, not impose)***
Humility is a key part of life for the Zapatistas and aligns with their practice of debate and self-reflection, and a culture of proposing a path forward and not imposing one.

3. *Representar y No Suplantar (to represent, not supplant)*
Before the coloniser arrived, Indigenous people governed themselves. Self-governance for the Zapatistas, grounded in the collective trust of the community to represent what the community wants.

4. ***Convencer y No Vencer (to convince, not conquer)***
Zapatistas practise dialogue and assembly, which require logical argument, reflection, consideration of many viewpoints, and open discussion.

5. ***Construir y No Destruir (to construct, not destroy)***
The ethic of anti-destruction and an end to exploitation is a practice in creating the institutions and the world that we want, in relationship to humans and the land.

6. ***Servir y No Servirse (to serve others, not serve oneself)***
The Zapatista slogan, 'Para todos todo, para nosotros nada' (Everything for Everyone, Nothing for Ourselves), is at the core of this principle of humility. Every Zapatista must find a balance in serving others for the collective while taking care of their individual family work.

7. ***Bajar y No Subir (to work from below, not seek to rise)***

In Zapatista communities, 'trabajo colectivo' (collective work) is a way of life. This aligns with the mentality of working at the grassroots level for the benefit of your community.

Climate Justice Charter Movement

This is a South African alliance of progressive civil society, faith communities, labour movements, environmental/climate justice and water sectors, formed to encourage a re-alignment of climate justice forces. Their principles and "systemic alternatives for transformative change" define the future they see and how they hope to get there. Their charter provides a guide to specific short-term demands and tactics as well as narratives and long-term strategy. Below are some excerpts.

Principles for deep just transitions

Every community, village, town, city, and workplace must advance the deep just transition to ensure socio-ecological transformation. The following principles shall guide the alternatives, plans, and processes towards a deep just transition in our society.

1. ***Climate justice:*** Those least responsible must not be harmed or carry the cost of climate impacts. Hence the needs of workers, the poor, the landless, people with disabilities, grassroots women, children, and vulnerable communities have to be at the centre of the deep just transition. The benefits of socio-ecological transformation must be shared equally.

2. ***Social justice:*** Climate justice is social justice. Confront all forms of discrimination and oppression as it relates to race, class, gender, sex, and age, to secure climate and social justice.

3. ***Eco-centric living:*** Live simply, slowly, and consciously, in an eco-centric way, which recognises the sanctity of all life forms and our inter-connections and enables an ethics of respect and care.

4. ***Participatory democracy:*** All climate and deep just transition policies must be informed by the voices, consent, and needs of all people, especially those facing harm.

5. ***Socialised ownership:*** In workplaces and communities, people's power must express itself through democratic control and ownership, including through democratic public utilities, cooperatives, commoning, communal ownership, and participatory planning, including participatory budgeting in towns and cities to ensure collective management of the life enabling commons and systems.

6. ***International solidarity:*** Everyone's struggle is a shared struggle to sustain life. In the context of worsening climate shocks, international solidarity is central to the deep just transition as it serves to unite all who are struggling for emancipation and for a post carbon world.

7. ***Decoloniality:*** Colonial, neo-colonial, and imperial domination are driving us towards extinction. This is based on the worship of extractivism, technology, finance, violence, and markets. We will actively delink from this system as we affirm an emancipatory relationship between humans and with non-human nature rooted in our history, culture, knowledge, and the wider struggle of the oppressed on planet earth.

8. ***Intergenerational justice:*** Care for our planetary commons and ecosystems is crucial for intergenerational justice and to secure a future for our children, youth, and those not yet born.

> **I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.**
>
> *- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*[7]

Theme 3:
Roadmaps to Change

> It is not enough to open the door to the rooms of power.
> We have to get inside and rearrange the furniture!
>
> *- Gertrude Mongella*[13]

The way we live into our vision requires a clear sense of our values and purpose but also clarity about our approach to change. What do we assume to be true about how change happens?

Change is often assumed to follow a linear, causal pathway from the actions we take, to the outputs of these actions, to outcomes and impacts.

Change is messy. It's not a straight path but rather a network of roads, travelled by many, and filled with potholes, pitfalls, and unexpected diversions. We set forth to overcome the destructive dynamics of patriarchy, racism, capitalism, colonialism, ageism, ableism, classism, homophobia and more, knowing that the road can be winding and dangerous.

- How do we together create these roads to ensure we get where we want to go?
- What can we contribute to the enabling conditions for change?
- How does this complement what others are doing, on the roads they are following?
- Who and what do we bring along to help us get to our destination?
- How will we overcome the many obstacles along the way?

> Traveler, there is no path, The path is made by walking.
>
> *- Antonio Machado, Spanish poet.*

ACTIVITY 5:

How change happens

We look at our experiences in movements for change (or at one of the case studies in this guide) and draw out our assumptions about how change happens, and how our own efforts contribute to the process of resisting, shifting, and building power. We will revisit and deepen these questions throughout the Guide, particularly in Chapter 6: Power and Strategy.

Step 1: What do we assume about how change happens?

Plenary: Using the Antonio Machado quote for inspiration, we can reflect on some of our assumptions about the change process – which is certainly not as linear, causal, or predictable as some planning frameworks indicate. Think about a change process led by movements in your context (or refer to one of the case studies in this guide). What do you observe about what makes change possible and what some of the important ingredients are? Consider these questions:

- Who or what creates the 'enabling conditions' – or lays the groundwork for social change to happen?
- Which different actors and organized groups contribute to the change process?
- How do different groups' actions complement each other? Are there tensions?
- What can we learn from this reflection about the ingredients and actions that might be needed to advance our vision and agenda?
- Will our change efforts benefit from complementary strategies? Might there be conflict with other actors? And if yes, who? Where? Why?

Small groups: Each group takes a different question from this list (or other questions that arise in discussion) and generates three or four responses. What assumptions can you make about how social change happens?

Plenary: Small groups share their key thoughts. Draw out highlights from each one and open up to further discussion.

Share the quote Naming the Moment, inspired by Latin American experiences of struggle. Invite someone to read it aloud. Ask:

- What are the key assumptions in Naming the Moment?
- How do they enrich or challenge your thinking?
- What do you feel is the most important insight about power? About how change happens?
- What questions does it raise for you and your organization?

Naming the moment

"When we do this analysis, we assume that ...
... our social situation is filled with tensions between social groups and within them.
... history is made as these groups come into conflict and resolve conflict.
... some groups have power and privilege at the expense of other groups.
... this oppression is unjust and we must stop it.
... if we want to participate actively in history, we must understand the present as well as the past.
... we can learn to interpret history, evaluate past actions, judge present situations, and project the future.
... because things are always changing, we must continually clarify what we are working for.
... to be effective, we must assess the strengths and weaknesses of our own group and those working with and against us.
... at any moment there is a particular interrelationship of economic, political, and ideological forces.
... these power relationships shift from one moment to another.
... when we plan actions, our strategy and tactics must take into account these forces and relationships.
... we can find the free space that this particular moment offers.
... we can identify and seize the moment for change."

Extract from Naming the moment, Deborah Barndt[15]

How does change happen?

Common assumptions in the NGO world are that policy drives change, that information changes minds, and that change is a straight line. But history and our own experiences give us plenty of examples to show that policy and information matter but politics, power, and mindsets are much more complex than that. Rather than a steady, linear progression toward justice and rights, it is clear that change always generates conflict and that struggle takes on new contours as contexts and power shifts.

This Guide uses a set of case studies that incorporate a broad array of strategies, both short and long term, that build power and leadership for communities and movements while advancing change at multiple levels. The case studies illuminate the critical importance of organising and movements in enabling people to resist oppressive forms of power, demand democratic and responsive governance, protect themselves from backlash and repression, create solutions and sustain the advances they make. Ultimately, creating change is about changing the balance of power through the organised efforts and strategic action of people over time.

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

- An African proverb

Defining movements and movement-building

In this Guide, we assume that movements and movement building are central to change. But these terms are often overused and misused. 'Movement' is used to describe everything from a handful of NGOs in a global policy process to a street mobilisation or an online campaign around a hashtag. All of these things may have elements of movements and movement building. We need to be precise about our definitions so that we are clear about our approach to change.

Movements and movement building

What Is a Movement?	What is movement-building?
Clusters of NGOs do not make movements. A movement has: A clear vision, values, broad agenda and narrative about the problem and solution	Organizing and bringing diverse communities, people and groups together in alliances around common cause and a long-term vision and agenda for transformation
Broad membership and active constituency base and intentional strategies to always broaden more	Dialogue and spaces to refresh political analysis and strengthen shared leadership and relationships that value lived experience and introduce new knowledge
Some degree of organization; formal and informal linkages and alignment	Valuing and strengthening multiple types of leaders, division of labor and flexible linkages and core principles facilitate joint action; mechanisms for internal negotiation and accountability
Diverse leadership and opportunities to lead, represent, decide, division of labour	Share resources, voice, roles and leadership of the most affected by injustice at the heart of the movement and ensuring collective safety of all
Multiple forms of knowledge and information valued	
Leadership and groups closest to problems "frontline" in decisive role	
Proactive and reactive joint and aligned actions in pursuit of common goals;	
Continuity over time adjusting to moment/ context	
Activities that combine *extra-institutional* (marches, protests, organizing, gatherings), *institutional* (advocacy & lobbying), *virtual* (digital organizing and action) and *in-person.*	

JASS' *Feminist Movement-Builders Dictionary (2012).*

> A movement is a set of people with a shared experience of injustice, who organise themselves to build their collective power and leadership, develop a shared agenda for change, which they pursue through collective action, with some continuity over time. ... Movements are always about challenging power structures. ... Movements are built by creating spaces where people can come together to think and speak radical thoughts, and plan radical deeds to change their reality.
>
> *- Srilatha Batliwala*[16]

Social justice movements are formed and driven by the power of multiple people and organisations brought together by their common problems and different struggles – from racial, gender, and climate justice to women's, labour, and indigenous people's rights. Movements weave the voices and concerns of many players into an ever wider and deeper force for change. Often catalysed by a pivotal event or an inspiring figure, movements are many years in the making through the often invisible organising among communities and organisations. We may not witness that invisible organising until a pivotal event occurs. That was the case in the USA with the Movement for Black Lives. The murder of George Floyd in 2020 didn't create the movement, but it mobilised and amplified it.

In finding common ground and purpose, movements can develop strategies that align with their desire to challenge the systemic power dynamics at the core of oppression and violence. Operating under a broad and overarching vision and agenda, some movements often function loosely, without clear coordination. In such instances, certain groups serve as catalytic hubs that generate ideas and actions, motivating other, more dispersed groups to join. In other configurations, one or two organisations initiate actions that generate a movement, are recognised as its primary leaders, and establish clearer structures of participation and coordination.

Feminist Movement Building

Building feminist movements	Feminist movement building
Means organising and mobilising women and LBTQI+ communities around gender justice, equality, and women's rights.	On the other hand, involves integrating gender justice and equality and decolonial, feminist perspectives into a range of social justice agendas with different allies. Feminist movement building is both a means to an end and an end in itself.

Understanding power and developing political consciousness are at the heart of feminist movement building. As people build their own analysis of the economic, political, and social dynamics that shape their lives and contexts, they are able to identify shared problems and needs.

This process is the foundation of organising for collective power by helping transform practical needs – clean water, protection from violence, access to land – into a shared commitment that sparks and sustains movements for change.

ACTIVITY 6:

What do we mean by 'movements'?

Materials: paper and markers, handout: *Defining movements and movement-building*

Plenary: Introduce the activity and invite people to brainstorm:
- What is the first word that comes to mind when I say 'social justice movement'?

Note responses on a flip chart.

Share and discuss the quote from Srilatha Batliwala as a kick start and/or the handout: Movement story: *Treatment Action Campaign.*

Small groups: Discuss:
- In your experience, what is a social movement?
- How are social movements organised? How do they come together?

List five key elements of movement building on a flip chart.

Individually: Make a drawing that reflects what a social movement means to you.

Plenary: Each group posts their drawings on a wall and, after a brief gallery walk, groups read out their five points. Together, discuss what you've heard and create working definitions of 'a movement' and 'movement building'.

You might also ask:
- What are the features of different kinds of movements? Can you think of examples?
- How do movements operate? What are some key characteristics?
- What are some of the methods of organising, leadership, and decision-making?
- What formal or informal groups, alliances, or coalitions are movements made up of?
- And what do movements contribute to larger eco-systems of change?

Explore differences of opinion and areas of agreement.

Share the handout *Movements and movement building* for individuals to read to themselves or for a volunteer to read aloud. Then facilitate a plenary discussion.
- How do these definitions and stages enrich or contrast from our own definitions?
- How does this information help us understand movements that are active in our contexts and their contributions to change efforts?
- What is distinct or different about feminist movement building?
- How does our understanding of movements shape our ideas for how change happens?

A movement story: Treatment Action Campaign

Responding to the HIV-AIDS epidemic in 1990s South Africa, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) organised HIV+ people to gain better treatment and confront stigma. Started by anti-apartheid HIV activists, TAC grew into a dynamic social justice movement. A powerful factor was TAC's ability to attract and involve strategic allies – from international organisations such as Doctors Without Borders to local community groups, faith-based networks, labour unions, children's organisations, legal support and research institutions, and health-service associations among others.

A membership-based organisation, TAC, began with a centralised leadership structure in which key community members and allies made decisions and took action with great agility. Later, TAC developed local branches across the country, and this allowed for more direct community participation, including voting on major movement decisions and working as HIV educators and promoters with government health centres. Despite challenges, TAC affected all levels of power including government, corporations, and the invisible systems of beliefs and norms that stigmatise HIV and reinforce people's sense of powerlessness. TAC has achieved substantial impact – improving the health and dignity of people living with HIV as well as the entire health system and even levels of democratic participation. A variety of factors contributed to TAC's success, including its founders' experience both in South Africa's liberation struggle and in being HIV positive; the resultant political trust; the agility and efficient coordination with which TAC could respond to changing power dynamics; and the scope and creativity of its strategies – from those aimed at the expansion, education, and participation of its members and allies, to the combination of confrontational direct actions with more traditional advocacy and communication approaches.

Theme 4:
Who are 'We'?

> Many international NGOs believe that they are fighting for our (anti-mining) agenda but without asking us what our agenda is. They take policy positions without even asking us. This can undermine our movement and put us at risk. They don't feel the attacks and repercussions like we do.
>
> *- Activist from the Peaceful Resistance La Puya, Guatemala, during a mining blockade*

Given our vision and principles, pathways forward, theories of change, and understanding of movements and movement building, the next step is to assess who 'we' are and where we are situated in relation to the broader change ecosystem – civil society organisations, community and faith groups, social media, and other entities. We started to identify other change-makers in our 'pathways' pictures. Now, we seek to:

- Locate our activism more specifically in relation to other actors and wider movements.
- Understand better what we bring.
- Identify where we might need to stretch or contribute more to movements by building alliances, facilitating learning, organising, and more.

Successful social movements are a complex mosaic of different kinds of people, identities, and groups, both formal and informal, aligned toward the same goals. The individual parts of a movement may be very diverse and our own role may be just one part of the whole.

ACTIVITY 7:

Who are 'we' and what do we bring?

Here, we take stock of who 'we' are – as individual activists and as collectives – where we are positioned in the wider ecosystem of actors, and what our contribution might be.

Materials: Flip chart paper, markers, dot stickers or the virtual equivalent

Step 1: Locating ourselves and our organisations

Plenary: Introduce the purpose and process.
First, invite personal reflection. Ask:

- What motivates you to be involved in efforts for social change in your context?
- What kind of social change work do you participate in individually and with what kind of group or organisation are you active? (There may be more than one.)

Together, list the kinds of groups and organisations represented in the room. Note the categories on a flip chart.

Next, ask people to identify others that are not represented here. Use the list below, and add others, to expand the range of actors that might be involved in a wider movement ecosystem.

- Movement
- Informal association
- Alliance or collaborative
- Local service NGO
- Research group
- National advocacy NGO or non-profit
- Legal or policy support group
- Campaign
- Media group
- International NGO
- Funder
- Grassroots group
- Movement support
- Other (specify)

Give each person three dot stickers and ask them to place these stickers next to the names of groups or organisations that they are most active in or connected to. Look at the results together and reflect:

- Where is our activism and change work located?
- Are there types of groups or organisations that we don't have much connection with? Why or why not?
- What, if anything, do we miss by not having those relationships in our change work?

Small groups: Clustered according to the categories of groups or organisations represented, discuss the questions together. Write your individual or collective responses on six different colours of sticky notes or coloured cards, two for each question:

1. When you consider your group or organisation, what individual words describe what you stand for?
2. What characteristics distinguish your group or organisation? Examples might be area of focus, staffing, membership, level of commitment to struggle, location/ scope of operations (community/local, national, international), leadership and accountability structures, funding sources, etc. Name three.
3. What are the key contributions and strengths that you offer within a wider movement ecosystem, in terms of capacities, connections, reputation, or other resources? Name three.

Plenary: Place three flip charts on the wall, one for each of the questions. Each group presents and places their cards on the flip chart. Compare and review them. Then ask:

- What does this tell us about the diversity of groups that make up (or that contribute to) a successful social movement?
- What kinds of strengths or contributions do we bring to the wider movement ecosystem?
- What gaps are we filling, or could we fill?
- What are some of the bridges and connections we might want to strengthen to increase our capacity and build our social change infrastructure?

Draw out commonalities and differences. Ask:

- What might these imply for our contributions to movement building, individually and in the groups we belong to?
- What changes might be needed in our roles, strengths, and contributions?

Step 2: Where are we situated in the broader movement ecosystem?

Small groups: To identify other actors in this ecosystem, discuss:

- Who are your allies and friends? How closely do you work with them?
- Who is in your inner circle?
- Who are the other players or communities whose work and activism are adjacent, similar, or aligned to yours?
- How do they see you?

Pick three key insights and someone to report back.

Plenary: Each group shares their three key insights. Point out and discuss any significant differences or disagreements. Ask:

- What new or strengthened relationships would deepen and expand your impact and community? What connections would help strengthen movement power?
- What challenges arise between NGOs and other formations such as movements? How do, or could you, deal with them? (Refer to the quotation at the start of this Theme.)
- What can your group, organisation, or movement do to be a better colleague and ally?
- How do others in the ecosystem view you? What do they say about you? What might this mean for movement building and strategy?
- What might this mean to your ability to build relations and power? What challenges do these reflections highlight for you and your organisation?
- Have you any new insights about movements, relating your own experience to our activities on visioning and pathways?

1 African American writer, educator and spoken word artist.
2 JASS Executive Director
3 Uruguayan poet, philosopher, and activist. "In Dare to Question: A journal for uprising"
4 American anthropologist, educator, museum director, and college president.
5 "Dreams". From The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes, published by Alfred A. Knopf/Vintage. Copyright © 1994 by the Estate of Langston Hughes.
6 "The Pandemic as Portal". Financial Times, April 3, 2020.
7 US Civil rights activist. Speech in the marble steps, Lincoln Memorial, Washington DC (August 28, 1963)
8 African American writer, educator, and spoken word artist.
9 https://systemicalternatives.org/2014/11/25/earth-democracy-ten-principles-of-justice-sustainability-and-peace/
10 Paraphrased from https://www.uhn.ca/Research/Research_Institutes/The_Institute_for_Education_Research/Events/Documents/Care-Manifesto-Readings.pdf
11 https://www.themixedspace.com/7-principles-of-zapatismo-to-consider-in-community-building/
12 https://cjcm.org.za/about
13 Tanzanian feminist, diplomat, and educator.
14 "Traveler, There Is No Path". Antonio Machado, trans. Willis Barnstone from Antonio Machado, Border of a Dream: Selected Poems, Copper Canyon Press, 2004
15 Barndt, Deborah, Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action. A Manual for Community Groups, The Moment Project, The Centre for Social Faith and Justice, Toronto, 1991.
16 Srilatha Batliwala, "All About Movements: Why building movements creates deeper change", CREA 2020.

2

NAMING THE MOMENT

> **Communities and organisations are waging a struggle between two opposing worldviews: one based on depredation and dispossession, the other based on respect for the web of life, mutual care, equality, and social justice.**
>
> *- Aura Lolita Chávez and Marusia López Cruz*[1]

The first step in understanding power dynamics is to name the moment.[2] Building on Chapter 1: Getting Started, we situate ourselves and our change work in history.

What is happening now – looking at the big picture – and how did we get here?
What is creating upheaval, violence, and inequity in our contexts?
How do these forces fit within larger global trends?
How did we get here?
Where do we see the possibilities for organising, resistance, and transformation?
What gives us hope and keeps us going?

This chapter guides an initial analysis of the contexts and larger trends – the major global-to-local patterns and reconfigurations shaping the current moment – and explores the historical roots and lessons of struggles.

Our histories of struggle are often glossed over or hidden by the official versions that we learn in school. The recovery of our own histories of resistance and transformation is crucial for power-building and connects us with the ideas and people who fought for justice before us.

Trends are global, but distinct histories and cultures shape the local contexts and specific problems exacerbated by those trends. Gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and location shape our different contexts and how we experience them. Our analysis integrates the personal, political, cultural, and organisational dimensions of power and change, and this helps us plan and organise strategically.

This chapter is divided into four themes. Each theme offers one or more activities.

Theme 1: Between Crisis and Mobilisation
How is the context changing? How are people responding to upheaval and a deepening sense of inequity, injustice, and inaction? We analyse how crises shape situations, for example through increased attacks on dissent and activists. We name the signs of resistance and transformation that challenge the status quo and generate a sense of hope and possibility. We notice how these patterns interconnect and impact people differently.

Theme 2: Global Patterns, Systemic Shifts
What are the global trends driving the challenges we face as well as the possibilities for change? We take a deeper look into the systemic shifts underway, naming and categorising the sweeping forces impacting our lives beyond our national context. We

come to understand these forces as disputes about what and who matters, and about the present and the future.

Theme 3: Learning from History
How did we get here? What are the roots of current structural crises and people's mobilisations? Creating a timeline of key events over the last decades, we trace the historic roots of crises and upheaval and reconstruct stories of how our ancestors fought for justice. We explore the zigzag push and pull of different forces seeking to rebalance, resist, or gain power.

Theme 4: Cracks Where the Light Comes In
Even when we are overwhelmed by what we are up against, there are still possibilities – no matter how small – to connect and build solidarity for a different future. As people mobilise to end the injustice and reshape broken systems across the world, we reflect about where change is happening and what sustains our hope and energy.

We stand on the shoulders of our ancestors but rarely pause to learn from their efforts to confront and change power. Much of that history is not easily accessible and relies on our collective memories and stories.

Theme 1:
Between Crisis and Mobilisation

We share many problems across borders – including violence and corruption – but every context is unique. There is no 'one size fits all'. Examining the context is a critical first step to understanding and building power. Here, we share observations and feelings about what's happening in the current context. We draw from lived experience and knowledge as a starting point for a deeper analysis. When we reflect together, we are able to bring differences and disagreements to the surface and create a more nuanced sense of what is happening and how it affects people differently. As we discuss our change strategies, we identify common challenges and opportunities to make change happen.

Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.

- Desmond Tutu

ACTIVITY 1:

The current situation

This activity offers two different options for beginning to identify what's happening in our context and how we feel about it. These initial observations will provide the basis for scanning global trends, reflecting on history, and analysing power later in the Guide.

Step 1: What's changing?
Plenary: Give an overview of the themes in this chapter. Explain that this first activity is an opportunity for people to share experiences and impressions of what is changing around them. Choose either to engage in reflection or body mapping and then go on to Step 2.

Individually: Jot down a few phrases (or draw a picture) to capture your experiences and feelings.

- Name three ways your context is changing.
- How has this affected your life, your work, and your sense of the future?
- Name two signs of promising or positive change in your context.

In pairs: Go for a walk or sit together. Take turns sharing your thoughts for five minutes each, and then discuss:

- What changes – positive and negative – do you have in common? What are some differences?
- In what ways are your feelings and experiences – at work, at home, and your sense of the future similar or different?
- What are your key reflections about how the current moment impacts activism and social justice strategies?

Alternatively, involve the group in body mapping.

Materials: flipchart paper, sticky notes or cards of different colours, markers

Plenary: Ask: How does the current moment affect us? What is the impact on our hearts, minds, and bodies?

Form groups of three or four people. Give each group two sheets of flip chart paper taped together lengthwise (to be nearly the size of a person) and markers. If the group is of mixed genders or sexualities, consider dividing into similar groups.

Given the amount of violence people – and especially women – experience in their bodies, use the advice in Chapter 1: Getting Started for creating a safe and courageous space.

In small groups:
- Draw the outline of a human body.
- Where does the current context affect you and your work, negatively and positively? Take turns pointing to four or five places on the body map that illustrate the challenges and possibilities that you experience.
- Do at least two rounds, choosing and marking places on the body map with both negative and positive examples. What impact do you experience in your heart, mind, and/or body?
- On coloured sticky notes or squares of paper, write a key word for the kinds of challenges or possibilities you've seen and felt, a key word for the body part it impacted, and words that describe how you felt.

Step 2: A snapshot
Plenary: Invite each pair to share the highlights from their exchange and conversation or give each group three or four minutes to present the highlights of their body map.

Open a general conversation about what is shifting, and our experiences, feelings, and their impact. Ask:
- What are some of the changes you observed and experienced?
- How are these changes impacting your sense of the future and your wellbeing? Or if you followed option B, How are these changes affecting your hearts, minds, and bodies?
- What is the impact on our families, friends, movements, and communities?
- What is the impact on our work as organisers and change makers?
- What possibilities and opportunities do you see for activism and social change strategies?

Note key points on a flip chart. This process helps pinpoint key issues and emerging change efforts. Crises reveal the flaws and fissures in political and economic systems, but they also create new pathways and possibilities for systemic and structural change.

Step 3: How do these changes affect people differently?
Plenary: Refer to the key points on the flip chart from Step 2. Discuss how these shifts impact people differently, because gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, class, and location shape who is affected and how. Share this short video: Power and Protection: The Challenge of Defending Rights in Hostile Contexts (4 minutes)

Small groups: In groups of four to seven, discuss these questions. One person per group notes the main points in brief on cards. Give all groups the same colour card per question.

- What actors and forces – both positive and negative – are contributing to the changing context?
- How do these challenges and possibilities for change impact and involve different individuals, communities, groups, and organisations differently? Who is most adversely affected? Who is targeted?

Plenary: Use the 'popcorn' method, where groups build on each other's points. One group starts by sharing their top three insights. They place their cards on the wall, table, or floor. Then another group shares similar or different answers. Invite people to cluster the cards by colour and/or theme. Then summarise and discuss, cluster by cluster. Quote people in the room where possible and ask questions to emphasise key points.

- How are different activists and organisations – women, indigenous peoples, LGBTQI+, labour organisers – affected differently?
- What is the role of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and location in explaining the similarities and differences?
- Together, write short phrases or labels to define each of the clusters and how they are affected or involved. Organise the clusters in a way that represents the connections between issues, forces, and actors.

Body maps in action
Read about the early stages of organising with grassroots women leaders affected by HIV/AIDS in Malawi as they searched for a common mobilising agenda for women across many cities and villages. Body maps revealed something that had not emerged in any previous process or discussion. Once the women recognised that they shared the same shame and discovered the root causes, this issue became a potent energizing demand for quality medicines and healthcare and ultimately galvanised an 8,500-strong nationwide movement.

Mary Tembo, Feminist Movement Building, Salima, Malawi© 2022, JASS

Global Race to SAVE Lives March, Malawi © 2012

Analysing a body map in a workshop in Guatemala © 2018, Lisa VeneKlasen/ JASS

> **Our bodies, like our territories, are in dispute.**
>
> *- María Guadalupe García, Mamá Maquín, Guatemala*

Theme 2:
Global Patterns, Systemic Shifts

The concrete changes we are experiencing are shaped by global patterns that have been underway for many decades. These patterns are 'trends', and understanding and anticipating future trends has become all the rage in the corporate world for obvious reasons. From the business sector to civil society, analysts try to map different scenarios into the future and navigate uncertainty. However, our political orientation in this Guide differs from some of the more expert-driven, technical methods of analysing trends. We rely instead on our own reading of history and theory, our analysis, observations, experience, stories, and reflections, as well as the facts and information we gather. To understand the present moment, we examine the past, tracking earlier crises, power dynamics, and related struggles for social justice. From there, we map where these trends may lead. Terms included below – What we're up against – help us name these trends and see how they are interconnected and historically rooted.

> **The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born**
>
> *- Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks*

ACTIVITY 2:

Trends analysis

What does 'trend' mean to us? Which trends stand out?

Materials: Flip chart paper, markers, handout: *What we're up against*

Plenary: What do we mean by a 'trend'? Invite responses and discussion. Explain that trends are not only the events and changes we experience in our daily lives and work but also larger patterns – social, economic, political, technological, cultural – that reveal a correlation of forces at play. When the specific and the general are somehow connected, this is a trend.

Identifying global trends may seem abstract, but it helps connect our local and specific situation to a broader range of forces. To begin, ask what new realities or recent incidents may indicate larger shifts and trends. For example:

- The denial and violent rejection of election outcomes, such as the January 6th assault on the US Capitol in Washington, DC in 2020 or the violent protests following Bolsonaro's election loss in Brazil in 2022–23
- The growing dependence on digital technology for access to information, services, and connection – a lifeline for some but excluding others who lack access while increasing our vulnerability to disinformation and surveillance

- Increased attacks on environmental defenders and journalists as conflicts escalate over natural resources and territory
- Renewed political conversation and mobilisation about racial justice and the legacy of colonialism, as well as backlash against these discussions
- The rising political visibility of women and their rights, for example in Iran and around abortion rights in the US, as well as sustained political backlash and internal conflict, particularly related to the rights of trans women
- The growing numbers of people displaced by extreme weather and climate crisis
- The extreme consolidation of wealth at the expense of everyone else's stability and basic needs

In pairs: Scan the news on your cell phone, magazines, or newspapers to identify and share headlines from news sources or announcements by governments or influential institutions such as the World Bank.

Plenary: Share headlines and discuss:
- Do these headlines make sense in relation to your own lives?
- Are similar events, challenges, or changes happening in other countries too?
- What shifts – political, legal, social, cultural, demographic, climatic, technological – are changing day-to-day life and the near future?
- Consider political, economic, legal, social, cultural, demographic, climactic, and technological changes happening in your context: what's new and different?

The same trend can be both positive and negative. Digital technology, for example, connects us and enables us to expose abuses of power and share ideas globally. At the same time, it makes us vulnerable to surveillance, misinformation, and the mining of our private information.

Small groups: Using flip charts and markers, identify the five key trends affecting your context. Draw and label a graphic to show:
- the five trends your group identified
- the relative influence and potency of each trend (indicated by size on your graphic) in your context
- the connections and overlaps between these trends
- two elements that characterize each trend in your context and globally
- Draw or show three examples to explain the activity.

Plenary: Post the groups' graphics on the wall. For a few minutes, everyone views them. Then each group has a turn to explain two of the trends they identified.

Synthesis: If possible, enlist a resource person to share their insights. Alternatively, share background articles or videos related to the context or geographic region.
- Some critical trends
- Authoritarianism, dictatorships, coups, and political extremism
- Xenophobia, racism, othering
- Religious nationalism and fundamentalism
- Ethno-nationalism
- Militarism
- Extractivism and resource grabs
- Climate change and extreme weather

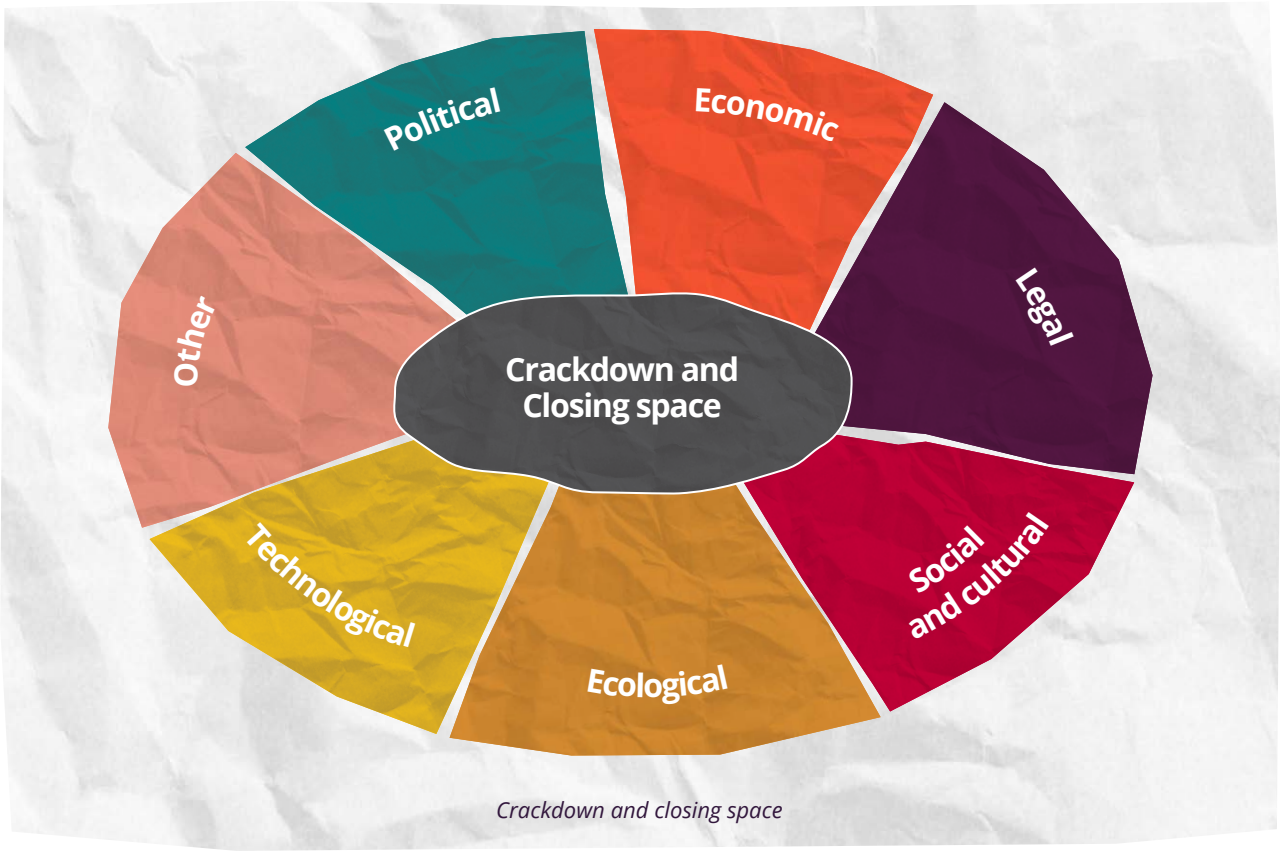
- Backlash and misogyny, anti-feminism, anti-gender
- Corporate capture of the state
- Neoliberalism
- NGO-ization
- Racism and colonialism within organisations
- Rising economic inequity, insecurity, consolidation of wealth
- Repressions and attacks on activists, defenders, civil society, and democracy

Plenary: For each of the main trends that groups identified, invite concrete examples and experiences. Together, clarify the definition, dynamics, and impact of that trend.

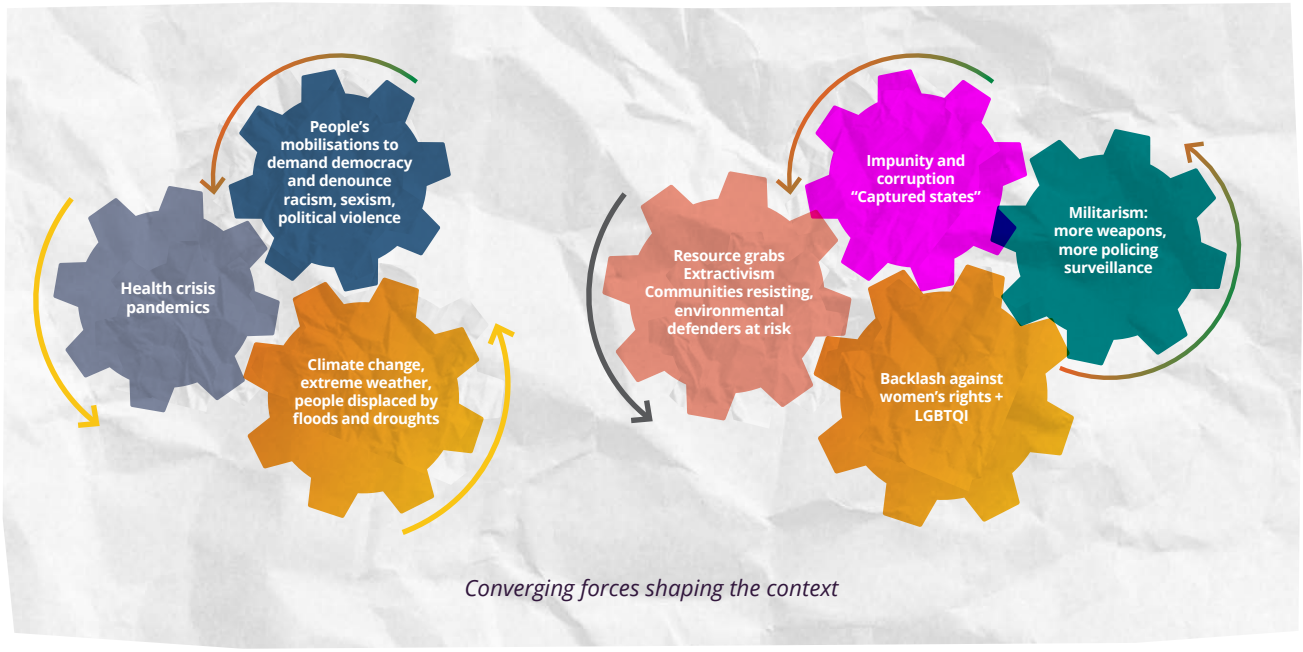
- How do we understand or experience the trend in our context?
- How are the trends connected to one another? What historic roots do they share?
- Where can we see examples of communities and movements resisting these trends or offering alternatives and change?

Discuss how people are pushing back against and organising to change the consolidation of power and wealth. For example, as corporations and billionaires concentrate more wealth and wield more political influence, workers are organising, striking, and, in some countries, gaining power in their industries and, importantly, the political process. The push and pull between different interests in highly unequal systems and societies drives the work of movements and other change makers.

Ask: what do these trends mean for the ways we organise ourselves to mobilise and change power?



Crackdown and closing space



Converging forces shaping the context

What we're up against

Activists, journalists, and change makers around the world name and describe these as some of the greatest threats to a just and sustainable future. These definitions combine elements from different contexts and readings.

Authoritarianism: Leaders who come to power through elections – including Orban in Hungary, Trump in the US, Duterte in the Philippines – restructure institutions to concentrate power and decision-making within a small elite and pass draconian laws. Often centring a 'strong man' ruler, authoritarian governments seek to:

- neutralise the legislatures and media
- rely on the police, military, and surveillance to control information and dissent
- use fear and social division to polarise populations and undermine institutions in order to legitimise taking control
- promise to restore an idealised past and traditions
- use racist, xenophobic, anti-feminist, and homophobic narratives
- put women 'back in their place'
- demonise immigrants
- align with religious fundamentalist theocrats and cultural conservatives to promote the 'traditional family'
- limit access to abortion and birth control
- attack LGBTQ+ people as 'abnormal'

Extractivism: "Extractivism is a nonreciprocal, dominance-based relationship with the earth, one purely of taking. It is the opposite of stewardship, which involves taking but also taking care that regeneration and future life continue."[4] —Naomi Klein, This Changes Everything (2014)

Extractivism usually:

- relies on collusion or complicity – often corrupt – between government, international financial institutions, corporations, and elites
- mobilises security, police, and armies to quell resistance, silence opposition, and detain defenders and rights organisers

- extracts natural resources and lowers wages and standards to produce goods and products at a maximum profit
- devalues women's labour and caregiving as essential ingredients of unequal and exploitative economies

Neoliberalism: A set of policy prescriptions, promoted by international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and the G8 countries since the 1980s, established the dominant free-market ideology of the late 20th century. These policies include:

- deregulation
- liberalisation of trade
- privatisation of public services
- elimination of subsidies to support local industry and agriculture
- weakening environmental, labour, and other standards

Neoliberalism asserts that private companies and finance with minimal or no government intervention will facilitate economic globalisation and growth. But, in practice, it has led to:

- unchecked corporate power in increased collusion with governments and influence over policy
- obscenely low wages and poor labour standards
- the privatisation and dismantling of social safety nets
- hyper-exploitation of natural resources
- extreme economic inequity

Militarism: Governments increasingly rely on the police, security forces, and the use or threat of violence to resolve social conflict, address crime, and exert public control. They espouse a narrow notion of 'security' that centres control of people:

- the surveillance, policing, and silencing of dissent
- attacks on communities, journalists, human rights defenders, and their organisations
- control over populations through fear and intimidation.

As a growing sector of the global economy, and central to US foreign policy, the production and sale of weapons and security technology both for domestic and international conflicts are driving militarism. Investment in the weapons industry and military institutions involves:

- a shift in resources from public services (such as mental health, pandemic preparedness, climate crisis mitigation) to expanding the military and security sector, in collusion with sometimes corrupt and autocratic politicians
- unregulated global business subsidised by public funding, with exorbitant profits, vested interests, and minimal regulation
- a reduction in public safety and an increase in political repression

Surveillance: Governments, large corporations, and organised crime monitor people's activities and communication and use this information to manipulate, control, restrict, or profit from behaviour. Expanded powers of surveillance – using information and communication technology 'justified' by the threat of terrorism – have spawned 'surveillance capitalism' by large technology corporations with unparalleled access to data and capacities for tracking people.

Inequity and inequality: Economic and social disparities are created and reinforced by unfair advantages that some have over others. Inequality and inequity are structural, meaning that unfair access to resources and opportunities – such as health care, education, employment, and housing – is built into the social, economic, legal, and political system. Globally, the gap between rich and poor has been growing for decades, further exacerbated by structural oppression based on location and identity (gender, race, ethnicity, class, caste, sexuality, age, ability).

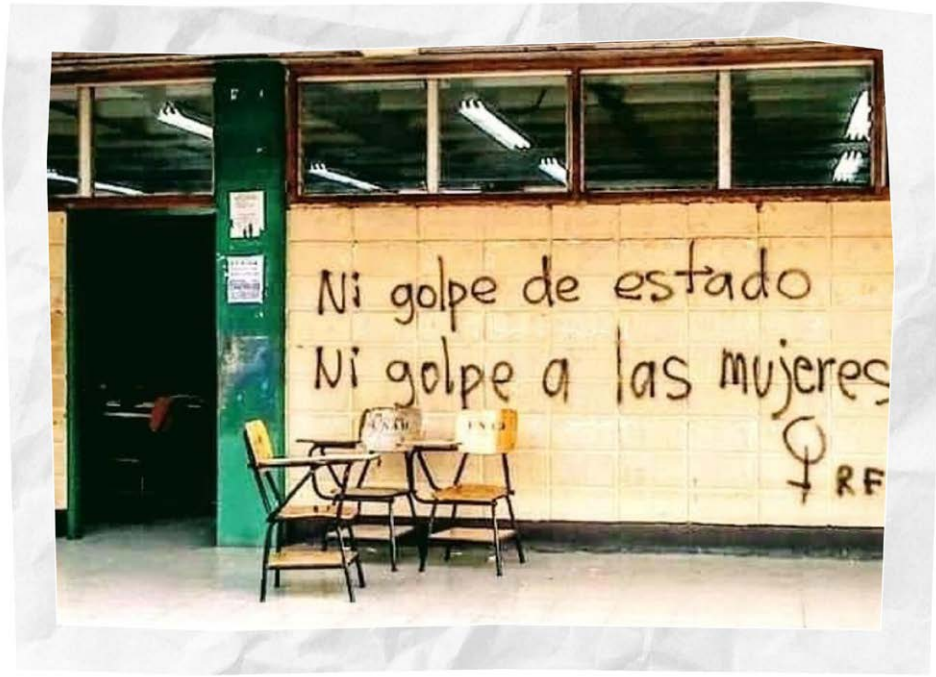
Precarity: Tied mainly to the dismantling and rising costs of basic social services and support and the impact of extreme weather driven by climate change, this refers to the lack of secure or predictable means of survival. Millions of people lack income, employment, land, crops, and housing, leaving them highly vulnerable to destitution. Many workers face precarity due to low wages, long hours, poor working conditions, and the absence of secure contracts or benefits such as health care and child care, or sick or maternity leave.

Crisis of democracy: The validity and strength of democracy as a form of government is being challenged across the world, including inside the US and Europe. Democracy is "a system of decision-making, and governance is exercised directly or indirectly by the people, through a system of legislative, judicial, and executive checks and balances on power."[5] Democratic governance relies on a degree of participation, and this is eroded when elections are manipulated through misinformation, electoral fraud, voter suppression, and violence. Meanwhile, large corporations and other 'non-state actors' co-opt elected leaders through campaign contributions, corruption, bribery, and slander. Behind the pretense of democracy, autocratic governments consolidate executive power, reduce oversight, and strengthen 'security'.

Political and religious extremism: Around the globe, powerful political and religious organisations use religious doctrine to control the public agenda, institutionalise religion in the structures of the state, and consolidate power. Fundamentalist and theocratic groups span many religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and localised religious traditions such as the ethno-religious Kenyan Mungiki movement and Nepali shamanism. Theocratic and religious political power has grown in recent years with coordinated attacks on 'gender ideology' (meaning LGBTQI and women's rights) claiming they are a greater threat to families and society "than communism and Nazism."[6]

Backlash: Refers to the attempts by powerful actors to reverse political, social, economic, and environmental justice gains by dismantling rights and policies that protect more people and the planet. For example, conservative, right-wing, and religious extremists (among others) claim to 'protect the family' by reversing new gender and sexual rights and controlling women's bodies and reproduction. The far-right and fundamentalists are well-organised in many governments and policy processes, including within the UN, and work in alignment with the Catholic Church, evangelical Christians, and the Islamic Brotherhood, for example.

See more definitions in JASS' *Movement-Builder's Dictionary*.



'Golpe' implies both a coup and hitting or beating. Honduras © 2018, Lisa VeneKlasen

The future is contested

The trends shaping crises and upheaval are, fundamentally, conflicts and contestations over what and who matters, power, resources, and our futures. In the face of multiple crises, people are organising to contest the very foundations of power, mobilising to challenge the political and economic systems that destroy lives and the planet. Even the roles of governments, citizens, and corporations are in question, with different interests and actors pushing to influence or control public agendas, perspectives, and decision-making. What is the nature of this contestation, and what does it mean for our power analysis and strategies?

"The future is a territory we must defend."

- Andrea Ixchiu[7]

"In 2005, the women's movement concluded that we have five disputed territories: body, land, nature, memory, and history. In a 2014 meeting with indigenous compañeras, we added another: worldview. Today, I say that there is another disputed territory: the state. If we do not struggle for it, they will continue to make decisions against the common good. I contend that the struggle, the confrontation of power—which means our powers against theirs, collective power against individual power, power that wants to build against power that wants to destroy—that is the dispute. So, I assert that there are seven territories in dispute: body, land, nature, memory, history, worldview, and the state. We have a lot to do."

- Sandra Morán, member of Guatemalan congress

ACTIVITY 3:

Territories in dispute

Plenary: Introduce the theme of conflict and contestation as a central dynamic in a time of upheaval. Share the quote from Sandra Moran and read it aloud to introduce the activity.

Small groups: Divide into seven thematic groups. Each group takes a different 'territory in dispute': body, land, nature, memory, history, worldview, the state. Discuss:
From your experience and analysis, identify three or four ways in which this 'territory' is in dispute.

- How would you characterise the different sides of the dispute?
- How does this dispute play out concretely in your context? Who and what are on different sides of the dispute? What are their differing interests and agendas?
- What core ideas and beliefs are in conflict?

Plenary: Invite each group to share reflections. Then explore the interconnections between these 'territories' in terms of actors involved and the clash of ideas they represent. What do these conflicts suggest for our strategies?

> ***The government is waging three wars: a war on drugs – 30,000 deaths mostly from slum areas; a war against communist insurgency – used to attack indigenous communities and their land; and a war on women.***
>
> *- Filipino Activist*

Theme 3:
Learning from History

Retracing our history is critical to understanding power, struggle, and the lessons of our ancestors. Invite people to think about whose voice, story, experience, and contributions are visible in education systems and national discourse – and whose are invisible. In Chile and Guatemala, for example, processes of recovering historical and collective memory disrupted the narratives of violent dictatorships and affirmed stories of resistance that continue to guide the path today.

> ***You can't really know where you are going until you know where you have been."***
>
> *- Maya Angelou*[8]

"From Silence to Memory" exhibit: 2005 discovery of documented surveillance, torture and detention during Guatmala's civil war. Photo © 2018, Lisa VeneKlasen

ACTIVITY 4:

Constructing a timeline

Materials: Blank timeline on flip chart paper along a large wall
Use one or two flip chart pages per decade, each section labelled with years, depending on how far back you want to go: 1960–69, 1970–79, 1980–89, 1990–99, 2000–2009, 2010–2019, 2020–present

Sticky notes or cards in five different colours, markers

This participatory historical timeline reveals trends of power and conflict, and of struggle, resistance, and transformation. You need to prepare. The group brings their own knowledge and responses to the process, but you should know about the period and setting. Much of the history of struggles for social justice has been hidden. To fill important gaps, invite an older activist or a historian to provide information. Alternatively, show a video, share a reading, or discuss timelines constructed in previous workshops.

Step 1: Pivotal moments
Plenary: To understand the roots of current trends, we will construct a visual timeline of key events that shaped the last 60 to 100 years. (To include the history of colonialism, go back further.)

Small groups: Divide into small groups that are intergenerational to share knowledge across age groups. Each group reflects on these questions for the era or decade that they are focusing on.

- What were the important moments or events of social, political, or economic change – positive and negative?
- At what moments did people organise to challenge dominant powers? What were they challenging, and what did they want?
- What were the most important breakthroughs and gains for social movements?
- Where did social movements lose ground or face repression?

All groups use the same colour cards to note and post on the timeline:

- key social, political, and economic turning points (one colour)
- challenges and responses led by social movements and civil society (a different colour)

Step 2: Conflict and resistance
Plenary: Groups post their stickies on the timeline. Each group in turn describes what was happening in their section of the timeline. They focus on one or two particularly important moments, highlighting the relationship between the events and the responses by a social movement or civil society.

Small groups: In the same groups, go deeper – discuss one or more of these questions:

- What do you see in the timeline about how change happens from decade to decade?
- What can we learn about the battles over who and what matters, and who controls access?
- What can we learn from examining history through the lens of factors including class, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity?

- What can we learn about the use of violence and threat of violence to block and silence social justice voices?
- What can we learn for our own ways of organising and change strategies?

Step 3: The struggle over ideas and beliefs
Plenary: Now, focus on the role of ideas and beliefs. What ideas and beliefs were challenged? What new ideas were put forward?

Small groups: On stickies or cards, note key phrases and words.
- With what ideas and beliefs did those in power legitimize their actions and undermine people's demands and agendas?
- What ideas and beliefs animated resistance, social change, and liberation struggles? (For example, trade unionism and cooperatives shaped the 1960s in Kenya.)
- How were these ideas promoted and amplified?

Plenary: Groups post their notes on the timeline and explain each briefly. Engage the group in a deeper conversation about the power of ideas and beliefs, both for dominant interests and for those seeking to make change.
- What can we learn from our timeline about how ideas and beliefs define public narratives?
- At what point/s do you see the most successful use of ideas and beliefs? How do these ideas and beliefs shape struggles today?

Close the timeline process with a brief summary of insights about the zigzag of history. Note how change generates conflict and backlash by dominant interests. List insights about strategy and movement organising to use later (see Chapter 6: Power and Strategy). Keep the timelines for power analysis in Chapter 3: Making Sense of Power.

Step 4: Drawing inspiration and lessons from history
Plenary: We can learn a great deal from the brutal struggles of our histories, but we can also be inspired by the courage, creativity, and examples of our ancestors.

Individually: Think back over the timeline discussions, and then write your answers to these questions on different colour cards.
- What inspiration can we draw from the timeline?
- What lessons emerge about the push and pull of power and change?

Plenary: Participants take turns to post their cards on the timeline, each announcing what inspiration they have drawn from the past. When everyone has posted their cards, identify common threads and contrasts in perspective or interpretation. Cluster the sticky notes (if this helps) to identify common sources of inspiration.

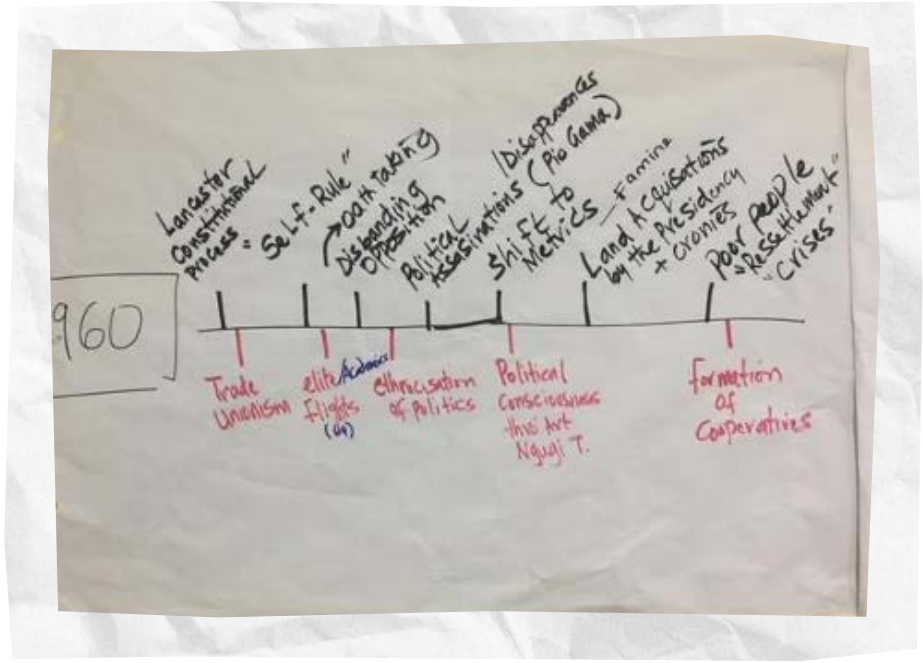
Reflecting on the lessons, draw out the push and pull over time between dominant interests and those fighting for social justice.
- How did those who came before us organise to build common ground?
- How did they change hearts and minds?
- How did they defend themselves?
- Where did they fall short?

Timelines
In this example from Kenya, participants divided the last 80 years into decades. For each decade, a group named the key moments, turning points, and contributions of social movements and civil society. On the top line, the group noted key moments over the course of the 1960s in their country:

- Lancaster constitutional process, 'self-rule', oath taking, disbanding opposition, political assassinations/ disappearances, shift to metrics, famine, land acquisitions by the president and cronies, poor people's 'resettlement crises'

In red underneath, they noted responses and organising over the decade:

- trade unionism, elite/academic flight, ethnicization of politics, political consciousness through art (Ngugi wa Thiongo), formation of cooperatives.



A timeline from a process in Kenya

> **The grandmothers have a lot of wisdom, but they often depart with this knowledge.**
>
> *- Miriam Pixtún, La Puya Resistance-Guatemala*[8]

Mural of Ancestors
A moving and inspirational process involves naming and telling the story or sharing a quote from an ancestor upon whose shoulders we stand.

Mural of Ancestors from a JASS-Sinergia N´oj process with rural and indigenous communicators
© 2010, Daysi Flores

Theme 4:
Cracks Where the Light Comes In

Times of upheaval also create unimagined possibilities for transformation. We ask ourselves: where are the cracks where the light comes in? Crises may make us rethink the fundamental assumptions that guide our political and strategic choices. The climate crisis, for example, has fuelled a profound existential battle for the future of the planet and the human species. Worldwide, increased numbers of people are calling capitalism itself into question. This opens up space for logics and systems, particularly coming from indigenous peoples, that emphasise interdependence and balance between humans and nature.

ACTIVITY 5:

What time is it on the clock of the world?

Where are we at this moment in history, and how does that orient our change strategies? To provoke activists into awareness, Grace Lee Boggs, a prominent US civil rights activist, would ask: "What time is it on the clock of the world?"

Materiales:
"*Message from the Future II: Years of Repair*"
"*Janelle Monáe – Turntables*"
Laptops, tablets, cameras, and other digital devices (if you have good wifi)
Notes or cards of different colours and markers for each participant
Letter-size paper of different colours, and coloured pencils, crayons or markers, tape

Step 1: What gives you hope and energy in difficult times?
At least a day before this session, ask each person to bring a song, music video, poem, or image that makes them feel hopeful. Alternatively, give the group 10 minutes to search online to find a favourite song, poem, or image. Another option is to invite people to create their own expressions of hope and inspiration, with a partner or a small group, or individually. They could make (for example) a short video, music video, collage, drawing, song, poem, dance, photograph, theatre piece, or mask.

Plenary: If possible, move to a different space or rearrange the room to shift the energy. Ask: What gives you hope about the future? It could be an idea, an image, a symbol, a song, a vision of how the world could be, or a feeling of what it means to be liberated, empowered, or free from fear and violence.

People create, find, or show their own source of hope. After each person shares their inspiration, ask everyone else in the group to say one word or a short phrase to express how this makes them feel.

What we are witnessing now is the opening up of imaginations, where people are beginning to think more expansively about what the solutions could be.

- Opal Tometti, co-founder of US Black Lives Matter movement[11]

ACTIVITY 6:

Make another world possible

We can take inspiration from past and current struggles to shape our ideas for the future.

Materials: Hand out copies of Ideas for the future, share the link, and/or copy headings from the spread on a flip chart.

Plenary: Before or during the session, invite everyone to read the list of Ideas for the future. Point out that many future-oriented ideas exist, such as proposals for more just, sustainable, and democratic ways of solving problems and organising our lives. Some ideas that have been 'cooking' for a long time are being recovered. Ask:

- What ideas inspired our struggles in the past?
- What ideas are re-emerging, gaining ground, or evolving in our context today?

In pairs: Choose one idea from the list or from your own context or experience of resistance and struggle. You could do some quick research on the internet. With your partner, discuss the questions and prepare a short presentation in words and/or graphics on flip chart paper.

- What idea or proposition has given you or your movement inspiration, hope, and strength?
- Where, when, and how has this idea been active in the past?
- What lies behind this idea: how does it propose to do things differently? What problems does it seek to solve? What alternative does it propose?
- In what ways is this idea present today? How does it provide inspiration or possibilities for change?

Plenary: Pairs take turns to present highlights from their research and discussions. Then, compare the presentations: what commonalities or differences emerge? Together, discuss:

- In what ways do our current activism and movement strategies draw on these ideas?
- Could we use them to focus or strengthen our strategies?
- How can we bring these ideas to life in the ways that we organise and lead?

Ideas for the future

Movement history reveals where new ways of thinking, big ideas, and propositions for reorganising our world to upend power and confront injustice took root. Some of these became a driving force behind struggles for power like anti-colonialism, liberation, socialism, and communism, while others were also critical to changing how people organised themselves economically and politically, like cooperativism, trade unionism, etc. This is a list of ideas and propositions that are under construction, emerging, or being renewed – that are shaping discourse, narratives, and how we organise ourselves for the future.

Many 'big ideas' and propositions listed here are not new. Take **feminism:** this ever-evolving paradigm, political agenda, and set of practices have been around, morphing, and embattled for over 300 years. Take **cosmovision**: an indigenous worldview that has survived centuries of struggle in the Americas. Like **internationalism**, a proposition that in the 1950s, '60s and '70s helped shape liberation struggles in the Global South, the Non-Aligned Movement as an alternative structure for global arrangements, and even the practices of popular education (Paolo Freire) and Black consciousness (Steve Biko).

Even though they have been around for a long time, these Big Ideas are undergoing a refresh by new generations as new crises unfold. Many have their origins in the Global South. Some newer concepts, such as Just Transitions and Regenerative Economics, are inspired and shaped by other ideological propositions and attempt to land in a policy framework or set of solutions shaped more in the Global North.

Buen vivir

Loosely translated into English as 'good living' or 'living well' (but not as welfare), buen vivir is a worldview shaped by indigenous belief systems in the Americas and critiques of global capitalism and international development. Its defining characteristics are harmony between human beings and nature and a sense of collective development based on reciprocity and mutual support. Property ownership is absent, because humans are never owners of the earth and its resources, only stewards. Buen vivir is one of the many sources for the thinking of regenerative economies. [*Oliver Balch, Buen Vlvir*]

Commons

A concept which, while its name originated in Roman law, can be found in pre-industrial and indigenous practices and laws all over the world in which particular resources were understood to be shared and managed by the community, belonging neither to the state nor private owners. The Commons include both tangible and intangible goods – communal lands, fishing and hunting access, parks, air and space, water and waterways, traditional knowledge, biodiversity, and the Internet – to which all members of a society have or should have access. Commons embody the efforts of multiple individuals and inputs: no single individual or entity can claim private ownership of common resources, such as government-funded scientific research or intellectual property. But the current stage of capitalism, in a major offensive against the public commons, privatises land and resources. The extractive industries – including mining, fossil fuel, timber, palm oil and other kinds of mass crop production – appropriate and deplete public and indigenous lands. Today, activists are reinventing and reclaiming the commons to democratise access to vital resources and protect them for current and future generations [*JASS Feminist Movement Builder's Dictionary*]

Solidarity economy
An alternative to the market economy consisting of economic enterprises undertaken not for profit but for collective benefit. In many economic crises, women and neighbourhoods band together to produce necessities or coordinate small enterprises such as shops, gardens, neighborhood kitchens, and childcare or financial cooperatives. The solidarity economy promotes organisation and a culture of shared decision-making. It can help women and poor people access basic economic and social rights such as food, credit, and education, as well as reduce women's burden of unpaid labour in the care economy by sharing tasks that usually fall to individual women in a single household. [*JASS Feminist Movement Builder's Dictionary*]

Regenerative economies
A direct response and counter proposal to an extractive economic model that destroys and depletes ecosystems and drives climate crisis. Regenerative economy – also called a circular economy – is inspired by the ideas of Kate Raworth about "donut economics". To be regenerative, the products and materials are used and re-used for as long as possible so that natural systems are regenerated. A regenerative economy does not just retain resources; it creates new resources while maintaining a dynamic balance to the sustained benefit of people, planet, and profit. It is holistic by nature and enhances the individual and collective characteristics of the natural environment, the built environment, and the social environment.

An example of regeneration, "restoring forests … would capture 37% of our greenhouse gas emissions to ensure a good chance of staying below two degrees by 2030. Recreating living soils also helps to capture carbon, regenerate biodiversity, and improve yields. Reintroducing wolves into certain regions helps to regulate species that eat vegetation and thus improves carbon transformation through photosynthesis." [Circulab]

Five principles of *regenerative economies*:
- sobriety, not abundance
- no more extraction
- local, interactive, and aimed at improving resilience
- cooperation, less competition
- develop life and evolution

Regenerative agriculture
As a philosophy and approach to land management, regenerative agriculture asks us to think about *how all aspects of agriculture are connected through a web* – a network of entities who grow, enhance, exchange, distribute, and consume goods and services – instead of a linear supply chain. In refocusing the ways we farm and ranch to better nourish people and the earth, specific practices vary from grower to grower and from region to region. There's no strict rule book, but the holistic principles behind the dynamic system of regenerative agriculture aim to restore soil and ecosystem health, address inequity, and leave our land, waters, and climate in better shape for future generations. (National Resources Defence Council, NDRC)

Feminisms

An ideology, an analytical framework, and a practice, feminism is undergoing another renewal, breaking from the neoliberal feminism prevalent in the Global North in recent decades. Feminisms today reclaim and intersect with radical traditions and liberation struggles. They are shaped by many convergences and the influences of indigenous and rural women, queer activism, women workers, Black and Brown liberation struggles and land defenders. While still encompassing women's rights and equality, today's feminist practices and ideologies seek to expose, uproot, and transform power; end violence in the intimate, private, and public spheres; revalue care and bodies; protect the earth on which we depend and ensure basic needs, autonomy and social inclusion. Feminists are organised differently in various regions of the world, drawing on distinct histories of struggle. Today, feminist leadership and practice can be seen across many movements and organisations, as well as within institutions and classrooms, workplaces and cultural spaces – even as there is pushback and backlash – around the world.

Food sovereignty

Originally coined in 1996 by La Via Campesina, a global movement of farmers founded in Brazil, the term describes a vision of a better food future defined as the right of Peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. Adapted by many agricultural, environmental, and food activists, as well as farmers and indigenous movements, food sovereignty puts producers and democracy at the centre of our food systems. It recognises food as a right and a public good, not as a commodity. It identifies sustainability as essential and promotes the use of agroecology. It also recognises the various layers of discrimination that combine to place an even heavier burden on, for example, women, indigenous people, youth, and LGBTQI+ farmers. Food sovereignty requires bringing all voices to the table, and sharing land, seeds, water, credit, and other resources equitably.

Just Transition + Just Feminist Transition

A vision-led, unifying, and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste-free. The transition itself must be just and equitable, redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations. If the process of transition is not just, the outcome will never be. Just Transition describes both where we are going and how we get there. [Just Transition Alliance]

Decolonial Feminist Green New Deal

A strategy not only to promote the necessary interconnection between the main structural challenges of our times but also to emphasise the structural demands of justice. The Decolonial Feminist Green New Deal challenges:

- colonial financial extractivism based in a white supremacist North–South division of labour, with the corresponding depletion of wealth and resources as irreparable damage is done to ecosystems' integrity
- a sexual division of labour, in which women subsidise the entire economy by means of unpaid domestic and care work and the precarity in which they are placed, both in informal and formal employment

- existing economic, trade, and financial dynamics, under the umbrella of a call for a UN Economic Reconstruction and Systemic Reform Summit
- This movement seeks a New Global Economic Architecture that works for the People and Planet. (Bhumika Muchal)

Healing Justice

A framework that recognises the impact of trauma and violence on individuals and communities and names collective processes that can help heal and transform these forces. In a system and society that actively targets Black, Brown, and Indigenous bodies with violence, oppression, and terror, it is critical to build movements that fight for and achieve justice for all people. This justice includes healing, well-being, and not only surviving but thriving. Resiliency and healing are strategic – we need everyone in our movements to have access to healing from trauma and violence, as it strengthens all of us and all of our movements." (Melina Laboucan-Massimo and other)

Energy Justice and Democracy

Emerging from the global climate justice movement, particularly activists from the Global South, is a framework to decentralise and involve communities directly in managing energy production and distribution to address fairness and equity within the current extractive energy system and incorporate aspects of 'deep democracy', cooperation, and regeneration that feature in the just transition frame[12]. Energy justice considers: 1) energy burden, which refers to the expense of energy expenditures relative to overall household income; 2) energy insecurity, which refers to the hardships households face when meeting basic household needs; 3) energy poverty, which refers to a lack of access to energy itself; and 4) energy democracy, the notion that communities should have agency in shaping their energy future with particular attention to gender, racial, economic, and social justice, using energy as a catalyst for their development and wellbeing. (Just Energy for All, United Methodist Women and others.)

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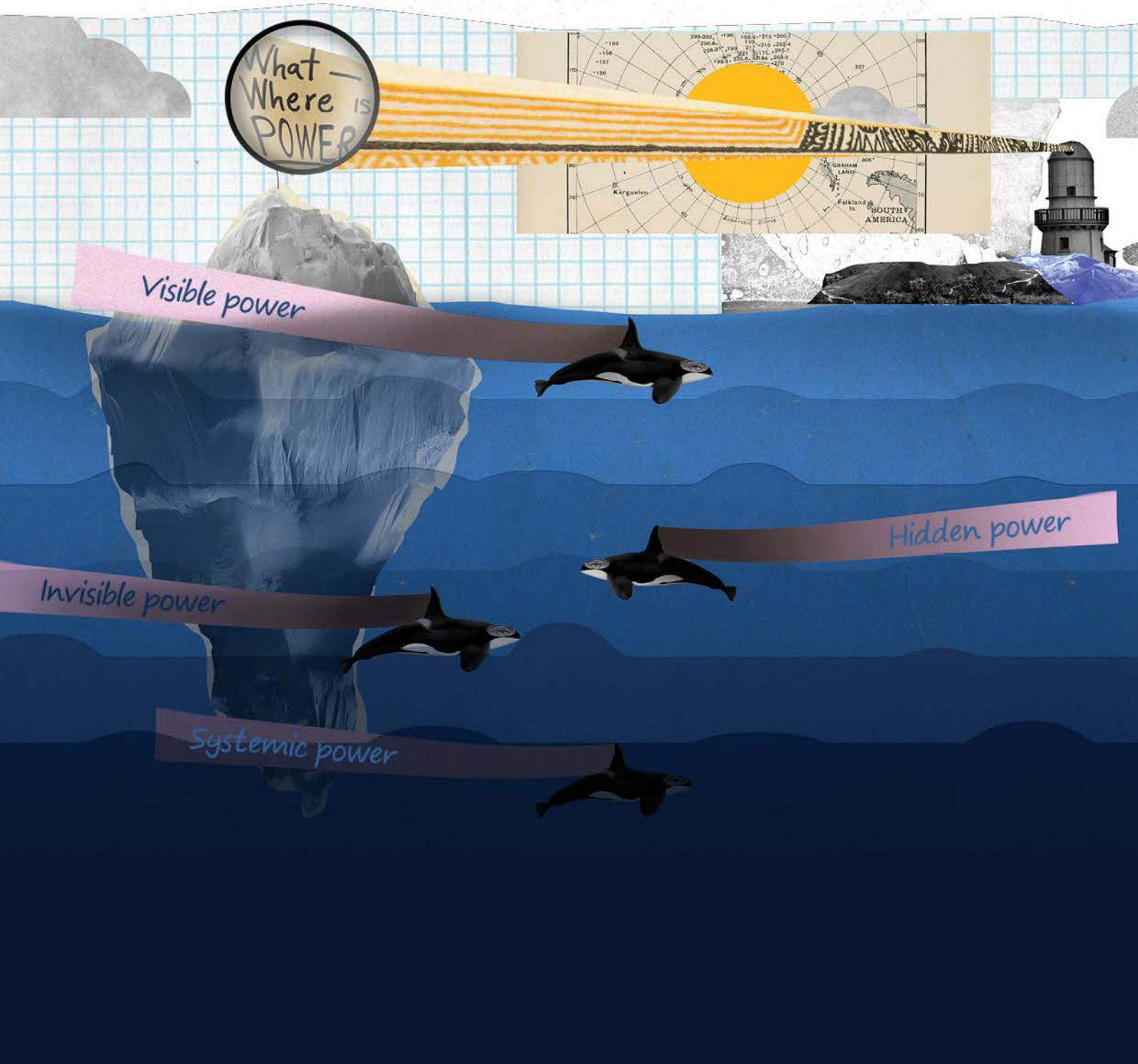
3

MAKING SENSE OF POWER



Justice and power must be brought together, so that whatever is just may be powerful, and whatever is powerful may be just.

- Blaise Pascal[1]

Climate disasters, political upheavals, pandemics, and other crises lay bare our broken economic and political systems. People's uprisings give voice to community demands and conflicts related to power around the world. Struggles over who and what matters play out everywhere from our politics to our families.

How do we resist the consolidation of autocratic, destructive and divisive forms of power on the one hand, and build more inclusive, democratic forms of power on the other? Developing effective strategies together in times of upheaval and opportunity demands a fresh examination of power

What can we observe about power?

Power is in dispute in all spaces and places, from formal decision-making to public opinion and debate, and from the most intimate to the most public parts of our lives. Conflicts and contestation over values, ideas, and beliefs play out in our own relationships, organisations, and communities as well as society at large.

Unequal power dynamics are institutionalised and embedded in social structures in keeping with the deep systemic logics of capitalism, patriarchy, structural racism[2], and colonialism–imperialism. These systems and their assumptions function like an underlying operating system and are harder to perceive and disrupt than other forms of power.

Inequities and oppression related to class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and location create structural fault lines of discrimination and inequities of power and privilege among us. *But forging solidarity across diverse identities* offers the basis for building power with others and envisioning liberation.

Political violence and the threat of violence are essential features, not aberrations, of the overarching systems of unequal power. When dominant forms of power fear the loss of their legitimacy, they turn to violence and fear to silence dissent. Specific strategies and organising approaches are needed to address fear and violence.

Practices of radical reimagination are vital to envisioning the future and shifting narratives, as we define the values, practices, demands, and proposals at the heart of our transformational efforts.

This chapter is divided into six themes, with concepts and processes to help us understand power more deeply.

Theme 1: What and Where is Power?

We know a lot about power from lived experience and our efforts to make change. To build power, we need to understand that it is not solely negative and that it means more than simply policy change, elections, or better communications.

Theme 2: Multiple Forms and Arenas of Power

There are many ways of thinking about power. In this chapter, we introduce tried and tested frameworks for analysis and strategy built around these concepts:

Four arenas of power: visible or formal power (decision making and enforcing the rules); hidden power (influencing and setting the agenda); invisible power (shaping norms and beliefs); and systemic power (defining the underlying logic of all structures and relationships)

Transformative power: four interconnected kinds of generative power necessary for transformative change – power within (dignity, self-esteem), power with (solidarity and collective action), power to (capacity to act), power for (vision and values)

Theme 3: Systemic Power

Many of us have long analysed power at three levels: visible, hidden, and invisible. Unfolding crises across the world have opened up renewed interest in 'systems thinking and systems change' that can help us better see patterns and interconnectedness among things happening. Naming a fourth layer – systemic power – means we can analyse the underlying logic or 'operating system' defining power relations as they show up in institutions, social structures, and ways of thinking. Here, we explore how capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy or structural racism, and colonialism shape systems of oppression and demand broader systemic and visionary alternatives.

Theme 4: Power and Interconnected Identities

Gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, ability, age, location, and other factors intersect to define our different experiences of structural discrimination and oppression, and also our possibilities for change and liberation. We experience the positive and negative impacts of these identities in intimate, private, and public arenas.

Theme 5: Power, Conflict, and Violence

The coercive and violent side of power over involves political violence, threats of violence, hostility, criminalisation, and fear as instrumental strategies that uphold the 'operating systems' of power. Drawing on our own and others' experiences of conflict, violence, and fear, we introduce a typology of forms of violence to help us identify and navigate violence – as well as to better protect ourselves.

Theme 6: Analysis to Strategy

We analyse power so that we can develop effective strategies that navigate, disrupt, resist, influence, and build power for social justice and transformation. Under this theme, we introduce essential considerations for making strategic choices that both respond to urgent opportunities of the moment and build power over the long term to build a more inclusive, sustainable world.

Theme 1:
What and Where is Power?

Power is an ever-present aspect of our lives and work. A good place to begin is our own lived experience – how we internalise and encounter power every day and what we do about it – rather than using abstract definitions and frameworks. Power can be uncomfortable to talk about, because we've all felt, witnessed, and even internalised oppressive forms of power.

ACTIVITY 1:

What and Where is Power?

Everyone has experienced power dynamics in different ways in their lives. In this activity, we explore what power means to us and uncover aspects of our own power before introducing new information and ideas.

Step 1. Power drawings
Materials: Sheets of letter-size/A4 paper, coloured pens, flipchart, handout: *What and where is power?*

Individually: Give each person a sheet of paper and pens and ask them to:

- Draw a line down the middle.
- On one side of the line, draw a situation where you felt powerful.
- On the other side of the line, draw a situation that made you feel powerless.
- Choose specific moments and situations rather than "a general time when…".
- Focus on something you are comfortable sharing with others.

All groups use the same colour cards to note and post on the timeline:

Remind everyone that the quality of artwork is not important. A simple line drawing can help us see our experiences with fresh eyes. Draw or find images that reflect feeling powerful/powerless, since images can be highly evocative. Or choose a few words that capture your experience.

Small groups: Each of the three or four people in a group has five minutes to explain their drawings or images, share their experiences, and speak to the following questions:

- What was it like to feel powerless?
- What caused you to feel powerless?
- How was power used or experienced to control your actions or suppress your voice?
- What made you feel powerful, and why? How did you use or express your power individually or with others to enhance your life, make your voice heard, or change a situation?

Plenary: For a gallery walk, each group posts drawings and images on the wall. In turn, each group presents a quick synthesis of their reflections. Then, together, discuss the feelings that people have shared, identifying the different experiences of power, powerlessness, or feeling powerful. Draw out people's own understandings and

meanings. Invite them to share concepts or definitions of power or empowerment from their prior experience. As the facilitator, record these so everyone can see the evolving ideas. Ask guiding questions:

- Looking at all the drawings and reflections, what is it like to feel powerless or disempowered? What is it like to feel powerful?
- What do these drawings show us about the different ways that power operates?
- What do you conclude about power from this process? What insights have you gained?
- Individually: Think about power, powerlessness, and feeling powerful. Each person writes down on a card, in large letters with a bold marker, a short statement or a few words describing each of these terms.

Small groups: People choose the term that interests them most: power, powerlessness, or feeling powerful and form groups to discuss it. In their group, people share their thoughts and create a symbol or drawing together with a short definition. Encourage them to use metaphors and write/draw their ideas on a piece of flipchart paper or using digital tools to share in plenary.

Plenary: Groups take turns to present their ideas and invite quick responses. Keep the pace brisk. Facilitate a discussion, making note of key points:

- What do our drawings show us about the nature of power?
- What kinds of negative and positive power did you see? What are some of the sources and uses of power from these examples?
- What are different ways power operates in our contexts?

Step 2. Enact a scene or embody a sculpture

This can be an addition or an alternative to Step 1. If time allows, go through both steps. Use this process to extend and embody understandings of power, building directly on the drawings and stories shared in Step 1.

Small groups: Choose one picture, story, or combine elements of more than one story. Aim to convey the feeling of experiencing power and/or powerlessness through either a body sculpture or skit.

A body sculpture can be silent or include repetitive motions or sounds. Design the positioning of group members by improvising.

- To make a body sculpture, position yourselves in a way that symbolises or best reflects your experience of power or a snapshot of one moment.

Or if using a skit or scene:

- Enact one part of the story.
- Choose whether to mime (using silent acting) or include short dialogue or sounds.
- Allocate roles, dialogue (if any), and action.
- Keep the scene short.

Using our bodies in this way can be challenging, especially if we have experienced trauma in our lives. Explain that anyone not comfortable with acting in a scene or body sculpting

can just observe. Be aware of your own actions and movements and how others might experience them. Initiate any physical contact gently and slowly, leaving spaces between actors (unless your group is experienced with theatre and comfortable with physical contact). Be mindful of cultural and gender differences in what is acceptable for physical interaction and contact between people in an exercise or presentation.

Plenary: Designate a stage area on one side of the room where groups take turns to perform their scenes and body sculptures. After each performance, ask the audience to share – in just one or two words – what they felt seeing the sculpture or scene. Then ask a few to share what they think was happening. Finally, ask the group who performed to explain the sculpture or scene.

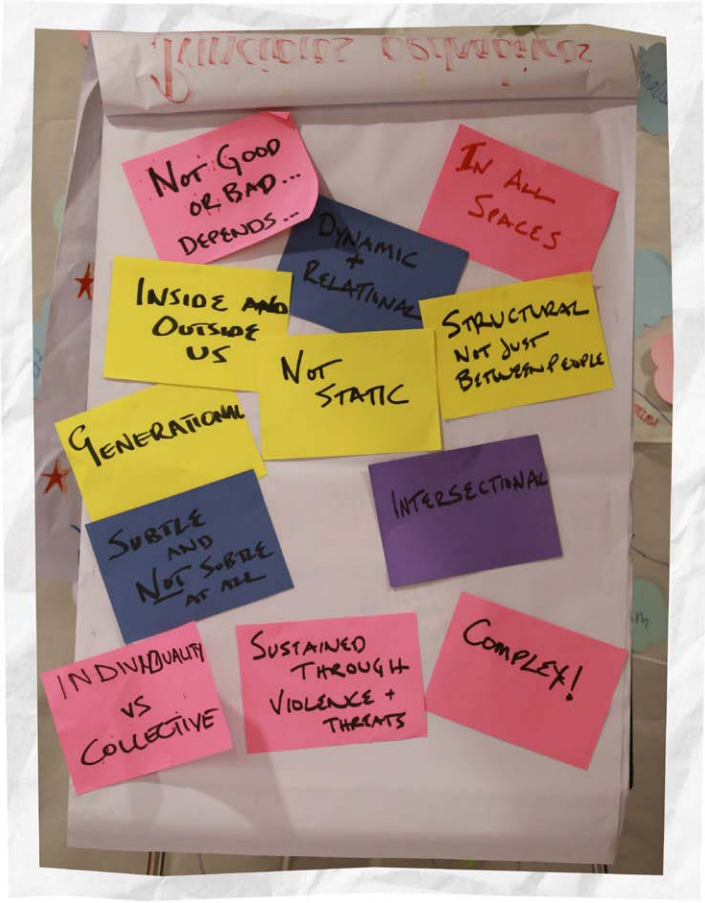
Keep the debriefs after each performance short. Draw out the embodied experiences and feelings of both the performers and the audience. Hold off on more analytical or conceptual discussion until all groups have performed.

After all the presentations and reflections, engage the group in summarising the feelings they have expressed and experienced by acting and watching. Then identify the different kinds of experiences of power, powerlessness, or empowerment that were represented, drawing out participants' own understandings and meanings. Invite participants to share any useful concepts or definitions of power or empowerment from their prior experiences and knowledge.

Step 3: What is power?
Distribute copies of the handout: *What and where is power?* for everyone to read

Plenary: With reference to groups' presentations from Steps 1 and/or 2, discuss:
- What resonates with your understanding?
- What is new or different?
- What do you conclude about power from this process?
- What further insights have you gained?

Summarise key points, and note that the group will return to these meanings of power and enrich them with further definitions and frameworks in later activities.



What and Where is Power? JASS internal FMB School in Bali, Indonesia (2023).

What and where is power?

Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, and economic change.

- Martin Luther King[3]

Power is ...

- Everywhere – within groups, individuals, and nature.
- Part of our everyday lives and interactions.
- Neither good nor bad – that depends on who is using it, how, and for what ends.
- Relational, dynamic, and messy.
- Experienced differently in the public, private, and intimate arenas of our lives.
- Structural, systemic, and institutionalised.
- Entrenched but not static; when unequal, it is always in dispute and contradictory.
- Intersectional, impacting us differently depending on gender, race, ethnicity, caste, class, sexuality, ability, location, and more.

- Fluid and changing depending on the context and moment.
- Held in our bodies, hearts, and minds – internalised and often unconscious.

Power, if unequal, is always in dispute

Power works at all levels of our lives – personal, social, cultural, political, economic, systemic – in both good and bad ways. Power shapes what we do, what is done to us, and how we think and act. When power is unequal, there is always a push and pull, and conflict over:

- Who 'we' are
- Who decides and makes the rules
- Who and what matters most
- Who gets what
- Who does what
- What is 'normal'
- Which ideas and beliefs 'count'

Power over is extractive, exploitative, and oppressive.
Power over operates in a zero-sum universe where some have it and others don't, an 'us' vs 'them' competitive approach to power where those with more power resist change. Power over is embedded in all structures and maintained through social conditioning, the control of rules, access to resources, coercion, narratives, fear, and violence. It can be resisted, challenged, subverted, and transformed.

Transformative power is liberating and generative, seeking to change the inequities and injustice of the status quo.

Shaped by a consciousness of abundance, a commitment to liberation and justice and a belief in the possibility of deep change and a vibrant future for all, it is built over time by inclusive visions expressed through strategies for change. This enables us to foster community and belonging, and to push back and contest power over. Transformative power takes many forms:

- *Power within* (dignity, confidence, and self-esteem)
- *Power with* (solidarity and collective action)
- *Power to* (capacity to act)
- *Power for* (vision and values – the purpose for which we build other forms of power)

Power is not static
Even where power over is dominant and entrenched, contradictions exist, and resistance is present. These are the cracks where the light comes in, that offer opportunities for change, however small or gradual. Transformative power is a continuous struggle against the deeply internalised and systemic patterns of power over that permeate our lives. Therefore, it involves conflict as we challenge the status quo – personal, professional, and political – and demands that we cultivate relationships of trust and solidarity, practices of safety and care, self-awareness, thoughtful analysis, and strategic action.

Theme 2:
Multiple Forms and Arenas of Power

> **We see how powerful it can be for movements to look at the world through a power lens. It enables them to think about the power players in relation to their own lives and struggles. This is important because we often do not understand how powerful groups invisibly undermine people's rights.**
>
> *- Phumi Mtetwa*[4]

The frameworks in this section – developed, adapted, and refined over the years – help us make sense of the shifting and conflicting dynamics of power.[5]

ACTIVITY 2:

How do you analyse power?

This optional activity is designed for working with organisations and individuals who may have their own frameworks and tools for planning and analysing power. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to understanding power. In this activity, ask participants:

- What tools and approaches do you use to make sense of power?

Explore people's existing ways of understanding power before introducing the Guide's frameworks.

Materials: Virtual board with stickies (such as miro) or flipchart paper, markers
Definitions and symbols of power created in Activity 1 (on flip charts or virtual equivalent)

Handout: *What and where is power?*

Community market or sharing circle
For a community market, people present their tools and approaches on flip charts or handouts at different 'market stalls' around the room. The group walks around the 'marketplace' from one stall to another. Each stallholder explains briefly what they are 'offering'.

Alternatively, people form a circle and take turns to present the approach they have used in the past, outlining the purpose, application, strengths, and any challenges the tool may present. Invite comments and discussion.

Plenary: Discuss:

- How do these different approaches help us understand power?
- How do they help us strategise in a way that considers power?
- What's missing? What questions or challenges do they raise?

Power is dynamic and can be both negative and positive, depending on how it is used, by whom, and for what purpose.

Although some forms of power are deeply entrenched and violent, all power is contested in some ways. There are always possibilities – even very small – for creating power that is transformative.

When we contrast power over and transformative power, we sometimes imagine two cleanly distinct types of power battling each other, like good and evil. But they co-exist, even in the same groups and organisations.

Creating transformative power is a winding road, not a linear process.

Four arenas of power

This framework proposes four interconnected arenas where power is in dispute, to help us to unpack the different ways in which power operates and thus to identify ways of exposing, challenging, and transforming it. Social movements and allies – imbued with values of equity, dignity, liberation, and love – constitute a fundamental force to upend oppressive and discriminatory power dynamics.

VISIBLE POWER

Making and enforcing the rules

Formal decision-making – including laws, courts, policies, budgets, enforcement, policing, regulations, and institutional rules and procedures at all levels, local to global. This includes elections, appointments, and enforcement, from police and judges to Members of Parliament, bureaucracies, services, and local authorities. Visible power – formal decision-making – also exists in most institutions from churches and mosques to corporations, unions, and NGOs. Depicted as neutral, decision-making and implementation/ enforcement often discriminates by race, gender, class, location, and other factors. Exclusion is perpetuated by unrepresentative, closed, and discriminatory processes and structures. People, organisations and movements work to open decision making, change decisions and who makes decisions, and ensure fair enforcement and accountability.

HIDDEN POWER

Influencing and setting the agenda

Organised social, political, and economic interests – both legal and illegal – seek to influence and control formal visible power and shape what is prioritised and decided, and how decisions are enforced. For example, corporations, religious, and political groups operate parallel to or in collusion with state actors (visible power) to define priorities, policies, and budgets to serve their economic interests and political power. We call this 'hidden power' because, even though we can sometimes see the interests involved, they work behind the scenes to exercise influence with formal governance structures to control what is decided and whose interests matter. At times, they resort to lawsuits, surveillance, and violence to silence dissent and delegitimise

alternatives. People, organisations, and movements expose and challenge these entrenched interests, but also influence visible power across the political spectrum, as do right-wing groups and illegal 'shadow' actors such as organised crime.

INVISIBLE POWER

Shaping norms and beliefs

Beliefs, ideology, social norms, and culture that shape people's sense of what is right, normal, and real. This includes deeply held, often unconscious prejudices based on gender, race, class, sexuality, location, age, and ability. The media, education, religion, and social rituals help to socialise particular beliefs, values, and narratives that legitimise and normalise injustice, discrimination, and violence. Manipulating invisible power through information and distorted narratives can turn people against each other and generate fear and distrust, often without people being aware of it. People, organisations and movements work to challenge and transform social norms and values through awareness raising, political education, narratives, and communications strategies.

SYSTEMIC POWER

Defining the logic of all structures and relationships

Deeply embedded logics work like operating systems to shape and structure all social and economic arrangements. Dominant ones include patriarchy, structural racism and white supremacy, capitalism, and colonialism-imperialism. Together, these logics naturalise a dehumanising dominant–subordinate hierarchy based on violence and the exploitation of each other and nature. These logics are like the genetic codes that determine economic, political and social relationships and permeate institutions, which in turn shape our lives. Marxism, liberation theology, feminisms, decolonialism, and abolitionism are all ideologies that seek to replace these logics with more equitable, sustainable, and inclusive economic and social relationships. People, organisations, and movements who successfully contest power in the other three arenas can also challenge and transform power at the systemic level.

ACTIVITY 3:

Arenas of power

The idea that power operates in different dimensions and arenas is foundational to this Guide and rooted in political theory and insights from years of social movement-building experience. Many people and organisations have used and adapted this framework to analyse how power affects them and develop strategies to transform power.

Step 1: Introduce the framework
Materials: Handout: *Four arenas of power*

Plenary: Refer to the handout: *What and where is power?* and reiterate key points.

In pairs: Building on the earlier activities about power and powerlessness, brainstorm as many examples of power from your context and social change experience, being sure to include both negative and positive forms. Identify two examples and write them on cards:

One example of power as negative (as control, abuse, coercion).
One example of power as positive (as liberating, creative, transformative).

Plenary: As pairs share their examples, cluster their cards on the floor or wall. Then, as you present the frameworks, draw examples from participants' cards of:

- *Visible power* (making and enforcing the rules); hidden power (influencing and setting the agenda); invisible power (shaping norms and beliefs); systemic power (the deeply embedded logics that define social relationships).
- *Power over*: the oppressive use and abuse of power to exploit, control, dominate, and exclude.
- *Transformative power (power within, power with, power to, power for).*

Distribute the handout *The four arenas of power* and facilitate a discussion. Focus on clarifying the frameworks. In conclusion, invite discussion by asking:

- How are these arenas of power useful in helping you work out what and who you're up against and where to focus your change work?
- How can they be useful in guiding your efforts to build and use your own power to challenge and change injustice?
- What questions do the arenas raise that you might explore and clarify when you apply them to your own work and issues or to case studies?

Step 2: Apply the four arenas of power
This framework helps reveal how power is operating and where there are opportunities to expose, contest, and change power in relation to real contexts and issues.

Choose one of three options as the basis for analysing the four arenas of power:

- the historical timeline created in Chapter 2: Naming the Moment
- a case study (three are provided)
- participants' own experiences and issues (note: this can be enriched by the learning from one of the options above first)

Materials: Use several large pieces of paper to map out the arenas of power as groups name them. Alternatively, create a simple grid with a row for each of the four arenas of power and two columns. In the first column, groups note how powerful interests in this specific arena of power contribute to the problem. Leave the second column blank for exploring how movements challenge these dynamics of power.

Option 1: Use the timeline created in Chapter 2: Naming the Moment or do the timeline activity now. Post the timeline on the wall. Look at the whole timeline, or form groups by age and experience to focus on a section of the timeline.

Option 2: Choose one of the case studies or provide your own.

UBUNTU: Rural women mobilise in South Africa

PEKKA: A grassroots women's movement in Indonesia

COPINH: Guardians of the River in Honduras

Read the case study individually or aloud in turns.

Option 3: Handouts or resources related to the group's issues and agendas. Identify a maximum of three issues that your group is working on or care about.

Small groups: For any of the three options:

- Identify a moment when power was challenged. What were the issues or events at the centre of this moment?
- How and where did power play out in relation to the four arenas of power? Who were some of the dominant actors, and what were their interests?
- How has exclusion or violence been reinforced or legitimised in each arena of power?
  - Visible: making and enforcing the rules
  - Hidden: influencing and setting the agenda
  - Invisible: shaping norms and beliefs
  - Systemic: defining the logic of all structures and relationships
- What social justice strategies or ways of organising did the movements or community groups use to enhance and mobilise their influence to disrupt, resist, challenge, or change power in these arenas? Identify up to three strategies.

Plenary: Consider each of the questions above in turn. Invite one of the small groups to share their thoughts, then ask others to add or build. Small groups take turns to share first. Note key words and 'aha!' moments on flip chart. For variety, invite groups to present their thoughts in creative ways such as a lively talk show (TV or radio), a three-to-five-minute skit, a story, or a song.

To conclude, ask and discuss:

- Which of the four arenas of power were you able to identify?
- Who and what was in conflict? How did the groups involved try to address injustice or shift power?
- Was the framework useful? What did the arenas of power reveal?

Transformative power
Power is also a positive and regenerative force for change that centres around an alternative ethic of caring and interdependence – personal, social, political, and organisational. It can be experienced as a sense of one's dignity, empathy, and belonging and an ability to imagine alternatives to the status quo, and expressed in creative and collective work to forge a different path and make change happen.[6]

Power within: self-worth and self-knowledge
Grounded in a belief in inherent human dignity, power within means self-esteem and the ability to challenge assumptions, value interdependence, feel empathy, and seek fulfilment. Grassroots organising, leadership development, and joyful connection help people affirm their personal worth, tap into their dreams and hopes, and discover their power to and power with.

Power to: the potential to speak out and take action
Leadership for social justice involves new skills, knowledge, and awareness that taps into the sense of hope and possibility for change. It opens up possibilities for individual and joint action or power with others. Nurturing our power to is a critical antidote to resignation and fear.

Power with: collective strength and action
Finding common ground and community with others to work together for change, power with is expressed in collaboration, alliances, reciprocity, belonging, solidarity – and collective action. It multiplies individual talents, knowledge, reach, and resources, all of which are essential for transformational change.

Power for: combined vision, values, and demands
Orienting our change strategies and practices, power for is the vision, values, and propositions that steer and inspire action and connections and that move us toward the change we seek to create and practice. Power for provides the guiding star of transformative power, shaping our proposals, initiatives, agendas, and demands.

Transformative power grows from respect for self and interconnectedness with others – in all our diversities. It is the power inside us *(power within*), collective power together with others (*power with*), our power to speak out and act (*power to*), and power to articulate the change we want *(power for*). Transformative power can be identified, practised, and cultivated intentionally and serves as a guiding star for organising, leadership development, and strategy processes.

Oppressive actors and groups create their own forms of power within, power to, power with, and power for to pursue their agendas or obstruct change. Articulating our vision and values as change makers – our power for – is therefore essential in building transformative power. The power of collective imagination is a cornerstone of movement-building.

Graphic inspired by Lou Lecuyer, Powerbiodiv.

ACTIVITY 4:

Transformative power in action

The four arenas of power help us unpack the many shapes and forms of domination, coercion, and oppression – or power over – that we face in our lives and activism. The arenas of power are often experienced as negative, but they are always contested. Each arena is a space where we can resist, engage, build, and transform power for positive change. How we source, build, and mobilise our own power, individually and collectively, can be unpacked into different kinds of "transformational power", as we will explore using the framework here.

Materials: The option that the group explored in Activity 2: Arenas of power: timeline, case study, or own experience.

Handout: *Transformative Power*

Facilitator note: Ahead of time, familiarise yourself with the Transformative Power concepts (see handout)

Step 1: Introduce the framework

Individually: Give people some paper or cards. Ask them to think about and write down:

- What sources of power do you draw upon to deal with conflict and challenges in your personal and work life?
- What sources of power do you draw on in your activism?
- What are some of the ways you have used your power to make a change?

In pairs: Discuss the sources and uses of power you each feel and deploy, and the similarities and differences in your experiences. Together, choose one source of power, and create a living statue (with moving parts) or skit that represents it.

Plenary: Each pair presents their living statues or skits, and the group guesses what they mean. Once the group has guessed, invite the presenting group to explain what they were thinking. Record what emerges on a flip chart. Ask at the end if anything is missing from the list of sources of power, and, if needed, add to the list. (You should note to yourself those that fall under power within, with, to, and for).

Synthesise and introduce the concepts of transformative power — ideas developed by women's rights activists and feminists to describe the different categories of power people use to transform and improve their lives and their societies. Share the Handout: Transformative Power.

With help from the group, cluster the ideas on your list according to power with, within, to, and for. You can ask for other examples.
Stress how these forms of power interact and reinforce one another (for example, we often discover our sense of power within and power to in the context of working with others, power with; power for grows out of a deepening sense of the other three as we get clear what it is we want to create and change in the world around us).

- How do these forms of power resonate with our understanding of power? How are they different than power over and the four arenas of power? Anything we might add?
- Reflecting on our experiences, how do we foster power within? Where do we develop power to? How do we build power with? And what gives us a sense of power for over time?
- How do each of these powers contribute to strong movements?

Step 2: Transformative power in action

Small groups: Small groups: Invite each group to look for examples of – or potential for – sources and uses of power that could be transformative from the activity above in Step 1. Ask:

- What kinds of transformative power can you identify? What was the main source of this power? How was this power used? Look for examples of power within, power with, power to, and power for.
- How did these sources of power work together or support each other? How can they be combined to strengthen the power of activists and movements?
- Are there any forms of transformative power not discussed that you would add?

Plenary: Invite each group to share three or four insights or 'aha!' moments. Discuss the questions above. Finish by asking and discussing:

- How has transformative power changed or shaped your understanding of power?
- How does transformative power relate to challenging and changing power in the four arenas?
- What potential do you see for building transformative power with others in your own work or context?

Posters from Black Lives Matter protests © Lisa VeneKlasen

Theme 3:
Systemic Power

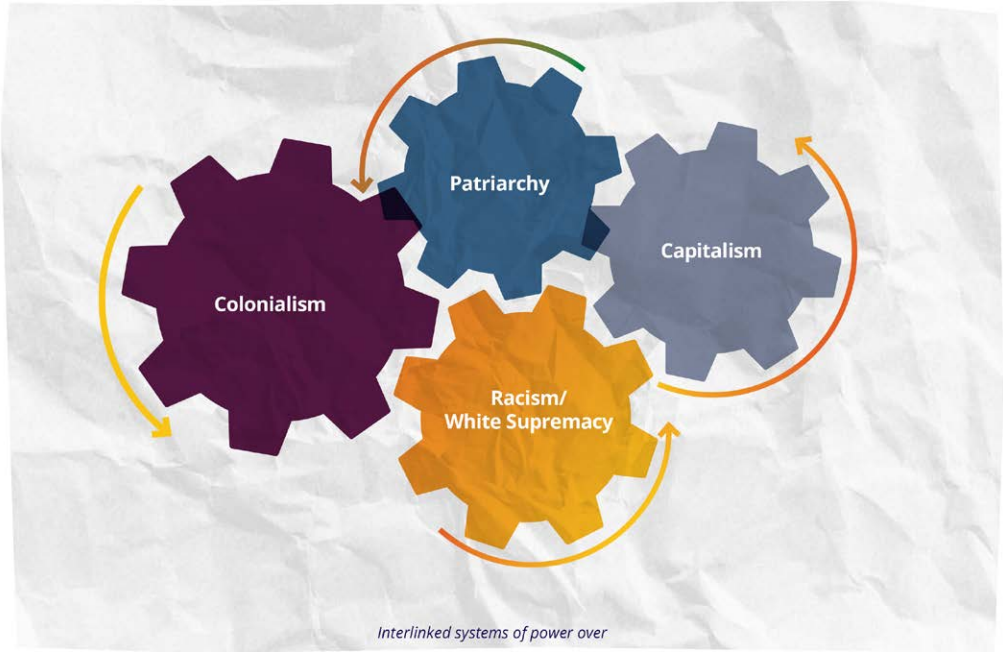
When dealing with systemic injustice, just because something is not calculated doesn't mean it isn't by design.

- Jamie Arpin-Ricci[8]

All economic, political, and social institutions and arrangements are shaped by underlying belief systems. Dominant systems include patriarchy, structural racism or white supremacy, colonialism-imperialism, and capitalism. The 'logics' of these systems set the 'codes' of dominant–subordinate, dehumanising, and extractive hierarchies among people and between people and nature. These systems show up and change throughout history in ways that perpetuate structural violence, cultural erasure and genocide, and the extraction of natural resources, human labour, and even knowledge. However, their distinct and connected logics are often completely invisible and normalized.

Systemic power is global, though it may differ from place to place, and it is always contested. Throughout history, crises and alternative ideologies and economic and political models have exposed the flaws of these interlinked systems and put forth alternative systems and structures, such as Revolutionary Catalonia created by anarchists and communists before the Spanish Civil War or the Zapatistas in southern Mexico. Think of ideologies such as feminisms, Marxism, liberation theology, co-operativism, regenerative farming, the commons, Black power, Pan-Africanism, and abolition. These alternative ideas and models have thrived and shifted through different periods of history as scholars, movements, and organisations practised and globalised them, seeking to challenge dominant logics and create new arrangements.

The timeline exercise shows that, even as we make incremental change, moments of crisis reveal the sheer destructiveness and fallacy of dominant systems and ignite new ideologies and fresh calls to action. To take on this arena – systemic power – requires visionary imagination, unifying ideologies, and alternative propositions for organising our economic, ecological, social, and political lives. We need to challenge and upend not only the institutions of power but also the systems that underpin them. Working to challenge and transform power across the other three arenas can also have a systemic impact.



Interlinked systems of power over

Forms of systemic power

This fourth arena of power is dominated by interlinked systems of patriarchy, capitalism, structural racism, and colonialism–imperialism. Historically, these systems have cemented a logic of domination, exploitation, and superiority that permeate our institutional structures and ways of thinking. These systemic 'genetic codes'[9] work to:

- Define who and what matters.
- Rationalise the commodification of labour and nature.
- Dehumanise and subordinate those deemed to have less value – often in relationship to their gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, etc.
- Normalise violence and the threat of violence as ways to enforce order.

These oppressive systems of power are consistently contested by other systemic models and ideas.

Capitalism: the commodification and extraction of resources for profit and accumulation:

- Includes the exploitation of labour, natural resources, genetic material, public goods, and personal data.
- Assigns value to different kinds of labour and 'work', with reproductive and care work assigned zero or little value.
- Morphs and evolves over the centuries to include new arrangements, rules and modes of exploitation, and logics to justify them.

Patriarchy: the hierarchy that 'naturalises' the dominance and superiority of men and masculinity as leaders, decisionmakers, providers, and fighters, and women and femininity as weaker, less capable, less intelligent, and primarily useful for reproduction:

- Is based on a rigid biological binary between male and female.
- Defines 'the family' as heterosexual only.
- Rejects gender non-confirming and trans people as threatening and abnormal.
- Judges LGBTQI+ people as inferior or dangerous.
- Establishes biological hierarchies such as ableism and ageism.

Structural racism/white supremacy: the hierarchy that attributes less value, humanity, and rational capacity to people based on their caste, ethnicity, skin colour, culture, and nationality:

- Is structural, institutionalised, and reproduced through both unconscious and actively promoted beliefs and narratives in media and popular culture.
- Is maintained through violence, the threat of violence, and systematic exclusion from resources, opportunities, and decision-making.

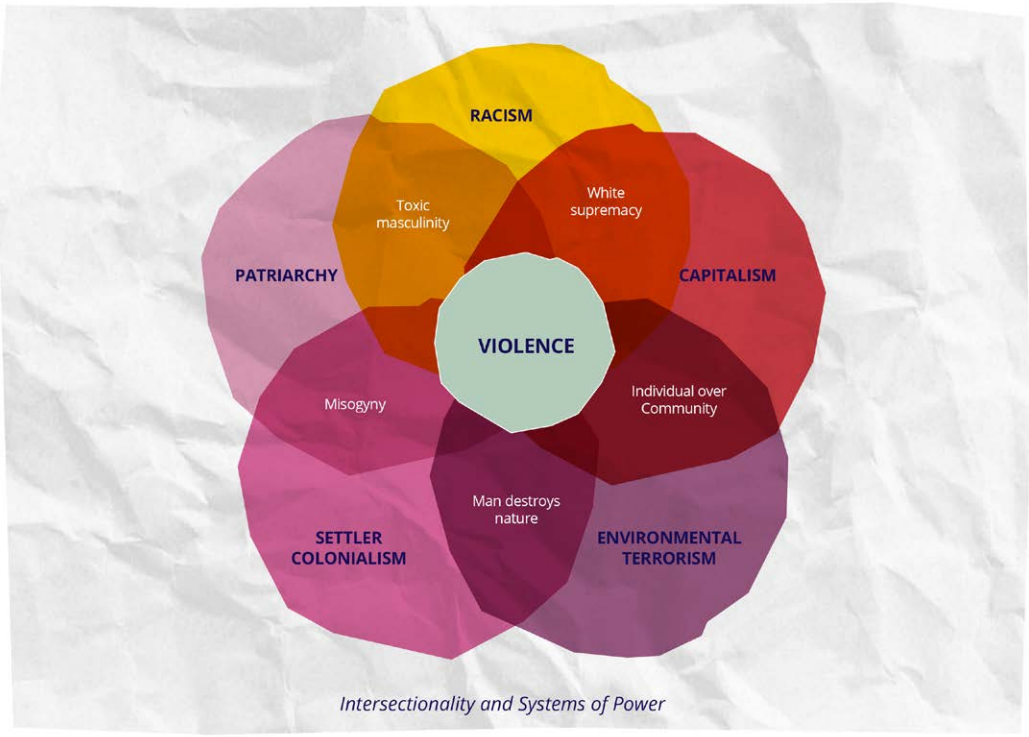
Colonialism–Imperialism: a geographic, racialised code of inequality:

- 'Justifies' and institutionalises the exploitation and extraction of people and resources from some countries or peoples.
- Is based on race and ethnicity, painting some societies and cultures as 'primitive', exotic, or less 'civilised'.
- Creates paternalistic relationships, reinforced by religion and other beliefs.

Examples of the 'logics' that justify and sustain systemic power abound.

- Attacks on women's reproductive rights and access to abortion are framed as the defence of motherhood and family.
- Loan forgiveness for corporations is presented as essential for a healthy economy, while poor and working people and the Global South are forced into 'austerity.'
- Extractive industries are framed as 'development' even as they destroy local land, water, forests and ways of life, and drive climate change.

A new political energy is driving efforts to reject these logics and the devastation they cause. To respond to systemic power, we must cultivate radical imagination, unifying ideologies, and alternative social, economic, and political models – feminism, the commons, regenerative economics, abolition, and liberation – to re-define our future.



Intersectionality and Systems of Power

ACTIVITY 5:

Unpacking and upending systemic power

How does systemic power operate and show up in our context? What bold ideas can we use to expose their logic? How can we shape and amplify alternative ways of being and models?

Materials: Tcards or sticky notes (four colours), markers, handout: *Forms of systemic power.* Before the activity, create a blank matrix on the wall or share copies.

Download *Analysing the four arenas of power* to copy and share.

Step 1: Our contexts

Plenary: Introduce the activity with a brief overview of systemic power. To reach a basic, shared understanding of the logics, nature, and interconnectedness of the dominant systems of power, review and discuss the definitions in the handout.

Small groups: Break into four groups, each taking one of the dominant forms of systemic power: patriarchy, structural racism/white supremacy, capitalism, or colonialism–imperialism. Discuss these questions, noting key examples on stickies.

- How does this form of systemic power show up concretely in our context and lives? Identify specific examples of how it is reinforced by visible, hidden, and invisible power.
- How has this changed over time? For example, how did colonialism present itself in earlier eras, and how does it present itself today? How has systemic power morphed over time?

Note that it can be easy to confuse contemporary trends and systemic power. Trends such as rising authoritarianism or white nationalism are indeed global and do influence power dynamics. However, these trends are shorter-term political projects, financed and organised by key actors to gain political and economic power. They are the product of these larger systems and tap into the logic, beliefs, and structures of patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy.

Plenary: Each group in turn posts their cards in the matrix on the wall. After each group presents, pause to discuss the questions.

- How does each system show up in our context in relation to each arena of power?
- How and where do these systems overlap and reinforce each other?
- How does systemic power make change more difficult?
- What are some of the ways these deeper systemic logics are contested? What alternative ideas, ideologies, and alternative economic and political models have emerged over time?
- What ideas or systemic power do we expose or tap into in our change strategies?

Step 2: Our issues

Plenary: Identify one issue or problem that everyone knows in their lives or faces in their activism. Examples could be extractive 'development' that threatens land, water, and environmental defenders, or gender-based violence. Form four groups, each tackling a different system: patriarchy, capitalism, structural racism/white supremacy, or colonialism–imperialism.

Small groups: Read the handout Forms of systemic power. Discuss how the system (for example, patriarchy) impacts your issue. Write two or three specific examples for each element listed below, using a separate card for each example:

- What are the key elements or structures of this system? (systemic power – green)
- What norms, values, and beliefs underlie the system? (invisible power – orange)
- How are powerful interests and agendas mobilised? (hidden power – grey)
- How are rules and decisions set and enforced? (visible power – blue)

Plenary: When all groups have shared their cards, invite everyone to look across each of the arenas of power (visible, hidden, invisible, systemic).

- How do capitalism and patriarchy reinforce each other? How do colonialism and white supremacy reinforce each other?
- How do these systems interact with and influence visible, hidden, and invisible power?
- How do we expose and challenge these systems? Give examples from your work. Can we create alternatives through the ways we organise and live?
- How does this analysis sharpen our strategies? How might we think differently about building and mobilising power through alliances?
- What systems – social, political, economic, ecological – do we imagine, aspire to, and centre in our agendas, organising, lives, and activism?

Further discussion:

How does the logic of capitalism prevent people from considering certain economic, environmental, or climate policy solutions? How do patriarchy and structural racism shape beliefs and politics in society particularly in relation to LGBTQI+ rights, marriage, migration, and employment? How does this overarching system shape our economic, political, and social lives and aspirations? What are the key features of each system's 'genetic codes' with regard to power? For example:

> One of the codes of patriarchy is to define 'family' as a man, a woman, and children, and treat all non-conforming behaviour as a threat.
>
> A capitalist code treats nature as merely an exploitable resource and source of profit.

Theme 4:
Power and Interconnected Identities

A critical layer of unpacking and dismantling power over relates to our interconnected identities. Systems of privilege, inequity, and oppression are embedded in our institutions and reproduced by social norms and beliefs around gender, class, caste, race, sexuality, ethnicity, geography, age, ability, and other factors. Discrimination, oppression, and violence based on identities are socialised and institutionalised in all aspects of our lives. The intersection of these identities makes oppression or possibilities of transformation different for different people in different contexts. Our identities can also be a source of connection, power, joy, and transformation.

> **Some of these identities give us a leg up, while others push us a rung down the ladder. The combination of identities can compound (or diminish) advantage or compound (or relieve) harm, and there are perhaps endless variations. The point of intersectional practice is to look at all these possible combinations of privilege and vulnerability, rather than just stopping with the ones that apply to us, whoever we are.**
>
> *- Rinku Sen, Narrative Initiative*[10]

This section introduces identities and intersectionality as essential to both power analysis and power-building strategies. In the activities, we discuss the ways we experience our identities in the intimate, private, and public arenas of our lives. These dimensions of power are explored more deeply in Chapter 4: Identity, Intersectionality, and Power.

ACTIVITY 6:

Identities, power, and privilege

Our personal experiences help us understand discrimination based on identity.

Materials: flipchart paper, markers
Accounts of intersectionality: Video "Phumi Mtetwa (South Africa) – Walk Together in Struggle" and video "Dalila de Jesús Vásquez (Guatemala) – Transforming Oppression into Liberty".

Handout: *Intersectionality*

Plenary: Set the tone for a safe, open discussion. Take time to define terms such as gender, class, and ethnicity so that participants are operating from similar understandings. You could refer to the JASS Feminist Movement Builder's Dictionary. Ask:

- How do you understand discrimination and oppression in relation to gender, ethnicity/race, class, sexuality, and other factors of exclusion?

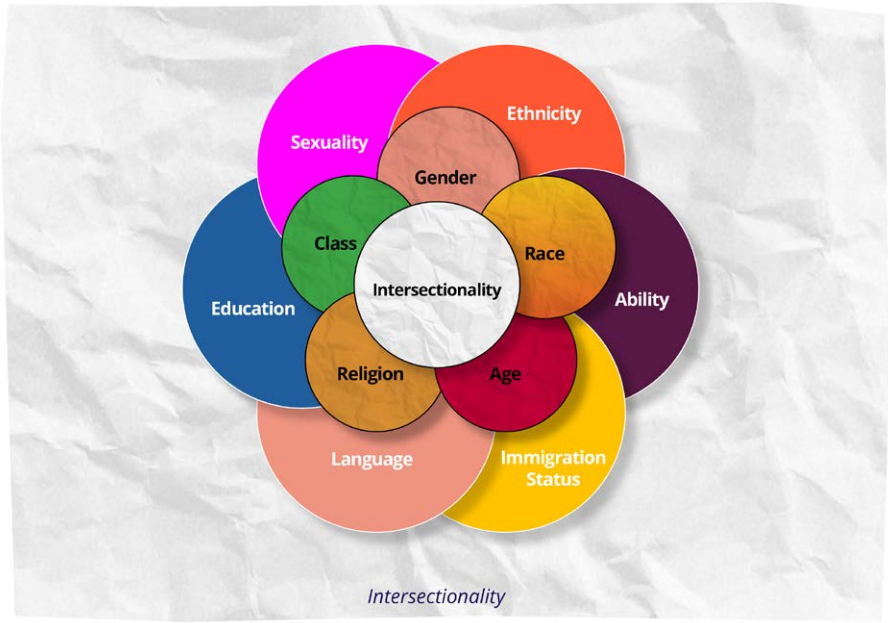
Small groups: In groups of three, watch the videos. For each one – Phumi Mthethwa and Dalila de Jesús Vasquez – discuss:

- What are the different social identities that shaped the storytellers' experiences?
- In what ways were their identities a source of connection and power, and in what ways did they trigger structural discrimination and/or violence?
- What other observations about identity and intersectionality can you glean from these examples?

Plenary: Invite discussion. Ask a second facilitator or participant to write answers on flipcharts.

- What do we learn from Phumi and Dalila's stories about identity and intersectionality?
- Do you relate to any parts of these stories? Are there moments in your life where you have experienced barriers or advantages due to your gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, age, immigration status, education, or other aspect of your identity? How did you become aware of how your identity affected you? Did you feel any discomfort or other emotion?
- Can you share experiences where awareness about your identity(ies) has been a source of power, connection, and belonging?
- Why is intersectionality important to our strategies and organising?

Intersectionality



Intersectionality

Like many terms that have become mainstream, intersectionality can be controversial, so it's helpful to clarify what we mean by it. Defined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a Black legal scholar in the US, 'intersectionality' describes how race, gender, class, sexuality, and other characteristics intersect and overlap to create different experiences of oppression, discrimination, and privilege.

Activists of earlier generations note that intersectionality was a concept and practise long before it was introduced in legal studies. Indigenous peoples and Asian, African, and Latin American feminists of earlier generations, particularly those working in popular education, focused on interconnected forms of oppression.

> **The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As Black women, we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of colour face.**
>
> *- Combahee Collective, 1974*

Like many political ideas, intersectionality is contested by the right and the left. But a critical analysis of the intersections between our different identities is a core part of building individual and collective awareness and power. We come to recognise and celebrate the different and converging sources of our power as well as our oppression. This can inspire us to mobilise within and across our identities for change, find common ground, and create alliances.

ACTIVITY 7:

Intimate, private, and public realms of power

Here, we build on the ideas and practice of intersectionality and power analysis. Our experiences of power and identity vary and can even be contradictory in different realms of our lives, from our intimate relationships to the private realm to our public selves. These differences reveal a lot about the logic of systemic power and the force of invisible power – ideas, beliefs, and norms – in all aspects of our lives. Where we might feel confident in our public leadership and activism, we may be more cautious in our families, where challenging norms can create conflict and threaten our deepest relationships. Alternatively, we may feel confident in our personal lives, yet face conflicts and challenges in our organisations and public activism. This framework is important in understanding how change creates both personal and political conflict and helps us feel empathy for and deal with the challenging implications of organising and leadership. [1]

Materials: Handout: *Intimate, private, and public realms of power*
Copies of the matrix for each group
Flipchart and markers

Plenary: Share copies of the handout, or show the contents as slides, to introduce the topic.

Small groups: Each group chooses one aspect of identity to work on – such as gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, ability, or faith. Each group reads the handout out loud. Using or adapting the matrix, discuss how each identity can be experienced differently in the intimate, private, and public realms of life. Prepare a flipchart or drawing to share in plenary.

Tool 3: Matrix for intimate, private, and public realms of power

Plenary: Post small groups' flipcharts or drawings around the room or on the virtual space. Each group briefly presents their key points. Facilitate a wrap-up discussion, emphasising these key points:

- Dominant belief systems and systemic power establish hierarchies based on gender, race, class, and other identities. All institutions and beliefs are structured around these hierarchies. They assign value and create dynamics of privilege and exclusion that are both deeply personal and structural.
- Each of us is shaped by a mix (intersection) of identities, including gender, race/ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, age, ability, education, and immigration status.
- Challenging the status quo can create conflicts in our organisations and personal lives, and these conflicts impact our wellbeing, leadership and activism. We must consider these tensions in our strategies and their implications for how we lead, work together, and support collective care.
- Intersectional analysis and organising are essential in ensuring that we build more inclusive democratic spaces and treat one another with grace. This takes time and courage to deal with the awkward realities of privilege and power as they play out in our lives.
- Our identities can also be a source of power, connection, belonging, and liberation – and many social movements have redefined how we see each other. Identity, like all forms of power, is dynamic and context-specific, although systemic power – patriarchy, capitalism, structural racism, and colonialism – continues to define the meaning of aspects of identity as it has over history.

Intimate, private, and public realms of power

Because of the ways oppression operates, distinct aspects of our identity can create contradictions and conflicts in the different realms of our lives. We may behave or be treated one way in our public life, but another way in our private or intimate lives. Leadership and organising strategies need to take this into account to support deeper transformation. As the well-known feminist adage says: "the personal is political."

The **intimate realm of power**: my sense of self, personal confidence, psychological well-being, and safety and my relationship to (and control over) my body and health

The **private realm of power**: my relationships and roles in the family, among friends, in sexual partnerships and marriage, and so on

The **public realm of power**: how I am seen and treated in my public life, such as in my organisation, employment and community, including my legal and civil rights

For an individual, the experience of power and powerlessness differs based on gender, sexuality, race, class, or age, and may even be contradictory in different realms of life. For example, a woman politician who appears confident in public may accept a subordinate role in her family; she may even survive abuse in her private relationships while keeping up with the demands and image of her public duties. Throughout the world, it is common for a woman to face the same work demands as her male partner and yet be primarily or solely responsible for the maintenance of the home and children. Similar conflicts and

contradictions can be true of, for example, a Black man, a gender non-conforming person, or someone differently abled: they face a dominant culture that is discriminatory that they must find ways to navigate but have a very different experience in their private or intimate life.

It is helpful to acknowledge these layers and contradictions in order to understand the tensions that are generated by our political organising and change work, particularly for those who experience sexism, racism, classism, or ageism more directly. Political change and advocacy strategies that focus solely on the public realm may overlook challenges such as those faced by women leaders, activists, and public officials when they return to their homes and families.

Theme 5:
Power, Conflict, and Violence

All change generates conflict – in our families, organisations, workplace, and contexts. Standing up to dominant forces and beliefs can create exponential conflict and violence – backlash is an inevitable condition of social change.

Movements and activists face many risks as they navigate change. Governments, corporations, and other powerful actors often respond to policy change or calls against abuse, corruption, and injustice with threats of violence or direct attacks and repression, targeting activists and movements. These attacks against dissent include lawsuits aimed at undermining and paralysing organisations and the use of stigma, gossip, and misinformation on social media to isolate, shame, and silence activists, divide and neutralise groups and communities, and confuse or sow doubt. In the case of women and LGBTQI+ defenders, these attacks are often personalised aimed at shaming them. Widespread tolerance of gender-based abuses within organisations and families intensifies the risks that activists face.

Violence is embedded in the institutions that marginalise and dehumanise people and serves as a tool to create fear and force compliance. Throughout history, backlash and violence have been part of the operating system of unequal power relations and injustice, and yet we rarely factor this into our strategies and change work. Collective safety and protection strategies for activists are all too often an afterthought.

Political violence breeds rage, and it is tempting to want to respond to violent attacks with violence. That's why it's important to analyse how violence operates in relation to power broadly and specifically in your context, and to take time to reflect about non-violence and the tactics you choose.

ACTIVITY 8:

It's all connected

Our power analysis needs to include awareness of the dynamics of conflict, backlash and violence. Here, we explore how change creates conflict that can be either positive or negative, and we demystify structural and systemic violence so we can better anticipate risk, conflict, and threats, and, in turn, improve strategies and collective safety.

Before starting, check in with participants about the sensitivity of this topic. Many people have experienced violence in their private lives and political work. Discussing violence can trigger trauma or other unresolved feelings, which may be expressed in many ways. Give people the option of stepping out of the small-group discussions; it is important to acknowledge the real nature of that trauma and create space for the emotions this process can bring up.

Materials: Handout: *It's all connected.*

Plenary: In Activity 7, we looked at interlinked systems of domination. It's helpful to remember what these systems are and how they connect and overlap with each other. (Ask for a few examples.) We will now look at how violence and the threat of violence are essential features of these systems and play a critical role in maintaining unequal relations of power at all levels. We begin by reflecting on our own experiences of violence and backlash at the intersection of these systems.

Small groups: Distribute the handout: It's all connected. Review the diagram and identify two concrete examples that illustrate how each of these overlapping systems – patriarchy, structural racism, extractive capitalism, and colonialism–imperialism – rely on violence.

- Who are the players behind the systems, people, and institutions that perpetrate and orchestrate these forms of backlash and violence? What do they hope to achieve with their actions?
- How have you, your organisation, or groups you've worked with dealt with these forms of backlash and violence? Identify examples.

Plenary: Share examples and reflections from small groups. Ask:

- What insights did you gain about how violence and the threat of violence operate?
- Have you been involved in change efforts that generate backlash intended to reverse or resist change? Did you anticipate this?
- How does this exercise make you feel?
- How might you approach strategy in a different way, given what you've discussed and the emotions it generated?

It's all connected

Dominant systems of power rely on fear, coercion, and the threat and use of violence to prevent change and silence dissent. Fear becomes a political and easily internalised tool for control and creates what observers might read as apathy or acquiescence.

This violence is systemic and structural – it plays out amongst us, in public and in private and in our families, culture, and politics. We absorb it in our bodies and minds. Context, gender, race/ethnicity, class, location, and so many other factors define its contours, but the violence is universal.

But violence is not invincible. We can prepare for the conflict generated by standing up and speaking out. Anticipating backlash and violence helps us to continuously build alternative kinds of relationships while preparing for the many challenges and risks our change-making will generate.

> **They tried to bury us. They did not realise that we were seeds.**
>
> *- Protest poster*

ACTIVITY 9:

Experiences of power, conflict, and violence

There are multiple kinds of violence deeply connected with how power operates. Here, we'll consider some different forms of violence, an awareness that can guide our strategies and ways of organising.

Materials: a case study (Guardians of the River, or another case study the group is familiar with), or the timeline created in Chapter 2.

Handout: *Power, conflict, and violence*.

Plenary: Introduce the activity. Form groups to review the Guardians of the River case study, their timeline, or another case study of their choice. (Choose just one.)

Small groups: Review the case study or timeline to identify five examples of the use or threat of violence that blocked change from happening.

- What was the violence or threat of violence? Who was behind it, and why?
- What impact did violence or threat have in the short and long-term (years later)?
- How did activist groups adjust their strategies in response to violence or the threat of violence

Plenary: For discussion, ask:

- Why are we always surprised when our change efforts – whether inside our organisations and communities or challenging the dominating forms of power – create conflict and even provoke violence?
- What does this quote mean to you in terms of your work and the history you stand on?

Plenary: Share the handout Power, conflict, and violence, and review the definitions, asking for examples to make sure participants have a common understanding. If some participants have directly experienced violence, prepare a safe space and provide support for the psychological and emotional impact of remembering.

Small groups: Identify two examples of each type of violence described in the handout from your own work or the case study or your timeline. For each example, discuss:

- How does this type of violence work to maintain unequal power?
- What impact does it have on your life and your change work?

Plenary: This analysis links to the previous discussion about how power operates differently in the intimate, private, and public realms of our lives. Facilitate an exchange of examples and thoughts from groups. Ask:

- Which of the types of violence are most common in your context?
- How do these forms of violence work to maintain unequal entrenched power?
- What impact do these forms of violence have on our organisations and change work?
- What are the ways we can build safety and care into our organising and organisations to protect against and counter violence?

Power, conflict, and violence

Conflict, violence, and the threat of violence are used to prevent change, quell dissent, and maintain power and control. Both power and violence are always changing and take direct and indirect, visible, and invisible forms in both public and private arenas. In anticipating and responding to conflict, violence, and fear, it's helpful to understand the different forms these can take:[13]

Structural: The ways that social, economic, political, and cultural institutions systematically marginalise and exclude certain people (based on characteristics including gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability), rendering them impoverished and invisible. This discrimination is tolerated by society. Those who suffer from poor health, economic insecurity, lack of shelter, stigmatisation, or crime are often blamed.[14]

Political: Threats, attacks, and intimidation from both state and non-state actors when dominant actors believe their control and power are exposed or challenged, including:

- Lawsuits (for example, defamation) and legal restrictions on funding/operations.
- Repression, assassination, and the presence of police, military, and weapons to deter or suppress protest.
- Complicity in violent attacks by non-state actors such as private security, militias, and organised crime and paramilitaries.
- Surveillance and infiltration (such as posing as new members of a group to steal information)
- Use of digital and other media to marginalise, stigmatise, and blame dissenters and discredit their agendas.
- Death threats or threats of assault against family members and activists.
- Raiding offices, destroying equipment, or seizing property.

Cultural: The use of popular culture, stories, and humour that normalise gendered, racist, or economic violence or degrade certain cultures or communities.[15]

Symbolic: Highly visible attacks on communities, their leaders, cultural icons, and expressions of beliefs, language, dress, and customs in ways intended to threaten and destroy their core identity and existence.[16]

Ecological: The destruction and degradation of nature and the environment through mining, logging, and other extractive industries; through overuse, as in the case with industrial farming, or pollution produced by car emissions, pesticides, or industrial waste in water.

Identity-based: Perpetrated on the basis of a person's gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, etc.

Consider, for example, gender-based violence, directed at a person, group, or movement based on their perceived biological sex, sexual expression, or conformity with norms of gender identity. Here, violence is used to control behaviour, freedom of movement, and expression. It prevents people from stepping out of traditionally prescribed gender roles and can include physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse, threats, coercion, and economic or educational deprivation, harassment, and control on freedom of movement, whether occurring in intimate, private, and public arenas.

Femicides – the murder of women and girls because they are female – used as a political agenda is an example of gendered political violence, along with the sexualised and gendered attacks on women human rights defenders.

Violence of all kinds is used to police and dominate ethnic and racial groups, working class and poor communities, immigrants, and other marginalised communities

> **The essence of non-violence is love. Out of love and the willingness to act selflessly, strategies, tactics, and techniques for a nonviolent struggle arise naturally. Non-violence is not a dogma; it is a process.**
>
> *- Thich Nhat Hanh*

ACTIVITY 10:

Non-violence and liberation

Change involves conflict, but there are alternatives to violence and fear. Here, we explore age-old traditions of non-violence as a form of disobedience and resistance and nonviolence as a way to upend systemic power. We acknowledge that the concept of non-violence is debated – not all activists and changemakers believe that non-violence is the only option – and that it is important to grapple with these debates.

Materials: videos or quotes from the videos:
- Interview with Martin Luther King about nonviolence
- Ted talk by Minniejean Brown-Trickey on nonviolence

Plenary: Invite participants to think about the meaning of 'liberation' in light of the last hundred years.

Many countries around the world, particularly in the Global South, gained their sovereignty and autonomy from occupations and colonial and imperialist power through liberation struggles involving civil wars and the armed overthrow of governments. Many governments currently in power may have betrayed the principles of the liberation struggle over time, but, for some people, this kind of violence has positive associations. Indeed, many of us are socialised to believe in violence as key to retribution or freedom. It's important to begin this exploration of non-violence with an open conversation of how we see violence in relation to change.

Violence is a central feature of all of our histories. But it is not a given as a means for changing the way things are. Many of those who've made change before us recognised the need to disrupt the logic of violence that is so deeply embedded in all unequal forms of power – and also deeply internalised.

Change involves conflict – there's no way around it. But there are alternatives to responding to violence and fear with more violence, including age-old traditions of non-violent disobedience and resistance.

Small groups: Take turns sharing what you know about the role and nature of violence in struggles for change and liberation in your context – including stories, beliefs, ideas, history, and your own experience.

- What beliefs or practices have been in favour of using violence to create change?
- What beliefs or practices have sought or created change without using violence?
- What are the fundamental differences between these two perspectives?

Create one or more drawings that represent these beliefs, ideas, and practices around violence and non-violence as ways of challenging, changing, or creating power.

Plenary: Post drawings around the room or virtual space. Allow time for everyone to look at them. Invite each group to explain what their drawings are about, and how they see violence and non-violence as ways of engaging with power. Document key ideas on a flipchart.

Present two critical ideas from older generations in quotes and/or full audio-visuals:

- Interview with Martin Luther King about nonviolence
- Ted talk by Minniejean Brown-Trickey on nonviolence

Invite discussion comparing these perspectives. Draw out implications for our own work:

- How do the ideas of these thinkers question and disrupt the logic of power and violence?
- How might these ideas be critical to resistance and liberation?
- What does this mean for how we see our struggles and how we organise?
- How do we have conversations with others about the limits of violence, given how important it has been in history?

Individually or in small groups: Invite people to go back to their ideas about reimagining the future. What gives you hope and energy in difficult times?. Ask:

- How might you refine your vision now?

Theme 6:
Analysis to Strategy

Power analysis is essential for guiding our choice of strategies – the short- and long-term actions, tactics, and organising processes that we invest in to build and mobilise collective power to block, resist, expose, and change power. Power analysis can also help us identify gaps in our strategy, opportunities to build alliances with groups doing complementary work, the access, resources and relationships we need, and ways to strengthen our base and leadership. A strategy requires a deeper layer of power analysis and other ingredients that are included in other chapters and pulled together in Chapter 6: Power and Strategy.

This section builds on all the concepts covered in this chapter and begins the process of bridging from analysis to strategies and actions. We connect analysis of the four arenas of power to strategies and then explore whether and how these strategies build or catalyse power to, with, within, and for. This approach to strategy development is shaped by the orientation toward (decolonial) feminist movement-building discussed in Chapter 2: Naming the Moment, and in more detail in Chapter 6.

> Strategy is a collaborative, dynamic, and evolving process that guides an organisation, alliance, or movement towards achieving social change. It includes processes and steps to align more opportunistic or urgent short and medium-term actions with long-term goals. A movement-building strategy also specifies how these processes – organising, developing leadership, and action – embody and enrich the underlying values and vision.

We use The Power Matrix[17] to connect an analysis of the Four Arenas of Power to the formulation of strategies and actions, using concrete issues or one of the case studies as examples. The Power Matrix is a simple but effective and flexible tool that has been used and adapted by activists in dozens of contexts and organisational settings. It helps us identify specific strategies for contesting or building power in each of the four arenas – visible, hidden, invisible, and systemic – and for thinking about how these strategies are connected. We then reflect on how or whether these strategies catalyse transformative power (to, with, within, and for).

The Power Matrix can be useful to assess the strengths and gaps of your current strategy and identify opportunities to build alliances. Chapter 6: Power and Strategy gives more depth.

The Power Matrix

ARENAS OF POWER	EXAMPLES How do dominant forms of power contribute to the problem or situation?	STRATEGIES What strategies and actions could be used?
Visible Power: making and enforcing the rules laws + policies • enforcement or implementation • police, military • the legislature • courts • budgets • elections/appointments • international organizations (eg. World Bank, International Finance Corporation etc.)		
Hidden Power: influencing and setting the agenda • corporations, companies • elites + business associations • religious groups • civil society and political organizations • media companies + organizations		
Invisible Power: shaping norms and beliefs • narratives • media coverage • traditions • cultural beliefs • popular culture • curriculum in schools • religious beliefs • family 'traditions'		
Systemic Power: defining the underlying logic of all structures and relationships		

ACTIVITY 11:

The Power Matrix

Summary

Movement strategy that centres a power analysis is about solving problems of injustice and inequality by building, mobilising, and using our power to block, change, and engage the dominant structures and expressions of power. What connections do you see between creating and resisting power?

Distinct arenas and expressions of transformative power require different, interconnected strategies and approaches that are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. For example, to face formidable forces, we need to build and leverage our movement power – through intersectional organising, critical awareness, diverse leadership and alliances. Our tactics seek to mobilise and amplify our demands, collective voices, and narratives so that we can block, resist, pressure, propose or engage with the structures and dynamics of power.

Building our collective power is ongoing, long-term, and foundational to all other strategies involving the heart, mind, and body. It is also where we put our democratic values into practice and stretch beyond our comfort zones with new allies and organised collectives.

Our ability to reimagine the future in line with our values reinforces how we build and sustain our movements and guides our demands and narratives.

No single organisation or group has all the capacities necessary to do everything it takes to transform power and achieve systemic change. Movements are all about expanding the 'we' through the ways we organise, connect, communicate, and take action. In this way, we manoeuvre through shifting opportunities and threats while always strengthening our 'critical connections' across borders, issues, and sectors.

1. Popular attribution
2. Activists in different countries and contexts define the larger systems of racism and ethnic discrimination with different language and terminology. We refer to white supremacy and structural racism here, but these are not the only terms that are used to describe ethnic and racial oppression.
3. US civil rights leader
4. JASS South Africa Regional Director
5. The three dimensions of power
6. Adapted from Just Associates, We Rise Toolkit, Sources of Transforming Power, developed by Just Associates and activists in Southern Africa and Mesoamerica
7. Canadian author, speaker, and award-winning bisexual/queer activist.
8. Grassroots Global Justice use this phrase to describe systemic logic in their International Feminist Organizing Schools, 2021, www.ggjalliance.org
9. https://narrativeinitiative.org/blog/how-to-do-intersectionality/
10. Adapted from Lisa VeneKlasen with Valerie Miller, (2002), A New Weave of Power, People & Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation, Practical Action Publishing, and originally conceptualised by Nicaraguan feminist activist and scholar, Malena de Montis.
11. Some of these definitions draw on Rosemary McGee with Jesús Alfonso Flórez López, 2016, "Power, Violence, Citizenship and Agency: A Columbian Case Study" Working Paper 474, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, and others were developed and adapted for "Building Power in Crisis: Opportunities for Supporting Women on the Frontlines of Extractivism," 2023, Sage Fund.
12. Galtung, J. (1969) 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research', Journal of Peace Research 6.3: 167–91, cited in McGee and Flórez López (2016)
13. Pearce, J. (2007) Violence, Power and Participation: Building Citizenship in Contexts of Chronic Violence, IDS Working Paper 274, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, cited in McGee and Flórez López (2016)
14. Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. (1992) An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology, Chicago: Chicago University Press, cited in McGee and Flórez López (2016).
15. The three left-hand columns are adapted from the Power Matrix in Lisa VeneKlasen with Valerie Miller, (2002), A New Weave of Power, People & Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation, Practical Action Publishing); further adapted in Miller, V, L. VeneKlasen, M. Reilly and C. Clark (2006), Making Change Happen 3: Power. Concepts for Revisioning Power for Justice, Equity and Peace, Washington DC: Just Associates. The right-hand columns were further developed by Alexa Bradley,(2020) 'Did we forget about power? reintroducing concepts of power for justice, equality and peace', in R McGee and J. Pettit (eds), (2020), Power, empowerment and social change, Abingdon: Routledge.

4

IDENTITY, INTERSECTIONALITY AND POWER

> There is no such thing as single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.
>
> *- Audre Lorde*[1]

We can't talk about power – especially from a decolonial feminist standpoint – without talking about how power intersects with identity, including the ways that:

> Dominant forms of systemic power embed inequity and structural violence in all aspects of life according to gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and other factors of difference.
>
> Invisible power – norms and beliefs – normalise prejudice and discrimination.
>
> Elite and powerful groups are able to retain influence, legitimacy and decision-making power, and divide communities by mobilising prejudice and 'othering'.

Questions of identity are essential to understanding, challenging, building, and transforming power. This chapter tracks the intersections of power with social identity, structures and systems. This understanding can help unleash the potential for liberation, solidarity and transformation.

Every one of us has multiple and complex identities related to our gender, class, race, ethnicity, religion, education, age, sexual orientation, ability, and other factors of difference. Intersectionality is one way of describing how these identities interact – within larger systems and structures – to shape different experiences of power, privilege, and oppression.

While our experiences of power vary greatly, we can find points of unity and common action if we take the time to understand each other's experiences and work together for greater equity and justice. We can learn from one another, work together on solutions, and stand with each other.

> The concept of intersectionality provides a helpful way for people to name their distinct experiences, claim their whole interconnected identity, and seek common ground with others. The idea is not new, but Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American legal scholar, coined the term in the 1980s, recognising that "intersectionality was a lived reality before it became a term"[2] . She originally used the word to convey the dual reality of black women experiencing both gender and race discrimination.

> Others who felt invisible within 'women's' movements took up the term to bring to light the invisibility of many constituents within groups that claim them as members, but often fail to fully represent them. People of colour within LGBTQI+ movements; girls of colour in the fight against the school-to-prison pipeline; women within immigration movements; trans women within feminist movements; and people with disabilities fighting police abuse — all face vulnerabilities that reflect the intersections of racism, sexism, transphobia, ableism and more"[3]
>
> In whatever way we choose to name our diverse and interconnected identities, it is our lived experience that matters. "It is important to name how various forms of violence interact and compound to affect different people in specific ways. For most, class, race, and gender are simultaneous forces...it is not 'race + class + gender but 'race X class X gender'."[4]

Activist and writer Charlene Carruthers paraphrases the famous Combahee River Collective statement to explain why intersectional work is transformative: "[Because] if Black women were free, it would require the dismantling of so many systems of oppression that everybody else would be free as a result."[5]

Intersectionality is the basis for collective liberation.... And if we do not build that commitment to intersectional identity and struggle, we risk fighting for change that still preserves the conditions of someone else's oppression.

- Alexa Bradley, Global Programme Director, JASS

This chapter explores three key themes and builds on the introduction to interconnected identities and power in Chapter 3. The historical timeline from Chapter 2 will be useful too.

Theme 1: Identity, Power, and Privilege
Who are we and how do we name and experience our different identities in our lives and in relation to other identities? Various identities – and their intersections – translate into widely differing degrees of power and privilege depending on context, history, and existing social structures and norms.

Theme 2: The Personal is Political
How do aspects of identity converge to compound and complicate power relationships? Links between identities and power can either aid or thwart the work for justice. For example, in certain contexts those with specific identities are targeted, stigmatised, and exposed to hostility and violence.

Theme 3: Identity, Power, and Transformation
Our identities link with the ways we can recover our power in different forms: power within – strength in re/claiming our whole self as valuable; power with – finding common ground with others who see us and share our issues and concerns; and power for and to – defining and working toward a vision of inclusive liberation where no part of us is left behind.

Together, the activities in these three sections deepen our understanding of power and identity – how they are experienced day-to-day in our families, relationships, organisations, work, community, and politics. We examine the ways in which risk and vulnerability are shaped by our social identities in different contexts, and the meanings they are assigned by the systems and structures of our society. And importantly, because power analysis aims to enable more powerful collaborative work for change, we show that by affirming and connecting our identities – with an intersectional lens – we can include our whole selves in ways that energise our communities and organisations, across apparent differences, in our strategies for liberation, justice, and safety.

Theme 1:
Identity, Power, and Privilege

How we think about and experience our identities – and their intersections – is both a personal question and one that is shaped by societal norms and structures. Depending on our context, the identities we inhabit translate into differing levels of power, access, and privilege in relationship to other people.

Understanding these inequities and the ways they affect not only our own lives, but also our organisations and work for social change, can unleash more transformative strategies.

> The various aspects of our identity intersect, and so we experience power differently, resulting at times in relative privilege and, at other points, in oppression, subordination, and exclusion. Understanding identity and power can move us toward more freeing and equitable ways of being and working.

ACTIVITY 1:

Identity and the Power Flower

Every one of us has multiple, nuanced identities. Gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and age, among others, intersect and interact to shape who we are, how we are treated, and what challenges and contradictions we confront.

Set the tone for a safe open discussion. People may experience shame, anger, grief, or guilt when they talk about aspects of their identity. Make it clear that the purpose here is to deepen our understanding together so that we can work more effectively toward justice and mutual liberation.

Materials: Poster-size version of the Power Flower; Handout: Identity and the *Power Flower*; personal notebooks or sheets of paper for each person; markers.

Step 1. Who am I?
Plenary: Introduce the theme and activity. This is the first step in exploring who we are through our various identities, illuminating the ways they shape our lives.

Individually: Each person writes or draws their responses to the questions.

- What were you taught about difference and people different from you?
- What were you taught about your 'place' in social hierarchies?
- How has that affected your life?
- How might what you learned shape your work for social change?
- People can choose to share or not. Either way, their thoughts will inform the activity.

Step 2. How identity has shaped our lives

Plenary: Post a poster-sized copy of the multi-petaled Power Flower on the wall. Invite people to name different categories of identity. These can include: gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, religion, ability/disability, age, education, marital status, and/or location (urban/ suburban/rural). Write labels on most of the petals but leave a few blank so that people can add other categories.

Most of these categories are not binary but instead encompass multiple options (such as male, female, trans, intersex, non-binary) and dimensions (such as gender non-conforming) that add layers of complexity to gender. Everyone navigates multiple forms of identity – some remaining the same, others changing over the course of their life. Emphasise that no identity has more intrinsic worth or value than any other.

Power Flower

Individually: Each person identifies six or seven of their own personal characteristics/ identities in relation to the categories decided by the group and fills in the petals on their handout (or draws their own and Power Flower).

Next, each person writes three words or draws three sketches on a sheet of paper to show:

- A part of your identity that makes you feel strong, safe, or proud.
- A part of your identity that has made you feel less valued, vulnerable, or powerless at times in your life.
- A part of your identity that has in some way shaped your life's purpose.
- These may be three different parts of your identity or the same.

Plenary: Form a circle. Invite each person in turn to hold up their sheet of paper and explain the three parts of their identity, without questions or discussion.

In pairs: Each person finds someone with one matching element. Pairs have ten minutes to share. People may form mixed pairs instead and discuss what they might have in common.

Plenary: Share any reflections or 'aha!' moments. Talking about identity is not an everyday conversation. Ask:

- What was it like to talk about your identities with others? Did you feel any discomfort? What if anything helped you have this conversation?
- What did you learn about identity and difference and how society values or devalues certain identities? How does the experience of identity change in different circumstances?
- Did you gain any insights about your identities and how they shape your experience in specific ways?

Identity is complex. It is not fixed. We are assigned some aspects at birth or by family, other aspects are fixed, changed, or are imposed on us, and some we choose or claim. Depending on the context, identity shapes our experience, access, opportunities, and safety.

Identity is relational. In one context you may have more privilege than other people, but in another you may have less. Identity does not automatically convey value, privilege, and power – value is assigned to different identities through systems of power.

We tend to think of identity as individual. But the social meaning of any specific identity and the power and privileges it bestows – or denies – are systemic and structural. Identity-related benefits accrue whether or not the group or individuals actively seek them. Privilege seems obvious in many ways, but those who have it can be blind to it. Those excluded from forms of privilege and power tend to be highly aware of these inequities and may share outrage with others with similar experience, but they may not feel they can risk speaking about it in mixed groups.

In both cases – privilege and exclusion – we end up divided and disconnected when we do not talk about our experience for fear of feeling shame, pain, anger or guilt, or being exposed to judgement or backlash. As a result, we leave privilege, and its flipside – inequity, oppression, marginalisation, exclusion – intact and unchallenged.

We must cultivate awareness and open conversations in safe spaces to build trust and solidarity for collaboration and equitable relationships.

Power and Privilege Wheel

ACTIVITY 2:

The continuum of identity, power, and privilege

Materials: One large copy of the Power and Privilege Wheel to display on the wall. One small copy per person.

Step 1: Identity and privilege

Build on the Power Flower by adding another layer. Show how identities intersect with forms of systemic power and are thus afforded differing levels of privilege. This in turn translates into access, voice, choices, resources and power.

Plenary: Read out these two sentences to open a discussion.

- "Our society assigns value and gives greater privilege and power to certain identities than it does to others."
- "Privilege is, simply put, a set of unearned benefits given to people who fit into a specific social group."[6]

Brainstorm examples of forms of privilege in your context, defined as "benefits given to people because they are from specific social groups".

- How are specific identities offered or excluded from power and privilege?
- How do these differences in privilege show up in your context?
- What impact do the differences have on people, communities and organisations?

You may need to clarify the ways in which the benefits of privilege differ from efforts to address past and present inequity such as gender-specific safe spaces or proactive opportunities such as quotas for historically marginalised groups. If these topics are new or unfamiliar, you may want to collectively define the ways that these terms connect identity with power inequities:

- White/light skin privilege
- Male privilege
- Heterosexual privilege
- Class privilege

Step 2: The Power and Privilege Wheel

Plenary: Introduce the activity and hand out the Power and Privilege Wheel. Check that everyone understands what the wheel shows. Identities closer to the centre of the wheel are afforded more privilege and value by society than those further out. These may vary according to context but hold true overall.

Post a large graphic of the flower or wheel on the wall and invite everyone to come up and write on it. With bigger groups, brainstorm collectively with a few people writing suggestions on the wheel.

On each petal – for example, gender or 'race' – write the socially dominant identity close to the centre, for example male or white. Write the less dominant identities on the outside edge of the petal. There may be various non dominant identities on any petal, such as female, trans, non-conforming on the gender petal.

Individually: On their handout, each person notes for each petal where they identify and how that sits in relationship to the relative degrees of power.

Small groups: In groups of three, discuss these questions, sharing only what feels comfortable.

- Have you ever been aware that aspects of your identity afforded you more or less access, safety, and/ or power in a situation? Have you been excluded, targeted, or discriminated against because of some part of your identity?
- Have any aspects of your identity changed over time? How does your sense of power or privilege change depending on where you are, who you are with, or what you are doing?
- Have you ever felt like you had to hide or leave some part of your identity out? Do you ever change the way you reveal or express your identities depending on the context, and if so, why? (Examples could be your accent, vocabulary, dress code, or openness about your sexuality.)

Plenary: Share any 'aha!' moments.

- What was the most important realisation for you?
- What did this add to your understanding of identity and its meaning in your context?
- How did this activity connect your experience of identity with broader systems and structures that shape power and privilege – determining who is valued, who has a voice, who benefits?
- Was there anything that surprised you? Anything that felt uncomfortable? Anything that felt validating?

Going deeper: You may decide that your group would benefit from exploring this further. For instance, a lack of clarity and forthright discussion – about race, ethnicity, class, gender or another aspect – may be blocking the group's ability to work in politically aligned and coherent ways. If so, you could use or adapt one of the many tools designed to surface deeper awareness about specific types of privilege. Address particular 'blind spots ' or areas of tension around the privileges afforded to some identities over others, in order to build a shared commitment to dismantling systems of inequity.

Theme 2:
The Personal is Political

In this section, we analyse how aspects of identity can converge to complicate power relationships in ways that either aid or thwart the work for justice and liberation. We also explore the links between identities and forms of violence, building on Chapter 3: Making Sense of Power, Activities 7 and 8.

ACTIVITY 3:

The Master's House

In this activity, we analyse systems of dominance. Step 1 focuses on gender and patriarchy. Step 2 expands into an intersectional analysis of oppression. Together, the two parts encourage discussion about what patriarchy is, how it works, and how it intersects with other systems of domination and discrimination.[1]

The Master's House explores how complex power dynamics of patriarchy play out and function in institutions (such as in the family, formal education, the media, and government). The analysis covers relations of domination and discrimination between men and women, and across class, race, ethnicity, and other aspects of identity. Over the course of the activity, people draw on their diverse experiences and knowledge to collectively build a 'house of multiple oppressions'.

Materials: Sticky note paper of at least four colours (alternately you can use pieces of paper and tape); white and different coloured notecards; flip charts; different coloured markers; scissors; white and other coloured posterboard; posterboard strips, or strips of white paper; masking tape; a big wall!

Before the session, draw or cut sheets of paper to create the shape of the Master's House on a wide wall. Allow space for people to 'build' the House's inner walls and pillars, each pillar having three rows of blocks.

The activity can take four to six hours or a whole day. Conversations are essential to the process, so allow sufficient time in small groups and plenary.

The Master's House

Step 1. Gender
Plenary: Explain the overall purpose of the exercise: building a house to reflect the forces that affect women's lives and place in the world. Avoid terms such as 'patriarchy' at the start. Once the group gets the concept, then use the term that describes it.

Ask:
- Where do we learn about what we should or should not do as a woman/female person, or as a man/male person?
- Where do we get these messages? (You may need to give examples e.g. school, church, home.)
- Write responses on the flip chart.

From the institutions that people mention, choose six or seven to build the pillars of the House. Important pillars include the family/home, religion, government, educational institutions, the media, and organisations in which we participate.

Write the name of each pillar down on a strip of poster board and stick the pillars under the roof inside the house. Allow for three rows of 'blocks' to build each pillar. Assign a different colour for each pillar.

Small groups: Each small group 'builds' a different 'pillar' or institution (for example the family or the church). Ask each group to discuss:
- What does this institution say (directly or indirectly) about how women or men should act? How is this message communicated?
- Who is welcome or unwelcome in certain social spaces? Who is valued for what and when?
- What are the gender 'rules' or lines we are not supposed to cross? What happens when someone does cross them?
- How are these 'rules' enforced?
- How do these norms and rules affect those who challenge gender norms or who are gender fluid or transgender?

Groups summarise their key points on individual sticky notes – a different colour per pillar. These rules and norms are the building 'blocks' of the pillars of inequity, discrimination and oppression.

Plenary: To report back, groups take turns to describe their key points as they tape their 'bricks' in columns inside the outline of the house. In this way, they build The Master's House. Invite people to ask clarifying questions.

Once all groups have posted, ask people what they notice. Any 'aha!' moments? What is the same and what is different across the institutions?

Step 2. The House of Multiple Oppressions
In each of several rounds, a new dimension of power emerges in relationship to identity. People add to The Master's House, laying a new row of 'bricks' for each new factor such as race/ethnicity, class, or sexuality.

Round 2: Race/ethnicity

Small groups: Each small group again chooses a social institution – family/home, religion, government, educational institutions, the media, or community organisations. This time, the group focuses on the institution they have chosen in terms of race/ethnicity,

- What does this institution say (directly or indirectly) about different groups in terms of race/ethnicity (for example, indigenous, black, white, or whatever the relevant categories are for your context)? Who is valued? Who matters? How are these messages communicated?
- What are the rules about how certain groups should behave/not behave? Who is welcome or unwelcome in certain social spaces? How is this enforced?
- What lines are we not supposed to cross and what happens when we do? What happens to those who challenge or resist?

Groups write their key responses on a different colour of sticky notepaper from the colour used for gender. They add these to the wall, laying down a second row of blocks across institutional pillars of the house under construction.

Plenary: Groups report back in turn, taping their bricks in columns inside the outline as they present their key points, building more of The Master's House. Invite clarifying questions from the whole group. Once all groups have posted, invite people to share their observations: what is different and what is similar across the various institutions?

After that discussion, ask:

- What do you see and hear about the intersections of race/ethnicity with gender?
- How do you feel about what has been shared? How does it resonate with your own experience of identities, intersectionality, and racism?

Round 3: Class and caste

Small groups: Following the same steps as in rounds 1 and 2, each group reflects on class (and caste, if relevant) in relation to the same institution, noting their responses on paper of a third colour.

- What does this institution say about how people obtain their wealth, status and privilege?
- How does it explain why some people have very low incomes or live in poverty? How are these people seen and treated differently?
- How does this institution view different classes and castes, and how are those messages communicated?
- How are the 'rules' of class and caste enforced? What happens when people challenge them?

Plenary: Each group posts and explains their observations in the 'class and caste' row of each pillar. Invite people to describe what they have heard about class relations. Point out that class is the defining feature of the capitalist system, while caste is a religious hierarchy where status is determined by birth. In both systems, some people accrue privileges and wealth while others are excluded, exploited, and dominated. Ask:

- In what ways have you seen or experienced this? How is class and caste exploitation justified and explained?

Go on to discuss how class interweaves with other power relations, such as gender and race/ ethnicity. Invite further thinking on intersectionality, multiple identities, and power.

Round 4: Sexuality and sexual identity

Small groups: Repeat the process above but focus on sexuality and sexual identity – heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other identities.

- What does this institution say is 'normal' or 'natural" in terms of sexuality and sexual identity?
- How does it explain or view variations in sexuality and sexual identity?
- How does it enforce its 'rules' around sexuality and sexual identity, and what happens to those that challenge or do not comply with them?

Plenary: Invite a discussion of the intersection of these identities and oppressions. Ask:

- What commonalities and differences do you see across the different identities and how they are treated? Any 'aha' moments?
- How does this relate to your own experience?
- How do each of the institutions compel the conformity to rules of gender, race, and class?
- How are these enforced? Examples could be violence, fear, or exclusion.
- What can happen if you cross the line and disrupt those rules?

On thin strips of paper, note people's responses describing how behaviour is compelled and enforced. Place them between pillars as 'walls'.

Emphasise key points from an analysis of the House of Multiple Oppressions.

To conclude, ask people to examine the House they have built. All of us live in and maintain the House of Multiple Oppressions, often in ways we are not conscious of. Ask:

- How do I live in that House and what is its impact on me?
- What do I do that maintains parts of it?
- How do I reinforce or weaken patriarchy and other systems of oppression through my actions, words, relationships, and beliefs?
- How does my leadership reflect this?

Each person writes down their answers anonymously and folds the piece of paper.

Engage people in discussing how all of us live in the House of Multiple Oppressions – men and women, white, black, indigenous, rich and poor, rural people, workers, employers, the elderly, the young, from North, South – by design, all of us building and maintaining these systems.

By contrast, we can work towards solidarity based on a recognition of difference and equity, towards transformational/liberating leadership, and towards transformational power for systemic change.

Invite people to place their cards in a bowl in the centre, each one announcing something they hope to transform.

Gender, class, and ethnic relations intersect, and *power over* reinforces dominance and subordination. The relationships between the different systems are complex and expressed in different ways. The power relationships of the house are sometimes visible (laws, policies, rules), or hidden (who has influence) or invisible (beliefs, values, social pressure). Because these forms of oppression are often normalised, it is important to name them. For example, we can only fully understand patriarchy – the system of dominance based on gender – by seeing how it combines with other forms of power and dominance in specific contexts and lives. From there, we can develop specific strategies and actions to undermine, crack open, and demolish patriarchy and other systems of oppression.

ACTIVITY 4:

Intersections of Identity and Power

Identity is not merely a personal or interpersonal matter; it relates to larger power struggles. When we talk about difficult contexts, it is important to see how different groups experience them in different ways. This not only helps us to understand the political dynamics in our context better but also encourages us to build solidarity with others struggling in their own ways.

We tend to think of the most visible forms of risk and insecurity that protect those in power by silencing and suppressing any challenge: crackdowns on activism and outspoken community leaders, more restrictive laws undermining freedom of speech and assembly, surveillance and threats of violence. But risk and insecurity can take more everyday forms: discrimination, exclusion, marginalisation, subordination, silencing, harassment, economic exploitation, and domestic and sexual violence. These forms of violence maintain the social and political domination of people of non-dominant identities.

Materials: A computer and projector if possible; a handout of the introduction to this chapter.

Step 1: Intro to Intersectionality

Plenary: Review key points thus far: that identity is not singular and does not exist in a vacuum. Society assigns greater privilege and power to some identities than it does to others. Here, the concept of intersectionality is useful for locating our interconnected identities more clearly within social power dynamics.

To bring the concept alive, screen the video of Awino Okech's intro to Intersectionality. You may want to show more videos from JASS' Big Ideas page on Intersectionality, in which people talk about their own intersecting identities. Alternatively, choose and read out quotes on the complexities of identity, for example from the In Depth section of JASS' Big Ideas page on Intersectionality (in which case, adapt the discussion questions).

Ask:

- Did you experience any 'aha' moments concerning intersectionality and why it matters? How did the video/s add to your understanding of identity?

- Did you relate to any particular video/s and if so why?
- What do these videos reveal about how different identities may intersect in a person's life and how this can relate to their experience of systems of power?
- What struck you in the women's accounts of reclaiming their whole identity and finding power and liberation that way?

You might want to direct people to this resource on Power and Protection for more on the targeting of activists in terms of gender and other aspects of their identities.

Step 2: Intersectionality Defined

Plenary: Share the introduction to this chapter as a handout or read out this shorter definition:

> Intersectionality is a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power. Every one of us has multiple and complex identities based on our gender, class, race, ethnicity, religion, education, age, sexual orientation, ability, etc. Some parts of our identity may connect us to more dominant groups and the power that comes with that identity (for example white, male, middle or upper class, heterosexual). Other parts of our identity may mean we experience discrimination, less opportunity or security, and more risk and violence. Intersectionality describes how these identities interact and overlap to create different experiences of power, oppression, discrimination, and privilege. Intersectionality has become a way for people to name their distinct experiences and fight for visibility, justice, and inclusion.

In pairs: For a few minutes, discuss these questions.

- Can you think of instances where a lack of awareness about identity and privilege undermined trust and authentic collaboration or reinforced inequitable power dynamics
- And correspondingly, can you think of instances where awareness and a commitment to challenge such inequities have built solidarity and galvanized collective efforts?

Plenary: Invite people to share their insights from the activity. Open a discussion, drawing out key points. Note that, to understand and acknowledge openly the ways in which identity, privilege and power work:

- Is a critical step in social change.
- Enables us to see and address these power dynamics within ourselves and our organisations and movements.
- Gives us a better understanding of the workings of systemic power and how to challenge it.
- Provides a foundation on which to build a common commitment to liberation and the trust and solidarity that are needed.

Intersectional power dynamics connect to broader systems of domination and oppression: patriarchy, white supremacy, colonialism, capitalism. It is at this systemic level that the codes and logic of inequality are created and perpetuated. The root causes of inequity, discrimination, and subjugation go far beyond individual prejudice.

"Well, for us identity is extremely important because it allows us to create communities, and communities are the main space in which we feel safe because it relies on mutual trust. It is a space where we can interact with individuals that have similar problems and the same ideals, and this allows us to create strategies for individual and collective protection, because individuality cannot be separated from the collective because we all form that community.

For me, however, it is important to learn about different experiences, not only because we are in a system that affects us all in similar manners. Each one of our identities depends on the space we live in and where we live, and this is where we see the particular differences. These differences, then, give us new resources to strengthen our work and continue saying that we are not alone, and continue increasing solidarity at the regional level so that together we can maintain communication and transform our current reality of oppression into a reality of liberty, real democracy, and exercised rights."

- Dalila de Jesús Vázquez, Indigenous feminist leader, Guatemala

ACTIVITY 5:

Systemic logic

Materials: Handout: Four Arenas of Power (from Chapter 3: Making Sense of Power)

Step 1: Invisible and systemic power revisited
Briefly refresh people's memory and understanding of invisible and systemic power (from Chapter 3: Making Sense of Power). Discuss the ways that these dimensions of power link with identity and oppression.

Invisible power: beliefs and norms; ways in which we are socialized, conditioned to carry and reproduce ideas and prejudices that are activated in narratives.

Systemic power: logic and 'genetic code' that shapes all relationships, 'operating system', deeply embedded systems of meaning.

Discuss how this logic is reinforced in the laws, policies, and biases of formal decision making (visible power), and in shaping what issues are addressed and who has a voice and influence and is included in important questions (hidden power).

Each of the systems in the House of Multiple Oppressions drives a logic that explains and

naturalises inequality and that in fact requires inequity. Each system proposes one set of characteristics or identities as superior and others as inferior. The interactions between them are dynamic.

Step 2: Where gender meets power
Plenary: Introduce the theme and activity.

Small groups: Draw two circles on large pieces of paper, then add the figure of a woman at the centre of each. For each woman, choose four to six aspects of her identity (such as indigenous, LBTQI+, young) – identities that exist within your context. One of the two women is also an activist. Write all those identities within the lines of her body.

Considering her different identities, list around each circle the various possible conditions that converge to shape and impact her life. These might include:

- Experiences of discrimination (based on racial, ethnic, class, caste, religious, linguistic or other hierarchies)
- Particular gender roles
- Access/lack of access to education
- Exclusion from/inclusion in specific spaces
- Heavy burdens of care
- Economic stability
- Being targeted as an activist
- Sexual violence
- Legacies of colonialism
- Lack of recognition of leadership

By contrast, her identities may also offer her positive experiences of power within and power with. For example, does she have a strong connection with others who share her identity and historical experiences? Does her identity give her a strong sense of who she is, a sense of purpose, and a feeling of belonging? What skills and capacities does she have from her lived experience?

Read out the quote from Dalila on common ground and difference. Ask:

- What are the similarities and differences between the two women? What is different for the activist?
- How do different aspects of identity offer differing levels of privilege and power?
- Are there ways in which each is 'put or kept in her place', and by whom or what, and why?
- For each, where and how is she likely to experience violence? In what part of her life: relationships and the family, in public spaces, within organisations, at work, in religious or community institutions, in courts and law making?
- How do you think each of the women might feel powerful and joyful in her identity?

To close the session, reiterate that one identity is not 'better' or 'worse' than any other. The purpose is to strengthen our political consciousness about how systemic power works in our own and other people's lives, so that we are better able to work across differences and to disrupt the perpetuation of inequity.

Gender and violence

Gender-based violence is often taken to mean domestic violence, intimate partner violence, or sexual violence, and treated as distinct from political violence. But that misses the point. In reality, all forms of violence are interconnected and designed to control and subordinate one person or group by another.

Women and LGBTQI+ activists and political leaders experience multiple forms of violence all the time – in their homes, in the streets, in discriminatory policy and practices, in exclusion and discrimination, and in both systemic and incidental forms. Women and female-identified people face violence because they are female, because they are outspoken, because they dare to challenge the status quo, because they are seen as gender non-conforming, because they are smart, because they are poor or working class, because they are or are believed to be LBTQI+, because they belong to a targeted racial, ethnic, or religious group, because they are seen to be sexually free or not available enough, because they organise and take leadership, because they achieve political power, and so on.

The policing of sexuality and gender is manifest in violence against anyone who is seen as violating the socially prescribed 'rules' and norms. This includes LGBTQI+ people, transgender people, intersex people and anyone whose gender expression, identity, or sexual activity does not conform to those rules and norms. All people in these groups, activists as well as others, face high levels of violence and discrimination in all parts of their lives.

ACTIVITY 6:

Analyse a case study

As an optional activity, analyse and explore intersectional identities in the Guardians of the River case study.

Small groups: Read or re-visit the case study and ask:

- How do gender, ethnicity, and class shape inequality and injustice in this story? How has the legacy of colonialism affected dynamics of identity, power, and privilege?
- How do powerful actors mobilise prejudice and systemic forms of oppressive and coercive power in the story?
- How do the activists, community, and/or movement in the story seek to disrupt systemic power dynamics of racism, sexism, and homophobia through their work? How do they build transformative power around a different vision and shared identity?

Each group prepares a three-minute scene, a body sculpture (still or moving, silent or with sound) or a drawing to illustrate the systemic oppressive power involved, and how the community built transformative power around a different vision and reclaimed identity.

Plenary: Groups present their scene, sculpture or drawing. Afterwards, ask:

- What did you see in these pieces? How did they shed light on the ways in which prejudice and systemic power are mobilised? How did they illustrate the ways in which communities are disrupting and shifting those dynamics?
- What can we learn from this about how systemic oppression is activated and reinforced as a powerful tool in our contexts? How are discrimination and prejudice embedded in structures?
- What strategies are activists and movements using to disrupt, challenge, or shift the power of systemic logics?
- What evidence of these systems do you see in your context? How do these logics show up in your own communities, organisations, and movements?

To conclude, draw out key points.

Summary

Our personal and interpersonal experiences of identity – and relative privilege or lack of it – are shaped by systemic power.

We call this fourth face of power 'systemic' because it is defined by pervasive and long-standing systems of domination: patriarchy, capitalism, structural racism/white supremacy and colonialism–imperialism.

The histories of these systems have driven a logic of domination, exploitation, and violence that permeates and shapes all our institutions and ways of thinking.

Our collective liberation depends on seeing how systemic power impacts our lives and how our work for transformation demands deeper levels of change.

Theme 3:
Identity, Power, and Transformation

I will stand for you; will you stand for me? Everybody deserves to be free."

- Deva Mahal and Stephanie Brown with the Resistance Revival Choir

Intersectionality is linked to the recuperation of power within – the strength we can find in re/claiming our whole self as valuable; power with – finding others who are doing the same and who see us; and power for and power to – defining and working toward a vision of inclusive liberation where no part of us is left behind. This understanding can shift our analysis of what's wrong, what is needed and how we are going to get there together. Dealing with past legacies and present experiences of oppression can be difficult, but there is joy and celebration on the path as we affirm who we are and walk toward the world we want. We can all think of music, film, art, song, or poetry that has fed our spirit and nourished dreams in which we are all whole and all free.

Every time we try to imagine a world without prisons, a world without oppression, a world without war, without borders, that is science fiction, because we've never seen that world. But we need imaginative spaces because we can't build what we can't imagine. Without the ability to imagine something different, we are trapped within the parameters that the system has set for us."

- Walidah Imarisha[8]

I think hard times are coming when we will be wanting the voices of writers who can see alternatives to how we live now and can see through our fear-stricken society and its obsessive technologies to other ways of being... We will need writers who can remember freedom – poets, visionaries – realists of a larger reality.... We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. But then, so did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings.

- Ursula K. Le Guin[9]

ACTIVITY 7:

Liberation, solidarity, and transformative power

Materials: If you created a timeline earlier, use it for reference here. If not, the group generates examples from their own knowledge.

Step 1. Identity, solidarity, and history – the timeline
Plenary: Ask each person to think about a moment in history when people – especially unlikely allies – came together in solidarity across identities and across movements to build collective power to create change. It could be something local or from another part of the world. Brainstorm some examples and record them on sticky notes or a flip chart.

Choose a few examples that seem to have the most resonance and break into small groups, each with an example.

Small groups: Discuss:
- What was the significance of this instance of solidarity and collaboration?
- On what grounds did the different groups come together and what activated their collaboration?
- Did the two groups have a prior connection and if so, what was it? If not, what enabled them to come together in this instance?
- What made the collaboration and solidarity work?
- What tensions did the groups need to manage in order to collaborate?

Plenary: Groups take turns to share insights.
- In these examples, what difference did it make to work with unlikely allies?
- What do you take away about working across difference and what makes it possible?

Step 2: Dreams of intersectional liberation
Plenary: To create the future we want, we need to imagine it. Every time we describe the world we want, someone or something tells us that this dream is impossible. But everything is impossible until we make it happen. Imagine those who organised for liberation over history – against chattel slavery, against colonial powers, for gender equity, for human rights, for our lands and planet, for the vote, for self-determination, for the right to love who we love. Surely these struggles seemed (and in many cases, can still seem) impossible. But we know that every gain for social justice has been achieved in the face of that impossibility.

Read out the quotes by Walidah Imarisha and Ursula K. Le Guin. Discuss:
- What do these quotes convey about imagining our way into a new future?
- How are we constrained by the 'possible'?
- What is something you long for that is currently deemed 'impossible'?

What might the future lead to? Screen and discuss a future-inspired video or film clip such as M4BL: Black Futures: An Ode to Freedom Summer.

Small groups: Imagine a story of transformation 50 years from now when people came together to create change. How are things in that future? How and why did people come together? What did they do? Why did it work?

Find a creative and inspiring way to share that story with those here in the present in under five minutes, perhaps a skit, set of drawings, or Wikipedia entry from the future

Plenary: Groups tell or present their stories. After each one, discuss:

- What moved you?
- What door in your mind, heart, or body opened at the prospect of that future?
- What inspired you?

Summarise the activity. Focus on:

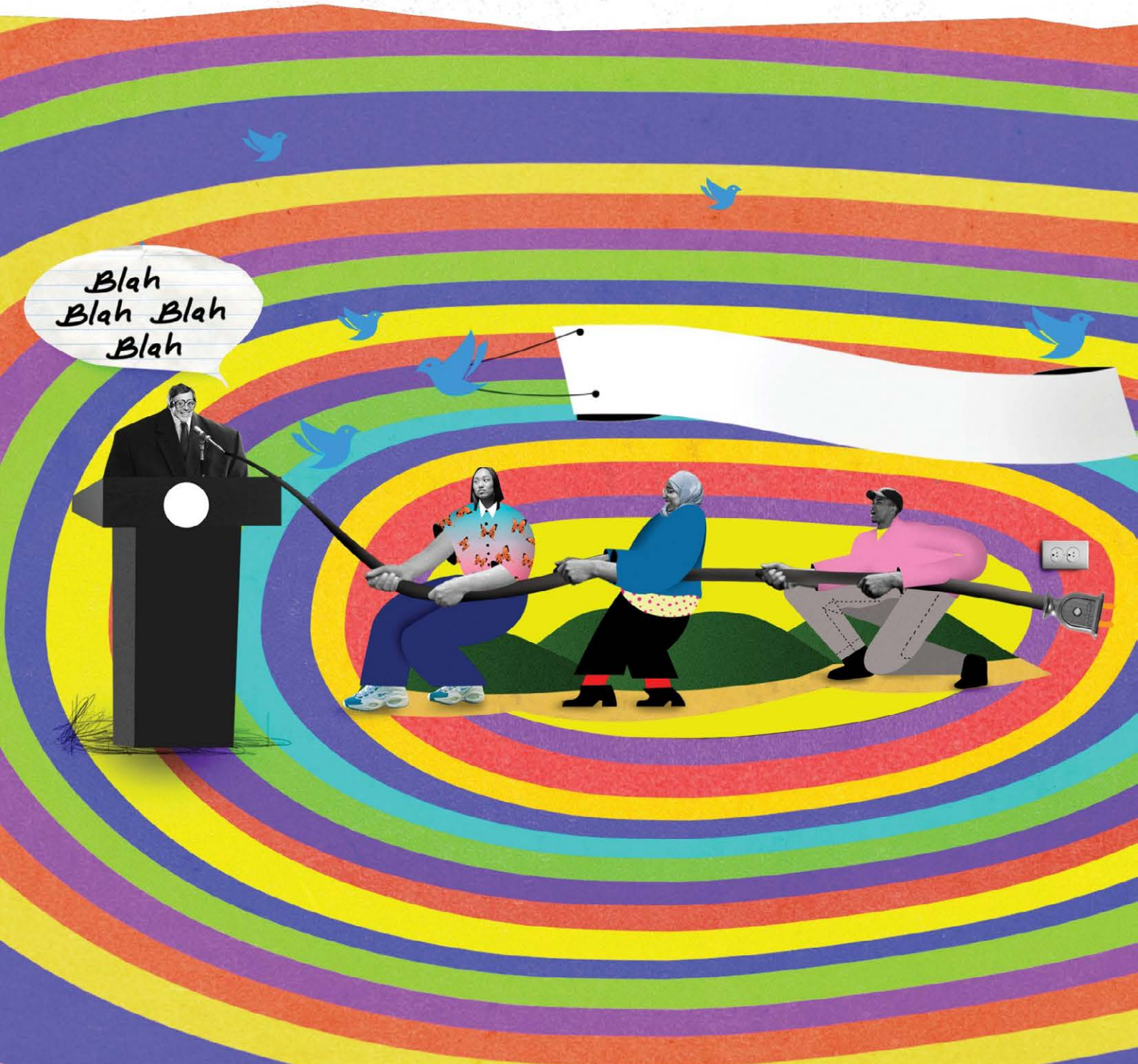
- The importance of radical – and intersectional – imagination in connecting us across the divisions, beyond the sense of scarcity that keeps us fearful and toward our boldest vision for the future.
- The importance of telling these stories, carrying these narratives into what we say and do, and how we work.
- The connections between intersectional politics, radical imagining, transformative power, and collective action.

> As much as these 'categorisations' of people in terms of identities linked to gender, race, or class and so on are used by people with resources and power as the basis for oppressing and violating those people, these identities are also a strong basis for groups of people organising to oppose and resist the inequality and marginalisation that they experience.

1. Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider, Essays and Speeches, Berkeley : Crossing Press 2007
2. K. Crenshaw, the Washington Post, Sept 24, 2015 "Why Intersectionality Can't Wait".
3. K. Crenshaw, the Washington Post, Sept 24, 2015 "Why Intersectionality Can't Wait".
4. Ayesha Imam, UNFPA; Women in Nigeria; African Feminist Forum.
5. Charlene Carruthers, Unapologetic, Beacon Press, 2018.
6. From Everyday Feminism website article
7. Step 1 of the Master's House was developed by Koni Benson, Shereen Essof, and Anna Daviesvan Es. Step 2 was adapted by Malena de Montis for use in JASS Mesoamerica's Alquimia's Leadership Course for Indigenous and Rural Women.
8. Interviewed in the Anti-Racism Daily, February 23, 2023. Walidah is a writer, poet, activist, and academic in Portland, Oregon.
9. Ursula K. Le Guin, acceptance speech as Medallist for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. The Guardian.

5

THE POWER OF NARRATIVES



Narratives are collections of stories that convey certain values, norms, and beliefs that shape our perceptions of the world and how we think and act. Often operating subtly and without our full awareness, narratives mould our understanding of how society works and our place in it.

These stories can normalise the status quo and all its inequities; they can be manipulative and dangerous, creating social conflict, fear, confusion, and doubt. Such stories, which we refer to as *dominant narratives*, serve to consolidate *power over*. But narratives can also reflect and spark positive visions of the society we aspire to. These, we call *transformational narratives.*

Narratives have always been central to power struggles, but we are now paying closer attention to them. It is increasingly important for activists, movements, and organisations to be aware of how dominant narratives reinforce and justify inequality and polarise us, and to understand how narratives can be contested and transformed.

Tapping into values, emotions, and prejudices, organised interests use dominant narratives as political tools to shape people's thinking about:

- What is true or false.
- What is possible.
- Who is to be trusted and who is to be feared.
- What is 'fake' news and what is not.
- Whose rights count and whose do not.
- Which solutions and ideas are significant and practical, and which are not.

Digital tools and social media make it easier than ever to disseminate narratives that shape public debate and attitudes. This presents both perils and possibilities for our work for social change.

We have the power to 'unmask' the interests behind dominant narratives. Activists can put forward transformational narratives that articulate a more inclusive, just, and life affirming view of the world and vision of the future.

For example, the rallying cry 'Black Lives Matter' is a simple, emotive phrase that both asserts the humanity of black people and unmasks the systemic nature of racialised violence. Narrative change work is not the same as strategic messaging or communications. Its strength lies in the deeper work of understanding how invisible and systemic power shape meaning and how we can express transformational narratives that connect to what people care about and long for. Shaping meaning and discourse is an energised point of conflict in social and political change work.

> **One cannot divorce the combat for culture from the people's struggle for liberation.**
>
> *- Frantz Fanon*[1]

Dominant narratives can be used as forms of control and soft coercion to consolidate power by:

- Sowing distrust in one another, politics, science, etc.
- Legitimising repressive actions and polarising communities.
- Discrediting, isolating, and silencing dissent and social justice movements, portraying them as anti-national, anti-development, elitist, corrupt, and even as terrorists.
- Inflaming prejudice, fear, and violence against particular groups of people, for example labelling women activists as bad mothers or whores, LGBTQI+ people as deviant, outsiders and predatory, and indigenous land defenders as backward and marginal.

Transformational narratives seek to build a larger, more inclusive 'we' toward a more deeply democratic and regenerative future by:

- Exposing violence and corruption.
- Amplifying otherwise silenced stories and perspectives about human connection and the possibilities for change.
- Inspiring alternative visions and versions of reality.
- Affirming our shared desire for human connection, belonging, mutuality, and our common desire for a better future.
- Inspiring and galvanising others to action.

Narratives, like invisible power, are always fluid and contested. They do not always fit neatly into categories of 'negative vs. positive' or 'dominant vs. transformational'. For example, some oppressive narratives may not be dominant, even as powerful groups use them to normalise beliefs that support their interests. Likewise, transformational narratives for positive social change, and the values and beliefs behind them, may over time become dominant.

This chapter is organised in five themes.

Theme 1: What Are Narratives?
As a dimension of strategy, narratives can be used for or against positive social change. This theme introduces and demystifies narratives as a contested dynamic.

Theme 2: How Do Narratives Affect Us?
Narratives both shape and are shaped by our times, contexts, movements, and activism

Theme 3: Narratives and Invisible Power
Narratives are rooted in invisible power and can either challenge or legitimise systemic, visible, and hidden power.

Theme 4: Unmasking and Transforming Narratives
We look at how to unpack and analyse dominant narratives and how to contest them with transformational narratives.

Theme 5: Creating Transformational Narratives
We introduce examples and methods for sourcing and strengthening transformational narratives that are grounded in values of social equity and justice.

Theme 1:
What Are Narratives?

Narratives direct our attention and understanding in a particular direction. Stories about government, climate, Covid-19, gender, race, and the economy all influence our sense of possibility, and how we see and address societal problems and each other. Narratives are always being contested and mobilised – whether to perpetuate and disguise dominant interests or to challenge and transform oppressive forces and beliefs.

Narratives are …

- Collections of stories, messages, and explanations about how our world operates, based on certain assumptions about who counts, what matters, what is normal, and what is to be feared.
- Grounded in deep, internalised, and often unconscious beliefs, values, and norms (invisible power) and support the operating logic of our societal institutions and structures (systemic power).
- Always contested and shifting, either in favour of dominant actors and systems of power over, or in support of resistance and social transformation.
- Not the same as messages or communications.
- Narratives draw on the power of the beliefs and deeply embedded logic that shape our assumptions, feelings, lives, institutions, and societies.

Dominant narratives

Now a popular buzzword, narratives are not new. We know about propaganda, socially coded advertising, ideological and cultural battles, the manipulation of prejudice, and the framing of news stories in ways that blame the victim or reinforce prejudices. The machinery and practice of dominant narratives have always been here, upholding values, norms, and systems of *power over*.

Powerful state and non-state actors are skilled at controlling narratives to mobilise certain beliefs and prejudices to create fear and a sense of scarcity, discredit opposition, close democratic space, disguise their interests, and legitimise their actions – polarising and inflaming politics to divide people and consolidate political and economic power.

Digital technology and social media have greatly amplified and accelerated the ability to promote misinformation, distort facts, incite fear and hate, plant seeds of doubt, and delegitimise certain groups and agendas.

Transformational narratives

Activists and social movements can contest 'official truths', unmask the destructive interests behind dominant narratives, crack open the status quo, and elevate new narratives. Transformational narratives are more than 'counter-narratives' – they tell a different story about what's wrong, what's possible, and who we are, grounded in values and practices of equity, care, inclusion, and justice.

Transformational narratives play an important role in cultural strategies to enlarge a sense of possibility, build shared vision and understandings, and create the collective will and courage needed to challenge and shift power in all arenas of struggle. Digital and social media strategies can also be mobilised around transformational narratives.

ACTIVITY 1:

Demystifying narratives

This activity introduces and demystifies narratives as a strategy to contest for power. Participants reflect on:

- The ways in which narratives have shaped their own lives and perspectives.
- The impact that narratives have had on them.
- The messages, stories, and explanations within particular narratives.
- How narratives are communicated.
- Whose interests narratives serve.
- The deeper values, beliefs, and explanations they build on.

Materials: Handouts: What are narratives? and Dominant narratives, flipchart paper, markers

Step 1: What does the word 'narrative' mean?
Plenary: We hear the word 'narratives' quite a bit, but what does it really mean, especially for social change and organising? Narratives are stories, explanations, and messages that make sense of and shape how we see the world and how we act in it. These stories may be positive visions of the politics, society, and future we hope for, or they may be manipulative, hateful, and dangerous, blocking change, distorting facts, provoking conflict, and reinforcing inequity and discrimination.

Introduce the activity with key points from the handout: *What are Narratives?* Brainstorm together in response to two questions:

1. What does the term 'narrative' mean to you?
2. Can you identify two examples of narratives that have shaped your view of the world and of your life, or the views of those around you?

Write meanings on one flipchart and examples on another. You could add prepared examples and definitions. Ask the group if they would like to add anything. Keep the flipcharts to use later.

Step 2: What narratives have we experienced in our lives?
Small groups: In groups of five or six, participants brainstorm narratives that have shaped their lives, positively or negatively. Reflect together on the following questions and create a visual presentation on flipchart paper.

- What two or three narratives have shaped your own lives, positively or negatively?
- Choose one narrative that has been a *positive force or inspiration for change* in your lives, and one narrative that has been a negative force or obstacle to change.

For each of these two narratives, discuss:

- What impact has this narrative had on your lives?
- What are the key stories, messages, and explanations in this narrative?
- How have they been communicated and by whom?
- What deeper values, beliefs, and behaviour are they based on?

For one or both of these narratives, create a simple drawing or graphic, including keywords, to address the four questions.

Step 3: Sharing experiences of narratives
Plenary: Groups post their flipcharts around the room. Everyone walks around to see what others have done. Invite a short presentation and discussion around each group's work. Ask:

- How did different groups respond to the four questions? Any similarities or differences?
- Is there a contrast between the positive and negative narratives?
- What other narratives did groups identify (if you did not present both)?

If groups shared all positive or all negative narratives, select and discuss a contrasting one.

Distribute the Dominant narratives handout. Adapt it to the context or make your own handout. Allow time for people to read it individually or in small groups. Invite discussion:

- Do any of the narratives shared by the groups resonate with those in the handout?
- Which of these dominant narratives do you experience in our lives, and how?
- Did you identify any positive or transformational narratives?
- If so, which dominant narratives do they challenge? How?

Conclude by clarifying together how we understand narratives; review definitions of narratives from the introductory brainstorm; and write down the group's agreed definition as a final output.

Dominant narratives

> The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion but allow very lively debate within that spectrum – even encourage the more critical and dissident views. That gives people the sense that there's free thinking going on, while all the time the presuppositions of the system are being reinforced by the limits put on the range of the debate.
>
> *- Noam Chomsky*[2]

Narratives are rooted in larger belief systems and worldviews. For example, the systemic logic of white supremacy and patriarchy 'validates' the inequitable hierarchies embedded in institutions that devalue and subordinate some people based on gender, ethnicity, and skin colour. Dominant narratives legitimise and activate those underlying belief systems – systemic power – to protect the interests of those who benefit from them. With vast commercial media conglomerates that dominate news, information, and culture, together with the explosive power of digital and social media, narratives are a central battleground for any change work.

Dominant narratives tap into prejudices that have shaped our societies and institutions for a very long time – for example, that 'bad women' get involved in politics rather than tend solely to their duties as mothers and wives, or that indigenous peoples are 'backward' in relation to modern culture. Powerful actors activate these narratives to reinforce prejudices, confirming their 'naturalness' and 'rightness'. When we want to shift such narratives, we need to engage not just with the words but also with the deeper beliefs, emotions, and systemic logic that find expression in the narrative.

Dominant narratives also shape people's understanding of themselves, perversely leading many people to internalise those prejudices. Self-doubt, marginalisation, discrimination, and violence are then reinforced and justified on that basis. Similarly, beliefs about the supposed efficiency and superior role of business to solve problems legitimise the privatisation and reduction of government services, and thus the growth of corporate power and the curtailment of the state's capacity as safety net and defender of human rights. Economic projects that generate money and wealth – no matter that they benefit privileged elites – are seen as positive and modern 'development'. Those questioning such projects are portrayed as backward, narrow-minded, or anti-development, their concerns mocked and treated as unrealistic and outside the mainstream.

Capitalist narratives

As workers, consumers, and citizens, we are all embedded in a globalised capitalist system of mass resource extraction, commodification, production, commerce, consumption, and waste. these have become so naturalised that we seldom question the underlying logic or consider alternatives as realistic. This extractive, carbon-intensive economic system is reinforced by individualism.

- Dominant narratives play a role in perpetuating norms and beliefs such as:
- Free-market capitalism is the only viable model.
- If people work hard, they can succeed. People living in poverty have only themselves to blame.
- Inequity is inevitable but wealth trickles down.
- Progress and growth are built on the exploitation of resources.
- Global investors help 'underdeveloped' countries exploit their resources to become more modern.
- Taxes and government intervention in the economy are ineffective and bureaucratic; the private sector is better at providing health, education, energy, and other public goods.
- Technology can solve most problems and save us from environmental catastrophe.
- Work in the labour market is 'work', work at home is a family obligation.

These narratives help to normalise global financial and extractive industries based on fossil fuels, mining, logging, large-scale farming and fishing, retail and digital monopolies, and mining of personal data. At the same time, these narratives prevent deeper investment in regenerative economic models and public discussion of energy alternatives.

Contemporary capitalism turns everything from water to DNA into commodities to be exploited and traded for profit. Dominant narratives frame and endorse neoliberal policies, regulations, property laws, resource concessions, and corporate subsidies, while justifying poverty wages, privatisation of public services, and shareholder profits as all in the public interest and necessary for growth and progress.

Neoliberal economics are taught in prominent universities to the exclusion of other approaches. Efforts to soften capitalism with ideals of sustainability, corporate responsibility, and ethical investment can sometimes reinforce dominant narratives, because they do not question the underlying logic of the system. These narratives also reinforce values of individualism, consumerism, and material possessions as key to success and happiness.

Patriarchal narratives

Patriarchy is everywhere, expressed in different ways, in nearly all institutions and structures. It systematically discriminates against women and LGBTQI+ people. Patriarchy is socialised through our families, culture, religions, and the media and is embedded in all our laws and political institutions. It shapes our most intimate and family relationships as well as our organisations. Patriarchy is actively upheld by dominant narratives, for example that:

- Gender roles are biologically determined and natural.
- Women's place and value are in the home and in the family.
- Women's primary role is to give birth, raise children, and care for others.
- Sexual/reproductive rights – giving women the power to make decisions about their bodies – are subversive, anti-family, and encourage sexual promiscuity.
- Heterosexuality is normal and other sexual identities are deviant.
- Gender is binary – men or women – and any other identity is deviant and threatens the social order.
- Women are less capable than men and do not deserve the same pay and opportunities.
- Women are soft, emotional, and unable to make tough choices.
- Women and LGBTQI+ people bring sexual violence on themselves by challenging social norms and the rightful authority of men.

Backlash – against women's and LGBTQI+ rights, reproductive and sexual rights, and feminism – is both a legal and narrative battle. Conservative forces claim to be 'pro-life' and 'pro-family' and depict gender, women, and feminists as immoral and selfish, narratives that tap into and exploit old prejudices and patriarchal values.

> **If we were fish, gender would be the water we swam in. Gender is a set of behaviours and processes handed down to us by peers, relatives, and authority figures; it's the substance that surrounds us, with the power to alternately buoy us or drag us down. Asking people to change how they engage with gender is tantamount to asking a fish to think critically about its fishbowl—how can it, when it's never known anything else? The fish has probably lived its entire life without noticing the water at all.**
>
> *- Dominique Dickey, "Gender is a story we tell ourselves", The Narrative Initiative*

Racist and white supremacist narratives

Racism and white supremacy are deeply embedded in the structure of most societies. As with patriarchy, dominant norms and beliefs about race, skin colour, and ethnicity are socialised through family and culture, reinforced by religious and educational institutions, and reproduced in politics, government, the private sector, the media, and civil society. Narratives are key in propagating norms of white supremacy and racism, for example that:

- Race is biologically based and fundamentally determines who we are.
- Whiteness and white people are superior, people of colour are inferior
- Black men and boys are dangerous, criminal, and immoral, and Black women are aggressive and hyper-sexual.
- Racial inequities are natural – people of colour have less because they lack skills, intelligence, or a strong work ethic.
- White culture is 'normal' and 'universal,' whereas non-white cultures are 'exotic' or 'different' – and borrowing from them is appreciative not appropriation.
- White people today are blameless for historical genocide, forced and enslaved labour, colonisation, and other forms of violence against non-white people. That's all a thing of the past.

> Anti-Blackness is the exclusion of Black people from social, political, and cultural belonging. It is core to white supremacy and rooted in histories of slavery and colonialism. Alicia Garza[3] describes "the fulcrum around which white supremacy operates … an organizing principle for access and for power and for influence, and that impacts everybody…. The closer you are to Black, the worse off you are. The closer to white, the better off you are."[4]

In their extreme forms, white supremacist and racist narratives are used to justify systemic citizen and police brutality and the murder of Black people. For decades, narratives criminalised Black men as 'super predators', and depicted them as bad fathers, and poor Black women as 'welfare queens'. White nationalist movements have developed narratives to undermine anti-racist work and promote conspiracy theories such as what they describe as 'white replacement' and fears of immigration and the population growth of Black and Brown people. Right-wing populist leaders frequently use narratives that portray the 'real people' (coded as white people) as being threatened by 'others' or 'foreigners', meaning people of colour or refugees.

Around the world, racist and white supremacist narratives, entrenched in social norms and education by colonialism, shape how and what is taught, particularly about history, culture, and human rights. Narratives that involve critical discussion about race are said to promote censorship and cancel culture. White people who do not think of themselves as racist use more insidious, everyday 'denial' narratives that reinforce racism and white supremacy.

Colonial and imperialist narratives

Racism and colonialism are intertwined. Narratives are a central part of the story of conquest, exploitation, extraction, and wars. Capitalism and the competition for geopolitical domination drive colonialism and imperialism, but colonial narratives mobilise racism to justify occupation, genocide of indigenous peoples, and the wholesale robbery of the natural and human resources that 'developed' the industrialised countries of the Global North.

To this day, racist narratives of colonialism and imperialism are perpetuated by corporate media, religions, and international development and security, for example, by:

- Depicting Africa as a place of exotic cultures, animals, and primitive people who suffer from endless wars, corruption, and poverty, and who are in need of aid.
- Depicting Latin America as a place of narcos, cartels, and communist uprisings, in need of security and stability.
- Depicting indigenous peoples as backward, primitive, and simple – and whose ancestral lands and territories are better put to use by others.
- Using the terms 'Third World' or 'undeveloped' to describe the non-Global-North world.
- Imposing expertise and solutions that are not appropriate or beneficial to countries and indigenous peoples in the Global South in the name of modernisation and development.
- Continuing to extract resources from poor countries, leaving land and water depleted and poisoned.

Colonial domination devalued non-Western culture and knowledge as 'primitive' and imposed Christianity as a 'civilising' measure – despite the fact that many of the colonised or occupied peoples had much older and advanced civilisations. 'Science' validates Western knowledge, and, in many cases, seeks to erase knowledge and ways of knowing from people and places deemed 'primitive'. The legacy and continued influence of colonial education can be seen around the world.

Demands to decolonise knowledge, conservation, aid, culture, philanthropy, and civil society are rooted in a long history of anti-colonial and liberation struggles. Activists and progressive academics seek to upend the assumptions at the heart of unequal structures in order to recognise and value multiple ways of seeing, doing, and thinking in different contexts and cultures.

Theme 2:
How Do Narratives Affect Us?

> Negative narratives portray activists as backward, anti-development, and dangerous. They frame civil society as elitist and unaccountable or as foreign agents seeking to undermine national sovereignty and traditions and subvert popular will, as per Turkey's authoritarian, populist president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in addressing his critics: *'We are the people. Who are you?'*"[5]

The battle for hearts and minds is not new in political history, but social media and digital information technology amplify and intensify it. Misinformation is used to polarise societies, create doubt and sow confusion, and lay the groundwork for authoritarian demagogues like Trump, Putin, Modi, Duterte, Bolsonaro, Orban, and Lukashenko. However – despite global trends, common patterns, and even an explicit playbook shared by a loose network of actors – narratives are context specific.

ACTIVITY 2:

How narratives shape context, history, and struggles

How do narratives affect our contexts and movements over time? How do they contribute to fear, insecurity, and risk? Use the timeline you created in Chapter 2: Naming the Moment to explore the role of narratives in shaping power and social struggles. Alternatively, create a timeline now, with a focus on narrative trends.

Materials: Historical timelines from Activity 4 in Chapter 2: Naming the Moment; flipchart paper, cards or post-its, markers

Step 1: How have narratives shaped your contexts?
Plenary: Introduce the activity. Ask for brief examples of dominant and transformational narratives affecting people's lives and struggles over time. Tease out the historical origins and evolution of these narratives and their effects on political dynamics.

- What narratives have been dominant in shaping your context and struggles over time, and where did they come from?
- What positive or transformational narratives have existed, in contrast to the dominant ones? Where did they come from?

Step 2: What narratives have shaped your history?
Plenary: Post the group's historical timeline on the wall, or do the timeline exercise, now with a focus on the relevant questions.

Plenary or small groups: Identify both the dominant narratives behind key events in the timeline and any transformational narratives that contrast or compete for attention with the dominant ones.

For each of the key periods or moments in this timeline, discuss the questions below. Create a graphic or add notes to the timeline. Use different coloured pens, shapes, or sticky notes for each question.

- What were the dominant narratives during this period, moment, or event?
- What transformational narratives did other groups or movements articulate?

Choose one dominant and one transformational narrative, and discuss for each in turn:

- What were the narrative's main stories, messages, and explanations?
- How were these stories and messages communicated, and by whom?
- What values, beliefs, or unconscious behaviour were behind the narrative?
- Who or what interests benefited from this narrative?
- What impact did the narratives have on people?
- How did this narrative portray people working for change?

Step 3: How did narratives shape your struggles?

Plenary: Invite each group to share briefly. Draw out real examples of slogans, images, and memes that expressed narratives from this event or moment. Add examples. Identify the differences between dominant and contrasting narratives (if these differences are not obvious). Stimulate discussion and analysis. Ask:

- What differences do you see between dominant and transformational narratives?
- How did these narratives shape key moments or events?
- Whose agenda or interests were served by dominant narratives?
- What ideas or beliefs did the dominant narrative attempt to silence?
- How were dominant narratives contested, by whom, and with what success?
- How do these narratives from history affect the contexts in which we work today?
- How do they influence our activism and movements?

Conclude with a discussion of everyday narratives that affect our lives and movements (for example, narratives of racism and sexism).

Theme 2:
Invisible and Systemic Power in Narratives

Narratives build directly on invisible and systemic power. They align with socialised norms and beliefs and with the underlying systemic logic of societal institutions and structures. For this reason, a key social change strategy is to 'unmask' oppressive and polarising narratives and contrast them with a different way of seeing things. This enables us to develop critical awareness, common ground, and justice-oriented political choices.
To be effective in challenging a negative narrative, we must do more than contradict it. We must dig into the beliefs and ideas about inclusion, empathy, and fairness that exist in all societies and bring these to the forefront.

Invisible and systemic power in narratives
Operating across three, related dimensions, invisible power is...

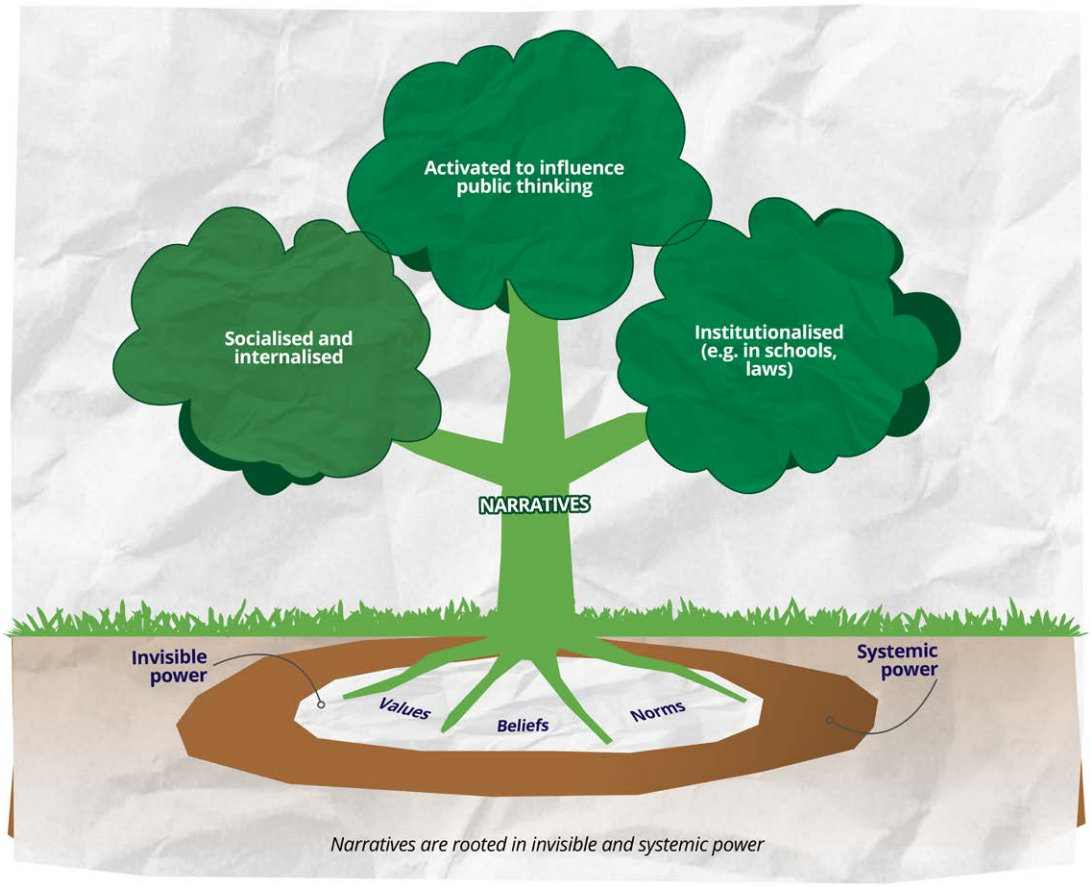
Socialised. Values, norms, and beliefs are reproduced through everyday socialisation, often unconsciously, by all actors (for example, those of patriarchy). Here, invisible power is the collective internalisation and embodiment of values about ourselves and others and what is good, right, or normal.

Institutionalised.These same values, norms, and beliefs are reflected and embedded in the logics and hierarchies of many social structures and institutions – from families and education to laws and economics. Building on and reinforcing socialisation, here invisible power is the pervasive reproduction of deep structures in society.

Mobilised. Dominant narratives are used consciously and intentionally to shape and manipulate beliefs, reinforce social hierarchies and inequalities, and uphold the power, legitimacy, and privilege of some groups over others. They seek to explain what's wrong and what needs to be solved and who and what's to blame. Here, invisible power is wilfully exercised at the service of political interests and often accompanied by a legal and policy agenda. Although narratives operate in this dimension, they are grounded in the other two.

In all three dimensions, these norms and beliefs are underpinned and reinforced by systemic power – the logic and codes that define all relationships, such as patriarchy, structural racism, extractive capitalism, and colonialism/imperialism. Like invisible power, systemic power is a contested arena in which alternative logics and codes – expressed in contrasting narratives – compete with the dominant ones. For example, identity can be both a cause of oppression and a source of connection, community, and liberation. Because invisible and systemic power are socialised, institutionalised, and mobilised, many strategic entry points exist for activists and movements:

- Affirming positive norms and beliefs.
- Reforming and rebuilding institutions.
- Creating and mobilising transformational narratives.



Narratives are rooted in invisible and systemic power

ACTIVITY 3:

Power and narratives

Explore how narratives are part of invisible and systemic power, shaping and reinforcing norms, beliefs, and ideologies through socialisation, cultural traditions, and behaviour – and through the systemic power of patriarchy, structural racism, extractive capitalism, and colonialism. In narratives, invisible and systemic power meet visible and hidden power. Powerful actors can leverage the power of beliefs and prejudices to achieve their ends.

In this activity, groups apply a framework to delve into the various layers that make up a narrative (stories, messages and explanations, communication, values and behaviour, and who benefits).

Materials: Flipchart paper, markers, handout: Invisible and systemic power in narratives

Step 1: How are narratives related to invisible and systemic power?
Plenary: Refer to, repeat, or do two activities:

1. *Arenas of Power* framework in Chapter 3: Making Sense of Power
2. *The Master's House* activity in Chapter 4: Identity, Intersectionality, and Power

Review the concept and meaning of invisible and systemic power. Ask participants what they remember from *The Master's House activity*.

We can track invisible and systemic power working through different narrative strategies.

- Narratives that divide – causing fragmentation among allies, weakening movement unity, exploiting existing faultlines and prejudices
- Narratives that de-legitimise, stigmatise and criminalise activists and movements – undermining community leadership, fomenting distrust
- Narratives that distract – focusing attention elsewhere, away from actual issues
- Narratives that promote despair – reiterating powerlessness and oppression.
- Narratives that drive danger – creating fear, criminalising people, justifying violence

Individually: Looking at the handout Invisible and systemic power in narratives, each person reflects on their own experience of these different kinds of power.

Plenary: People share reflections on the impact of dominant narratives. Discuss how these narratives reinforce one another.

Step 2: Applying the framework

Plenary: Referring to the handout: Invisible and systemic power in narratives, discuss how invisible and systemic power are socialised, institutionalised, and mobilised or activated. Ask:

- How are the stories, messages, and explanations in dominant narratives mobilised to serve the interests of particular groups?
- How are these narratives institutionalised in the family, law, education system, religions, economic and political structures, and social systems?
- How do these narratives build on – and reinforce – deeper layers of socialised values, beliefs, norms, and habits? How are they related to the systemic logic behind relationships?
- What is the impact of narratives on people's lives? How do these narratives serve the political and economic interests of those who promote them?

Step 3: How do invisible and systemic power underpin a narrative?

Explore one example together, using the questions below, before applying the framework in plenary or small groups. One example is the narratives about LGBTQI+ people. You could choose another example.

Plenary: To understand how invisible and systemic power underpin a narrative, focus on the example of LGBTQI+ people. Unpack the stories, messages, and explanations in the dominant narrative, and then examine how this is enabled by – and reinforces – invisible and systemic power. Discuss personal experiences of this narrative.

What are the main **messages, stories, and explanations** in the dominant narrative? Think about the difference between the messages you hear and the stories behind them. For example:

- Messages: "LGBTQI+ people put our kids at risk."
- Stories: "LGBTQI+ people are immoral and outsiders, not part of our families, and prey on our children."
- Underlying beliefs: "Non-heterosexual relationships are evil, sinful, and unnatural."

How are these messages **communicated**, and by whom? For example:

- In conservative religious communities (sermons, literature, school lessons, informally), by religious leaders, educators, community members
- In political messages, speeches, and campaign materials, by politicians, party officials and activists, conservative media outlets, party supporters.
- In social media, everyday language, parents with their children.
- in symbols, images, cultural activities, social and body cues.

What **actions** or **impact** do these messages produce? **Whose interests** do they advance? For example:

- Everyday exclusion, prejudice, and discrimination against LGBTQI+ people.
- Violence, hostility, and harassment.
- Laws and policies that discriminate against LGBTQI+ people, such as marriage rights.
- Conservative and traditional explanations of an unequal social order and strict gender roles with males as dominant fathers and women as mothers and carers.
- Patriarchal control of sexuality for the purpose of reproduction only.
- Domestic violence as a private matter.

What is the **dominant narrative** created by the above? For example:

- LGBTQI+ people are outsiders, immoral, not normal human beings, not part of our families and communities; they don't belong in society and pose a threat to our children.

What kinds of institutions and structures in society give strength to – or are strengthened by – this narrative? For example:

- The 'traditional family' is the centre of society; marriage is for the purpose of raising children; sex is for reproduction, not pleasure; any sexual or gender expression or identity that does not conform to these values is a threat to society.

What kinds of **socialised values, norms, and beliefs** are behind this narrative? For example:

- Beliefs and ideologies: conservative religious beliefs, traditions and teachings about sex and sexuality, families, gender, women's roles, and marriage.
- Social norms: patriarchal views about marriage between a man and a woman only (heteronormative) emphasising that there are only two genders – male and female – with their 'proper' roles in society – masculine and feminine – (binary-gendered as 'normal').
- Embodied habits: gendered behavioural norms of masculinity, femininity, sexuality; how we reproduce these norms in our everyday speech, behaviour, and actions.

Plenary or small groups: Explore another dominant narrative of interest to the group, using the same questions and drawing on the example above. Alternatively, small groups work on different narratives. If working in small groups, share highlights in plenary.

Step 4: Transforming narratives and invisible power

Plenary: So how can we break this cycle and transform the dominant narratives?

Invite a quick brainstorm of ideas, without going into depth on specific strategies. List ideas on cards or flipcharts, and cluster into categories if helpful. Raise or emphasise the following key points in the discussion:

- A starting point for shifting a dominant narrative – and the invisible and systemic power behind it – is to identify and express our own positive narratives and visions of society.
- We call these positive narratives 'contrasting' or 'transformational'. If we use the terms 'alternative' or 'counter-narratives', we are still centring the dominant narratives which give them power. Positive narratives have always been there.
- We reveal and elevate positive narratives that are already there – grounded in long-standing progressive values and beliefs – rather than talk about 'creating' new ones.
- Exploring the emotional resonance of narratives is a good starting point for identifying positive narratives. Notice how the dominant narrative makes you feel. Which of your own values or beliefs do you feel are challenged by this narrative? Which of your values or beliefs contrast with this dominant narrative?

What are some examples of positive and contrasting narratives and messages? For example:

> *Narrative*: LGBTQI+ people are loved and loving parts of families.
> *Message*: love makes a family, love is love, we all belong.
>
> *Narrative*: all black, indigenous, and people of colour have as much value and significance as any other human being
> *Message*: Black Lives Matter

Small groups: All work with the same dominant narrative, or each group works on a different one. Each group has ten minutes to reflect on the questions and five minutes to prepare a creative drawing or dramatic presentation. Start by reflecting individually on one of the dominant narratives we explored today with these two questions:

- How does the dominant narrative make you feel?
- Which of your values and beliefs does the narrative contradict?

On pieces of paper or cards, write short, simple statements that express your own values and beliefs on the theme. Write from the heart, and don't worry about exact words.

Take turns each sharing one or two statements that you feel very strongly about.

Cluster the statements into categories, and choose one cluster to discuss together:

- Which values and beliefs do you hold that lie behind these statements?
- Where do they come from?
- How do you live and express these values and beliefs in daily life?

Prepare a short, creative presentation – a diagram, drawing, symbol, message, dramatic scene, or body sculpture – to show what the dominant narrative looks like and what your own contrasting values, beliefs, and behaviour look like. Be creative and expressive, and feel free to use images, symbols, or metaphors to convey your values, beliefs, and ways of being.

Step 5: Bringing our values to life

Plenary: Ask each group to share their creative representation of the dominant narrative and the values and beliefs of the group. After each presentation, invite a quick round of reactions:

- What did you see or hear? How do you feel?
- What values and beliefs are being expressed?

Values, norms, and beliefs are in constant flux and are contested. In every moment, they can be affirmed or resisted, complied with or rejected, through words and behaviour. Invisible power shifts and evolves, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, sometimes passively, sometimes due to proactive agency. It can at times be strategic or safer for activists to remain silent and 'comply'. How and when do we resist or comply with dominant narratives?

Share the handout Resisting dominant narratives. Discuss how we resist or refuse to comply with a dominant narrative. Ask:

- What are some examples of strategic resistance to narratives?
- What values and beliefs give strength to our position?
- Where do these values and beliefs come from?
- Who has upheld them over time? Who or what has inspired us?
- Is there a transformational narrative that flows from these values and beliefs? If so, what is it?

> **Institutional change is often easier than at the personal level... Most people resist changes to their personal space, even when it involves extending their horizons. It is not easy for people to reach critical consciousness in their personal lives due to an intrinsic need to belong. In Africa or less developed countries, insurance from a sense of belonging takes over social welfare functions of the state, therefore imposing major barriers on people's consistency in political consciousness. Particularly for marginalised groups such as women, what one does within an institutional setting is often different from the compromises made in private lives in order to belong. This should not be labelled as inconsistency, because the ability to recognise power and its uses and to act within one's context for self-preservation is actually 'strength'.**
>
> *– Hope Chigudu*[6]

Resisting dominant narratives

We might remain silent or passive in the face of a dominant narrative, perhaps because we have internalised the narrative's values. But silence can also be strategic: the moment may not be right or the risks too great to speak out or resist. We may choose to express resistance less directly.

Why do we sometimes remain silent or passive when faced with a dominant narrative? Think of specific examples.

- Is compliance automatic or unconscious?
- Do we sometimes consciously comply with a narrative, even if we don't agree with it?
- When, and why, would we choose to comply with narratives we don't like? (for example: for safety, for fear of being shamed or excluded by those around us.)
- When might it be strategic to remain silent or comply with a dominant narrative?
- If we notice others complying, is it always okay to 'call out' or shame them? Give examples.

Calling out or shaming people publicly for going along with a dominant narrative can be strategic, particularly if powerful people are advancing the narrative. But in everyday life, this can alienate people. We may not understand the reasons for their compliance. Black feminist activist Loretta Ross advocates dialogue with those we disagree with, or *calling in, rather than calling out.*[7]

> **The work of narrative is just one extension of the overall work of power. Narrative 'product' is not narrative power. We do not need more ways to get our ideas on the record and archived online. Narrative power is not born of great content that no one watches, nor content we ourselves enjoy and think is right but has no social or political effect. Narrative builds power for people, or it is not useful at all.**
>
> *- Rashad Robinson, Color of Change*[8]

Theme 4:
Unmasking and Transforming Narratives

Narratives have an enormous impact on our politics, civil society, activism, and journalism, and social media has the power to galvanise and polarise people on an extensive scale. New and powerful narrative strategies emerge from social movements.

- The Movement for Black Lives
- Pro-democracy movements in many parts of the world including Guatemala, Thailand, Poland, Hong Kong, Belarus, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, Chile, and Myanmar.
- Women's movements challenging impunity for sexual assault and pressing for full reproductive rights.
- Indigenous land defenders, the Buen Vivir movement, and others calling for life in harmony with the earth.

People approach narratives in different ways. They draw on, for example:

- The evocative emotional power in what we stand for (power for) to inform smarter campaign messaging.
- Longer term cultural work to shift worldviews.
- Humorous and creative expressions of resistance in dangerous contexts.
- Actions that communicate meaning in embodied and symbolic ways – often without words.

In this Guide, we approach narratives through a power and intersectional analysis that centres context and culture and looks at the connection between messages, narratives, and the mobilisation of the invisible power of beliefs, values, and ideas.[9]

Laura and Bertita washing in the river © 2016, Daysi Flores

> **Women's entire lives revolve around the river – it's where they gather water for cooking and drinking, wash their clothes, bathe their kids, wash their hair, share stories, cool off and just relax, not to mention the river being the source of water for their gardens and fields."**[10]

Guardians of the River: The power of narratives

Competing narratives are at the centre of the power struggle and conflict around the construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Gualcarque River in Lenca territory that led to the murder of Berta Cáceres. The quotes, headlines, and examples here illustrate these competing narratives and the distinct worldviews, values, and interests they embody.

Dominant narratives

These examples (among many) highlight the framing, messaging, and underlying narratives that were mobilised to discredit, dehumanise, and criminalise COPINH and Berta Cáceres.

In April 2010, soon after a right-wing coup, the Honduran government held an international investment convention, "Honduras Is Open for Business". The government relaxed the country's mining regulations, repealed a moratorium on new mines, and granted 41 concessions for hydroelectric dams across the country.

On July 15, 2013, COPINH staged a peaceful protest at the dam company's office that turned deadly. When soldiers opened fire on a peaceful COPINH protest against a new dam in 2015, killing community leader Tomás García and wounding his son, the Honduran national TV station blamed García's death on COPINH: "Protesters from COPINH also have blood on their hands … Members of COPINH should not have entered onto private property that was guarded by the army. The army provided security to the private company working on the hydroelectric dam."

Aline Flores, from a Honduran business coalition, said publicly, "[COPINH] are invading us and making us look bad, hurting our international reputation." The coalition denounced Berta for "impeding renewable energy projects … with the support of Amnesty International and the Human Rights Commission," implying that these were not home-grown struggles but rather externally driven.

"DESA's (Desarollo Energetico Sociedad Autonomo) press statements claimed the community members violently entered the company compound, leading to Tomás García's killing, and that the crowd then entered Cristian Madrid's home and killed him. Milton Amaya Coello, commander of the First Battalion of Engineers, whose troops were stationed inside the DESA compound, echoed the company's explanation of events. He claimed that, after entering the compound, three people then proceeded to attack the heavily armed soldiers with machetes, so Sergeant Jasser Sarabia fired in self-defense."[11]

Between 2013 and 2015, DESA used its influence to push the government to refocus policing and surveillance on COPINH and, particularly, on Berta. WhatsApp[12] messages obtained by lawyers investigating the murder[13] (GAIPE) revealed coordination between company executives, staff, security, police, and local officials to track and harass COPINH

leaders. For example:

> "I'm going to hire a sniper."
> "Pile a bunch of 'indios' in a car. Berta, Aureliano, and Tomás, 3 ring leaders… I've spent a lot of money and political capital to get these three arrest warrants."

In September 2013, a magistrate ordered that Berta be held in pre-trial detention for "endangering the internal security of Honduras."

FMO, the Dutch investment company that co-financed the construction of the Agua Zarca dam, posted a video about it on their website (removed after Berta's murder), depicting the dam as a small-scale, people-centred, sustainable development project to benefit the community. They failed to mention the fact that the community had rejected the project, as is their right under ILO resolution 169.

After her murder, and against the evidence, the police initially blamed the murder on a COPINH leader. Mainstream Honduran media cast the incident as a "crime of passion" in the news and in the investigations.

Strategies to unmask the dominant narrative
These examples highlight some of COPINH's strategies.

A 2013 protest in Río Blanco, Honduras, exposed the corruption behind the project and called on allies to join the protest.

In 2015, Berta said: "I never doubted I would continue the struggle despite the threats; they even gave me more resolve. Today, we are receiving death threats not only against me but against other *compañeros*."[14]

In an interview with The Guardian in the same year, Berta asserted: "The political, economic, and social situation in Honduras is getting worse, and there is an imposition of a project of domination, of violent oppression, of militarization, of violation of human rights, of trans nationalisation, of the turning over of the riches and sovereignty of the land to corporate capital, for it to privatise energy, the rivers, the land; for mining exploitation; for the creation of development zones."[15]

"It is not easy being a woman leading processes of indigenous resistance. In an incredibly patriarchal society, women are very exposed, we have to face high-risk circumstances, and sexist and misogynistic campaigns. This is one of the things that can most influence a decision to abandon the fight." (Berta Cáceres, Open Global Rights).

COPINH radio stations broadcast regular updates to expose and counteract inflammatory and sexualized attacks on Berta by the company and the government, accusing her of being "a devil's whore" and portraying COPINH as a terrorist organisation. Sectors of the Catholic Church joined in the attacks – a cardinal prohibited Catholics from joining COPINH or listening to its radio broadcasts – but these were countered by a prominent priest with public support, Padre Melo, on a popular radio station, Radio Progreso.[16]

Transformational narratives

"In our worldview, we are beings who come from the earth, the water, and the corn. The Lenca people are ancestral guardians of the rivers... [taught] that giving our lives in various ways to protect the rivers is to give our lives for the well-being of humanity and of this planet." — Berta's speech for the Goldman Environmental Prize in early 2015.[17]

After she was murdered, COPINH and Berta's daughters communicated hope and continuity. "Berta no se murió, Se multiplicó!" / "Berta did not die. She multiplied!" "Without our cosmovision, we wouldn't exist as Lenca people. It gives our resistance energy and force." — COPINH Instagram)

"We must undertake the struggle in all parts of the world, wherever we may be, because we have no other spare or replacement planet. We have only this one, and we have to take action." — Berta Cáceres

Berta Cáceres receiving the Goldman Environmental Prize © 2015, Goldman Environmental Prize

ACTIVITY 4:

Narratives in action

Powerful interest groups use dominant narratives to manipulate public opinion and shape the terms of debate. They mine and mobilise existing prejudice, beliefs, ideologies, and fears. We can unmask dominant public narratives by unpacking their messages and exposing the forms of invisible power they draw upon.

Materials: Handout: *Guardians of the River*: The power of narratives

Step 1: Compare the narratives

Small groups: You may want to re-read the case study: COPINH: *Guardians of the River in Honduras,* as well as the handout *Guardians of the River: The power of narratives*. Compare the dominant narrative with COPINH's transformational narrative.

Dominant narrative

- What were the main stories and messages in the dominant narrative?
- How were these messages framed and communicated?
- What values and norms did they represent?
- Whose interests were served by the dominant narrative?
- What was the impact of these narratives on the activists and their struggle?

COPINH's transformational narrative

- What messages and stories were communicated by COPINH and Berta?
- How were they framed and communicated?
- What values and norms did they represent?
- What was the primary interest and strategy of this narrative?
- How did COPINH's narrative advance its agenda?

Step 2: Unmask the dominant narrative

Plenary: Draw out the groups' observations, starting with the dominant narrative. Ask for new responses to the questions rather than full reports from each group. Points for deepening discussion:

- Stories and messages
- Framing and communication
- Values and norms
- Interests served
- Impacts

Step 3: Explore COPINH's transformational narrative

Plenary: Draw out groups' observations about COPINH's narrative. Stimulate discussion with examples from the handout *Guardians of the River*: The power of narratives.

- In what ways did COPINH and the movement against the dam expose and resist the dominant public narratives that were mobilised in favour of the dam and against the movement?
- What contrasting or transformative narrative was advanced by the movement and its supporters? What values, beliefs, or worldviews did this narrative build upon?
- How did COPINH go about sharing their narrative? What stories and messages were shared, and how were they communicated?
- What effects did COPINH's contrasting narrative have on public opinion and support? What were the strengths and weaknesses of their narrative?
- What other contrasting or transformative narratives, if any, do you think would have helped the movement and contributed to its safety and protection from violence?

Plenary: Beyond exposing and criticising a dominant narrative, a key strategy is to articulate a transformational narrative that contrasts with the dominant one.

Reflections

COPINH's struggle illustrates the importance of organising and action in creating and communicating narratives for social movements and communities who may not have access to courts, mainstream media, and public opinion. The peaceful protests involving families and Lenca symbolism, and the many rituals that affirm the common story and worldview of the Lenca people, are a narrative strategy in themselves.

Berta's leadership centred her community, COPINH, and her family, and this helped to humanise her struggle in the face of slander and criminalisation. It was only after her murder that COPINH's social media – in the hands of a new generation of leaders and activists in pursuit of the powerful interests behind the murder – was able to frame and sustain a narrative about justice.

Without the added pressure from social media strategies continuously inviting allies to step in, it is unlikely the case would have progressed. COPINH's strategy was both to unmask the dominant narrative and articulate their own values and visions through their transformational narrative.

COPINH exposed and named the real interests and collusion of the investors, elites, and officials behind the dam project. They unmasked the logic and costs of the exploitative, corrupt, violent colonial system that the dam project represented and perpetuated.

ACTIVITY 5:

Unmasking and transforming narratives

Adapt these steps and questions to other case studies or issues of concern.

Step 1: Unmask the dominant narrative

Plenary: Introduce the case study or issue and distribute useful resources (such as a handout or audio or video clip).

Review the resource materials and discuss:

- What do you see or hear? (messages, symbols, images)
- What is the narrative designed to make you think, believe, feel, or do? What is the narrative here?
- What are the key stories and messages in the narrative?
- What does it say about those in opposition or resistance?
- Who and what does it value or devalue? What does it say about who or what is 'normal'?
- What social norms, values, or beliefs underpin the narrative?
- Who is promoting the narrative, and what is their primary interest?

Step 2: Share insights and observations

- Did anything surprise you? What, and why?
- What are the more obvious messages and stories in the narrative?
- Which messages are more hidden and manipulative (based on biases and prejudices, for example, those that may be racist, sexist, neo-colonial)?
- Which messages may be designed to create division or fear, or draw on biases and innuendo to shape perceptions?
- What values, norms, or beliefs underpin the narrative?
- Whose interests does the narrative promote?
- In what ways do these narratives exclude or negate certain people or create fear or increase the risk of violence for specific groups (such as women, LGBTQI, indigenous, opposition activists)?

Step 3: Mobilise transformational narratives

A transformational narrative is most effective if it:

- Is based on positive values and beliefs that already resonate with many people.
- Offers the positive choice of a different story from the one that is being told.
- Is not framed as a 'counter-narrative' or 'alternative' to the dominant one.
- Provides a source of hope and strength, linked to values of care and connection, and a concrete vision and pathway to a desired future.
- Includes humour, popular expressions, and common cultural references – particularly for provocative or controversial perspectives.

Plenary: What do you reveal by unpacking or analysing a narrative in this way? What connections can you make between narratives and power? Did you experience any 'aha' moments?

Summary

If we look at narratives through a lens of power, not just communications or messaging, we see that they are part of a larger dynamic in which powerful interests use certain values and beliefs to construct and promote narratives that exclude other perspectives and advance their own narrow interests.

Narratives are used to "manufacture consent"[18] : to shape public opinion and not only legitimise but also normalise underpinning ideas and values: *That's the way things are and should be, and they should determine policy.*

Unpacking narratives is vital to open a space for critical reflection to expose and challenge those interests.

Dominant narratives can be resisted most effectively by not only unmasking them but also identifying and elevating transformational narratives that are grounded in other values and beliefs.

Theme 4:
Creating Transformational Narratives

> **In this and like communities, public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed.**
>
> *– Abraham Lincoln, 1858, in a debate with pro-slavery Senator Stephen Douglas*

A transformational narrative makes it possible for people to imagine new possibilities. A transformational narrative dares to ask, 'What if?'

- What if you are just as powerful as those at the top of the social and political ladder?
- What if you claim that power alongside others in your community?
- What if the unjust systems that operate in our society were changed?
- What if you could give birth to the liberated and beautiful world of your dreams?

> **A transformational narrative calls upon individuals to change the world as it is into the world as it should be. We build power when we shift the current dominant narrative to a narrative of transformation.**
>
> *- Mary Lim-Lampe, Executive Director of Genesis*

In addition to unmasking dominant narratives, we need to affirm our own transformational narratives. Activists working on narrative change have shared the following reflections and lessons:

Dominant and oppressive narratives often prevail within our own communities, organisations, and movements. Transformational narratives are not only about projecting our values into the wider world but also embody values, norms, and visions within the spaces of our own lives, actions, and activism. Transformational narratives are grounded in our specific context and culture – which may be virtual, organisational, and geographic.

Invisible power is always contested and so can also be transformative. Invisible power is not just an oppressive form of power over. Social change cannot happen without transforming invisible power: mobilising our own narratives – offering people a positive narrative that contrasts with the one they are used to – is a key strategy for doing this.

ACTIVITY 6:

Transforming narratives

This process is a first step in creating and mobilising our own transformational narratives.

Materials: A selection of visual images that represent resistance to dominant narratives or that express transformational narratives from social-change struggles and movements. Compile a selection of images with which participants are familiar. Include the images in this chapter if they are useful.

Step 1: What are transformational narratives?
Plenary: How can we challenge dominant narratives? As we have seen, when we unmask and de-normalise a dominant narrative, we show that it is not 'natural'. Because it is shaped by people, it can also be transformed by people. Ask

- Can you think of any limitations to unmasking as a way of changing the narrative? Is it enough to expose and critique? Can you think of cases where doing this had limited effects?
- Think of oppressive or dominant narratives that have been present within your communities, movements, or organisations.
  - In what ways have these narratives been exposed and challenged, or not, and why?
  - Has the community or organisation also put forward transformational narratives?

When we criticise a dominant narrative, **we need to be careful not to reinforce it** by allowing that narrative to define the boundaries of debate. For example:

- "We can provide health care for all without raising taxes" supports the narrative that "paying taxes to the government for public services is bad, and privatised health care is good."
- "We want to encourage best practices when it comes to extractive industries" validates the narrative that "extractives are not in and of themselves a problem, they just need to be improved."
- "All politicians are corrupt" is a narrative that undermines public trust in any and all public officials, even those who are honest and accountable.

Brainstorm examples of transformational narratives from people's own experience or from current or historical struggles. Discuss how these narratives go beyond saying no to the dominant ones and how they celebrate other values, norms, and beliefs.

Share and discuss unmasking using images that represent resistance to dominant narratives or that express transformational narratives, such as those in this chapter.

Creative and symbolic images and memes can be one powerful way of disrupting and transforming dominant narratives. Show a selection of visual images that represent transformational narratives from social-change struggles and movements with which participants are familiar. Start with a brainstorm without the images, then bring the images in as narratives are named. Or use the images after the brainstorm to stimulate discussion. Add to this list or substitute others that are relevant to your context.

Pick one example of a transformational narrative to deepen discussion. Ask:

- In what ways does this narrative contrast with the dominant one?
- How does this narrative reflect its context and culture with its use of images, humour, and emotion?
- What values, norms, and beliefs underlie the narrative?
- How has this narrative been historically expressed over time?
- What images, symbols, stories, or messages are associated with the narrative?
- How does the transformational narrative make you feel?
- Does this narrative offer an appeal or choice to at least some of those who follow the dominant narrative? In what way?

Step 2: What values and visions underpin transformational narratives?
This step works best if people are all working on the same issues and dealing with similar dominant narratives. If not, form groups around similar interests.

Plenary: Introduce the next two steps as a process in which we will:

- Identify our shared values, beliefs, and visions of society.
- Shape these into statements and images to form the foundation of a transformative narrative.

Naming our values, beliefs, and visions of society may seem obvious, but reaching a common understanding of these – beyond the specific issues we are working on – is not always easy. The first step is to clarify our shared philosophy and the kind of world we hope for, starting with individual reflection:

- What is it that you really hold in common and would like to see?
- How can you best express this among yourselves?
- What long-term hopes and visions should underpin our messages?

Individually: For a key issue you are working on, think about what you value, believe in, or would ideally like to see in society:

- Write three or four brief statements or draw symbolic images on cards or slips of paper.
- Write just a few words, not full sentences, with one idea (or picture) per piece of paper.
- Write or draw in large letters with a marker, so it will be easy to read.

Small groups or plenary: Spread out the pieces of paper. Everyone helps to cluster them into similar sets of values, beliefs, or visions. Once there is general agreement, discuss the clusters. Give each cluster a short title and write each title on a different coloured sheet of paper.

If people worked in small groups, they return to plenary and post the results of their discussions on the wall for the full group to read and discuss in a gallery walk. Note similarities and differences between groups' conclusions.

Step 3: What are the elements of transformational narratives?
Plenary: Turn each cluster of values, beliefs, and visions into a short statement: a phrase or sentence in simple language. The statement should reflect what these values and beliefs look like in practice, what the world looks like when they are fulfilled, and what the desired future is.

Small groups: Each group works on one cluster of cards and writes one statement on the top of a flipchart sheet.

Plenary: Take turns sharing and discussing the statements. Write any reactions and suggestions below the statement, or post the statements around the room and invite people to write suggestions below the statements. Refrain from wordsmithing – focus on the meaning.

Small groups: As an option, work in small groups to improve the statements based on the feedback. Alternatively, each group creates a short scene or body sculpture to represent the transformational narrative. Another option is for a small team to work on the statements to share in the next session.

Plenary: Post the final statements on the wall. Announce: we have created the foundation of our transformational narrative. There is more to do to mobilise and communicate it – creating stories and messages for different audiences – but this will come later. For now, this is for us, an internal resource to feed our hopes and inspire our dreams. Pause and reflect on what you have created.

Invite participants to read the statements out loud and to perform scenes or body sculptures if they prepared these. After each statement or performance, allow a minute of silence for quiet reflection. In pairs, share reactions or feelings, then have a round of one-word reflections:

- How do you feel after hearing these statements or seeing these performances?

Small group: Ask for three or four volunteers to shape these elements into a synthesis of the transformational narrative – a short document, one or two pages, perhaps with images, to use as the foundation of narrative strategies. This may involve, for example, re-ordering the statements and images, editing the wording, or combining or separating some elements. The synthesis should keep the essence of the elements created by the group.

Plenary: The small group brings the synthesis back for feedback and suggested changes. Explain that this will not be a public document but a grounding resource to guide and inspire strategies.

Examples of transformational narratives

Students John Salter, Joan Trumpauer, and Anne Moody sit in at the downtown Woolworth's in Jackson, Mississippi © 1963, Wisconsin Historical Society

- The sit-in tactic initiated by young Black activists in 1960 in the South of the US during the Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968) embodied a powerful narrative both exposing the brutality of racism and lifting up what desegregation could look like.
- #BlackLivesMatter
- We Walk, a nationwide action in Thailand that enabled people to meet each other face-to-face and walk together as a way of organising, and to communicate that unity would be an effective strategy against the military dictatorship.
- In protests against the military dictatorship in Myanmar, the nationwide pro-democracy movement adopted a simple three-finger gesture from a TV series, the Hunger Games, to communicate, "We are in this together. We may seem small, but we will win."

Protestors raise three fingers, Hledan Yangon, Myanmar © 2021, Maung Sun

- A Chilean feminist protest song and coordinated dance – The rapist in your path – went viral around the world, naming the state and the public as the problem.
- #LoveWins, "love makes a family".
- "We are the 99%" – a simple message and tactic from the Occupy Wall Street movement in the USA in 2011 – helped shift the narrative on inequality and focus attention on the economic elite.
- COPINH's slogan – "We are the guardians of the river; we are stewards of nature" – conveyed a narrative about each one of us taking action to protect the earth.
- At Standing Rock in the US, Native American activists proclaimed their role in preventing an oil pipeline through their territories and called for global solidarity: "We are not protesters, we are water protectors – we are protecting life. Stand with us."

Standing Rock © 2016, Alexa Bradley

- A Climate Justice Charter from the Climate Justice Movement, South Africa – a comprehensive future-oriented political, economic, cultural change agenda grounded in a transformational narrative that aligns people and the planet.
- Choose Earth, a platform to resource indigenous-led solutions.
- "Caution: Women Crossing the Line", JASS' slogan, derived from a literal and provocative translation of Observatorio de la transgression feminista, an action strategy in Mesoamerica to expose violence and make feminist resistance visible. The tongue-in-cheek image and message centred the importance of resistance at a time when policy advocacy was the dominant change strategy.

Crossing the line – JASS activists in Malawi, in alliance with faith leaders © 2013, JASS

1. *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961
2. *The Common Good,* 1998
3. Director of Strategy and Partnership of the National Domestic Workers Alliance
4. Alicia Garza, "What Future of Black Lives under a Kleptocracy?" (video)
5. Power and Protection. Defending rights in Hostile Contexts. JASS, Fund for Global Human Rights.
6. A New Weave of Power, People and Politics, 2002, p. 53.
7. For more information, see Loretta Ross TEDTalk, "Don't call people out, call them in".
8. https://nonprofitquarterly.org/changing-our-narrative-about-narrative-the-infrastructure-required-for-building-narrative-power-2/ July 17, 2020
9. For resources on strategies for narrative change, see: Grassroots Policy Project: https://grassrootspolicy.org/featured-essays-on-narrative/ and the Narrative Initiative – https://narrativeinitiative.org/.
10. As reported by Daysi Flores from JASS who was present and interviewed people at the scene.
11. https://www.banktrack.org/download/the_agua_zarca_dam_and_lenca_communities_in_honduras/130920_earth_rights_rpt_130920_rioblanco_final.pdf – an insightful, comprehensive and historical 2013 analysis of the conflict over the Gualcarque River, revealing who was behind the dam, the ways that laws and courts were manipulated to serve local elites and investors, the role of the World Bank and IMF as well as the US Embassy.
12. https://theintercept.com/2019/12/21/berta-caceres-murder-plot-honduras/
13. The Grupo Asesor Internacional de Personas Expertas (GAIPE) includes specialists in international human rights law, international criminal law, and comparative criminal law, was created in November 2016 at the request of the family of Berta Cáceres and COPINH after the government and international human rights bodies failed to launch an in-depth investigation.
14. For Indigenous Peoples, Megadams Are 'Worse than Colonization', Terra Justa, 2015
15. Honduran indigenous rights campaigner wins Goldman prize | Honduras | The Guardian
16. Guardians of the River Case Study, Just Power: A Guide for Activists and Changemakers, JASS 2023
17. Berta Cáceres's Goldman prize acceptance speech in 2015 (video)
18. Noam Chomsky, Edward Herman. " Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media"

6

POWER AND STRATEGY

> **We must dare to invent the future.**
>
> *- Thomas Sankara,*
> *Burkinabe Pan African revolutionary (1949–87)*

This chapter makes the bridge from power analysis and other key processes outlined in the Guide to strategy. Strategy is a collaborative process that guides groups, organisations, and movements towards achieving systemic, structural, and material change for justice, equity, and wellbeing.

Power analysis is central to developing strategy, because it:

- Helps identify and assess who and what are at the root of systemic and structural inequities, injustices and violence we seek to address.
- Shows where and how to focus change efforts in a given context and moment while investing in the long-term power-building process.
- Locates and directs our organising and change work within the wider movement ecosystem.
- Invites us to build, mobilise, and exercise our power with others over time to make all that happen.

Strategy guides what we do (why, when, where, and with whom) but equally how we do it, so that we seed the change we want, embody our vision and values, and create an ever bigger and more inclusive 'we'.

This chapter draws on a core set of ideas and covers five themes for approaching strategy.

Core Ideas
We begin by defining a set of core ideas that are used throughout the chapter. You may want to share this set of concepts and processes, relevant to all the themes in this chapter, with the people taking part in your process.

Theme 1: What is Strategy?
What are the key components of a social change strategy? What needs to be in place as a foundation for creating strategy? We begin by reviewing elements that we identified in the first five chapters of this Guide. Then we approach strategy with a movement-building lens; locate our actions within the context of a broader movement ecosystem; and identify opportunities for connections, alignment, coordination, and building 'movement infrastructure' around the agenda and vision we hold.

Theme 2: Connecting Analysis to Strategy
In Chapter 3: Making Sense of Power, we began to think about strategy using a power analysis. Here, we deepen that work by going back to the case study *COPINH: Guardians of the River*. We examine more closely who and what COPINH was up against in each of the four arenas of power, explore the implications for their strategic approach to resistance and advocacy, and look at how they built their power and cohesion. COPINH's experience offers many lessons about the factors that shape strategic choices and the range of possible responses and tactics.

Theme 3: Context and Moment
As we discussed in Chapter 2, the specific context and moment shape strategic choices, pathways, and risks. The issues we seek to address, and our organisational capacity, resources, and relationships are also pivotal in determining how we move and what's at stake. We discuss what factors matter, how they shape our strategies, and what strategies look like in repressive and crisis contexts.

Theme 4: Building and Exercising Power
Our greatest source of strength and legitimacy is our collective capacity to mobilise and exercise our power through organising, leadership development, and alliance-building over time. Catalysing our 'connective tissue' – from small groups to networks – is an essential strategy that involves many kinds of processes, possibilities and challenges. We make a distinction between organising and mobilising power and offer tools and methodologies for building *power within, to, with* and *for*.

Theme 5: Engaging and Resisting
Policy advocacy and lobbying are a primary focus of many civil society organisations. Yet engaging visible power may not always be effective in a given context or moment, and requires complementary tactics if it is to be effective. We offer tools and examples for deciding whether and where to engage in policy spaces, and when acts of resistance or creating autonomous spaces may be required – whether on their own, or as part of 'inside-outside' strategies.

Core Ideas

Strategies for movement building

Any strategy includes short- and medium-term processes and actions in pursuit of long-term goals. A movement-building strategy specifies how organising, leadership-development, alliances and joint action build capacity and community over time to advance the values and vision that center justice and belonging. In a context of constant flux, think of strategy as the compass that orients decision-making and informs short-, medium-, and long-term actions and processes.

> **To be truly visionary we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality."**
>
> - *bell hooks, Feminism is for Everybody:* Passionate Politics, 2014

Movement strategy depends upon five components:

1. Creating a shared guiding **vision of change**;
2. Understanding **context, moment and power**;
3. Articulating a **bold ambition and agenda;**
4. Forging a sense of **common ground, community, and belonging**; and
5. Building and leveraging leadership and organising **capacity, clout, resources, and alliances.**

A movement ecosystem

Depending on the moment and context, different forms of engagement make sense. At times, strategies to reform visible power and formal structures (policy, laws, budgets, elections, etc.) may be key, at other times they are either too risky or not likely to produce the change we want. Some movements will focus on other ways to contest power – resisting and exposing powerful interests, re-imagining and reclaiming alternative ways of living, creating sovereign and autonomous spaces, or blocking or shutting down oppressive systems. For any of these approaches to deliver social and political change, narrative strategies are vital to legitimise agendas and broaden popular support and momentum.

All of these strategies can co-exist in a movement ecosystem. They can be complementary or merely parallel. Intentional alignment and complementarity are powerful. Ask yourselves:

- Where does your organisation sit within a larger movement ecosystem of organisations and individual change-makers and activists?
- What do you and your organisation bring to this ecosystem?
- With whom might you find common purpose or align?
- How can you harness collective efforts for greater impact?

Movement ecosystem

Essential movement strategies

Organise and educate: Organising is about bringing people's concerns, dreams and indignation together into a collective organised force for change. Deep dialogue and collective learning (for example through Feminist Popular Education) mixed with new types of knowledge are central to building individual and collective leadership and common agendas. Organising and educating help establish trust and cohesion across differences to create an energising bond and a liberatory force. Organising builds the essential base and constituencies to drive and embody change over time.

Reform and engage: These strategies aim to change specific laws and policies and their enforcement in order to stop harms, address structural discrimination, redirect resources, and better serve all people, the planet, and our future. We campaign and engage in elections to promote leaders who are more representative and accountable. We go to court to block or address harm. We lobby and advocate to pressure decisionmakers on the specifics of policy and implementation. We may

seek to change rules and practices within religious, educational institutions, civil society organisations, and corporations – not only governments.

Network and connect: Building a bigger 'we' – to leverage greater power – involves working with people and different kinds of organisations, some of whom may not agree with us on everything. Alliances demand trust building because of inevitable conflict over power, resources, visibility, representation, and values. Beyond our own groups, we can advance our agendas by building tactical alliances with key experts, researchers, and officials inside the structures of power.

Resist and expose: We can rally constituencies, allies and supporters by working with social media activists, journalists, and researchers, and through mobilisations to confront and expose injustice, corruption, and abuse of power. Challenging the legitimacy of the system – through civil disobedience, non-compliance, rejection of existing decision-making processes, and use of autonomous spaces or boycotts – are other ways to resist. Direct action such as protests, blockades, marches, boycotts and non-participation build public pressure, create opportunities for people to act on frustrations, and amplify our messages and demands.

Create and claim: Other strategies disengage with the state and visible power, and instead establish autonomous and sovereign spaces, such as cooperatives, commons, or self-defined or ancestral forms of community governance. Such independent initiatives enable communities to define and protect ways of life and economies that are aligned with their beliefs and values. Using media and messaging, they can share their example to inspire others and to shape narratives and public discussion about broader possibilities for change.

Narrate and communicate: We need to expose and challenge the dominant narratives that generate fear and polarise and dehumanise groups, and create our own narratives to offer alternative explanations and worldviews that centre life, care, dignity, and reciprocity. Communicating our narratives digitally – as well as via traditional media, popular culture, and face-to-face through dialogue and popular education – serves to connect a larger 'we'. Symbolic and cultural change strategies can be demonstrated through art, songs, humour, theatre, poetry, and dance to build strength and convey alternatives.

Reimagine: Central to all these processes is the inspiring reimagined future that we seek. Individual and collective practices of radical imagination draw on our wisdom and values and beliefs to build a sense of purpose and power for social transformation.

No single organisation can do everything that is needed to transform power. In the constellation of actors, it is key to have organisers and it helps to have specialised

capacities in support of frontline communities including legal and research aid, security, and media. The idea of the movement ecosystem situates our efforts in a larger agenda.

> **Movements are born of critical connections rather than critical mass."**
>
> *- Grace Lee Boggs, American activist*

The collaborative process of strategy development is an opportunity to deepen shared analysis and to build collective consciousness, political trust, and a sense of ownership.

Movement infrastructure

"Social movement infrastructure can be physical – the meeting spaces where people come together or the megaphones and equipment people use in the streets; movement infrastructure can be organisational – regular coordination spaces to engage in consultation and move work forward; and movement infrastructure can be intellectual – power mapping, databases, and contact lists... [it] can be relationships and networks – building alliances, facilitating conversations, aligning around collective demands.... (and) training new organisers. And more often than not, the strength of the movement infrastructure that is in place just before ... trigger events take place can play an incredibly influential role in how high movements can ride waves of action and how far those waves can carry movements." *Movement Catalyst* [1]

Emergent strategy

Activists and scholars are generating fresh thinking about strategy that is better suited to our turbulent times than the results-specific strategic planning theories of an earlier era. These ideas consider the relational, contentious, zigzag nature of social change and power. For example, the activist and writer adrienne maree browne draws on patterns of nature and ecological systems to conceptualise "emergent strategy".

> **Emergent strategy is how we intentionally change in ways that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated worlds we long for. ... Everything is about relationships, critical connections; chaos is an essential process that we need to engage; the sharing of information is fundamental for organisational success; and vision is an invisible field that binds us together, emerging from relationships and chaos and information."**
>
> *- Adrienne Maree Brown*[2]

Good strategy is about holding the realities of the present while imagining the future and weaving a bigger 'we' that can enable us to navigate the unexpected. Effective social change work demands agility – to be able to step into unexpected moments and opportunities to block or speak out against injustice or move a justice agenda forward. Our actions are never exactly as we plan – adjustments, learning and the unexpected shape fresh directions and offer new insights. Praxis – the habit of action–reflection–action – remains a crucial process.

Theme 1:
What is Strategy?

> We use the word 'strategy' to mean the longer-term framework that guides a change effort, but it can also describe the specific actions, tactics, and processes used in the shorter term. This may be a bit confusing. Find the words that make sense to you in your language and political culture to distinguish a big picture strategy from a more immediate or focused one.

Activists and organisations facing huge external pressures tend to focus on immediate, short-term priorities and routine approaches to planning. They don't always stop to critically reflect on the context, the histories they build upon, their assumptions about how change happens, and what they can do to achieve it over the long-term.

Everything in this Guide so far has prepared us to construct strategies that navigate, build, and transform power for social justice. Strategy comes together by connecting all the strands of analysis, visioning, and prioritising.

Not everyone using this Guide will work in a direct movement-building role, but we can all locate our actions within the broader movement ecosystem in which our organisations, strategies and agendas sit, and identify ways to connect, align, coordinate, and build movement power, connections, and infrastructure.

ACTIVITY 1:

Components of a movement strategy

Materials: flipchart paper, sticky notes, pens, handout: *Strategy components*

Plenary: Introduce the activity. Share the handout: Strategy Components. Introduce each component and ask people to recall key insights and 'aha' moments from earlier sessions. Prompt with examples from the analysis and insights they have generated so far, or invite them to reflect on these questions now.

Individually: Invite people to look at the questions on the handout and jot down any key insights. Ask them to choose three key insights and write them on sticky notes.

Plenary: For each component, people take turns to post their sticky notes on the flipcharts or slides, reading out and explaining each one. When one component is done, review the notes and ask:

- Is anything missing here?
- Does anything stand out?
- How does this component contribute to shaping strategy?

Strategy components

Movement strategy depends upon organising and groundwork around the five key components in the table below.

Components of a movement-building strategy

Components	Questions for reflection	Key insights
Our guiding vision	• What future have we reimagined – what will be different in the world in this future? What problems will be solved? *(see Chapter 1: Getting Started, Activities 3 and 4)* • What are our core beliefs, ethics and ways of working related to our vision? How can we live into our values and principles? *(see Chapter 1: Getting Started, Activity 5)* • What are our assumptions about how change happens? What do we assume about how to build and change power? *(see Chapter 2: Getting Started, Activity 6 and Chapter 3: Making Sense of Power, Activity 10)*	
Context, moment and power analysis	• What's happening in the moment in our context? What are the implications for our vision and agenda? • What can we learn from previous history and those who came before us in this work? • Who are the key actors and interests currently contesting for power and what are the beliefs and narratives they are mobilising to advance their interests? • Who is pushing back? • What are the contradictions and where do you see opportunities or openings? *(see Chapter 3: Making Sense of Power)*	
Bold ambition and agenda	• What is the solution or agenda we're advancing? What is the deeper structural, social and material change we're seeking? *(see Chapter 1: Getting Started)* • What are our immediate demands and proposals? How are we communicating key narratives to build and activate support? *(see case studies and Chapter 5: Narratives and Power)*	
Common ground, community and belonging	• Who is the "we" in this effort? How are we connecting and engaging a broad "we?" • What stories and experiences do we have in common? How are we nourishing a sense of community, culture and belonging to inspire and fuel our work for change? How do the futures we imagine and dream of speak to us collectively? *(see Chapter 2: Getting Started, Activities 1, 2 and 3)* • How do we affirm and connect across our diverse identities, as a source of collective power and liberation? *(See Chapter 4: Intersectionality, Identities and Power)*	
Organised capacity, resources and allies	• What do we bring to the work – knowledge, resources, relationships, organisation and capacities? Who do we rely on for other contributions to the work? Where are we situated within the wider movement ecosystem? What relationships matter most? Which need building? Who are our key allies? *(See Chapter 2: Getting Started, Activities 7 and 8)*	

"Movements matter because the people most affected by injustice join hands, organise themselves, and act together for the change they seek – and through their collective power and passionate vision of a better world, they create deep and sustainable change.... Feminist movement building is based on a deeper understanding of how power structures operate, especially patriarchal power".

- Srilatha Batliwala, All About Movements, CREA

ACTIVITY 2:

Strategy for movement-building

Materials: Virtual equivalents; notes or outputs from Chapter 1: Getting Started, Activity 5: Living into our visions and values, and Activity 7: Movements and Movement-Building, including copies of the Handout: *Movements and movement-building.*

Make, print, or share a large copy of the graphic *Components of a movement-building strategy*

Plenary: Display the resources and outputs from Chapter 1: Getting Started (if you worked on this). Introduce the activity with the ideas that open this chapter and section, adapting them to people's specific context and issues.

Individually: Invite people to reflect on their personal experiences of strategy and movement-building – whether through direct involvement or observation of a movement and strategies they are familiar with. Then jot down brief answers:

- What in your experience is 'strategy'?
- What kinds of strategies have you been part of, or what strategies have you seen other social change efforts use? What do you feel worked well and not so well?
- What do you see as five key components needed to create an effective strategy, one that contributes to movement building?

Write your five key points on sticky notes. Focus on key components, rather than the strategies themselves.

Plenary: Display a large version of the graphic Components of a movement strategy. Invite each person to place their sticky notes one by one on the graphic, on or near the most relevant component. When everyone has shared, open a discussion.

- What has this group identified as the most important components?
- What are other key elements for developing a movement strategy in your view?
- What do these different strategies contribute to making change and how can they be complementary?

Movement ecosystem

A movement-building strategy inevitably combines different tactics, processes, and actions carried out by different organisations and entities, rather than a singular plan from a single group. These organisations play different roles and make distinct strategic contributions in the broader movement ecosystem, particularly if they are more or less aligned and connected. No single organisation pursues all of the strategies necessary, but together, with intention, they can become a powerful force for change. Different actors play diverse but ideally complementary roles so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. We need to locate our organisational and individual positioning and contributions in the broader ecosystem and identify potential alliances and alignment with others pursuing complementary strategies

Movement ecosystem: sample responses for 'organise and educate'

ACTIVITY 3:

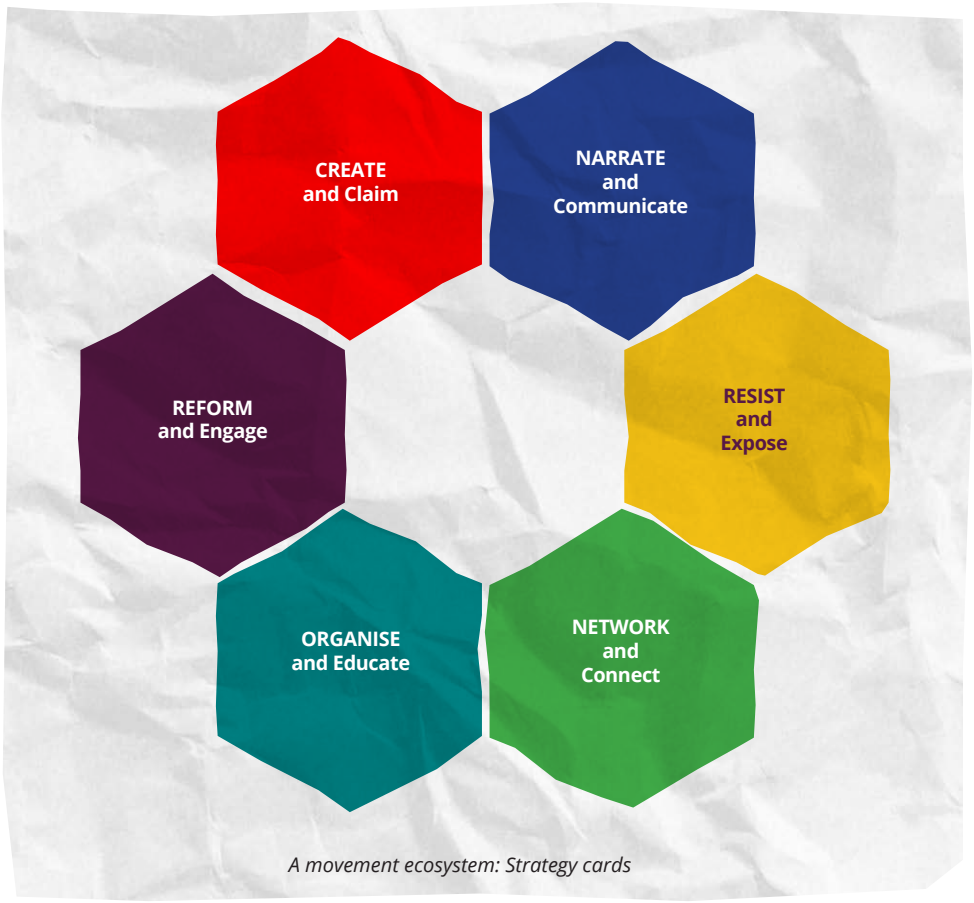
Movement ecosystem: sample responses for 'organise and educate'

Materials: Display a large copy of A movement ecosystem, and provide copies as a handout; flipchart paper, six large strategy cards for each work table. Plus, for Step 2, dot stickers of different colours

Plenary: Refer to the definition of strategy:

Strategy is a collaborative process that guides people, organisations and movements towards achieving systemic, structural, and material change for justice and belonging.

Any strategy includes short- and medium-term actions in pursuit of long-term goals. A movement-building strategy specifies how organising, leadership-development, alliances and joint action build capacity over time to advance the values and vision. In a context of constant flux, think of strategy as the compass that orients decision-making and informs short-, medium-, and long-term actions and processes.



A movement ecosystem: Strategy cards

Step 1: World café

Plenary: Place one of the six strategy cards on each of six work tables. Invite people to group themselves by strategy, ensuring equal numbers per table.

Small groups: Each group appoints a note-taker who stays at the same table. The rest of the group moves from one table to another for three rounds of 10 to 15 minutes per round. At each table, the group discusses:

- WHAT does this strategy accomplish in relation to building and changing power?
- WHY is this strategy critical in relation to the others and for achieving change?
- HOW is this strategy carried out? What does it look like in practice?
- WHEN is this strategy most useful?
- WHO should be involved and how?
- WHERE is this strategy used?

The note-taker summarises the first round and adds new points from subsequent rounds.

Plenary: The whole group moves together from one table to the next. Each note-taker summarises the key points from that table.

Movement ecosystem: sample responses

WHAT?	Shared understanding and analysis of the issues, a space for re-imagining the future, and a collective vision of change
WHY?	*Power within*, *to*, *with* and *for*; a base of activist leaders and a broader interconnected 'meshwork' of organisations in alignment to expand reach and navigate risk and opportunity; validate and celebrate values, vision, agendas, joy, and critical connections
HOW?	Popular education, community organising, storytelling, joint analysis, dialogue and collective planning; mutual learning around lived experience, identifying common problems; building collective and individual leadership, agendas and coordination; care and healing; dancing, creativity and joy
WHEN?	Ongoing: to build trust, coordinate capacity at all levels
WHO?	Centring those most affected; ensuring they are at the heart and in the forefront of organising, leadership, and representation
WHERE?	Local and national levels, with cross-border connections and networks

Step 2: Where are we in the movement ecosystem?

The Movement Ecosystem helps us to situate our organisations and our change strategies in a given context and moment in time, and in relation to the many other different actors, groups, and forms of activism and influence that contribute to the change we are seeking. No single organisation or activist can do every strategy, so the ecosystem guides us to think about our identity, niche, and strengths along with the possible gaps in our strategy and alignment, and to consider where we can build alliances and coordinate better.

Plenary: Hand out three different colours of dot stickers to each person (or use three colours of markers to draw dots). Thinking about the identified strategies, and allowing for overlap:

- Place a dot of one colour on the strategies you are most engaged with (use more than one dot if you work in more than one area).
- Place a dot of the second colour on areas where allies or others you know are engaged.
- Place a dot of the third colour areas where there seem to be gaps, or where you may need to stretch or adopt strategies.

Review the results and ask:

- What are your main assets, resources and areas of strategic focus?
- In what areas are others working? Who are they and what are they doing?
- With whom are you in relationship or alliance? With whom are you not connected?
- Where are the gaps or areas you (or others) may need to stretch into?

- Where do you need to build capacities, relationships, and alliances to move your agenda forward?

Use lines to connect the groups and efforts where relationships and alignment can be strengthened or developed; a dotted line for areas of coordination and a solid line to show formal alliances or collaboration to develop.

Alignment and infrastructure
Alliances vs alignment: It is not always necessary or possible to build relationships or alliances with all actors across a movement ecosystem but it can be beneficial to have a greater awareness about who is doing what and how best to coordinate, even without direct collaboration.

Lack of alignment is a major weakness among NGOs and across movements. The movement ecosystem tool and process invite orientation and alignment across different strategies in a way that potentially strengthens connection and movement infrastructure. Timing shapes the opportunities for strengthening infrastructure across the ecosystem. In crises and when injustices and repression are extreme, often the energy to connect, unify, and build power is greater. These are important moments to invest in organising.

One way of organizing across diversity and in complexity is to see it in terms of alignment around key challenges, rather than one-size solutions that focus on getting everyone to do the same thing. We align both to interrupt the advance of authoritarianism and destruction, and to build something new – the notion of block, build, transform – and making sure that we are dedicating our human capacity towards all of those kinds of activities"

- Tarso Ramos[3]

Theme 2:
Connecting Analysis to Strategy

Strategy development requires layers of power analysis and information-gathering. In order to make strategic choices for both long-term power-building and short-term tactics we must identify:

- The overall dynamics and actors shaping the situation we want to change.
- More specifics about who (the players and decisionmakers and their relationships) and what (for example, norms, beliefs, and narratives) we're up against and what their agendas and interests are.
- Where the opportunities, contradictions, unexpected allies, and levers of change may be, outside or inside the structures we seek to change.
- Potential risks and precise conflicts, and how to mitigate and prepare for them.
- How and with whom we can build and leverage power.
- What we are demanding, exposing, and blocking, and what are we working to change and create.
- What story and narrative support the change we seek.

In developing strategy, details matter. This section therefore draws on the Guardians of the River case study, which offers specific lessons about the factors shaping strategic choices, as well as a range of possible strategies and tactics. It is illustrative of the possibilities of connection with the broader movement ecosystem and about the specifics of context, issues, and actors.

COPINH: Communities defend territory and bodies in Honduras

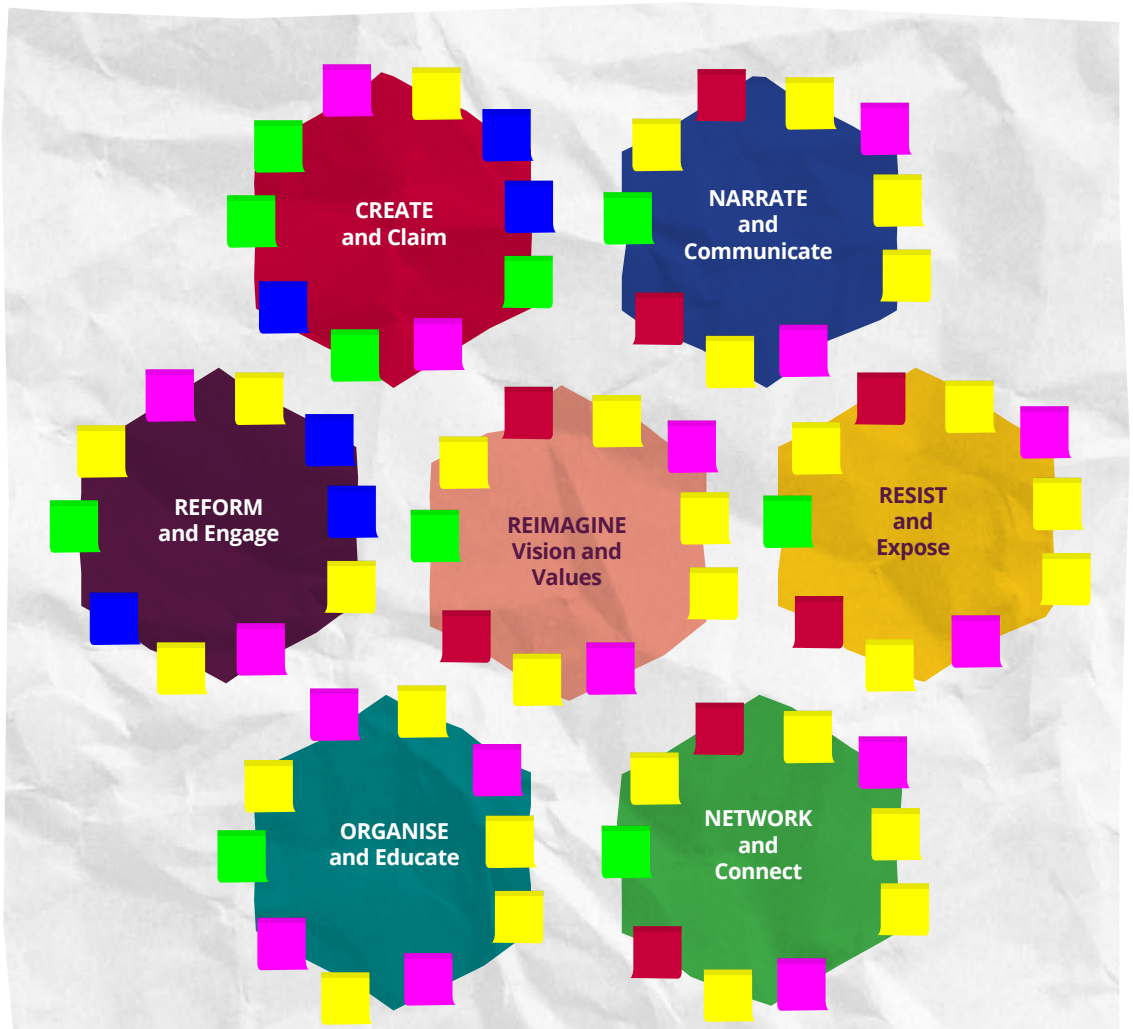
Example of Power and Strategy Matrix[4]

Contested arenas of power	POWER OVER Power to control, exclude, privilege some groups and interests over others, coerce, divide, silence	CHANGE STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	
		Engage, challenge, expose, and resist dominant power	**Build, create, and mobilise transformative power**
Visible power – making and enforcing the rules Presidents, legislatures, courts, ministries, police, military, United Nations, World Bank, chambers of commerce. Instruments: Policies, laws, constitutions, budgets, regulations, conventions, agreements, and enforcing mechanisms, etc.	Biassed laws/policies Decision-making structures that favour the elite and powerful and exclude or target (through biassed enforcement) others based on gender, race, class, location. Unrepresentative governance bodies Lack of transparency and accountability Laws not upheld/ gap between law and practice Policy + budgets written by corporate or other (hidden power) interests	Demand accountability to existing laws and agreements or challenge discrimination (in the law or in enforcement) using advocacy, lawsuits Expose corruption, ties to hidden power or injustice with direct action, petitions, strikes, vigils, social media, etc. Align advocacy "inside" visible power with "outside" pressure strategies	**Impact Decisions and Governance: Laws, Policy, Judicial, and Spending** Mobilise community power for accountability Leverage relationships with allies in key positions Engage in legal, political, and judicial advocacy Reform institutions Shape policies and practices Garner mainstream media coverage Influence political party agendas, support candidates that represent our interests, get involved in education and mobilisation around elections; provide protection against electoral violence
Hidden power – setting the agenda Political control over what and who is part of decision making Exclusion & delegitimization of others through "unwritten rules", intimidation, misinformation, and co-optation Examples: industry suppression of climate science	Activist leaders are discredited as troublemakers or outsiders and their issues as elitist, impractical, anti-tradition, etc. (e.g. LGBTQI+ rights / labour rights are 'special' interests) Collusion where the state protects private actors (corporations, financiers, oligarchs, etc.) by detaining activists and using lawsuits and libel cases to silence organisations who expose corruption. Media does not consider these groups' issues newsworthy Corporations and political leaders prevent information from going public	Research and expose hidden power actors and their influence and interests Expose and discredit shadow actors Develop strategies to protect ourselves from detention, threats, and backlash Amplify power of grassroots and women leaders Connect local to national to global organising efforts to align pressure on powerful	**Build our own movement infrastructure, visions, agendas, and narratives** Build collective power of communities Strengthen movement leadership and organisation Build strategic alliances across borders and sectors Participatory research to legitimise our issues Mobilise popular narratives and cultural strategies to reach out and build a larger "we"
Invisible power – shaping norms and beliefs Socialisation: Cultural norms, values, practices, and customs shape people's understanding of their needs, rights, roles, and normalise inequities and the status quo Control of information and political narrative to "manufacture consent" and silence dissent Dominant ideologies validate social realities	Socialization/oppression Belief systems (e.g. patriarchy) cause internalisation of inferiority, powerlessness, shame, anger, resignation, etc. Dominant ideologies and narratives in popular culture, education, and media reinforce bias and inequality and stifle other ways of thinking (e.g. women blame themselves for abuse) Crucial information is misrepresented or withheld Misinformation and disinformation that can polarise and create conflict among us or doubt in solutions	Challenge and disrupt repressive social norms and traditions Question taboos and use of shame/guilt to control Name and expose underlying interests and values driving political narratives Draw attention to contradictions and impacts of invisible power Understand fear as a tool of control and its impact on our bodies Engage in careful media analysis to sort out reality from misinformation	**Create shared awareness through analysing context, power through lived experience** Develop new agendas and our own narratives Foster critical consciousness, self-esteem, and solidarity Amplify non-dominant voices, ideas, views, and beliefs Influence and inform public discourse, attitudes, and behaviour Creatively produce media and cultural, artistic practices. Use music, songs, and popular culture Cultivate alternative ideas and models for economic, social, and ecological well-being
Systemic power – defining the logic of all power relationships Setting the codes of inequality, individualism, competition, exploitation – of people and nature; the use of violence for control based on capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy-racism, colonialism, imperialism	Preventing 'real' solutions, e.g. ending fossil fuel dependency Naturalising the way things are (e.g. trans is "abnormal") and patriarchy "protects women and children better" Preventing and demonising significant alternative economic approaches	Expose how the dominant logics are at work in policies, institutions, etc. and the effect they have Activate collective imagination and desire for futures that embody liberation, collective benefit, and planetary survival Lift up different ideological, political, cultural, and economic ideas and ways of living in order to break the hold of current systemic logics (e.g. Indigenous cosmovision, care economies, feminist just transition, solidarity economy, etc.)	**Reimagine the future, our path to liberation, and how we can live in balance with nature** Support social practices and rituals that preserve or recover ancestral knowledge and ways of thinking Create cooperatives, collectives, mutual aid, and other interdependent, alternative ways of living that address needs, care, and practise inclusive democracy. Autonomous - liberated zones or small alternative structures Eg. Ubuntu, Pekka Savings Cooperatives, Cooperation Jackson MS[2], Zapatistas[3], Rojava[4] Kurdish Forces, many indigenous communities

ACTIVITY 4:

COPINH's strategy

Materials: Case study: *Guardians of the River;* large copy of the handout: *Movement ecosystem* graphic on the wall; copies of handout: Power and Strategy worksheet; sticky notes or cards in four different colours.



Movement ecosystem plus strategies

Step 1: Connecting COPINH's power analysis and strategic choices

Plenary: Place a large Movement Ecosystem on the wall with space to add stickies around each strategy. Download, share, or refer to the example of a power and strategy matrix.

Use the *Power and Strategy worksheet* to take a more nuanced look at how different arenas of power require different strategies for resisting and building power. The two right hand columns invite different kinds of observations about strategy. In the column labelled "Engage, challenge, expose, and resist dominant power", note actions COPINH took to confront and shift the power dynamics and actors in the context. In the column "Build, create, and mobilise transformative power", note the ways in which COPINH built their transformative power, including the more internally focused activities that strengthened their cohesion.

Introduce the small group activity and form four small groups. Assign one colour of sticky note for each arena of power.

Small groups: Use the *Power and Strategy worksheet* to analyse the struggle of COPINH (and the wider movement) against the Agua Zarca Dam. For each arena of power, note specific examples of power over in the first column:

- Who and what are the actors, structures, and forces that contribute to the problems that COPINH is confronting?
- In the case of specific actors, what are their interests? Remember that strategies and power dynamics operate at local, national, regional, and international levels.

Note answers in any or all of the three columns:

- How does identity – particularly gender, ethnicity, class, and location – play out in each arena of power, both in terms of discrimination and violence, and in relation to strategy, as a potential source of community and narrative-cultural strategies?

In the second two columns, identify the strategies used by COPINH and their allies to challenge and build power in each arena – both to oppose the dam and to build and exercise their own power:

- What were the different entry points, angles and possibilities for challenging the construction of the dam and the political repression accompanying it?
- At the global level, how did the US Congress figure in COPINH's power analysis and strategies? What was the role of the legal system?
- What about other global, regional, and international institutions?
- How did COPINH and their allies build, mobilise, and exercise their power?
- How did COPINH engage, challenge and contest ideas, beliefs and narratives? How did they activate different belief systems and views of the world?

As a final step, pick key strategies (maximum three) used by COPINH or their allies, and write these on the sticky notes, using the colours assigned for each arena of power.

Plenary: Groups take turns to share highlights from the *power over* column, building on each other's contributions rather than repeating. Focus on how the different arenas of power intersect and involve converging structures, actors, and dynamics. Invite each group in turn to share the COPINH strategies they identified, starting with those for contesting visible power, then moving to hidden, invisible, and systemic.

Step 2: COPINH's Strategies in the movement ecosystem

Plenary: Examine the range of COPINH strategies in light of the broader movement ecosystem. Invite small groups to place their sticky notes on the Movement Ecosystem, near the relevant area of strategy.

Notice any patterns, such as colours of sticky notes clustered around certain kinds of strategies, or gaps where there are fewer strategies.

- How did COPINH build and mobilise their power to resist or block the building of the dam?
- What organised capacity was COPINH able to activate in their resistance – members, allies, etc?
- How did they use and influence legal mechanisms and policy spaces to advance and draw attention to their agenda and defend their rights?
- What resources, capacities and alliances did they require?
- How did they turn up the heat on decision makers and expose corrupt abuses of power through direct action?
- How did they continue to build and mobilise relationships with allies both inside and outside structures of power, within movements and across borders?
- How did their vision and values shape their strategy and their narrative, and serve as the foundation of their power?

Share and discuss the handout: Lessons from COPINH.

Step 3: Vision and values

"In our worldview, we are beings who come from the earth, the water and the corn. The Lenca people are ancestral guardians of the rivers… [taught] that giving our lives in various ways to protect the rivers is to give our lives for the well-being of humanity and of this planet." Berta Cacereres, Goldman Prize acceptance speech

Plenary: An effective long-term strategy is always anchored in a clear vision, explicit values, and a bold ambition or intention. COPINH's vision and values provided a continuous touchpoint for the political culture it seeks to create, and its community-building, demands, and narratives.

Buzz groups: Use stickies and a brainstorming process to generate words and phrases that capture COPINH's vision, values, and bold ambition.

Plenary: Read aloud the quote from Berta Cáceres' speech when she won the Goldman Environmental Prize (duplicated above). Discuss:

- How do you think COPINH's vision and values shaped their strategy and strengthened their base of community members and allies?
- How did COPINH's years of community building and other groundwork strengthen their power and fortify their resistance?
- From your own experience or study, how do vision and values shape and strengthen the strategies, agendas, and ways of working of organisations and movements?

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.

Power and Strategy worksheet

Contested arenas of power	**POWER OVER** **Power to control, exclude, privilege some groups and interests over others, coerce, divide, silence**	**CHANGE STRATEGIES and ACTIONS**	
		Engage, challenge, expose, and resist dominant power	**Build, create, and mobilise transformative power**
Visible power – making and enforcing the rules			
Hidden power – setting the agenda			
Invisible power – shaping norms and beliefs			
Systemic power – defining the logic of all power relationships			

Cultural strategies – in COPINH's case, rooted in indigenous identity, practices, and cosmovision – 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.[5]

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.

Aligning power analysis with possible strategies

These are some of the ways that analysis and strategy connect:

Visible power: Identify a specific decisionmaker plus the legal tools and opportunities to influence or target them; technical support in the form of policy and legal knowledge and research; allies inside; clear specific demands and talking points.

Hidden power: Conduct quality research to expose 'hidden' actors, their interests and relationships to formal power. Establish broad alliances and media connections. Develop

organisational capacity to mobilise virtual and in-person action. Create compelling messages, demands, and safety protocols.

Invisible power: Design processes for organising and developing leadership that build trust, solidarity, coordination and celebrate who we are. De-normalise and develop a critical analysis of harmful and oppressive norms and beliefs. Co-create and share narratives and messaging that communicate a different explanation of what needs to be change and a new vision of who you are and what you want.

Systemic power: Analyse how systemic power shapes the context and issues you are facing. Develop narratives to expose systemic problems and validate alternative ways of thinking and approaches. Create and claim autonomous spaces.

Being the change we seek

Tarso Ramos[6] says that in order to seed the change we seek, strategies must:

Dismantle misogyny and patriarchy (which are the building blocks of authoritarianism) and centralise both the personal and political, along with body autonomy.

Build the practice of sharing power across difference (racial/ethnic, religious, gendered, class, ideological); create new social and political relationships that accelerate these connections vs those that are divisive.

Expose authoritarian power, including in spheres of: military or police, paramilitaries, judiciary, parties and legislatures, media, narrative, ruling and business classes.

Provide for movement and community defence.

Contest pressive and exclusionary definitions of the collective (community, nation, 'the people') with compelling alternative assertions of the 'we'.

Theme 3:
Context and Moment

The choice and mix of strategies are shaped by many factors unique to every place, people, moment, set of issues and organisations. Careful (power) analysis of all of these determines the pathways for contesting and changing power.

For example, COPINH's strategic choices were shaped by specific contextual realities unique to Honduras and regional institutions unique to the Americas. Their organising led to a blockade of dam equipment in one moment, and a hearing at the Inter-American Human Rights Commission in another. Similarly, the decision to build their centre, Utopia, as a space for rituals and political education was driven by a sense that the recovery of Lenca identity and worldview would be central to a shared vision of the future to guide them, and to building the power needed to confront a formidable situation.

ACTIVITY 5:

What shapes strategic choices?

This process builds on Activity 3: Mapping the movement ecosystem and Activity 4: COPINH's strategies. The aim of this next activity is to identify and explore factors to consider – particularly trends and forces in a given context – in developing strategy and choosing tactics that build organisational power as well as advancing an agenda. You will draw on what was learned from the COPINH case study to analyse your own experiences and the constraints and possibilities in your context which inform your justice work.

Materials: Case study COPINH: *Guardians of the River in Honduras*; handout *Factors shaping strategic choices*; flipcharts, sticky notes

Make a large copy on a flipchart of the graphic *Components of a movement-building strategy.*

Individually: Reflecting on the key factors that shaped COPINH's strategies and choices, ask:

- What do you see as the most important factors about the context and moment that your own organisation must consider in making strategic choices?

Write two or three-word answers, each answer on a separate sticky note. Post your sticky notes on the flipchart, clustering them with other, similar ones.

Plenary: View the stickies together and discuss themes briefly.

Small groups: Discuss:

- What opportunities and enabling factors most influence your strategic choices and actions?
- What key limitations, constraints and risk factors shape your strategic choices?

Record your thoughts, one or two words each on sticky notes.

Plenary: Groups report and build on each other's input. They place each sticky near the most suitable of the Components of a movement-building strategy. Ask:

- How do these factors influence the choice of strategy?
- How do these factors shape the way your organisation builds and leverages its own sources of power?
- What do these factors mean for risk and safety?

Use the handout Factors shaping strategic choices to build on the discussion and the list you have generated.

Factors shaping strategic choices

Factors Trends, forces, and questions to consider in making strategic choices	**Considerations** Openings and opportunities Challenges and risks
Context and history What are the most important aspects of your analysis of power dynamics in the context? How does history shape this context in ways that you need to be aware of?	
Civic space What degree of civic space exists? What openings exist that you can take advantage of? Are there any spaces you can claim even if not intended for your use? What are the risks?	
Moment What political/ economic/ social dynamics exist that could create opportunities to mobilise and exercise power? What are the constraints and risks in the current moment?	
Entry points What issues and entry points might be most effective? What openings and opportunities exist to mobilise around your agendas? What risks or obstacles?	
Narratives and norms What are the narratives that dominate public debate? What beliefs and norms (forms of invisible and systemic power) do they reinforce and legitimise? What is the impact? What narratives, ideas and other cultural interventions are your organization or other social movement groups invoking, creating and promoting?	
Media and freedom of expression What is the degree of freedom of expression and media? What level of capacity do you have to strategically use the media - mainstream, progressive platforms, social media, etc? What opportunities and risks exist in relation to media access and coverage? What kinds of surveillance and censorship is present in our context?	
Capacity, resources, and reach What organisational capacities, resources, and relationships (e.g. members, allies) can you mobilise? How much alignment and commitment can you count on from your allies and members? What are the risks and challenges in this area?	

Making strategic choices

Context and history

The politics, history, culture, and society of any given place are critical, as they determine how the government functions and who it serves, who has economic power and who is most affected by inequalities. The social fabric – cohesiveness and community connections – also shape choices about organising and social conflict. Given a history of colonialism, imperialismm and globalisation, many decisions inside a country may be controlled by outside governments, banks, and corporations – and this creates both challenges and opportunities.

Civic space

What is the degree of political openness and basic freedoms and rights? Where are state repression and social violence happening, and misogyny tolerated and promoted? How do censorship and surveillance affect public discourse, expression, and activism and who do they affect?

Entry points

Some issues are more controversial than others. Those that generate the most conflict are often perceived as cultural – centring racism, religions, sexuality and gender – as well as economic access and the demands of the working class, poor, and marginalised. In an era of extremist and authoritarian politics, the state itself is highly contentious. In the PEKKA case study, Marginalised women organise in Indonesia, basic needs provided a less directly conflictual entry point for a strategy that eventually challenged patriarchy and capitalism and the cultural beliefs that sustain them.

The moment

Crises, scandals, natural disasters, and pivotal events (such as a pandemic or military coup) change the terrain. They may create even bigger possibilities to shape what's on the agenda and challenge dominant power or they may shut down or refocus other strategic possibilities. In the short term, major events like the sports events, concerts, a visiting dignitary, or a national holiday can create opportunities for visibility and attention.

Narratives, media, and freedom of expression

Popular culture shapes politics and beliefs and is central to messaging, narratives and outreach strategies. However, the degree of access and surveillance determines how useful social media and digital platforms will be for connecting, educating, and mobilising. Since sports, music, and popular shows shape perceptions and public discourse, they offer possibilities for change strategies.

Capacity, resources, clout, and reach

The size, scope, reputation, relationships, and reach of an organisation or network obviously determine many strategic choices. These determine how much clout an organisation can leverage to draw attention and open doors. 'Resources' refers to both funding and people – although more funding and more people do not automatically translate to greater capacity. A movement that relies on vast active constituencies though sparse funding may have far more reach than a large well-funded institution.

Crisis is the new normal

This is a time of poly-crisis. Climate and ecological crises. A democracy crisis. A crisis of

inequality. To build and transform power amid these and many other, simultaneous crises, movements can keep six priorities in mind.[7]

Be nimble: Crises open windows for change, but those windows don't stay open forever. Prepare organisations to be nimble so they are ready to adapt as a crisis unfolds.

Go bold: In moments of crisis, it is more possible to advance bold demands for structural reform than it is in normal times. Millions of people go through intense struggles in moments of crisis, and their immediate needs mandate solutions that go beyond what established mechanisms can address. As a result, bold demands often make more sense than incremental reforms in moments of crisis.

Make meaning: In moments of crisis, people need to be able to make meaning out of their changing reality. Because the old ways of understanding are inadequate to explain peoples' lived experiences during a crisis, we have openings to challenge dominant narratives. But we can only do that if we have clarity on the story we need to tell and clear ways to get that story out to the people who need to hear it. That story needs to connect to the ways in which people are experiencing the crisis and offer a narrative that connects those experiences to the bold reforms that we are advancing. If we miss this opening to consolidate a new story to make meaning of the moment, people will fall back into old narratives based on fear, scarcity and division.

Build power: During moments of crisis, our organisations can grow much more rapidly than in normal times. In a crisis, huge numbers of people are open to stepping out of their daily routines and getting involved in social change efforts. We need a plan to quickly build mass mobilisations so we can both inform what happens and absorb the individuals who become involved.

Build a bigger 'we': In moments of crisis, our organisations can quickly move into much stronger positions of leadership. Changing circumstances can encourage us to build alliances with other organisations that had previously been distant or even antagonistic to us. We can also move beyond primarily leading our own communities to leading much broader sections of society.

Plan for backlash and heightened risk: When we challenge power structures and the status quo, we need to expect backlash in the form of threats, hostile narratives, criminalisation and repression. It is vital that we integrate strategies for safety, both individual and collective, physical and digital, into our organising for social change. The toll and strain of pushing for change, also requires attention to care for our hearts, minds and bodies.

See JASS' toolkit on collective protection and wellbeing: Our Rights, Our Safety.

For everything we want to do, we must first be well-organised"

– Bettina Cruz

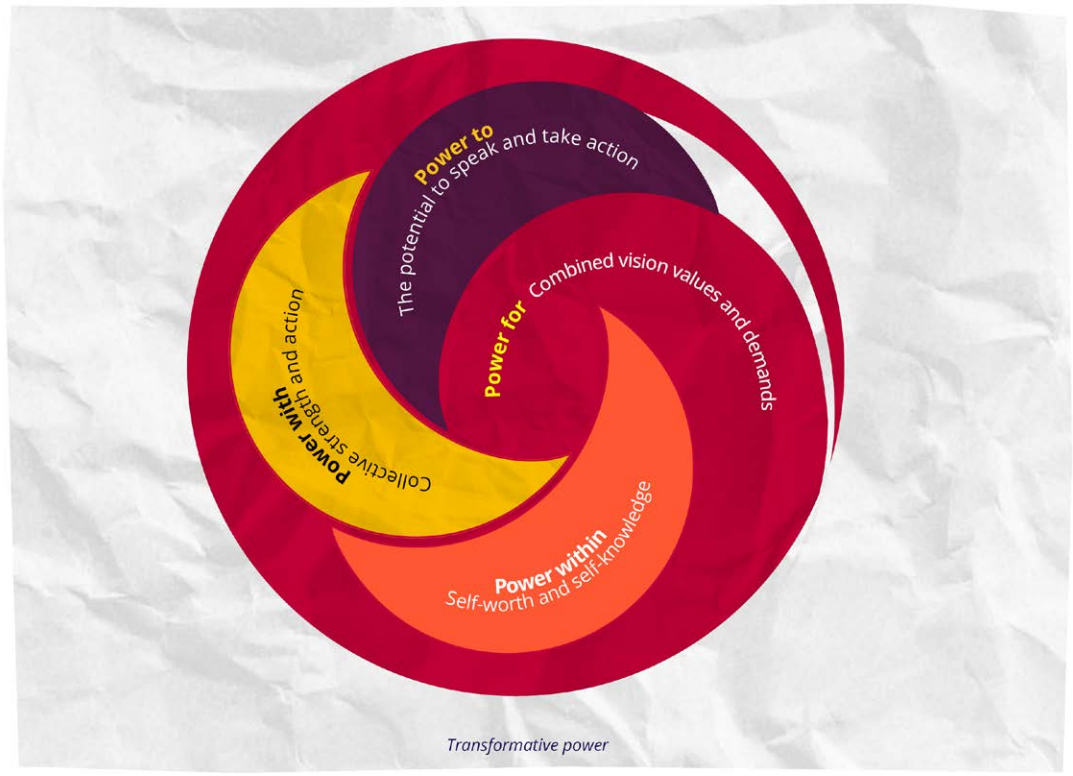
Theme 4:
Building and Exercising Power

Building and exercising our power is an essential part of movement-building. Many attribute social and political change to heroes (think of Rosa Parks or Wangari Maathai) as if they spontaneously stood up to injustice in unexpected moments, or to hashtags that appear out of nowhere to galvanise people. These lone-hero narratives render invisible all the organising and power-building that enabled such leaders to speak truth to power. 'The Arab Spring' of the early 2010s, for example, is often attributed to a handful of social media activists and a hashtag, ignoring the many years of organising by trade unions, women's groups, students and others that preceded that uprising. In the US and beyond, media stories about #MeToo credit Hollywood celebrities for kicking off a movement when, in truth, the more recent mobilisations are built upon decades of workplace organising by women workers, feminists, and allies around the globe.

> Building power – the process of generating *power within, power to, power with* and *power for* – involves a range of strategies that interlink the individual and the collective, leadership-building and organising, networking and defining shared visions, narratives, and agendas.

Over time, investing in movement infrastructure enables organised, decentralised action at multiple levels by a vast network of connected leaders, activists, groups, institutions, unions, think tanks, media endeavours, people who care, and, in some contexts, political parties.

Building coalitions and connections is not easy because of polarised politics and distrust, and all the different ways that structural discrimination, prejudice, and power over play out between us. How we lead, support, and respect the leadership of others can build trust and effective collaboration. If ignored, the power imbalances inherent in differences (such as lived experience, class, race-ethnicity, gender, and sexuality) create conflict and prevent coming together. Forging authentic and intersectional connections across different organisations and communities, however, can create strong alliances and more powerful agendas.



Transformative power

ACTIVITY 6:

What generates transformative power?

Materials: Large copies or hand-drawn versions of *Transformative power* and *Movement ecosystem graphics*, coloured cards

Plenary: Ask:

- From your experience, what strategies and processes generate and build power within, *power to*, *power with*, and *power for*?

Ask people to write short answers on coloured cards and cluster them on the Transformative power graphic.

Small groups: People self-select or divide according to forms of transformative power. Take turns telling stories that illustrate what you've seen and experienced regarding your form of transformative power. Choose one example to act out in a five-minute skit.

Plenary: Groups present their skit. After each one, discuss:

- What does the skit tell us about what it takes to build this kind of transformative power? Any 'aha' moments?
- How do the different forms of power contribute to building power overall? How do we know?
- How do these transformative power strategies strengthen the wider movement ecosystem?

Refer to *Strategies for transformative power* and select examples to discuss further.

Strategies for transformative power

Type of power	Processes that build individual and collective power
Power within	Safe spaces to be ourselves and confront internalised oppression, power, and privilege amongst us Telling stories and learning from lived experience Healing and heart–mind–body processes that acknowledge trauma and enable us to care for ourselves Building critical consciousness Recovery and practice of cultural rituals that affirm shared identity and values Music, artistic expression, dancing Somatic work Belonging and common ground
Power to	Leadership development and skills Learning by doing e.g. leading a meeting, speaking in public Taking action together to solve problems Speaking out on behalf of others and oneself Gaining new knowledge, gathering information and research Exposing injustice Recovery and practice of cultural rituals Practices that support well-being and groundedness Mobilised actions together
Power with	Organising and building relationships of trust and common purpose Taking collective action to solve problems, including direct action Shared power analysis Developing a shared vision, common values, and proposals or demands Creating organisational structures that validate different capacities and leadership Rituals affirming a shared identity and dignity Humour, dancing, music, and joyful connection Conflict negotiation Common narratives that bring together different ways of thinking
Power for	Imagining a different and just future Creating alternative models Developing clear proposals and demands for change Making values explicit and putting them into practice in an organisation Slogans, messaging, stories, and narratives that project a perspective that challenges power

ACTIVITY 7:

What blocks or generates collective power?

Materials: Flipchart with stickies/markers. Copies of handout: *Organising vs mobilising*.

Plenary: Experience and history demonstrate what prevents people from coming together and what helps people to converge.[8] As discussed in Chapter 4: Intersectionality, systems of oppression within movements can undermine organising effort while, by contrast, political choices and commitments can build equitable, aligned relationships for greater impact.

Small groups: Discuss, with examples:

- What undermines or creates conflict in our movement formations, communities or organisations when we work together to address issues?
- How can our differences in terms of identity and life experience create conflict or confusion?
- What kinds of behaviour, approaches and ways of working across differences enable us to work together better and feel stronger?

Prepare a five-minute skit or a group drawing to share with the whole group, dramatising two scenarios. what undermines and what enables coming together.

Plenary: Groups present their skits or drawings. Invite discussion after each one. Once all the groups have presented, together identify and name the enabling and undermining features. Note responses in two labelled columns:

- What prevents or undermines coming together and building our power?
- What enables us to come together for change?

Discuss each point on the list drawing from experience and examples.

Distil a list of the essentials for building collective power. Each person notes one essential factor that they feel needs attention in their organisation or group on a sticky and posts it on a separate flipchart or virtual board.

Distribute the handout: *Organising vs mobilising* and take a moment to read it. Discuss:

- What is the difference between organising and mobilising? How are they connected?
- What are some examples of ways that people have organised or mobilised to create change?
- What can activists do differently to support either organising or mobilising?

Draw out the differences between organising and mobilising and discuss why this matters. to *Strategies for transformative power* and select examples to discuss further.

What prevents or undermines our coming together and building our power?	What enables us to come together for change?
Lack of clear goals and shared values	Shared vision, values, and goals – a common problem or enemy
Lack of clarity about plans and actions	Clear sense of purpose and actions
Not having a voice, not being seen, being silenced and undervalued	Recognition of multiple leadership roles and opportunities to grow
Sexism, racism/anti-blackness, homophobia, classism, ageism, and so on. Treating everyone as if they were 'the same'. Overt and less overt ways of excluding, embarrassing, invisibilising, silencing.	Creating safe space to address and recognise how differences are shaped by systemic power and result in levels power and privilege. Making political commitments to build equitable, inclusive spaces and leadership.
No space for disagreement or dealing with conflicts	Acknowledgement of differences and space to discuss and continuously refresh common ground and connections amid disagreements
Lack of transparency and clarity about how decisions are made and about resources	Being clear and transparent about how decisions are made and what resources are available
Top down and strict hierarchies	Tapping into multiple sources of knowledge
Relentless pace, lack of recognition, and unclear expectations	Space for rest, reflection, recognition, and renewal of commitment
Cliques and in-groups	Joy, rituals, dancing, creativity
Infiltration and divisiveness	A sense of belonging

See more tools, approaches, and ideas about building collective power, organising, and dealing with conflict in We Rise: Building Up and Chapter 17 in A *New Weave of Power, People and Politics*, pg. 320-324 on conflict.

Over time, feminist movement-building connects and strengthens groups of people whose collaboration fosters skilled activist leadership, organised capacity for sustained action, and the building of movement infrastructure. These kinds of interconnected relationships and shared commitments are the bedrock of collective power".

- Shereen Essof [9]

Organising vs mobilising

People often conflate organising with mobilising.[10] While they are connected, they demand different strategies.

Organising means bringing people together to find common ground around a shared injustice and problems. Through dialogue (or popular and political education process), they build political relationships and consider solutions that become a specific demand or forward-looking agenda over time. Organising happens in phases. It might start with loose formations but ultimately seeks to widen, multiply, and diversify the people who come together through alliances and networks with a sense of belonging, shared vision, and values that are key to movements. Organising can happen face-to-face or – especially in dangerous contexts – virtually or both. Many activists frame the challenge of organising as "How do we build our base or constituency?"

Mobilising refers to sets of actions taken to activate and expand supporters through outreach to garner attention and to pressure for change using the power of numbers and virtual as well as face-to-face actions.

Mobilising tends to be short-term and tactical while organising means investing in leadership and skills, including the capacity to mobilise.

Organising isn't rocket science, but it is a serious skill and a craft. A good organising conversation [is] 70% listening and 30% talking. It is not Facebooking, it is not tweeting ... those are mobilising tools."

- Jane MacAlvey and Michael R, Jacobin.[11]

We can't lose connection to the human part of this work: our human connections and humanity. The worst is when we feel alone and isolated. A call, a conversation matters. Alliances matter. We are not alone. We are all connected."

– Miriam Miranda, Honduran activist

Theme 5:
Engaging and Resisting

Policy and legal advocacy – focused on visible power – tend to dominate public perceptions about how change happens. In many contexts, engaging with, reforming, and using the mechanisms of formal decision-making – whether through government, corporate, civil society, trade union, or religious structure (among many other examples) – remains a critical tool for influencing and changing power.

Policy and advocacy efforts may be strategic in specific moments or contexts, but not always. Some movements choose not to get involved in formal lobbying or advocacy directed at governments and to focus instead on shifting power in other arenas, such as generating new narratives, investing in political education that challenges the dominant norms and beliefs of invisible power, building their own alternatives, creating autonomous communities – self-defined and self-governing groups – or resisting through protests, marches and occupations. For example:

- Occupy Wall Street activists in the US and beyond chose to disengage from policy work because addressing inequality was not even on the policy agenda in any meaningful way. Their goal was to use a visible encampment in the midst of the financial district in New York city to expose the realities of who capitalism serves (the 1%) – and rally the 99% to get economic inequality and justice on the agenda.[12]
- Autonomous actions and spaces organised by activists and movements have produced liberated zones and sovereign communities throughout history, such as the anarchist collectives in Spain and the Zapatistas in Southern Mexico, various kinds of commons and communitarian governance, workers' collectives, and self-defined solidarity economies and community spaces. Autonomous community-building has led to policy change and state engagement through smart media and narrative strategies such as in the cases of the Zapatistas, Cooperation Jackson in the US, the transboundary indigenous water governance in the Coast Salish Sea, and the Arvari River Parliament in India.
- In the case study PEKKA: *Marginalised women organise in Indonesia*, autonomous spaces became the foundation for building cooperatives that enabled women to organise and gain collective economic and political influence.

A key element of strategy is to determine if, how, and when to engage with visible power. However, not all opportunities to engage are strategic. Numerous other manuals detail how to conduct lobbying and advocacy. Here, we offer tools for deciding whether to engage, and also when to resist – either instead of engaging, or in a combination through 'inside-outside' strategies.

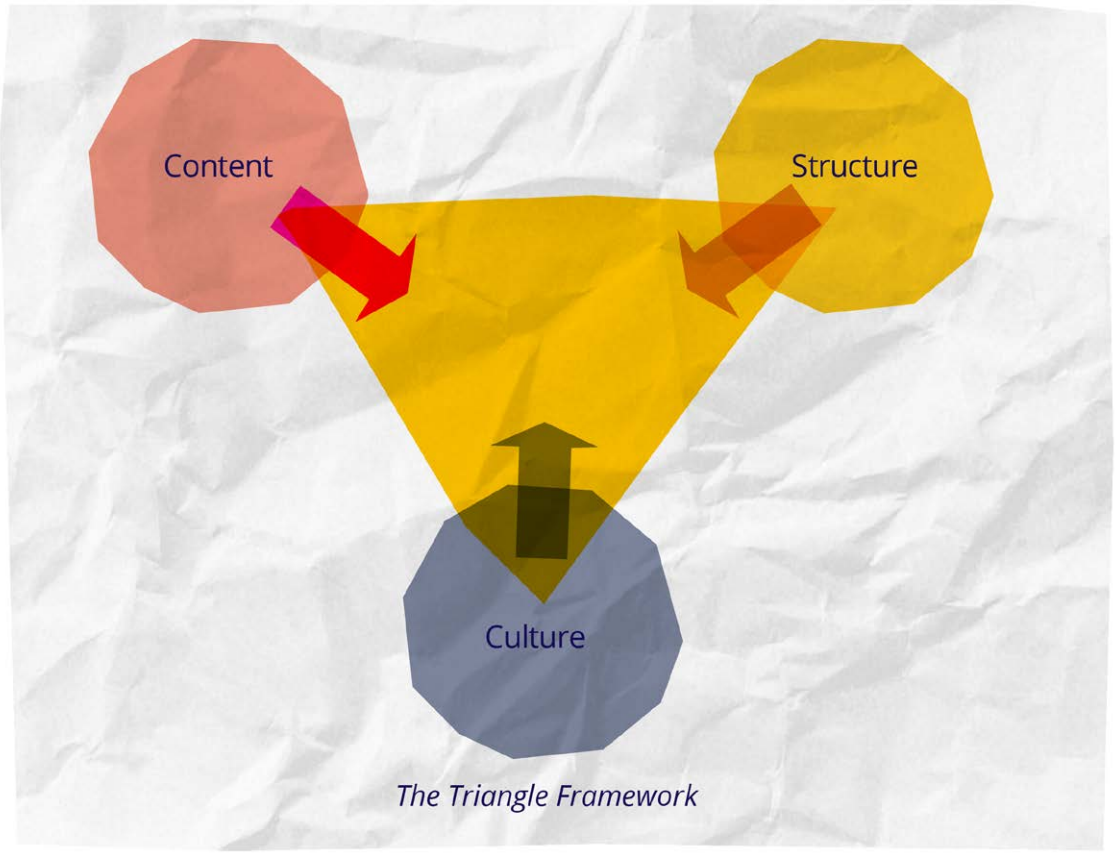
"Revolution cannot happen without reform — new structures, processes and relationships of power cannot exist absent direct challenges to the current structure".

- Alicia Garza, from Black Lives Matter in the US[13]

Aligning advocacy strategies with mass mobilisations can create pressure on decision-makers and shift narratives so that allies 'on the inside' can highlight the costs of inaction and create more receptivity, making lobbying easier. 'Inside-outside strategies' combine actions within the halls of power and outside the doors simultaneously. The combination of street action and social media, for example, can turn up the heat on political and economic decisionmakers and forces.

The Triangle Framework

This three-way analysis guides where and how to focus visible power strategies. It divides visible power into two domains – Content and Structure – and considers how these are influenced by Culture, the invisible power of norms and beliefs. This framework overlaps in some ways with the four arenas of power.



The Triangle Framework

Content: what's written in and what's deliberately left out of laws, policies, budgets, and the rules, and who are the people in charge of making those rules. Bias and discrimination are reinforced by what's there and what's not there when rights aren't recognised, and by who gets to decide.

Structure: the interpretation, implementation, and enforcement, of those rules by judges, police, military, legislators, civil servants and managers – the people and institutions responsible for implementing the rules, regulations and standards, along with their enforcement mechanisms and implementers. All too often, these are biased and serve the interests of those in power. This is why many organisations seek to retrain judges and police as part of their change strategies. Holding decisionmakers to account is critical, to ensure that policies are created and implemented in a way that serves the people most affected. Even when a decent law exists, biased police or judges serving the interests of

those in power tend to reinforce injustice.

Culture: the norms, values, beliefs and traditions that can either justify or upend inequality and injustice. Artistic and creative expressions – music, art, dance – can mirror, reinforce, or disrupt these beliefs.

By precisely locating how the Content and the Structure contribute to injustice – and potentially, to addressing a key aspect of that injustice – the triangle can help sharpen strategies that engage and use visible or formal power for change.

The framework is a reminder that changing laws and elections – examples of strategies to reform governments – can advance our justice values without fundamentally shifting the underlying norms and beliefs that uphold power. Integral aspects of engaging visible power, therefore, can include narratives that affirm our power together, educating and organising people to claim their rights, and demanding that the system treat people with dignity and fairness.

	How and where does this contribute to the problem or situation? (local, national, regional, global)	**How and where might you make change for justice and toward a solution?**	**What is needed for an effective strategy? (allies, information, skills, clout)**
Content Laws, policies and rules (is a right or harm not specified?)			
Structure Enforcement mechanisms (courts, commissions, management, boards, police, etc)			
Culture Beliefs, norms, ideologies, narratives.			

ACTIVITY 8:

Triangle analysis

This optional activity is most useful for those seeking to engage with visible power/formal decision-making structures through advocacy and lobbying around a clearly defined agenda and problem. It benefits from an earlier power analysis, pinpointing how visible power shapes the problem being addressed and can also contribute to its solution, including identifying key actors and decisionmakers.

Materials: Previous power analyses of issues people are working on and examples of visible power. Handout: *The triangle framework*.

Plenary: Briefly review the meanings of visible, hidden, invisible and systemic power. Focus in particular on visible power – the formal rules and decision-making structures of any institution and space, such as governments, civil society organisations, churches, mosques, corporations, the stock market, and the internet. Every organised place and space has its written rules and 'deciders' and its hidden and invisible power dynamics as well. Remind people how 'culture' or invisible power affects the implementation or passage of laws and policies that deal with inequality, violence, and rights.

Recall or brainstorm the kinds of strategies needed to engage visible power. Examples discussed earlier in this Guide include:

- Elections and appointments
- Lawsuits
- Law and policy reform
- Shadow reports
- Educating judges and police
- Budget advocacy
- Documenting and denouncing violations of rights

Introduce and discuss the handout and address any questions.

Small groups: Each group creates a grid with three columns on flipchart paper. Use this to explore the issue or case study.

Cluster responses to the questions in the grid, with reference to the triangle. Since visible power dynamics and forces play out at local, national, regional and global levels, identify the levels in your case and use different colours or stickies to illustrate each.

Plenary: Groups report back and everyone takes a 'gallery walk' to examine each others' grids.

Discuss key takeaways about strategies to engage, reform, and exercise visible power. To deepen discussion, ask:

- What are some of the key strategies and opportunities for engaging and using visible power?
- What are some of the ingredients that make 'engage and reform' strategies work?

Draw on, share, and add to the handout: *When and how to engage visible power.*

Spaces of power: when and where to engage or resist?

All spaces where policy decisions and issues are being discussed are political and contested. When people, activists, and civil society groups are invited by officials to 'engage' in formal policy processes, it's worth assessing whether and how to do so, and when to consider the power of claiming and creating autonomous spaces.

Policy engagement may not make sense as the most strategic use of your resources and time in all moments and contexts. Being strategic is not simply a question of whether you can impact policy or its enforcement. Sometimes, engaging with global, state, corporate, civic or religious actors can be an opportunity for new alliances, gathering information, gaining clout or shifting the agenda. But is it worth the necessary investment in resources, preparation, and credibility to engage in these spaces? What other spaces can be claimed, created or strengthened to build your power and influence?

For the past few decades, activists have used versions of this framework to assess the different kinds of policy and political spaces they can engage in or create to effect change.[14] The framework helps groups to analyse the potential opportunities and entry points for engagement and resistance in terms of how decisions are made and whether participation is 'strategic' in four kinds of spaces[15].

Spaces of Power: When and where how to engage or resist?

A closed space is controlled by an elite group of decisionmakers by virtue of their position or appointment; it is usually neither transparent nor open to public participation. Examples include legislative committees , councils, and spaces for making security, trade, and corporate policy.

Strategic considerations: Are the decisions made in this space vital to your change agenda? Can this space be influenced through advocacy, shareholder or electoral campaigns? Is it possible to use exposure strategies (revealing leaked information) or to mobilise outside pressure and resistance to demand transparency or participation?

An invited space is created by policymakers who want to engage civil society groups (under pressure or for other reasons) in consultation. Usually, the agenda, who participates and how remains tightly controlled. Policymakers can use these spaces for meaningful input but more often to create a veneer of legitimacy and democracy. Examples include the UN climate talks, Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) annual meetings, and participatory processes at different levels convened by public or private agencies.

Strategic considerations: Considering the financial costs of participating in a policy space (including preparation), will the opportunity strengthen relationships with insiders, advance the agenda, create an opportunity to build alliances, educate leaders on the process, and/or move your agenda forward? When activists choose to participate, their presence may be as useful or more so to the powerholders convening the space than to the activists themselves or their agenda. Will your agenda be co-opted for a purpose that you don't support? Conversely, however, it can be useful to gather information, network, and gain visibility and voice in an invited space.

A claimed space, by contrast, is created by civil society or informal groups specifically to challenge and question the legitimacy of a closed or invited space and in order to engage with decision-makers around the civic group's agenda, not that of decision-makers. Examples are a parallel conference or an autonomous space with or alongside a UN conference, the COP meetings, the World Economic Forum (Davos), or other officially convened processes.

Strategic considerations: Will the strategies to claim a parallel space communicate clearly to decision-makers that their agenda and their engagement with civil society is inadequate? Will a claimed space help build your alliances and consensus around demands and propositions and serve as leverage in advocacy and strategic communications aimed at the policy process you're claiming space from? Can you invite some decisionmakers to join you?

Created spaces are autonomous spaces defined by civil society, such as the World Social Forum or local or national alliances where the agenda and who participates are entirely in the hands of activists and change makers. These are spaces in which to exchange ideas, build solidarity, and forge common visions, values and agendas to connect movements and change makers across borders informally and formally.

Strategic considerations: Is this a moment in which we face such great divisive forces and siloing that we need to shift our resources and energy to creating our own spaces in order to forge an alternative agenda for the future? Can we create and sustain our own processes of alliances and resistance while also influencing and engaging with formal power-holders?

Key strategies and opportunities to 'engage and use' visible power include:

- Litigation
- Lobbying and advocacy to change laws
- Elections and appointments of key decision-makers, judges, commissioners, etc.
- Media strategies to expose corruption and make the case
- Generating alternative research and policy proposals
- Utilising commissions to make the case
- Action research and participatory consultations around laws, referenda, etc.
- Pressing for accountability and funding for existing laws or policies
- Budget tracking
- Training and 'sensitising' civil servants, managers, or implementers
- Using regional and global human rights mechanisms to draw attention to violations and expose abuses, create pressure

When the context is too risky to directly challenge actors at the local or country level, exposing the corporate actor or state actor by focusing on an angle involving the international financial institutions, bilateral agencies, and the UN human rights system

Ingredients for successful 'engage and reform' strategies include:

- Access and relationships with selected allies on the 'inside' of formal structures
- Allies with professional expertise (such as lawyers for litigation or policy advocates)
- Quality research to gather information (for example, participatory action research to raise awareness and organise communities, as well as generating information)
- A clear focus and case to be made, actionable by decision-makers
- Visibility and support from 'outside'
- Connections to journalists and effective digital and media strategies

- Targeting and putting pressure on international financial institutions or corporations that may be more sensitive to public exposure than national governments are
- Using human rights mechanisms and spaces for leverage and attention, and to build alliances

Even when focused on specific laws and policies, it is important to align the allies and strategies working on all the arenas of power simultaneously, in order to create pressure and build broader public support and constituencies. And as we will discuss later in this chapter, it is also important to keep in mind the need to consider other strategies of resistance and autonomous spaces.

Spaces of Power exist across many different levels, from the local to the global. The Power Cube is a useful three-dimensional tool for exploring the interaction of power, spaces, and levels, and the implications for joining up strategies for change across these dimensions.[16]

ACTIVITY 9:

To engage or not?

Materials: Handout: *When and how to engage visible power*

Plenary: Begin with an open discussion by asking:

- How do you determine whether or how to engage in policy or use legal strategies to advance your agenda?

Point out that many women's groups, for example, engage with the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York each year in March. Some have an explicit strategy to lobby governments on the content of resolutions and agendas, while the majority come to network with each other and donors.

- Is this a policy space that merits the costs of travel, hotels, and time?
- Can we claim and reshape existing political spaces to serve our goals? Or do we need to create our own political spaces that enable us to set the agenda, speak out, and focus on the most important questions for ourselves?

Invite people to name examples of lobbying and policy advocacy work they have been involved in or political spaces they have created. Select three or four examples to be examined in small groups. Introduce the framework Policy spaces: to engage or not? from the handout as a tool for assessing whether and how to engage in policy work.

Small groups: Each group addresses the questions in relation to a different example of policy advocacy. Alternatively, the group discusses their own experience.

- Assess the policy spaces you've engaged in: what was your purpose?
- Which of the spaces in the framework describes the space(s) you engaged in, and why?
- What were you able to accomplish in the space(s)?
- What kinds of strategies might each space require to be strategic?

Plenary: Groups present their analysis for discussion.

Go on to explore what lessons or insights can be applied to other policy engagement opportunities. Distil the key considerations for deciding how and whether to engage, using this checklist:

- What are the opportunities to shape the agenda in the space?
- If engaging, what difference will this make for advancement of your strategy?
- If there isn't much opportunity to shape the space or policy,
- How will the space enable relationship-building among activists, donors and/or with decisionmakers?
- Will there be an opportunity for activists and leaders to learn new skills and gather new information?
- Is this an opportunity to gain legitimacy and visibility for your agenda, organisations and leaders?
- What is the opportunity cost of not engaging? What could you do instead given the resources?
- What is the cost–benefit analysis?
- If you decide to engage, who are the most important power-holders in the space, and how can you build or utilise your connection with them?
- What do you want to achieve and what would be success in terms of the visibility + legitimacy of your agenda and demands, of your alliances and relationships, or your positioning for future advocacy?
- Who should represent your initiative and what will it take to ensure that whomever leads is fully briefed, equipped and supported to ensure learning and confidence?
- What kinds of materials will you need to draw attention to your agenda in the space?
- How do you ensure that there is adequate preparation and follow up?

This indigenous community from southeastern Guatemala oppose the Escobal silver mine, the world's second largest silver deposit. The mining of silver has polluted water and soil and displaced whole communities in the region. Xinka organisations have allied with rural farmers, other indigenous organisations, and human rights groups to defend their rights, land, and water. It has been a bloody struggle with the killing and detention of activists.

With the signature of the Peace Accords in 1996, the Xinka were finally recognised as one of the four Peoples in Guatemala. (The others are Mayan, Garifuna, and Meztizo.) Their political-cultural strategy involved years of community education and rituals to reclaim their own history and identity, while the legal dimensions of their struggle involved lawyers and human rights experts. Recognition as indigenous people entitled them to the rights under ILO Resolution 169 to free, prior, and informed consent on their land, an essential tool in their struggle against the massive mine.

The Xinka trace their history back hundreds of years in Guatemala. In recent decades, they have built their organising power with allies and advocated for formal legal recognition as indigenous people At the forefront of the struggle is the Xinka Parliament, representing more than 200,000 indigenous people across 13 communities in southern Guatemala. Women leaders play a major role. As they

put their lives on the line in the blockades, Xinka women also organise within their communities and movements to challenge traditional gender roles and gender-based violence.

The Xinka first achieved a ruling from the Guatemalan Constitutional Court that suspended mining operations until the government could undertake a consultation process consistent with ILO Convention 169. Initially, the Xinka Parliament was excluded from the consultation process, but the Xinka combined a women-led direct action with a legal strategy to temporarily block the mine, while resetting the conditions to ensure a robust consultation and consent process.

In late 2020, they succeeded in securing a commitment from the government to recognise their 59 delegates. The Xinka-led consultation process – in the context of attacks by mining security and police – relied on the collaboration of outside experts but was designed to strengthen their leadership and organisation in addition to generating evidence to make their case. The evidence showed toxicity in the water and soil that is affecting health and undermining the fruit production that Xinka depend on.[17]

ACTIVITY 10:

Inside–outside strategies

Materials: Handout – either Xinka indigenous people's inside–outside strategiesor COPINH: Guardians of the River in Honduras.

Plenary: Moving an agenda forward often demands a combination of engagement with formal decision-making and pressure created by mass mobilisation and other forms of resistance and protest. Referred to as inside-outside or 'sandwich strategies'[1], they demand careful coordination and planning between different types of organisations and leaders with different orientations and capacities.

Invite people to reflect on their experience with advocacy. Ask:

- What does it take to be heard and get to the table of decision-making or have your demands considered? And – more specifically:
- What kinds of actions and steps were essential, in order to be taken seriously by decision makers?
- What skills, resources, and alliances did that take?
- What were some of the biggest challenges?
- What tensions existed between groups working inside the halls of power and groups mobilising outside? What are some of the ways to overcome them?

Small groups: Read the case study and discuss:

- What do you learn about visible power and engagement strategies from this example?
- What are the main distinctions between the legal strategies and the mobilisation strategies? How are they interdependent?
- What are the limitations and success factors involved?

Plenary: Groups share their insights from the short case. Points to note:

- The importance of gaining formal recognition of rights as leverage and the limits of those rights when power is intent on its agenda.
- The mix of alliances – including outside expertise in service to the community – as a critical dimension of defending rights in the visible arena.
- Political organising and a shared sense of identity and history as the foundation for a long-term strategy and mobilising and sustaining a struggle that has many layers.
- Gathering information and analysis as a strategy for organising and leadership development for the community, not only the domain of outside professionals.
- The recognition over time and through conversation of political differences, unique roles, and interdependence between groups that focus on lobbying inside the halls of power and those that mobilise outside.

Draw from your own experience to emphasise the importance of aligning inside and outside strategies.

The election of these candidates is often incorrectly described as a shift from protest to policy. We did not leave the streets for the ballot box — we found the power at the intersection of those tactics. The same organisers who mobilised thousands in defense of Black lives built strong enough campaigns to shift the consciousness of an electorate, and voters showed up at the polls to fuel the election of aligned candidates".

– Kayla Reed and Blake Strode[19]

We mobilize "the struggle in the street to make demands in moments when the structures of the state and power did not listen to us... but they [protest and policy advocacy] shouldn't be divided by differences in strategy".

– Berta Cáceres, 2015

ACTIVITY 11:

Why and how to resist

Resistance strategies are an essential part of transforming power. Blockades, protests, marches, boycotts, strikes, and occupations are just a few examples of 'direct action' to physically impede or expose abuses of power while creating pressure on formal power to advance your agenda and shape public debate.

Not all resistance strategies are direct action, however. Creating autonomous initiatives that embody just, regenerative propositions and values (like the Zapatistas in Mexico, for example) can also be resistance, as can small acts of rebellion or 'crossing the line'. Acts of autonomy and rebellion can be powerful ways of communicating an alternative, or what has been called 'the threat of a good example'. History is full of examples of washer women or mothers stopping their 'invisible' care work as a form of resistance. In recent years, influential resistance strategies – the five-month movement mobilisation in Guatemala to stop a coup, Podemos in Spain, and Occupy Wall Street in the US – utilised strategic communications and social media to ramp up their outside influence in order to disrupt or change the narrative, and create public pressure for change. 'Outside strategies' – coordinated street and virtual action – can turn up the heat and pressure policymakers to take action.

Materials: Sticky notes, handout: *The basics of resistance and direct action*

Small groups: Reflect on your own experience with resistance strategies or that of a group you know of. Alternatively, discuss one of the case studies.

- Describe examples of resistance. What was the action? What were some of the key elements (for example, the number of people, target, and messages)?
- What motivated this resistance?
- What were some of the challenges?
- What was achieved?

Note one-word answers on coloured stickies – a different colour each for *Why? Challenges? Impact?*

Plenary: Each group shares examples and posts their sticky notes. Bring out additional examples from the handout. Conclude by discussing the multiple purposes and key characteristics of resistance strategies.

Basics of resistance and direct action

Non-violent direct action is mobilised when (for example):

- Powerful interests or decisionmakers are not responding or listening to opposition or demands for change
- A grave injustice, abuse, political attacks, and/or violence are taking place and no one seems to be stopping them
- Unchecked corruption and abuse by dominant interests need to be exposed

Effective strategies to mobilise resistance[20] include:

- Prior organising to ensure a significant number of people are involved
- Creative actions and messages, including costuming and performance
- A clear target and objective
- Shared specific demands
- Many different opportunities for a variety of people and organisations to be involved, lead, be visible, engage, and connect with each other
- Only a few, short speeches at any event, with more elements such as music for collective energy
- Adequate resources and support for advance organising and logistics
- Affirmation that "we're in this together"
- Actions and ways of working that communicate an alternative narrative
- Diverse organisations and leaders working in alliance
- Virtual and in-person actions in coordination
- A through risk and safety plan to provide protection and legal support, in person and digital
- A shared analysis and awareness of possible backlash, violence, and repercussions

In closed and highly repressive regimes, decentralised and invisible ways of connecting and acting are essential.

ACTIVITY 12:

Actions around the world

Materials: Compile photos and brief explanations of resistance and protest actions from around the world and/or locally, recent or from history. A few examples are provided here, but add your own.

Alternatively, ask two or three resource persons or group members to prepare 10-minute stories of their experiences in resistance and protest action. Each story should include a photograph or video and explain:

- What was the strategy or action? Why? What were the goals?
- Who was involved and how was it organised?
- What were the key features of the action?
- What were the demands and messages?
- What challenges and risks were foreseen, unexpected, and/ or mitigated?
- What different kinds of impact resulted from this action

Plenary: Introduce the examples or resource people. After the presentations, invite discussion. Compare key features and differences.

Alternatively, give out photographs of examples of protest, resistance, or direct action, together with background information or links. People discuss (possibly in small groups or pairs):

- What is happening in this photo? What is the context and why is it happening?
- What does the image communicate?
- Which image feels most moving or inspiring to you, and why?
- What level of risk was involved, do you think?

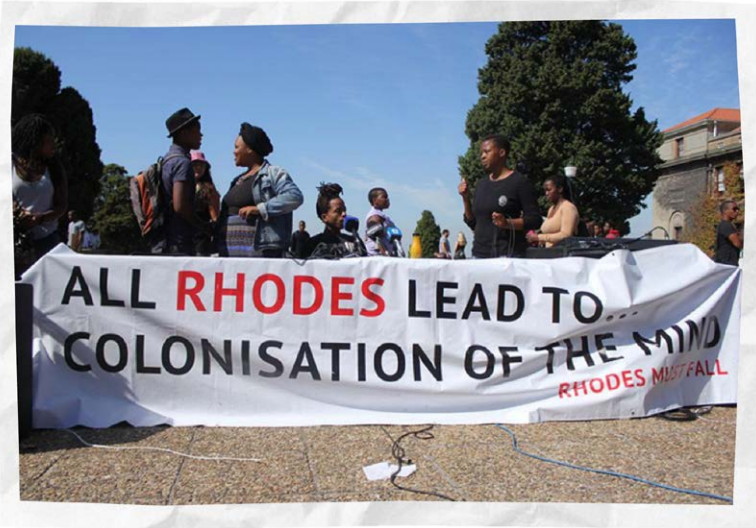
Stories and images of resistance

Protests against a military dictatorship and coup in Myanmar

In 2021, the military seized power and clamped down on dissent in Myanmar, jailing and killing dozens of activists. Led by young people, millions mobilised to protest, using creative ways to protect against and block violence. The 3 fingers is inspired by the series The Hunger Games, communicating that the people must rise up against their oppressors.

#NiUnaMenos #NotOneLess and the Ola Verde Green Wave

Beginning in Argentina and spreading across the continent, a series of creative and potent street protests, slogans, and messaging made this movement viral and global. Initially a protest against femicide and unchecked gender violence, it evolved into a powerful public health, reproductive justice, and abortion rights agenda that contributed to the legalisation of abortion in Argentina in 2019. Green scarves and the colour green have become symbolic and present in abortion-access mobilisations worldwide.



Rhodes Must Fall – Fees Must Fall – Patriarchy Must Fall

Student-led mobilisations in universities in South Africa initially demanded the decolonisation of the curriculum, which was still dominated by white and European history and academia (Cecil Rhodes was a prominent coloniser and founding leader of Rhodesia.) It quickly evolved into a protest against the privatisation of public education and increased fees. Women then protested male dominance and violence not only in the structures of the university but within the emerging movement itself.

Black Lives Matter

#BlackLivesMatter is a slogan that connected dozens of mobilisations in 2013 in response to the acquittal in the US of the person who murdered 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. Hundreds of organisations rose up against white supremacy and racist policing. The Movement for Black Lives grew in scale and strength in the aftermath of police murders of other Black people, including George Floyd. The Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) is a global platform of many organisations and individuals within and beyond the US combating and countering acts of violence, improving lives, and creating space for Black joy and innovation.

Winning and building

Movement strategy is fundamentally about addressing problems of injustice and inequality step by step, move by move, while always building and amplifying the power of 'we'. Many times on the long road to justice, we can feel paralysed and discouraged by the scale and persistence of what we're up against. This is especially true for those at the frontline of struggles in times of crises. Like the activists in Myanmar fighting a military dictatorship or in Hong Kong where a vibrant youth-led movement is now underground and in exile. Like COPINH and Berta Cáceres as they struggled to defend the Gualcarque River over many years.

Despite all of our organising efforts and that of our ancestors before us, sometimes our past gains are visibly eroded as we face new and greater forces of backlash and co-optation. Think of the long struggle for bodily autonomy and reproductive justice that feminists, LGBTQI and HIV+ people have waged, often with little support from other social justice allies. Imagine centuries of racial justice and anti-racist efforts to expose white supremacy and reform deadly policing, politics, and policies.

Winning takes many forms but win we must. We can't forget that we build movements to win – to stop harms, reform the system, and chip away at root causes of violent systems inside and out. What does winning look like? In a repressive dictatorship, a simple collective gesture that says "We are still here together" provides a glimmer of hope. In a more open context, it might be stopping a bad policy or it might be a street mobilisation amplified by viral social media. How do we affirm our incremental 'wins' and recognise that staying the course against tough odds is winning?

In most contexts, winning also involves contesting for and building 'governing power' which refers to more than getting our allies elected or appointed, although those can represent significant change.[21] Governing power – the core of visible power — involves changing the people, culture and structures of decision-making and politics to be more deeply democratic and inclusive. That's a long-term strategy.

Governing power is the ability to (1) win and sustain power within multiple arenas of decision-making so as to (2) shift the power structure of governance and (3) establish a new common sense of governing... To win governing power, we need the capacity to design, drive demand for, legislate, enforce and defend a structural reform agenda that serves the interests of our people (rather than the wealthy few). This requires us to reshape the structure of the government itself, so that it can advance democratic control, redistribution and reparation".

– Harmony Goldberg and Dan McGrath, Grassroots Power Project[22]

Strategy is often misunderstood in a narrow sense as the setting of goals for leadership and plans, or in terms of activities, campaigns, and advocacy efforts to support the achievement of these goals. While it can certainly help organisations with their priorities, strategy is so much more than this. When it grows from a deep shared analysis of the multiple dimensions of power – and of the widely discussed and understood potential for resisting, building, and transforming power within a wider movement ecosystem – strategy is the very heart of making change happen.

Each arena of power (visible, hidden, invisible, and systemic) is not simply a form of domination or power over but a dynamic, contested terrain with its own logic and potential for transformative action. Power analysis reveals the tensions and contestations within each arena, the openings and 'cracks where the light comes in', and the possibilities for building our own transformative power. When pursued together, power analysis and strategy are our trusted guide to change-making, helping us see when and where to expose, resist, engage, organise, educate, narrate, communicate, network, and imagine and create a better world.

We discern that the urge of the times is not to fix a broken system, but to acknowledge our inherent power to summon other worlds.

"We know a way. Our cultures teach us that in turning to each other, we become disruptive to old realities and hospitable to new ones. Because we will not co-create the world by proxy, we need to turn to ourselves again and rekindle the realness we have lost. ... In these human-scaled circles of rejuvenation, we will weave a new social fabric; a new world will be a tantalisingly present and dynamic reality, not a distant ideal. In these places of 'vulnerability', we will reclaim a terrain that is free from the paralysing influences of NGO-speak and politics.

"This is not about conventional movements. We envision a meta-network, a new politics of engagement that draws in the non-activist and activist and helps them recognise the power they already are".

– Bayo Akomolafe[23]

1. Building the Movement Infrastructure We Need in This Moment, Movement Catalyst, Medium. January 25, 2021,
2. adrienne maree brown, 2017. Emergent Strategy. Edinburgh, Scotland: AK Press.
3. Executive Director of Political Action Research, researcher and strategist on confronting rising authoritarianism, quoted in JASS Dialogue What Time is it on the Clock of the World, May 2023
4. Bradley, A. (2020) 'Did we forget about power? Reintroducing concepts of power for justice, equality and peace', in R McGee and J. Pettit (eds), (2020), *Power, empowerment and social change*, Abingdon: Routledge.
5. For more power-mapping tools, see A New Weave of Power, People and Politics, Chapters 11: Finding Hooks and Political Angles, and Chapter 12: Forces, Friends and Foes. Also, search on We Rise.
6. In a 2018 programme at Barnard College's Center for Research on Women. (Video.)
7. Harmony Goldberg, Grassroots Power Project: Stepping into the Moment: The Corona Crisis in Convergence, April 8, 2020. The final point on backlash, safety, and risk is the authors' addition.
8. See "Sources and Uses of Power" in A New Weave of Power, People and Politics, pg. 42 and 56, and Defining Power and its Sources on We Rise.
9. 2022 JASS Annual Report.
10. Distinction attributed to Jane MacIlvey, US labor educator and organiser, in Building a Revolutionary Movement.
11. "The Big Difference Between Organising and Mobilising: How Unions Can Win in the Future" Alternet, October 21, 2015.
12. The Art of Non-Violence: The innovations and adaptations of Occupy Wall Street
13. Alicia Garza, The Left Should Double Down on Electoral Organizing, Photo By Citizen University – The Movement Moment – panel at CitizenUCon16, CC BY 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=50088219
14. Colleagues at IDS and activists who later built JASS began asking these questions in 2001 when the following concepts were developed to help advocates assess policy spaces and determine how and whether to engage. They are still relevant. See Brock, Karen, Andrea Cornwall and John Gaventa, Power, Knowledge and Political Spaces in the Framing of Poverty Policy, IDS WP 143, October 2001; also see "Assessing Entry Points" in A New Weave of Power, People and Politics, (2002/2007) by Lisa VeneKlasen and Valerie Miller, page 208.
15. Adapted from Making Change Happen2: Citizen Engagement and Global Economic Power. Just Associates, 2006
16. For more tools on power mapping, and choosing and framing issues, see We Rise and a New Weave of Power, People and Politics, Chapter 10: Policy Hooks and Political Angles, and Chapter 11: Forces, Friends and Foes.
17. Jeff Abbott, Women lead the struggle against mining and machismo in Guatemala, Open Democracy (2015).
18. For an explanation of 'sandwich strategies' see Jonathan Fox and the Accountability Research Centre.
19. Kayla Reed and Blake Strode, "George Floyd and the Seeds of a New Kind of Activism", New York Times, May 22, 2021
20. See also "198 methods of nonviolent action"
21. Recent examples (2024) where progressives gained governing power and are making a difference include Colombia, Chile, Honduras, etc.
22. Harmony Goldberg and Dan McGrath, Governing Power, Grassroot Power Project, September 22, 2023
23. Bayo Akomolafe, The Times are Urgent: Let's Slow Down

CASE STUDY

UBUNTU

Rural women mobilise in South Africa

The winelands outside of Cape Town reveal South Africa's stark inequalities: lavish wealth next to deep poverty. Here, the Ubuntu Rural Women and Youth Movement, an organization of women and young people based in communities of farm workers, shack settlements, and rural townships leads fierce resistance to evictions, organizes against gender-based violence, and runs soup kitchens and a food garden.

Taken from Nguni languages, the word 'Ubuntu' stands for the idea that 'people are people through other people'. The Ubuntu movement strives to embody this philosophy in its action and in the ways that members relate to each other. The group was formed in 2012 by Wendy Pekeur, a trade unionist and feminist activist, and a solid core of about 50 women are active in day-to-day organizing. This case study[1] does not tell the whole story of Ubuntu's struggles but, rather, highlights activities and steps that illustrate the movement's engagement with particular arenas of power.

[1] Interview with Laura Zúñiga Cáceres, Hecho en América, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mktzkud7FPI&t=4511s

Context

Apartheid officially ended in the early 1990s and a new, liberal constitution provides for basic human rights for all South Africans. National aspirations towards justice and development stand in contrast to the realities of the communities where Ubuntu works. Here, institutionalised racism and gender inequities endure, with white, male supremacy at one pole and the continued impoverishment and oppression of Black women at the other. This is especially evident in rural areas dominated by white-owned commercial agriculture, as in the Cape winelands.

However, the context is also shaped by the histories of resistance against Apartheid and against post-Apartheid policies that prioritize big business. At the point of transition in 1994, many pre-democracy struggle leaders moved into the new government and social movements faded. In the 2000s, new generations of activists took up struggles against the power of corporations and the policies that favour them – particularly privatisation, market liberalisation and austerity – and preserve the inequities of Apartheid. Despite heroic efforts, most of these movements collapsed or splintered apart. Activists paid a heavy price and learnt valuable lessons.

In summary, four key factors define the context in which Ubuntu organizes:

1. the persistence of Apartheid patterns of race, gender, and class oppression
2. an aspirational constitutional framework providing for human rights and the rule of law
3. the commitment of the state to a pro-corporate policy framework
4. histories of anti- and post-Apartheid resistance

Addressing needs

Feeding the hungry is one of Ubuntu's main activities. The group runs 20 soup kitchens, has its own food garden, and regularly mobilizes and distributes food donations.

> **Our role is to be there. We try to make sure that nobody is hungry. We are creating a sisterhood and building a movement."**
>
> *Wendy Pekeur, Ubuntu founder*

Addressing this immediate need has been a means of building the movement by bringing women together as leaders and solvers of problems. A tightly knit core of 50 activists formed and laid the basis for campaign work by winning the respect of the community and the authorities. Donors also took note and Ubuntu gained new resources. The greatest challenge is that the scope of hunger exceeds the organization's capacity to meet the expectations it has created.

Formal power

Ubuntu engages government departments, state institutions, and politicians around farm evictions, worker rights, GBV, hunger, and land rights. At different times Ubuntu met or tried to meet with the Human Rights Commission; the departments of rural development, health and labour; and a labour dispute resolution body called the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration. The organization pressed these bodies to address social problems by applying existing laws and policies or, in a few cases, changing some laws and policies.

These activities – together with public protests and media exposure – aimed to engage, block, and redirect the decisions and actions of these institutions. Successes were rare. After the start of the Covid pandemic, Ubuntu convinced the authorities to install a water tank in a community of farm dwellers. Other than that, typical comments from Ubuntu members were "nothing happened," "we were blocked," "relations between us and the Department of Labour are not good," and "they (the local government bargaining council) did not want to set a new precedent of workers being represented by community organizations."

Hidden power

In its legal work, Ubuntu exposes and confronts the hidden power of farm owners, often with the collusion of the police, despite the fact that most farm evictions happen unlawfully. Other unlawful actions against farmworkers include cutting off their water and electricity supplies.

> **The farmer is on the police forum and the police cover up these things."**
>
> *Rosie Links, an Ubuntu member leading a fight against eviction.*

By helping community members to secure legal representation and providing advice and representation as paralegals, Ubuntu has been successful, especially combined with media exposure. For instance, Rosie Links' community was able to remain on the farm. However, the threat of entities that operate outside the law continues, causing distress and precarity.

Invisible power

> **I said to the farmer: You don't talk to me like that! (He had been rude.) My family would sometimes say, 'Leave the farmer. You are causing trouble."**
>
> *Rosie Links*

In their regular awareness-raising activities, including on gender-based violence and women's rights, Ubuntu confronts a range of narratives that tap into and reinforce the invisible power of gender norms and expectations. Ubuntu members also then conduct the talks inside the households and immediate communities where they live. This is crucial to creating the space for Ubuntu members to be activists and leaders.

> **Things changed in my family since I joined Ubuntu. My family see people approach me for advice and help with their problems. There is more love in our house. I was lonely before because I am Congolese. But now I am not lonely any more. This was a good change. I went from nobody to being somebody."**
>
> *Aziza Bahati Idolwa*

Transformative power

Ubuntu has rules and norms to guide practices and relations within the organization. Members formulated these rules through individual and collective reflections on their situation and experiences. They drew on learning from other, similar groups, particularly Sikhula Sonke. This now-defunct trade union of women farm workers, which overlapped in membership and activities with Ubuntu, arose in the mid-2000 and grew fast but splintered and collapsed

around 2012. To avoid the problems that beset Sikhula Sonke, Ubuntu has focused on building and protecting the transformative power of the members and the group as a whole, as these rules and practises show.

- Ubuntu members are women only, although the organization works with supportive men.
- Members worked as volunteers for the first eight years. Now people are paid a nominal stipend to offset their personal costs.
- Members and the organization maintain a non-partisan stance in politics.
- Ubuntu avoids growing too fast and is careful about the struggles and cases it takes up. It will say no to calls for help if the members do not believe in the justice of the cause or if they do not have the capacity to address the issue.
- As a membership organization, Ubuntu has collective, democratic decision-making.
- The group running the day-to-day operations are not responsible for addressing internal disciplinary issues and disputes – these are handled by the board.
- There is transparency around fundraising and strict rules of accountability on payments.

Rather than establishing Ubuntu branches in other regions and provinces, the organization works with other women's and community groups to build women's solidarity and leadership through organizing and education. The challenges posed by racist and sexist neoliberal capitalism are too big for one group or movement to overcome. Much will depend on effective alliances towards a mass feminist movement of Black working-class women and their allies.

Ubuntu sees itself as a small organization but small does not mean weak. Its active and cohesive core group, wide scope of activities, and deep reach into the communities where it works all indicate a strong community-based organization of the poor. Its methods and internal practices indicate that is strong precisely because it is a women's and feminist organization.

CASE STUDY

PEKKA

A grassroots women's movement in Indonesia

PEKKA transforms the lives of women heads of households through feminist popular education and collective organizing. The group began with village-to-village organizing among the poorest women around their immediate survival needs. This gave rise to a large network of independent savings-and-credit cooperatives, but the goal was always more ambitious. PEKKA has gone on to change many of the laws, practices, and norms that make these women outcasts.

In the past, widows, divorced women, and single female heads-of-household were called janda, a pejorative term that implied a useless person, an outcast. Laws, policies, religious institutions, and society in general demeaned janda as worthless burdens and threats to the stability of marriage, families and community.

PEKKA started from where the women were, organizing around their immediate needs as the basis for strategic movement-building. Beginning in 2001, the group has worked to:

- shift deeply internalized stigma through learning and new political experiences;
- create space for building shared consciousness about power as women live it every day;
- use savings cooperatives as the vehicle for organizing women to claim rights and challenge discrimination;
- address one problem at a time, with increasing complexity, from legal status to local budgets and media to active citizenship;
- develop leadership through participatory 'schools' and democratic decision-making experience;
- support women to use their voice and collective power at every level; and
- creative alternative markets and products, regenerating skills, and resisting imports that contribute to climate change.

From outcasts to full citizens mobilizing for expanded rights, resources and full representation, thousands of grassroots women are now leaders in their communities, districts, and provinces, improving safety and wellbeing for everyone. Alternative economic and political models created by PEKKA are replicated across the region, supporting more sustainable ways of living.

Context

Between the late 1980s and 2008, many governments around the world were pressured to limit or end safety-net policies for their citizens. As a result, inequality increased dramatically.

When PEKKA was launched in Aceh in 2001, the province was emerging from a civil war shaped by ethnic and religious differences. An earthquake and tsunami followed soon after. This series of crises created an opportunity to organize women that might not have existed in more stable times. PEKKA's entry point was the poverty that women faced. Stigmatized and shunned by society as women without husbands, they struggled even more than others to survive in this period of crisis.

To counter the stigma, the founders named their evolving initiative 'The Female Heads of Households Empowerment Initiative' or PEKKA. The name affirmed the women's dignity and potential to change their lives and communities. Over time, organizing under the banner of PEKKA has instilled a sense of self-worth, shared identity, and autonomy in many thousands of women. It has offered their communities and families a completely new way of understanding their contributions and value.

Start where women are

The initial spark for the project was violence. Komnas Prempuan, the National Commission to Stop Violence Against Women, asked PEKKA founder Nani Zulminarni to lead a small project in Aceh. However, when teams spoke with village women, they learned that the consistent priorities were economic issues and a better future for their children. Gender-based violence was indeed a serious problem, but the organizers believed the women needed to determine their own path and so a discussion about savings cooperatives began, with economic security as a step towards political voice.

PEKKA savings cooperatives did not receive any outside funding, as was the case with other micro-finance programs. Instead, they were seeded by pooling women's own resources – however meager – to ensure that women could define and run their own groups and, over time, invest in collective solutions. Not surprisingly, women were reluctant at first. The project seemed outside the norm and difficult. Slowly, however, a handful of groups began exploring the cooperative idea. Some saved the money they previously spent on candy for their children, while others sold coconuts or cooked food to sell at the market.

> **We don't attach women to an existing cooperative. They build their own together. Economic organizing in this way enables us to work under oppressive governments. We say, 'We're doing savings and credit,' and then the authorities leave us alone. Over time, our experience shows that the women will promote their own leaders to become village head or members of the village parliament. From there, they have influence, gain more power, and can make bigger changes."**
>
> *Nani Zulminarni, PEKKA founder*

Stigma runs deep

Even just talking with single and widowed women – let alone organizing them – created a lot of tension in communities. Called pimps and traffickers by some, PEKKA organizers found the first few years discouraging. The effort almost collapsed due to prejudices and resistance. Women had internalized the janda stigma and found it difficult to believe they could change things. They were nervous about rocking the boat even further by standing up for themselves.

However, from their shared pool of savings, groups gradually began making loans to each other on their own terms. As other women witnessed the benefits, new PEKKA groups formed. Each group chose an inspiring name and, with training from PEKKA in democratic organizing, practiced new forms of leadership and organization and built trust in themselves and one another. Dozens of cooperatives began to thrive in many different communities.

PEKKA's teams also grew. Trained organizers led popular education, information, and coaching activities to strengthen the cooperative groups and leaders. PEKKA processes included games, songs, and dancing, creating moments of joy and fun and bolstering women's spirits and bonds. Women broke taboos to learn about their bodies and self-care as an essential part of their political strategy. They learned how power operates in their lives and consciousness, both positively and negatively. This equipped them to plan together and deal with community resistance and conflicts among themselves.

> **By setting up democratic cooperatives, women also practice new leadership, decision-making and democracy: one woman, one vote, equal rights. This leads to more practical and emotional independence. Of course, it takes lots of consciousness raising and capacity building. That's an appropriate role for NGOs, we feel; … supporting this growing grassroots movement of women to develop and support new kinds of leadership and to build women's capacity to manage conflict, basic business and planning skills, and then, gradually, how to use their democratic collective power to influence local and even national politics."**
>
> *Nani Zulminarni, PEKKA founder*

Multiplying

As their resources grew, loans enabled many members to form viable income-generating enterprises. From earnings or loans from their cooperatives, women could provide education for their children and support for their extended families. Some groups built community centers that provided meeting spaces for the whole community and housed healthcare services, Wi-Fi, and training and literacy programs. PEKKA groups became recognized within their communities as important leaders and, when local elections rolled around, candidates actively sought their endorsements. Increasingly, PEKKA women have come to participate in local government and programs to promote fair resource allocations and budgets for community development. Some PEKKA leaders ran for local government.

To scale up their model, they created cooperative stores and marketplaces that provide fair-priced basic goods to the community and commodity-exchange for rice and vegetables. By contrast with consumerism and plastics, these markets bolster sustainable, local food production and a return to traditional housewares, such as baskets and cloth. They eliminate dependency on moneylenders, middlemen, and plastic products from outside. Annual PEKKA fairs showcase members' contributions and achievements. Local and regional officials inaugurate the festivities, and local media cover them. In these ways, PEKKA's national visibility and credibility increased in the eyes of the government and civil society.

As the cooperatives evolved, women faced legal and religious barriers to their roles as heads of households. Without legal recognition, they could not claim state benefits or appeal for divorce.

PEKKA launched a grassroots campaign to lobby national government for legal status for janda and for expanded access to mobile courts, especially in remote areas. In the process, PEKKA trained teams of local paralegals to navigate legal systems on behalf of other villagers, both women and men.

PEKKA expanded popular and political education to improve women's skills and to educate donors and international agencies about organizing, movement-building, gender justice, and social change. When outside researchers and groups want to study the situation of women in the region, PEKKA leaders insist on participatory research to ensure that the information also benefits their campaigns, combining the knowledge of formal researchers with that of the community. Information-gathering now centers on lived experience and power dynamics in local communities.

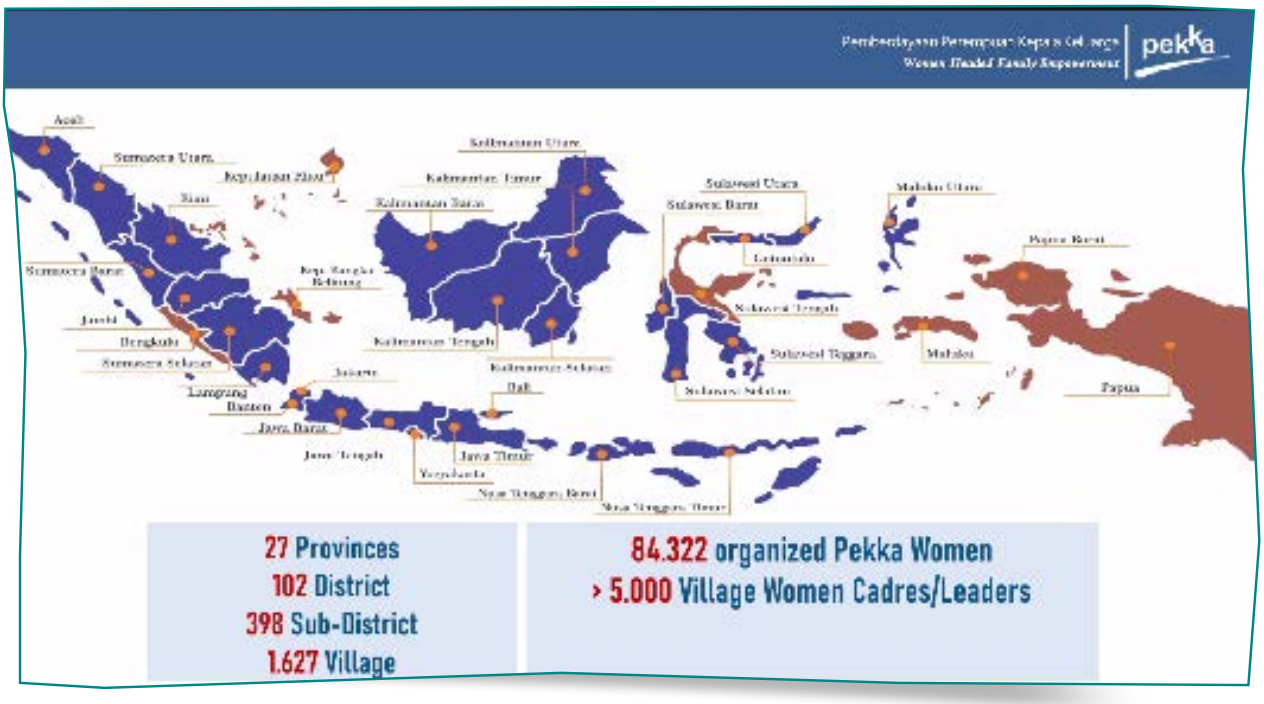
Backlash and response

As PEKKA grew, conflicts emerged over women's growing public roles and the challenges they posed to well-established inequalities. Moneylenders, religious leaders, and some local officials felt their power being questioned. Using slander and threats, opponents sought to intimidate and silence PEKKA members and isolate them, particularly as religious conservatives – often funded from the outside – have gained political power and influence and sought to reverse gains in women's rights.

However, community leaders recognize the economic and social benefits gained from PEKKA groups and so name-calling has lost some of its potency. PEKKA cultivates good relations with regional and national media. Some PEKKA members trained to be broadcasters, established community radio stations and

can counter misinformation and slurs. PEKKA also collaborates with Islamic scholars and clerics who are concerned about discrimination against women, to offer research and community training programs for local imams.

In 2017, PEKA became an autonomous national federation, led by grassroots women and supported by a network of PEKKA organizers and popular educators. By 2023, PEKKA had organized over 84,322 divorced, single, and widowed women – among the most marginalized in Indonesia – in 1,627 villages throughout 27 of the country's 37 provinces. More than 5,000 PEKKA members are now village leaders. Today, PEKKA women continue to dream big – strengthening their individual and collective livelihoods, influence, and vision.



CASE STUDY

COPINH

Guardians of the River in Honduras

COPINH – the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras/ *Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras* – was formed in 1993 and became a powerful grassroots movement with a vast global network of allies, acting in defense of ancestral lands, rivers, and culture. Then, in 2016, COPINH founder Berta Cáceres was assassinated. The international media framed this as the story of an individual hero – and Berta was truly an emblematic, inspirational, and brave leader – and yet the story of COPINH is both broader and ongoing, illustrating the many ways in which collective power challenges violent structures and systems, both public and personal.

COPINH emerged through organizing within the Lenca indigenous communities in Honduras to reclaim a shared cultural heritage and defend their rights and territory. It raised awareness, mobilized community action, conducted action research, and

built diverse leadership and networks. In all their direct action, members remained committed to nonviolence, solidarity, and collective leadership. Over time, COPINH grew to represent around 200 Lenca and rural communities, led by a 15-person council and backed by assemblies, land councils, and coordinators. Its community center, Utopia, has become a hub for strategy, rituals, training, and gatherings with allies.

Context

A history of deep inequities and violence has continuously reinforced itself in Honduras: corrupt entrenched elites, interrupted attempts at building democracy, US interventions, and the increasing power of organized criminal networks. A coup in 2009 overthrew a democratically elected president, which opened the way for accelerated land grabs and the dismantling of fledgling economic and environmental regulations and basic rights. The state intensified its repression of all forms of dissent and maximized business opportunities for elites and multinational corporations.

For several months after the 2009 coup, a broad-based movement emerged across Honduras to protest the illegitimate regime. The US government used 'diplomacy' and military force to 'stabilize' Honduras, consolidate the post-coup regime, and undermine demands for a return to constitutional order. After coup-sponsored elections in November 2009 – boycotted by the opposition and denounced internationally – the new government made national resources available to largely unregulated ventures in energy, tourism, and agro-industry.

Organizations such as COPINH and activists including Berta faced increasing risk and hostility in the 2010s as they confronted corrupt and often illegal moves to take over land and natural resources. Infiltration, attacks, and violent repression of defenders followed. Meanwhile, the US government's war on drugs had limited Colombian shipping and air routes, and this drove narco-trafficking overland, transforming Honduras into a narco-state. The Honduran authorities used the growing insecurity to further justify crackdowns and expand US military presence (12 US military installations around the country by 2014).

Honduras became one of the most violent countries in the world: number one in homicides per capita[2] and the most dangerous place to be an environmental activist[3]. Aggressive strategies dismantled regulations, privatized public services, and gave power to extractive companies working in partnership with local elites, corrupt state officials, and organized crime. Amid increased inequality and the seizure of resources from indigenous and rural communities, grassroots organizations and their allies continued to resist and expose corruption and rights violations from the local to the global level.

[1] Adapted from a longer piece written by Lisa VeneKlasen and Valerie Miller with Laura Carlsen for JASS.

[2] https://www.reuters.com/article/us-honduras-homicides-idUSBREA1G1E520140217

[3] Dangers for community and environmental activists skyrocketed, over 100 being killed between 2010 and 2014.

Indigenous feminist leadership

Berta Cáceres and her colleagues set out in the early 1990s to organize indigenous Lenca farming communities in defense of their land and resources. Then as now, COPINH developed local and democratic leadership through a mix of popular education and indigenous practices.

> **In our worldview, we are beings who come from the earth, the water, and the corn. The Lenca people are ancestral guardians of the rivers. Giving our lives in various ways to protect the rivers is to give our lives for the well-being of humanity and of this planet.**" *Berta Cácere*[4]

While her approach focused on collective organizing, Berta also became a visionary feminist. She believed that patriarchy was as violent and destructive as the extractive capitalism and racism the Lenca community faced. She experienced directly the ways that gender inequality and violence in families, relationships, and movements created rifts, marginalized women, and, potentially, made everyone vulnerable to gossip, distrust, and divide-and-conquer tactics.

> **It is not easy being a woman leading processes of indigenous resistance. In an incredibly patriarchal society, women are very exposed. We have to face high-risk circumstances, and sexist and misogynistic campaigns. This is one of the things that can most influence a decision to abandon the fight."**
>
> *Berta Cácere*

Berta helped COPINH to walk the talk – from increasing women's leadership in COPINH's structures and decisions, to ensuring that men and women played equal roles in daily tasks, to designating an LGBTQ coordinator to combat homophobia. In the last ten years of her life, Berta's explicitly feminist, intersectional analysis influenced other indigenous, rural, and campesino movements in Honduras and around the world.

The Agua Zarca struggle

Early in the 2000s, a local community assembly, supported by COPINH, voted against a hydroelectric project on the Gualcarque River on Lenca ancestral land, stating that it would "jeopardize their water resources and livelihoods." After the 2009 coup, however, the Honduran government gave permission to a private-sector energy company called DESA (Desarollo Energetico) – involving influential Honduran figures, a Chinese dam-building company, Sinohydro, and international investors – to conduct a feasibility study on the Gualcarque River, bypassing the legally required community consultation.

In 2011, when DESA began constructing roads, the community resisted. DESA officials promised jobs, schools, and scholarships and offered to buy people's land, but community members remained unconvinced. COPINH organized protests and mobilized other communities along the river to join the struggle. DESA hired armed security, including ex-soldiers, to guard the construction.

Under attack for defending its land and rights, COPINH called for international support to stop the project and presented official complaints to the

[4] Goldman speech 2015.

national Special Prosecutor's Office for Indigenous Peoples (Fiscalía de Etnia). The company's security targeted COPINH members and Berta began receiving death threats. When in 2013 the company destroyed people's food crops with bulldozers and tractors, communities began to set up roadblocks. DESA sent in more men and bulldozers, tearing down homes. Enraged and distressed, more community members joined in the resistance.

In addition to organizing at home, Berta traveled to the US, Canada, and Europe, building relationships with influential decisionmakers, religious leaders, NGOs, and movements on every continent. She attended environmental conferences, engaged with the media, and spoke with officials in foreign ministries, international financial institutions, and development banks, encouraging international allies to raise the visibility of COPINH's demands and to pledge financial support.

Meanwhile, COPINH radio stations broadcast regular updates, highlighting the role of the communities in defending rights. Social-media campaigns exposed and counteracted inflammatory, sexualized, and polarizing attacks on Berta from DESA, the government, and elements in the Catholic Church.

The conflict escalated. DESA accused the community of trespassing and being "anti-development," denouncing Berta and COPINH in the national media. Police dismantled the COPINH roadblocks, COPINH rebuilt them, and the government deployed the military. Berta and a colleague were arrested and held on fabricated charges, and the government imposed a travel ban on Berta. She used her release to amplify visibility with a media event. An international human rights delegation visited the site and, in a letter to Sinohydro, verified that DESA and the Honduran Armed Forces were systematically harassing the community. When COPINH held a peaceful protest at the dam's offices, soldiers opened fire on the crowd, killing Tomas Garcia, a COPINH leader. In the face of bad publicity, Sinohydro pulled out of the dam project, marking COPINH's first major victory.

Throughout 2014 and 2015, community protests continued, intimidation increased, and death threats mounted. An army whistleblower confirmed[5] that Berta's name was on an army hitlist months before her murder. In 2015, Berta and COPINH received the Goldman Environmental prize, catapulting the Lenca struggle onto the world stage. Many supporters hoped that raising Berta's profile as an internationally recognized environmental leader would provide better protection, but others worried that the singling out a 'hero', plus the prize money, would exacerbate community conflicts and power struggles within the movement.

Berta spent the morning of March 2, 2016 in a workshop on economic alternatives. In the afternoon, she met a colleague[6] to discuss healing workshops for women human rights defenders[7]. Just before midnight, armed hitmen broke into Berta's house and killed her.

[5] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/21/berta-caceres-name-honduran-military-hitlist-former-soldier

[6] Daysi Flores. JASS-Honduras

[7] The Women Human Rights Defenders Network in Honduras is part of the Mesoamerican WHRD Initiative, which was co-created by JASS, Consorcio Oaxaca, AWID, Colectiva Feminista and others. The Honduras network is comprised of indigenous, rural, LGBTQ activists and feminists

Berta Cáceres's legacy

After Berta's assassination, COPINH and its allies in solidarity networks organized massive international demonstrations in dozens of cities. Media campaigns put pressure on the Honduran government to investigate the crime and bring the assassins to justice. Signs reading *"Berta did not die, she multiplied"* could be seen from Jakarta to New York City.

> **For Lenca people, of course [the assassination] was a terrible blow, but that's why we say that Berta has multiplied, because the communities continue in the process, with all their obstacles and problems, confronting the challenges on a daily basis, and in this sense, the whole emancipatory project that our compañera Berta Cáceres built is still being carried out."**
>
> *Bertha Zúñiga Cáceres, COPINH coordinator*

To deflect attention, the Honduran government confiscated COPINH documents and arrested COPINH members as 'suspects.' But organizations and advocates – human-rights, environmental, indigenous, and feminist – pressed for an in-depth investigation and demanded that international investors withdraw funding for the dam project. The end of 2016 saw a small win. Under the pressure of lobbying and advocacy, guided by COPINH research and communications, international investors withdrew financing for the dam project. Construction was suspended by December of 2016, at least temporarily.

In December 2019, the Honduran court sentenced seven men for the assassination of Berta Cáceres, among them company hitmen and Honduran military personnel trained by the US. Berta's family and organization combined independent investigation with legal action and political pressure to demand the prosecution of those behind the crime as well, and, in 2021 David Castillo, former DESA president and US-trained army intelligence officer, was found guilty of collaborating in Berta's murder.

Berta's teachings have taken root in others, including her daughters, Bertha and Laura Zúñiga, and her legacy lives on in the continued work of COPINH – an example for indigenous, campesino, and feminist organizing everywhere.

Multiple strategies for change

COPINH is notable for its multi-pronged and nuanced organizing strategies over the years.

Building shared sense of Lenca identity, belonging, history and worldview, COPINH:

- established a Center of Healing and Justice for survivors of domestic abuse;
- encouraged spiritual growth and community unity through women-led rituals, ceremonial fires, songs, dances, and solidarity-inspiring tributes to ancestors.

Fostering collective power and diverse leadership, COPINH:

- built the capacity of community members to speak out, deal with internal conflicts, and remain united;
- trained dozens of community coordinators, organizers, teachers, and nurses in political education;
- held women's leadership courses to confront machismo and family violence;
- broadened the participation and leadership of women and LGBTQ representatives (pioneering at the time).

Engaged and mobilized around visible power to make indigenous rights real in people's lives, COPINH:

- established two indigenous municipalities (an unprecedented victory);
- obtained public funding for health centers and schools in Lenca areas;
- in alliance with other indigenous organizations, successfully lobbied the Honduran government to ratify ILO Convention 169 on the Rights of Indigenous People, including the Right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent by Indigenous Communities for projects affecting them;
- used a combination of mobilization and advocacy to gain community and individual title to land;
- lobbied the international financial institutions and US Congress to challenge global policy that facilitated militarization, violence, and land grabs.

Challenging dominant narratives and created their own, COPINH:

- created a network of five village radio stations;
- collaborated with indigenous peoples around the world to challenge dominant worldviews and promote cosmovision centered around harmonious relationship between people and the earth.

Exposing and resisting state capture and corruption, COPINH:

- developed comprehensive plans to engage, expose and confront the state, corporations, and oligarchs;
- mobilized numerous protests and global campaigns to challenge land grabs and development as economic growth.

> **One of the ways that the memory [of my mami] has inspired us is the leadership of women: how we can take on the struggles, how we can lead processes that imply rebelling against these companies, but also learning to dream a common dream."**
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> *Laura Zúñiga, COPINH*[8]

[8] Interview with Laura Zúñiga Cáceres, Hecho en América, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mktzkud7FPI&t=4511s