

Prompt #3: There's a lot of talk about spread and scale. We think it's about spreading processes, not scaling products. So what does that mean?

Sarah's Opening Statement:

Spread and scale. Most of us 'social innovator' types use these words. Arguing to funders that investing in innovation methods - be it ethnography, co-design, or prototyping - will be efficient. Because you can figure out what works at a small-scale, and then spread what emerges at a large-scale. Question is: what should we be spreading if we're wanting to prompt systemic change? Should we be spreading the *product* - the new app, the new service, the new network? Or should we be spreading the underlying *principles and process*?

I believe it's the principles & process that prompts change. But, this is a step away from work I did as Co-Lead of the Radical Redesign Team in Australia or as Project Lead at Participle. Where we looked to grow & profit from the solutions we ourselves created. Loops, Family by Family, Weavers, Care Reflect. That meant productizing the solutions. Creating an identity and a brand; specifying each interaction in a blueprint (think: how-to manual); and ultimately creating a new organizational infrastructure with staff to do 'sales' and 'delivery'. But, had we sold the process, what would we have codified?

That's what we're asking right now @ InWithForward as we start work in [Burnaby, British Columbia](#). Where success for us isn't one scaled solution. But multiple prototypes taken forward by local teams - with lots of folks (inside and outside of public systems) mobilized, trained, and taking ownership over explicit and shared outcomes. It's more in the spirit of ['Collective Impact'](#) than ['Lean Start-up'](#) - although there's plenty to learn & apply from the latter.

So, what will be actually *making*? And, what will be *selling*? Products are so much more concrete. When you go to a bakery, you buy the nice looking cupcakes. With the chocolate frosting. If we're not selling the cupcakes, then, are we selling the instructional recipe to make the cupcake? Are we selling the cupcake making tools - the icing pipettes, the baking tins? Are we selling the baking school experience - unfolding in the pastry chef's context? Or are we selling the cooking TV show - for DIY learning in your own context?

Here we're spreading a learning experience and a set of stories as part of our St. Chris Stories project in Toronto.

The challenge, of course, in selling the recipe is that you can follow all of the steps, and still get a pretty lousy result. You might not have any prior reference points. So when the cupcakes aren't rising, you don't know what to do. And if you're missing an ingredient, you can't easily adapt. You don't realize you can make buttermilk with two squeezes of lemon in a cup of whole milk. You see, key to making *things good*, is tacit know-how. It's that extra sense of how to tweak as you go along to get a good result. That's dam hard to communicate in a stand-alone recipe. You're much more likely to learn that through watching your grandmother, through practice, through trying lots of different recipes and seeing what works and what doesn't for yourself.