

# Practical Guide to Transformative Change Making

Marc Saxer  
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- When technological, economic or social change is transforming society, but effective mechanisms to shape these transformations are missing, crises can occur. Transformation crises are confusing. Why do so many resist change? Can yesterday's opponents become tomorrow's allies? Where is the entry point for action? Transformative Change Making (TCM) introduces a new method to build the alliances needed to tackle such transformation crises.
- TCM uses strategically crafted narratives and well-designed catalytic projects as vehicles of transformative change. The narrative provides a platform onto which a broad societal alliance can come together. The catalytic projects build networks of trust, give entry points for action, and lend credibility to the change narrative.
- TCM strengthens the ability of policy makers to reach out to broader constituencies, encourages private sector contribution to the common good, builds the strategic capacity of civil society, accesses knowledges across silos, and builds political literacy of all stakeholders.
- TCM is a work in progress. So far, the method has been successfully used to facilitate reform processes in India, Pakistan, and Thailand. This revised practical guide is meant to give practitioners an easy to use introduction to a new way of making change.

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## The Concept

### Quick introduction

#### ***What is Transformative Change Making?***

Transformative Change Making (TCM) is a method to create maximum societal buy-in for disruptive reforms. To achieve the ultimate objective of shifting the development path, the aim is to build a broad societal transformative alliance. By using a set of techniques to visualise the political playing field, TCM facilitates strategic debates over the best entry points, incentive structures and narratives to bring about change.

#### ***Why is a new method needed?***

Transformations create winners and losers, prompting those who benefit from the status quo to resist change. Creating awareness and understanding, incrementally optimising the system or cutting deals are therefore ill-suited to shift the development path. With seemingly everything being connected to everything, policy debates then tend to endlessly go round in circles, with stakeholders blaming each other for inaction. New ideas cannot diffuse across social and cultural barriers, local knowledges are not sufficiently included in the policy making process, and stakeholders find it difficult to find common ground. What is needed is a forward looking, solution-oriented approach to identify concrete entry points for action.

#### ***Going after the low hanging fruits: Transactional coalitions***

To create some initial momentum for change, it makes sense to first go after the low-hanging fruits. Even within the status quo, transactional coalitions based on the lowest common denominator between different interest groups are capable of implementing some win-win projects. Natural champions (e.g. “the already convinced”) working together with fence-sitters (e.g. those who come on board provided it is in their best interest) not only produces tangible

results on the ground, but can also create the goodwill and trust needed to lay the foundation for a lasting coalition.

#### ***Breaking the glass ceiling: Transformative alliances***

Transactional coalitions, however, can only get so far. Sooner or later, they run into resistance, or simply out of win-win projects. In the status quo, all initiatives to shift the path will be uphill battles.

To break through the glass ceiling of the status quo, the paradigm needs to be shifted. Paradigm shifts, however, are not academic exercises, but the outcomes of societal struggles. Hence, the paradigm can only be shifted by a broad societal transformative alliance.

This means the “already convinced” have to go even further out of their comfort zone and reach out to those who do not share their interests and values. Building transformative alliances means to bring on board at least some of the spoilers, e.g. those who, for whatever reason, believe their interests are best served within the status quo.

Transformative Change Making gives change makers all the tools they need to build transformative alliances. In its essence, TCM is a method to facilitate informed strategy debates. Key to these strategy debates is finding the right narrative which can allow members from many communities to come together on a common platform.

#### ***Finding the entry point for action***

Discourse needs to be translated into action. Catalytic projects provide change makers with strategically chosen entry points to collaborate around concrete doables. Using a crowd-working process to bring together diverse knowledges in the field, project design is central to TCM. Implementing technically doable, commercially viable and politically sellable catalytic projects provides the success stories needed to give credibility to the narrative of change.

## How does Transformative Change Making work?

Broad societal change alliances are notoriously difficult to build because social groups usually have different interests and priorities. Instead of building an alliance around interests, TCM builds the alliance around narratives.

TCM makes use of the way narratives, actors and interests are interconnected. Actors believe to follow their own interests. But how are these interests defined? Not in isolation, but within the echo-chambers of discourse communities. Members of discourse communities share a particular set of beliefs of what is happening, and what needs to be done.

If their imagination about the future changes, so will their expectations about how the future will unfold. Different expectations about the future lead to fresh calculations of risks and opportunities. In other words, when actors reimagine the future, they start to redefine their interests. And when they redefine their interests, they can come together in an alliance to work towards an alternative vision of tomorrow.

### Change Narrative

A good change narrative has five elements:

- **Threat:** What is the danger of continuing with the status quo?
- **Hope:** The vision for a better future where the interests of key constituencies converge. The vision is the lens through which key constituencies imagine the future and

interpret the situation today. The vision needs to be vague enough to allow different groups to project onto it, yet concrete enough to alter the calculation of risks versus opportunities.

- **Opportunity:** The change narrative must credibly explain how this vision can become a reality. Game Changers explain how long term, structural drivers (e.g. technological innovation, demographics, geopolitics, connectivity, trade, education etc.) will create a window of opportunity to achieve the alternative vision.
- **Confidence:** Facts need to be framed in such a way that makes them emotionally accessible and cognitively tangible through metaphors evoking shared historical experiences, myths, legends, norms and values. Historical experiences, for instance, suggest that what has been done before, can be done again.
- **Ethical Imperative:** Why the doable is the right thing to do?

#### *Example: US Presidential Campaign*

*In vast, diverse and fragmented societies, no single group can form a majority on its own. Hence, an umbrella coalition must be built which includes members with different interests, priorities, and identities. The common platform for such a heterogeneous alliance is built by vision and narrative. The Obama 2008 campaign, for instance, pointed to a Better Tomorrow (“The Audacity of Hope”), rallied a diverse coalition around a platform (“Change you can believe in”), and added credibility to the change narrative (“Yes, we can”).*

**Catalytic Projects**

To make the hope for a better tomorrow credible, narratives are not enough. Discourse needs to be translated into action. This is where the design of catalytic projects comes in.

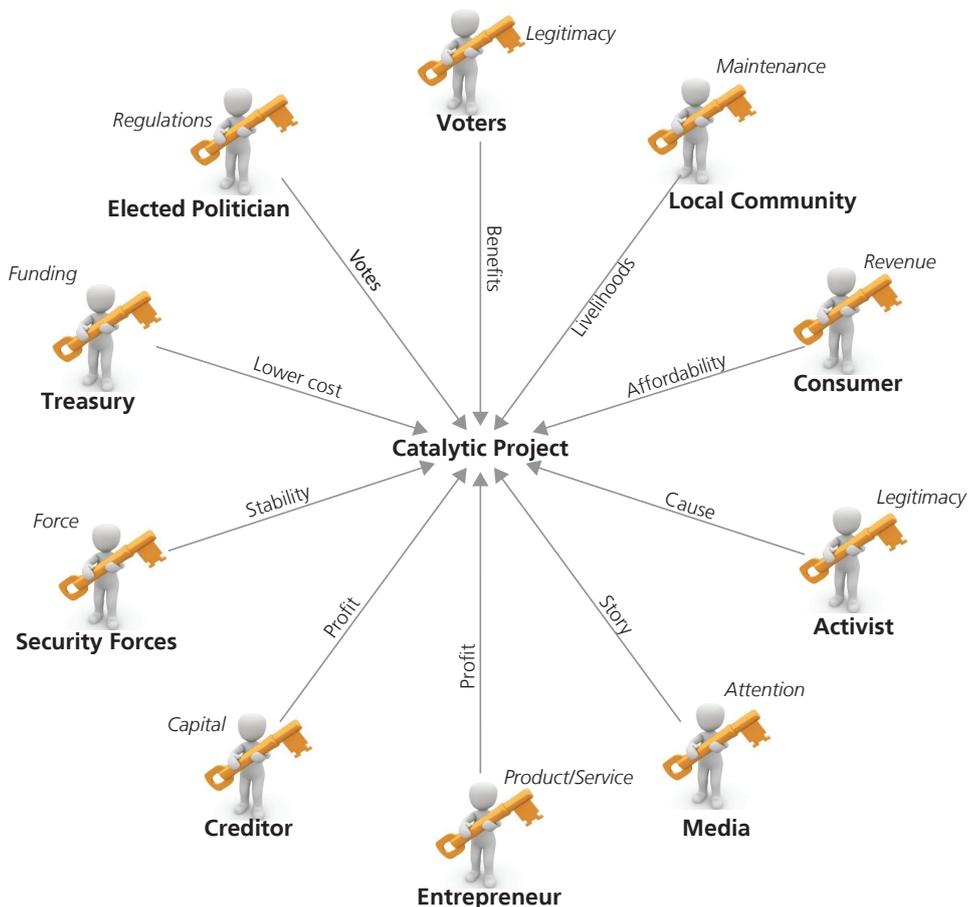
Catalytic projects are carefully chosen doables which exemplify the narrative. Success stories demonstrate that the formula works, and can, when adjusted to the local context, be replicated elsewhere.

But catalytic projects do more than that. By giving early supporters an entry point to work together, they build networks of trust. By demonstrating how successful collaborations work, the emerging coalition can make the case for broader cooperation. Once implemented, catalytic projects contribute to the unleashing of the structural Game Changers, and prepare the ground for broader change.

Catalytic projects can only be implemented when all necessary ingredients (e.g. technology, funding, permission, maintenance etc.) are available. Thus, all those who hold the keys to these critical ingredients need to be wooed into the supporter coalition. This is why TCM puts the process of project design front and centre. Different from the conventional approach of “selling” prefabricated projects to local stakeholders, TCM is all about designing the incentive structures in such a way that all critical keyholders can be brought on board.

If spoilers hold the key to critical ingredients, even incentive structures will not suffice. To win over these keyholders, the paradigm discourse (“what is the problem, and what needs to be done?”) needs to be reframed.

Graphic: Keyholders for a Catalytic Project



Change narrative and catalytic projects are deeply intertwined. The narrative suggests which projects are best suited to exemplify the desired change. Successfully implemented catalytic projects give credibility to the narrative. This is why the two main instruments in the use of TCM are Narrative Construction and Project Design. Locating the narrative strategically within the political field helps to reach out to as many keyholders as possible. Project design creates incentives to win over critical keyholders. If spoilers are unwilling to join, designers need to find solutions to make the project work without them.

Together, carefully crafted narratives and well-designed catalytic projects are the vehicles of transformative change. While the discourse alliance inspires stakeholders to work together, the concrete experience of cooperation around catalytic projects creates the necessary trust and goodwill between social groups who thus far have not considered each other allies. Once the transformative alliance grows, it can generate the social buy-in, the financial resources and political leverage needed to implement disruptive reforms.

*Example: 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR)*

*The practical utopia of the 'Chinese Dream' opens the imagination of new possibilities, namely a prosperous Eurasia. The vision becomes credible because it is backed up by concrete hardware projects: roads, railways and bridges. These catalytic projects aim at unleashing structural drivers like trade, energy cooperation and people to people contacts. The change narrative resonates emotionally by recalling the legendary Silk Road. It is this combination of hardware and software which shifts the expectations of how the future will unfold, thereby changing the definitions of interests of policy makers and investors all over Asia.*

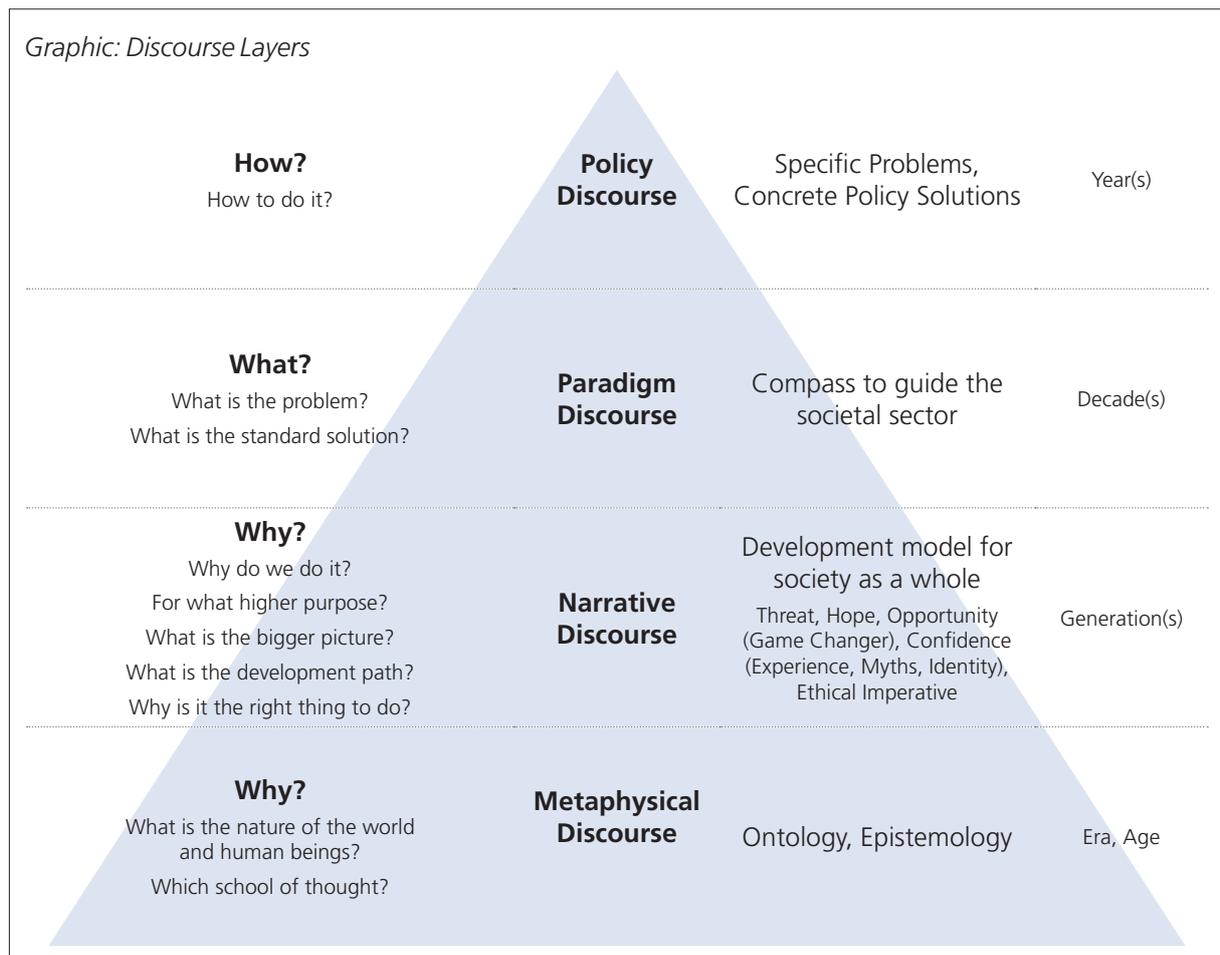
## How does discourse steering work?

### How does discourse alliance building work?

Broad societal alliances are not easy to build as social groups have different interests. This is why TCM builds the transformative alliance around a change narrative. In essence, TCM constructs narratives to resonate with as many discourse communities as possible. These narratives need to tickle the imagination about the future, offer rationally and normatively convincing alternatives, and give concrete and tangible examples of how it is possible to bring about change. The narrative provides the platform onto which different communities can come together to form an alliance.

### What is a discourse community?

A discourse community is a group of people who share a set of discourses, understood as basic values and assumptions, and ways of communicating about those goals. These shared discourses can be broken down into four layers. On the surface is the policy discourse, which explains what needs to be done to solve a clearly defined problem (e.g. repealing Obamacare). The paradigm discourse defines the underlying policy making manual. It identifies the problems, and suggests standard solutions (e.g. discipline the weak). The narrative discourse explains why the Doable is the morally Right Thing to Do. It translates



<i>Example: Conservative Discourse Community in the United States</i>	
<p><i>Policy Discourse</i> How to do it?</p>	<p><i>Economy:</i> Tax cuts for the rich, welfare cuts for the poor. <i>Social Policy:</i> Cut back distortive incentive system (welfare) <i>Foreign Policy:</i> Discipline (Conditionality) and Punish (Austerity and War) <i>Education:</i> Discipline to teach right from wrong. Spend lavishly on winner schools, cut back on loser schools.</p>
<p><i>Paradigm Discourse</i> What is the problem? What is the standard solution?</p>	<p><i>DISCIPLINE and PROTECT:</i> Primacy of national and domestic security. Install moral incentive system which rewards the winners (=the moral, hard-working) and punishes the losers (=immoral, lazy).</p>
<p><i>Narrative Discourse</i> Why to do it? Why is it the right thing to do?</p>	<p><i>STRICT FATHER FAMILY:</i> Role of strict father is to protect and support his family in a dangerous world. As a moral authority, he must teach his children right from wrong. It is his moral obligation to maintain moral incentive system, or the society will decay and fall prey to the bad people.</p>
<p><i>Metaphysical Discourse</i> What world do we live in? What is human nature?</p>	<p><i>DOG EAT DOG WORLD:</i> The nature of Man is bad. The world is a dangerous place. Us versus Them, Zero sum logic.</p>

facts into emotionally accessible frames (e.g. the role of the father is to make his children fit for the world). On the deepest level is the metaphysical discourse, which echoes our view of the world and human nature (e.g. the world is a dangerous place).

**Why do we understand discourse as a source of power?**

Within each discourse community, the discourse acts like a framework of rules which defines what can be said and done. By regulating the thinking and actions of community members, discourse is a source of power.

On every political field, a dozen or so discourse communities compete over hegemony. Hegemony means that a vast majority accepts the basic assumptions of a discourse community, and even naturalises them as the unquestioned ‘truth’. By dominating the mainstream imagination of “what is the problem” and “what is the reasonable thing to do”, discourse hegemony is a source of enormous power.

Discourse power, however, is deeply intertwined with political, social and economic power. Winning and keeping discourse hegemony, therefore, seems far-fetched without the control of the institutions which produce discourses and the channels which distribute them. For change makers, discourse hegemony would be a great asset, but it is not a must-have.

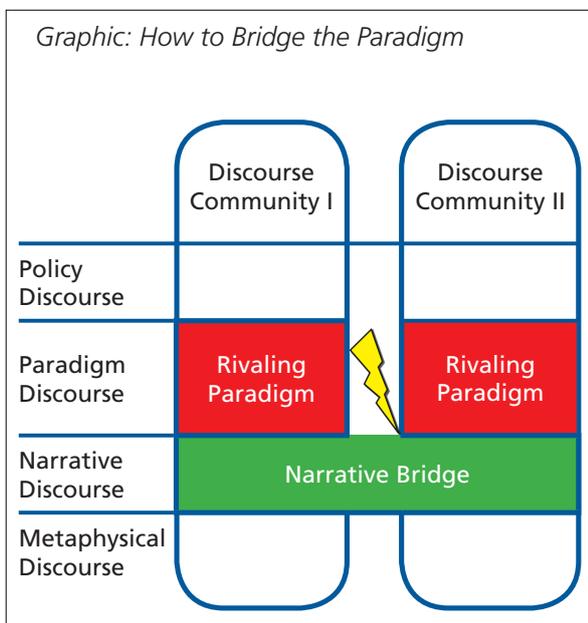
**How can we use discourse to shift the balance of power?**

For TCM, it is good enough to understand how to make use of discourse as a source of power. In the society at large, discourses structure how communities see their role and place, as well as their relations with each other. By ordering social relationships, discourse is a source of political power. TCM makes use of the fact that for social actors with little financial or coercive power, discourse is often the only available source of power.

Transformative Change Making uses discourse as an instrument to achieve two critical goals: to shift the paradigm and to create platform for the transformative alliance.

**How can we shift the paradigm?**

A transformation crisis is characterised by the clash between at least two opposing paradigm discourses. As a result, society tends to be divided into two irreconcilable camps, whose political feuding can lead to a political standstill and economic stagnation. To escape this transformation trap, a new paradigm is needed which can show the way forward.



Paradigm clashes can be tackled in two different ways:

First, by transcending the paradigm. By shifting the imagination of what is possible, the expectations of how the future will unfold will start to shift. Shifting expectations about the future, changes the interpretations of the situation today. Shifting calculations of risk versus opportunity is what makes stakeholders redefine their interests. Redefined interests pave the way for cooperation in a transformative alliance.

Second, by bridging the paradigm. Conflicts of interest are often rooted in clashing policy paradigm, e.g. the standard understanding of what is happening and the guidebook of what needs to be done. Bridging the paradigm means to introduce a change narrative which turns the allegedly rivalling principles into two sides of the same coin.

*Example: The Green New Deal*  
 For decades, economic growth and environmental protection were understood by a majority to be at odds with each other. As a consequence, environmental policies were dismissed as “bad for business” by the market liberal discourse community, and as “bad for jobs” by the social justice discourse community.  
 With the introduction of the “Green New Deal”, this dichotomy has been transcended. The “Green Growth” narrative defines green energy, mobility and production as the precondition for future growth. And the “green jobs” narrative defines green businesses as the job engine of the future. As a result, a discourse alliance has emerged which increasingly uses the same frame to imagine the future possibilities, and defines its interests through similar calculations of risks versus opportunities.

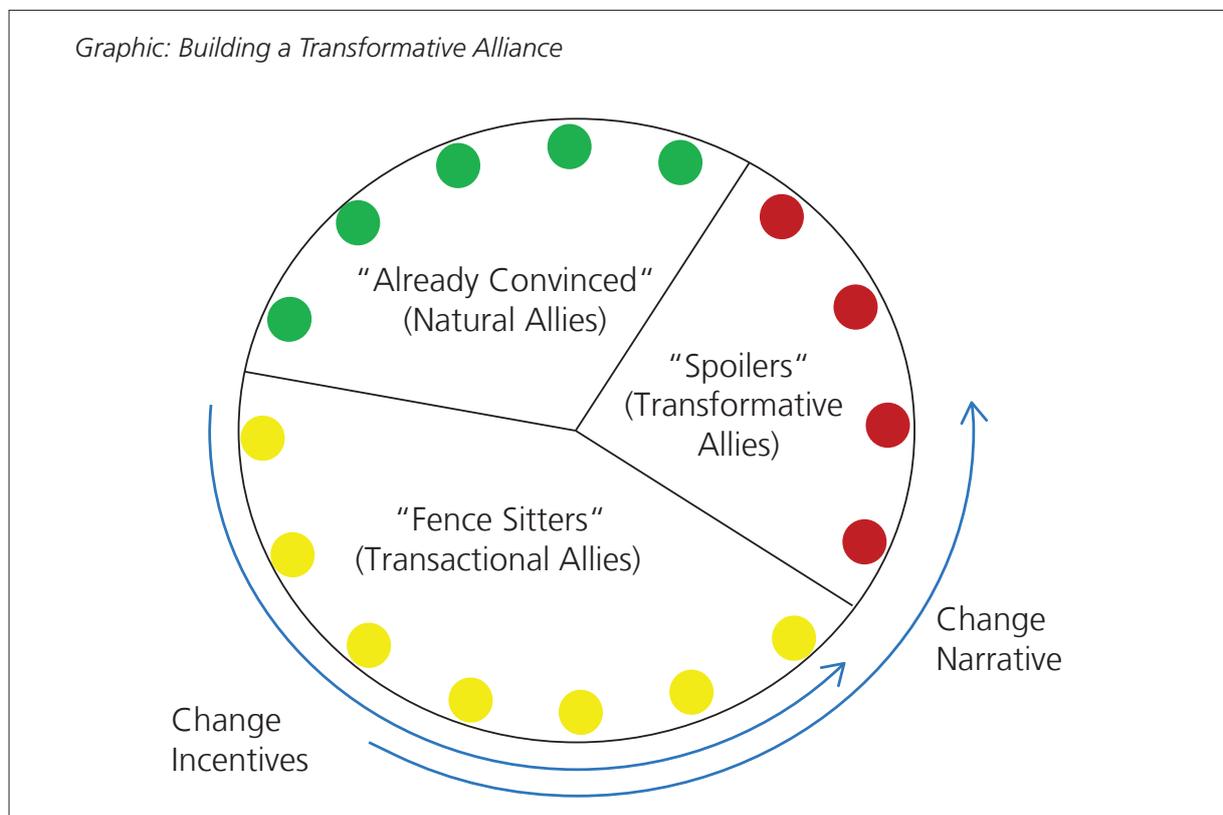
It goes without saying that this new narrative can only play this role if it is prominently introduced into public discourse. Hence, once the new narrative has been formulated, change makers need to stick to it in their entire communication.

**How are narrative and project design connected?**

In order to gain access to all the ingredients needed to successfully implement catalytic projects, the keyholders who control the access to these ingredients must be wooed into the support coalition. This can be done first and foremost with a clever design of incentives.

Some keyholders, however, perceive their interests to be fundamentally at odds with the catalytic project, hence they are unlikely to be swayed by incentives only. If project designers don't find ways to bypass these spoilers and access the necessary ingredients through alternative channels, those projects are doomed to hit a dead end.

The challenge is then to sway some of these spoilers to embrace the catalytic project. Keyholders are unlikely to act against what they perceive to be in their best interest. However, people do not determine what is in their best interest in an isolated way, but within the frame of reference subscribed to them by their respective discourse community. When this framework of "what is happening, and what needs to be done" shifts, some keyholders will start to recalculate their interests. In other words, the way to convince spoilers to support the catalytic project is not through incentives only, but through a change in the paradigm discourse. If a new narrative manages to turn some spoilers into transformative allies, the chances of implementation of the catalytic project will improve.



**What is the use of discourse mapping?**

In the end, change making is all about strategy. In order to debate over strategy on an informed basis, it is necessary to get a better understanding about the political field. Discourse maps are tools to visualise the political field.

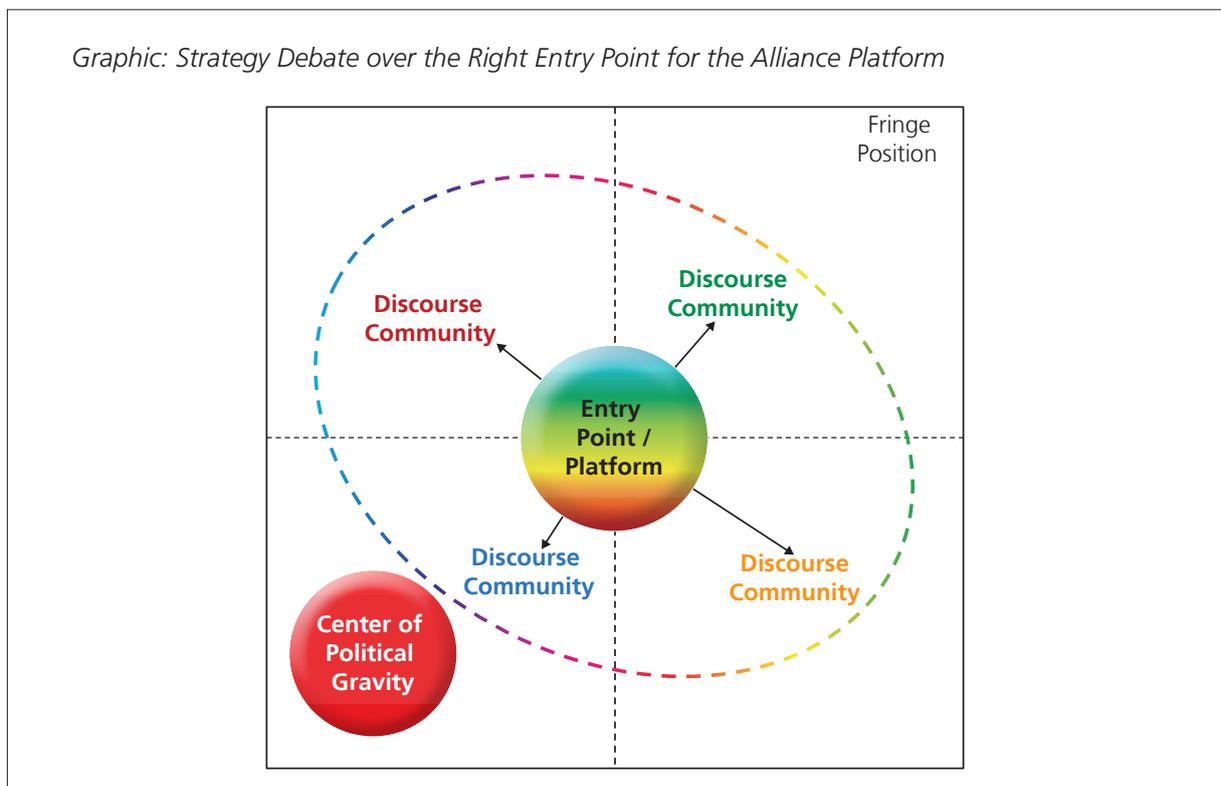
As an exercise, discourse mapping helps to build strategic capacity and political literacy. First, it encourages participants to break out of their “truth boxes”. For many, seeing the discourse landscape in its totality is an existential experience. Finding one’s own position side by side with many others puts it into perspective. Relativising one’s own “truth” helps to recognise that other positions are not simply “vile” or “misinformed”, but equally informed by a different morality.

Second, finding one’s own position at the margins of the political field fosters the understanding why it is so difficult to find allies for its implementation.

Third, identifying the centre of political gravity (e.g. the compass guiding major decision makers) helps to realise why certain things are happening while others are not.

Fourth, the discourse map makes it easy to identify potential allies beyond one’s own comfort zone. Fifth, the debate over the entry point helps to bring all seed community members onto the same page, and builds ownership within the group for the resulting strategy.

Given this instrumental use of discourse, it should be clear that the mapping exercise should not aim for academic accurateness, but simply create a tool for informed strategy debate, and provide the basis for the development of a quality change narrative.



## **A new format: the seed communities**

TCM needs a container within which stakeholders can produce the vehicles for transformative alliance building. Seed communities are multi-annual, multi-stakeholder working groups with a clearly defined mandate to produce the change narrative and catalytic projects needed. Bringing together the movers and shakers in a sector, they form a network of networks, a clearing house which pools the different knowledges distributed in this field, and a forum designed to break down institutional silos and social barriers.

In order to build transformative alliances, natural champions need to learn to understand the logics, cultures, needs and interests of potential allies. This is why seed communities, different from narrow capacity building workshops, reach beyond the comfort zone of the 'already convinced'. On the other hand, seed communities stop short of the 'bringing-the-entire-system-into-the-room' approach underpinning many multi-stakeholder dialogues. Having spoilers in the room will cripple any effort to create momentum for change, often turning such platforms into mere talk shops.

Seed communities, by contrast, serve as laboratories in which change makers can experiment with new ideas, formulas and narratives, as well as incubators where the nucleus of transformative alliances can be formed. They seek to create networks of trust

as well as ownership for common projects. Bringing together some of the most creative and prolific thinkers and opinion makers, they are ideator groups as well as launch pads for new discourses.

In order to run successfully, the seed community needs a convenor (ideally a partner with a wide network and knowledge capacity) who identifies and approaches new members. Seed community meetings will be conducted by a facilitator who moderates, guides and steers the discussions. To conduct the exercises, a small team of two rapporteurs is needed who can visualise and report the discussions.

Seed communities work best with a two-chamber system. To ensure the well-roundedness of perspectives and knowledges, both the incubator as well as the peer group bring together policy makers, civil servants, academics, entrepreneurs, federations, labour unions, activists and journalists with a focus on the sector in question. In line with the mandate to think-outside-the-box, the incubator emphasises creativity and commitment over representativeness and experience. As incubators need to work extensively with TCM, they should be open to innovative approaches and teamwork. To check against unrealistic pie-in-the-sky thinking, the peer group of experienced decision makers and senior experts provides a reality check for project proposals. With a view of the outreach process, peer community members qualify themselves through their access to vast networks of decision-makers.

**Setting up a seed community**

Given the high expectations of the analytical, social, communicative and creative skills of seed community members, recruiting the right mix of participants requires considerable effort. To introduce the methodology and foster commitment, one on one meetings are ideal. To speed up the process, conventional workshops can be helpful to identify candidates, assess the existing capacity in a region or sector, and deepen the convenor’s understanding how the issues are discussed.

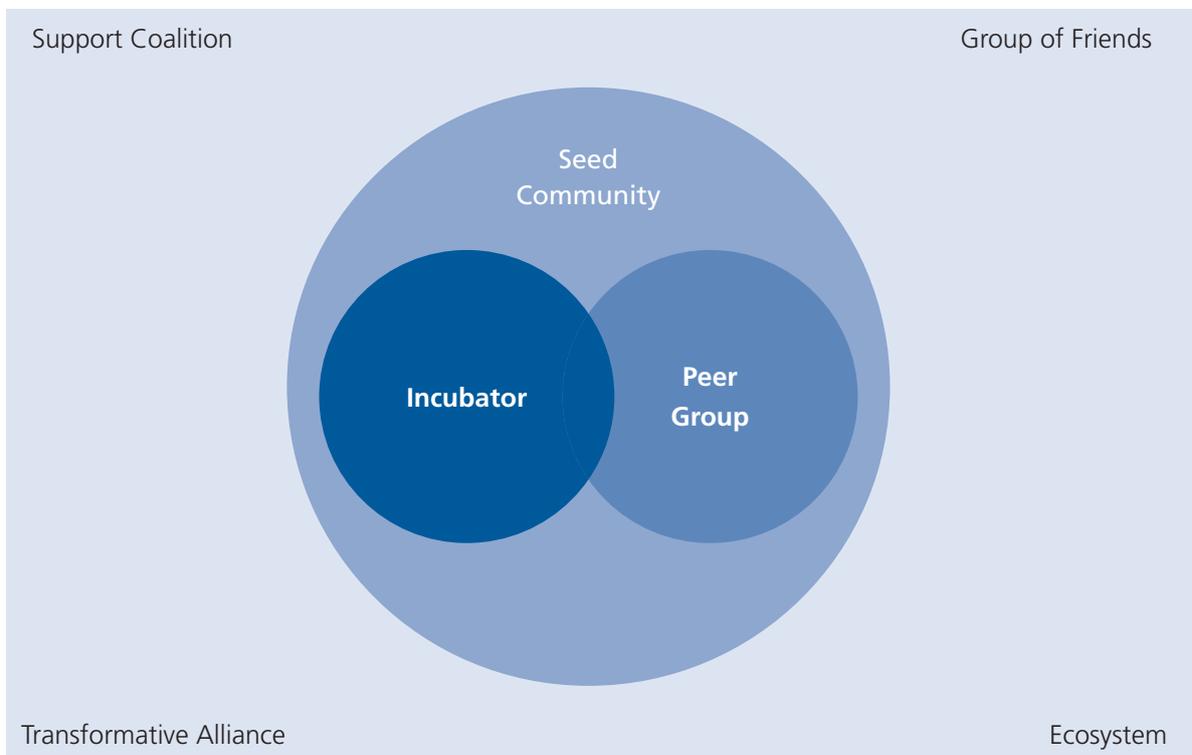
Three basic models to set up the seed communities are conceivable. First, a local seed community can bring together regional stakeholders. The strength of a local seed is the familiarity of members with the local context as well as their connections to local decision makers. In some regions, however, it may prove to be difficult to find a critical mass of suitable incubators.

The second model is a roadshow, where a fixed incubator group travels across the country to raise awareness with local peers. This may, however, pose significant logistical challenges and could undermine the commitment of seed members.

A third option is to bring together incubators from the entire country in a neutral space, e.g. for a weekend away from the buzz and distractions of everyday work life. To complement the lack of local knowledge and networks of such a “national incubator”, regular consultations with local peer groups are advisable.

A similar consultation mechanism can also connect the incubators with peers in Europe or seed communities in the region.

*Graphic: From Seed Community to Support Coalition*



**The working process: combine creativity with experience and influence**

Given the enormous task at hand, seed communities should have a time horizon of two to three years, depending on the logistical challenges involved in bringing participants together.

In every session, incubators work on the narrative, identify project ideas, vet them thoroughly, and decide whether to go ahead, redesign or drop the project. In between meetings, the facilitators (e.g. the conveners or FES) can help to polish up ideas, provide the necessary empirical background, and refine vetted project ideas into elaborate and detailed project proposals.

In regular consultation meetings, mature project proposals will be discussed with the peer group of experienced decision makers and experts. To maximise the benefits of this collaboration, the roles of incubator and peer group need to be clear. The incubator chooses project ideas, assesses their viability, and develops the project design. In this project design phase, the peer group acts as an advisory body, which adds information, roots out flawed assumptions, and contributes to the overall project design. The role of the peer community will become bigger in the outreach, when peers use their networks to mobilise keyholder support.

To avoid confusion, the working process should follow a clear sequence. Only after the incubator has developed a clear idea of the project design should the peer community be consulted. To facilitate focused discussions, a draft project proposal outlining the incentive structure, technical feasibility, business model and political narrative needs to be available. This project proposal should be the point of reference for all discussions. Additions, clarifications and changes will then be built into this open source document.

The incubator will take up this feedback, and redesign the project proposal taking these critical points into account. If a catalytic project is deemed ready and implementable, the entire seed community reaches out to their respective communities to find allies for implementation. The goal is to win the support of each identified keyholder. To ensure a sustained effort, a group of friends can be created which will assume responsibility for a particular catalytic project. Once this support coalition is formed, the implementation of the project can begin.

To create awareness and ownership early on, FES can engage with the ecosystem surrounding the seed community through the entire spectrum of classical instruments for capacity building, knowledge and experience sharing as well as public deliberation. In the outreach phase, FES can support the organisation of public platforms. The role of FES ends in the implementation phase of the catalytic project.



### What is different from classic instruments?

Transformative Change Making introduces several paradigm shifts in the way deliberation and decision making processes are approached.

First, TCM does not approach problems from a technocratic point of view (“for every technical problem, there is a technical solution”), but from the perspective of the political economy (“build alliance strong enough to win the struggle over implementation”). As opposed to “ideal” technical solutions, TCM looks for adaptable political formulas.

Second, TCM uses an instrumental approach to discourse; narratives are not treated as absolute truths, but as tools for alliance building.

Third, rather than looking for a place to implement a ready-made project, TCM puts design front and centre to develop tailor-

made projects for particular contexts. In place of debates over “issues” and “policies”, TCM breaks the work process down into the design of concrete projects.

The working process follows the peer-to-peer model of collaboration. Instead of formalised, hierarchical and standard-setting, seed communities are egalitarian, flexible, experimental, open source and reflexive crowd-working platforms.

Rather than recommending policies on how to fix a particular problem, TCM aims to create momentum to move the societal sector onto a trajectory of permanent change. Acknowledging the dynamic and complexity of modern societies, TCM understands the work process as open ended. In preference to setting standards, TCM prefers an evolutionary process of continuous upgrades.

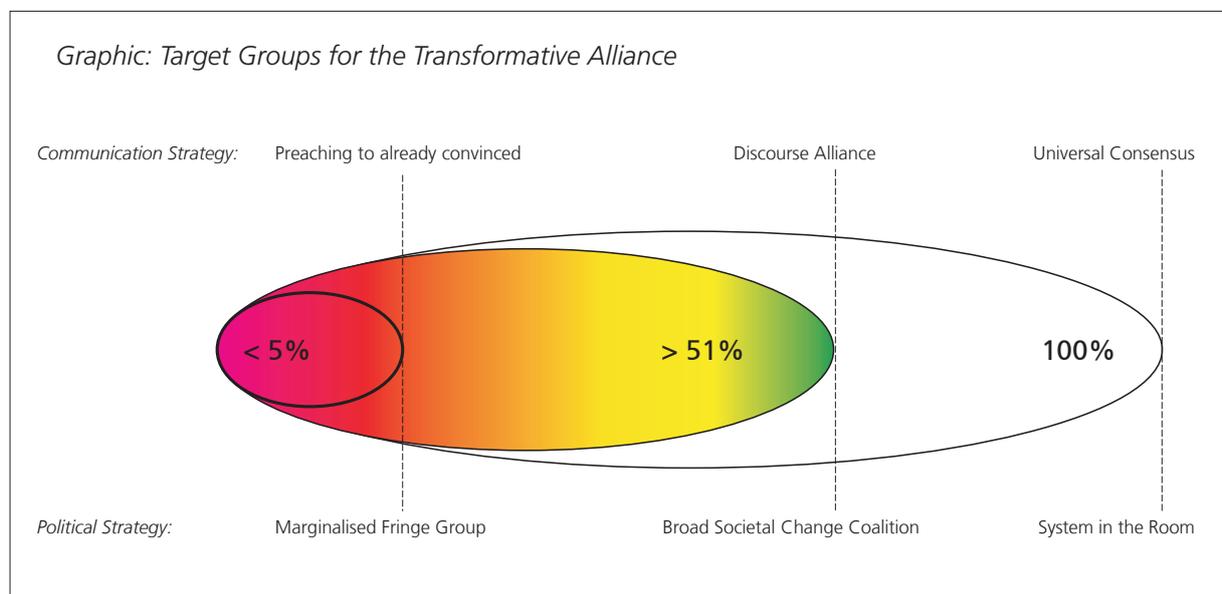


Table: What is different from classic instruments?

	<b>Capacity Building</b>	<b>Transformative Change Making</b>	<b>Multistakeholder Dialogue</b>
<i>Target Group</i>	"Comfort Zone" (5%) Friends and partners with progressive agendas	Potential Change Makers (60%) Actors with diverging interests in the status quo, whose interests may converge in an alternative paradigm	"System in the Room" (100%) Stakeholders from the entire political spectrum, including hawks and spoilers
<i>Goal</i>	Support progressive struggles	Shift development path	Technocratic optimisation of the system
<i>Strategy</i>	Raising awareness and creating understanding	Building alliances	Influencing decision makers
<i>Modus</i>	Transactional	Transformative	Transactional
<i>Time horizon</i>	Ongoing workshop series with changing participants	2-3 year project	Ongoing dialogues with partly overlapping participants
<i>Output</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content and organisational capacities of current and future activists strengthened</li> <li>• Policy campaigns</li> <li>• Agenda setting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicative and strategic capacity, political literacy strengthened</li> <li>• Change narrative introduced</li> <li>• Catalytic projects implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiences and expertise exchanged</li> <li>• Policy recommendations (best practices and lessons learnt) based on the lowest common denominator</li> <li>• Agenda setting</li> </ul>
<i>Role of FES</i>	<p>"Trainer"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify participants, experts and trainers</li> <li>• Program design</li> </ul>	<p>"Coach"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult on strategy, process</li> <li>• Recruit seed members</li> <li>• Method trainer</li> <li>• Handholding, trust building</li> <li>• Visualise the challenges</li> <li>• Support outreach</li> </ul>	<p>"Platform"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify experts and participants</li> <li>• Program design</li> </ul>
<i>Role of partners</i>	<p>"Trainee"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation</li> <li>• Identify participants</li> <li>• Roll out projects or campaigns</li> </ul>	<p>"Captain on the field"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit seed members</li> <li>• Prepare pitches, proposals</li> <li>• Mediate conflicts</li> <li>• Organise outreach</li> </ul>	<p>"Primus inter pares"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation</li> <li>• Identify participants</li> <li>• Moderator</li> </ul>

## Transformative Change Making, Step by Step

By telling success stories, catalytic projects lend credibility to the larger claim that change is possible. In order to do so, catalytic projects need to exemplify the narrative. Hence, it is best to start the working process with the construction of the narrative, and then use this narrative as a spotlight to identify fitting projects.

This sequence helps to prevent the misconception of using a different narrative for each and every project to “sell” it to the public, and underlines the need for an umbrella narrative to frame a multitude of catalytic projects.

The challenge is that first time participants often find it easier to work with the conventional method of project design than the more innovative tools of discourse steering. Mixing narrative building and project design in every workshop helps participants grasp how the constitutive elements of TCM – narrative, projects and alliance – are interconnected.

Experience shows that an average seed community can conclude the first phase – a narrative plus a fully vetted project pitch – in roughly 13 hours. This suggests a two-day workshop in a location away from the commitments and interruptions of professional lives.

In the following, we suggest time frames for every step. These time estimates refer to an average group unfamiliar with TCM. Once the method is fully understood, these time frames will dramatically decrease.

*Example: ‘Transforming the India Pakistan Relationship’*

*The three seed communities use the field analysis tools to update each other about the political shifts which have occurred in-between meetings. The discourse mappings help participants to distance themselves emotionally from events, thus preventing the politically charged atmosphere which otherwise often distorts the work process. An experienced seed community can conclude this exercise in less than an hour.*

### Constructing the change narrative

Finding the right narrative which allows communities to come together to form an alliance is front and centre to TCM. This means, not just any narrative will do, but the entry point for the narrative has to be carefully chosen.

TCM prepares the strategy debates over the right entry point to make sure that seed community members have all the information they need. In order to allow participants to analyse the entire political field, TCM uses discourse and actor maps as visualization tools. These maps are a means to the end of informed strategy debate. Still, experience shows that going through the process of preparing these tools helps participants to develop a deeper understanding of the complexity and dynamic nature of the field they analyse. With a view of building the strategic capacity of participants, these preparatory exercises are worth their while. Still, it is helpful to remind participants that these maps are only preparatory tools, so the time and effort spent to generate them needs to be proportionate to the end of informed strategy debate.

## Preparing the debate

### Step 1: Identify discourses (90 min)

First, the major discourse communities in the chosen field need to be identified and analysed. Collect all the narratives relevant for the political field. When in doubt if a narrative is widely shared in the public discourse or only by a few, it is better to include it.

The development narrative charts out a path for society as a whole. It explains the bigger picture, positions the country on the path from the past into the future, and normatively justifies why this path is the right one to travel. The paradigm discourse determines what the role of the societal sector (e.g. energy, education, security) in the overall development of the country is, what the main challenges are, and what needs to be done to overcome them. Hence, the sector paradigm discourse (“What to do”) is always embedded in a development narrative (“Why to do it”). Several discourse communities can share the same policy compass, but for different reasons.

Some participants may find it difficult to take the step from analysing “issues” or “policy” to identifying discourses. To stress that their contributions are not invalid, but simply located on a different analytical level, it can be helpful to list policy discourses, too.

Experience shows that it may be easier to take Step 1 and 2 in parallel. While mapping the discourses, missing discourse communities can be identified.

### Step 2: Map discourses (90 min)

Map these discourse communities onto a coordinate system reflecting the main conflicts in the analysed sector. The seed community should discuss and agree on these main conflict lines. This may pose a slight dilemma. Often, it is only after the analysis of the map that the main conflict lines become apparent. Badly chosen coordinate systems result in maps with limited utility. As a rule of thumb, it should be avoided to duplicate the sectorial paradigm, e.g. by mapping foreign policy discourses into

Example: Energy Discourse Communities in India

	<b>Policy</b> How to do it?	<b>Energy Paradigm</b> What to do?	<b>Development Narrative</b> Why do it?	<b>Actors</b> Who says this?
<i>Discourse Community 1</i>	build clean coal plants	cheap, accessible energy for industrialisation	growth first, environment later	Government, Industry
<i>Discourse Community 2</i>	small hydro power, solar, wind	clean energy	sustainable growth	Government, CSO, iNGO
<i>Discourse Community 3</i>	coal, eclectic energy mix	good quality, affordable and reliable energy	quality of life	Industry, CSO, Consumers
<i>Discourse Community 4</i>	cheap energy	financially sustainable clean energy generation	poverty reduction	Government, CSO, local communities, opposition
<i>Discourse Community 5</i>	all energy forms	employment generating energy	job creation	Government
<i>Discourse Community 6</i>	sub-regional energy cooperation	energy to all	inclusive growth	CSO, Government
<i>Discourse Community 7</i>	renewables, efficiency, skilling	green energy, green jobs	green growth	CSO, iNGO

a coordinate system where one of the axes is the foreign policy paradigm. The resulting map would still be useful, but it wastes the opportunity to expose potential blindness of a community (e.g. the foreign policy community) to the ground realities outside its 'filter-bubble'. An outright mistake would be to use co-dependent variables, e.g. when one variable is essentially a function of the other. The resulting field map would not be very useful.

To avoid this dilemma, the organizers should propose the coordinate system. If the group cannot agree on it after extensive discussions, it is better to go on with the mapping exercise as originally suggested rather than risk the entire working process going off the rails. At this very

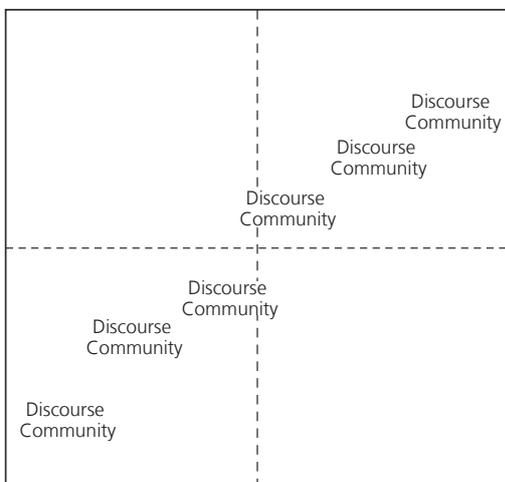
early stage, when parts of the groups have not yet fully digested the methodology and may not see where all of this may be leading, the danger of frustrating the group is higher than ending up with a less than ideal map. The seed community can repeat the exercise with a new coordinate system in the next session.

*Beware of the elite bias*

Sometimes, choosing a less than ideal coordinate system can be enlightening. As witnessed in many societies around the world, the educated elites of the capital are often woefully unaware of the discourses predominant in other social silos. This becomes a problem when an expert community

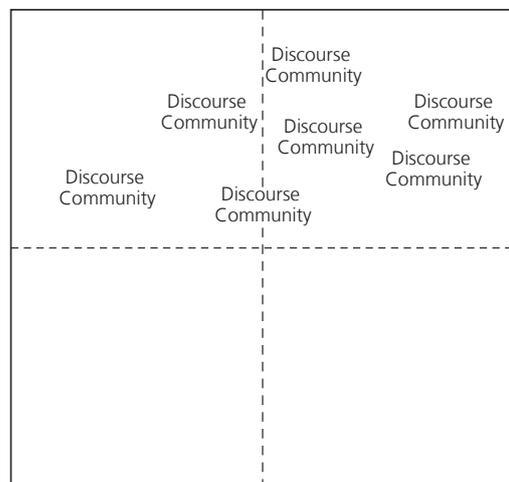
*Problematic Example: One Variable Dependent On The Other*

*If we chose "GDP growth versus Ecological Sustainability" (x axis) and "Renewables versus Fossile Energy" (y-axis), then the latter is dependent on the former. No discourse community which favours environmental sustainability would prefer fossile fuels. And only a few who opt for "GDP growth first" would bet everything on renewables. As a result, vast parts of the map would remain empty, while the identified discourses would be plotted in a diagonal line.*



*Problematic Example: Delhi's Elite Bias*

*Delhi's expert communities tend to overlook the communal identity politics of caste and religion in their analyses. These considerations, however, feature prominently in the minds of elected decision-makers. India's posture towards Pakistan, for instance, cannot be fully understood without taking into account the role of Muslims in local electoral politics. A failure to include cultural conflicts may result in policy recommendations which seem out of touch with ground realities.*

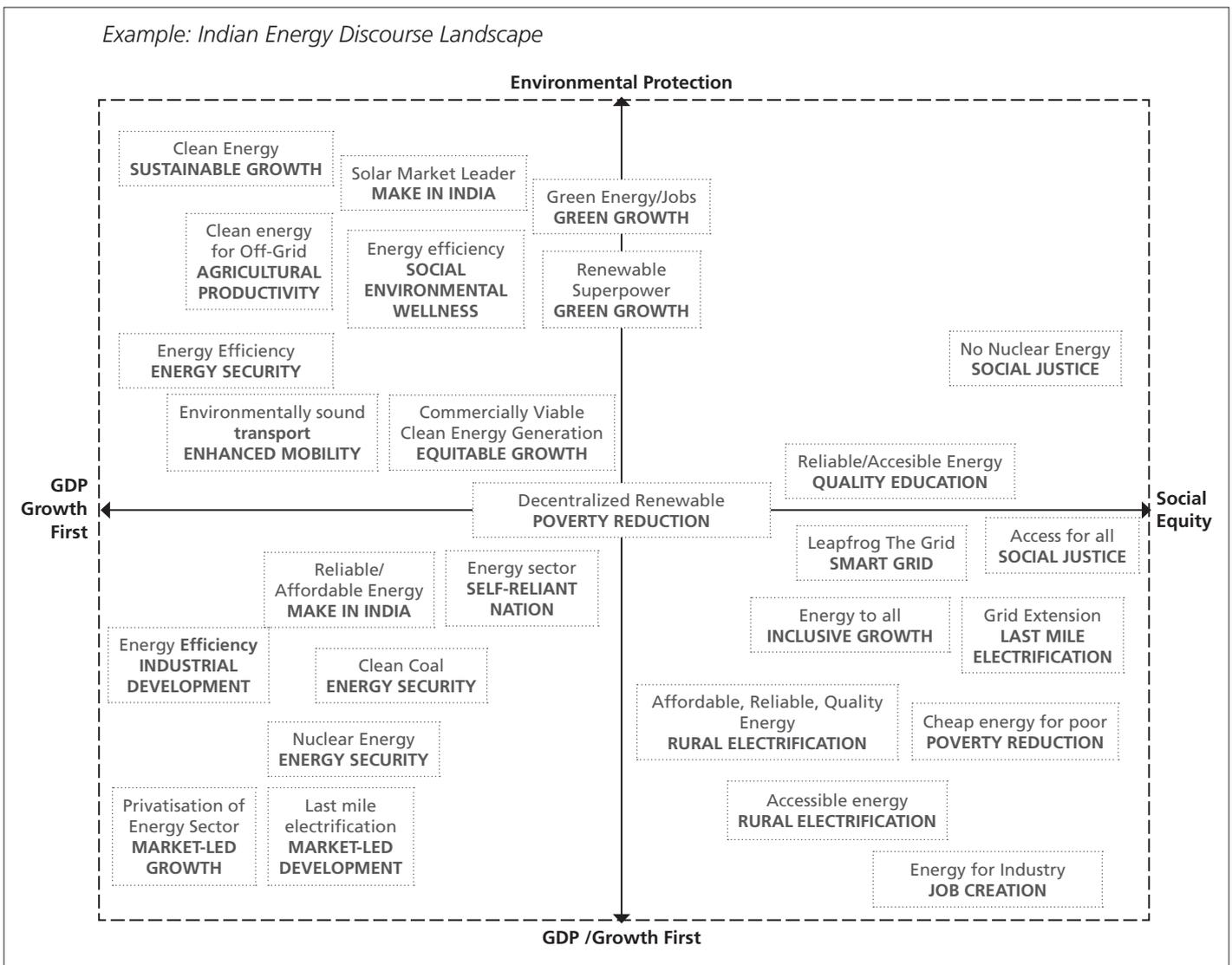


fails to understand what discourses truly dominate the political field and develop their policy recommendations from this distorted view. Such failure to understand what really motivates decision-makers, however, is likely to result either in the dismissal of expert advice, or if taken, can lead to political disaster.

If cultural conflicts are omitted from the analysis, the resulting map would only reflect the narrow view of the elite filter-bubble. If the cultural axis is added, on the other hand, elite discourses would only gravitate around one axis, but leave vast parts of the map empty. As a general rule of thumb, empty spaces on the map should always encourage participants to double-check for discourses they may have

overlooked. Some participants may feel that “these voices don’t matter”. When in doubt, mapping discourses is always preferable, as it helps to identify the centre of political gravity more correctly. More often than not, non-elite discourse communities are important players in the political field. Breaking participants out of their “elite filter-bubble” is, therefore, an important outcome of the exercise in its own right. Especially in societies with deep centre-periphery or class conflicts, making different worldviews visible can be an important first step to address these issues.

The mapping should be done in a participatory manner. Stakeholders will need to be encouraged to discuss exact positions in order



to sharpen understanding of the differences, commonalities, and the overall character of the discourse communities. This position should reflect how the discourse is widely understood at present, not what its original speakers may have intended. Narratives, as social constructs, are living things, and shift their position in the field over time. The map, thus, can only be a snapshot at any given time.

When participants cannot agree on an exact position, it may be helpful to remind them that the purpose of the exercise is not to scientifically document public debates, but to create a tool for informed strategy debates. Accordingly, the objective of this first step is to bring all participants onto the same page.

*Beware of the truth box*

Some participants may feel apprehensive to see what they believe to be true mapped side by side with other discourses in the wider field. Some may even feel compelled “to explain how it really is”. This can lead to a diversion into

policy debates, technical details and empirical evidence. However, to break participants out of their “truth boxes”, or making them acknowledge the relativity of their own beliefs is precisely the point of the exercise. One of the reasons why it is so difficult to overcome the status quo is rooted in this widespread failure to see other viewpoints on the same moral footing (e.g. “I speak the one and only truth, hence I am righteous. If you differ from me, you are not only wrong, but must be immoral”) which undermines the ability to form broad societal alliances.

With a view of building the strategic capacity and political literacy of civil society, the ability to analyse the political field from the eagle’s perspective is a crucial first step. The moderator should therefore encourage participants to embrace the methodology, and focus their contribution on the identification and mapping of discourses, rather than the analysis of challenges or the debate over the merits of policies.

**Step 3: Map actors and ingredients (60 min)**

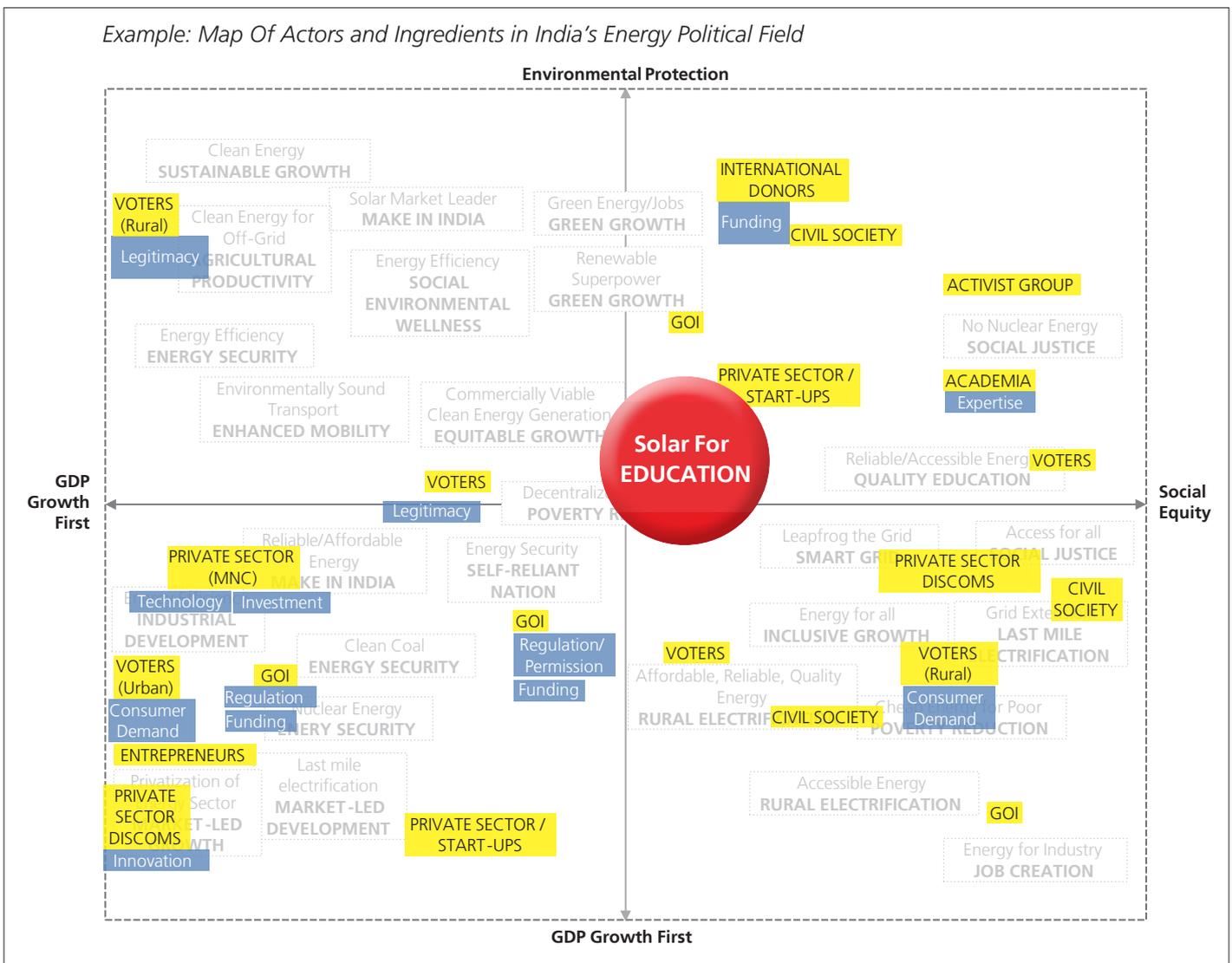
Not all narratives are equally powerful. While some hail from the fringe, only a few occupy the mainstream of public discourse. The difference reflects how widely a discourse resonates with social groups. Vice versa, the predominance of a discourse depends on the political, social and economic power of the social groups propagating it.

In this step, participants map main players (e.g. government and major opposition parties), economic groups (e.g. domestic and international industry and finance) and social groups (e.g. major voter blocs, civil society). The actors should be mapped next to the discourses

they promote. Any discourse community can and will comprise more than one actor. In a quick analysis, participants should elaborate why certain social groups propagate a certain narrative, and if this association has changed over time.

To help with the design of catalytic projects, map which ingredients these keyholders control. The resulting map shows which keyholders need to be recruited into the support coalition to be able to implement the project successfully. If keyholders seem unlikely to be swayed by incentives, project design needs to think of ways to bypass these keyholders or get access to crucial ingredients through other channels.

Example: Map Of Actors and Ingredients in India's Energy Political Field



**Step 4: Identify the centre of political gravity (30 min)**

In this step, participants should analyse the interplay between discourse and political action. The aim is to find out what compass guides the decision making of the political and economic establishment. The further away from the centre of political gravity actors are located, the narrower is their political room for manoeuvre. Accordingly, which discourses are mainstream and which ones are fringe is determined by their distance to the centre of political gravity. The point is to further the understanding of the pressures, interdependencies and complexities decision makers are facing.

Sometimes, the centre of political gravity is confused with public opinion. However, not even in a perfect democracy, these two concepts are the same. In all societies, some actors carry more political clout than others. In many countries, a significant part of deliberations happens behind closed doors, and never enter the public discourse. More often than not, these voices carry more weight in the minds of decision makers, thus need to be carefully considered when locating the centre of political gravity. If this makes some participants uncomfortable, remind them of the purpose of the exercise: to get a clear-eyed view of the political playing fields as the necessary precondition for an informed strategy debate.

Analytically speaking, the “centre of political gravity” is a trick to visualize the fact that some actors are more powerful, and some discourses capture the imagination more than others. All communities struggle to pull the centre of political gravity into their direction. This is why the centre of political gravity must be understood as a dynamic spot which is highly dependent on current events. Still, the centre of political gravity is unlikely to bounce all over the field, but rather move around the paradigm

of the status quo. In other words, only a major shift in the balance of power would result in a dramatic shift of the centre of political gravity.

The following questions can help locate the centre of political gravity:

- What discourse communities dominate the field?
- Did the discourse landscape shift over the last year(s) or decades? If so, what is the trajectory?
- Under the current political constellation, which political, economic, and social groups are dominant?
- What kinds of narratives do these dominant groups propagate?
- Looking at major political decisions over the past year, what is the common denominator?
- Did the policy paradigm shift; if so, what is the trajectory?
- Do the trajectories of discourse and action point to the same direction, or is there a divergence between talk and action?
- What does all this mean for the room for manoeuvre of political decision makers?
- How far is the distance between the centre of political gravity and the initiatives of some of the seed community members? What does that mean for their ability to implement them?

**The strategy debates**

**Step 5: Discuss the entry point for the new narrative (60 min)**

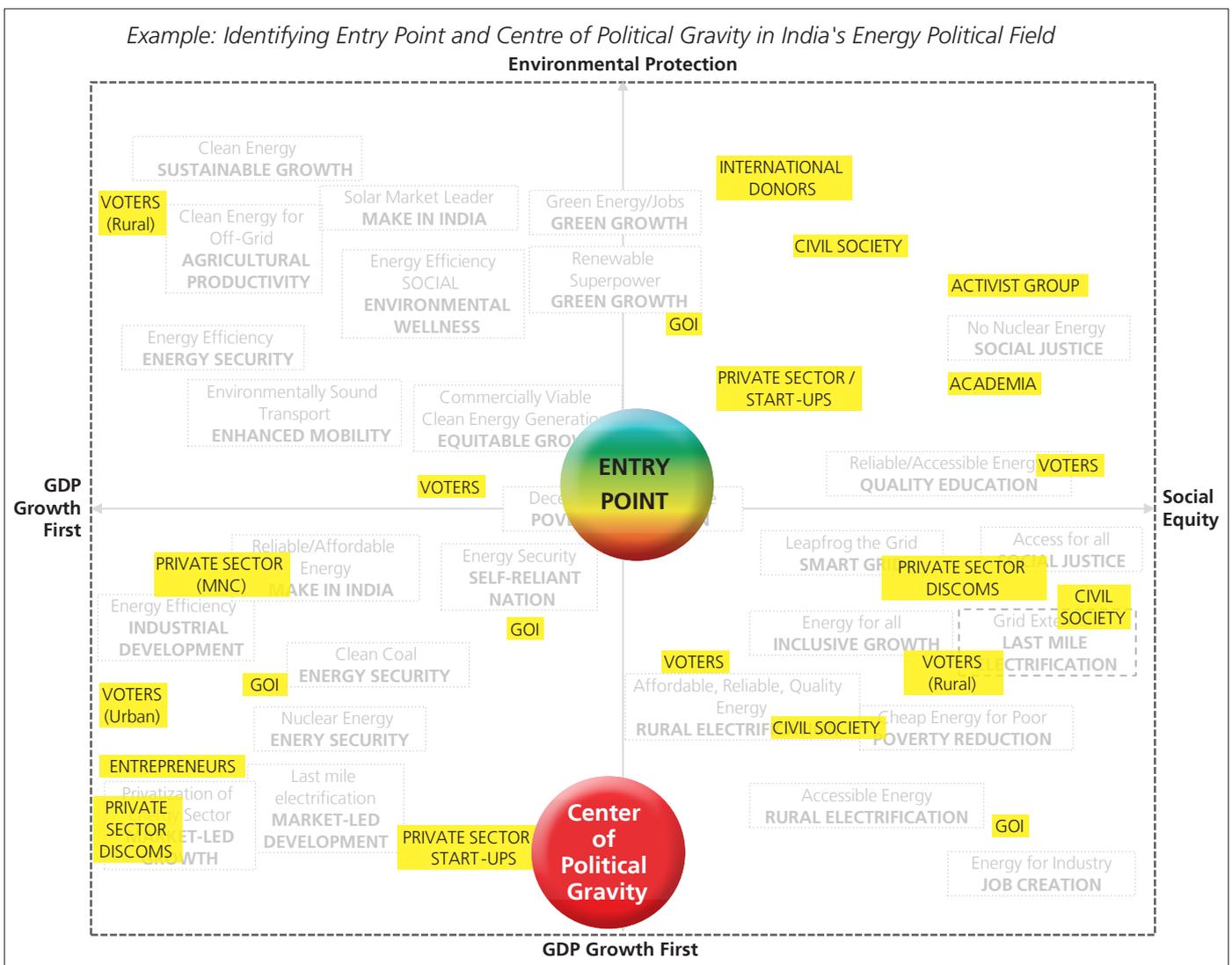
The resulting map is a useful tool to facilitate informed strategy debate over the best entry point for the new narrative. This strategy debate is the ultimate objective of the entire exercise. The entry point determines how far the change narrative will resonate, how many communities come together on this common platform, and how strong the transformative alliance will be.

- Which social, economic, and political resources are a must-have to shift the development path?
- Which entry point would allow the narrative to resonate with as many discourse communities as possible?
- Where should the discursive platform for the transformative alliance be located?
- Which neighbouring discourse communities can be won over for a discourse alliance?
- What kind of narrative would resonate with these major keyholders?
- How must the change narrative sound like to serve as the platform for the discourse alliance?

*Example: Analysis of the energy political field in India*

*The centre of political gravity shows that despite the rhetoric targeting the international community, decision makers are still firmly motivated by the “GDP growth first” paradigm. Over the last years, the emerging “curb dependence on fossil fuels to improve energy security” narratives have shifted the discourse. To cater to the needs of a broad spectrum of constituencies in the largest democracy of the world, the government has championed narratives all over the map. Seed communities see the opportunity to link the green energy transformation to these security concerns, as well as the electoral appeal of electrification to votes in rural areas.*

Example: Identifying Entry Point and Centre of Political Gravity in India's Energy Political Field



**Step 6: Construct the new narrative (180 min)**

A powerful development narrative combines a threat (“The danger of continuing with the status quo”), the hope for a better future (“Vision that key constituencies can agree on”), a window of opportunity to make this happen (“This structural trend is a Game Changer”), confidence to be able to do so (e.g. “It has been done before, and we can do it again”) and an ethical imperative (“This higher purpose makes this the right thing to do”).

First, the group brainstorms which risks and dangers; visions and dreams; technical, geopolitical, demographic, economic or social trends; histories, experiences, myths or cultures; as well as higher purposes, norms, values may be useful to build the new narrative.

Then, a strategy debate is needed to determine which of these elements are best suited to communicate the chosen entry point, resonate with as many discourse communities as possible, and help to woo all critical keyholders. This debate needs to be informed by the clear understanding that the new narrative will be the frame of reference for all catalytic projects, and define the platform that will deliver the transformative alliance.

*Example: New Energy Transformation narrative for India*

*If we do not address energy poverty, social disparity will continue to widen. We can strengthen delivery of essential services and create millions of sustainable livelihoods through clean energy. Technological and financial innovation will make it possible to scale renewable energy. Hence, clean energy will be an enabler of education, health, finance, entrepreneurship, helping to provide full capabilities to a wider population, thus unleashing sustainable development. Since the dawn of history, Indians have learned to efficiently use natural resources. Traditional knowledge and rich experience with scarcity makes us a world class frugal innovator. India has always been a moral leader. Today, it is our duty to be at the forefront of saving the planet and save lives with clean energy.*

*Table: Narrative Building*

<b>Threat</b>	<b>Hope</b>	<b>Game Changer</b>	<b>Confidence</b>	<b>Ethical Imperative</b>
What is the danger when the current trend continues?	What better future is possible? This promise of a better tomorrow is not arbitrary, but describes the alternative paradigm where the perceived interests of key constituencies converge.	Which structural drivers (“Game Changers”) will transform the situation to make it possible to achieve this hope?	What gives us the confidence to say “It has been before, so we can do it again”? How can we translate facts and figures into emotional narratives?	Why is the ‘Doable’ the morally ‘Right Thing To Do’?

## Designing catalytic projects

### **Step 1: Brainstorming project ideas** (60 min)

Catalytic projects are the entry points to transformative change. This is why they need to be carefully chosen and designed in order to work as structural, social and discursive catalysts. In a first exercise, participants brainstorm over potential catalytic projects.

### **Step 2: Project Pitch** (90 min)

If the project idea is deemed promising, it should be developed into a project pitch. Ideally, someone volunteers to put together a short pitch (max. 1 page) and present it to the seed community. If not, the convenor or FES can prepare the pitch in-between the meetings. After a short presentation of the project outline, the incubator discusses if the project – optimised by careful design – has the potential to be catalytic and doable.

#### **Is the project idea catalytic?**

##### *1. Is it transformative?*

Which structural game changers will the project unleash? How would these game changers transform the situation over the next few decades?

##### *2. Can it scale?*

Does it reach well beyond the original ecosystem, and impact the lives of millions? How can the project be institutionalised?

##### *3. Is there a critical mass of early supporters?*

Which interest groups support the project? Is there a support coalition to get the project off the ground? Do these early supporters have the means to implement the project? Does this support coalition have the potential to grow into a broad societal alliance?

##### *4. Does it exemplify the narrative?*

Does the catalytic project reflect the strategic entry point for the narrative? Will the narrative resonate with all the keyholders needed to implement it successfully?

##### *5. Can it tell a success story?*

Would the project formula be replicable elsewhere? Would its successful implementation tickle the imagination?

#### **Is the project idea doable?**

##### *6. Is it technically doable?*

What technological, fiscal, legal ingredients are needed? Where are the gaps and difficulties?

##### *7. Is it commercially viable?*

Is there enough demand and supply? Who provides the initial investment, subsidies, access to credit or maintenance cost?

##### *8. Is it politically sellable?*

Is there an electoral mandate? Which political factions support the initial agreement? Is there a budget? Is public as well as published opinion in favour? What are the permits and regulations needed? How strong is the opposition?

By running project ideas through this set of criteria, gaps and shortcomings can be identified. The discussion should focus on these gaps and seek to sense whether they can be addressed or not. If the incubator deems a project idea neither catalytic nor doable, it should be set aside.

*Example: Solar Irrigation in India's Rural Areas*

*1. Transformative?*

*Thousands of Indians villages are still not connected to the electricity grid. In order to irrigate the fields, pumps powered by diesel generators are being used. Diesel is not only a health hazard, but the most expensive source of energy. Replacing diesel generators with photovoltaic panels will accelerate the electrification of off-grid rural areas. Electrification of the rural areas will boost social inclusion as well as economic activity.*

*2. Scalable?*

*Solar irrigation has the potential to reach millions of farmers. Solar panels can also be used to power households and markets.*

*3. Support coalition?*

*Given the right incentives, potential allies are farmers, local entrepreneurs, elected politicians, environmental groups, as well as donor agencies.*

*4. Exemplify narrative?*

*Solar irrigation resonates with the green discourse community ("cutting emissions"), the social justice discourse community ("access as justice") as well as the development discourse community ("rural empowerment*

*and entrepreneurship"). Discourse bridges may be possible to appeal to the women empowerment discourse community. Hence, the project exemplifies the entry point at the centre of the field.*

*5. Success story?*

*Solar irrigation makes the green energy transformation tangible for millions ("Seeing is believing"). The formula can be easily replicated not only in India, but also in other developing countries.*

*6. Technically doable?*

*The technology needed is already available in India. A gap remains: the intermittent nature of solar energy.*

*7. Commercially viable?*

*Local entrepreneurs have already introduced the product and are ready to install as well as maintain them. A potential gap is access to credit for villagers. A possible solution could be to use the local cooperatives to provide credit.*

*8. Politically sellable?*

*Given the potentially broad social coalition backing the projects, it seems likely that political champions will promote solar irrigation.*

**Step 3: Vetting a project pitch** (90 min)

Incubator members will run the project pitch through a thorough vetting exercise. The goal of this step is to narrow down the list to identify the most suitable projects and begin a strategy discussion on how best to design the project with a view of creating maximum social buy in.

The steps to be followed for this are:

- Collect the ingredients that would be required to make the project a success, in a comprehensive manner from planning to maintenance.
- Which societal actor holds the key to these ingredients?

- Are these keyholders natural champions (those who are already convinced: mark green), fence sitters (those who need extra incentives to be on board: mark yellow), or spoilers (those who are ideologically opposed or have vested interests in the status quo: mark red).
- In case of the fence sitters: What incentives are likely to sway them?
- In case of spoilers: Are they critical for the success of the project?

At this point, the seed community should come to a conclusion if the project candidate should be adopted, or needs to be redesigned, or should be dropped.

*Example: Vetting Solar Irrigation in India's Rural Areas*

Natural champions      Transactional Allies      Spoilers

<i>What is needed to successfully implement the project?</i>	<i>Are the keyholders on board?</i>	<i>What incentives can sway keyholders?</i>
R&D, Product development	Renewable energy/ Development institutes	
Supply: Market introduction	Local entrepreneur	Profitability: Subsidies
Demand	Consumers/ Farmers	Price cheaper than diesel
Funding, subsidies	Treasurer, Donor	
Access to credit	Cooperatives, commercial banks, local lenders	Local lenders not needed
Installation, maintenance	Local entrepreneur	Subsidies
Political support	Elected politician	Votes, Caps on budget
Administrative support	State Ministry of Agriculture	
Public opinion	Media, Civil society	

*An in-depth vetting shows that with the exception of local lenders (who often happen to coincide with the provision of diesel generators for local markets), no spoilers can be identified. Given the alternatives, especially the local cooperatives (who are being pushed out of the market by commercial banks and need a new mission), the support of local lenders is not needed. Demand in the rural areas depends on the price (solar will be significantly cheaper than diesel), the initial funding (incentives such*

*as subsidies) as well as the technical doability (intermittency problem needs to be addressed). Mirroring demand, local entrepreneurs are on board if profitability is given. Given the natural allies of Academic Institutes, NGOs and international donors, availability of expertise and funding seems to be guaranteed. Given the potential of thousands of votes, as well as a benign public opinion, political support seems to be likely as long as the budgetary commitment is kept in check.*

**Step 4: Designing project proposals** (up to 3 months)

Drawing from all the information provided by the seed community, a project proposal will be developed. The developer will enrich the proposal with further research, e.g. additional data or feasibility studies. The project proposal will develop incentive structures which are carefully designed to bring transactional allies on board. The proposal also suggests how the projects can be embedded in the change narrative.

**Step 5: Reviewing project proposal** (90 min)

The project proposal needs to be reviewed to check if it is truly catalytic and doable. Ideally, this reality check is best done by the entire seed community, including the peer group.

- Are the incentives adequate in order to bring all keyholders on board?
- Can potential spoilers be swayed by the new narrative? If not, did the project design find solutions to bypass them?
- Does the project exemplify the narrative?

If significant flaws or shortcomings in the project design are detected, the proposal should be sent back to the drawing board. If potential crucial questions cannot be addressed by the seed community alone, a fact-finding mission may be commissioned. If the majority of the seed community endorses the project proposal, the outreach can begin.

**Outreach**

When a project proposal has been endorsed by the incubator and its peer group, it is then time for public outreach. The seed community can organise public fora, and lobby decision makers. How this outreach will be organised of course depends on the nature of the project.

The ultimate goal remains the same: to build a support coalition which brings together all the keyholders needed for the successful implementation of the project.

Once the support coalition is formed, the project implementation can begin.

A productive seed community should be able to design half a dozen catalytic projects. To assure a sustained outreach, an effective division of labour between the seed members is needed. For this purpose, a Group of Friends could recruit new supporters to carry out the outreach and oversee the implementation of one of the projects.

Professionally produced material is needed to support the outreach. A “Book of Ideas” can present all catalytic projects. Youtube videos can help to spread the word of success stories.

## Annex I: Transforming India Pakistan Relationship

*TCM is not restricted to any topic. FES India is using the method in the seed communities on “Energy Transformation”, “Urban Transformation” and “Digital Transformation”. Elements of the method have been developed in FES Thailand’s “Civic Education Reform” community. On the regional level, the Network of Social Democracy in Asia (SocDem) and “Political Feminism” project have started to experiment with TCM. FES India and FES Pakistan are convening three Indo-Pakistani seed communities.*

Since the Partition of 1947, India-Pakistan relations have oscillated between periods of relative calm and phases of confrontation. Official negotiation processes, both in the public eye and through backchannels, periodically hit a dead end. In times of breakdown of communication, several Track II dialogues keep alternative channels of communication open. These dialogues offer safe spaces to address contentious issues, and build an atmosphere of trust, with the aim of mutually developing policy recommendations. The strategy is to tackle the so-called “low-hanging-fruits” in order to create momentum for a better relationship. Unfortunately, in practice, Track II dialogues often fail to deliver tangible results. Some of the “low-hanging fruits”, especially related to territorial disputes, are difficult to tackle. Participants, often briefed by their governments, tend to bring official positions into the dialogue, thereby undermining the atmosphere of trust. Finally, policy recommendations rarely find their way to decision-makers, and if they do, are often dismissed.

To meet this challenge, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung India and Pakistan offices convene three ‘seed communities’ – economy, cultural and security - with the objective of finding entry points for collaboration and serve as a nucleus for the formation of broad societal change coalitions.

Acknowledging that solutions for contentious issues are hard to reach in the current environment, the seed communities take a long

view. They do so by trusting that, over decades, structural trends – from shifting geopolitics to increased trade and changing perceptions of each other – will transform the relationship to a point when it will become possible to tackle these issues.

The objective of the seed communities is to contribute to this process in two ways. First, by shifting the imagination and expectations in such a way that more and more stakeholders find it in their best interest to take a collaborative stance towards the other side. And second, by providing decision makers with concrete doables which have the potential to transform the relationship.

It is understood that in the periodic ups and downs of the relationship, there are times when it may prove difficult to implement any project. However, catalytic projects can be helpful in three ways. First, they counter the scepticism prevailing amongst decision-makers with an impressive list of technically feasible, commercially viable and, if the moment comes, politically doable projects. Second, they allow decision makers to get ahead of the curve; once the window of opportunity opens, fully developed, ready-to-be-implemented projects proposals will be readily available. And if they can be implemented, catalytic projects create networks of trust, tell success stories and build the confidence that cooperation will be possible in other areas, too.

As long as India and Pakistan see each other as security threats, it is unlikely that any of the contentious issues can be resolved. In such an environment, collaborative projects often hit a dead end, or never scale beyond the point of becoming truly transformative. In order to transform the relationship, the paradigm discourse has to be shifted. The shift of the paradigm, however, is not an academic exercise, but a result of political struggles. Only a broad societal alliance will be able to reframe the lens through which the two countries see each other. Building such an alliance requires a strategically well-placed platform on which as many communities as possible can come together.

The task of the seed communities is to find the right entry point for this narrative. In order to have an informed strategy debate over the right entry point, a better understanding of the political playing field is necessary.

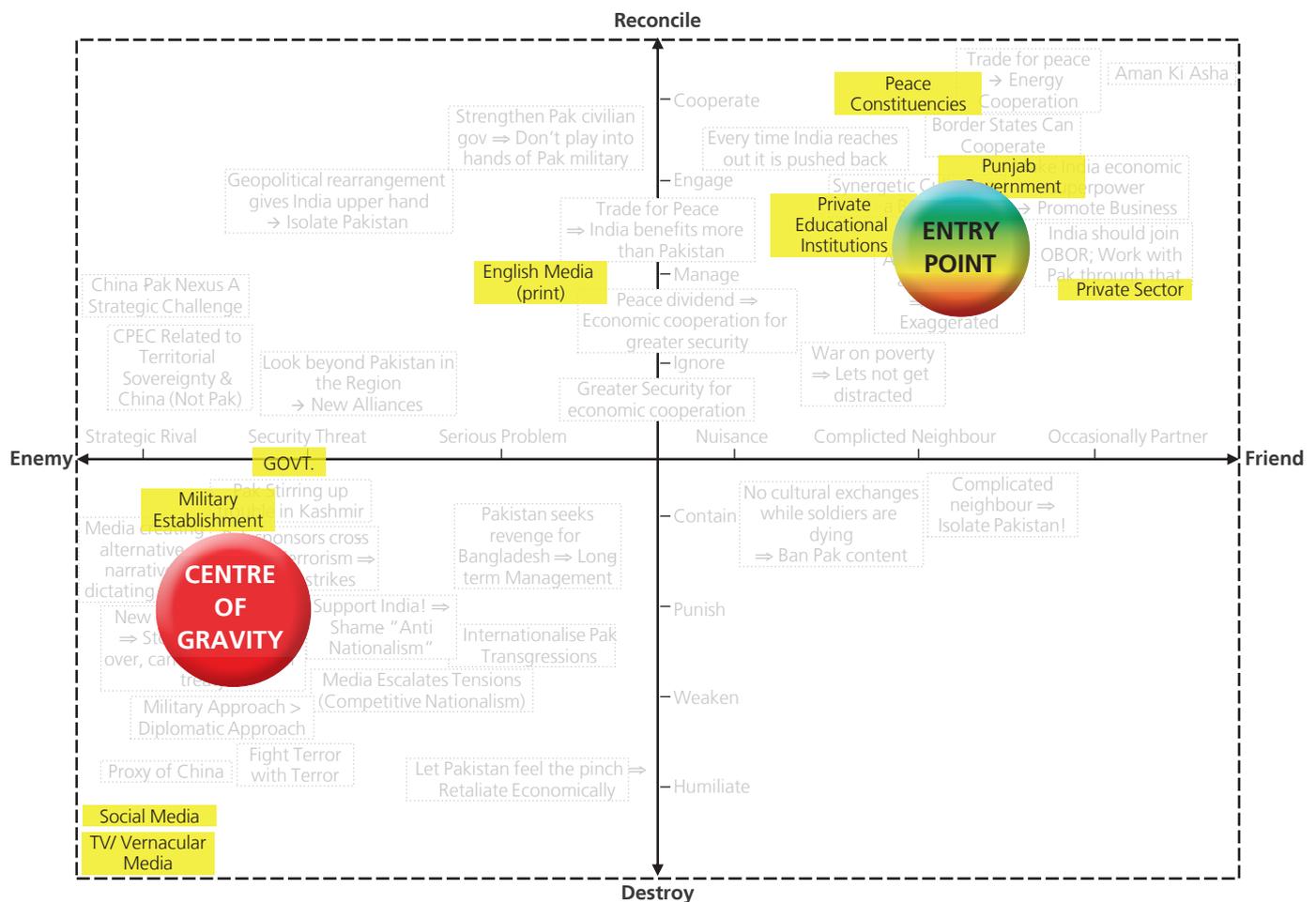
At the beginning of each seed community meeting, participants update the political field map. This first-hand account of the discourse shifts on the other side helps participants to get a much clearer understanding of the situation beyond all the filters and distortions. Psychologically, the mapping helps participants to put some distance between themselves and the events. This helps to say what needs to be said, without it becoming a confrontational issue that could poison the working atmosphere.

**The political field analysis**

In May 2017, all participants agreed that the situation has worsened since the last seed community meeting. As a result, the centre of political gravity on both the Indian and Pakistani discourse maps shifted towards the more negative corner. As a consequence, the

room for manoeuvre of peace constituencies, private sector, as well as governments to reach out to the other side has shrunk. Under current circumstances, any project design that requires the involvement or consent of the governments and military establishments may not take off.

Example: India Political Field (May 2017)



In India, some media houses compete against each other in "Pakistan bashing" (a phenomenon described as "Competitive patriotism"). On the actors' level, members perceived a hardening of the Indian

government's approach towards Pakistan. Reacting to what it perceives to be deeper cooperation between Pakistan and China, New Delhi has publicly opposed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.



### ***Catalytic projects***

The seed communities have designed three catalytic projects to maturity, and are currently working on four project proposals.

#### *Common Media Market*

In a situation where media engage in neighbour-bashing as a business model, the room for decision makers to reach out to the other side is extremely limited. The catalytic project "Common Media Market" proposes to offer media owners access to the neighbouring market as a commercial incentive to tone down jingoism. The strength of the project design is to combine a commercial driver with the cultural game changer of "shifting the perception of the other".

#### *Electricity Sharing*

India and Pakistan have negotiated for years over an electricity sharing mechanism. Today, Pakistan is in need for electricity, while India produces more than it can use. Connecting the grids is technically doable and commercially viable. With a view of not raising any red flags, the project design starts with a limited amount, which can be scaled up any time the political context becomes more conducive.

#### *Unmute Festival*

India and Pakistan share a syncretic culture, with food, music, sports and literature at its core. Already today, collaborations of musicians from both sides draw a passionate following. The Unmute Festival seeks to scale up this potential to "see the other" in a different light with a televised music festival. To bypass the bottleneck of visa requirements, the festival is planned to take place in a third country.

## Glossary

**Catalytic Project.** Catalytic projects are technically doable, commercially viable and politically sellable entry points for collaborative action. Functionally, they need to scale up enough to unleash structural drivers which can transform the situation. Socially, they build networks of trust which can grow into change coalitions. Discursively, they reflect the strategic entry point, and provide success stories to lend credibility to the change narrative.

**Centre of political gravity.** Mapping all discourse communities and actors as equals fails to take into account the differences in power between them. To better understand the room for manoeuvre decision-makers have, it is necessary to identify which narratives dominate the mainstream media as well as the corridors of power. The centre of political gravity is a tool to visualize the distribution of power. Locating the centre of political gravity in the discourse landscape helps to unveil the lens through which decision-makers interpret “what is happening, and what needs to be done”. The further away from the centre of political gravity actors are located, the narrower is their political room for manoeuvre. Accordingly, whether discourses are mainstream or at the fringe can be visualised through their distance from the centre of political gravity. As the sum of all societal forces pulling into different directions, the center of political gravity is a dynamic location and likely to shift over time.

**Discourse.** Discourses are socially constructed frameworks which explain “what is happening and what needs to be done”. By giving structure to language and thought, discourses arrange our relationships with others and society. By defining what is right or wrong, discourses introduce

invisible rules which regulate what can be said and done in public. This capacity to regulate human behaviour makes discourse a source of power.

**Discourse Community.** A discourse community is a group of people who share a set of discourses across all four discourse layers. These discourses are informed by shared basic values and worldviews, a main promise about a better future, and ways of communicating about shared goals.

**Discourse Hegemony.** At any given time, dozens of discourse communities compete with each other over the power of interpreting “what is happening, and what needs to be done”. If one discourse gets near universal acceptance as being “right”, “reasonable” or even “the truth”, it has achieved hegemony. By defining what is “wrong” or “unreasonable”, discourse hegemony gives speakers the power to exclude others from the public discourse. Discourse power, however, is deeply intertwined with political, social and economic power. You cannot win discourse hegemony if you do not control the institutions (e.g. politics, academia) which produce discourses, as well as the channels (e.g. media) which distribute them. What we often call “the status quo” is a hegemonic bloc of discourses, actors and institutions which cement the power relationships in a society.

**Discourse landscape.** All public discourses are represented in the discourse landscape. The discourse landscape, like the political field, is organised around main conflict lines. Without additional information about the actors and their relative strength, however, the discourse landscape treats all discourse communities as equals.

**Discourse layers.** Discourses can be broken down into four layers. On the surface, the policy discourse explains how a specific problem needs to be tackled. The paradigm discourse offers standard solutions for a particular social sector. The development narrative proposes a model for the entire society. At the deepest level is the metaphysical discourse, which echoes our view of the world and human nature.

**Elite bias.** Social media has made us aware of the filter-bubble, e.g. preselected information to fit our values and worldviews. In everyday life, we also tend to live within the lifeworld of our social and cultural peers. This becomes problematic when expert communities, e.g. the educated elites in the capital, are unaware of the discourses dominating the rural areas or lower social strata. The failure to properly analyse the entire political field can result in policy recommendations seemingly out of touch with ground realities.

**Frame.** Frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world. Compared to socially constructed discourses, some frames are hardwired into our brains before we even learn to speak a language. Determined by such existential experiences like gravity, our bodies, or our families, these frames are universal, and can be understood by people all around the world. Other frames are learned, and therefore culturally specific. Mental frames can be understood as the subconscious grammar of language, meaning if you dig deep enough, you will find one frame or the other at the root of any discourse.

**Political framing.** Political framing turns the way our brains work into a tool for political communication. Whenever we hear a word, a frame is activated in our brain. Using the right metaphors to activate the right kind of frames is an effective tool to communicate our political goals and values.

**Keyholders.** Keyholders are actors or institutions who hold the key to a particular resource. Getting all the ingredients needed to successfully implement a catalytic project means to win the keyholders for the support coalition.

**Narrative.** Describing the big picture, the development narrative proposes a model for the entire society. It translates facts into emotionally accessible frames. A good change narrative has five elements: a threat (“What is the danger of continuing with the status quo?”), hope (“the vision for a better future where the interests of key constituencies converge”), opportunity (“What game changers will create a window of opportunity to achieve the alternative vision?”), confidence (“What gives us the confidence to say: it has been done before, we can do it again”) and an ethical imperative (“Why the doable is the right thing to do?”).

**Natural champions.** Natural champions are “already convinced” allies who are willing and ready to support catalytic projects early on.

**Paradigm.** The paradigm discourse defines what the problem is, and what needs to be done to fix it. As the guiding compass, the paradigm discourse offers standard solutions for a particular social sector. The paradigm is like a political manual for decision makers.

**Political field.** A political field is defined by agents, their relative strength, and their position vis-à-vis to each other. This political playing field is organised through the main conflict lines around which social struggles are waged.

**Seed community.** Seed communities are multi-annual, multi-stakeholder working groups. It can make sense to sub-divide the work between an incubator and a peer community. The out-of-the-box-thinkers of the incubator

group construct the change narrative and design catalytic projects. The experienced peer community provides a reality check and supports the outreach process through their networks of decision-makers.

**Transactional allies.** Given the right incentives, undecided fence-sitters can be turned into transactional allies in support of a catalytic project.

**Transformative allies.** Those who believe their interests are best served in the status quo will act like spoilers. Spoilers can be turned into transformative allies by shifting the frame of reference within which they define their interests. Once the paradigm discourses shifts, former spoilers may become transformative allies, and

collaborate in the implementation of catalytic projects.

**Truth box.** Most of us believe that the policies and projects we passionately promote are the best and maybe the only way to go forward. This reflects our belief that our understanding of “what is happening and what needs to be done” is true. This healthy confidence can become problematic if it turns into self-righteousness, e.g. to promote “the one and only truth”, while dismissing all others as wrong and immoral. The inability to understand that others also act within their moral framework makes it difficult to build alliances.

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## About the author

**Marc Saxer** is the Resident Representative of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in India.

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K-70-B, Hauz Khas Enclave | New Delhi-110016  
India

Responsible

**Marc Saxer** | Resident Representative

Phone: + 91 11 26561361-64

Fax: + 91 11 26564691

Website: [www.fes-india.org](http://www.fes-india.org)

Facebook: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, India

To order publication:

[info@fes-india.org](mailto:info@fes-india.org)

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TCM has been successfully used to facilitate reform processes in India, Pakistan, and Thailand. As a work in progress, it will be further adapted to match the local context. This revised version of the practical guide is meant to give practitioners an easy to use introduction into the method.

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