

Session 9:

Co-design, local solutions, community-based development...
How are we going to transform agri-food systems at scale ?
Which role for research, for policy, for extension services,
for the private sector ?



Sustainability transition experiments

- **STE:** design-oriented or change oriented projects providing “spaces that facilitate explicit experimentation and learning based on participation and user involvement” (Voytenko et al., 2015):
 - Co-design, co-innovation, participative, action-research projects, Living Labs, Real-World Labs, etc.
- **Common aim:** developing ‘actionable knowledge’ to support transformation of agri-food systems with local communities around the world.
 - Actionable knowledge: context-specific knowledge that assists stakeholders in their decision-making to be better positioned to achieve their goals (Geertsema et al., 2016; Rossing et al., 2021)

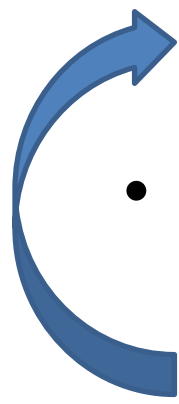
How to scale-out STE?

- Despite the success and relevance of the “actionable knowledge” generated by many STE projects, the impact beyond the community directly involved as project participants has been low or less than expected. **Why?**
- The role of research is essential to develop ‘actionable knowledge’, but what is the “Impact Pathway theory” of STE projects (beyond their end)? **How many projects have an explicit IPT?**
- Most common dissemination activities:
 - Scientific publications, targeted-audience publications
 - Training extension agents and farmers
 - Field days, on-farm demonstrations and workshops
 - Web pages, social media, digital apps and platforms
 - Radio, TV, YouTube...
 - Policy briefing**Are they enough to support transformation of agrifood systems?**

Some Why? Hypothesis (after Woltering et al., 2019)

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agsy.2019.102652>

- STE projects are usually set up and managed in very controlled environments that make it very difficult to transition to the real world at scale
- There is poor conceptual and methodological clarity on what scaling is and how it can be pursued
- Scaling in projects is dominated by a “technology transfer mindset”
- Donors request the delivery of a certain number of outputs at a particular time, and hold the implementing organizations accountable
- Project implementers present solutions as relatively straightforward fixes that their organization can provide in a few years.



Some How? ideas (after Woltering et al., 2019)

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- Projects should be designed as part of a multisector, long-term programmatic approach.
- Focusing in “actionable knowledge” is not enough, projects should deal with the necessary coevolution of organizational and institutional arrangements required for transformation of agri-food systems.
- Scaling requires different skills, approaches, and ways of collaborating than those required for successful implementation of pilot projects
- Need for approaches that takes scaling serious in its own right and recognizes the complexities involved in facilitating a transition to a new “normal.”

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