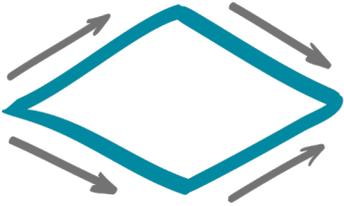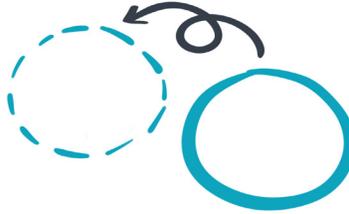# 6 Patterns in Collaborative Innovation

DIVERGING & CONVERGING

It's helpful to be clear and intentional about moving through cycles of divergence and convergences when leading collaboration innovation. There are times when you want to open the network up to greater possibilities, expand the analysis, and generate more ideas. At other times, you need to narrow the scope, focus the analysis and choose which priorities to take forward. Be aware of your own biases and focus on what the group needs at the time.

CHECKING BACK

Checking Back refers to regularly returning to earlier parts of the work to ensure that our current activities are aligned with our network's purpose. In collaborative innovation, this means regularly checking back on the network's Intent ("Is this still the best expression of our shared intent?"), Analysis ("Have we learned new things that need to inform our analysis?"), and even composition ("Do we have the people we need to do this work?").

LEVERAGING TENSIONS

Participants in any complex change initiative invariably experience tensions around positions that seem mutually exclusive. These can be sources of polarization and stuckness if allowed to play out covertly. By framing these tensions as positive assets and helping the group get the best of both values (like the best of action AND learning) your network will collaborate more deeply and design better, more resilient solutions.

SPIRALING

Spiraling the goals, analysis, shifts, and potential solutions is a way to increase engagement AND create better thinking and solutions at the same time. Spiraling begins when one person shares her thinking with another person, and adjusts that thinking so they have something that works for both of them. Then these two people engage 4 more people, those people engage 4 others, and so on. Eventually, the analysis and thinking is even shared by people outside the network in the broader community or sector.

THE DESIGN PROCESS

Innovation is often perceived as a neat and orderly process, but it's actually messy and unpredictable. It's helpful for participants to understand that design-led innovation will not be a linear process that goes straight from problem to solution. It will feel messy and unclear at times, especially when they are full of insights with no clear path forward, but the strategy and solutions will emerge in time.

(based on The Design Squiggle by Damien Newman at Central Office of Design)

WORKING CONCURRENTLY

People often assume that work in networks needs to happen in a linear, sequential way or that everyone needs have a say in all parts of the work. That not only slows down the work, it's less productive and less meaningful and engaging for participants, and it can silence diverse voices. Instead, we use methods like silent brainstorming, forming separate teams around network initiatives, and having multiple teams prototype the same solution then drawing the best features from across the diverse prototypes.

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