

Future of Jobs in India (FOJI)

Meeting Report | New Delhi | June 3, 2017

Present	Could Not Attend
Ajay Shankar (Ex-Chairman, NMCC)	Dhiraj Nayyar (OSD and Head, Economics, Finance & Commerce – Niti Aayog)
Arun Maira (Ex-Member, Planning Commission & President, CUTS)	Dr Shakti Sinha (Director – India Foundation)
Neha Kumar (GIZ)	
Pradeep Mehta (Secretary General, CUTS)	
Rathin Roy (Director, NIPFP)	
Sabina Dewan (Co-Founder, Just Jobs)	

BACKGROUND

In the wake of the challenge of jobless growth and imminent threat of increased automation and digitization on job creation, CUTS International and FES are steering an initiative on Future of Jobs in India. The two organisations have already organised three conversations on this subject in Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai. On Saturday, June 03, 2017, another interaction was organised by the two organisations with the above-mentioned participants for the following purpose:

1. Pointedly identify current discourse communities in the area of the digital transformation space vis-à-vis jobs in India
2. Who (the actor) is propelling them
3. Visualize where they are located on a qualitative coordinate system (i.e. a graph) which will itself be identified by the group in the room
4. Identify the political centre of gravity/ or where the maximum weight lies, politically speaking.
5. Identify the narratives required to reach out to crucial discourse communities by locating an entry point on the map.

With the aim of contributing to the creation of decent livelihoods in India, CUTS and FES are planning to convene a multi-stakeholder and multi-annual working group in the form of “seed community”, which will use the Transformative Change Making (TCM) method in order to build a broad societal alliance for decent livelihoods (“transformative alliance”).

Building such an alliance is notoriously difficult, as actors have different interests and priorities. Instead of interests, it is better to build the alliance around a change narrative. However, not just any arbitrary narrative will do. What is needed is a strategically well-placed platform on which as many discourse communities can come together as possible.

The purpose of this exercise was to prepare the strategy debate over the best entry point for the change narrative.

Building alliances around narratives

In order to have an informed strategy debate over the right entry point, a better understanding of the political playing field is necessary. **Discourse mapping** is a tool for such full field analysis. By visualizing discourses and actors, mapping allows to assess the political room for manoeuvre of key actors, identify potential allies or spoilers, and debate over the best entry point to build the coalition.

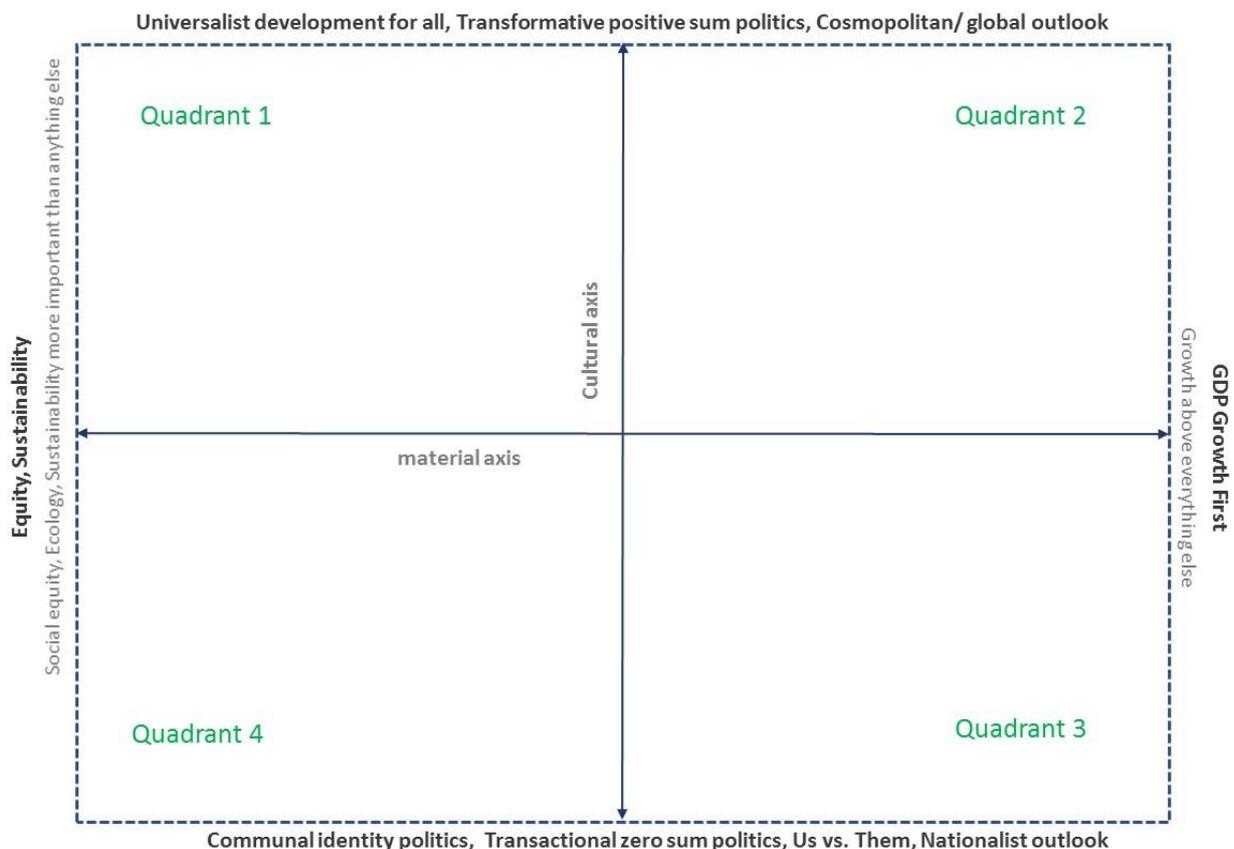
The mapping exercise locates the discourses and actors in the political field. Based on this analysis, participants are able to identify the centre of political gravity. The centre of gravity represents the prism through which most of the decision makers view "what is happening and what needs to be done". The closer actors are to the centre of gravity, the greater their room for manoeuvre. The further away a discourse is located, the less likely it is to make an impact on key decision makers.

Based on such a full field analysis, the seed community can debate over the most suitable entry points for the new narrative.

GROUP EXERCISE

To accomplish the above, a group exercise was organised with the participants through a structured process presented below:

STEP 1: Plotting the Map



The coordinate system should reflect the main conflict lines formatting the political field. Which conflict lines work best is to a certain degree a matter of discussion and experimentation. Keeping in mind the purpose of the exercise – to inform strategy debate – this question should not be regarded as a matter of academic principle, but rather utility in the visualization of the pressures decision makers face, their room for manoeuvre, and the potential for alliances. As the mapping exercise can only provide a snapshot of the political field at the present date, it needs to be regularly updated anyway. Then, the seed can experiment with a different coordinate system.

What should be avoided, however, is to use interdependent variables. If, for instance, the paradigm is a function of the narrative, the resulting map will show a diagonal graph, and have little analytical value. Hence, it is advisable to choose axes that are not connected.

A good way of doing this is to choose one material and one cultural conflict line. These conflicts tend to be governed by different actors, logics and considerations, hence are fairly independent of each other. Experience shows that most political fields tend to be formatted by material and cultural conflicts. The group chose the cultural conflict between a universalist (developmental politics, positive sum logic) and a communal outlook (identity politics, us versus them, zero sum logic). On the material axis, the conflict between “GDP Growth first, all other concerns later”, and “social equity and ecological sustainability first” was chosen.

STEP 2: Identify Discourse Communities & Actors

The next step was to identify different discourse communities. This was done by identifying relevant development narratives in India and the corresponding job creation paradigm.

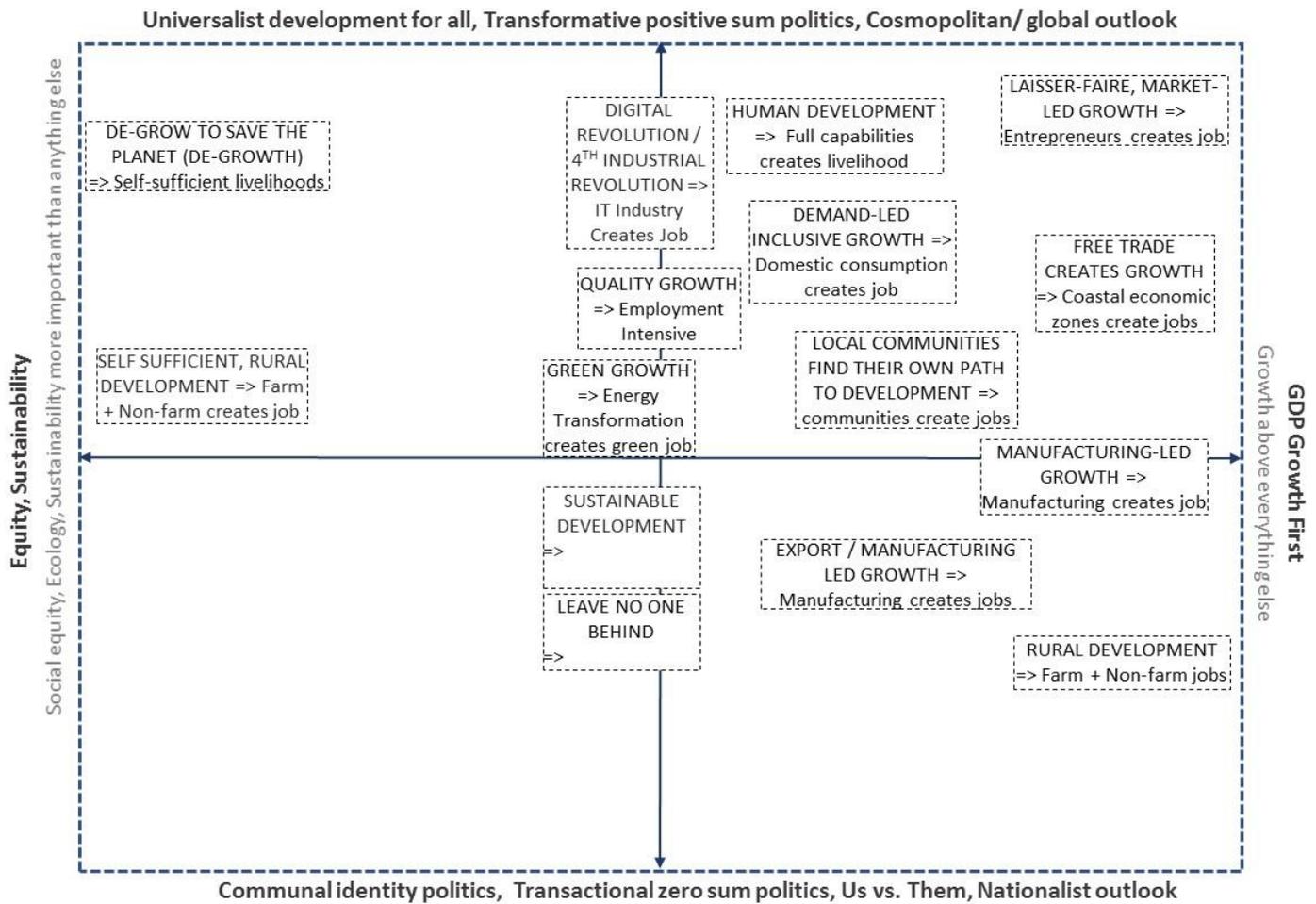
The following grid illustrates this further. In total, 15 discourse communities were identified.

	Discourse Community 1	Discourse Community 2	Discourse Community 3	Discourse Community 4
Development Narrative	Rural Development	Manufacturing-led Growth	Export & Mfg-led Growth	Laissez Faire politics will lead to market-led growth
Job Creation Paradigm	Agriculture will create farm and non-farm jobs	Manufacturing creates jobs	Manufacturing creates jobs	Entrepreneurs will create jobs

Subsequently, the discourse communities were plotted along the axis presented above. In addition, an exercise was also undertaken to identify the actors who are propelling each discourse community.

For instance, the discourse community promoting the ‘Digital Revolution’ Job Creation (narrative) / ‘IT Industry will create jobs’ (paradigm) comprises the Government, ITeS Sector, Think Tanks and Media.

Figure 1: Discourse Map (as of June 2017)



STEP 3: Identify Political Centre of Gravity & Entry Point

Analysis of the political field

The first step of the analysis is to identify the centre of political gravity. The centre of gravity is determined by the collective influence exerted by the different actors. The aim of the exercise is to find out what paradigm guides the decision making of the political and economic establishment. The further away from the centre of 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 gravity. The point is to further the understanding of the pressures, interdependencies and complexities decision makers are facing.

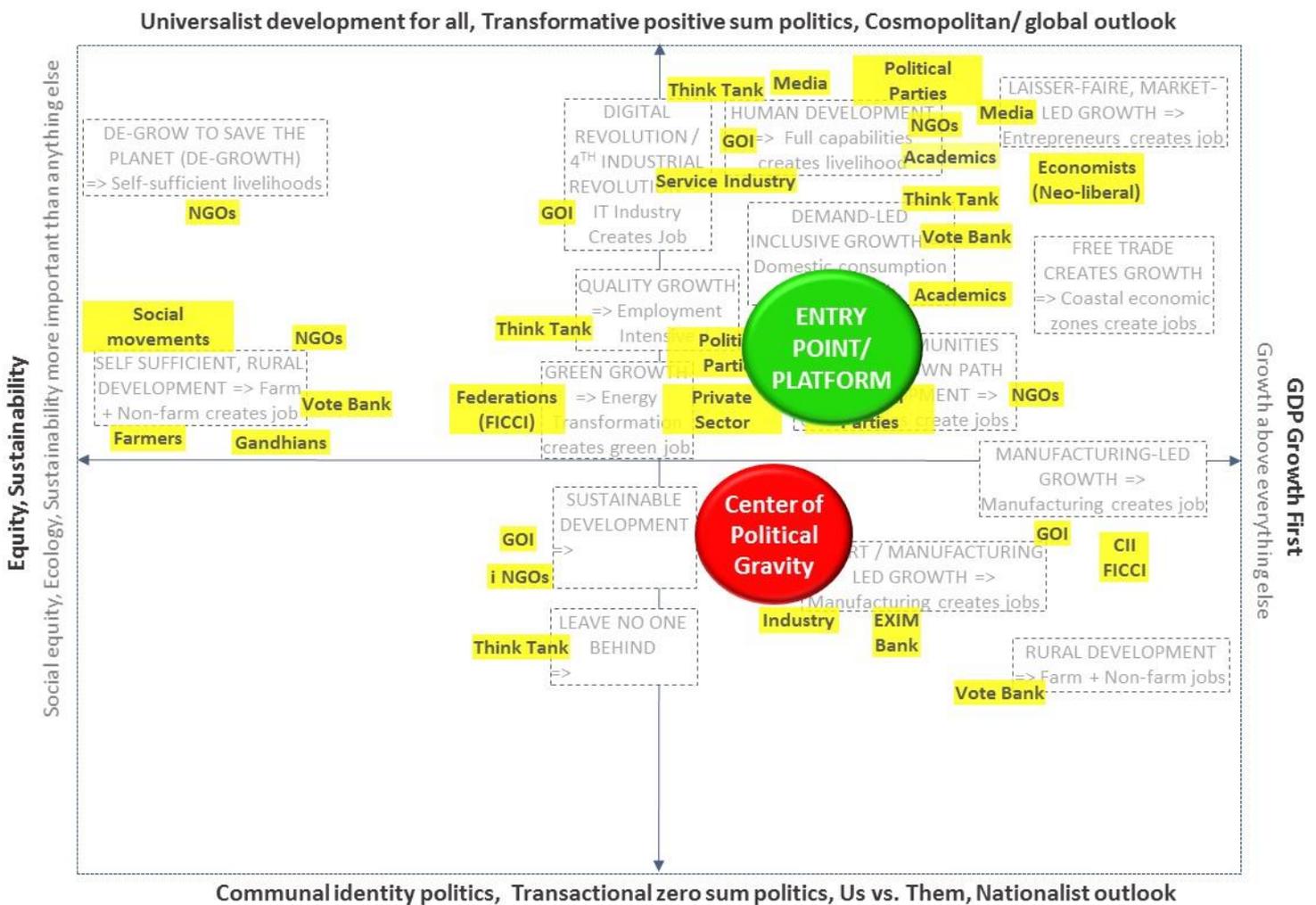
Analytically speaking, the “centre of political gravity” is a trick to visualize the fact that some actors are more powerful, and some discourses capture the imagination more than others. All communities struggle to pull the centre of political gravity into their direction. This is why the centre of 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, a dramatic shift of the centre of political gravity would coincide with a major shift in the balance of power.

In the above exercise, the political centre of gravity was placed in the Quadrant 3 and closer to the where the axis intersects. This is due to number of reasons, for instance, the present government is aggressively focused on GDP-led growth through initiatives like 'Make in India' and 'Digital India' along with protecting national interests, amongst others.

Consequently, the entry point was placed in Quadrant 2, as most discourses were positioned here along with most actors and influencers. In other words, it is a sweet spot as it would assist in building allies within these actors and influence these discourses to construct a new narrative and paradigm for job creation.

Figure 2 below provides a complete overview of the exercise:

Figure 2: Actors, Centre of Gravity, and Entry Point (as of June 2017)



Outcomes of the Exercise:

- While the exercise provided a broad visualisation of the current discourses, where they are located and their distance from the political centre of gravity, the quadrants 1,3 and 4 were relatively empty. This could be due to some of the voices which were not present during the exercise. When updating the map, more consideration should be given to rural and identity

discourse communities. Similarly, important actors such as political parties or political wings are still missing.

- Alternatively, the plotted positions may be reconsidered. It seems somewhat suspicious that so many discourses were located in the dead center of the x-axis. Maybe a reconsideration would place some of them slightly into Quadrant 1.
- Be this as it may, the most important outcome of the exercise was to sensitize participants for the importance of discourses, as well as raise the awareness for the existence of elite filter-bubbles. There was a consensus that a failure to fully understand the entire political field, well beyond the Delhi expert communities, is a crucial step for alliance building.
- It is proposed that this should be taken up during the seed community meetings.

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