

# SCALING LAND-BASED INNOVATION

## A THOUGHT GUIDE TO GROWING INNOVATIONS WELL

### About the thought guide:

This pack contains five info-graphics, each of which outlines a tension associated with the scaling process.

Though these tensions have deeply influenced past innovations' development, and may be intrinsic to the scaling process, they are often difficult to clearly identify and manage.

This pack helps readers to recognise these forces, leaving them better equipped to understand the scaling process and critically reflect on its implications for a particular innovation.

As a whole guide, the pack helps provoke social innovators, and those that support them, to think about what scaling 'well' means, and how it can be done.



### About the research

This pack was produced as part of Shared Assets' **'Learning Lessons from Social Innovation'** research project, running from October 2013- April 2014. Desk research and qualitative interviews were used to investigate the development of **five community-led innovations** in the UK.

### About Shared Assets

Shared Assets is a social enterprise, established in 2012, which supports community use of environmental assets such as woodlands, parks and waterways. Our vision is the creation of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century commons.

[www.sharedassets.org.uk](http://www.sharedassets.org.uk)

Research conducted by Shared Assets and funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. All quotes from anonymised qualitative interviews conducted by Shared Assets.



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CREATING A 21ST CENTURY COMMONS

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### 1: SCALING vs INNOVATING



#### Scaling

The growth of a business model or innovation: increasing activity or moving to new areas.



#### Innovating

A process, starting with an idea, which develops into systemic changes – new services, technologies, activities, products or ways of doing things.

**The Relationship** Scaling and innovating are different processes. Each calls on different skills, activities and focus; each may need different types of people to be done well. Practitioners may want to reflect on their **skills, motivations, knowledge** and the wider context when considering scaling.

Scaling successful past innovations may make future innovations less productive.

Scaling a single service may mitigate against trying new approaches.



Ongoing cycles of innovation may make scaling less productive.

Innovation at the expense of strengthening routine activities can destroy value.

Scaling and innovating may preclude one another in some situations, where focus on one undermines the other.

#### Adjusting to scale Case study: Development trusts

Although aimed at acquiring buildings and land to bring about benefits for the community, managing these assets can put development trusts under strain. Often spearheaded by activists and flexibly shaped to meet the needs of local communities, the financial and organisational demands of asset management can bring innovation to a halt. Strengthening of routine activities may be required to ensure a trust is viable, sustainable and meets its objectives. [More >](#)

**“You can be criticised for ‘limiting’ projects, but you have to check initiatives are viable.”**

#### Keeping open for innovation Case study: Community food enterprises

A young and relatively small sector, community food enterprises in the UK are highly diverse, with different organisational forms, activities, aims and methods. This fluidity, with each organisation innovating in response to context, is celebrated by many. Opportunities to scale these initiatives, however, may require different skills, such as strengthening routines and building organisational capacity. [More >](#)

**“Fluidity and diversity is a key strength.”**

#### Things to think about

##### Context

What does the innovation need to operate well? What type of **market** is it operating in?

##### Skills

Are those involved excited by new ideas? Or by getting things done really well?

##### Goals

If scaling can preclude innovating (and vice versa) which do you and your organisation want to be doing?

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## 2: PULL vs PUSH



### Pull

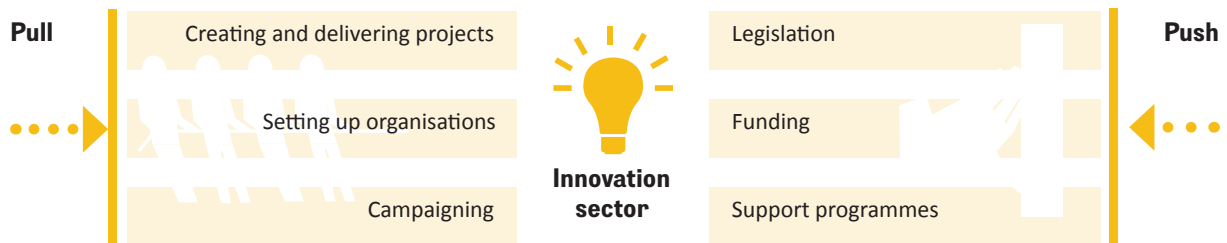
Social entrepreneurs, innovators, activists and campaigners recognise needs that are not being adequately met and seek to address them.



### Push

Social entrepreneurs, activists and campaigners are encouraged by funders and policy makers to meet needs through a particular innovation.

**The relationship** Social innovations often begin with 'pull', but innovators may campaign for funders and policy makers to provide the 'push' to grow or **mainstream** the **impact** of their work. This push may provide support and resources but may have unintended consequences.



What consequences result will depend on an innovation's **replicability** and the **skills, motivations** and **knowledge** of those involved.

### Needing a push

#### Case study: Community renewable energy generation

In response to rising energy costs, fears around energy security and environmental concerns, groups have set up community energy enterprises. These 'pullers' frequently encounter policy blocks, obstructive planning regulations and challenges in getting their projects access to the national grid. The need for financial, legislative and infrastructural 'push' felt by practitioners and campaigners is starting to be addressed by the UK government's 2014 Community Energy Strategy and by financial subsidies in the form of Feed In Tariffs and Renewable Heat Incentives. [More >](#)

### Pushing too much?

#### Case study: Development trusts

The development trust movement began as a 'pull' from community activists in the 1980s, advocating for and delivering community ownership of land and buildings, aimed at creating long-term prosperity in neighbourhoods. Policy makers now see community ownership as a good thing and the sector has been experiencing a concerted 'push'. Cuts to local authority budgets are encouraging public assets to be transferred into community ownership. This focus, though, can saddle community groups with unsuitable buildings, liabilities they are unable to sustainably care for. The 'push' must be executed with caution. [More >](#)

### Things to think about

#### Obstacles

What are the main issues preventing this innovation from scaling?

#### Viability

What will make innovations sustainable after policy or funding disappear?

#### Conservation

What aspects of the innovation does policy need to work around or preserve?

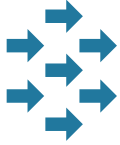


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### 3: ALTERNATIVE vs MAINSTREAM



#### Alternative

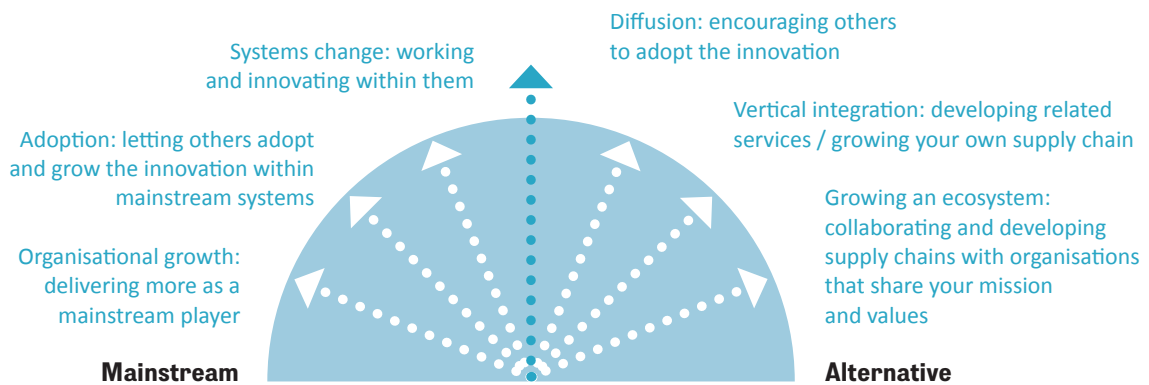
When an innovation is focussed on growing a specialist, niche or alternative market, often dedicated to developing change outside of established institutions.



#### Mainstream

Where an innovation aims to grow and create social change by engaging with established institutions.

**The relationship** Some practitioners may want to create change by operating within, or changing, existing mainstream systems. Others may want to develop their own niche or be part of an alternative system. The spectrum below illustrates different scaling decisions.



Which path is chosen will depend on a range of factors, including the applicability of the innovation outside of its niche, the **context** in which it was developed, its **replicability**, the **objectives** and **values** of the organisation, and the skills and motivations of those involved.

#### Mainstreaming through private sector adoption

##### Case study: Community-led recycling

“The legacy is in the innovation.”

Community groups’ kerbside recycling schemes were **replicated** and mainstreamed by commercial waste management companies, following legislation that required local authorities to recycle household waste. Competing for large contracts, community groups were largely shut out of the market. This was a highly **replicable** and scaleable innovation. Community organisations were competing for contracts that did not call for niche knowledge, but industrial scale. The core innovation was successfully mainstreamed, though its social **value** may have diminished and the involvement of activists and local volunteers declined. [More >](#)

#### Things to think about

##### People

What are the goals and values of practitioners? What do they want to change? What skills do they have?

##### The innovation

What is the innovation like? How difficult is it to **copy**? What does it do? How far can it go?

##### Context

How favourable is the context? What might the implications of engaging, or not engaging, with the mainstream be?



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### 4: IMPACT vs VALUE



#### Impact

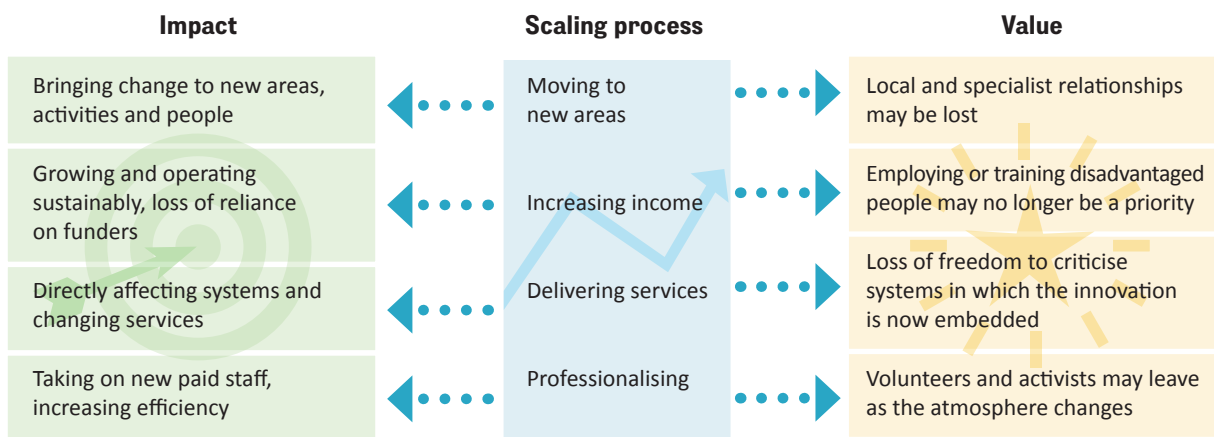
The key result a social innovation is designed to produce.



#### Value

How an innovation delivers its impact, often creating supplementary positive social effects.

**The relationship** Social innovators may want, or be **encouraged, to** scale their impact. Reflecting on how growing impact can affect value creation may help practitioners make informed decisions about how to **grow** well. As organisations scale up and increase their impact, the social value they create can diminish. Below is a diagram showing how certain scaling processes may add impact but reduce value.



Retention of social value may also depend on the **replicability** of the innovation, the **skills** and **motivations** of practitioners and the **context** in which the innovation develops.

#### High impact... low value? Case study: Community-led recycling

Commercial waste management companies emulated community recycling schemes and, though largely shutting such schemes out of the sector, took their innovation to national scale. The innovation's impact – recycling household waste – was increased. However the commercial waste management companies no longer focused on providing employment and training for disadvantaged local people, money was drawn out of the local economy and residents were no longer as invested in the care of their neighbourhoods, reducing the social 'value' the innovation delivered. [More >](#)

**"It depends what you're trying to do - build a community or replicate a model?"**

#### Things to think about

**Core**  
What is the core impact of the innovation? What is to be scaled?

**Process**  
What methods are used to deliver this result? Do they create value?

**Values**  
How important is process to the innovation? Is scaling impact or delivering social value your main aim?

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### 5: SCALING vs REPLICABILITY



#### Scaling

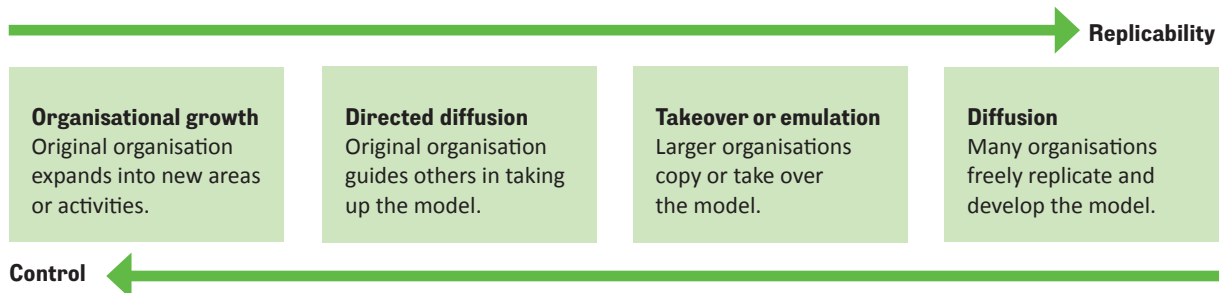
The growth of a business model or innovation: increasing activity or moving to new areas.



#### Replicability

The extent to which an innovation lends itself to being replicated, or copied.

**The relationship** Social innovators have a range of different growth models to choose from, each allowing them to retain different levels of control. Which model they choose will also need to be appropriate to their innovation's replicability.



#### Organisational growth

Original organisation expands into new areas or activities.

#### Directed diffusion

Original organisation guides others in taking up the model.

#### Takeover or emulation

Larger organisations copy or take over the model.

#### Diffusion

Many organisations freely replicate and develop the model.

#### Control

What pathway an organisation takes may also be shaped by the **skills** of those involved, their **motivations**, **goals** and the **context** in which they are operating.

#### Low replicability

##### Case study: Community-led HIV services

In the 1980s epidemic, community groups like the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) provided services for people living with HIV. These innovators fast gained specialist medical knowledge and developed strong relationships with the community. THT received significant statutory funding and merged with other charities to become the largest voluntary-sector sexual health organisation. Professionalising and expanding into a range of services, this innovation scaled through organisational growth. [More >](#)

“Lay people became treatment experts.”

#### High replicability

##### Case study: Community-led recycling

Community groups responded to increasing household waste by setting up kerbside recycling schemes. Although their local knowledge was useful, the core of their work, collecting kerbside waste, was highly replicable. When 1990s legislation required councils to recycle household waste, commercial waste management companies moved into the market. They adopted and modified kerbside waste collection and scaled it across the nation, largely shutting community efforts out of the sector. [More >](#)

“The real legacy remains in the innovation.”

#### Things to think about

##### Core

What is the core of the innovation? What is to be scaled?

##### Copying

Does it require specialist knowledge? Can it be copied?

##### Goals

How much control do the innovators want? How much are they likely to retain?