

Initiators of change

Beloved economies: Imagining a world of work to include love and listening (#117)

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Introduction

Jean 0:11

Hello everybody. I am delighted to bring you Joanna Cea and Jess Rimington. They are co-authors of “Beloved Economies: Transforming How We Work.” Their book has already been shortlisted for Porchlight Business Books of 2022. As soon as I saw the title of the book, Beloved Economies, I wanted to bring them here for you.

Joanna is dedicated to reimagining investment and funding practices to uplift the wellbeing of all. Jess's work focuses on awakening the economic imagination of individuals to step out of business as usual, to foster more just and resilient economies.

Fasten your seat belts, because we're about to take a ride into a future that is only beginning to exist. As you listen to them, think what kind of economy and workplace do I really want to be in? They're here to tell you that a more just and caring society and organizations really are possible.

Hello, everybody. I am beyond excited to bring to you Joanna Cea and Jess Rimington, who have written a marvelous book that invites us to reimagine work and reimagine capitalism. I should add, part of reimagining work is reimagining who gets included in decision making about the work.

Joanna describes herself as dedicated to reimagining investment and funding practices to lift up the wellbeing of all. Jess describes herself -- I love this -- as a leading voice in the next economy movement. When she said next economy movement, I said "You mean there's really people talking about what should be the next economy?" And they said yes. They're going to get into it.

They have the book that they have written, called “Beloved Economies: Transforming How We Work,” which has been shortlisted for the Porchlight 2022 Business Book of the Year award. In other words, the book is heavy duty, gaining recognition. We're more than honored to have the two of you here with us.

Jess 3:04

Thank you. We're so honored to be here.

Joanna 3:07

Thank you, Dr. Jean.

Jean 3:09

Yeah, you've got to call me Jean. And I'm going to call you, Joanna and Jess.

Joanna 3:14

Okay, you got it.

Jean 3:16

Let's tackle this big thing of what is a beloved economy, and then we can back up and find out who you are, and how you got to even care about it. Okay, but let's get our terminology together. What is a beloved economy? Economies, it's plural. Jess?

What are beloved economies?

Jess 3:36

I mean, we used the plural really intentionally on the book cover, because part of what we're trying to do with this book -- and the research and what many of the folks who were involved in co-creating the research behind the book, and then crafting the narrative of the book are trying to do together -- is really expand our collective imagination, to remember and to re-remind ourselves, that there can be more than one model for our economy.

And there's so much about the way US -- particularly the US -- culture and mindset around economy trains us to believe that there's this one type of economy possible, and it's called capitalism and we've tried the other types: socialism, communism, and there was like three options and this is the best one. And there you have it, basically.

And we're really trying what we can to expand the window of imagination, that not only are our economies as plentiful and as diverse in options as those who can dream them up. But also that we might have multiple types of economies even within a nation state boundary, for instance, and we already have multiple economies coexisting within a larger economic context within even the US right now. That's where the plural comes from.

For us, you know, from an activism perspective, we actually make a really explicit choice in this book to never define what a beloved economy is.

Jean 5:22

Okay, I was wondering about that. All right.

Jess 5:25

Because one of the things we feel that the current economic paradigm does that we named the loveless economy in the book -- which in its current manifestation in the US context, and for much of the world is capitalism -- is a particular form of neoliberal extractive capitalism, that economy that loveless economy, does this really particular thing about, kind of top down imposing what an economy can and cannot look like.

We're trying to loosen up that imagination space and allow it to create fertile ground for more and more of us to dream into what our economies can be. That said, it's pretty confusing to do research around a topic when you don't have any definition for it. I'll share what in practice--

Jean 6:19

I want to ask Joanna a question before you continue, okay? Joanna, she said the word "loveless," two or three times, what is a loveless economy?

What is a loveless economy?

Joanna 6:34

I'll speak to that. And I'm also going to come back to one thing about a beloved economy or economies. In the book, we chose to call it the loveless economy, because of how many themes and reflections came up in our qualitative research over the years with enterprises, groups, organizations, who were boldly departing from business as usual in some similar ways which we can speak about, and who often ended up speaking about things that have to do with love, or using the word love itself.

Jean 7:11

Explicitly?

Joanna 7:12

Yes, and we also quote in the book bell hooks, who spoke very powerfully to a lovelessness that was becoming pervasive in our society, a turning away from an ethic of love. And that felt like such a powerful distillation of what was going on.

As we were doing the research, the theme of love and working from an ethic of love, came up in a very robust way, again and again with multiple groups. And the reason we chose to call the current economy that most of us move around in and operate in in the US, the loveless economy, was inspired by writing that bell hooks did on this topic decades ago, actually, in which she spoke about a rising ethic of lovelessness, and a turning away from love, and how our institutions and society and economic interactions function. And it doesn't have to be that way. And we wanted to name and call out the lovelessness of how we operate.

Jean 8:17

I just had a conversation literally yesterday with someone who was accusing me, who was putting what was happening, what I was advocating for. The words were, "This is business, this is not social work," and separate, and I was calling for greater inclusiveness of a group of people in the decision making around something as opposed to centralizing it. This is business.

Jess 8:51

Business within a certain paradigm, right? But doesn't have to be the way business is, and I think one of the things that I think we both really want to make sure we do lift into attention and focus around the term beloved economy that speaks to what you're speaking to as well, is that term is not our own.

That term was granted and bestowed upon the research by Dr. Reverend Virgil Wood, who's a longtime civil rights activist and educator. We had actually been in year six of the research, the qualitative research, when we all met--when Dr. Wood and our research team met--and we were describing this different way of doing business. A way of doing business that prioritized sharing power in different ways, unlike perhaps what the person you were speaking to prioritizes in their business.

And Dr. Wood said, "Well, that sounds like they're creating a beloved economy." We were like, "beloved economy? We've heard of beloved community, but we haven't heard of beloved economy." And, kind of leaned in closer to dialogue with him to understand what he was seeing from the research of if businesses and organizations transform their way of work this direction, and if our economies are made up of businesses and organizations and workers, then what is the

resulting economy or the economy that we're co-creating together as we walk the path of work differently?

The more we were in dialogue together, the more share we felt about that frame together, beloved economy being such a powerful, I guess, inspiration to-- there's something intuitive about it. It feels like there's a disconnect, like how can an economy be beloved, but also there's something we felt at least in those, and the research collaboration felt intuitive too, but we longed for that, whatever that is, there's a part of us that knows what that is.

All of us together with Dr. Wood felt like we wanted to create a lot of spaciousness, and so everyone could define that for themselves. But an economy that feels like love that turns towards the way that life moves and functions, that does share power, that thinks about the prioritization of inclusion.

Jean 11:27

Let's back up. Joanna, do you want to say something?

“This is business, this is not social work”

Joanna 11:31

I wanted to pick up on of your friend saying, "This is business, this is not social work." The whole impetus for Jess and I starting the research, and then carrying it through into the book and campaign and everything it's become, was because we started discovering that enterprises that were operating in this less loveless way, if you will, far more inclusive in who they're bringing together as peers, co-owners, co-leaders, they were being more successful.

And so the book is not about charity. It's not about what you should do, or doing the right thing. It's about a whole group of 60 enterprises that were exceptionally successful in ways that are measured by our current economy; financial success, quality products, retention, etc. And whose teams and communities and stakeholders and clients were describing these whole other kinds of success around purpose and meaning and connection and even joy. And doing a sense making process together to say what's happening.

So that with these enterprises, when they do cast the net wider and bring a far more diverse people around -- group of people around the table as peers -- how is it that they're being successful? Because a lot of folks try that and maybe aren't always successful, right? It's not automatic.

Jean 13:00

It even creates chaos.

Joanna 13:02

Exactly. What is it that these groups are doing that's channeling a power of that into simply being more successful? The reason this book is a business book, and we were so honored to be shortlisted for that award is, it's about business. It's about just being more successful.

Jean 13:22

We got tantalized enough about how this thing might work that we want to understand it. But first, let's understand you. Can you each say something about your backgrounds? And what got you from wherever you were to here? Jess?

Writers' backgrounds

Jess 13:50

Sure. Yeah, I think for myself grew up in both a small business and also a working-class family. Where I saw some of the negative impacts of the current economic system come to bear on my immediate family and just education access.

What opportunities were available for work with the limited education that my parents had been able to access and then simultaneously saw the really brilliant ways that they were running their small businesses to survive and kind of had a number of gigs that they were patching together, what we would call gigs now in the gig economy context, and how there was this real prioritization of relationship and community within that.

And then I went on to my own education and saw a really different way of doing business being taught that maybe was professional but didn't really model some of the values of resiliency and survival that I saw be really effective where I came from.

Got involved in economic justice organizing for a number of reasons, and then saw that some of the organizations and impact first businesses maybe talked a good game, but their internal operations, at the same time, didn't model that externally espoused mission, which wasn't necessarily anyone's fault, because it's hard to pull from those tools.

There's not a playbook, people are taught to just copy and paste from an MBA program. But those MBA programs are designed to create workers and leaders to continue extractive practices within an extractive economy to work and do business in a particular way.

I just became obsessed with this idea of, what does it look like as someone who is pro-business that saw small business do amazing things for my community and family, and even just transform people solely into the individual humans they wanted to become, and learn leadership skills through work together, through collaboration together? As someone who's pro that kind of business, what does business look like outside of capitalism?

Jean 16:27

That's a great question. Let's stop right there. Joanna, how did you get from there to here to this book?

Joanna 16:36

Great question. Well, I guess my answer changes sometimes, but I'll start not too far back. I grew up in a family with international roots and was very interested in how the US fits into what's happening around the world economically. And starting--

Jean 17:02

International roots, can you be a little more concrete.

Joanna 17:05

My dad's family is originally from Poland and Lithuania, but three generations in South Africa, and then he, his parents, and siblings and everyone emigrated to the US right before I was born, or as I was growing up. And my mom's family is originally from Ireland but been in the US many generations.

And I grew up with stories of apartheid South Africa, and that side of the family's awakening, of questioning it. And I think I grew up with an interest of how systems and injustices happening in our country were linked to what's happening around the world.

And the work I had the opportunity to do for the first like 10 years coming out of college was doing policy advocacy to push big financial institutions, like the World Bank, to operate in ways that were more accountable to the people they're supposed to benefit. So rather than pushing through big "development project" that benefits industries in the US, what does it look like if that development project actually supports the aspirations of local folks on the ground?

And I learned so much from peers and activists around the world in that work. And I became more and more frustrated and troubled by how it is that their plans and visions and very sophisticated ideas for development couldn't be heard by the systems and powers that be.

Jean 18:53

You said their plans, you mean the communities?

Joanna 18:55

Community plans. For example, in a farming region in Bangladesh, a whole plan for how to strengthen smallholder farms and water quality and access to education and whatever. But the official plan that gets rammed through is to turn that whole agricultural area into an open pit coal mine and export coal.

Jean 19:15

Wow.

Joanna 19:17

That happens all the time. And even more nuanced versions of that of one large scale gold mine gets pushed through for Mongolia. And maybe communities weren't totally anti-mining, but their recommendations for where things were sited were completely ignored. And the mine ends up getting sited on top of the most important spring that people use year-round.

There are injustices that have happened in the US that continue to happen globally. And many people are doing the work to stop those injustices. But I became obsessed with like, what is happening in the first place that all these people's designs and ideas for what development means to them aren't even getting on the table? Like, what is it about our current system?

It led me to be really curious about the design piece, and how we change who is at the table for coming up with plans. And to look at that, not just from a social justice lens. But to go back to my business point earlier, I saw case after case of how ignoring those ideas ended up having a really negative bottom line impact eventually worth like millions of dollars.

And that if they had been able to hear as peers, like, why don't you think that person is equally brilliant? If you can't hear their idea, it limits the effectiveness and success of what you're building together. To me the research that led to this book started with an exploration of hold on, could there be a business case for operating in a way that is far more inclusive and whole? And seeing across great difference as peers with care and respect? Could there be a business case for that?

Jess and I went in with that as a legitimate question, not a foregone conclusion, and looking at what happens if we innovate out of loveless ways of work?

Jean 21:37

Let me just summarize what I'm hearing about your two backgrounds. It's very similar, even though the platform is different, or the scope is different. Jess is observing, growing up in a family seeing businesses run through relationships, through caring, through sharing.

And then goes into, I want to say, small town girl goes into big city, and sees all this anonymous, we're about the facts and the figures. And, where the people just get left out. And she says, "Wait a minute, I know it can work because I saw it with my own eyes." That's Jess.

Then Joanna goes and starts off with an international perspective, a perspective of multiple ways of being and multiple norms, because your family comes from different places, and you've lived in whole different places. You grew up seeing these different cultures.

Then you started saying, "But wait a minute." And then you got into a situation where you saw community voices are omitted from decision making. And you said, "Well, wait a minute." And so the two of you came together around the same "Wait a minute" question. "Isn't there another way where we can still have results? We could still have economic results, we can still have economic progress. But it includes people rather than excludes people?"

Jess 23:15

Thank you for that. I feel great.

Jean 23:20

Is that accurate?

Jess 23:23

It is yeah. In a way that feels therapeutic Thank you.

Joanna 23:30

No wonder we collaborated, Jess.

Jean 23:33

Your backgrounds ostensibly are different, but you're really the same. You see what can work and you see what's missing. Joanna, you didn't see it working. But you saw the effects when community, love, caring, a broader set of voices were not included.

You all may have heard this old, long, long ago thing about a corporation's decision makers. They were trying to name a new car, and they came up with the term Nova. They were all white men. And the one Latina female secretary in the room said, "Wait a minute. Nova means 'does not go,' you'll never sell that car in Mexico." Had she had not been in the room and had the courage to speak up, they would have lost the millions of dollars that you and Joanna we're talking about. That's my example of what you were talking about.

Jess 24:43

That's a great example.

Seven practices

Jean 24:44

Okay. How to do it. You have seven practices. I'd like you to each take one or two of the practices or summarize what the practices are and explain it. Maybe do you have a case that you can talk it through?

Joanna 25:12

Sure. I love that your question Jean goes to how to do it. Because Jess and I described that when we met. I think we -- you -- zoomed in on it in your summary, but we did really recognize something kindred in each other. And this focus and interest on the how, and how you're doing it.

Our research actually didn't start out examining the how, we just had this bigger question of what happens when enterprises do innovate beyond harmful dreaming, loveless ways of work, what happens? And we started looking to see where there were -- we call it bright spots -- of groups who were operating in far more inclusive power sharing, different kinds of norm breaking ways and being really successful.

We were industry-agnostic. I mean, we looked at everything from tech startups to disaster recovery programs to urban planning firms to cardiology department to youth groups, it was all over the map. But the commonality was groups had departed from business as usual ways of operating in significant ways in their field, and were achieving forms of success that were really celebrated by those involved and peers.

And as we were talking to those groups, we started to realize, wait a minute, everyone's yes, doing very different things in their day to day, right, if you're a nurse at a cardiology department, or coding in a tech company, but beyond the activity, there's a deeper pattern in how folks are working.

We ended up doing a participatory research process with groups and what we began to call our co-learning community with these bright spot enterprises to unpack and sense make together, what is it that they're all doing that is in common? Through rounds of iterating and distilling that we got to these seven practices. I'll list them and then I'll just give one example. Should I do that?

Jean 27:28

Wait a minute, I want to just make sure people can follow what you just said, you were having the question of how are these groups being successful, including a lot of voices, including a lot of people? And you did your research, you used the word participatory, in other words, you involved

people in participating in the research. The question was, what do these groups have in common that they're achieving this success by including a lot of folks?

Joanna 27:58

Exactly.

Jess 27:59

And also, do they? First was, do they?

Jean 28:02

Okay, that's great. Yes, do they, because a lot of people think you need to narrow the scope of the parties involved in the decision for greater efficiency. And that including all those voices is the chaos that I had mentioned. Okay, so that's cool.

Jess 28:19

It wasn't just about number of voices too, it was about just the act of sharing power itself. So there wasn't like a quantity prioritization of like this group is doing this better, because they have 1000 people included versus this group that are doing 10, just to clarify.

The sample size of folks included a wide range of those proven you could do this at scale, to folks just, you know, a smaller company that changed the dynamic and moved beyond the worker manager paradigm.

Joanna 28:50

I'm going to list the practices and I'll do one or two cases here to illustrate them. But in no particular order, the practices are shared decision-making power, prioritize relationships, reckon with history, seek difference, source from multiple ways of knowing, trust there is time, and prototype early and often.

What do these mean in practice? I'll give one example from our co-learning community. One of the groups, Concordia, they are New Orleans based, an architecture and community planning firm. And one of the oldest stories we've looked at in our process is from work they did immediately after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

The context there was right after the disaster there were two attempts to come up with a recovery plan that was approved by the whole city, which needed approval to unlock urgently needed federal recovery funds, to quite expensive top down efforts by top planning firms, each just ignited kind of a

firestorm of criticism and couldn't get approval because so many groups and people in the community felt like this wasn't actually responsive to what was needed.

Concordia offered to facilitate an alternative approach and it kind of stepped up and organized it, and with less money and in less time engaged over 9000 residents, including folks in diaspora in substantive design roles. And that project, finally, is what unlocked the funds.

And we all know that what actually happened afterward is imperfect and everything. It's a very complicated situation, but at least it got funds rolling. And it forged new relationships and ways of working which a lot of folks have continued to value.

Seek difference. I know all of us here in this virtual room care a lot about diversity, equity, and inclusion. And that is a very strong factor of all the groups in our co-learning community. And they often take things a whole step further than what's often done in each of their fields really being courageous in who they bring to the table, and not just convening lots of differences and lived experience and background and identity. But making sure the process is one that welcomes and makes everyone feel safe and able to share the brilliance they have.

Why this requires courage

Jean 32:10

Wait a minute. You said being courageous, explain why that requires courage.

Joanna 32:18

Sure, you know, what can I-- oh, go ahead, Jess.

Jess 32:22

Being courageous to take the time needed to make sure everyone in the room is able to participate, being courageous in how budget allocation happens. In order for Concordia to really make sure that there was ability to have as many diverse voices, as much types of diversity around the table as possible, this means thinking about things like, are we going to have childcare on site for the meeting? What time is the meeting? Are we paying stipends sometimes for participation? How do we think about how the agenda is structured?

Sometimes you'll be working, as we all know, in business as usual, and to allocate budget in certain ways to take time to even talk about how do we have diversity, equity, and inclusion in a way that's not tokenism, in a way that there's actually channels for voices to lead to decision making authority, not just presence in the room, can be put under the rug as like a fluffy, nice to have. It takes courage to be like, "No, this is essential. It's not just about tokenism, it's essential to make sure we're actually in shared power together."

Jean 33:43

What you're saying is, if I am in charge, and I just rely on me and my trusted little few people, then I am deceiving myself into believing I have control of the outcomes. And so it takes courage to recognize I don't and to expand beyond that, and include other voices and provide the mechanisms for them to actually participate.

Jess 34:08

And to decide that, for the power to move differently in that room too. I think that and also courage to push back on the norms, often there'll be one person that actually may agree with us in this virtual room but has to advocate within a system that isn't designed for everyone to be around the table.

Joanna 34:37

And I think about, like one of the groups in the co-learning community is a program called 10 Squared that serves factories around the world that have really entrenched problems with occupational health and safety. And they bring this 100 Day innovation program to solve those problems and they have this amazing record of solving problems that have gone unsolved for years. And they finally come up with a solution.

And at the core of how 10 Squared works is they form a 10-person design team of five manager level folks and five factory floor level worker participants, and the stories they have of the courage that takes on all sides. Like sometimes people getting yelled at, like they can't be in the room with you or,

Jean 35:27

Really?

Joanna 35:27

Yes, or even like some of the healthcare cases of research that puts researchers, doctors, and patients on level ground. It takes courage to call for it, it takes courage for everyone to show up and do that. I think we don't realize in business as usual how much we're siloed, and how much we devalue certain forms of expertise. And that's a huge part of what our book is about. And so, we want to recognize really seeking difference is a courageous act.

Jean 36:06

Okay. Jess. Another practice, this is -- my heart is literally starting to pound. This is exciting stuff. Because it's so contrary to what many people think is good business and good leadership.

Jess 36:24

Totally. And yet, so in alignment with how the rest of life works. Isn't it amazing if a town center, like a community group that we worked with quite a bit in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, had this river running through town that had been really polluted over time, but that could be a huge potential source of recreation and commerce?

And over time was becoming a hub of more local recreation activity from kayaking to summer events that were happening around the river side, and really thinking about within the decision-making structure of how that community foundation was prioritizing resources, what were they learning and their human interaction with that river of its priority and possibility for a rebirth of commerce of that town? What could that river provide that was different than what it was providing to the paper mill?

All about balance

Joanna 42:01

This practice is a great one in which to point out something we emphasize throughout the book, which is the practices are about balance. A number of the co-learners point out in our chapter about source from all ways of knowing this does not mean throwing out technical knowledge.

It doesn't mean like, one of the co-learners, Brookling Gatewood from a group called the Emergence Collective mentions, she's seen groups swing so far from "Oh, we were over prioritizing the written word" to stop documenting meetings, and then you have a lack of accountability, transparency, and documentation.

No one is saying we don't want the quantitative data from the experts. It's about enriching the field of information and bringing more things in. And the practice really tries to offer this in a -- the chapter in the book presents this practice in a way that gives any of us a starting point, because a lot of folks in current US may have never had the opportunity to listen to a river or learn from a river as Jess is saying, but there's plenty of data in Harvard Business Review that when teams of people spend time in outdoor settings, new kinds of innovation and brain pathways are sparked.

You could do things as simple as let's start our business retreat outside, or more and more groups, even in business as usual, are bringing in meditation or bringing in -- So it's just about what are ways we can operate that help expand the kinds of knowledge and insight coming in, that can move us toward the most successful outcomes.

Jean 43:44

Let's go beyond traditional sources of knowledge, traditional expertise. And nature is a right field for that. And there are people, people that we would not normally turn to, but who are affected by this. They are another rich source.

Joanna 44:06

Yep, and bodies info from movements and somatic work that bring that. The chapter mentions a bunch of things, but it calls to attention, we might not realize in the loveless economy, how many channels of information are actively shut down. This is just about reopening those, bringing those in as also legitimate sources of ideas and inspiration in business.

What works besides capitalism?

Jean 44:34

I want to ask this question, and I'm looking at the time. We've only covered two practices. There are five more to go and readers can get your book and learn the others. My question is, what is there besides capitalism that you say works? You say there are a lot of other economies, point to even one of them.

Jess 45:02

Well, we're going to answer your question with posing more questions for the audience. What we're really trying to advocate here is economic imagination, and to try to get us to ask that question less actually, because that is how capitalism continues to win capitalism.

If capitalism is personified here, let's just make it personified for the sake of this dialogue, capitalism's, like, "You show me what works better than me. And I'm going to make it so hard to have practice and imagination of an alternative that it's going to feel like stepping out of capitalism is equivalent to death. It's going to feel like you're going to lose your livelihood, there's going to be like food lines, it's going to be a scarcity, nothing will work. There will be this authoritarian..." All these images and propaganda we've been shown.

And that the only alternatives are these other "isms" that have been floated around and used in sort of pseudo political context. And what we're more interested in is, if we make the path by walking it, then what happens if we just start to walk out of what isn't working? What happens if we just start to choose work practices that are not extractive and stop becoming so obsessed with or feeling as though we have to prove to who?

Who is this person we keep trying to prove to? Who is this body that needs the evidence that this other ism or set of isms has to exist, and we have to full scale the solution first, to just start walking out? So if we change our work practices, if we change how we move as workers, we change how we move as consumers, we change how we move as business leaders and managers and organizations and businesses, we will start to find ourselves like many of the groups and companies that we're in touch with starting to operate with one foot out of the system, and where they end up when they have both feet out, we don't know, we're not purporting to know.

Jean 47:09

What you're talking about the alternatives does not yet have a name. That's how I'm translating what you're saying.

Jess 47:18

I think we don't yet know what these systems fully look like.

Jean 47:22

Okay. They haven't been defined. Therefore, they don't have a name. And the challenge you're offering all of us is to walk it and see what evolves.

Jess 47:36

And probably focus less on the naming and taxonomy since that's --

Jean 47:41

We would need some meaning making machines.

Jess 47:45

Can we start to feel it before we name it?

Jean 47:48

Yeah, that's one way of being. And that'll work for those who have that capacity. I literally know someone who does not have empathy, that cannot feel it, they have to think it.

So not everybody-- feeling is one way of knowing. So we have to have something that works for people who have different ways of knowing for them to understand it. And so I'm talking to the thinking, not to the feeling people, who don't get what you're saying is right now, do the practice, observe and see what evolves.

Jess 48:30

And see what new thoughts you have too, and the only reason I mentioned feeling is just the current system over-prioritizes rational pendulum swing. But you know, that exists in an equity with the need to think out of the system too, and see where we end up.

Jean 48:52

Joanna, you want to add to that?

Joanna 48:54

I know we just have one minute here. I think that one of the hallmarks across the work of where groups end up when they, we call it, "deconsolidate rights to design" they end up sharing power to design and own and lead. We know our current system has a real wealth inequity problem. We expose in the book that also along with wealth, we accumulate power to decide and design.

A beloved economy distributes that power to design our future and our business and our life. And that often means wealth is like, as Jess said, still pro-business, still generating wealth, but looking at different ways that that can be shared, and not assuming there's only one thing that's been tried for what shared wealth looks like. But what does it look like to prioritize different kinds of ownership, different kinds of leadership, prioritizing care and not just maximization of financial growth at all costs, and that it can be legitimate to make those choices and that, in fact, sometimes even more successful.

Jean 50:09

Okay. I want to thank both of you, Jess, and Joanna, for being here. For inviting us to think outside of our traditional little boxes of hierarchy and authority. I want to encourage everybody to get your book, please tell people how to reach you and how to find your book.

Joanna 50:39

Sure, you can buy our book, wherever you like to buy books, Beloved Economies: Transforming How We Work. And you can learn more about the research and whole initiative behind it at belovedeconomies.org.

Jean 50:53

Thank you.

Jess 50:54

Thank you. Thanks, Jean.

Joanna 50:56

Thank you so much, Jean.

Jean 50:59

My main takeaway is that it really is possible for organizations and communities to set up structures where decision making is shared, and the wellbeing of people is considered, along with profits and efficiencies. We don't have to choose.

Their book gives actual case studies, where innovative leaders had the courage to suspend their deeper tight control, and instead to involve whole communities or groups of people in decision making. And the result has been better than anyone anticipated.

Listening to them, I couldn't help but think of some of the diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives that I've known about. In the conversation today, none of us even used the vocabulary of DEI, because those concepts are automatically embedded in the work.

If you're figuring out a way to involve a whole community in decision making, as leaders did in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, then by definition, you're talking about diversity, inclusion, and equity.

As Joanna and Jess said, it takes courage to try, and that's what I wish for you and for all of us. The courage to envision a world that works for all of us, and the courage to try out different ways of working so it might actually happen.

You can learn more about me and my work at leadingconsciously.com. And you can get involved with the program I personally developed, Pathfinders: Leadership for Inclusion and Equity. Membership is limited, but there is a new session starting every two months. Use the link in the description below for details. Thank you for listening. And until next time, let's create the world we want to live in.



Jess Rimington is a next-economy practitioner, scholar and activist. With two decades of experience as a small-business practitioner and inclusive-economy strategist, she advises organizations and businesses in efforts to transform their work practices to be in alignment with social justice. Jess's work focuses on awakening the economic imagination of individuals and groups to step out of business as usual and into more just and resilient economies, one practical step at a time.

Her practice is informed by her experience leading three nonprofit organizations, place-based activism for economic justice, advising philanthropy and directing capital toward enterprises and groups building an inclusive economy, and running a small consultancy business. In her roles as an Executive Director and Managing Director, Jess built cross-cultural, global staff teams with innovative work cultures rooted in post-capitalism.

She served as a visiting scholar at Stanford University's Global Projects Center and co-director of the Beloved Economies research initiative, learning alongside more than sixty organizations and companies that were boldly breaking out of business as usual and generating forms of success that audaciously prioritized well-being, meaning, connection, and resilience. Based on this research, Jess co-authored [Beloved Economies: Transforming How We Work](#) (Aug 2022) which was shortlisted for the 2022 Porchlight Business Book Awards.

Jess is co-founder of the Futuring Collective which supports business leaders and culture-makers to build wildly imaginative futures rooted in well-being for all. Jess is also an Executive Producer of the scripted, speculative fiction podcast [The Light Ahead](#).

Jess is driven by her belief that our collective liberation is inextricably bound with one another.



Joanna Levitt Cea is an advocate, researcher and facilitator for funding and economic practices that lift up the well-being of all.

She is the co-author of the collaborative book, *Beloved Economies: Transforming how we work*, which was shortlisted for the Porchlight 2022 Business Book of the Year award, and co-director of the 2019-2023 Beloved Economies research and narrative-change initiative.

In 2015-2019, as the founding director of the Buen Vivir Fund at Thousand Currents, Joanna facilitated a co-design process with grassroots organizations from Latin America, Asia and Africa and progressive investors to create a groundbreaking model for investment based in grassroots practices for building community wealth, well-being, and power.

From 2006-2014, Joanna served as Executive Director of International Accountability Project (). Under her IAP leadership, IAP won precedent-setting policies for ensuring citizen participation and human rights safeguards at global financial institutions including the World Bank, International Finance Corporation, and Asian Development Bank.

Prior to joining IAP, Joanna worked as a Fulbright Scholar in Ecuador with the Centro de Derechos Económicos y Sociales, and as a John Gardner Fellow with the Center for International Environmental Law, in Washington D.C. She is a Board member of International Accountability Project and a member of the Kaulele Advisory Committee with INPEACE, the Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture.

Joanna holds a BA from Stanford University.