

Rathenau Instituut

MAKING EXPERIMENTS WORK FOR SOCIETY

**A REALISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE SCALING OF
COCREATIVE EXPERIMENTS AND THE ROLE OF
INTERMEDIARIES**

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- Cocreative experiments such as living labs emerge everywhere
- Living labs as part of evolving R&I landscape

What is a living lab?

Many definitions in literature...

A typical definition:

“... a **physical arena** as well as a **collaborative approach** in which different stakeholders have space to experiment, co-create and test innovation **in real-life environments** defined by their institutional and geographical boundaries.”

Schliwa & McCormick, 2016



Towards a realistic understanding of living labs

Conceptually:

‘Co-creation’ and ‘real-life setting’
as distinguishing features

In practice:

A loosely used label for a broad
variety of initiatives

Struggle:

How to gain broader impact?



Scaling up?

- Local initiatives remain stuck in local enthusiasm?
- From small-scale experiment towards large-scale systemic change?
- What does upscaling entail? Who works on upscaling?

Research question:

How can we understand upscaling of living lab experiments and how can intermediaries contribute to these processes?

Research approach

1. Interviews with experts working in or with living labs
 - Their views on upscaling and intermediation
 - Bottlenecks for upscaling
2. Literature review on upscaling & intermediary activities
3. Case studies in domains of water, agriculture, international development
 - Living labs are a recent phenomenon
 - Experiences with upscaling and intermediation in other domains.

Expert practitioners

What scales?

1. The innovative solution ('product')

- Scaling is task entrepreneur (marketing; classical *innovation journey*)
- Realisation that success is dependent on non-technological aspects

2. Cocreation method ('proces')

- Professionalising and spreading living lab way of work
- Situatedness makes tailored solutions necessary.

Who scales?

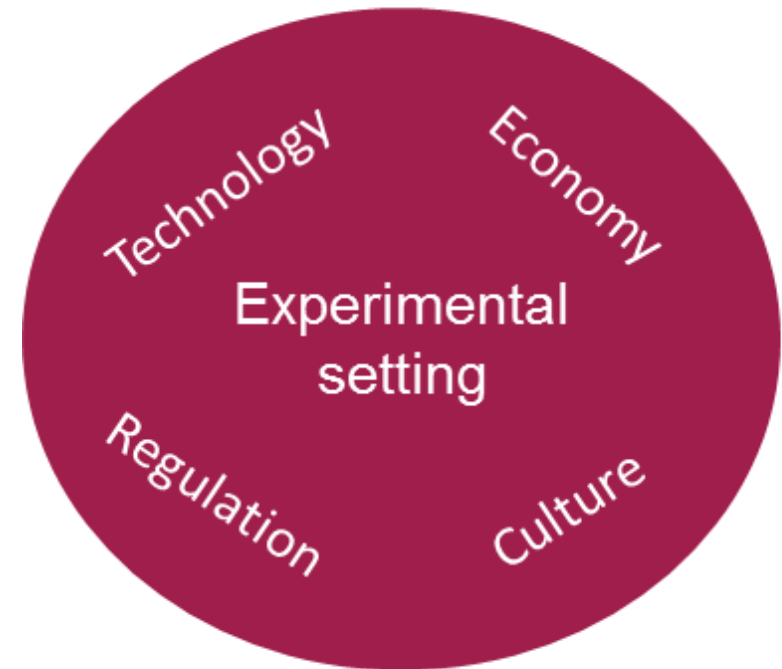
- Scaling as different kind of work
- No attention for scaling in projects
- Systematic monitoring and evaluation often lacking



Conceptually: Upscaling as embedding of novelty in societal contexts

Four dimensions of embedding

- **Technological**
- **Economical**
- **Regulatory**
- **Societal/cultural**



Learning processes in all these dimensions

Upscaling is more than rolling out

- **Growing** enrolling more users and other stakeholders
- **Replication** repeat elsewhere + adapt / fit in
- **Circulation** 'contaminate' and inspire
- **Institutionalization** development of (new) rules, routines and normal practices

Based on Turheim et.al., 2018



Intermediary roles per dimension of embedding

Dimension	Roles intermediary	Examples
Technological	Technical expertise Fit with existing infrastructures and organisations	Engineering firms; Technical consultancies
Economic	Supporting innovation management; finding suppliers and customers; product-market fit	Incubators; consultancies; market advisors; chambers of commerce
Regulatory	Judicial advisory; lobbying for new regulations; developing standards, protocols and norms	Law firms; standardization organisations; professional societies
Societal / cultural	User engagement; connecting with broader societal environment	Patient organisations; consumer organisations; advisory – and communication firms

Learning from other domains: Agriculture



- OVO-triptych
- Experimental farms
- Active dissemination
- 1980s: environmental degradation and animal welfare.

Role of scaling:

- OVO-triptych about scaling 'generic' knowledge, farm became more like a lab
- Upscaling became embedding on all dimensions

Role of intermediation:

- From knowledge transfer agents to knowledge intermediaries
- Actively organized
- First focused on *replication* of practices, shifts towards transformation

Learning from other domains: Water



- Technical solutions → integrated area development
- More actors involved such as local governments, citizens and businesses.
- Delta law and commissioner
- Actively organized learning
- National government in lead, implementation partnership

Role of scaling:

- Integrated approach for knowledge development and upscaling of solutions
- At same time increasingly locally adapted solutions, no one size fits all

Role of intermediation:

- Focusing on institutionalization of new practices alongside existing practices.

Learning from other domains: international development



- From top-down to bottom-up → leading to many local initiatives BUT:
- ‘Pilots never fail, but they also never scale’
 - Many local projects
 - Donors are temporarily involved, difficult to achieve lasting impacts
- Leading to much attention for successful upscaling

Role of scaling:

- Structural attention for upscaling needed from the outset
- Upscaling is an iterative process requiring a monitoring and evaluation strategy

Role of intermediation:

- Crucial as many different projects require active intermediation
- Importance of building absorptive capacity.

Lessons for embedding outcomes of experiments for transformative change

1. Experiments should be seen as part of ongoing innovation- and embedding trajectory

- a. Primary goal of experiments should be learning
- b. Organise intermediary functions
- c. Be inspired by 'theory of change' method

2. Experiments should be seen as part of broad searchproces geared towards systemic change

- a. Connect in both time and space with other experiments
- b. Organise internal learning and create systematic M&E
- c. Build an embedding community

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