

# Enabling Meaningful Dialogues: Introducing a Tool for Interest- based Negotiations

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# Interest-based negotiations –

a useful approach for stakeholder engagement and collaborations

- **Negotiations are a part of everyday life – and come in many different forms.**

*In interest-based negotiations, both parties benefit from sitting at the negotiation table – meaning that the shared outcome is more important than solving the issue alone.*

## **Difference in focus from traditional negotiations:**

- Win-lose vs win-win
  - Positions vs interests
  - Status quo vs. added value
  - Individual vs. collective
- 
- This approach is widely used in the Netherlands for very different types of projects (where I, among other places, trained myself!).





# Interest-based negotiations –

- **Takes a starting point in interests, not positions**

*Position:* “I am not interested in either CCS projects or solar panels close to where I live”

*To uncover the underlying interests, ask:*

“Why?/ Why not?”

“Can you elaborate?”

“Okay, so if we do this instead, would you be willing to participate?”

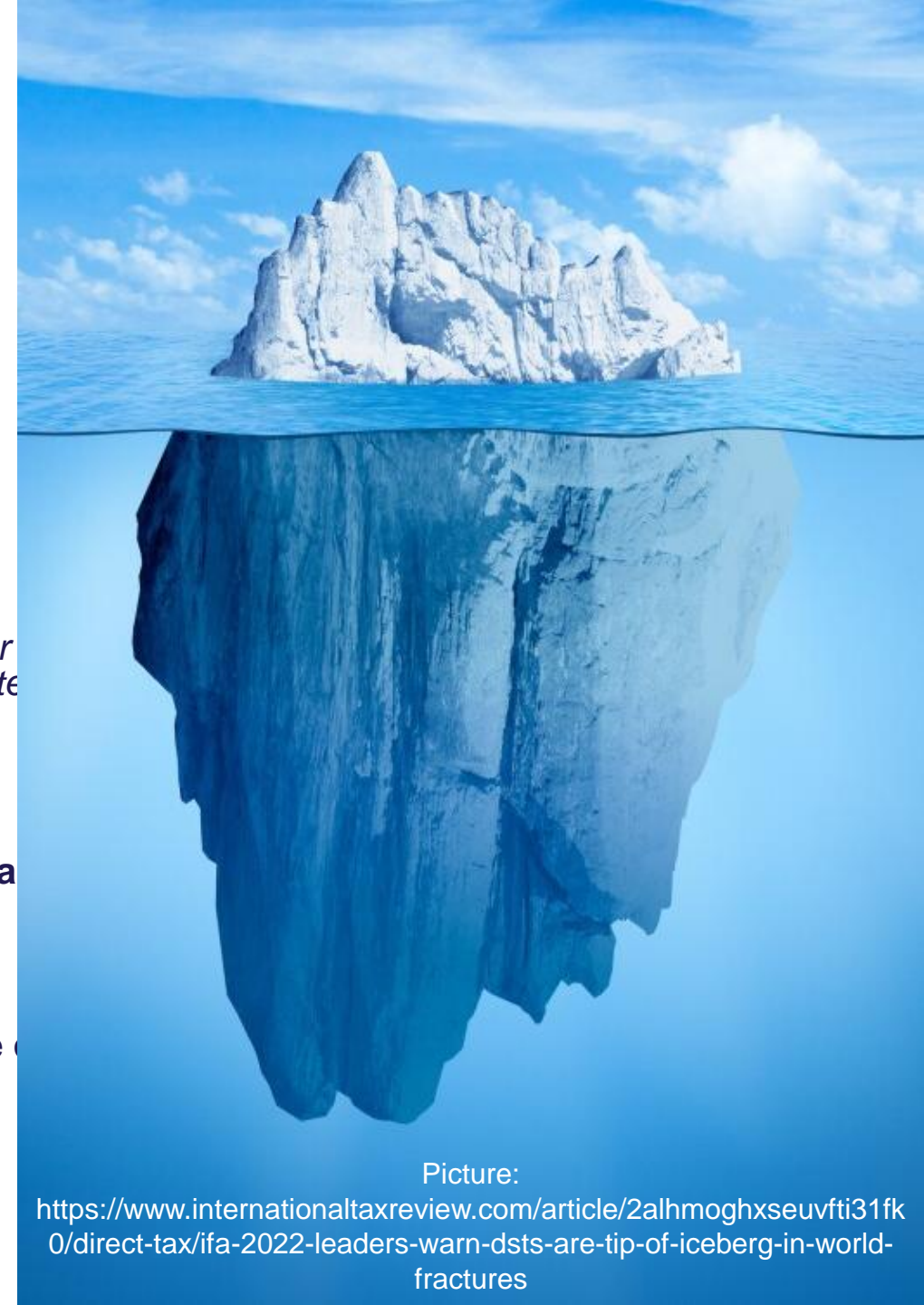
*“Sometimes you need to approach them with something else. Solve some other problem first. If they feel they're being helped with something, it becomes harder to say no later.”*  
(Planner, Randers)

- **Consider people’s BATNA!** (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement)

**What people can do if you cannot reach an agreement at the negotiation table**

BATNA is what you can achieve *outside* the negotiation table, on your own. It’s your best plan B – the alternative to a negotiated solution.

BATNA is something you should be aware of – both to ensure the best possible outcome for the other party *and* for yourself.



Picture:

<https://www.internationaltaxreview.com/article/2alhmoghxseuvfti31fk0/direct-tax/ifa-2022-leaders-warn-dsts-are-tip-of-iceberg-in-world-fractures>

# Interest-based negotiations –

- **Encourages joint fact-finding – acknowledging different forms of knowledge**

We all bring different kinds of facts to the table

(e.g. studies, reports, memories, interviews, photos, etc.).

Important to map what each actor already know about issues – and on what basis?

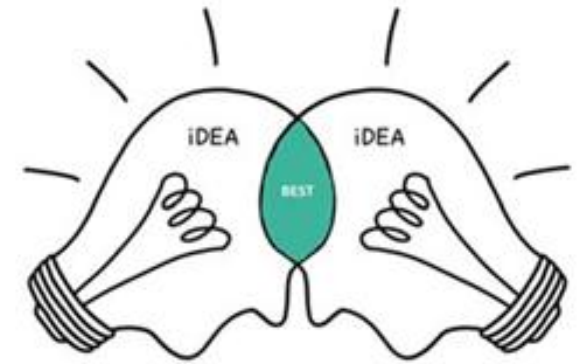
*A joint fact-finding process means agreeing on and finding facts **together**, so a shift to:*

What would you like to find out together, what do you base it on and where should you look for that information?

- **All this with an aim to create solutions and agreements with added value!**

To do so: *Use empathy and be creative!*

- Put yourself in the other person's shoes – explore interests
- Avoid early criticism and explore multiple options – widen the room for negotiation!
- Identify small components that can be combined into final agreements (packages)

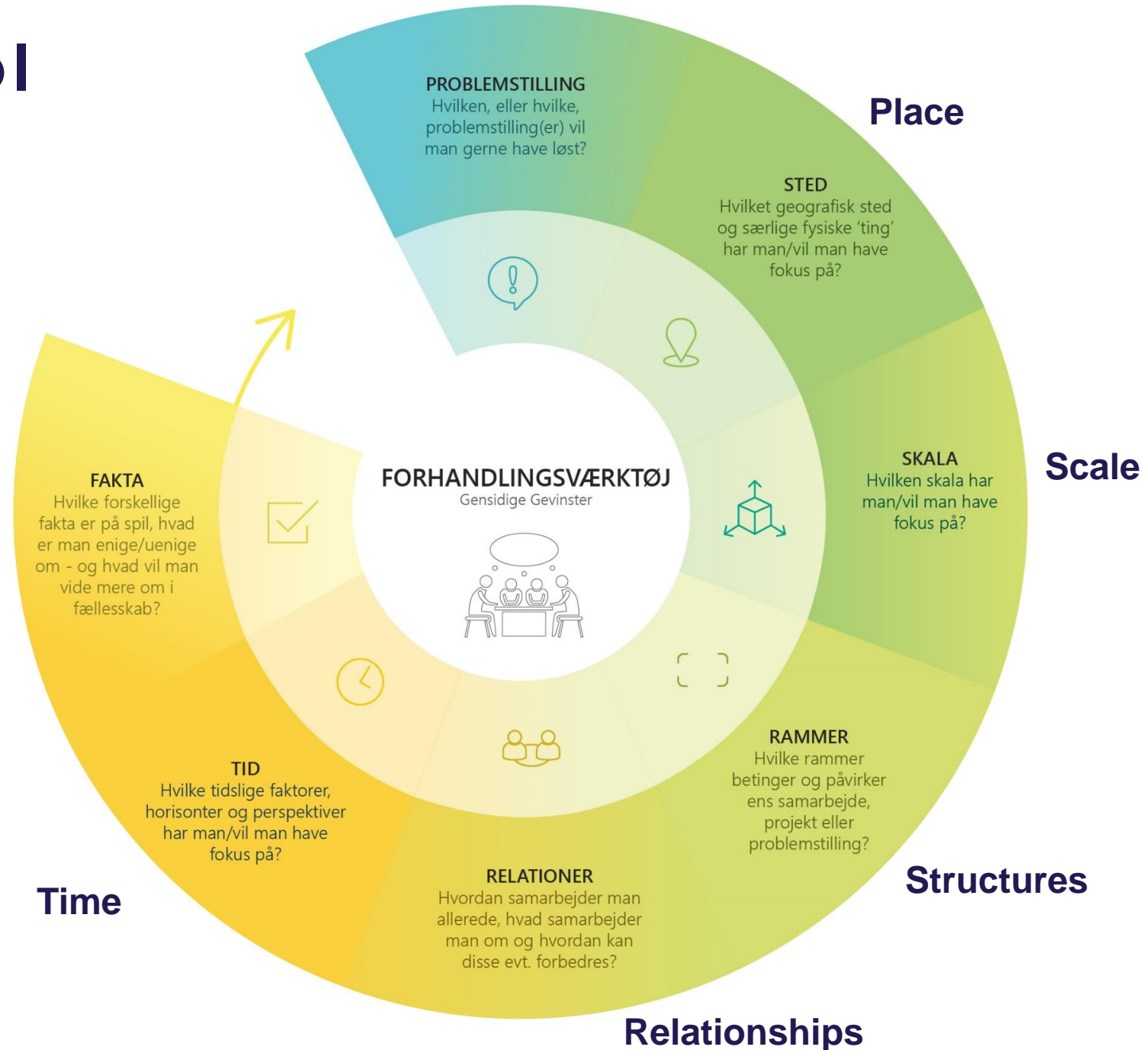


Picture: P2 & Central Denmark Region

# The Negotiation Tool for Mutual Gains

*The tool was developed based on my observations, participation and interventions in the participatory process across the seven Gudenå municipalities from 2020-2022, where I identified seven unresolved issues that led to miscommunication between the different participants, a failure to understand differing perspectives, and 'hidden' conflicts.*

## Facts





# Structures

- ❶ "They don't understand the constraints I'm working within!"
- ❷ Actors are situated within different structures – this can include, but are not limited to:

norms, laws, deadlines, political cycles, organizational hierarchies, budgets, deliverables in plans (e.g. 2030) or societal (new municipal reforms), economic (budget cuts) or environmental changes (new precipitation patterns)

*These influence what actors can do and their perspectives on a given issue!*

- ❸ An example– a municipal planner
- Navigating within e.g. legislation, directives, EU deliverables, national agendas but also political four-year cycles, municipal elections, work rhythms of 8-16, environmental changes (precipitation patterns, invasive species) and societal changes (municipal reforms) – farmers, for instance, might be navigating in quite different structures!
- ❹ Clarifying and understanding structural barriers often leads to a deeper understanding of actors' perspectives, which can, in turn, help prevent conflicts and solve miscommunication.



# Relations / Alliances

- ❶ What relationships exist, and how can they be improved and how can this knowledge be actively utilized to improve projects and processes?

- ❷ Mapping of:

*What existing conflicts are present, what do they concern, and how might they be resolved?*

*How do people already collaborate, what do they collaborate on, and how can this be improved?*

*Which actors do stakeholders wish to collaborate more closely with, in what ways, and on which issues?*

- ❸ Example, the Gudenå Trail Project - evaluations on negotiations with local landowners

“Past resistance and conflicts can leave traces in negotiations and may lead to a 'no'—which is why it's important to understand these histories and work with them”

“At the same time, there are also relationships within the local community that can be used to gain a 'yes'—for example, good neighborly relations”





# Time

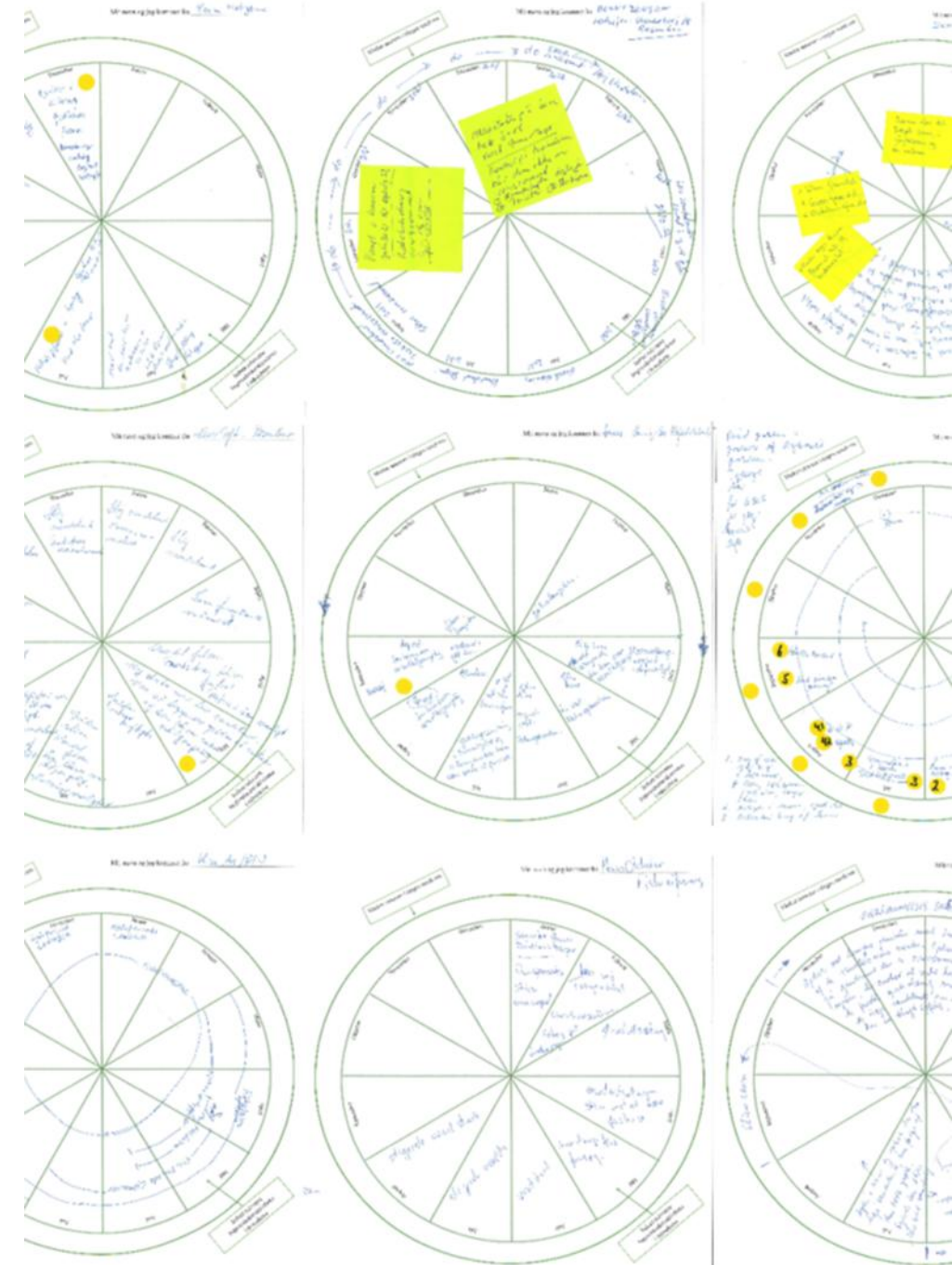
We often think of time as what we see on our clocks, which helps to coordinate and synchronize most of our daily practices. But time is much more than just the ticking of a clock. It also includes:

- Rhythms - circadian rhythms, family rhythms and natural rhythms
- Seasonality – Weather? Tourism? Harvest?
- Deadlines and cycles
- Tempo and timing
- Time horizons - We often refer to the past, present, and future—all forms of time that people may perceive differently (how far into the future?)

**These different perceptions of time can create friction in our stakeholder engagement and collaboration processes!**

- Example Gudenå

Different pasts deemed valid for present issues around flooding – e.g. farmers (generations), archeologists (Stone Age) and environmental advocates (Hydropower plants and natural adaptations)

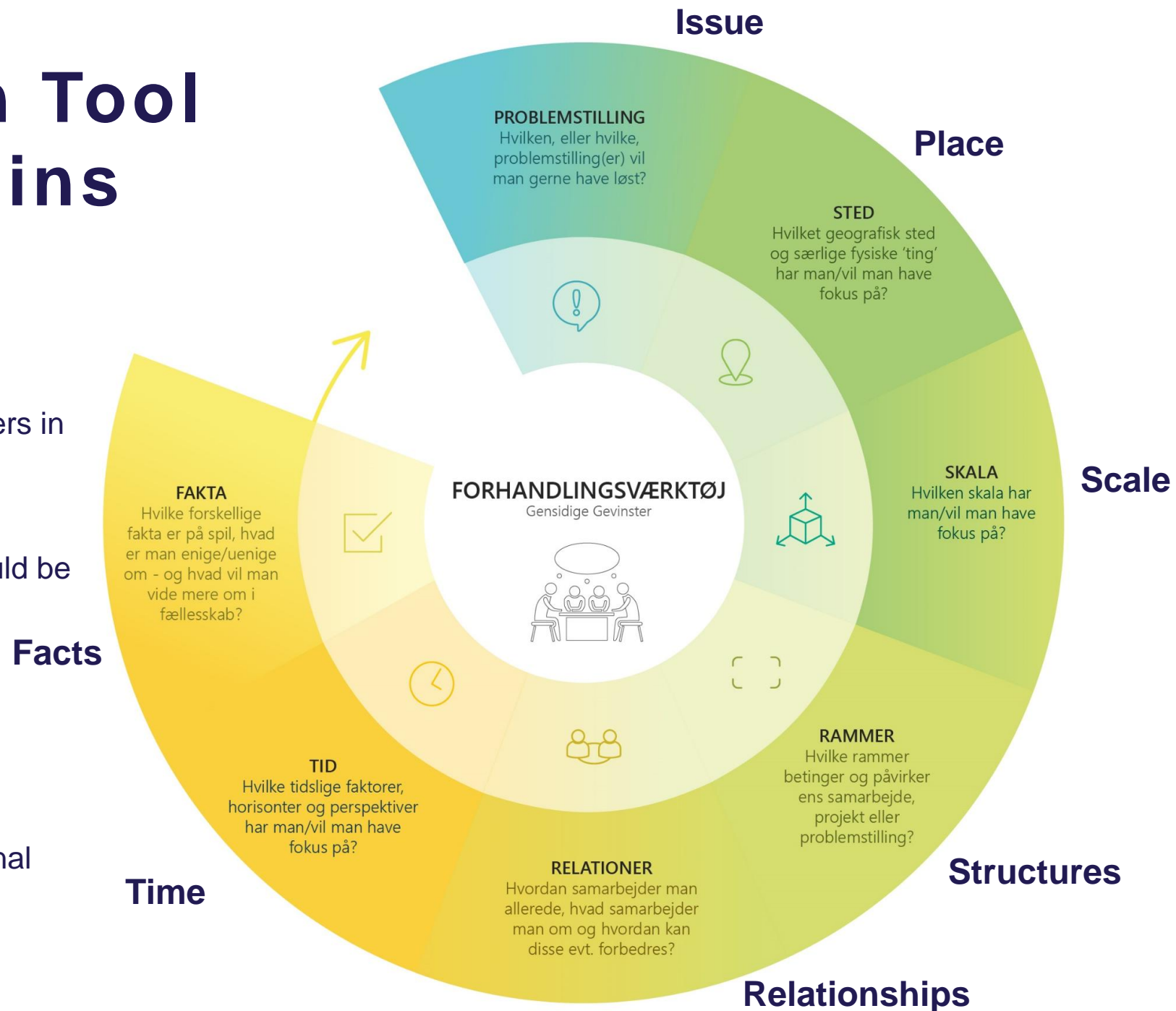




# The Negotiation Tool for Mutual Gains

The tool can be used to e.g.:

- **Prepare:**  
Prepare for your project using these dimensions – and try to map stakeholders in relation to each point.
- **Inform:**  
At different stages of a project - use the dimensions as a checklist for *what* should be communicated to stakeholders.
- **Involve/consult:**  
Request stakeholders' input on the various dimensions for your project.
- **Collaborate/ negotiate/co-create:**  
As a participant or facilitator, use these dimensions as reference points for reflection—they can serve as navigational tools to a shared agreement.



# Thank you for your time!

## Questions?

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