

Collective approaches to ecosystem regeneration in Aotearoa

More and more people are wanting to increase the impact of their environmental restoration efforts. This could be by joining up with other groups, increasing the size of their efforts, or deepening the scope of their project.

But which strategies work best? We reviewed international examples and surveyed restoration groups based in Aotearoa, to get a better idea of how groups can 'scale-up' their efforts in the most appropriate way.

International conservation and restoration

'Scaling' has become a buzzword in restoration circles around the world. This shows there's widespread recognition that we need to shift our efforts to make the most of our time and money.

Scaling doesn't just mean increasing the area you're restoring – it can also include improving the efficiency or resilience of your restoration project, or changing the rules and values of the wider system in which you're working (see Figure 1).

We found there are five models for scaling community-based restoration:

1. Mass mobilisation – increase the number of people undertaking restoration.
2. Community group formation – increase the number of groups undertaking restoration.
3. Network building – informal cooperation between groups, NGOs and agencies.
4. Collaboration – formal cooperation and joint action between groups.
5. Commons management – formal agreements among rights holders.

Aotearoa restoration efforts

The 27 'collectives' we surveyed were made up of multiple community groups all regularly working together to achieve a common goal. Most were funded by government grants and donations, and were brought together by their shared connection to a place. Most collectives were able to employ paid staff members – something highlighted by respondents as important to restoration outcomes.

The respondents reported several key benefits of being part of a collective:

- Building social connections, and the groups' pride and confidence in their work.
- Creating a shared vision, objective, or plan for an ecosystem or area.
- Access to a wider range of resources, support when applying for funding, and restoration advice.
- When smaller restoration groups are involved in larger collectives, it allows them to have greater impact by combining resources and coordinating activities.
- Expanding the scope and objectives of restoration activities.
- Improvements in some measurements of biodiversity.

From our study, we suggest three ways to enhance environmental restoration in Aotearoa:

1. Government and private investment in collectives that are effective at building the capacity, capability and connectivity of community groups and landowners.
2. Collectives invest their resources into relationship-building and collaboration between restoration groups.
3. Empower tangata whenua to engage in restoration projects and organisations as partners, with a view to reshaping the wider conservation landscape.

Authors:

Kiely Mcfarlane, Kiri Joy Wallace, Danielle Shanahan.

kiely.mcfarlane@cawthron.org.nz | Read the full report here: <https://bit.ly/35FOEg6>

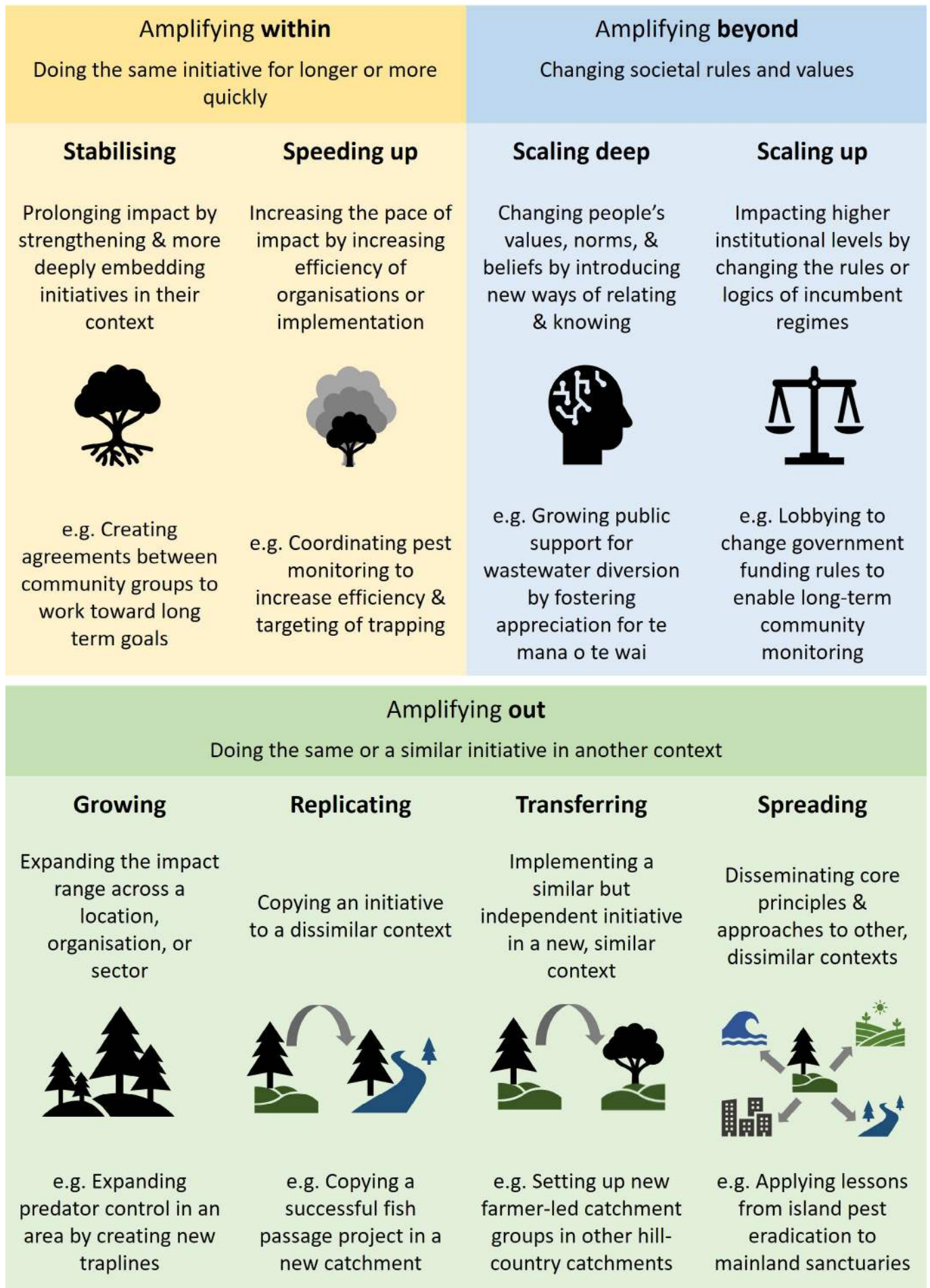


Figure 1. Diverse approaches to scaling environmental restoration, based on the typology of amplification processes proposed in Lam DPM, Martín-López B, ..., Lang DJ 2020. Scaling the impact of sustainability initiatives: A typology of amplification processes. Urban Transformations 2(1): 3.