

# Towards a stronger civil society

## Target group

Organisations and public authorities with projects aimed at promoting a democratic development of society

## Purpose

Give the participants an opportunity of:

1. visualising, discussing and valuing what may happen in a future project in a concrete, playful manner
2. using this new perspective to accentuate the democratic aspect of their projects

This *Dialogue conference* (see Method Bank) consists of three rounds of discussion between 5–6 people at each of an appropriate number of tables. Each table has a host. After each round, everyone except the hosts moves to a new table. The table host:

- distributes print-outs of this application to the participants and spends all three rounds at the same table
- ensures that a discussion gets going and helps participants with the instructions
- appoints a time-keeper, who announces when 5 minutes are left and when the time is up
- summarises results of the previous round at the beginning of rounds 2 and 3

*First round (base groups, each with one or more projects):*

## “Memories” of events during the project

- **Brainstorm.** Think a year ahead: the project has just been completed and you are meeting once more and having a lively discussion about what has happened since you last met. Your earlier fears and expectations have been transformed into memories. Everyone recalls specific matters – trivial and significant, expected and unexpected, positive and negative – from that time, both matters internal to the projects and external events. Each participant writes down at least 5 such “memories” on post-it slips, one memory per slip. At least two memories are to relate to external, unplanned events. Rules:

1. every idea is excellent – including those that are crazy or unrealistic
2. there is nothing to be responsible for or to agree on in this round
3. think of specific matters:
  - *Where* did it happen? *When* did it take place?
  - *Who* and *how many* were there?
  - Other details that stick in your memory
4. write clearly so that anyone can read what you have written

15 min

- **Sorting.** The participants read the slips out loud – one at a time – and spread them out on the table so that they do not overlap.
  1. Are there any patterns? Duplicates that can be removed?
  2. Bring together slips that have much the same content.
  3. Think up appropriate labels.

20 min

Second round (cross-section groups):

**Chart of possibilities** (see Method Bank)

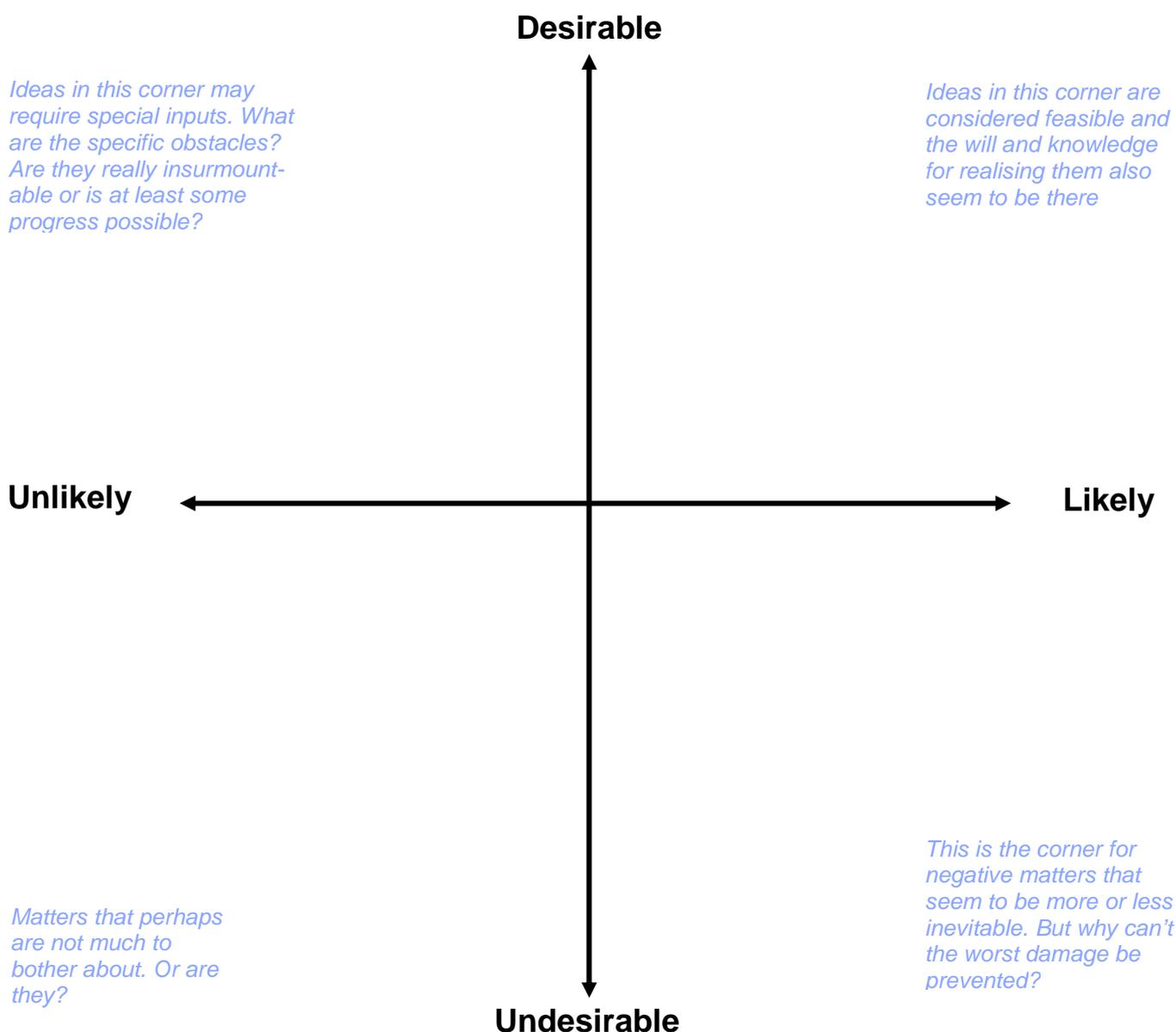
- **Assessment of events and activities**

The sorted “memories” from round one are presented by the table host to the new cross-section group. This group now jointly assesses the activities and events:

- Are they desirable?
- Are they likely to happen?

The table host’s task is to get the group to agree about and motivate where each slip is to be placed on a *Chart of possibilities* – the coordinates below presented on a flipchart:

- Why should this slip be placed just there?
- Why not further out on the scale or further in?
- Do you really agree that this is the right position?



35 min

Third round (start with base groups, then by projects):

## Priorities and proposals

### 1. Discussion and priorities

- The table host presents the *Chart of possibilities* to the original group. If the group considers that a slip is in the wrong position, an arrow is drawn from the slip to what the group thinks is its proper position
- discussion: which of the events or activities has the greatest impact – favourable or unfavourable – on a democratic development of society? To make the question more concrete, the group can start from the following list of strategies for promoting democracy:
  1. internally on the organisational level, using the Lifebuoy
  2. externally on the national or international level; a rights-based approach with the aim of:
    - strengthening other organisations in civil society
    - strengthening FD institutions (the political system's input)
    - influencing public administration (the system's output) and business
- priorities: each participant tags four slips with a marker pen

25 min

### 2. Proposed action

Starting from each organisation's own slips on the table of possibilities, plan two measures to further accentuate your own project's potential for promoting democracy.

- Prepare a presentation by filling in a *Plan of action* and working out how your proposal is to be anchored in the organisation:

20 min

Action plan	
<b>Desired change 1:</b>	Steps to bring it about:
<b>Desired change 2:</b>	Steps to bring it about:
<b>Outside threat:</b>	Steps to prevent or minimize it's effects:

**Joint presentation and discussion**

- all the Charts of opportunities are hung on the walls together with each project's Plan of action
- all the participants circulate and take in the plans and each one attaches a 'marker' (see Method Bank) to the three measures she finds particularly interesting
- questions and talk

**The Line** (see Method Bank)

- Has the conference been stimulating?
- Have you got some new ideas?