

Why narratives?

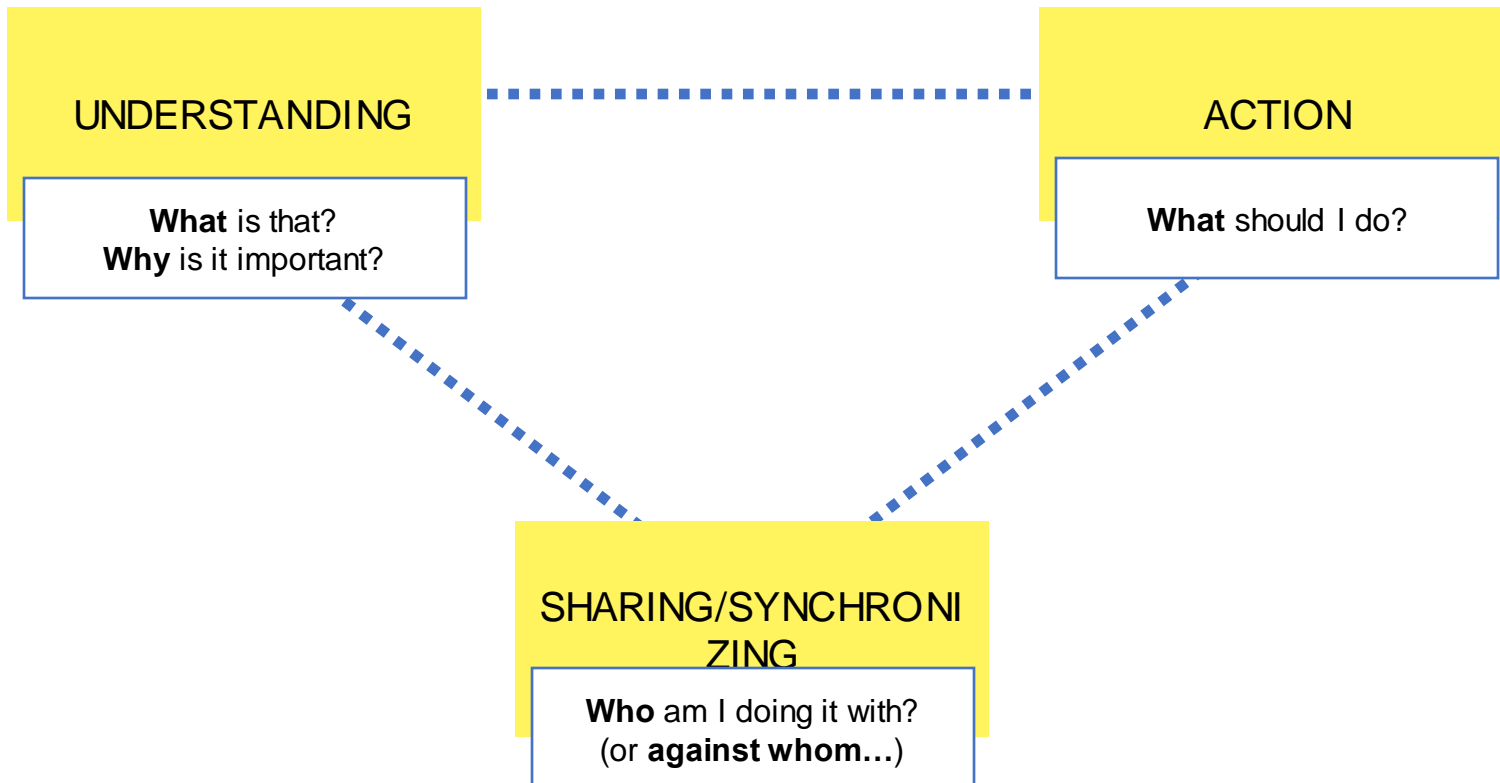
- People think and communicate using narratives
- Information is organized in the form of stories where the situation changes in time
- People do not simply react to facts
 - They usually do not change their mind just because the information they have believed in was proven to be false or incorrect
 - Facts that do not fit the accepted “narratives” are either rejected („things like that don’t happen”) or treated as “exceptions that prove the rule”
 - Facts that confirm the narratives are accepted because they show „how things are”
- Narratives divide and unite us (they tell us who are our allies and enemies)

Narrative analysis

- Understanding existing narratives can be helpful
 - To understand social dynamics
 - As a tool for listening to others
 - They allow us to understand the values, goals, and beliefs of others
 - As a tool of communication
 - To build bridges between **data, interpretation, and action**
 - To put multiple dimensions together in a meaningful way
 - To prepare the ground for better and socially acceptable policies

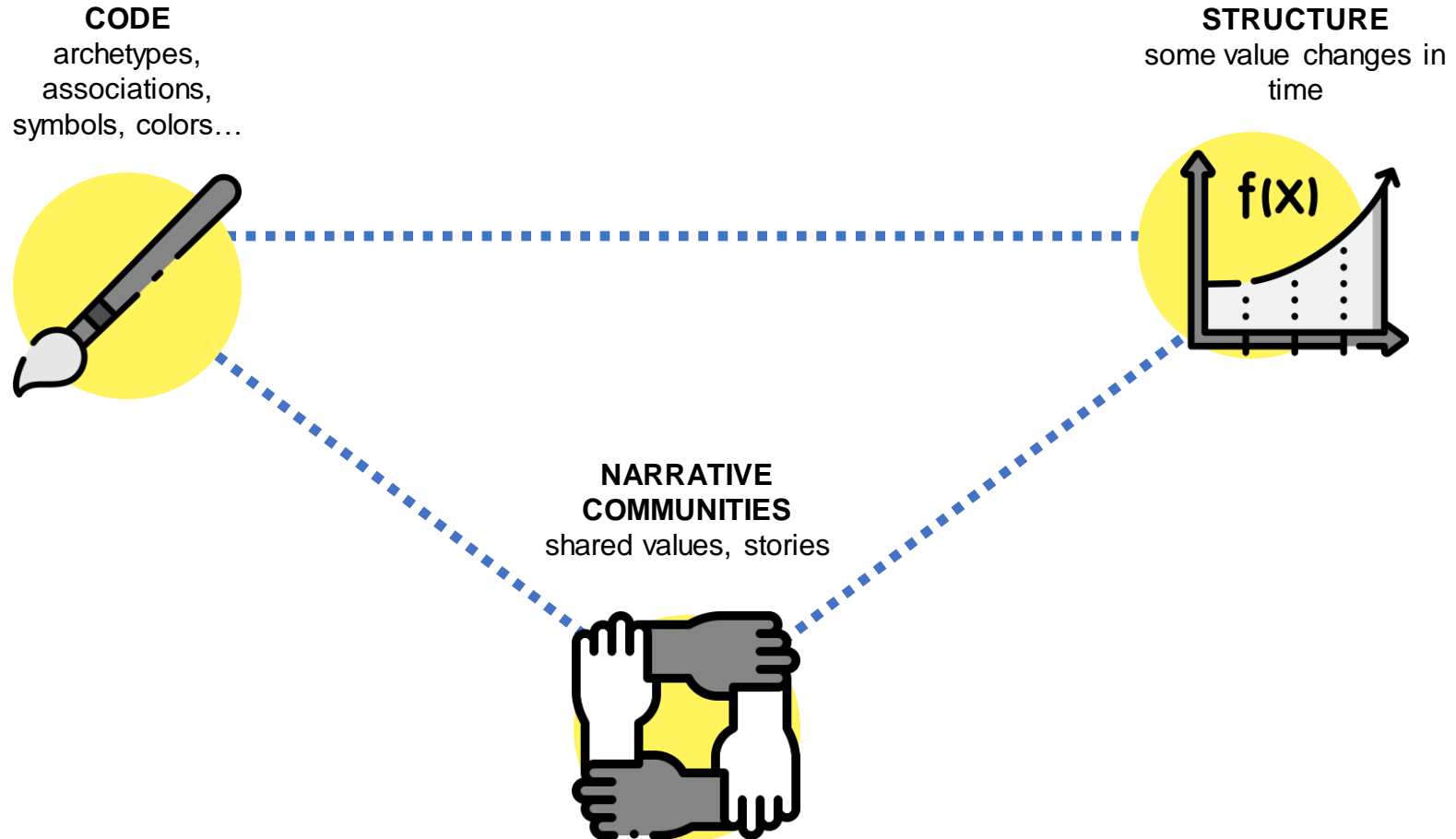
What are narratives?

Narratives are the **cognitive representations of the rules explaining how the social world works**

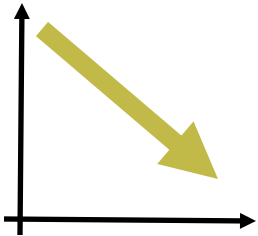


How do we define narratives?

3 DIMENSIONS APPROACH

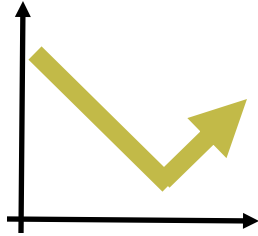


5 narrative structures



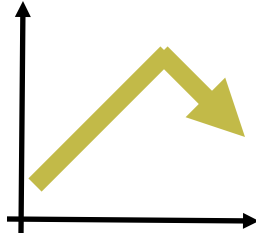
Degradation.

Our world is generally worse than the one of our parents and grandparents.



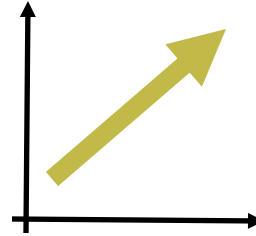
Crisis.

We are facing a major global crisis but things will get better again.

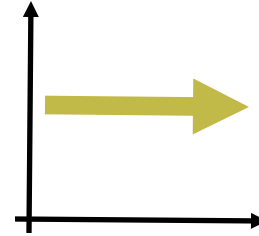


Decline and fall.

The world used to get better, but now it is getting worse



Progress. Historically, the world has been getting better with each decade



Balance.

The world doesn't change fundamentally. The cost of progress cancels out most benefits. Every discovery opens up new challenges.

-1-

EXISTING NARRATIVES

**What are the dominant stories
shaping social perception
of new technologies in agriculture?**

Understanding the existing narratives

Results of the RE-IMAGINE PLANET research 2020-2023

-1-

What are the **dominant stories** shaping social perception of new technologies in agriculture?

-2-

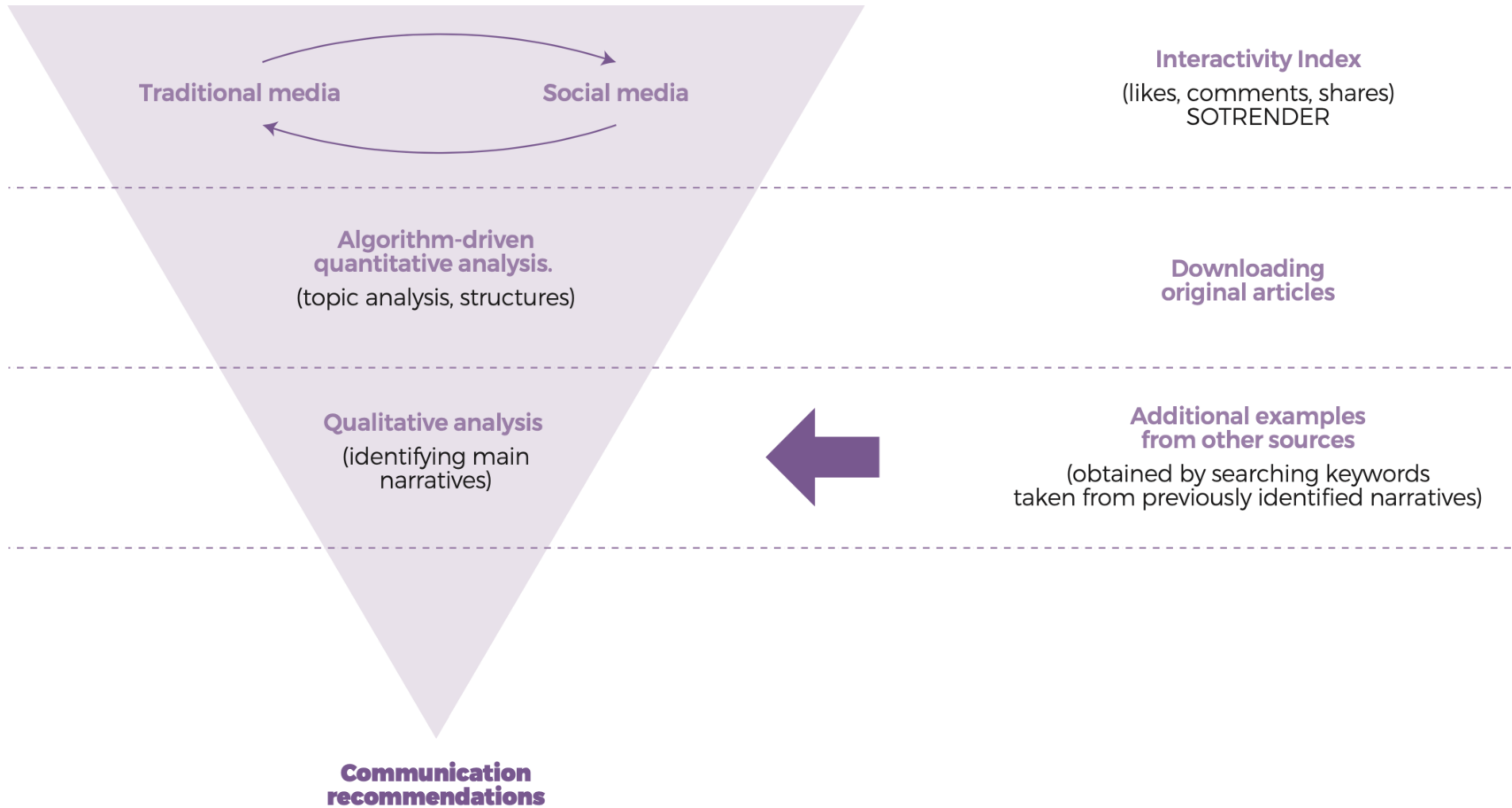
How these stories will be influenced by **recent events** (e.g. COVID-19, Russian invasion on Ukraine, climate change, rising food prices)?

-3-

How can we build a ground for a **better narrative system** to:

1. enable dialogue
2. reduce polarization
3. improve understanding
4. motivate to collaborative action

Understanding the existing narratives



8 dominant narratives on GMOs/NGTs

Precaution-focused

Unpredicted consequences

New technologies are dangerous because scientists tend to overestimate their ability to understand and control reality.

Violating the rules of Nature

Toying with natural boundaries that divide species and natural speed of evolution results in creating various forms of monstrosity.

Greed destroys the traditional way of life

New technologies destroy traditional farming societies and limit freedom of choice, by shifting food production to large corporations.

We've heard these promises before

New solutions in agriculture (like new genome editing technologies) are yet another version of old solutions (like GMOs) and more technology is never a solution to problems caused by technology.

Innovation-focused

Progress

Every new technology is another chapter in the history of progress that elevates us further from the hardships of living in natural conditions.

We need to face a crisis

We need new technologies to face unprecedented challenges.

The suspicions have been addressed and tested

Doubts are an important part of the innovation process and should be resolved based on evidence and scientific methods.

We have more precise technologies than ever

"New" technologies are not "completely new", but improved versions of traditional technologies. For ages humans have used various technologies to modify plants. The main difference is that today we can act faster and more precisely.

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Codes of two narratives

Violating the rules of nature

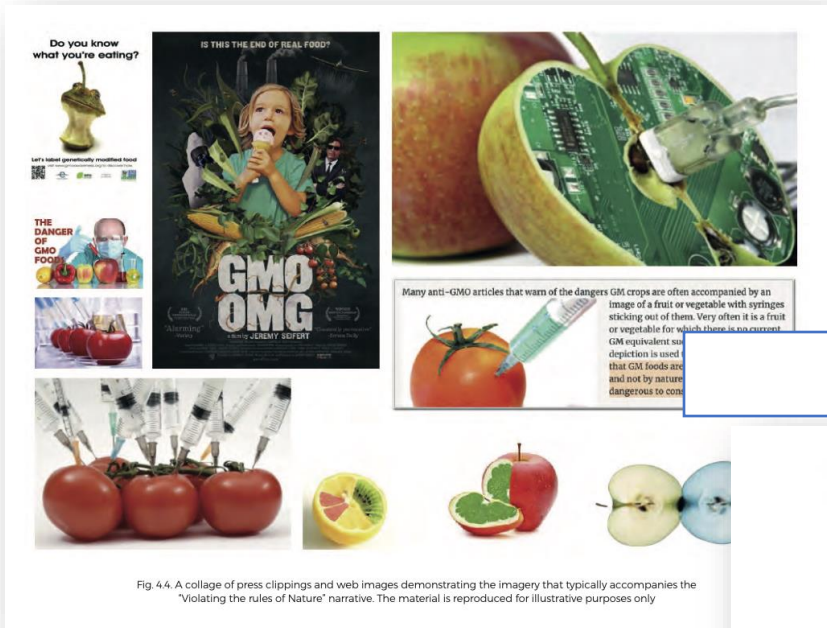


Fig. 4.4. A collage of press clippings and web images demonstrating the imagery that typically accompanies the "Violating the rules of Nature" narrative. The material is reproduced for illustrative purposes only

We need to face a crisis

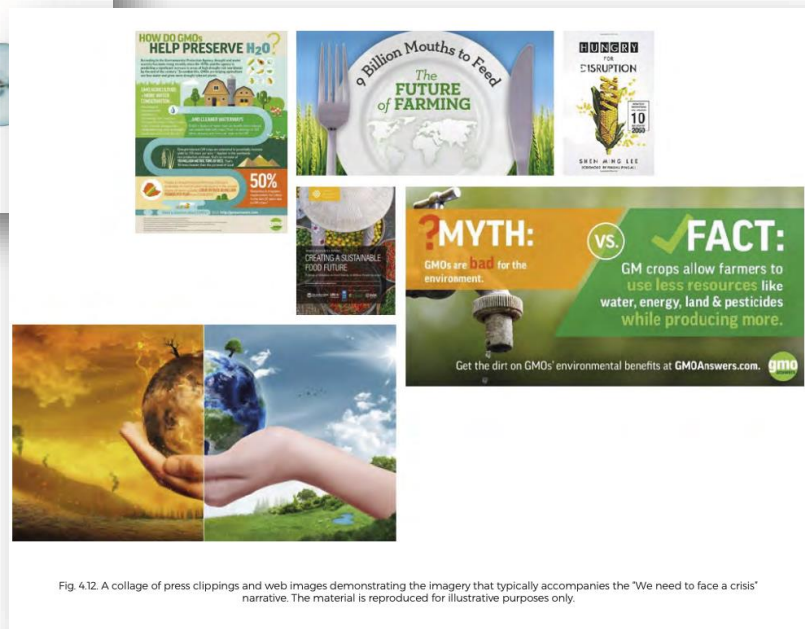
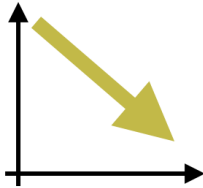


Fig. 4.12. A collage of press clippings and web images demonstrating the imagery that typically accompanies the "We need to face a crisis" narrative. The material is reproduced for illustrative purposes only.

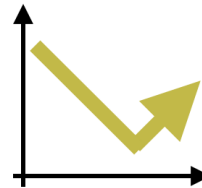
Structures of two narratives

Violating the rules of nature



Degradation.
Our world is generally worse than the one of our parents and grandparents.

We need to face a crisis



Crisis.
We are facing a major global crisis but things will get better again.

-2-

EMERGING NARRATIVES

**How these stories will be influenced
by recent events?**

The sense of uncertainty is growing

- War, COVID-19, climate change, and political polarization will result in a **new narrative system**
- Uncertainty is becoming a main factor
- Food becomes an important vehicle for political emotions
- Growing polarization will become a main problem

Influence on existing narratives

Precaution-oriented

rising effectivity

Unpredicted consequences

Violating the rules of Nature

rising effectivity

Greed destroys
the traditional way of life

We've heard these
promises before

Innovation-oriented

not effective

Progress

rising effectivity

We need to face a crisis

The suspicions have been
addressed and tested

We have more precise
technologies than ever

Emerging narratives

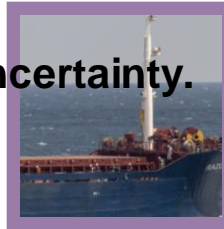
New narratives are emerging focusing on:

- (1) unavoidable apocalypse,
- (2) systemic complication of food production,
- (3) consumers' fears.

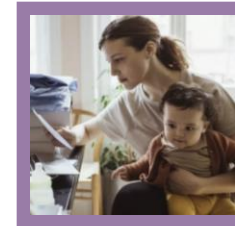
The end is unavoidable



Global circulation



Rational egoism



What they all share is **growing uncertainty.**

War, famine, epidemics and climate change are leading to a systemic overload that will wipe humanity off the face of the earth. New agricultural technologies are perceived as an important part of the problem.

Every food product is the result of the interaction of many factors dispersed throughout the world. A seemingly minor and insignificant event on the other side of the globe can have a catastrophic effect on the price, quality or availability of basic products. New regulations could be beneficial for consumers.

We can't afford acting in service of higher goals like climate or helping others. Helping those in need, particularly Russia-invaded Ukraine, comes at the expense of the wellbeing and security of us and our families. Politicians are dragging us into a risky game that will end badly. We need to regain our food sovereignty.

-3-

PREPARING THE GROUND FOR A BETTER NARRATIVE SYSTEM

- (1) enable dialogue**
- (2) reduce polarization**
- (3) improve understanding**
- (4) motivate to action**

Dialogue, pluralism, and diversity of opinions are the pillars of democracy.

However, radical polarization is not a natural feature of democratic debate.

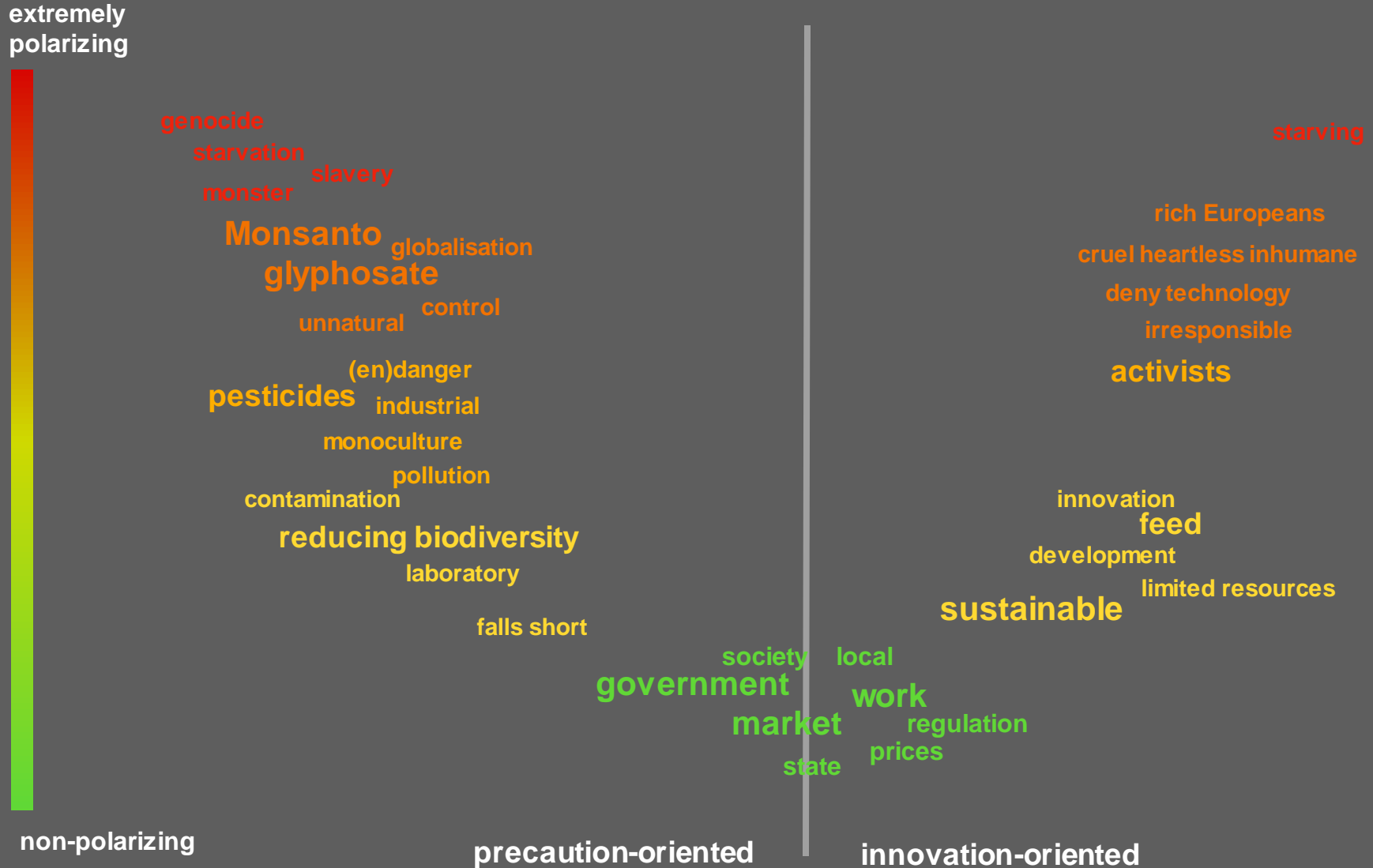
Radical polarization, where all the other side's arguments are immediately rejected, makes dialogue impossible.

What can we do to depolarize the debate?

How can we move from **a highly polarized debate** (NGTs yes/no) to **a goal-oriented debate**, where people can engage in a dialogue to discover common values and act together to achieve aims on which they agree.

That's why we're developing a **communication manual** and **toolbox for farmers**.

Keywords analysis

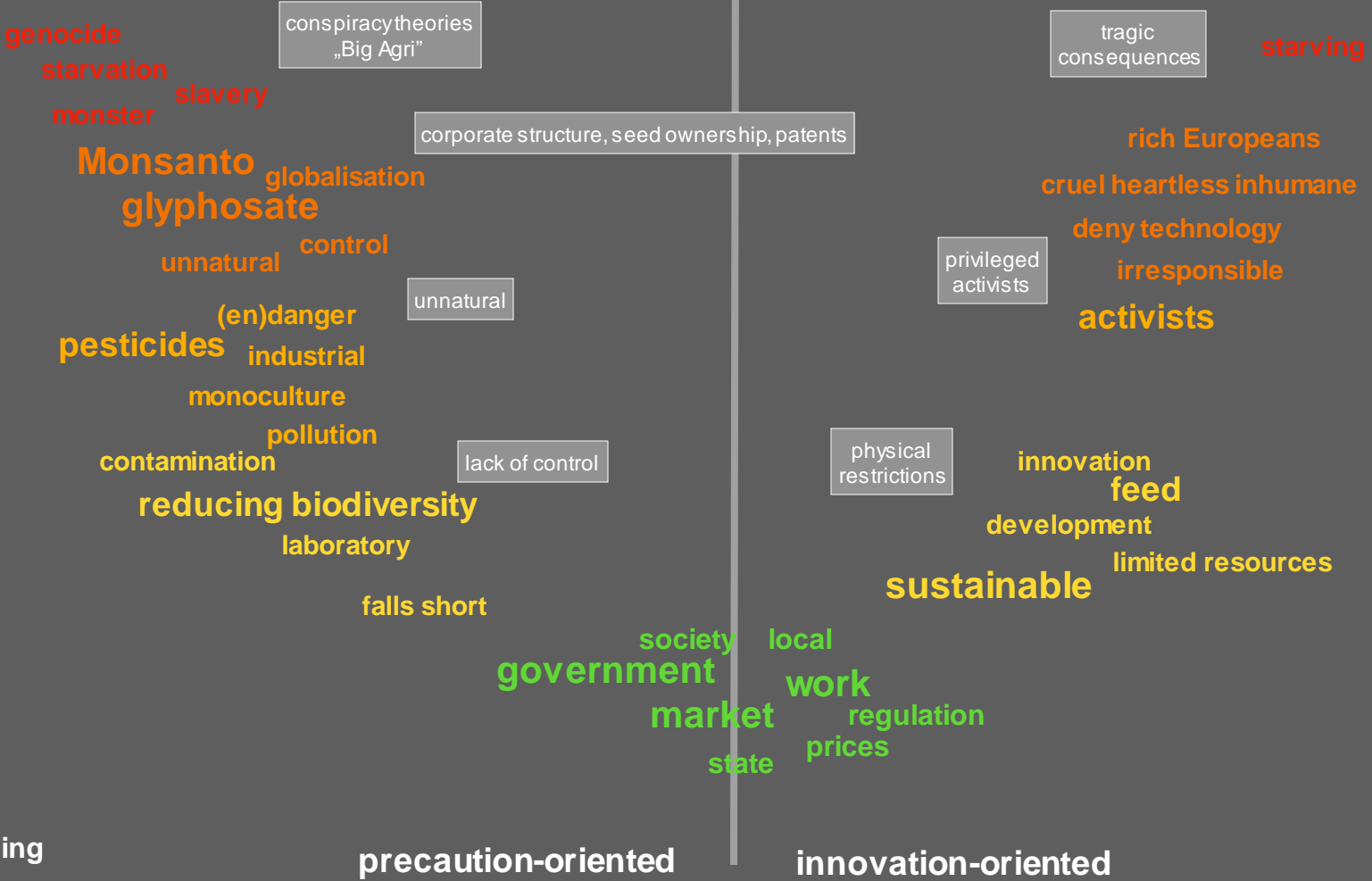


Keywords analysis

extremely polarizing



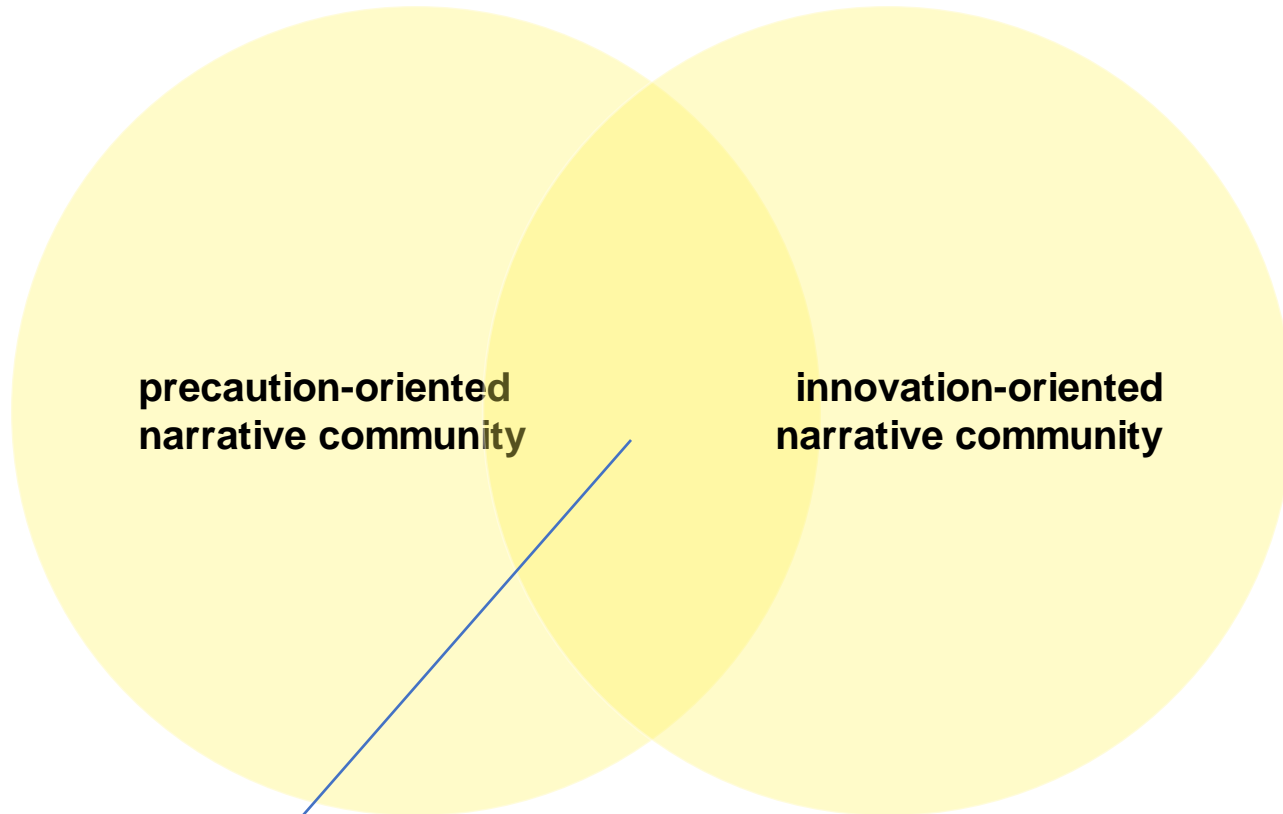
non-polarizing



Main points from the Communication manual



Identifying common goals and values



**precaution-oriented
narrative community**

**innovation-oriented
narrative community**

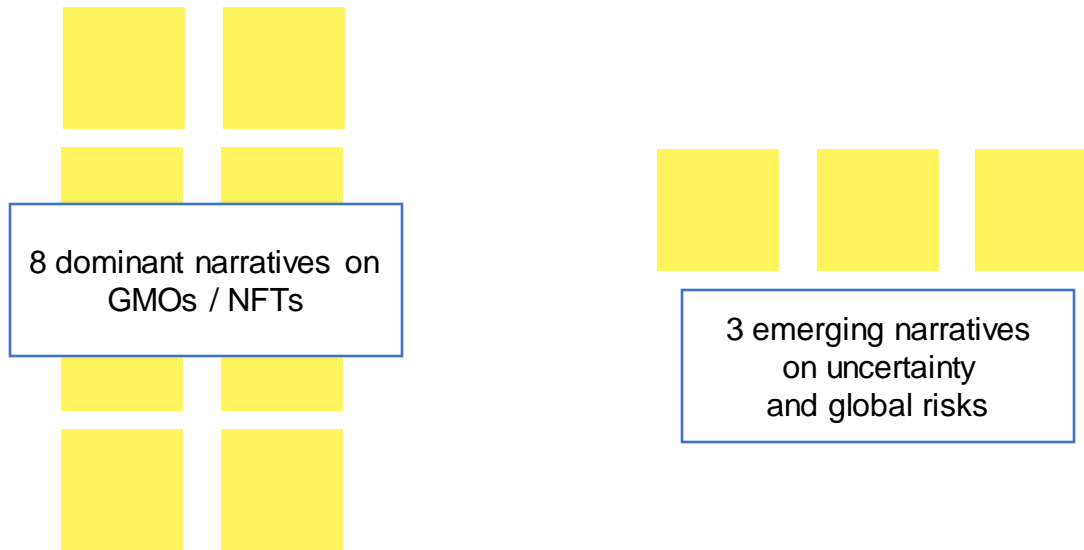
Sample shared values:

- crucial role of breeding in agriculture
- importance of sustainability
- role of small and medium farms



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations



1. Build narrative **bridges between data and action** (how can we translate information to stories?)
2. Reduce false contradiction between **nature (sustainability) and innovation (science and technology)**
3. Move away from YES/NO approach („silver bullet” idealization OR total rejection) towards a **toolbox approach** — diverse solutions.
4. Move from **polarization** to **dialogue** (bridges between different narrative communities)