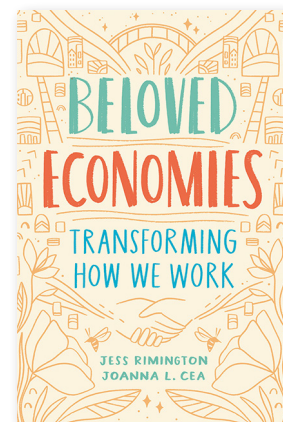


Beloved Economies

Transforming How We Work

by **Jess Rimington and Joanna Levitt Cea**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

In *Beloved Economies: Transforming How We Work*, authors Jess Rimington and Joanna Levitt Cea explore possibilities for how we work, learning with more than sixty people from a wide array of enterprises. What these groups have in common is that they are generating forms of success that audaciously prioritize well-being, meaning, connection, and resilience—alongside conventional metrics like quality and financial success.

Beloved Economies offers seven specific practices as a springboard for changing how we work. As the book reveals, it's not only what we do but how we do it that can be a powerful lever to move us into economies that all of us can love. Based on extensive research with organizations and companies that are boldly breaking out of business as usual, *Beloved Economies* offers readers an imagination-expanding vision of what work could be.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Seven specific practices as a springboard for changing how we work.
- How to guide yourself and your teams toward a more beloved way of working.
- How to make a change as an individual within a team or as a whole team, department, community group, or business.
- How groups, organizations, and enterprises can turn into a powerful lever for economic change.
- How to step out of business as usual into an audacious, healing future.

Introduction

The research and this book itself have been co-creatively shaped by more than one hundred people. Sixty people stand out in the contributions each made to the research findings and analyses. Each person played a different role: some engaged during a particular phase of the research, while others continued to participate and shape the emerging analysis throughout all phases of the research.

Together we formed a co-learning community. The common thread among all members of this co-learning community is a commitment to, and strong practice of, changing how we work to embrace power-sharing ways that depart from business as usual.

Wherever someone's words, ideas, or stories are shared, they co-created this part of the content and had ultimate decision-making authority on what appears in these pages. Many of those featured read and informed the book's narrative, ideas, and structure, or had the opportunity to do so, through co-creation workbooks and prototyping of the research findings and draft content.

Work Isn't Working

This book is for anyone looking—or longing—for ways to pull open the escape hatch and guide themselves and their teams toward a more beloved way of working. It is for anyone exhausted and fed up with what's not working about work and who has the will and latitude to make a change as an individual within a team or as a whole team, department, community group, or business reading this book together.

This book offers findings alongside seven concrete, actionable practices that our research has found can activate the potential of our groups, organizations, and enterprises to turn into a powerful lever for economic change. It is also a love letter to the people we have learned alongside on this journey—and to you, dear reader. This book admires our collective power to step out of business as usual into audacious, healing futures. It asks you to join us in dreaming and building ways of work that bring to life beloved economies.

Reclaiming Our Rights to Design

Breakout innovation is transformative change that is far-reaching, enduring, and imaginative in its departure from the lovelessness of the status quo. The plans, processes, and/or products that emerge from breakout innovation

share three key qualities. 1. Such ideas are bold reimaginings that support what makes life good. 2. These ideas achieve widespread adoption. 3. The process awakens a deep sense of agency to innovate.

Rights to design are what we exercise when we imagine, decide, and build together—when we hold the designer's pen and sketch our individual and collective futures. We understand rights to design to be linked with internationally recognized rights,² and primarily, they allow one to engage in imagining, deciding, and building the circumstances of our everyday lives.

As we studied the ways in which breakout actors transformed their work, we came to understand that there was a clear pattern in what they did that led to deconsolidating rights to design. This pattern is the seven practices we share with you in this book.

The Seven Practices

The seven practices are a way you can deconsolidate rights to design and set yourself on paths away from the loveless economy and toward breakout innovation. 1. Share decision-making power. 2. Prioritize relationships. 3. Reckon with history. 4. Seek difference. 5. Source from multiple ways of knowing. 6. Trust that there is time. 7. Prototype early and often.

In the following chapters, we explore each of the seven practices—what they are, how and why each one works, stories of the practices in action, and tips for how you might begin or deepen your own practice. Learning to apply and embody these practices “isn't just a one-time thing; it's something you do over time.” They are, in fact, a practice.

While breakout innovation is about the possible and emergent not yet, it is crucial to note that the seven practices are not new.

Share Decision-Making Power

When decision-making power is shared through a thoughtful and deliberate process, the practice can elevate a team from feeling like a set of disjointed individuals at work to operating as a tight-knit community.

While there is no set formula for how to share decision-making power, there are several common elements we observed and discussed with co-learning community members. Stand-out among these are: Customized decision-making protocols;

Full and accessible information-sharing; and Shared leadership, shared responsibility, and shared rewards.

When decision-making power changes from something we shoulder alone or fight to access into something we approach creatively together, each of us becomes more powerful.

Prioritize Relationships

Business as usual teaches that relationships matter: it's who you know, not what you know. There is a clear distinction between the business-as-usual view of work relationships and the breakout actors' view.

There is a paradox in play here: when we stop focusing only on what we can get from someone to achieve a goal and start caring about our connection for its own sake, the people around us rapidly become the greatest blessing to the task at hand.

For breakout actors, the practice of prioritizing relationships is about building caring, strong relationships across differences. At its essence, a practice of prioritizing relationships comes down to caring about one another and expressing this care in our day-to-day actions.

Reckon with History

In business as usual, history is often viewed as irrelevant to current work and as something to be retold only by expert historians. For breakout actors, history is inextricably connected to the present; it is a group's living teacher, and all group members have histories to share and teach one another.

Katherine speaks about "how important it is to look back and reflect"—both for individuals personally and for teams, organizations, and whole communities. For Katherine, exploring history together in a shared space is about creating "an opportunity for everyone to tell our stories... to understand the larger context in which you live and work. Because that context is always affecting what you do and how you respond."

Seek Difference

The practice of seeking difference is not about superficial efforts that aim to check a box or do a one-time step to expand the demographics of a group's members. It is instead a commitment to continually seek out relevant forms of

diversity and create team cultures that effectively engage differences. It is a stance of genuine curiosity and eagerness to hear and act upon the pulsing brilliance that exists when the richness of diversities is tapped into.

Naturally, a practice about forms of difference tends to look many different ways. Yet there are clear commonalities in how breakout actors seek difference. These include: Inviting multiple perspectives on diversity, Creating conditions that support safety and bravery, and Using varied channels for contribution.

Source from Multiple Ways of Knowing

In the status quo of the loveless economy, it can be jarring for some people to reawaken and realize that technical expertise or academic learning, for example, are not the only ways of knowing that have value. Though such a transition in perspective can be uncomfortable for some at first, our research shows that it is often joyful and restorative for people to see themselves as part of a broader web of knowledge.

Sourcing from multiple ways of knowing is the practice of considering, valuing, and attuning to multiple types of knowledge, ranging from technical training to lived experience to spirituality to what we sense from the living world around us. This practice actively examines and unravels biases that keep groups from appreciating certain ways of knowing, and it breaks down power dynamics that prevent people from expressing intrinsic knowledge.

Trust There is Time

Trusting there is time—to build relationships and shared language, to confront the exclusive histories within their field, and to account for power differences in the room—is a central practice of breakout actors to ensure that their efforts will result in meaningful outcomes.

Trusting there is time means believing there is always time available to prioritize engagement and care in how we work. This practice invites us to question the assumed urgency that is so pervasive in business as usual and to be critical of the frazzled state in which so many of us frequently operate. This practice applies the paradox of going slow to go fast. It means strategically investing time at the front end of a process—and at points all along the way—to nourish the solid foundations necessary for lasting transformation.

Prototype Early and Often

While many business-as-usual organizations are increasingly using elements of collaborative design when engaging with clients, community members, and other stakeholders, quite often this engagement still means sharing predetermined scenarios already passed through multiple rounds of tweaking and technical review behind the scenes, before getting feedback from external stakeholders.

Prototyping early and often is the practice of sharing and testing ideas at each step of a process. Prototyping early means that from the very beginning of working together, assumptions are tested and space is allowed to course-correct and refine before ideas are finalized or launched. Prototyping early and often means that along the way, there is transparency about the ways in which feedback and ideas from colleagues, collaborators, and other stakeholders has been assessed and integrated.

They May Try to Stop You

Here, we discuss two particular forms of resistance that breakout actors encounter, which they report can feel surprising and can sometimes even thwart a group's efforts.

The resistance faced by the breakout actors in our co-learning community most commonly came in two forms: external backlash and internalized doubt. Breakout actors shared that sometimes resistance bubbles up from their closest collaborators—or even from themselves.

In our research, we've also seen other forms of internalized doubt that limit what groups do, even when there isn't necessarily a work culture that people perceive as discouraging new ideas. For instance, some people report feeling nervous the first time they are invited to join together as peers with people they perceive as different from them in terms of class, race, gender, professional background, or ability. Others—when faced with the prospect of sharing decision-making power, for example—worry that everything will fall apart if they release control. Some people share feelings of confusion: will they still have a place in the work once change happens?

Practicing Beloved Economies

Any society's economy is inextricably linked to its rules and laws, which determine how people engage within that economy—what is allowed, encouraged, and prohibited. The rules and laws are usually established by the processes of

government. For this reason, we cannot ignore the critical role of legislation, which can encourage or imperil a shift toward a beloved economy.

Strikingly, the ripple effect in people, enterprises, industries, and regions seems to persist even if the initial effort that inspired the change bumped up against individuals trying to stop them—even when those individuals did stop the initiative. In those cases, the people involved were still transformed, and these internal shifts generated something profound beyond the scope of the specific project they were working on, something that no one could stop or erase.

Reorienting Work Toward Life

There are many examples throughout nature of living organisms having evolved behaviors and strategies similar to those we see in the practices of breakout actors.

These practices enable groups of people to change how they work in response to signals all around us, which seem to scream that work isn't working. The practices operate by activating the inherent potential of people across an entire system to reimagine and reorient toward that which sustains life and makes it good for all. As these changes ripple across our economic system, our economy as a whole has a far greater chance of evolving toward ways of operating that nourish, rather than endanger, life itself.

Conclusion

To support our readers in getting started with the seven practices, we want to share three points that may be useful. First, we share more about the value proposition—the return on investment, as some might say—of the practices. Second, we offer a concrete suggestion for how to start this conversation within your group(s). Last, we touch on a key point of advice co-learners have shared over the years for groups to start strong, stay the course, and tap into the practices' potential for breakout innovation.

When people commit to their own journey of self-reflection and growth, their individual transformation can shape collective action, and the resulting ripple effects are profound.



Jess Rimington is a next economy strategist focused on the design and ethics of emerging post-capitalisms. Her practice and research is grounded in historical analysis, accessible truth-telling, and present-day experimentation.

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