

An aerial photograph of a rural village in a dry, brown landscape. A winding road or path cuts through the scene, connecting various clusters of buildings. The buildings have simple, flat roofs, some appearing to be made of mud or brick. There are scattered trees, some green and some brown, and a few circular structures, possibly wells or small ponds. The overall scene depicts a traditional, possibly nomadic, settlement in an arid environment.

The Janwaar Way

A Nomad's Compass to
Change That Holds

Ulrike Reinhard

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“There is only us.”

Ron Garan, NASA astronaut — after 178 days aboard the International Space Station

From 250 miles above the surface, Earth appears as a single fragile sphere suspended in darkness. No borders. No flags. No us and them. Just one closed system, carrying billions of crew members who are only beginning to act like caretakers rather than passengers.

That is the view the Janwaar Way works toward — not from space, but from the ground.

One village. One skatepark. Two rules.

And the slow, honest discovery that we can drive change that holds.

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IMPRINT

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The Janwaar Way begins with a simple question: what does it take to build change that holds? Change that continues after you leave, that belongs to the people it serves, that does not depend on any single person to sustain it?

This booklet is the answer. But it only works if it lands in the right hands.

THIS BOOKLET IS FOR YOU, IF ...

... **you've started something – and it is not sticking.** It's not moving the way you hoped. You're wondering whether it's the idea or the method. Read this.

... **you're tired of change programmes that do not last.** You've run the workshops. You've hired the consultants. Six months later, nothing has changed. There is another way.

... **you work in an NGO or the development sector.** You believe in the work – but you have watched too many projects collapse the moment the funding ended or the founder moved on. You know that something is structurally wrong with how change is being built. This is the missing piece.

... **you're studying social innovation, development, or leadership.** Your courses talk about impact. They rarely talk about what happens after the intervention. This is that missing chapter.

... **you work in or with the Global South.** Not another top-down development story. This is what it actually looks like to build something with a community – rather than for it.

... **you lead – and you sense that control is the problem.** You already know that command-and-control doesn't work. But letting go is harder than it sounds. Here's what it looks like in practice – in the mud, over ten years, with real consequences.

... **you do not recognise yourself in any of the above – but you have felt, at some point, that the life you were living was not quite yours.** This book began there. It may be useful to you for reasons that have nothing to do with change management.

Please, do not read this booklet as a prescription. **It is much more a compass** – one that holds the thinking together without predetermining where it takes you.

If at any point it feels too structured, that is the moment to question it.

The Janwaar Way lives in how you use it, not in how closely you follow it. That is not a disclaimer. It is the point.

WHO AM I TO TELL YOU THIS

A degree from a German elite university in economics. Nine TEDx talks. Work that took me to NATO, Google, Harvard, MIT, Kiel Institute for the World Economy. Decades as a management consultant working with companies on change processes.

And then I built a skatepark in a village in rural India with two rules and no plan – and learned more about change in ten years there than in everything that came before.

That is the short version.

The longer one is called *The Nomad*. It's my memoir. It traces the cuts I made – the moments when staying no longer made sense, when something familiar had to be left behind so that something truer could emerge. Basketball. California. Loss. A publishing house built and sold. And then Janwaar – not where I learned what I knew, but where everything I had learned and unlearned finally converged. My years in business. My understanding of networks and their underlying principles. The Me-We question I had been sitting with for years. Myself.

Janwaar was where all of it fell together – organically, without a master plan. Just practice.

Writing *The Nomad* came later – in Australia, after COVID had closed India and taken away the daily noise of the work. In that silence, with enough distance, I allowed myself to see my patterns: the more clearly I recognised my conditioning, the more freedom entered my life. New possibilities opened up. And something shifted – not as a resolution, but as a way of moving through the world. I stopped performing the self others expected and started living from something truer. I became less driven by outcomes and more present to what each moment actually contained. I learned to trust what emerges when you release control – not as a philosophy, but as a daily practice.

That change is not dramatic. It does not announce itself. But it holds. It has held for years now, through loss, through uncertainty, through the kind of situations that used to send me back into performance mode. It still holds.

That is what I mean when I say change that lasts. **Not the change you implement. The change that becomes you.**



ulrikereinhard.com



Ulrike Reinhard
Wikipedia



Ulrike Reinhard
CV

A LIFETIME IN THE MAKING

It took me a lifetime to find the Janwaar Way – and to live it honestly enough to pass it on.

It didn't come from a research paper or a study. No. It came from a village in Madhya Pradesh – and from ten years of showing up there without a script. And it came from before that too. From a basketball court in Leimen where I learned to read the game rather than follow instructions. From The Well in California, where I watched a new kind of network being born and saw how this could change the world. From the teak forests of Panna, the changing waters of the Ken River, and long rides on my Royal Enfield Bullet through India – where I learned what resilience and presence actually feel like. From decades of consulting work where I saw, again and again, why the frameworks that looked so good on paper produced so little once they met reality.

What I mean by little is the gap between what was promised and what remained. Between the budget spent and the change that held.

When I wrote *The Nomad*, my memoir, it became clear that it was Janwaar where all of my lifetime endeavours finally converged and my journey inwards started. Where experience became understanding. Where what I had been doing all along finally made sense – and where I became more open to being changed than I had ever been before.

And the message which emerged is this: **change can be done in a way that holds.**

Not change as a project with a start date and a glossy report at the end. Not change that requires the person who started it to keep driving it. **Change that gets built into the people, the structures, the culture — so deeply that it continues when you are no longer in the room.** That is what Janwaar proved. And what my own life proves. **And that is what this booklet is about.**

Change that holds gives the community ownership of what was built – and with ownership comes agency, and with agency comes the capacity to keep building long after the catalyst has gone. It gives the practitioner the freedom to leave – because the work no longer depends on their presence. It gives institutions and funders something rare: an outcome that does not require ongoing maintenance, a return that compounds rather than collapses.

And it gives the people it touches a different sense of what is possible – which is how systemic change actually propagates. Not through programmes. Through people whose lives shift — and in shifting, show others what is available to them.

If the development sector built change this way – from within, with communities rather than for them, designed to outlast the people who started it – we would see what Janwaar showed us: girls crossing caste lines on a skatepark, boys unlearning hierarchies they were born into, women leading organisations they were never supposed to enter, and communities generating their own income, their own stories, their own futures. A different world.

Cultural shift. Social shift. Economic shift.

Not as outputs of a programme.

As consequences of a change that was built to hold.

That is not a distant ideal. I have lived it. In a village of 1,200 people in rural India, with two rules and no plan. If it can happen in Janwaar, it can happen elsewhere. The Janwaar Way does not promise a better world. It shows one way of building toward it – slowly, honestly, with the people it is supposed to serve.

I have given hundreds of talks carrying this message – at universities, colleges, schools, NGOs, conferences, boardrooms. Fragments of it exist everywhere: in presentations, in conversations, in emails and messages. But I never sat down and brought it all together. Until now.

Right now, as this booklet goes out, a film is in the making.

We are documenting something that has never been properly documented: not just what happened in Janwaar, but how it happened. How I set it up. How I accompanied the village and the kids after the skatepark disruption. How I stepped back – and what that did.

The film will show the how. This booklet will make it usable – for students, for NGOs, for managers, for anyone who wants to drive change in a lasting way and is looking for honest, field-tested guidance rather than theory.

I've done it. I lived it. I stand for it.

The theoretical foundation was always there – economics, years of consulting, working with companies navigating change. I knew the frameworks. But the frameworks were never enough on their own. Janwaar is where theory and mud, structure and intuition, knowledge and the willingness to not-know, came together. With actual people, in actual lives. It shows real impact. You can't get that from a textbook.

Writing *The Nomad* changed something. Not just in what I understand about Janwaar – but in what I understand about myself. Writing forces a kind of clarity that living doesn't. I had to find the pattern in the chaos of forty years of cuts and departures and arrivals. And when I found it, I understood for the first time what I had actually been doing all along – and why it worked.

I left Janwaar. *The Nomad* is written. The film is in the making. And for the first time, everything is aligned. Not just to tell this in a talk and leave it behind – but to scale it. To reach students, managers, institutions, anyone standing at the beginning of a change process wondering whether it will hold.

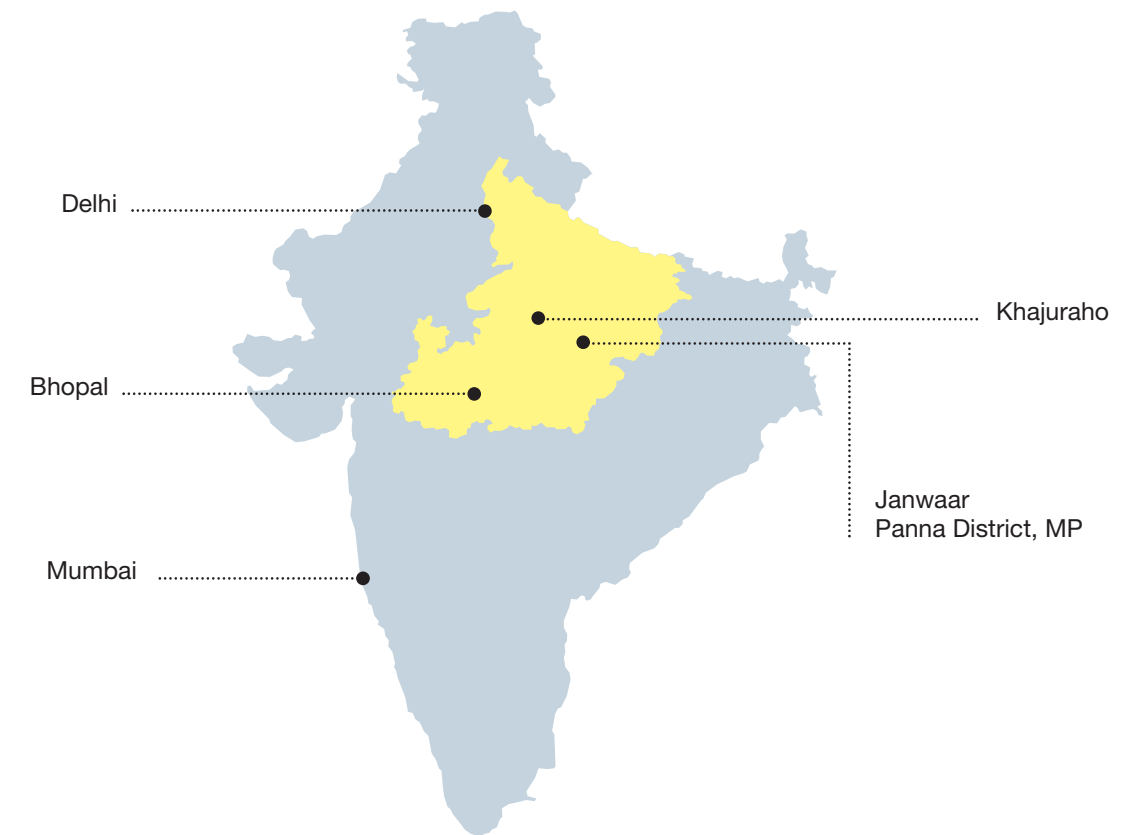
The book and the film together create the moment.

And I intend to use it.

A VILLAGE. A LIFE. A COMPASS.

The Janwaar Way has two roots. One is a village in rural India. One is a life — mine. Neither makes complete sense without the other. Together they produced something I could not have designed: a compass for change that holds.

THE VILLAGE: JANWAAR



Janwaar is a village of 1,200 people in Madhya Pradesh — one of the poorest corners of India, where caste, feudal structures, and decades of standstill had set the terms of life. In 2014, I built a skatepark there. Not as a development project. As a social experiment with one honest question:

Can a skatepark change a village?

The short answer is: It can. And it did.

The skatepark was built in the middle of the village — open, unfenced, accessible to everyone, at any time. No fees, no gatekeepers, no opening hours. Because change has to happen where people live, not in a protected space on the side.

That openness is what made the disruption possible – the skatepark didn't just offer something new, it placed something irresistibly unfamiliar right at the heart of the village that had never been offered an alternative before.

Two rules gave space. *No school, no skateboarding* – school attendance rose by 50%. *Girls first* – and with a skateboard, girls claimed space they had never been allowed to occupy. Simple rules do not restrict. They open. They create the space within which something new can grow.

Beyond those two rules, nothing was predefined. I had a vision – **kids who believe their lives can be different** – but deliberately left the how, who, when and where open. No programmes, no quarterly plans. Just a clear set of values and the discipline to observe what the village was actually showing me.

An open process is not the absence of direction.

It is the condition for real change.

Everything we did, we did with the villagers – not for them. Their knowledge, their ideas, their decisions. I contributed mine. That distinction sounds small. It is not. The moment you act for people you take away their agency – and without agency, nothing lasts.

The catalyst for all of it was friction.

Skateboarding culture – disobedience, resilience, finding your own way – was the exact opposite of everything Janwaar's caste and gender system stood for. I brought these two cultures together deliberately. Because friction creates movement. And movement opens the door for change. Skateboarding is counterculture. I chose it for exactly that reason.

From day one I was an observer, not a designer. I gave the kids fifteen skateboards, showed them videos on a tablet about how to skateboard because I can't, and stepped back. They took it from there.

But stepping back was never passive – it was a process I worked on consciously from the beginning. As the village moved and the kids grew into their own confidence, we built something together that would outlast my presence: the Barefoot Skateboarders Organisation, a non-profit created by and for the youth of Janwaar.

My exit was not an event. It was something I manufactured slowly, deliberately, over years – making myself a little more obsolete with every step, until the question was no longer whether they could manage without me, but whether they even needed me at all.

When I left Janwaar at the beginning of COVID, the answer wasn't yet clear. The youth of the village, however, carried on.

One answer came in the form of Asha Gond – a girl the system had already decided a future for, now a national skateboarding champion, director of the Barefoot Skateboarders Organisation, and a role model for girls across India.

Another answer came in the form of Arun Kumar – today, one of India's best skateboarders, national champion, sports teacher at Prakriti School in Noida, and coach of Uttar Pradesh's state skateboarding team. The once shy, overlooked Adivasi boy is now living his dream.

Arun's little brother Anil found his own path – not through skateboarding but through learning. He is, like Asha, director of the Barefoot Skateboarders Organisation. His dream, when he was still the little brother in the village, felt impossibly far away. It is not anymore. He is now studying at Rishiwood University, just north of Delhi.

And then there is Veer Singh. He belongs to one of the established Yadav families – the families who have always had the say in Janwaar, and who have not always used that power gently. Something shifted in Veer. He opened up. He slowly began contributing to the community rather than directing it. He may yet become part of the Barefoot Skateboarders Organisation. That would mean something.

The Barefoot Skateboarders Organisation might not survive in the way it was meant to be. That too is the Janwaar Way – not a finished product, but a living process. Still moving. Still theirs.

That is not luck. That is what change looks like when you build it to hold.

What random readers of *The Nomad* say:

The Nomad is a beautifully crafted journey to freedom, told through vivid encounters and adventures, taking the reader from post-war Germany, through Silicon Valley, to the backroads of rural India, and so much more along the way!

Ulrike Reinhard invites you into the messy, courageous work of unlearning old scripts and listening to your own compass in an increasingly complex world. Like Ulrike herself, this book pleasantly challenges you to live more honestly, more bravely, and more awake. Truly inspiring read!

Sylwia Korsak, Geek Therapist, Founder of VoxelHub.org, UK

A beautifully crafted autobiographical work that weaves together lives across borders – blending history, family, and encounters with strangers. What stands out is Ulrike's striking honesty, especially in the way she confronts and shares the most vulnerable parts of her journey, lending the narrative both depth and quiet power.

Zamrooda Khanday, Equity champion at Foundation for Mother & Child Health, India



The Nomad

THE LIFE: THE NOMAD

The Nomad is my memoir, published in spring 2026.

I was nineteen when I told my coach I was leaving basketball. We had just won the German championship. I had been named the tournament's most valuable player. From the outside, everything pointed in one direction: upward.

He looked at me as if I had said something absurd.

"Trust me," he said. "I know what's best for you."

His certainty filled the room. I hesitated – not because I believed him, but because I could feel the weight of everything standing behind his words. Plans. Expectations. A future that looked perfectly reasonable from the outside.

But another voice inside me had already become clearer.

Who is he to decide what I should do with my life?

It wasn't rebellion. It wasn't anger. It was simply recognition. And I walked away.

That was my first cut. There would be many more.

The Nomad traces those cuts – the moments when staying no longer made sense, when something familiar had to be left behind so that something truer could emerge. A working-class suburb of Heidelberg. A basketball court in Leimen where I learned that the ego goes quiet so the team can get loud. A move to California in my late twenties, where I watched the internet being born from a very good seat – at The WELL, where an illustrious crowd of early internet idealists genuinely believed the Internet would make the world more equal and more human. A publishing house built and sold. Decades consulting for companies navigating change, watching frameworks that looked so good on paper produce so little once they met reality. And then India – the Ken River winding through teak forests, the Panna plateau, long rides on a Royal Enfield Bullet through landscapes that stripped away the thinking mind and left only presence. Janwaar.

Each of these was a cut. Some were chosen. Some were not. All of them required leaving something behind – a rhythm, a role, a version of myself that no longer fit.

The Nomad was written in Australia, in 2024 and 2025 – away from the daily noise of work and distraction. In that silence, I began to see.

Not the events themselves – I already knew them. What became visible was the pattern underneath:

- How often I had moved forward when I gave up control and made room.
- How clarity came not from effort but from attention.
- How the most meaningful shifts hadn't been engineered – they had been noticed.
- How I had spent years mistaking ease for alignment and opportunity for choice, following a script so fluently that I rarely stopped to ask whether it was mine.

The more clearly I recognised my conditioning, the more I was able to change it – sometimes quickly, sometimes over years. And with each change, more freedom entered my life.

That is the red thread of *The Nomad*. Not a story of triumph or transformation. A story of recognition – slow, imperfect, and still unfinished. The realisation that what looked like a series of departures was actually a single continuous movement: toward something truer. Toward a freer soul.

THE COMPASS

The Nomad and Janwaar are not two separate stories. They are the same story told twice — once in a life, once in a village.

Every cut I made in my life prepared me for Janwaar. Not as training. Not deliberately. But when I arrived in a village of 1,200 people in Madhya Pradesh in 2014, I already knew something that no framework had taught me: that the most important thing you can build is something that does not need you to sustain it. That leaving — done honestly, done in time, done with care — is not abandonment. It is not failure. It is the work. And it begins on day one.

I had walked away from basketball at nineteen because the rhythm no longer felt mine. I had watched someone I loved choose his own exit — on his own terms, without compromise — and learned from him what it looks like to release something without bitterness or grasping. I had left California, the publishing house, the consulting world — each time carrying less than I arrived with, each time trusting that the next thing would become clear in the moving.

By the time I arrived in Janwaar, leaving was something I had already practised.

So I built the exit in from day one. Not as an afterthought. Not as a project milestone. As the entire point. Every step I took toward the village was also a step back from it — slowly, deliberately, making myself a little more obsolete with every season. The two rules. The open skatepark. The children training children. The Barefoot Skateboarders Organisation. All of it was architecture for my own departure.

The cuts taught me that you cannot hold on and let something grow at the same time. That the moment you make yourself indispensable, you have taken away the most important thing — the other person's, the community's, the system's belief in its own capacity. That real love — for a person, a place, a project — eventually looks like stepping back.

Janwaar was not where I learned to leave. It was where I finally got to use everything I had learned.

That is the compass.

The rest of this booklet is how this compass can be practised in different settings.

THE STORY IN QR-CODES

Short Documentaries



The Barefoot Skateboarders



Janwaar by Danny Schmidt



The Skateboarding Village of India



Wheeled Wings

Feature Film / Books /Music



Skater Girl on Netflix



Skater Girl Asha - The book



The Barefoot Skateboarders by Rina Singh



'I am THAT girl'



The Nomad

Janwaar in Indian media



MINT



Hindustan Times



New Indian Express

Janwaar in international media



Deutsche Welle



The Guardian



Worldskate



Mashable

Selective TEDxTalks



When a Skatepark transforms a village



Finding my own way

FROM STORY TO PRINCIPLES

Janwaar wasn't a programme. It wasn't a plan. It was a living experiment in the village, with skateboards, kids, and open processes as my instruments.

Every decision, every pause, every moment of friction revealed what works — and what lasts.

THE NINE CORE PRINCIPLES FROM JANWAAR



These are the values that run underneath every decision, every process, every moment of change we lived through in Janwaar — and equally through everything we didn't pursue, through our struggles and our failures. They were not designed in advance. They became visible over time — through what worked, what failed, and what changed.

They apply equally to a community of 1,200 people, an NGO, an organisation of 10,000 — and to a single life.

They are easy to agree with. Yet they are difficult to practise.

Systems over objects

Change is never the result of a single intervention. Every community, organisation, and institution is a system – a web of interconnected elements that together produce a pattern of behaviour. To change the pattern, you have to understand and engage the whole. Focusing on a single object – one metric, one department, one outcome – without seeing the wider system produces movement in one place and stagnation everywhere else.

Resilience over strength

Strength resists failure. Resilience allows it – and uses the space it creates. A resilient process does not close down when something goes wrong. It pauses, reflects, and responds from that pause. This requires a culture in which mistakes are not punished but examined. Without that culture, the creative space that failure opens up is never used.

Practice over theory

Action generates insight. Planning generates assumptions. A process grounded in practice moves in small steps, learns from each one, and adjusts before moving again. This is not the absence of thinking – it is thinking that stays close to reality rather than ahead of it. The cost of failure in a practice-based process is dramatically lower than in one built on comprehensive upfront design.

Emergence over authorities

In complex systems, leadership and direction emerge from the system itself – they are not installed from above. The role of the change-maker is to notice and support the conditions in which emergence becomes possible: openness, trust, the removal of unnecessary hierarchy. Who leads, what ideas surface, which direction the process takes – these things reveal themselves when the system is given enough space to move.

Disobedience over compliance

Compliance reproduces what already exists. Change requires the willingness to question – to challenge assumptions, to ask why things are done the way they are, to resist the pull of the familiar. This is not disobedience for its own sake. It is the discipline of not accepting the status quo as inevitable. Systems that reward compliance over curiosity protect themselves from the very change they claim to want.

Compasses over maps

A map specifies the path. A compass specifies the direction. In complex and unpredictable environments, the path cannot be known in advance – only the direction. A clear vision of where you are going is essential. A rigid plan for how to get there is a liability. The compass keeps you oriented when the terrain changes. And in complex systems, the terrain always changes. If the path is clear from the beginning, you are not working in a complex system.

Pull over push

A push approach delivers solutions to people. A pull approach makes space for people to generate their own solutions. Pull is slower to initiate and faster to sustain – because what people create themselves they own, and what they own they maintain. The ideas that emerge from within a system are also more likely to fit that system than ideas imported from outside it.

Learning over education

Education is what institutions do to people. Learning is what people do to themselves. In a world that changes faster than any curriculum can keep up with, the capacity for self-directed, ongoing learning is more valuable than any certificate. This principle asks both individuals and organisations to prioritise curiosity, openness, and the willingness to be changed by experience – over the accumulation of formal credentials.

WE over ME

The goal is not to dissolve the individual into the collective. It is to strengthen the individuals who are capable of building the strongest collective. These are not always the highest performers by conventional measures. They are the people with high emotional intelligence – those who connect, who listen, who lead without grasping for power. Empowering these individuals is what makes a genuine WE possible. Without strong MEs, the WE has no foundation.

The nine core principles from Janwaar do not tell you what to do. They tell you how to be, while you do it.

If you try to apply them as a model, they will lose their meaning.

They only make sense in practice.

THE JANWAAR WAY FOR NGOs

A village in rural India. A different way of building change.

India has more than three million registered NGOs — one for every 400 people. Most of them have clearly defined goals, programmes, a theory of change, and a set of outcomes they are accountable for delivering.

That clarity is understandable. Funders require it. Regulators expect it. And since India's CSR legislation mandates that companies direct a portion of their profits toward defined social objectives, the pressure to predefine, measure, and report has only intensified — built into the legal architecture of how change is both funded and executed. The money comes with a blueprint. And the blueprint determines everything: what gets done, how it gets done, who does it, and what counts as success. Including — and this is rarely in the blueprint — what happens when you leave. Or whether leaving is even part of the plan.

It certainly feels responsible — to know how to achieve your goals.

But it is a trap. The same trap the good girl in *The Nomad* falls into: rewarded for following the script so consistently, and so convinced that following it is the right thing to do, that the script itself is never questioned.

Many people working in NGOs are caught in exactly this — the belief that they are doing good makes it genuinely difficult to see that the method might be causing harm. Not harm through malice. Harm through assumption. **The assumption that you know what is needed before you have truly listened.** That your framework is the right one. The work feels meaningful. The cause is real. That is precisely what makes the script so hard to question.

And underneath it all — the unspoken drive to grow bigger, raise more, reach more, become more powerful. Making yourself obsolete is not part of the plan. It never was. Which is precisely how dependency gets built into the system — and why so little of what the development sector builds actually holds.

The Janwaar Way is not the easier option. It does not come with a blueprint. It does not produce quarterly reports full of measurable outputs. It will not make your funding applications simpler or your board presentations cleaner.

What it offers instead is harder to package and more difficult to sell — and more likely to actually work for the people and the community.

It asks you

- to arrive without predetermined answers.
- to observe before you act.
- to build with the community rather than for it.
- to measure success not by what you delivered but by what continues after you leave.
- to plan for your own obsolescence from day one.

The last one is probably the most difficult one. Not because you do not care. Because you do. The old proverb says: do not give people fish, teach them to fish. The Janwaar Way goes further: create the conditions in which they teach themselves — and each other. Because what people discover themselves, they own. And what they own, they sustain.

Without you. That is not a loss. That is the point.

An NGO that has made itself unnecessary in one place is free to go where it is still needed. That is not shrinking. That is the most honest form of growth there is.

What the Janwaar Way offers NGOs

Not a new programme. Not a rebranding of existing practice. Something harder and more useful: a different way of thinking about what you are building, who you are building it with, and what you are leaving behind when you go.

The four movements – DISRUPT. OBSERVE. CO-CREATE. LET GO. – run through every phase of your work. And the nine principles run underneath every decision. Together they address the questions most NGOs are not asking clearly enough:

Are we building this with the community – or for them?

Does this continue when we leave – or does it depend on us staying?

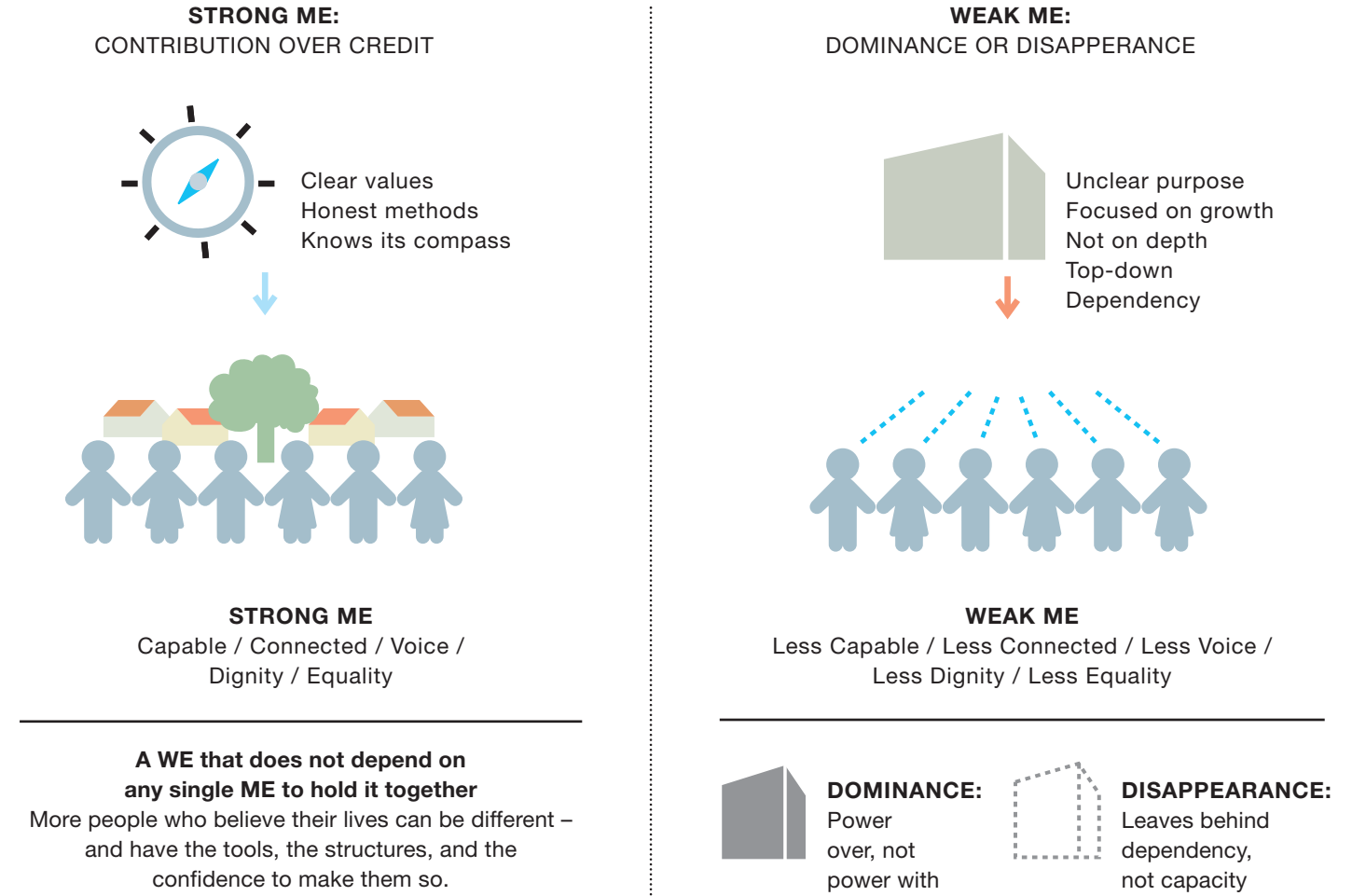
Are we creating agency – or dependency?

What does our exit actually look like – and have we been building toward it from day one?

These are not evaluation questions. They are design questions. And they need to be asked at the beginning — not at the end of a project cycle when it is too late to change what was built.

And there is something larger at stake here too. The ME/WE principle that runs through the Janwaar Way applies as much to organisations as it does to individuals. A strong ME – an NGO that knows its own compass, that is clear about its values and honest about its methods – is capable of contributing to a genuinely stronger WE. Not by growing bigger. By building deeper. By leaving behind communities that are more capable, more connected, and more confident in their own agency than they were before.

That is what a contribution to a better society actually looks like. Not more programmes. More people who believe their lives can be different – and have the tools, the structures, and the confidence to make them so. More equality. More voice. More dignity.



A WE that does not depend on any single ME to hold it together.

That is what Janwaar showed. And it is what the Janwaar Way makes possible – for any NGO willing to question the script it has been following.

How to begin

Shifting gears in an NGO is not a project. It is a decision — followed by a practice. The hardest part is not learning the Janwaar Way. The hardest part is being willing to look honestly at what you are currently building, who owns it, and what happens to it when you are no longer in the room.

That examination is where the shift begins.

What follows are three ways I work with NGOs. Each one starts where you are.

Format 1: THE TALK

90 minutes to 2 hours

The starting point. The Janwaar story, the four movements, the nine principles — and an honest look at what you would have to give up to practice them inside an organisation that was built on a different logic.

This talk is not a pitch for the Janwaar Way. It is an invitation to examine your own. It works as an opening for a team retreat, a staff day, a board session, or a conference.

The talk ends with one question I leave with every room: *what are you building — and will it hold without you?* That question, taken seriously, is the beginning of everything else.

Format 2: THE WORKSHOP

Half a day to one day

The talk followed by structured work — applied directly to your organisation's current reality. Where are you in the four movements? What are the rules that govern your work — and are they the right ones? Who is in the room when the decisions are made — and who is missing?

This is not a strategy session. It is an honest examination. It ends with one commitment — not a strategy, not a plan, but one specific thing each person will do differently in the next thirty days. And one thing they will stop doing. I collect these. I return them in thirty days with one question: *did you do it?*

Format 3: THE ORGANISATIONAL PROCESS

An ongoing accompaniment — as long as it takes

For NGOs that are serious about shifting the way they build. Not a training programme. Not a consultancy engagement. Something more specific: I work alongside your team through one real initiative — an existing project, a new programme, a transition you are navigating — and we practice the Janwaar Way together in that context.

What that looks like in practice: I come in regularly — monthly, sometimes more. We map the system you are working in. We examine who is in the room and who is missing. We identify the two rules that should be governing the work — and whether they are. We track where you are in the four movements and what the next movement requires. We notice when the organisation slips back into the blueprint — and we name it, without judgment, and adjust.

Between visits, your team practices. Between practices, patterns emerge. Over time — and it takes time, there is no shortcut — the Janwaar Way stops being something you are learning from me and starts being something you are doing yourselves. Not because I taught it to you. Because you practised it — in a real context, with real consequences, with someone alongside you who has done it before.

How long does it take? Long enough that the question is no longer whether your team can manage without me — but whether they even need me at all.

That is the goal. And it is the only measure of success I use.

THE JANWAAR WAY FOR UNIVERSITIES

We do not need more people with answers. We need more people who can sit with the right questions long enough to actually understand what they are dealing with.

Curricula for change that holds — for faculty considering embedding this work in their programmes.

A gap hardly any university is filling

The world does not need more people who can apply frameworks confidently. It has plenty of those. What it needs – more urgently than at any point in recent memory – are **people who can tolerate uncertainty without reaching for a false solution.** People who can sit with a complex system long enough to understand it before acting on it. People who know the difference between a problem that can be solved and a situation that has to be lived with, slowly and honestly, over time.

The crises of this moment – ecological, social, political, institutional – are not complicated problems waiting for the right framework. They are complex situations that have been made worse, repeatedly, by the application of confident solutions to things that were not yet understood. The development sector has built dependency where it promised agency. Organisations have launched change programmes that produced compliance instead of transformation. Institutions have optimised parts of systems while the wholes continued to deteriorate.

This is not a failure of intelligence or effort. It is a failure of stance. Of the willingness to not-know. Of the discipline to observe before acting, to build with rather than for, and to measure success not by what was delivered but by what continues after you leave the room.

That is what these curricula teach. And that is why it matters now.

The Curricula

All three curricula are organised around four movements that run through every session.

DISRUPT. OBSERVE. CO-CREATE. LET GO.

These movements map the arc of any genuine change process – not as a linear progression but as a terrain students will return to, recognise in new contexts, and gradually learn to practice rather than apply.

Underneath the four movements run the nine core Janwaar principles that govern how the work is done at every stage. The curricula ask students to examine how they show up – not just what they know. They will not produce students who can implement the Janwaar Way. They will produce students who have begun to practice it – and who understand the difference between those two things.

The Bachelor Curriculum

One semester
Twelve sessions
3 ECTS

Intended for: undergraduate students in social innovation, development studies, leadership, management, or related fields. No prior knowledge of the Janwaar Way required.

The shift it asks of students: from learning about change to beginning to practice it.

What the twelve sessions cover: The curriculum opens with systems thinking and the four-movement sequence, then moves through context reading, disruption and catalyst design, open systems, minimal structure, participation ethics, emergent leadership, transition and sustainability, individual transformation as evidence, organisational application, applied group project work, and synthesis.

Each session maps onto one of the four movements. Each session ends with a between-session practice – a small, specific action in the world rather than a reading task.

Session structure: each session combines a key concept introduction, a group exercise using real contexts brought by students, a personal reflection, and a between-session practice. The curriculum is designed to be taught by the practitioner who built Janwaar – but detailed session plans, reading lists, and facilitation notes are provided for faculty who wish to embed it independently.

Session overview:

Session 1 – What Is Change, Really? Before anything else, this curriculum asks the question most programmes skip. Not how to implement change – but what change actually is. The confusion between complicated problems and complex situations begins here, and so does the practitioner’s ability to tell them apart.

Session 2 – The Place: Reading the Context Confident solutions fail because they arrive before the context is understood. This session builds the capacity to read a situation – its history, its power structures, its rhythms – before acting on it. Observation as discipline, not delay.

Session 3 – The Disruptor: Choosing Your Catalyst Change does not begin with a plan. It begins with a disruption precise enough to open the space for change. Most practitioners reach for a solution before they have found the right disruption. This session slows that impulse down – examining what a catalyst is, how to choose one, and what happens when the rush to act produces exactly the false solution the situation did not need.

Session 4 – Open Systems vs. Closed Systems Most change programmes are designed for closed systems – predictable, controllable, measurable. Most of the world is not. This session gives students the conceptual and practical tools to work inside systems that refuse to stay still.

Session 5 – Rules as Frameworks, Not Restrictions **Two rules:** ‘No school, no skateboarding’ and ‘Girls first’. That was Janwaar’s entire structure. This session examines how minimal, well-chosen constraints create conditions for emergence – and why over-engineering a process is one of the most common ways to kill it.

Session 6 – With, Not For: The Ethics of Participation Dependency gets built where agency was promised. It happens in villages, in companies, in institutions, in product teams – wherever someone decides they know what another person needs before asking them. This session goes to the root of that failure – the difference between working with people and working for them, and why that distinction changes everything about what you build, what lasts, and what remains when you leave the room.

Session 7 – Leading Without Controlling Leadership in complex systems is not the management of outcomes. It is the creation of conditions. This session examines what it means to hold a process without directing it.

Session 8 – The Catalyst Steps Back: When and How Knowing when to leave is as important as knowing how to begin. This session addresses one of the hardest questions in practice: how do you withdraw without abandoning? How do you make yourself unnecessary without making the work meaningless?

Session 9 – Asha’s Story: Change at the Human Level Frameworks describe systems. Stories reveal people. This session grounds the curriculum’s abstract principles in a single human arc – a girl who was nearly married off at sixteen, who found her voice through a skateboard, and whose story makes visible what no impact report can measure. Her story is not a success metric. It is a demonstration of what change looks like when it is lived rather than delivered.

Session 10 – What Organisations Can Learn from Janwaar Most organisations optimise parts while the whole continues to deteriorate. Janwaar did the opposite – and this session examines why. The principles that worked in a village in rural India are not exotic. They are the principles that most organisations claim to follow and consistently fail to practice: building agency rather than dependency, producing transformation rather than compliance, seeing the system whole rather than managing it in pieces. This session translates the Janwaar Way into the language of institutional and organisational change.

Session 11 – Your Own Context: Applying the Way This is not a framework to implement. It is a way of showing up – and it has to be practised in the student’s own context, not borrowed from someone else’s. This session begins that translation: from Janwaar to the communities, organisations and systems each student will actually work inside.

Session 12 – Change That Lasts: Synthesis and Reflection The final session returns to the opening question – what is change, really? – and asks it again, with everything that has been learned in between. Not to answer it definitively, but to hold it more honestly. That capacity – to sit with the question rather than reach for the answer – is the curriculum’s deepest deliverable.

Learning outcomes: by the end of the Bachelor curriculum, students will be able to read a complex social or organisational context without imposing predetermined solutions; design a change process that builds community ownership from day one; distinguish between participation and consultation; understand what transition and sustainability actually require; and articulate their own practice – not just their knowledge – of the Janwaar Way.

Workload:

3 ECTS
approximately 75 hours
total student workload.

12 sessions × 2 hours contact time = 24 hours

Between-session practices × 12 = 12 hours

Reading across the semester = 9 hours

Group change proposal preparation = 12 hours

Practice log ongoing = 10 hours

Final individual reflection = 8 hours

Evaluation:

This curriculum does not use traditional grades. Instead, it uses criteria that reflect levels of achievement — each translatable into institutional grade equivalents where required.

Class participation – 20%

Ongoing engagement in sessions and group exercises. Assessed on evidence that a student is genuinely questioning their own assumptions – not simply performing engagement.

Group change proposal – 40%

Groups of three to four students apply the Janwaar Way to a real context at least one member has direct experience of. Presented in Session 12. Assessed not on whether the proposal is a good idea but on whether it applies the principles honestly – including naming what the proposal does not yet know.

Final individual reflection – 40%

Answering: what do I now understand about change that I didn't understand twelve sessions ago — and what am I going to do with that? The second question must be answered as a specific, observable commitment – not an intention. Assessed on honesty, specificity, and evidence of genuine self-examination rather than performance of the expected answer.

The Field Placement

An optional bridge between Bachelor and 3+3 — or an entry point to Master.

Between the Bachelor and 3+3 curricula sits something neither curriculum can provide: time in the world.

The field placement offers students three to six months in a real context – Janwaar itself, or a community working in a similar way – not to implement what they have learned, but to discover what they have not yet learned. Students observe before they act, act once and small with permission, then step back and document what emerged.

Students return from the placement with three documents: a positionality analysis written in the first week and revised at the end; a practice log – an honest account of where they practised the Janwaar Way and where they reached for a model instead; and one question – the question the placement left them with that the curriculum never asked. That question becomes their entry point to the Master curriculum.

The placement is not required. The Master curricula work without it. But for students who take it, it is where the gap between knowing and practicing becomes undeniable – and where the Master curriculum becomes genuinely necessary rather than merely useful.

Placement contexts are connected through existing relationships – communities and initiatives that have been part of the Janwaar story directly or indirectly over the years.

3 + 3 ECTS

The additional 3 ECTS can be taken in two ways: as a direct continuation for Bachelor students moving into this Master, or as a follow-up course for Bachelor graduates who are taking their practice into a different Master programme entirely.

Same rigour. Same expectations. The context changes. The work does not.

The key difference from the Bachelor curriculum: this course does not introduce new content. It shifts the stance. Students are no longer learning a way of doing things. They are examining their own relationship to it – and being asked to account for that relationship in the contexts they are moving into professionally. The reading list is more theoretically demanding. The reflections are more confronting. The group exercises use real professional challenges, not simulated contexts.

The central question: why is it so difficult to practise – and what will you have to give up – in your habits, your certainty, and your professional identity – to practise it honestly?

Session overview:

Session 1 – What You Think You Know

Session 2 – Rereading Janwaar: What the Case Study Doesn't Tell You

Session 3 – Disruption Revisited: Ethics, Unintended Consequences and the Limits of Intent

Session 4 – Open Systems in Institutional Contexts: The Political Economy of Openness

Session 5 – Minimal Structure Revisited: When Rules Become Cages

Session 6 – With, Not For: The Practitioner's Power and the Limits of Good Intentions

Session 7 – Leading Without Controlling: The Practitioner's Identity Under Pressure

Session 8 – Transition Revisited: What You Leave Behind

Session 9 – Evidence Revisited: Whose Story Counts

Session 10 – The Nine Principles Under Pressure

Session 11 – Your Own Context: Designing for Complexity Under Constraint

Session 12 – Change That Lasts: Honest Reckoning

Learning outcomes: by the end of this course, students will be able to read a change process – including their own practice – critically and honestly; navigate the gap between knowing the Janwaar Way and practising it under institutional pressure; examine their own unconscious agenda in participatory processes; design transitions that transfer genuine power rather than nominal responsibility; and make and keep specific commitments to change their professional practice.

Workload:

3 ECTS
approximately 75 hours
total student workload.

12 sessions × 2 hours contact time = 24 hours

Between-session practices × 12 = 12 hours

Reading across the semester = 9 hours

Group change proposal preparation = 12 hours

Practice log ongoing = 10 hours

Final individual reflection = 8 hours

Group project work and individual reflection are more demanding at this level – students are expected to draw on real professional experience throughout.

Evaluation:

This curriculum does not use traditional grades. Instead, it uses criteria that reflect levels of achievement — each translatable into institutional grade equivalents where required.

Class participation – 20%

Assessed on the quality of critical engagement – particularly the willingness to examine one's own practice rather than the practice of others.

Group change proposal – 40%

Groups work on a genuinely complex change challenge from their professional or research contexts. Constraints are real – institutional, financial, relational. Assessed on honesty about what the Janwaar Way would actually require in this specific context – including what it would cost and what it would not be possible to do.

Final individual reflection – 40%

A three-document portfolio: the reflection from the end of the Bachelor curriculum, a Session 1 reflection on what students were less certain about at Master entry, and a final two-page document answering: what has changed in how I practice — not in what I know, but in what I do?

The Master Curriculum

One semester.

Twelve sessions

3 ECTS

For Master students without
Bachelor background

Intended for: Master students entering with professional or academic experience but no prior exposure to the Janwaar Way.

The shift it asks of students: theory follows practice. Students are asked to examine their own professional experience before the curriculum gives them frameworks to understand it.

The central question: what kind of practitioner do you want to be – and what will that require you to give up?

What the twelve sessions cover:

The curriculum opens with complexity theory and systems thinking applied to the dominant change models students already know, then moves through structural analysis of context and positionality, disruption theory and the limits of design intent, open systems and institutional pressure, minimal structure as political act, epistemic justice and the participation paradox, adaptive leadership and the practitioner's identity, transition and making yourself obsolete, evidence and the politics of evaluation, the nine principles in organisational and institutional contexts, applied group project work, and critical synthesis.

Session overview:

Session 1 – The Problem with Change Most practitioners enter complex systems carrying a theory of change they have never examined. This session surfaces those theories – the assumptions about causality, agency, linearity and control that sit beneath the change models most students already know – and begins the work of questioning them. The distinction between complicated problems and complex situations is introduced not as a framework but as a diagnostic: which category does your own experience fall into, and what did you do with that?

Session 2 – Reading a Context: Power, Structure and the Invisible Context is not background. It is the determinant of what is possible. This session examines the structural, historical and relational dimensions of context – with particular attention to what remains invisible to the outside practitioner and why. Students apply positionality analysis to their own professional experience: what did you see, what did you miss, and what were you structurally prevented from seeing? Power mapping and context reading are introduced as prerequisite disciplines, not optional tools.

Session 3 – Disruption: Theory, Design and the Limits of Intent Disruption theory has been captured by design thinking – the idea that a well-designed intervention will produce a predictable change. This session examines the limits of that claim in complex systems, where disruptions trigger chains of consequence that design intent cannot anticipate or control. Students examine the difference between a catalyst – a disruption that opens space without closing it – and a solution – a disruption that forecloses emergence in favour of a predetermined outcome. The question is not how to design better disruptions. It is how to choose them more honestly.

Session 4 – Open Systems: Emergence, Accessibility and the Problem of Control Open systems theory – from Bertalanffy to Senge to Meadows – provides the conceptual architecture for this session. But the entry point is not theory. It is the institutional pressure students already know: the pressure to close systems, to make them measurable, to produce reportable outcomes from situations that resist reporting. This session examines how that pressure distorts practice – and what it requires of a practitioner to resist it without losing institutional legitimacy.

Session 5 – Minimal Structure: Rules, Frameworks and the Art of Restraint The political dimensions of minimal structure are examined here. Choosing restraint in a system that rewards comprehensive planning is not a methodological preference – it is a stance that carries professional risk. This session examines what minimal structure actually means in practice: not the absence of design, but the discipline of designing only what is necessary to enable emergence rather than direct it. Students examine their own contexts for where over-engineering has substituted for trust.

Session 6 – With, Not For: Power, Knowledge and the Ethics of Co-Creation Epistemic justice – the question of whose knowledge counts, who gets to define the problem, and who bears the consequences of getting it wrong – sits at the centre of this session. The with/not for distinction is examined not as an ethical preference but as a structural condition: **what has to change in the practitioner’s relationship to knowledge, expertise and authority for genuine co-creation to become possible?** Students examine where their own professional practice has reproduced the dependency it claimed to dismantle – and why.

Session 7 – Leading Without Controlling: Presence, Resilience and the Practitioner’s Self Adaptive leadership theory – Heifetz, Linsky – provides the conceptual frame, but the session moves quickly from theory to identity. Leading without controlling requires a practitioner who can tolerate the anxiety of not knowing, maintain presence under pressure, and resist the institutional pull toward premature closure. This session examines the practitioner’s self as the primary instrument of change – and what that means for how students understand their own professional development. **The question is not what skills you need. It is what you need to give up.**

Session 8 – Transition: Making Yourself Obsolete **Exit is not the end of a project. It is its most honest test.** This session examines transition theory – the conditions under which a practitioner can withdraw without abandoning, and the difference between a handover and a genuine transfer of agency. Students examine their own experience of endings: what was left behind, what was taken with them, and what that reveals about whether agency was genuinely built or only performed. The session also addresses the practitioner’s identity investment in staying – and what it costs the system when that investment is not examined.

Session 9 – Evidence, Story and the Politics of Knowledge What counts as evidence is a political question. This session examines the tension between the quantitative evidence systems demand and the qualitative reality that complex change produces – and the practitioners and communities who bear the cost of that mismatch. Asha’s story is introduced here not as a case study but as a counter-argument: what does her arc make visible that an impact report cannot measure, and what does that reveal about the epistemological assumptions built into standard evaluation frameworks? Students examine what evidence their own work has produced – and what it has systematically failed to capture.

Session 10 – The Janwaar Principles in Organisational and Institutional Contexts Most organisations optimise parts while the whole continues to deteriorate. This session translates the nine Janwaar principles into the language of organisational and institutional change – without domesticating them into another framework for confident application. The principles are examined as diagnostic tools: not prescriptions for what to do, but lenses for seeing

where current practice is producing compliance instead of transformation, dependency instead of agency, and optimised parts instead of functioning wholes. Students apply this analysis to an organisation they know from the inside.

Session 11 – Your Own Context: Designing for Complexity This session begins the applied group project work. Groups of three to four students – each bringing direct experience of a specific context – begin designing a change approach that applies the curriculum’s principles honestly to a real situation. The emphasis is on what the group does not yet know about the context, and what that uncertainty requires of the design. **Proposals that claim more certainty than the situation warrants will be pushed back.** The discipline of naming the unknown is as important as the discipline of designing the known.

Session 12 – Change That Lasts: Critical Synthesis The curriculum closes by returning to its opening question – what is the problem with change? – and asking it again, with everything that has been learned in between. Group proposals are presented and examined not for their quality as ideas but for their honesty as applications of the principles. The final individual reflection is introduced: one page answering what you now understand about change that you did not understand twelve sessions ago – and what you are going to do with that. The second question must be answered as a specific, observable commitment. Not an intention. A practitioner who leaves this curriculum with only intentions has not yet begun.

The key difference from Master A: Master B introduces everything from scratch at theoretical depth. It is the most academically demanding of the three curricula. It is also the most honest about the paradox of teaching an un-teachable practice inside an academic institution – and it asks students to examine that paradox directly, including by conducting a participation audit of the curriculum itself in Session 6.

Learning outcomes: by the end of Master B, students will be able to conduct a structural and political analysis of a change context; examine their own positionality and its effect on what they can see; distinguish technical from adaptive challenges; design for emergence rather than outcomes; navigate institutional accountability frameworks without compromising the openness that makes real change possible; and articulate a specific professional commitment that the curriculum produced.

Workload:

3 ECTS
approximately 75 hours
total student workload.

Same structure as Bachelor and 3+3. Reading load is heavier at this level – the curriculum carries a substantial theoretical reading list alongside the Janwaar primary sources.

Evaluation:

This curriculum does not use traditional grades. Instead, it uses criteria that reflect levels of achievement — each translatable into institutional grade equivalents where required .

Class participation – 20%

Assessed on the quality of critical engagement with both the theoretical material and the student's own professional practice. Particular weight given to the willingness to examine assumptions rather than defend them.

Group change proposal – 40%

Same structure as Master A. Students work on genuinely adaptive challenges from their own professional or research contexts. Assessed on the honesty of the structural analysis and the willingness to name what the practitioner cannot yet see.

Final individual reflection – 40%

A document returning to the theory of change written in Session 1 and answering: *what do I now understand about change that I did not understand twelve sessions ago – and what will practicing this Way cost me in my professional context?*

Additional assessment element – participation audit: In Session 6, students conduct a participation audit of the curriculum itself using Arnstein's Ladder. This is submitted as a one-page document and forms part of the class participation grade. It is the curriculum's most direct enactment of the with, not for principle – asking students to examine the institution they are currently inside.

Not ready for the full curriculum? Here are other entry points:

Format 1: THE GUEST LECTURE WITH Q&A

90 minutes to 2 hours

A single session covering the Janwaar story, the four movements, and the nine principles. Works as an opening to a course that continues independently, or as a standalone provocation within an existing programme. Ends with one question left open in the room: what are you building – and will it hold without you?

Format 2: THE CRASH COURSE

Half a day to four hours / 1 ECTS

The lecture followed by three focused exercises applied to real contexts students bring. Covers the essential territory in one sitting. Does not replace the full curriculum but gives students enough to understand what the Janwaar Way is, where it comes from, and why it is harder to practice than it looks. Works as a standalone workshop, an intensive seminar, or an introduction to a course that continues independently.

Evaluation: class participation 50% / individual end-of-session reflection (half page) 50%

Format 3: THE BLOCK COURSE

Two to three days / 2 ECTS

The Bachelor curriculum compressed into a residential or intensive format. All twelve sessions restructured into blocks, with longer exercises, more time for reflection, and the between-session practices condensed into within-day moments. Works best when students bring professional or practical experience to the exercises. Demanding – not because of the content, but because of what the content asks. Plan for space. Build in silence.

Evaluation: class participation 30% / group exercise outputs 40% / individual end-of-course reflection 30%

Ulrike Reinhard distinguished her lecture on the United Nations' role in crises by grounding her discussion in personal experience, which enhanced her analysis and the dialogue with students. A central methodological strength was the emphasis on connecting the macro level of international institutions with the micro level of individual agency, encouraging students to see themselves not as passive observers but as accountable actors capable of engaging with and transforming political reality.

Eugenio Salvati, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Pavia, Italy

What managers say about Ulrike's input:

Ulrike breaks with all the conventions of change management. Away from the master plan, toward experimentation! An inspiring talk that shows the best solutions emerge when you do not force a fixed process, but instead give principles room to unfold. Particularly impressive: the courage to embrace open-ended outcomes and the concept of the nine principles, which do not dictate what we should do, but rather how we make smart decisions. Inspiring, unconventional, and extremely valuable for anyone who truly wants to live change.

Martin Szugat, Georg Arens, Managing Partner, Datentreiber GmbH

“Ulrike Reinhard did at the Petersberger Trainertage 2023 what the best keynotes do: she told a story you do not forget – and left you with a question you can't put down.

A skatepark in a rural Indian village as a model for empowerment sounds like a bold claim. She proved it holds. Janwaar Castle shows how a deliberate disruption can break open rigid structures – caste boundaries, gender roles, inherited patterns of thinking. What worked in Janwaar cannot be copied directly into a corporate context. But that is precisely the point: this is not about blueprints. It is about the principle underneath them. Reinhard offers no recipes. She offers something more useful – the impulse to question the ones you already have.”

Nicole Bussmann, Chefredaktion managerSeminare

THE JANWAAR WAY FOR MANAGERS

A village in rural India. A different way of leading change.

Most organisations approach change the way they approach everything else: define the outcome, design the process, measure the output, write the report. This works beautifully for complicated problems — where the path is known, the variables are manageable, and the right answer exists somewhere ahead.

But change — real change, the kind that shifts behaviour, culture, and power — is not a complicated problem. It is a complex one.

Complex systems do not respond to linear interventions.

Complex systems adapt. They produce outcomes you did not intend and cannot control. When you try to control them — when you add more process, more governance, more measurement — they close down. They produce compliance. Not change.

Ask any room of senior leaders how many have run a change programme in the last five years. Most hands go up. Ask how many produced lasting results still visible today without someone actively driving them. The hands go down. In almost every case.

That is not a failure of effort or intention. It is a failure of method.

The conversation that follows is always the same: The leaders say they changed the structure, the strategy, the leadership — yet, the culture stayed exactly where it was. Changing culture — creating change that holds — requires a different kind of leadership.

And the need for it has never been more urgent.

The complexity that organisations face today — geopolitical instability, technological disruption, ecological pressure, social fracture — is not going away. It is accelerating. The problems that matter most are not ones that can be solved with a better process or a smarter framework. They are adaptive challenges: situations that require people to change how they think, how they lead, and how they relate to uncertainty — not just what they do.

Most leadership development programmes prepare people for complicated problems. They build analytical capability, strategic thinking, and execution discipline. These are not wrong. But they are insufficient. The leader who can run a flawless project plan is not the same as the leader who can sit with a system they do not yet understand, resist the urge to act before they have observed, and build something that will outlast their own presence.

That second kind of leader is what this moment requires. And they are rare — not because the capacity does not exist, but because almost nothing in conventional management education or corporate culture develops it.

The Janwaar Way does.

The organisations that get change right are not the ones with the best frameworks. They are the ones with leaders who have learned to read a system before acting on it. Who create conditions rather than deliver solutions. Who build with people rather than for them. Who know that the most important thing they can build is something that will outlast them — and who plan for their own irrelevance from day one.

That is a different kind of leadership. And it is learnable — not from a business school, but from practice. From showing up in places without a plan and staying present to what emerges.

That is what Janwaar proved. In a village of 1,200 people, with two rules and no blueprint, something was built that held. Not because the right framework was applied — but because the right questions were asked, from the beginning, every day:

Who decides — and who is missing from the room when decisions are made?

Are we creating conditions for people to lead — or dependency on us to drive?

What would collapse if we left tomorrow — and what does that tell us about how we have been building?

What would it take to make ourselves obsolete — and are we willing to do that?

These are not strategic planning questions. They are questions about how you lead. And they need to be asked not at the end of a change process — but at the beginning. And every day after.

Those who have taken them seriously describe something similar: not a new framework, but a different relationship to the work.

What the Janwaar Way offers companies

Not a new change management methodology. Not a framework to implement alongside the existing ones. Something harder and more useful: a different way of showing up in the systems you are responsible for.

The four movements – **DISRUPT. OBSERVE. CO-CREATE. LET GO.** – map the arc of any genuine change process. The nine principles govern how the work is done at every stage. Together they address what most change programmes systematically get wrong: the assumption that you can design your way to lasting change, that the people affected by the change are recipients rather than authors, and that your job is to drive the process rather than to create the conditions for it to drive itself.

What organisations that practice the Janwaar Way find is this: change takes longer to initiate and lasts longer once it holds. It requires more honesty at the beginning – about what you do not yet know, about whose knowledge you are missing, about what you are building and who will carry it when you are gone. And it requires a different relationship to control – not the absence of direction, but the discipline to hold direction without predetermining the path.

The result is not a better change programme. It is change that does not need a programme to sustain it.

How to begin

The Janwaar Way can be brought into an organisation in three ways – from a single talk to a full day of practice. Each one is designed to produce not a new plan but a different question – one that the leader or the team carries out of the room and cannot easily put down.

Format 1: THE TALK

45 to 60 minutes

The Janwaar story, the four movements, the nine principles – and the question that runs underneath all of them: what are you building, and will it hold without you? Available as a keynote, a fireside conversation, or the opening of a working session.

Format 2: THE WORKSHOP

Half day — talk plus two hours

The talk followed by structured work applied directly to your organisation's current reality – using the four movements as the spine. Ends with one honest insight and one specific commitment. I collect the commitments. I return them in thirty days with one question: did you do it?

Format 3: THE FULL-DAY SESSION

One full day, maximum 20 participants

A day of practice – not training. The full story, the Context Canvas, the disruption framework, the nine principles applied to your organisation, the participation question, and the transition question. Each participant leaves with their completed tools, their two commitments, and one question to carry: *what is the script you have been following – and what would change if you stopped?*

FOR YOU: PERSONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

This chapter is not for your organisation, your team, or your department. It is for you.

It is for the person who recognised themselves in the last point of the opening chapter: *you have felt, at some point, that the life you were living was not quite yours.*

That feeling is not a problem to diagnose. It is information. And it is worth paying attention to.

WE over ME

Before anything else – a note on the last of the nine principles, because most people read it wrong.

WE over ME does not mean the group comes first and the individual steps back. It does not mean you suppress your own compass, subordinate yourself, or disappear into the collective. That version of WE is not strength. It is compliance dressed as belonging.

The distinction is this: **you cannot build a genuine WE with a weak ME.**

A weak ME – someone who doesn't know their own rhythm, who follows scripts they didn't choose, who needs approval or control or credit – cannot genuinely contribute to a collective. They will either dominate it or disappear into it. Either way, the WE suffers.

A strong ME knows its own compass. It can pass the ball without needing to take the shot. It can let go without losing itself. It can serve something larger – without dissolving into it.

ME *it takes a strong me*
WE *to create a better we*

On the basketball court, being a good player was never about standing out. It meant belonging. More than once I passed the ball instead of taking the shot because someone else was better positioned. What mattered was contribution, not credit. But that kind of contribution is only possible from a place of genuine strength – from a ME that is clear enough, grounded enough, secure enough not to need the moment for itself.

In Janwaar, the kids who led were not the best skateboarders. They were the ones who connected, who listened, who led without grasping for power. Strong MEs who built the strongest WE. Asha Gond became the leader not because she dissolved into the community – but because she became more fully herself. And that self then served everyone around her.

This chapter is about developing that kind of ME – in yourself.

Why this work matters now

We live in a time that rewards performance over presence, output over reflection, and speed over depth. Most people are so absorbed in doing – in roles, relationships, systems that demand constant attention – that they rarely stop to ask whether what they are doing is actually theirs. Whether the script they are following was chosen or simply inherited. Whether the life they are living is the one they would choose if they stopped long enough to look.

The more clearly you recognise your own conditioning, the more you can change it. And the more you change it – slowly, honestly, one cut at a time – the more freedom enters your life. Not the freedom of having no limits. The freedom of choosing your own path.

That is not a small thing. It is, in fact, the foundation of everything else. A person who knows their own compass is more useful to the people around them. More honest in their relationships. More genuinely present in the systems they are part of.

The work of becoming a stronger ME is not self-indulgent. It is the precondition for a genuine WE.

What the Janwaar Way offers

Not therapy. Not coaching in the conventional sense. Not a programme designed to optimise your performance or accelerate your career.

What it offers is rarer: a place to examine what you are already doing – and whether it is actually yours.

The four movements – **DISRUPT. OBSERVE. CO-CREATE. LET GO.** – apply as directly to a single life as they do to a village or an organisation. Most people who feel stuck are either avoiding the disruption they know is needed – or moving so fast they never stop to see what is actually happening. The first is avoidance. The second is impatience. Both produce the same result: nothing changes.

The nine principles apply equally. Compasses over maps – knowing your direction without needing to control the path. Practice over theory – acting in small steps, learning from each one. Learning over education – staying curious about your own life rather than accumulating answers about it. WE over ME.

And underneath all of it, the question that runs through The Nomad and through everything that happened in Janwaar:

What is the script you have been following — and what would change if you stopped?

How to begin

Three formats – each one a different depth of engagement. Each one starts where you are.

Format 1: THE REFLECTION WALK

One conversation, two to three hours.

The lightest entry point. One conversation – structured enough to go somewhere, open enough to go where it needs to. It moves through the four territories: the script, the disruption you are avoiding, the ME/WE balance right now, and the cut. It ends with one specific step in the direction your compass is pointing – doable in the next thirty days.

Format 2: THE FOUR SESSIONS

Four conversations over four to six weeks.

One session for each movement: DISRUPT. OBSERVE. CO-CREATE. LET GO. Between sessions, one small practice – something to notice, not to complete. The final session ends with one commitment – specific, personal, observable. I return it to you in thirty days with one question: did you do it?

Format 3: THE NOMAD JOURNEY

Six monthly conversations.

For someone in the middle of a significant personal transition – a career change, a life reorientation, a departure from a script that has been running for decades. No fixed structure. No curriculum. The four movements and nine principles are the compass. Your life determines the path. Six months end with the question The Nomad ends with – not as a conclusion, but as a beginning.

The ME and the WE are not opposites. They are a conversation – one that runs through every relationship, every organisation, every change process, and every life. The stronger and clearer the ME, the more genuinely it can contribute to something larger than itself. And the more honestly it can let go when the time comes.

The Janwaar Way began in a village. But the question at its heart has no origin.

What do you build — in your work, in your life, in your relationships — that will last? And are you willing to do what lasting things actually require?

That question is not answered in a session or a workshop or a booklet.

It is answered in practice. Over time. With attention.

And it begins the moment you decide to stop following the script.

Most change programmes produce one thing reliably: a report. This booklet is about the other kind – change that keeps going after you've left the room, stopped the funding, and moved on.

One village. One skatepark. Two rules. No plan.

For NGOs, companies, students – and anyone who wants to change something. Starting, if necessary, with themselves.

Turns out, two rules and no plan was enough. Here's how.

Photo by Divy Bhagia: Aerial view of Janwaar

