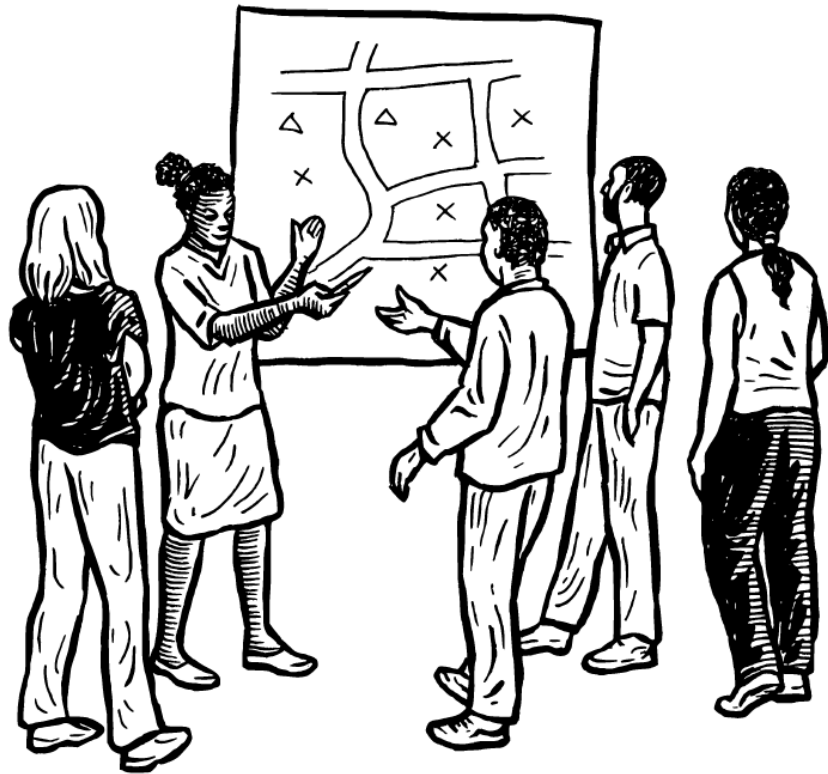


# Five Practices for Breakout Innovation

Following the five paths of the recollective way



**W**e are living in a time on earth when we are facing the most complicated problems that humans have ever faced. Problems like climate change, extreme inequality, and poverty are overwhelmingly complex to address—and they impact all of us.

We all have to bring our best thinking to the table. We cannot rely only on “the experts.” As community members—whatever our community might be, we know about the challenges unique to our communities—and we can generate powerful ideas for solutions.

*The recollective way* is a method addressing the problems facing our earth at this time—both big and small. It is about coming together in ways that can turn these challenges into opportunities. It is about innovating solutions together—in ways that start building the future we dream of *right now*.

Our hope is to come up with plans and solutions that will make a positive difference for generations to come. Not just for the few, but for all of us. To have the innovation process itself transform our communities to work together in new ways for this future. This is what we call *breakout innovation*.

To achieve breakout innovation, there are five practices that must be a key part of our work together. In these pages we share about the five practices and why they matter.

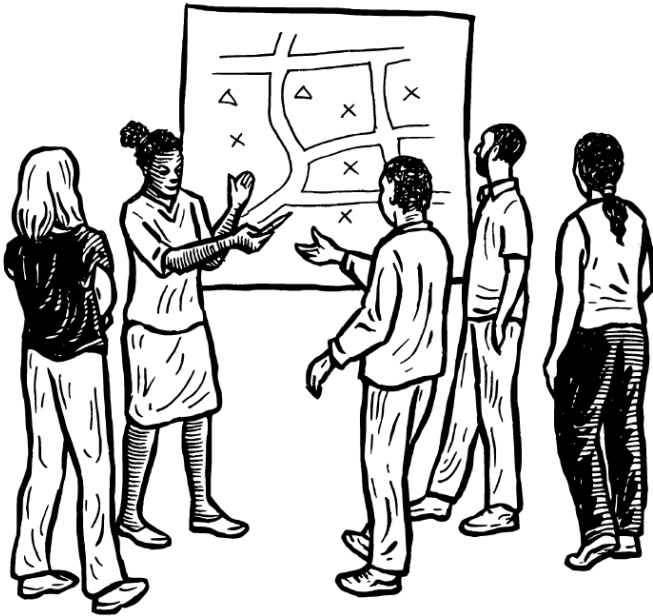
We identified these practices through a multi-year research project that brought together twenty groups that were achieving breakout innovation. These groups included community organizations, non-profits, businesses, government agencies and educational programs. The study was coordinated by researchers at the Stanford University Global Projects Center, with participation and advice from the twenty groups. Together we asked: When projects created breakout innovation, *why* were these projects successful? What did the people involved *do* in their work together? The findings pointed us to the five principles that we now call the five paths of the recollective way.

To learn more about the research, go to <http://www.recollectiveway.com/>

# Share power

*Sharing power* means that participants actually get to generate the ideas and make real decisions.

Most planning processes do *not* share power. Community members and others are surveyed for their ideas, or allowed to raise concerns and recommendations at a public meeting, but only a small group of people actually gets to make decisions.



A process that shares power is very different. Community members get to shape the goals, how the process will work, and help implement the process. All participants get to roll up their sleeves and come up with ideas and plans.

It is important to note that sharing power does *not* mean that the process is chaotic or disorganized. It does not mean that every decision is always a consensus process or that everyone always has equal say. Instead, processes that share power well often have very thoughtful forms of decision-making—whether

through working together in small groups to come to agreement, or having committees dedicated to particular issues, or ensuring that those people most directly impacted by the decision have more say. There are many ways to share power effectively.

Why does sharing power lead to more successful plans and designs?

One reason is because people give their best effort and thinking when they know their voice and choice matters. Another reason is because sharing power means that participants can do so much more than just fill out a survey—they can disagree and suggest a better way; they can come up with an idea any time; they can take initiative in implementing solutions. When processes share power, everyone can share their full capacity as people with talents, skills and passion. And the whole process benefits.

**Why do you think sharing power matters? And what does *sharing power* mean to you?**

# Prioritize relationships

*Prioritizing relationships* means that we take care of one another and take time to actually get to know each other as people. It means that we do not treat people just as a source of information for a survey. We value our relationship with that person instead of just trying to get the job done.



Why does prioritizing relationships make processes more innovative?

When everyone in a process prioritizes relationships, we create a sense of community around our process. We feel more inspired to give our best. We feel comfortable to raise questions or ideas, at any time, because we trust each other. This means that many more great ideas come up and are shared. Some of the brightest

solutions come up when we least expect them. Plus, real relationships tend to last. So prioritizing relationship helps create the lasting commitment that we need to address complex problems like climate change.

Prioritizing relationships does *not* mean that we only focus on the relationships we already have. Instead, to make our process successful, we have to stay open to new people, and be ready to value new relationships—and new ideas. This lets us build a strong and growing community—of people committed to caring for each other and our common future.

**Why do you think prioritizing relationships matters? And what does *prioritizing relationships* mean to you?**

# Include all points of view (Leverage heterogeneity)

*Including all points of view* means that we value the many kinds of diversity in our communities—and that we need everyone’s perspective to come up with the smartest solutions.

Why does including all points of view lead to smarter solutions?

If we have only one type of people in a group, or only a limited number of perspectives, it is very easy for the group to have a blind spot—to not see something that might be obvious for someone with a different background or life experience. When people with many different points of view work together to find a solution, they avoid blind spots and mistakes—and they combine ideas to come up with truly brilliant ways forward.



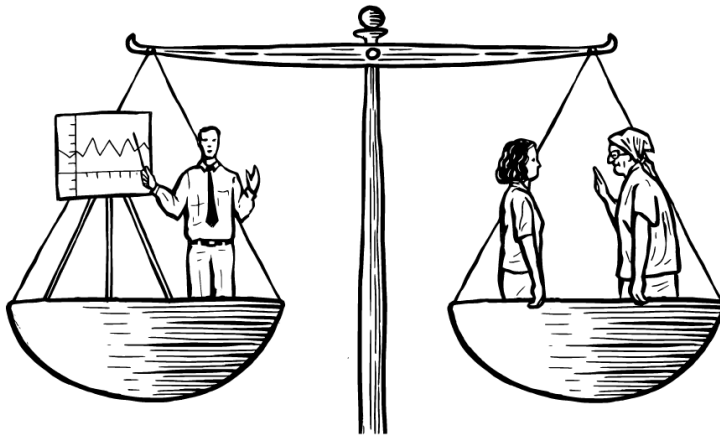
To include all points of view, we have to bring as many of kinds of diversity as possible into our process—and we have to make sure that everyone feels safe and respected to share their particular point of view. Diversity can include people of different racial backgrounds, economic backgrounds, genders and ages. It can also be people with different kinds of job experience or different kinds of training, and well as different life experiences and roles in their families and communities.

**Why do you think including all points of you matters? And what does *including all points of view* mean to you?**

# Use all kinds of knowledge (Legitimize all ways of knowing)

*Using all kinds of knowledge* means that we give equal respect to different kinds of knowledge—whether the knowledge comes from technical training and formal education, or whether it comes from life experiences, spiritual practices or intuition.

Most planning processes today focus on technical knowledge only. For example, an expert technician is brought in to explain what the problem is and what the solution is, based on the evidence she or he collects—and often very focused on measuring things with numbers. The planning process will design the plan and solutions based only on this kind of knowledge. But in reality, there are so many more kinds of knowledge!



Research on innovation has found that some of the brightest ideas come from everyday people with life experience that lets them see a new solution. They may not have the technical words or the numbers, but they have a brilliant idea. Innovative ideas also often come to people through meditating or praying, as well as through physically moving—like dancing or walking.

Also, not all great ideas are new! Often we can find great ideas for solutions through learning from elders or from what our families and communities did in past generations.

When we use all kinds of knowledge, we open up so many more possibilities for brilliant ideas to come to us.

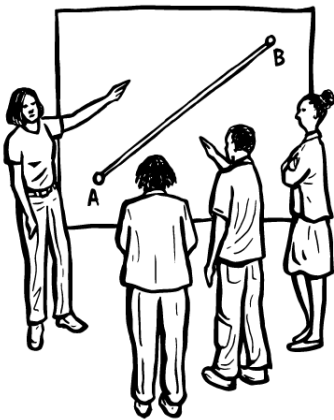
**Why do you think using all kinds of knowledge matters? And what does *using all kinds of knowledge* mean to you?**

# Test solutions early & often

## (Prototype early and often)

*Testing solutions early & often* means that we share and test out an idea for a solution as soon as we have it—even if it's only a first step.

Many planning processes today do not share their proposed solution with people for feedback until the solution is already completely designed. Those who came up with the proposed solution have already spent huge amounts of time and money on the idea by that point. If people don't like the idea or identify problems, then it means this time and money were wasted, since they will have to start over. Or, what often happens is that the developers just refuse to change the plan at that point!



By testing solutions early and often, we avoid this problem. We break down the solution into small steps, and we share and test out our proposed ideas for each step, to see if it's on track, before we move on. Because we only take small steps before sharing and testing, it is easy and inexpensive to go back and change plans.

There are many ways to test solutions. To test out a proposal for how our planning process should work, for example, we could create a graphic of the process—showing who would be involved and the steps we would take—so that people understand and can share their feedback on how to make the process better. Or, for example, to test an idea for a new kind of housing in our community, we could present illustrations or build a model of what the housing would look like, and see what people think.

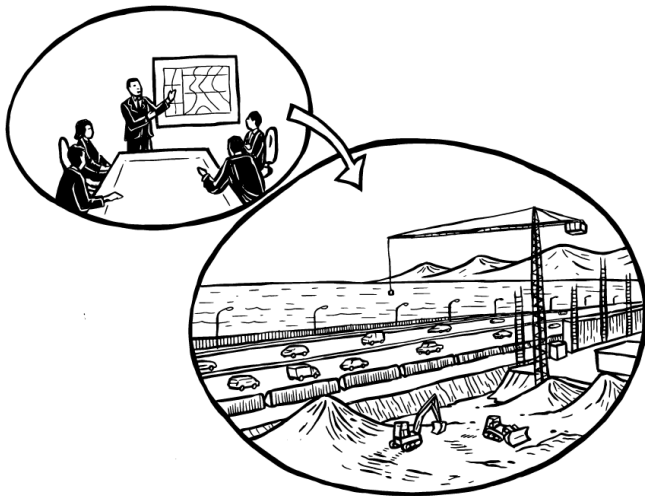
There is another benefit to testing solutions early and often: Actions speak louder than words. If people share ideas at a first meeting, and then at the next meeting they see that their ideas have already been incorporated into a possible solution, they see that their ideas really matter—their ideas are actually being turned into possible solutions. This inspires everyone to continue to share their ideas in making the proposed solutions better and better, step by step. This helps us get to the best solutions possible.

Why do you think testing solutions early & often matters? And what does *testing solutions early and often* mean to you?

## Breakout innovation

The research behind these principles found that when a planning and design process follows all five of these principles, it has a far better chance of creating *breakout innovation*.

Breakout innovation is a collective innovation process that creates solutions that tend to be very different from the mainstream approaches. The solutions also respond to the real needs—and big possibilities—related to the problem being addressed. Breakout solutions also go quickly from being ideas on paper to actually being implemented in the real world. Finally, the process of breakout innovation sparks many more people to become innovators, creating a new dynamic in which many people are now stepping up to provide creative leadership for their own community's future.



*“Business-as-usual”, and even “innovation-as-usual,” tends to produce more of the same – plans that are not very creative and that do not actually benefit most people or our planet.*

***Breakout innovation*** helps us create the solutions that our communities and planet urgently need.

