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Features

Creating Breakout Innovation

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Nonprofits, community groups, and philanthropists are embracing cocreation as a way to engage a wider community in tackling pressing problems. But only a small percentage of these efforts are resulting in bold innovation and powerful solutions. What does it take to deliver breakout innovation?

Creating BREAKOUT Innovation

BY JOANNA LEVITT CEA & JESS RIMINGTON

Illustration by MATTHEW RICHARDSON

Over the last decade there has been an explosion of interest in collaboration, open innovation, and crowd engagement. Many companies are moving away from a model in which products and services are created through a closed, top-down, expert-biased process and toward open, crowdsourced, user-driven strategies. Nonprofits, philanthropists, and community groups are also embracing cocreation as a response to the challenge of tackling pressing problems in an increasingly complex world.

And yet, while the language of cocreation is *en vogue*, relatively few organizations are applying cocreative strategies to innovate boldly. We celebrate the solutions resulting from design competitions and open innovation processes, yet few of the results lead to systems change or profoundly shake up what is considered possible. Despite all the rhetoric of cocreation as an important tool for innovation, it appears that the majority of such efforts are doing little to challenge the basic structures of problem solving. Meanwhile, our world cries out for designs that reimagine the way we do pretty much everything if we are to solve pressing problems like climate change, extreme inequality, and poverty.

After a two-year interdisciplinary research study exploring cocreative design processes in the nonprofit and for-profit sectors, we have concluded that only a small percentage of cocreation efforts are actually creating systems-changing solutions aligned with the stated needs and priorities of the participants, let alone with the possibilities for innovation that such approaches offer. We were left wondering why the majority of cocreation endeavors fall short of their promise and potential, so we set out to find an answer.

We scoured the fields of urban planning, organizational design, education, public health, and high-tech, among others, to find examples of designs that cast a wide net in terms of who was doing the decision making in the cocreative practice. We were curious whether cocreation that involved more and different voices in creative and decision-making processes might also break the mold of what outcomes are currently deemed plausible. In other words, were such efforts blowing the top off the status quo of innovation? The answer turned out to be "yes."

IDENTIFYING BREAKOUT INNOVATION

In our research, we found instances across a variety of fields where groups intentionally changed the "who" of creative decision making in cocreation efforts and then generated results that outperformed status-quo in their field. We call this phenomenon *breakout innovation*. Here are two examples:

In New Orleans in 2005, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, traditional planning approaches were failing to turn the various recovery plans into a single, unified framework that residents could agree on in order for federal recovery dollars to be released. A local architecture and planning firm led an alternative process. The firm, Concordia, directly engaged more than 9,000 New Orleans residents as researchers, designers, and ultimately decision makers about which designs would be implemented and how. The resulting Unified New Orleans Plan—created in only seven months—was enthusiastically embraced as the official recovery framework and played a crucial role in enabling the revitalization that New Orleans has achieved over the past decade.

In 2013, the cardiology department at the University of California, San Francisco, launched the Health eHeart Study. Leaders of the study decided to employ an approach that was a radical departure from traditional heart disease research, partnering with several advocacy organizations[1] to create a "patient-powered research network" that enabled heart disease patients to collaborate with fellow patients as well as researchers, doctors, and other health providers. This Health eHeart Alliance led to an explosion of compelling questions, many of which have resulted in fully funded research efforts that are generating findings with unusually high relevance for improving patients' quality of life.

Each of these cases is an example of breakout innovation. We define actors of breakout innovation as groups that do the following:

- Create designs powerfully aligned with the needs and possibilities of the system they are addressing.
- Deliver solutions that make a rapid leap from concept to real-world implementation and wide uptake.
- Generate a shift in power dynamics that activates more innovators within their system, permanently changing the dynamics so that a far greater number of actors now play creative leadership roles.

A consistent hallmark of this work is that its impact carries far beyond the actual plan, product, or program it created. The process itself transforms the people and systems involved and expands their creative capacity for future innovation.

We found that actors delivering such breakout results cocreated in ways that represent a significant rupture from mainstream practice within their field. In fact, we were surprised to find that many of the big names in cocreation—including those speaking the loudest about seemingly cutting-edge practices like "collective impact," "crowdsourcing," and "design thinking"—were not actually significantly departing from the status quo, particularly when it came to generating a shift in power, voice, and ownership. Instead, breakout actors tend to be on the fringes of their fields. From a systems theory perspective, this makes sense. Writer David Bollier argues that those at the edges can innovate without the constraints or judgment of existing systems, and that systems change in fact can only begin on the fringes.[2]

What can we learn from actors at the edges who are leading the way in innovation through cocreation? We begin to answer this question in the sections that follow.

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THE FIVE PRACTICES OF BREAKOUT INNOVATION

Our research began by examining more than 70 organizations involved or interested in cocreation processes. From that, we formed a co-learning group of 20 organizations that were directly engaged in work that we identified as breakout innovation.[3] These 20 actors included for-profit companies, nonprofit organizations, social enterprises, philanthropic foundations, impact investors, grassroots community organizations, and social movements.[4]

We worked with the co-learning group to identify specific practices associated with breakout innovation that are central to each organization's way of work. We identified five practices that were strikingly consistent across the broad diversity of fields in the group. We believe that these five practices of breakout innovation offer a way for organizations to step beyond the self-imposed limits of business as usual—or even innovation as usual—to unleash the profound breakthroughs needed to tackle pressing social problems.

We should note that these practices are not binary characteristics that a process either does or does not have. The 20 organizations we worked with emphasize that each of these practices is about continually striving to strike the right balance.

Practice 1: Share Power | While many crowdsourcing, open innovation, and consultation processes ask stakeholders to provide input, relatively few share power. Sharing power means distributing the functions of decision making, creation, implementation, and evaluation among the process participants, and dissolving once-rigid divides between designer and consumer, expert and beneficiary.

Decades of participatory action research reveal that insights can be dramatically deepened when power is shared so that participants are not merely inquiry subjects but also are engaged as researchers, analysts, and decision makers.[5] New research on cocreation in the consumer technology industry affirms this dynamic. Companies that are opening up traditionally internal processes by inviting consumers to design a new logo or submit ideas for new models are the ones growing and capturing market share most rapidly.[6]

We also are learning from biomimicry studies that when power is

concentrated in a natural system, the system becomes far less resilient and more vulnerable.[7] And recent anthropological evidence suggests that early human societies may have regularly shifted roles and hierarchies as a way to continually bring in new perspectives essential to wise decision making and prevent ossification of social structures.[8]

A lack of shared power is easy to find in many of today's innovation processes. An excess of shared power is not as common, but it is nonetheless a real risk. Full-fledged experiments in consensus have gone wrong when organizations interpret power sharing to mean a free-for-all in which everyone has equal say. Without thoughtfully designed roles and processes, sharing power can lead to confusion, delays, and even injustice, as those most impacted by a decision may not have commensurate say to influence it.

A balanced approach to sharing power is exemplified by the work of breakout actor Incourage, a community foundation in Wisconsin Rapids, Wis. For decades the town's economy was based on Consolidated Papers, but when the company was sold in 2000, the community lost nearly 40 percent of its jobs, and median household income plummeted, along with morale. Incourage purchased the former *Daily Tribune* newspaper headquarters and proposed that residents decide its future use. "We made a commitment to resident ownership and resident power in the design process—and also in the future of the building," says Incourage staff member Kristi Anderson.

By 2012, more than 2,000 people had joined the design process, actively shaping and deciding what the *Tribune* building would become. The two-year design phase included outreach to different segments of the community; monthly meetings where residents worked in small groups facilitated by volunteer moderators who were residents themselves; meticulous compilation and sharing of ideas generated at each monthly meeting; and decision-making processes that used a blend of numerical weighting and voting to prioritize proposed ideas, along with small-group reflection and consensus-building.

The plan that emerged was for the *Tribune* building to serve as a community accelerator—to stimulate opportunity, environmental sustainability, and connections for community benefit. But even more important than the building was the transformation and sense of leadership built within the community through the design and decision-making process.

Here are five ways to share power:

- Define the problem at hand with the others involved.
- Trust all players with full information about the big picture of the project and the constraints.
- Support authentic leadership roles and structures for participants, with possibilities to play multiple roles.
- Create an environment that incentivizes decentralization of creative input.
- Share ownership, including co-ownership models that share returns.

Practice 2: Prioritize Relationships | Relationships are an organization's greatest asset, both for immediate work and for the challenges that may arise in the future. A key to building and sustaining strong relationships is to establish a "fair deal"—which we reconceptualize as a "co-commitment." Research on crowdsourcing shows that one of the most salient factors motivating people to take part in a process is whether or not participants consider the process fair.[9] Important considerations include how decisions will be made, what will happen with the input that participants provide, what access participants will have to the final product, and what ground rules everyone will follow. Breakout actors revealed the centrality of having a common set of values, commitments, and expectations as a bedrock of their cocreative initiatives.

When a co-commitment is shaped with the participants at the outset, it is a powerful touchstone people can return to throughout the process, helping to keep the process on track. In this way, a co-commitment can be the glue that holds together an emergent community forming around an innovation process.

What does it look like when innovation processes don't prioritize relationships? One example is when designers ask participants to offer ideas or to interact with a prototype in a way that is primarily transactional and that does not prioritize relationships for their own sake. Even if interactions happen with courtesy and warmth, relationships forged as a means to a predetermined end tend not to sustain collective innovation or resilience over the long term. If not applied thoughtfully, however, prioritizing relationships can also have a dark side. For example, an organization might prioritize relationships with people it is already comfortable working with and fall into an in-crowd/out-crowd dynamic, nepotism, or decision making skewed by favoritism.

One of the breakout actors that demonstrated a balanced approach to prioritizing relationships is Chorus Foundation. Chorus has found that developing a rigorous strategy and set of decision criteria can be coupled with developing deeply relational processes and organizational culture. "We believe that there's a sweet spot between these two poles—a vantage point that holds the creative tensions between organic flexibility and rigorous strategy," says Chorus founder and president Farhad Ebrahimi. "For us, the key to this balance lies in the prioritization of relationships."

This means that Chorus staff not only engage with grantees around funding but also participate in their campaigns and initiatives, building authentic relationships and friendships. "For us, it begins with spending time with the organizations we support in the communities in which they operate—not the clinical 'site visit' of philanthropic jargon, but really spending time with staff and community members as whole people," says Ebrahimi.

The relationships that Chorus cultivates encourage grantees to bring new ideas to the table as well as challenges and critiques, whether or not a part of a formal process. As Ebrahimi says, "These relationships have inspired—one might say required—us to rethink the bulk of our grantmaking."

Here are five ways to prioritize relationships:

- Take time to care for everyone in the process.
- Establish a "co-commitment" together at the outset with clear commitments, ground rules, and practices that everyone agrees to. Return to this as a touchstone.
- Foster a sense of community.
- Cultivate bonds that can outlast the particular project.
- Learn about and strive for a relational worldview.

Practice 3: Leverage Heterogeneity | Most organizations now acknowledge the need for heterogeneity, both in their own makeup and in the organizations and people they work with. But few organizations

go beyond the superficial "check-the-box" inclusion efforts often associated with diversity.

Research on the dynamics of crowdsourcing demonstrates that it is a liability to have only one kind of actor in a crowd or stakeholder group. Diverse perspectives—including strong representation of voices that are often excluded or silenced—are needed to generate innovative insights.[10] But poor outcomes can emerge from nondiverse groups as well as diverse groups that are poorly managed and not supported to work effectively across differences. In other words, heterogeneity leads to better outcomes only when it is thoughtfully engaged.

The importance of heterogeneity is partially explained by a mathematical principle: When a sufficiently large and diverse group of people is asked to make predictions or assessments independently, the errors each makes in coming up with an answer cancel each other out, leaving the most accurate information.[11] However, if individual ideas are not also challenged, the group will not rise above the initial baseline of each individual's own thinking. Therefore, processes that blend independent engagement with collective reflection leverage heterogeneity most effectively and have the best chance of producing profound insights.

The absence of heterogeneity can take many forms. A common example is the lack of diversity among those actually making decisions. Empty versions of heterogeneity—such as tokenism when organizations set out to diversify but fail to go beyond changing surface-level optics of their group—are also unhelpful. They may create demographic diversity but not make the changes in institutional practice necessary to allow the new richness in perspective, knowledge, and ideas to actually be expressed, welcomed, and acted upon.

A balanced approach to leveraging heterogeneity is demonstrated by breakout actor Chaordix, a leading open innovation company, and the work of its chief social scientist, Sharon McIntyre. McIntyre was contracted by Cameroon's electrical utility, Eneo, to help engage its employees in solving a range of operational issues that were causing problems for its clients—including prolonged blackouts, transformer explosions, and financial losses for local businesses. They formed diverse teams of Eneo employees to take part in a two-week "innovation challenge." Many had never collaborated directly with colleagues outside their department or with someone at a different level in the corporation.

Each team reflected many types of diversity, including domain expertise, company department, specific role, employment tenure, degree of technical expertise, work experience, geographic location, and gender. The process involved a series of exercises to identify the problems, look for hidden examples of related operational excellence, and analyze why the pockets of success had been achieved. During this process, all perspectives were given equal weight and respect, opening up opportunities for cross-pollination and collaboration.

Eneo had anticipated that solutions might require an expensive overhaul of the company's software. However, the process identified solutions that had almost no financial cost. One inexpensive solution was for Eneo employees to regularly capture the mobile phone numbers of their customers (which can change very frequently) during routine administrative client interactions, enabling the company to solve a number of critical operational problems.

Here are five ways to leverage heterogeneity:

- Curate groups with meaningful differences in perspective.
- Create multiple channels for input to account for different learning and participation styles.
- Prepare participants to connect across differences effectively.
- Build heterogeneity into all levels of the process, from participants to leadership roles to facilitators.
- Continually assess and build up heterogeneity by engaging participants to identify perspectives that are missing.

Practice 4: Legitimize All Ways of Knowing | It can be challenging for many people to accept that all types of knowledge are legitimate. Because most innovation processes heavily privilege knowledge that reflects academic or technical training, it is important to actively source knowledge in other ways. This often requires people to unlearn what we refer to as "expert bias." Technical knowledge can often be prioritized above all other kinds. For example, when large-scale development projects are proposed, thousands of local residents may recommend alternative designs based on their lived experience, but project developers tend to pay attention only if these concerns are raised by "experts" in quantitative language.[12]

There is a growing acceptance in the social sector of the value of nonformal knowledge as well as the importance of unconscious, intuitive, and embodied insights. Many cultures recognize that humans learn and communicate in nonverbal ways with one another, and with animals, trees, plants, and the land itself. These concepts parallel recent scientific findings such as those showing that walking through a natural landscape activates the brain in ways that enhance problem solving and insight.[13] Practices for drawing upon such forms of knowledge include meditation, time in nature, mindful breathing, prayer, and physical movement.

Otto Scharmer of the MIT Sloan School of Management is a leading scholar on how such ways of knowing relate to innovation. Scharmer founded the Presencing Institute and developed Theory U—a "framework, method and way of being" for "learning from the emerging future." Theory U was inspired by a study that Scharmer and colleagues conducted on the habits of highly creative people that found that all reported having an intimate relationship with a deeper source of knowing—and that their moments of greatest insight happened when they found themselves feeling connected to this source.

A powerful example of how an innovation process can legitimate multiple types of knowledge was demonstrated by the organizers at Standing Rock. Their arguments against the pipeline were consistently articulated by referencing prophecies, wisdom, and spiritual teachings inherited from the Lakota Sioux tribe's elders and ancestors. They also relied on the technical expertise of tribal members and their allies—in clean energy technology, media strategy, structural engineering, and many other fields. These multiple forms of knowledge were held in equal regard in the prayer camp.

"One of the major responses when there was an issue or idea or guidance was needed is, 'We need an elder,'" says Paula Antoine, tribal member of the Rosebud Lakota Sioux and one of the organizers at Standing Rock. "With the elders that were there—having the strength that they do have and the wisdom and the knowledge that they did share with us—I think that was more valuable than a person with a couple PhDs if that person didn't understand the connection to Mother Earth that we needed to keep us going."

The organizers of Standing Rock regularly sourced from the technical expertise of tribal members and their allies, but they did so while recognizing that overly privileging such types of knowledge would undermine the movement's potential.

Here are five ways to legitimize different ways of knowing:

- Create a safe space for acknowledging biases and trying new approaches.
- Include activities that foster mindfulness, such as meditation and breathing.
- Utilize physical movement, music, arts, connection with nature, and other activities that awaken right-brain thinking.
- Explicitly value and invite knowledge from nonformal sources, such as bringing in life experiences and getting advice from elders.
- Create opportunities for participants to find inspiration and insight from a greater power, whether that is a community, a cause, or another source of spirituality.

Practice 5: Prototype Early and Often | A prototype is a draft, model, or mock-up of an idea. To prototype early and often is to share and test ideas with participants at each step of the process. This approach leads to better next-stage drafts, creates buy-in and ownership among participants, and sharpens the group's thinking and innovation. Effective design processes go through multiple prototype cycles—casting a wide net with each cycle.[14]

Research shows that groups produce the richest, most accurate information when they are involved at multiple points throughout a design process. The rapid prototyping and recurrent user testing at the heart of the lean startup methodology affirms this.[15] Most social sector organizations do little if any prototyping. Most large-scale development projects, for example, do not allow the public to comment until a plan has been largely decided and significant sums of money have already been invested in feasibility and preparatory studies, at which point what is actually open for public input is "everything but the essentials."[16]

Our research also found that prototyping too often can cause creative decision fatigue among participants, ask too much of people's time, or stymie an intuitive flow of work. Because the vast majority of the cases we observed did not prototype often enough, organizations should first get comfortable with prototyping regularly before trying to scale back for fear of imbalance.

One breakout actor that has a balanced approach to prototyping is Concordia, an architectural and planning firm that has facilitated community-led design projects across the United States. "We believe you can't ever have too many people at the table," says Concordia principal Bobbie Hill. "Everything we do places the community front and center."

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and multiple attempts at recovery planning that left New Orleans residents feeling excluded, Concordia was asked to lead an alternative process. By then, many people had lost faith in planning processes. "There was just such a lack of trust," says Hill. "So when people came to the first meetings, sometimes it could be slightly challenging."

Concordia held three "community congress" meetings over several months, with partners including AmericaSpeaks, and in coordination with a concurrent process of design meetings happening in each of the city's 13 planning districts. When people showed up at the second and third community congresses, they were stunned to find that their ideas and priorities were being incorporated into the draft plans.

For many residents, it was the first time that their input had been acted upon in an official planning process. This sent a powerful signal that the process was different. Concordia continued to do this throughout the seven-month process and always conveyed information about any constraints at play.

Here are five ways to practice prototyping:

- Begin with prototyping the fundamentals: defining the problems to be addressed, the key goals to be achieved, and the best processes to do so.
- Turn participants' ideas into prototypes at each step of the process, testing out the viability of that piece before moving on to the next.
- Engage participants to roll up their sleeves and do the synthesis and creative work required to turn many ideas into a consolidated prototype.
- Encourage transparency and open discussion about what input was incorporated into a prototype, what didn't make it in, and why.
- Encourage participants to let go of perfectionism and freely share half-baked or even crazy ideas as vital inputs of a collective innovation process.

BREAKOUT INNOVATION IS HARD

One of the things we heard again and again from breakout actors was that doing this kind of work is hard because it means swimming against the current of not only a given field, but also a dominant culture. Peer institutions, funders, investors, and even team members may not understand what is being done and why, and they may be baffled by the prioritization of process, relationships, and power sharing.

Even after very successful breakout innovation processes, it can take considerable coaching and effort to prevent teams and organizations from backsliding toward old ways of working. As shared by a facilitator from the Emergence Collective, reflecting on the Health eHeart Alliance process, "After our initial design process and investment in relationships, we heard from participants that it was hard work expanding to new patients and researchers who had not gone through the process with us."

This experience is common. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, which advises organizations on incorporating cocreative design, learning, and evaluation, finds that many of its partners struggle with this dynamic. "Even within the same institution, one department may adopt a cocreative new process and strategy—only to find that the plan is being vetoed due to the basic constraints and policies of the institution as a whole," says Isabella Jean, CDA's director of collaborative learning.[17]

Nevertheless, the experiences of the breakout actors suggest that there is potential for the mind-set of breakout innovation to rapidly spread: that there is a virtuous cycle that can happen with the breakout innovation process itself. For a process to work effectively, it requires a mind-set among participants that the process is to be trusted and that it is worth the effort—even if it means pushing one's comfort

limits. While this mind-set may initially be tentative, when a breakout innovation is successful, participants often experience a profound and seemingly permanent shift in mind-set that enables them to even more fully embrace and apply the five practices, opening the door to more paradigm-shifting ideas the next time around.

HOW TO IDENTIFY BREAKOUT INNOVATION

So how do we distinguish cocreative processes that are likely to yield breakout innovation from those that will likely continue to reinforce the status quo? We've created a self-evaluation tool that can help predict the transformative power of a particular design effort. This isn't a tool for judging whether a completed process is successful or unsuccessful. Instead, it's to gauge how well a collaborative process is set up for breakout innovation, and to identify course corrections that will enhance the chance of generating breakout results.

The self-evaluation tool includes a series of questions regarding the application of the five practices. The questions are designed to support evaluators in identifying specific ways the practices are already present within their work as well as to spark reflection on areas for improvement. (The questions and self-evaluation tool are available at our website: www.recollectiveway.com)

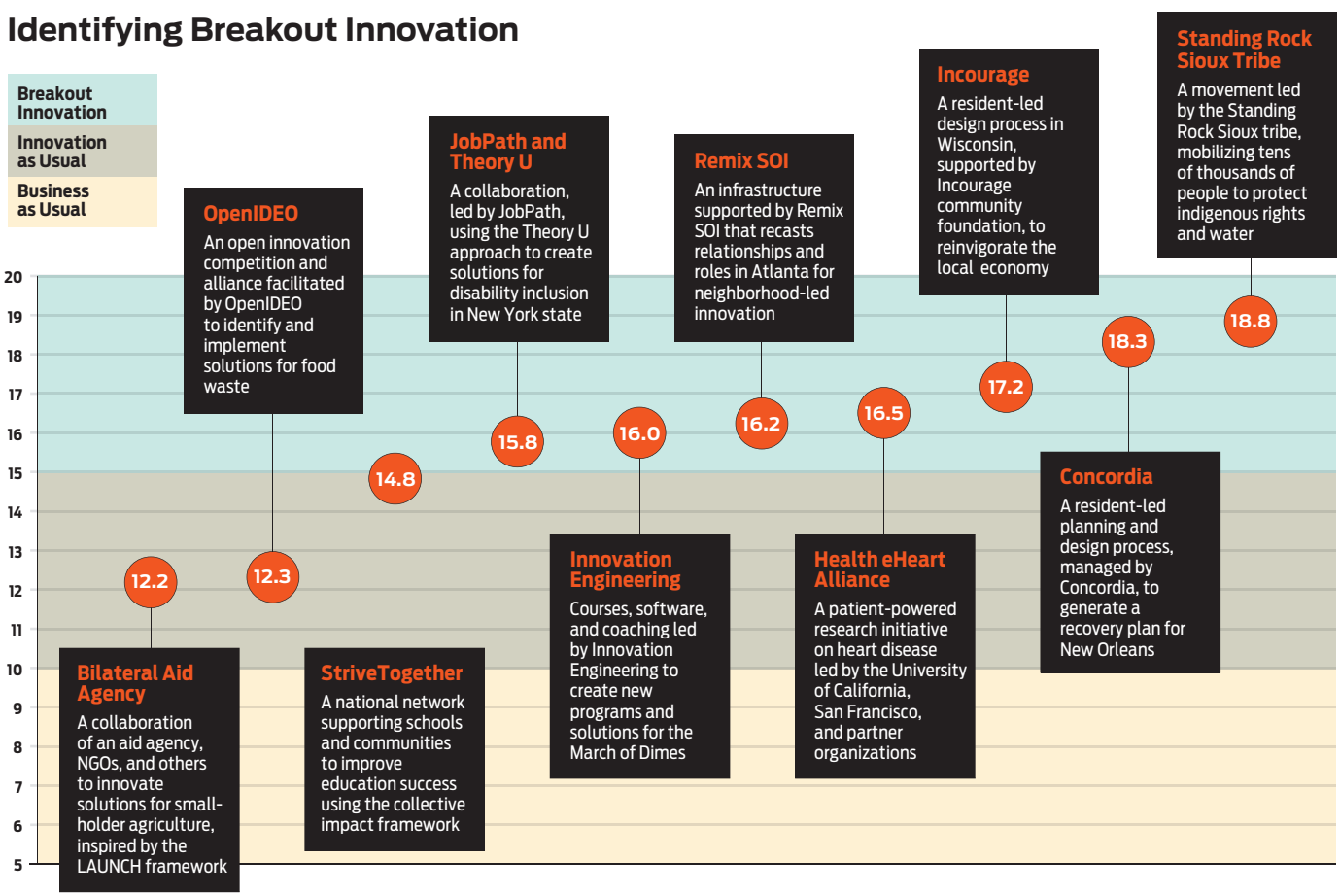
Through the question framework, evaluators surface information on whether and how the five practices are present and assign a rating in accordance with how strongly each practice is present. Each practice receives its own rating on a four-point scale, with four being the highest score. We acknowledge that this tool relies heavily on qualitative evaluation and thus risks being subjective. So we recommend reflecting on the questions with two or more fellow participants of the process, which will have the benefit of multiple perspectives and reduced errors.[18]

A particular design process can receive a total score of 5 to 20. A process that scores 16 to 20 is likely to produce what we call "breakout innovation," with transformative results that outperform current conceptions of what is deemed possible. All of the breakout actors mentioned in this article are producing innovative results within this realm. A process that scores 11 to 15 is likely to lead to the kind of out-of-the-box thinking that many consider innovative, but what we term "innovation as usual," as these results tend not to fully break the mold or fundamentally challenge current conceptions.

A process that scores 5 to 10 may still have a positive impact, but the results are unlikely to be very innovative or groundbreaking. Depending on how low the score, the process may have components that could actually reinforce harmful aspects of the dominant paradigm, such as shutting out the voices, aspirations, and creative potential of stakeholders. We call this "business as usual."

After more than 70 interviews and two years of further qualitative assessments, our research has found that most cocreation processes fall into the categories of innovation as usual or business as usual. We worked with our co-learning community to identify 10 projects that had either received positive press regarding their innovative cocreation or were considered by their peers to be quality examples of cocreation. Next, we engaged independent consultants to interview three stakeholders from each case, and independent evaluation experts to read the interview transcripts and score the cases based on the evaluation tool. (See "Identifying Breakout Innovation" below.)

Identifying Breakout Innovation



Although all solutions impact a range of stakeholders when implemented, not all solution-seeking processes attempt to engage such parties. In fact, this is the state of "business as usual" across the for-profit and social sectors. All 10 cases we chose to investigate represent a break from the status quo in that they are cocreative and work hard to engage a multiplicity of stakeholders to learn together and create better outcomes.

The results tell a perhaps surprising story: Although all of the cases scored well and should be recognized for that, those that most strongly self-identify as cutting-edge innovators did not score the highest. Also, the three efforts led by the most established institutions scored the lowest. Furthermore, the amount of public recognition that cases had garnered throughout their field did not correlate with more innovative results. It was instead those on the fringes, the small towns, the never-heard-of organizations, the unlikely movements, and the disenfranchised that scored the highest. Essentially, it was the underdogs.

This is an encouraging story because it demonstrates the fact that it does not take a big price tag, the support of a large institution, or the branding and awareness of the latest industry trends to break the mold and create groundbreaking, visionary solutions. Anyone can work toward and become a part of breakout innovation. And you can start tomorrow. All it takes to become a breakout actor is dedication, a tolerance for new and sometimes hard experiences, and a shift in mind-set.

A RECOLLECTIVE WAY: UNLEARNING TO INNOVATE

While the mainstream conception of innovation focuses on the new and the not-yet invented, it is striking that the five practices correlated with imaginative, breakout results are largely not new. In fact, elements of the five practices have long been an important part of many indigenous peoples' lifeways and the work of grassroots social movements. Many of our breakout actors talked about the need to "unlearn" certain customary practices in order to do breakout work. This unlearning included having to get comfortable with different ways of distributing decision-making authority, embracing uncertainty, and collectively imagining and creating a different way to be in community.

Fittingly, this very different way of being generates very different results. Our research found that breakout innovation was "breakout" because it often represented unprecedented redistributions of power, resources, and even land, as well as a rethinking of human relations. What most sets apart breakout innovation is that it is not about making marginally better an already intolerable state of affairs, but rather about prioritizing ways of interacting and creating together, which yield designs that feel as though they are pieces of an entirely new, emerging world.

Perhaps the most profound questions raised by our findings are: What is the root of the mind-set that now requires unlearning in order to be capable of breakout innovation, of reimaging our world? What happens that pushes these practices to the fringes of today's dominant paradigm? How can we change things so that these breakout practices are the natural way to imagine, plan, and build together?

To break out of the state of our current world and innovate a future that works for everyone, the way forward may be as much a remembering of what has come before as it is an invention of a brand-new path. In this spirit, we propose a new term: that the mind-set and practice of breakout innovation may be considered a *recollective way*—a process of being comfortable with imagining the not-yet invented, along with having a mindful recollection of an intuition we carry deep within our souls of what it is to be human in community. ■

More information about Joanna Levitt Cea and Jess Rimington's research, including a downloadable version of the self-evaluation tool for breakout innovation, is available at: www.recollectiveway.com

NOTES

1 The advocacy groups that participated in cocreating the Health eHeart Alliance are the American Heart Association, Mended Hearts, StopAfib.org, and SADS Foundation.

2 David Bollier, "Progressive Philanthropy Needs to Spur System Change," *News and Perspectives on the Commons*. May 2016.

3 The 20 organizations were: CDA Collective, Chaordix, Chorus Foundation, Community Organizers Multiversity, Concordia, Environmental Defense Fund (Restore the Mississippi River Delta Coalition), Faster Than 20, Feedback Labs, Foundation for Louisiana, Incourage, Invest2Innovate, Perpetual, Remix SOI (Community Ownership of Innovation), Sehat Kahani, Standing Rock Sioux tribe, TechSoup, Textizen, The Emergence Collective, University of Vermont Masters in Leadership for Sustainability, and Yellow Seed.

4 It is important to note that the co-learning group is predominantly US-based organizations. This is due in part to the limitations of our study and convening capacity, but it also reflects an intentional decision to focus on the sphere in which we operate as two US-based researchers and practitioners and a sphere whose practices have global ramifications, for better or worse. The lack of representation from other areas of the world should in no way imply that the United States is somehow leading on breakout innovation. To the contrary, in the developing world, grassroots organizations and social movements, in many instances, have been thought leaders in these realms.

5 Andrew Van de Ven, *Engaged Scholarship: A Guide for Organizational and Social Research*, Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2007.

6 Joanna Levitt Cea and Jess Rimington, "Designing with the Beneficiary: An essential strategy to optimize impact," *MIT Innovations*, forthcoming 2017.

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11 Ibid.

12 *Back to Development: A Call for What Development Could Be*, International Accountability Project, 2015.

13 Chris Mooney, "Just Looking at Nature Can Help Your Brain Work Better, Study Finds," *Washington Post*, May 26, 2015; and Chris Mooney, "New Research Suggests Nature Walks Are Good for Your Brain," *Washington Post*, June 29, 2015.

14 Jon Elster, "The Optimal Design of a Constituent Assembly," prepared for the colloquium on Collective Wisdom, Collège de France, May 2008.

15 Cea and Rimington, "Designing with the Beneficiary."

16 Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, London: Zed Books, 1997.

17 CDA calls for a paradigm shift toward a collaborative aid system in: Mary Anderson, Dayna Brown, and Isabella Jean, *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid*, Cambridge, Mass.: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2012.

18 We tested the index on 10 cocreative design processes in the areas of economic development, public health, disaster relief, product development, education, philanthropy, and public utilities. For each case, a team of third-party evaluators interviewed three stakeholders involved at different stages of the cocreation process, and then transcribed these recorded conversations. The transcripts were read by two independent reviewers and scored according to the index. Shelly Helgeson, Dylan Rose Schneider, Hafsa Mustafa, and Dr. Melissa Nelson each played a vital role in this process. The full list of evaluative questions, the scoring rubric, and additional information is available at: www.recollective.way.com