

Facilitator's Guide

for Think Collective Sessions



A guide to facilitating your very
own *Think* Session.

What is Think Collective?

Think Collective is a community of/for social development practitioners who care about reflection, strategic brainstorming, and collective sensemaking.

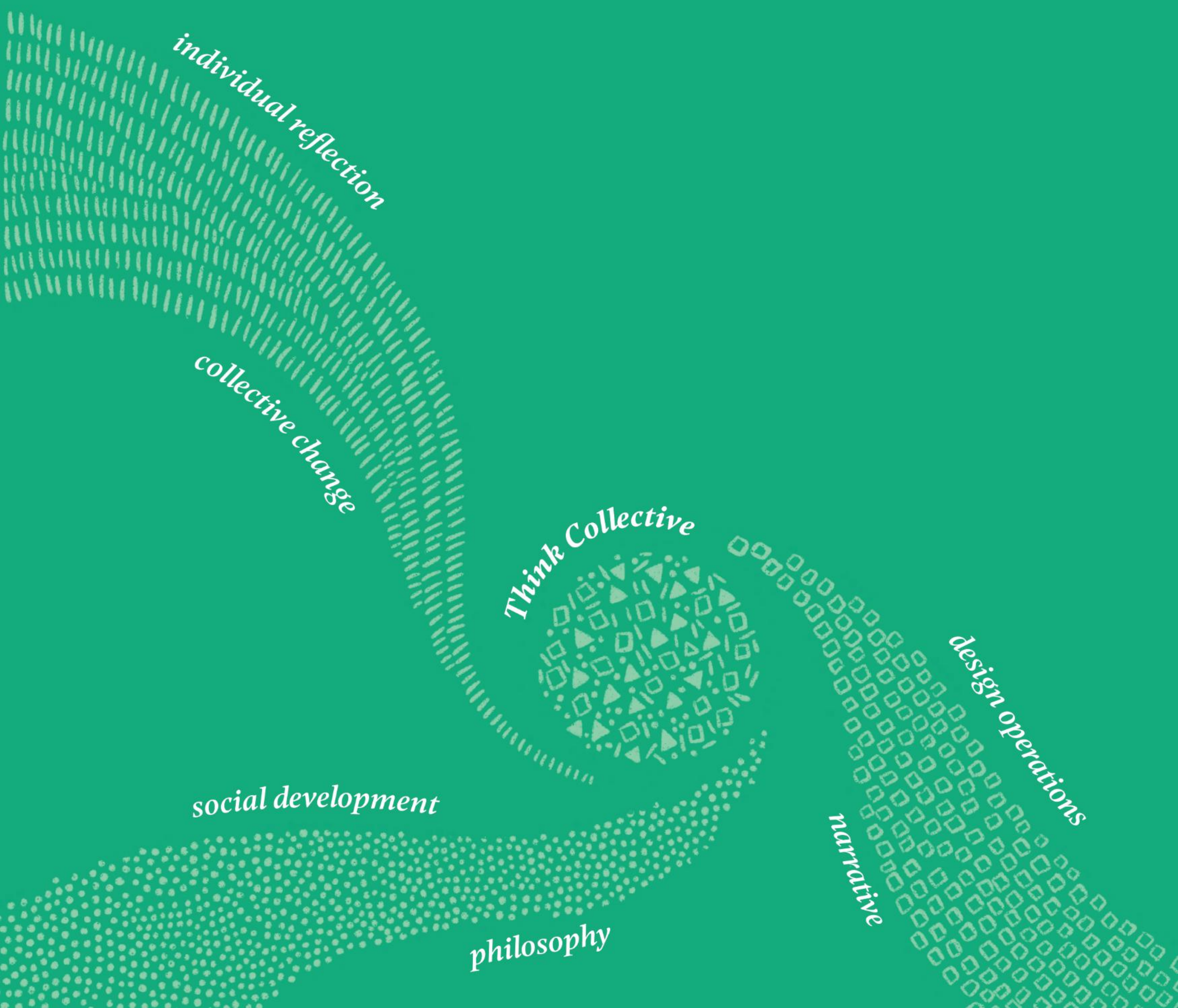
It welcomes thinkers and doers who are questioning the status quo in their own domains to engage with shared inquiries around scale, speed, and sustainability of exponential change, grounded in the ideas of the Think books.

Here, curiosity is welcomed, and practical ideas are explored in relation to lived experiences of the wider systems we are part of. Think Collective is for those who sense that practical changemaking requires deeper ways of thinking together.



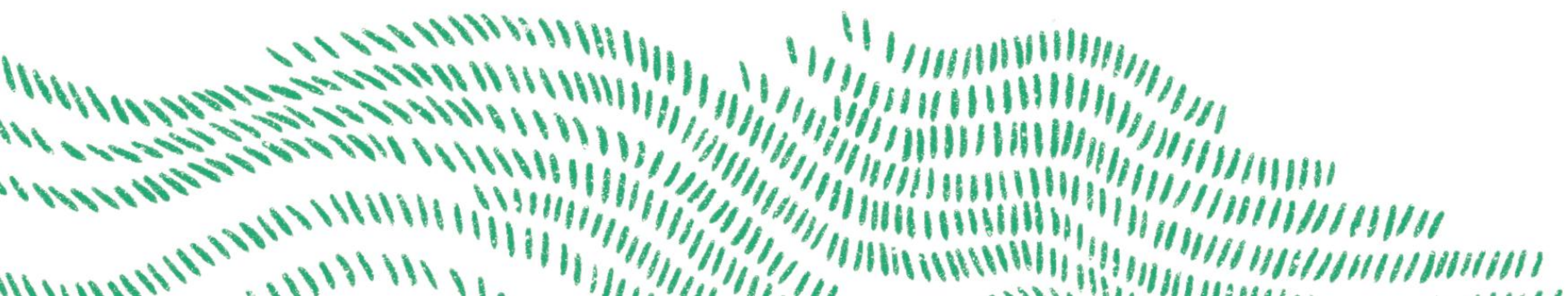
Think Collective exists at a rare intersection of:

- ***philosophy ↔ social development practice***
- ***narrative ↔ design & operations***
- ***individual reflection ↔ collective change***



Think sessions can be useful for you/ your team if...

- *...the scope of the exponential change narrative feels overwhelming, yet you sense its value for the social initiatives you drive*
- *...you have been very busy with day-to-day doing and need a reflective space for strategic ideation*
- *...you feel like the established approach to implementing things is not matching the ambition for the societal change you wish to see*
- *...you believe your team holds untapped collective wisdom that can shape the path forward & want to create opportunities to question the status quo safely and creatively*
- *...you've read or heard about the Think books and are keen to unpack the ideas more deeply in conversation with like-minded colleagues.*



You can do Think sessions with...

- *Your team*
 - *Your closest work friends*
 - *Your existing and/or potential ecosystem partners*
 - *Your funders/your grantees*
 - *Your advisory board*
-

Think sessions are meant to stimulate...

- *Openness to new perspectives*
- *Curiosity to question the familiar & digest the unfamiliar*
- *Collective exploration and shared sensemaking*
- *Reflection & introspection*
- *Alignment of thinking, speaking, and doing*

How did the Think books come into existence?

Over the past eight years, our team has co-traveled with more than 500 change leaders across 30 countries to explore the question: How can we enable social impact at scale, with speed, and in a sustainable way? This exploration led to the curation of knowledge in the format of three Think books — Think Scale, Think Speed, and Think Sustain.

The Think books are an opportunity to flip the lens. To move beyond replicating what works in one context to designing for scale. They can become good companions on your journey to impact at scale.

Contact **Polina** at polina@c4ec.org for any questions related to the *Think* books & Think Collective.

Where to find the Think books?

The Think books are self-published under the Creative Commons License, CC BY SA 4.0 International.

societalthinking.org/books



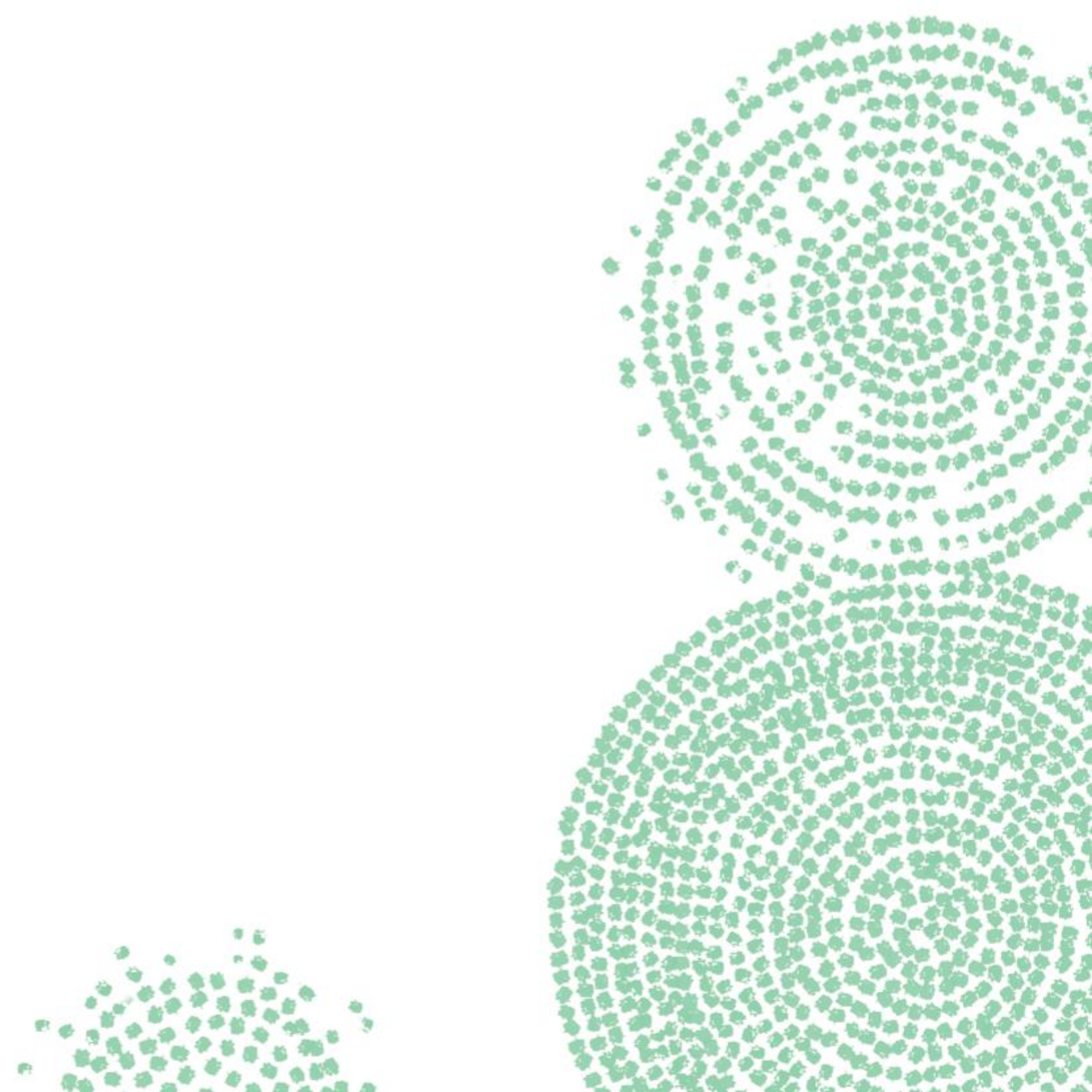
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[Join the Think Collective
WhatsApp community](#)

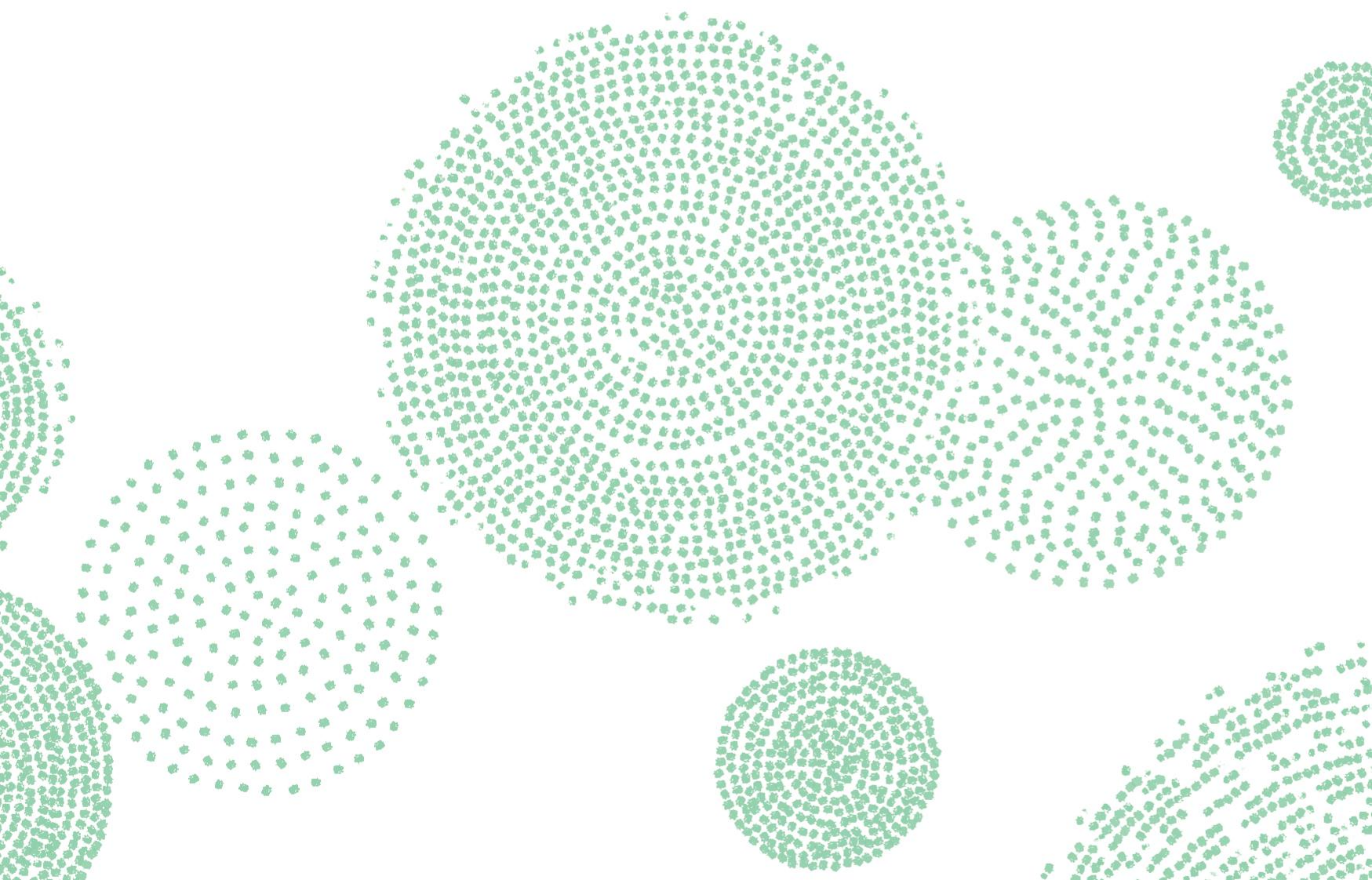
A checklist for hosting a Think Collective session

1. Pick a theme from the Think books that feels timely and slightly provocative for your group.
2. Choose a few chapters or prompts that can open up reflection, ideation, or collective sense-making.
3. Play with the time flow: Are you overstuffing the agenda, or leaving too much empty space? Is there room for people to think and to speak?
4. Gather your tools: In advance, prepare sticky notes, whiteboard, large sheets, Zoom/ Miro links — whatever will help thoughts travel.
5. Decide how you'll hold the thinking: You might want to use a shared board, a note-taker, photos of scribbles, or a living doc everyone can revisit.
6. Warm up the group beforehand: Consider sharing a chapter to read, a question to sit with, or a small challenge to bring into the room prior to the session.
7. Make facilitator notes for yourself: List key questions, moments you want to surface, or tensions you'd like to hold during the conversation.



On the next few pages are four sample session framings you can play with over 1.5–3 hours. Each comes with suggested prompts and provocations from the Think books around a particular theme.

Treat them as scaffolding, not a script — remix the flow, linger where the energy is, and craft a Think Collective session that feels true to your group.



Sample Session Plan 1: An Invitation to Think Scale

Who does this session work well for?

People new to exponential change thinking who want to approach scale with intention, but are still figuring out where to start.

Take it as:

A light, exploratory introduction to the topic.

Facilitator's role:

Induce curiosity, introduce provocations, suggest metaphors, ask questions, hold space for people to express their thoughts and doubts.

Play with these prompts — add to them and make the flow yours:

Scale is not a synonym of growth.

What works, may not work at scale.

Scale design is not an afterthought.

Scale is a journey of mindset shifts.

Complexity lingers, simplicity scales.

Set solutions grow, shared ideas scale.

A sample frame to anchor the conversation:

Let us scale the impact, scale the ideas, but not expect any one organisation to scale to the size of the problem. Such an endeavour becomes an inspiring journey, a connecting fibre, a relentless effort.

Each milestone on the journey to scale leads to a shift in mindset. It requires profound changes in leadership, team, operations and ecosystem.

If we start planning for scale, what shifts would be needed in how we lead, how we build teams, and how we engage our ecosystem?

If scale is not just more of the same — but a new way of thinking, acting, and enabling others — where do we begin & how do we start treating it as a journey and not a destination?

Sample Session Plan 2: Our Network Puzzle

Who does this session work well for?

People who sense that their partner relationships need strengthening; those who see the potential of network weaving around a shared purpose and want clarity on how to begin; and those who recognise that the scale of the challenge exceeds what any one actor can address alone, and are keen to reflect on the principle of distributing the ability to solve.

Take it as:

A reflective imagining exercise focused on those who share our mission, and the strengths we hope to weave together to amplify positive impact.

Facilitator's role:

Lead the brainstorming by unfolding threads around the meaningful others participants are beginning to identify. Invite reflection on the prompts, what they mean in each context, and keep drawing out perceptions of the current and desired network.

Play with these prompts — add to them and make the flow yours:

Agency fuels scale, and vice versa.

Adoption drives further adoption.

Everyone changes at their own pace.

Together we speed, divided we stall.



A sample frame to anchor the conversation:

Building digital infrastructure is about retaining choice — freedoms such that different things are possible. This ensures that solutions are designed by people closest to the context.

Latent leadership potential in communities and networks stays undiscovered. It is the key to unlock the capacity of various actors and innovate by going beyond the belief that the State will solve all problems.

To solve at scale, we have to distribute the ability to solve. However, first, we have to distribute the ability to see.

What is missing from our side in terms of understanding and interpreting our network puzzle?

To what extent do we recognise and engage the meaningful others in the ecosystem as equal contributors to the mission? Do they see us as a central node — and for how long do we wish to play that role?

What are we doing to distribute agency in the ecosystem we are part of — not just deliver value to it? What beliefs or assumptions might be holding us back from letting the ecosystem lead the next phase of scale?

Sample Session Plan 3: Simplicity for Scale

Who does this session work well for?

Those who have a well-developed model that has worked across multiple contexts or geographies, and who are now exploring how it might move to scale while grappling with questions of large-scale implementation and partner or community engagement.

Take it as:

A brainstorming process that surfaces the strengths of the existing model, along with current frictions and those likely to emerge as the scale journey unfolds.

Facilitator's role:

Facilitate the brainstorm and document all inputs visually. Hold the conversation around the core questions, parking additional threads as they arise. Close by inviting the group to collectively outline next steps.

Play with these prompts — add to them and make the flow yours:

Complexity lingers, simplicity scales.

Scale design is not an afterthought.

A sample frame to anchor the conversation:

***Anyone should be able to create or realise value in a few steps.
The more we use a service, the more valuable it should become.***

In the end, creativity isn't just the things we choose to put in, it's the things we choose to leave out. Choose wisely. — Austin Kleon

We must design for the way people behave, not for how we would wish them to behave. — DONALD NORMAN

Looking within...

What part of our model creates the most value for the people we serve? Among the floating priorities, partnerships and in-betweens, what would we absolutely need to retain?

Where do we observe unnecessary complexity in how we operate today?

What do we now have more of, but perhaps less connection to?
What do we wish we had slowed down to understand before scale kicks in?

Looking around...

What assumptions are we making about how people should engage with us — and how do those differ from how they actually do?

What makes it hard for caregivers to take the first step toward engaging? (Is it clarity, confidence, accessibility, time, relevance?)

What would go unnoticed if it disappeared — and what would be immediately missed?



Sample Session Plan 4: Unfolding +1 Thinking

Who does this session work well for?

Practitioners of network weaving and intentional co-creation, interested in strengthening participation across collectives, movements, and impact ecosystems.

Take it as:

An add-on to network weaving conversations, focusing on strengthening partner relationships, noticing how people are positioned within the network, and supporting the restoration of agency in ways that respect real-world constraints.

Facilitator's role:

Unpack the +1 principle and support participants in translating it into their priority focus ((in this case, network weaving is the priority focus but it can be applied to anything else as +1 thinking is a context-independent frame of mind).

Play with these prompts — add to them and make the flow yours:

Change sustains when habits change.

Standards prevail, prescriptions don't.

A sample frame to anchor the conversation:

More often than not, we focus on defining where people should spend their time. It may be more effective to identify where they are spending their time today and nudge that activity in the desired direction.

Change sustains when new routines become commonplace. It is the mundane that lasts and scales, and not the exciting or the thrilling.

The co-creative enterprise is not about “build it and they will come”. Rather, it is about “build it with them, and they’re already there”. – VENKAT RAMASWAMY & FRANCIS GOUILLART

Where are people in our network already spending their time and energy? How can we align our efforts with those existing behaviors instead of trying to redirect them entirely?

What small, everyday actions—if reinforced—could become new habits that anchor long-term change in our context?

In the long-term context, what would it look like for us to always build “with” instead of “for”?

A few facilitator principles to keep close

- **Hold the flow, not the floor**
Keep an eye on time and energy, but don't rush to cut off a thought just because it's unfinished. Sometimes a half-formed idea opens the most interesting doors.
- **Let silence do its work**
If the room goes quiet, resist the urge to fill it. Silence often means people are thinking. Let it breathe.
- **Invite the quieter voices in**
Not everyone jumps in easily. A gentle "Would anyone who hasn't spoken yet like to add something?" can shift the room beautifully.
- **Soften dominant voices, respectfully**
When someone takes up a lot of space, acknowledge their contribution and then widen the circle: "Let's hear from a few others as well."
- **Anchor back to the idea**
When discussions drift into personal debates or strong opinions, gently return to the text or concept: "How does this connect to the idea we're exploring here?"
- **Stay playful and human**
You don't need to be perfect. You're learning alongside the group. Naming uncertainty often makes the space feel safer for everyone.

At its best, facilitation feels like listening with intention, nudging the conversation just enough so the collective intelligence of the room can show up.

What does it mean to hold space?

A Think Collective session isn't a classroom and you're not there to deliver answers. Your role is to hold space — to create the conditions where good thinking can emerge on its own. Think of yourself less as an expert and more as a gardener: you prepare the soil, offer light prompts, and trust that something meaningful will grow.

This means staying tentative rather than definitive. Invite many voices. Stay curious, not conclusive. Let ideas sit next to each other without rushing to resolve them.

