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Scaling Out, Scaling Up, Scaling Deep*

Strategies of Non-profits in Advancing Systemic Social Innovation

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To effect large system change, “niche” or local-level innovations must span spatial and institutional scales to achieve broader systemic impact. Leaders of social innovation, in particular those who work in non-profit organizations and funders of non-profit and civil society organizations, are increasingly concerned with scaling the positive impact of their investments.

This study examines the case of the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and the implementation of a deliberate strategy, named the Applied Dissemination initiative, to build grantee capacity and to accelerate their initiatives to achieve systemic change. One part of the strategy involved an “educational intervention”, where leaders of more than a dozen national-level initiatives in Canada convened regularly over a period of several years to learn from each other’s efforts to achieve scale. The group was successful not only in their efforts to scale for positive impact on their respective issue areas, but also in catalyzing a field of practice in Canada with a growing expertise in scaling innovation for systemic change. The findings show the success of six different strategies that may be adopted to scale innovation on the pathway to large-scale or systemic impact, which cut across three different types of “scaling”: scaling out, scaling up, and scaling deep.

- Social innovation
- Scaling
- Impact
- Transitions studies
- Scaling strategies

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HOW CAN BRILLIANT, BUT ISOLATED experiments aimed at solving the world's most pressing and complex social and ecological problems become more widely adopted and achieve transformative impact? Leaders of large systems change and social innovation initiatives often struggle to increase their impact on systems, and funders of such change in the non-profit sector are increasingly concerned with the scale and positive impact of their investments. As Bradach and Grindle (2014, p. 7) state, the catchphrase 'scaling what works' has become 'a rallying cry to direct more funding to interventions that actually get results'. But questions remain about how funders and social change leaders can work together to have an impact across scales and what 'scale' or 'scaling' actually involves.

In this article, we argue that the process of scaling social innovations to achieve systemic impacts involves three different types of scaling—scaling out, scaling up, and scaling deep—and large systems change (LSC) is likely to require a combination of these types. Although large systems change processes in any complex problem domain will be emergent, we found that certain strategies are associated with each type of scaling process. This argument is based on experiences from social innovation experiments conducted by charitable organisations and funded by the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, over more than a decade in Canada.

To clarify terminology, we define social innovation as 'any initiative, product, programme, platform or design that challenges, and over time changes, the defining routines, resource and authority flows, or beliefs of the social system in which the innovation occurs' (Westley and Antadze, 2010). We believe social innovation is required to create large systems change.

This paper first examines the literature on management strategies for scaling the process of social change. In particular, we focus on the scholarly fields of strategic niche management (SNM) and social innovation and discuss the challenge of applying existing ideas for scaling from these fields to large systems change. Next, we describe the methods of this study and our case study of the J.W. McConnell Foundation and their grantees, as they collectively set out to learn how to scale the impacts of initiatives to achieve broader systems change. Following that, we present the study results, describing six strategies employed by these systems-change leaders.

Literature review

With the growing interest in scaling, questions arise about how leaders of social change initiatives may achieve scale, and thus, affect large systems change. Two bodies of literature have sought to address such questions: strategic niche management and the broader literature on social innovation.

Strategic niche management (SNM) is a sub-field of transitions studies that emerged in the 1990s (see Rip and Kemp, 1998). The conceptual logic on which SNM hinges, is that organisations interested in supporting the development

of innovations must work to create innovation ‘niches’ (Kemp *et al.*, 1998, Verbon *et al.*, 2010, Hegger *et al.*, 2007). These niches are understood as ‘safe’ spaces—places that are protected from the daily operational concerns of the organisation, even though the work being undertaken may not yet be profitable, or even feasible (van der Laak *et al.*, 2007; Schot and Geels, 2008; Smith and Raven, 2012). This strand of research primarily focuses on socio-technical transitions—the pathways involved in new technological adoption, and their role in breaking institutional lock-in within a given ‘regime’, which refers to the reinforcing social, economic, cultural and technological systems in a given organisational field (Geels and Schot, 2007).

SNM scholars have devoted considerable effort to understanding how to create a ‘niche’ that is safe and have provided detailed understanding about the mechanisms of shielding, nurturing, and empowering (Smith and Raven, 2012). Secondly, consideration has been given to the types of organisations that are able to generate an innovation within that ‘niche’ (Caniëls and Romijn, 2008), which is understood to involve organisational capacities to articulate expectations and a vision, build social networks to create support for a new technology, and facilitate learning processes within and among niches (Schot and Geels, 2008). However, due to the overt focus on the management of technological niches, questions remain about how or whether these mechanisms and capacities apply beyond the technological, to the scaling of *social* innovations. Despite this, multi-dimensional systems change has been widely recognised as necessary to address some of our most complex social and ecological challenges (Folke *et al.*, 2011), and thus, cultivation of innovation in technological niches alone will be insufficient.

Later work in transitions studies builds on a framework to address how niche innovations interact with different scales, known as the multi-level perspective (MLP). The MLP depicts three scales or levels to consider when managing an innovation or transition for system-wide change—niche, regime, and an exogenous landscape depicting the broader environment and accrued social trends (Geels, 2002). Van den Bosch and Rotmans (2008) describe the mechanisms by which transition experiments can successfully contribute to transitions, including: deepening (described as learning about culture, norms, values), broadening (repeating an experiment in different niche contexts), and scaling up (embedding a transition experiment into dominant thinking within a niche or regime). However, efforts to explain when or how an innovative initiative moves across scales have been much more limited, as have analyses of the deliberate scaling strategies involved, beyond nurturing smaller-scale niche technologies until they are ready to compete with the dominant technology in a regime. Two studies have illustrated that knowledge translation and the process of ‘anchoring’ or linking are important mechanisms for connecting the niche to the regime level (Smith and Raven, 2012; Elzen *et al.*, 2012, respectively). But overall, analysis of the processes or agency required to impact the broader system or regime are underdeveloped in SNM and transition studies, despite the fact that large systems change likely involves all three scales. Moreover, further explanation is needed to describe the multiple paths leaders may take to link across scales, and the strategies that may generate large systems change beyond new technology adoption.

Beyond the SNM literature and transitions studies, scholarship in social innovation and social enterprise has focused on the strategic agency required to move ideas from one context to a larger scale (Bradach, 2010; Evans and Clarke, 2011; McPhedran *et al.*, 2011; Mulgan *et al.*, 2008). From a social innovation perspective, large-scale change will necessarily involve changes to rules, resource flows, cultural beliefs and relationships in a social system at multiple spatial or institutional scales. However, in social entrepreneurship and social enterprise studies, the emphasis on ‘scaling for impact’ reflects a product and consumer orientation, synonymous with diffusion or replication of a programme, product, or organisational model in multiple geographic locations and contexts to maximise the number of people that a social innovation reaches (Dees *et al.*, 2004; Wei-skillern and Anderson, 2003; Mulgan *et al.*, 2008). Even authors who recognise that transformative social innovation will require more than just replicating a programme (e.g. Bradach and Grindle, 2014; Ross, 2014), tend to emphasise diffusion. However, scaling social innovations to effect large-scale change will necessarily involve a more complex and diverse process than simply ‘diffusing’ a product or model. Therefore, we contend that empirical investigations of deliberate strategies that social innovators use when attempting to create systemic change are also needed—in particular ones that go beyond a focus on geographic and numeric dissemination of a product or service, to impact social systems or institutions.

Westley *et al.* (2014) characterised the dynamics and pathways of scaling in cases of social innovation by describing five unique pathways to advance systemic change. They differentiate between two kinds of scaling: ‘scaling out’, where an organisation attempts to affect more people and cover a larger geographic area through replication and diffusion, and ‘scaling up’, where an organisation aims to affect everybody who is in need of the social innovation they offer, or to aims to address the broader institutional or systemic roots of a problem (Westley *et al.* 2014). Our research builds on the distinction between scaling out and scaling up, adding new insights by describing associated strategies, and adding the further distinction of ‘scaling deep’ to create a typology of three approaches to scaling. In so doing, we contribute new research and theoretical perspectives that address gaps in the SNM and social innovation literatures. Moreover, our typology underscores the complexities and complementary nature of the strategies involved in advancing large systems change, opening up new avenues for research on how different scaling strategies relate to one another, and illuminating the role of funders and conveners in amplifying the system-wide impacts of social change initiatives.

Case study and methods

This case study involves a group of grantees in Canada, funded by the Montreal-based J.W. McConnell Family Foundation (herein referred to as McConnell Foundation), who sought greater systemic impact through social innovation. In 1998, the McConnell Foundation began pursuing a deliberate strategy for

moving beyond discrete project-based funding, in order to enable broader impact by their grantees. The strategy was called **Applied Dissemination (AD)** and supported social innovators in disseminating new programmes, processes, skills or knowledge in their work with communities and organisations, and to apply or adapt innovations in different settings (Pearson, 2006). As one part of the AD strategy, the McConnell Foundation hosted a community of practice, convening diverse grantees to learn from one another, to integrate concepts of systems change into their practice, and to accelerate the impacts of funded innovations.

Organisations were awarded AD grants after an in-depth review. Selection criteria included showing: a deliberate strategy, demonstrable demand (McConnell Foundation, 1998), and completed evaluations that showed impact and distilled the ‘minimum specifications’ (Zimmerman, 1998) or variable and fixed elements of an innovation. From 2002 until 2007, the McConnell Foundation formally convened annual meetings with this AD learning group, and many participants continued in peer-support roles beyond this period. Organisations had diverse social change missions, governance and organisational structures and strategies, but shared a focus on scaling their work. Participating organisations included Caledon Institute of Social Policy, Child Development Institute, Tamarack, PLAN, L’Arche Canada, JUMP, L’Abri en Ville, Community Health and Social Services Network, Roots of Empathy, Santropol Roulant, Meal Exchange, and Engineers without Borders. Note that several of the same organisations also participated in the Westley *et al.* (2014) pathways study on social innovation, in which additional case data and organisational descriptions are provided. At the learning group, participants shared experiences and dilemmas, and learned from experts about topics including scaling, developmental evaluation, social marketing, complexity theory, and policy advocacy. Although some efforts did not succeed, almost 17 years later, many participants from the AD learning group have scaled their initiatives through a variety of means: by reorienting their mission to address root systemic issues; by spreading geographically; and by leading the development of new policies and cultural shifts.

Methods

Given the lack of baseline data on scaling strategies for large, complex systems change, we adopted a case study method (Yin, 2014) to begin building a theory of scaling, as per Plummer and Fennel’s (2007) theory development approach which consists of concepts, variables and relational propositions. Here, we align with Flyvbjerg (2006) who argues it is possible to begin building theory from a single exploratory case study. As Yin (2014) states, the case study approach investigates a particular phenomenon of interest within its ‘real-life context’. Because many study participants are still involved in scaling their social innovations (given that such a process has no endpoint), the phenomenon of scaling could only be studied as it unfolds in its real-life context.

In July 2013, 15 original AD learning group participants were invited to participate in this research. Because most participants were involved over long periods, they brought broad perspectives on changes in their initiatives, organisation, and their own practices over time. We asked them to reflect on the full arc of their own deliberate learning process on scaling. Participants completed a structured survey that used open-ended questions, including: What did 'going to scale' involve for your organisation? How did the AD learning group contribute to your perspective? And, what methodologies or understandings influenced how you grew or scaled your work? Participants were also invited to participate in a small focus group session (max. focus group participants = 4). Some participants chose to only complete the survey (14), but eight participants completed the survey and the focus groups. In total, three focus group sessions of 1.5 to 2 hours in duration occurred in August–September 2013. Focus group questions were: 1) What did you learn about scaling your initiative? 2) How do you now think about 'scale' and 'scaling' in your work? 3) What unintended consequences arose as you attempted to scale innovative initiatives? and 4) What leadership challenges did you face as you undertook this work?

We coded and analysed the survey responses and focus group transcripts, using first an open coding process, and then selective coding, as recommended by Dey (1999). As patterns emerged, we tested themes against the data to further substantiate the theme or refute it. Following the case study approach of Crutchfield and McLeod Grant (2008), we noted where patterns did not hold, helping us to identify differences in the strategies employed, their relationship to different types of scaling, and how these types of scaling differed from one another. We emphasise that our findings focus on the phenomenon of scaling, and the strategies by which actors can move social innovation impacts across scales. It is beyond the scope of this paper to describe the details of each social innovation and organisation involved; rather, we describe the patterns across the different initiatives.

A group of external advisers familiar with the AD learning group reviewed and responded to our preliminary findings.

Results and discussion

Many social change practitioners and funders are focused on scaling their impact, in order to meet the scope of contemporary social and environmental challenges. Executives within the McConnell Foundation believed that while the Foundation had invested resources into several initiatives, which successfully generated new models, these initiatives failed to address the roots or complexity of many social problems. That is, the Foundation was effectively supporting 'niche' development, but there were limited impacts on the broader regime or system. Our findings revealed that through the intensive learning process in the AD learning group, participants began to recognise opportunities to scale the

impacts of their initiatives beyond their own ‘niche’ (whether that was a single school, a community, or a narrow programme area).

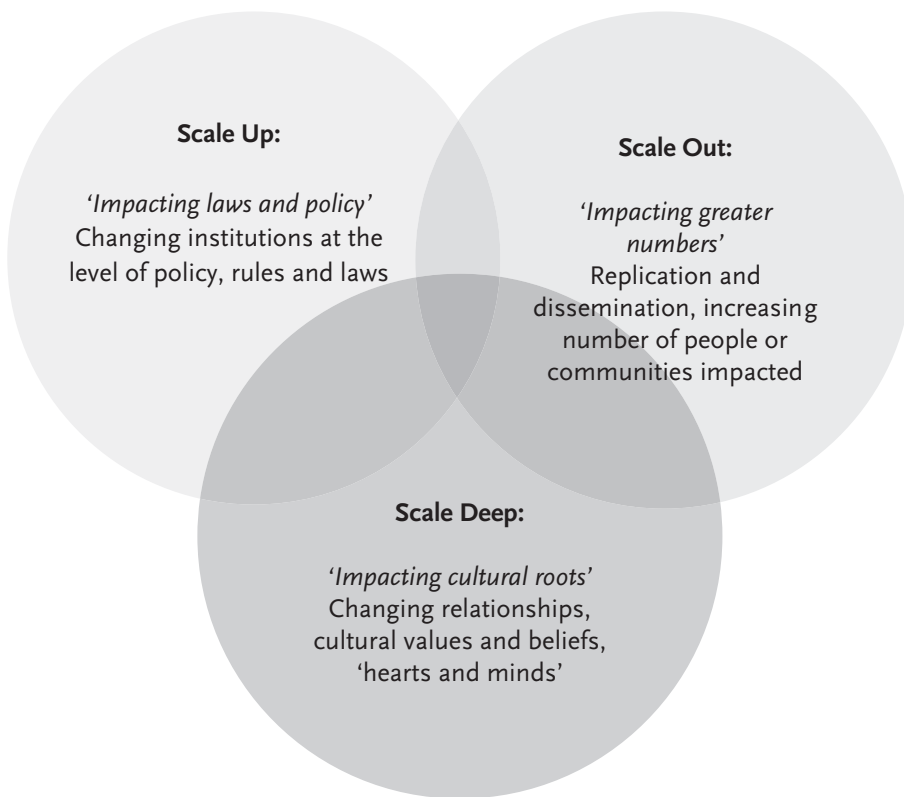
Not all participants pursued the same type of ‘scale’ or strategies to advance systemic impact. The strategy of choice was dependent on many factors: the founding conditions of their organisation; the context surrounding their issue; the resources and support they could access; choices they made about partners and strategies; and the windows of opportunity—political, cultural and social—that emerged. But we contend that several cross-cutting strategies were patterns in the various initiatives and that three different types of scaling emerged from our data: scaling out, up, and deep (Figure 1). The next section provides an overview of the three types of scaling and the strategies that align with each, as well as a short discussion of the leadership challenges involved with scaling.

A typology of routes to systemic impact: scaling out, scaling up and scaling deep

Our research found cross-cutting scaling strategies, and unique strategies that we have categorised into three broad types, refining Westley *et al.*'s (2014) distinction between scaling out and up, where scaling up refers to institutional changes—in cultural beliefs or rules and policies. Because of the unique strategies involved in these two kinds of institutional change, we suggest the third category of ‘scaling deep’.¹ ‘Scaling out’ was the approach that McConnell Foundation staff and the AD learning group focused on originally, emphasising replication of successful innovations in different communities (or ‘niches’), with the hopes of spreading those same results to more people. While at least one organisation has found this to be an enduring means to deal with context-specific issues that affect the system they are trying to change, the majority of participants found that replication might never address the root of the problem if these lay within broader institutions. For many initiatives, the route to greater impact lay in changing institutions and laws, or ‘scaling up’ to affect policies. Many participants described the shift in their scaling efforts to focus on the policy level because it has ‘the largest impact’ and was capable of changing the ‘rules of the game’. Strategies for ‘scaling deep’, built on earlier work by Van den Bosch and Rotmans (2008), are related to the notion that durable change has been achieved only when people’s hearts and minds, their values and cultural practices, and the quality of relationships they have, are transformed (see Figure 1 and Table 1).

¹ This term was coined by Tatiana Fraser, the former Executive Director of GirlsAction, during the AD learning group.

Figure 1 Scaling out, scaling up and scaling deep for social innovation



Strategies for social innovation and large systems change

Tips for diffusing innovation are abundant. But the findings in this study reveal a new and far more complex picture of what is entailed with 'scaling impact' depending on the type of scaling. Some of the strategies that have been well documented by other scholars consider the skills and agency of actors who are navigating complex systems, trying to stimulate or support large systems change, and leverage the necessary resources to achieve this change (Moore and Westley, 2011; Marshall *et al.*, 2012; Westley *et al.*, 2013; Geobey *et al.*, 2012). For instance, participants routinely cited the need to build and engage networks for all three types of scaling activities. Networking across sectors (rather than within sectors) was noted as especially valuable for focused collaboration, resource-pooling, extending the organisation's sphere of influence, and developing unusual alliances. Our findings specifically confirmed Waddell's (2014, p. 22) previous work, in that networks were not used merely for coordination, but for 'generating coherence through targeted interventions and stewarding development of particularly critical ingredients of a complex change system'.

Moreover, all participants acknowledged that once they re-focused their organisational purpose on scaling, as opposed to simply generating an innovative initiative within a niche, their ideas, process, or programmes required either

new funding, or entirely new funding models than what their original initiative required. Funding was not only perceived to support the scaling process, but it was also sometimes perceived as a necessary precursor to scaling in order to build internal capacity for systems approaches. As one participant stated:

We came to understand that in order to grow, we had to build organisational capacity and we have done so in an effective manner over several years. As a more mature organisation we needed to allocate new resources to growth and development.

But beyond confirming strategies that have been well-documented elsewhere, several other strategies were found to be essential for the scaling process. One cross-cutting strategy served as an important starting point for all participants when they first began to attempt to scale their initiatives. This was the strategy of broadening the framing of the problem to reveal its systemic or root causes.

Cross-cutting strategy 1. Broaden the problem frame

The organisations involved in the AD learning group began with a particular issue-focus such as girl's empowerment, preventing youth incarceration, building networks of support around people with disabilities, and reducing poverty in communities. Their organisational strategies were most often focused on particular populations, in specific regions. However, through participation with the AD learning group, participants realised that they could not achieve their goals of scale and impact unless they broadened their problem-framing.

Several participants described how adopting a systems-change perspective (using systems and complexity frameworks introduced by Westley *et al.*, 2006) was critical to building this consciousness and intention to change. It is beyond the scope of this article to detail the material and exercises the AD learning group undertook to develop a large-systems change perspective. However, in general, the learning process widened previously narrow constructions of problems and solutions, enabling organisational leaders to consider different types of scales (e.g. organisational scales, temporal scales, political scales), and to understand the complex interrelated layers of variables and phases of change that could influence their issue as they tried to scale their impact.

Broadening their problem definition led several organisations to re-conceptualise their goals, as they shifted from being focused on a specific issue, to being more deliberately focused on solving the roots of the problem. For example, the Executive Director of Meal Exchange observed,

It allowed me to evolve Meal Exchange beyond an emergency food charitable organisation to a food security/food systems organisation. It provided me the mental model and questions to guide the work: 'how do you make access to healthy food systemic? To what end?'

Different organisations expressed their new commitment to scaling and systemic impact in different ways. For instance, two organisations formally re-drafted their organisational vision/mission statements to incorporate clear intentions to effect systemic change rather than focusing on a single issue. Other participants used internal communication processes (both formal and informal) to establish agreement among staff to reorienting for greater impact.

Strategies for scaling out, up, and deep

After broadening their problem frame to pursue large systems change, participants described different strategies depending on whether they attempted to scale out, up, or deep. Table 1 summarises the strategies described below.

Table 1 Three types of ‘scaling’ and their main strategies

	Description	Main strategies
Scaling out:	Impacting greater numbers. Based on the recognition that many good ideas or initiatives never spread or achieve widespread impact	Deliberate replication. Replicating or spreading programmes geographically and to greater numbers while protecting the fidelity and integrity of the innovation Spreading principles. Disseminate principles, but with an adaptation to new contexts via co-generation of knowledge, leveraging social media and learning platforms: ‘open scaling’
Scaling up:	Impacting law and policy. Based on the recognition that the roots of social problems transcend particular places, and innovative approaches must be codified in law, policy and institutions	Policy or legal change efforts. New policy development, partnering, advocacy
Scaling deep:	Impacting cultural roots. Based on the recognition that culture plays a powerful role in shifting problem-domains, and change must be deeply rooted in people, relationships, communities and cultures	Spreading big cultural ideas and reframing stories to change beliefs and norms. Intensively share knowledge and new practices via learning communities, distributed learning platforms and participatory approaches Invest in transformative learning, networks and communities of practice
Cross-cutting		Seek alternative resources Build networks and partnerships Broaden the problem frame

Scaling out strategy 1. Deliberate replication

Initially, organisations participating in the AD learning group were focused on the types of diffusion activities documented in previous scaling literature (Dees *et al.*, 2004; Bradach, 2010). That is, efforts focused on expanding the geographic scale of programmes or initiatives, and increasing the number of people impacted by a social innovation. Leaders made decisions about whether to grow in a centralised manner, to franchise, to pursue other ‘social enterprise’

models, or to 'seed' like-minded organisations through affiliation, branching, or accreditation systems. Although this is similar to the approach of many social enterprises, our findings indicated that given the systems-change perspective and years of testing different dissemination approaches, participants began recognising the limitations of a replication or dissemination approach. Participants began to critique the isolated use of scaling out strategies and emphasise the impact and durability of a change. For example, one participant reflected:

You can't just transport it in a box. And I think there's a lot of confusion in some places with the concept of scale and impact that, in some cases, impact is simply defined as the number of widgets you've spread.

Prioritising system-wide change also led to emphasis on fidelity and integrity for some innovations. One participant stated:

As we learned that we were replicable and we could scale (1 site to over 100), we realised that the number was not as important as the impact and the sustainability factor. If you cannot replicate your programme and ensure it is done with high integrity and fidelity (achieve positive outcomes you know the programme can achieve) and ensure the programme can be sustainable, then your efforts of scaling are fruitless.

Protecting the integrity and fidelity became referred to in the AD learning group as Zimmerman *et al.*'s (1998) 'min specs' or minimum specifications. That is, leaders needed to determine what the non-negotiable aspects were, and what could vary when replicating, to ensure they were achieving a sustainable impact along with scale. This led some organisational leaders to jettison programme scaling and focus on spreading principles.

Scaling out strategy 2. Spreading principles

In recognising the limitations of a geographic replication approach, some organisations pursued more of an 'open scaling' model, where the core principles and approach of the innovation were spread, leaving it to the local community to adapt it to local conditions: 'You can scale an idea that lives out differently in every context'.

Shifting to focus on scaling impact demanded that organisational leaders distil the essence of their innovation and hone their capacity to disseminate the knowledge and principles associated with it:

We had to be very careful about articulating clearly the principles guiding our actions and that we always made sure to stick to those principles to the extent that we could. Those were our real guide-posts. And so groups could feel free to undertake whatever activity they wanted to, but they couldn't deviate from the overarching principles that we had set that bound us together as a collective, as a group.

A potential drawback of this approach is the intensive work involved in translating an approach in numerous different contexts, when there is no specific 'product' to simply adopt. Tamarack addressed this in part by creating a national-scale learning community for anti-poverty initiatives in hundreds of communities in Canada and the United States—blending a scaling out strategy with a scaling deep strategy.

Scaling up strategy 1. Scale up through policy or legal change

Our findings showed that scaling out mostly concentrates impacts on the niche scale, through developing more niches. For many social innovators, an equally powerful opportunity lies in impacting higher levels of institutions through policy change—referred to as the regime by SNM and transitions studies scholars. We refer to this cross-scale dynamic as scaling up. As one participant claimed: ‘We don’t have to have more chapters or more people involved, or expand to new regions—we can take the issue and get it into the policy domain, have public policy discussions and scale those up.’

Participants described at least two approaches for scaling up. In the first approach, pointed to in the quotation above, social innovators working at the level of families or communities shifted their work to higher levels in government in order to address root causes in larger-scale institutions that affected an entire population. One example of this is the work of Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN) in their creation of the world’s first Registered Disabilities Savings Plan, which changed the financial regulations guiding savings and benefits for people with disabilities and enabled them to escape financial dependency on the state. Creating new policy or regulatory frameworks was seen as part of disrupting existing systems and transforming them into something better. This differed from replication strategies, since it often meant leaving behind the initial innovative initiative, and starting an entirely new initiative focused on policy change.

The second approach focused on linking together community-level policy interventions into a more coherent movement. Interestingly, just as application within the local context is important when disseminating new ideas and programmes, it was also seen as critical when scaling policy change from one jurisdiction to another. One participant described how ‘one of the things that we learned in trying to scale up in terms of policy-related work was that context really mattered’. Those leaders who were seeking to scale policies faced challenges because municipal contexts and systems vary greatly across Canada, and approaches had to be adapted to new jurisdictions each time.

Scaling deep strategy 1. Generating big cultural ideas

Our language changed—from feed the hungry to ‘good food for all’

Closely linked to the cross-cutting strategy that involved broadening the problem frame, many participants and organisations found that scaling the impacts beyond the niche to the regime required scaling deep into the beliefs, ideas, and narratives of dominant social structures. Working with norms and values as vehicles for scaling innovations was described as critical because ideas live differently in every context but can spread rapidly. One strategy that was employed involved deliberately reframing predominant narratives that existed about the social issue participants sought to address. By changing the narrative, participants described how they could successfully begin to change cultural norms and beliefs about the issue. As one example, a leader with L’Arche, an organisation focused on people with intellectual disabilities, described the following:

We have, with others, been successful in reframing the goal of disability support from charity to contribution, from group to individual, from need to asset, and to significantly reduce the stigma attached to intellectual disability. Much more work to do, but today, as opposed to 10 years ago, the goals of belonging and citizenship for people with intellectual disabilities are widely accepted.

Culture change strategies varied tremendously, but one example included using stories as a method for sharing and co-creating ideas. One practitioner explained that amalgamating stories from the individuals affected by the relevant social issues, and translating them into a resonant framing enabled individual anecdotes to tell a more systemic story about the need for change. Therefore, our findings indicate that creating new stories and amplifying those that exist becomes an important vehicle for generating cultural ideas and thus, scaling deep to affect the 'regime' level of institutions, and even to the broader cultural landscape.

Scaling deep strategy 2. Invest in transformative learning

What we learned was how to develop a community of learning that in turn develops the growth and development of the networks we created. It is the connectedness that is the strength of our networks and this connectedness can only be created through sharing experiences and best practices.

What it was we wanted to scale was an experience rather than a particular programme or process

A common strategy to increase the scale and impact of socially innovative initiatives is to invest in learning processes (e.g. Dweck, 2007; Crutchfield and McLeod Grant, 2008). But cultivating learning became a specific strategy used to build shared mind-sets across a range of sectors and organisations, to ensure the impact of their initiative is scaled deep into the defining routines and practices and beliefs of partners and collaborators. Participants described how learning processes for scaling can be supported by a range of methods, including: mentorship, deliberate transfer of practices, capturing and sharing organisational or community culture, and shared reflection and evaluation practices. Interestingly, many AD learning group participants who used learning communities as a central means of scaling credited their experience in the AD learning group itself as the inspiration or model.

Our findings suggest that less mature forms of scaling focus on replication, and as social innovators begin to take seriously the need for large systems change, their approach transforms to include scaling up and/or scaling deep. This occurs as leaders of change gain confidence, grow partnerships and networks, and aim more consistently to change the system dynamics that gave rise to the problem in the first place. Consequently though, our findings revealed that large systems change impacts could occur when participants moved from scaling out to scaling up, or from scaling out to scaling deep. No single participant immediately jumped to scaling up or scaling deep, and thus, we believe that large systems change involves at least a combination of the three types of scaling. Relating to the transitions studies literature and SNM, scaling across

multiple niches remains a critical step before being able to scale impacts to the regime, landscape, or both.

Challenges in scaling

While the strategies described above were utilised to achieve different types of scaling, they were not without significant challenge. Inevitably, ambitious large systems-change goals can present leadership, organisational and social challenges.

Often, a socially innovative initiative is managed and implemented by a small portion of a larger organisation. As cited earlier, research in SNM emphasises the importance of safe spaces for innovation (e.g. Schot and Geels, 2008; Caniëls and Romijn, 2008). But in practice, this creates tension, both with other staff in the other sections of the organisation, or with board members who see the initiative as an anomaly from the organisation's central mission. As one participant stated: 'We ended up with a "business" operating inside of a non-profit. We had conflicts between the "old" and the "innovative". Our operational needs were different than other departments in the organisation'. These internal tensions were sometimes the most time consuming part of scaling processes. As one person described: 'I underestimated the time, skills, and talents required to get other colleagues within the organisation to understand and support what we were trying to do'.

Participants noted that the time and energy required for scaling was one of their greatest scaling challenges, as it placed demands on the growth and sustainability of their own capacity to act as leaders. Here, the support of like-minded peers was essential to sustain the innovators as they pursued a path of systemic change and scaling. As two participants described:

...to me this question of stress and the capacity to manage the ambiguity and to inspire others to stay with you in the ambiguity, is a key capacity. And when we talk about key leadership challenges, it's certainly maintaining in oneself that capacity over time. Because none of this work, if we're really talking about impact, durability and scale, is in any way a short fix.

Note to self: Do not underestimate the resistance that will come from within and without. It takes great commitment and time and energy to grow into the new. In our larger and decentralised organisation, we are not always unified as we struggle to hold together the old and the new, the 'system' and the individual, growth in numbers and growth in character and leadership, the simplicity with running alone and the complexity of partnering with others for greater impact, and the longing for stability and completion with the reality that change is our constant companion.

Conclusion

While previous research on strategic niche management and social innovation has shown the benefits of replication and diffusion strategies, or of creating 'safe' spaces for experimentation within an organisation, we conclude that these

only contribute to systemic change when used in conjunction with a variety of other strategies that ensure impacts are scaled up or deep. While both sets of literature widely acknowledge the importance of recognising scale and the general mechanisms needed within a niche to ensure an innovation's 'readiness' to be taken to scale, little insight has been provided about the strategies of actors to cross those scales.

This study of the AD learning group participants found that scaling for impact involved a combination of strategies. One of the key, but often overlooked, changes required when an organisation chooses to scale an innovative initiative involves re-framing the problem, and therefore the purpose of the organisation and their initiative.

Different strategies may then be used to scale out, up, or deep, but a formula does not exist for their precise combination. Rather, an important finding is that the three types of scaling and their strategies can interact in powerful ways to advance systemic change goals. The different types of scaling reveal at least three dimensions of systems that need to be engaged in large-scale change efforts: the quantifiable breadth of people and systems included; the institutional shifts in law, policy and resource flows that are necessary; and the subjective and inter-subjective transformations in values, relationships and cultural practices that support durable system-wide change. Furthermore, by tracing the patterns of scaling, this study highlighted that it is a combination of scaling out, up, and deep that is most likely to lead to large systems change, rather than any single strategy. That is, an organisation cannot simply expect to scale up to effect systems change without having gone through the lessons and capacity building experiences that occur when scaling out, or scaling deep.

Additionally, as scaling occurs, it is essential to ensure that the endurance and stamina of leadership can persist for the duration of time that is required for scaling an initiative. Applied learning processes, such as the AD learning group, can serve as an important forum to address this type of challenge.

However, theoretical and practical questions remain. First, additional research would be helpful to discern how the different types of scaling interact in other contexts, and whether these patterns are similar in cultural and policy contexts outside of North America. Second, these conclusions are based on more than a decade of experience; much of which involved learning by doing. The question that remains for the future is, how much of this can be 'taught', so that non-profits and funders today can leapfrog on the scaling successes of the past.

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