

Using a Theory of Scaling (ToS) to guide decision-making

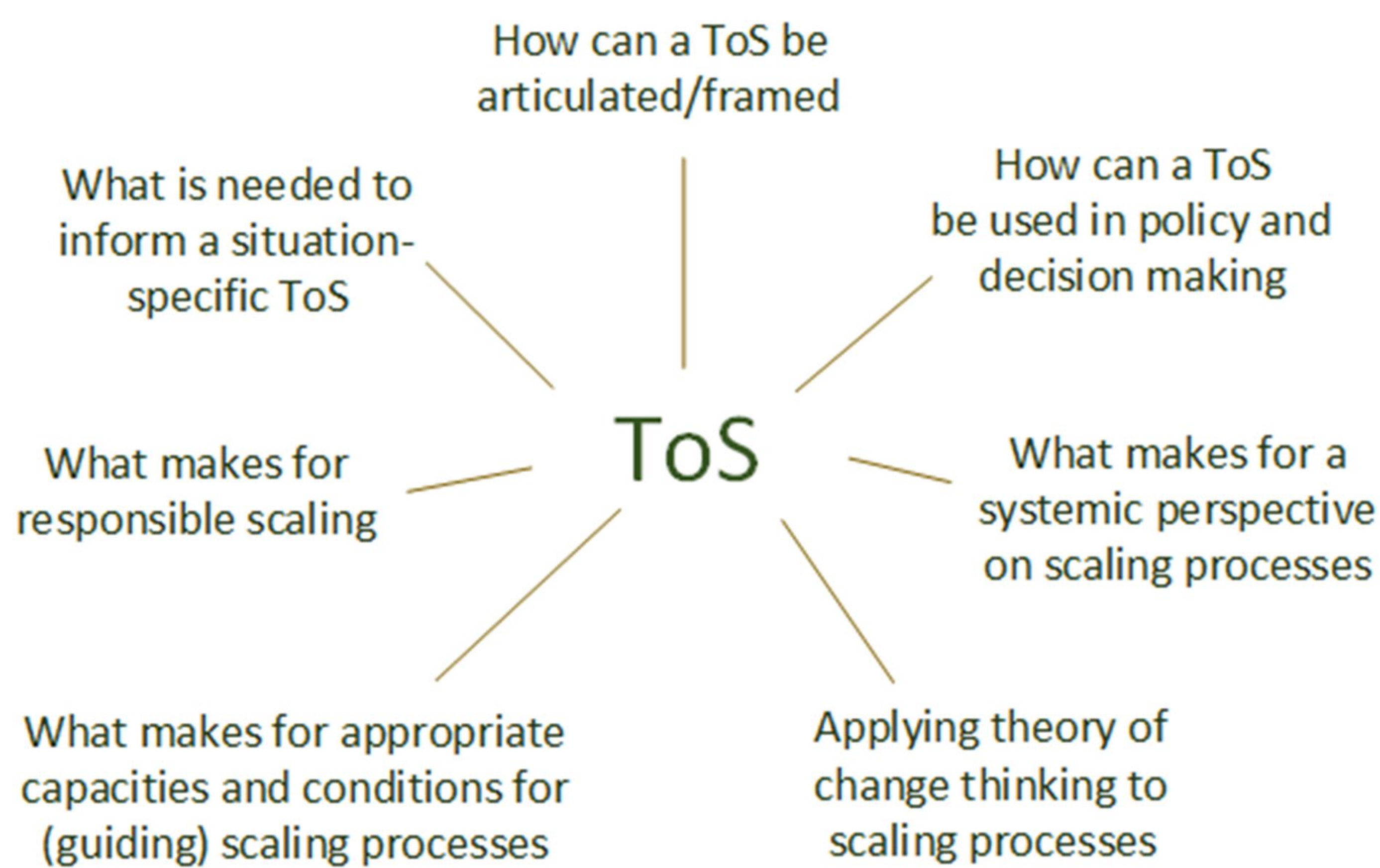
Engaging effectively and responsibly with scaling processes

DESCRIPTION OF APPROACH FOR SCALING

A Theory of Scaling is about unpacking the scaling concept; which often remains a black box in agricultural research for development projects and programs the context of wider innovation processes and impact aspirations.

By developing a Theory of Scaling, researchers and decision makers will be able to engage effectively and responsibly with scaling processes.

What a ToS seeks to address



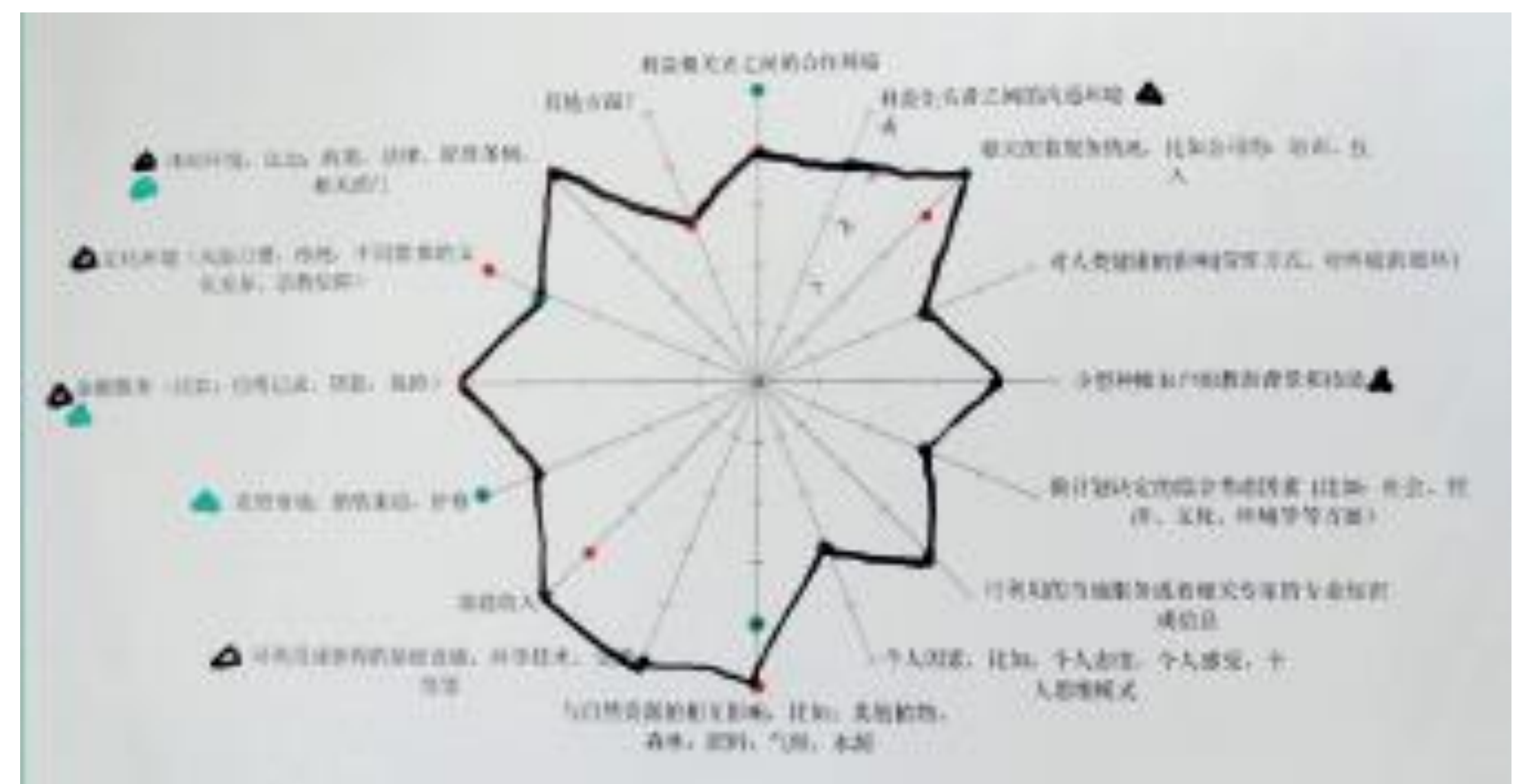
EVIDENCE OF EFFICACY

The usefulness of articulating theories of change has been established over the years. Essentially, a ToS is only different in its focus and the fact that it connects a theory of innovation to a theory of scaling. Initial exploration has been done in relation to scaling agroecological practice in Nicaragua (CIAT) and scaling green rubber cultivation in Southwest China (ICRAF).

This approach, process, and framework can be useful for:

- **Researchers and managers of change initiatives** – to be better equipped for assessing relevant complexities involved in scaling in relation to specific innovation and scaling efforts.
- **Policy makers** – since they indirectly have much more to do with scaling processes than they tend to realize and need to understand their role in relation to scaling initiatives.
- **Donors** – to be able to better assess proposals for scaling initiatives and to understand what are realistic expectations regarding scaling and what makes for realistic conditions (incl. budgets and time frames).

Assessing dynamics affecting scaling processes



INTERMEDIATE USERS & STAKEHOLDERS

Those involved in the design and implementation of a scaling initiative, which is any project, programme, or partnership involving an objective to see particular innovations go to scale.

MAIN STAGES IN THE APPROACH

Phase 1: Focus on developing understanding

- Scoping: forming a first impression about what a scaling initiative would be about
- A quick-scan study: creating an initial broad-based understanding
- Consolidating a big-picture perspective: prevent no longer seeing the forest for the trees
- A focused in-depth study on selected topics: zoom in on specific topics and issues

Phase 2: Focus on interpretation

- Exploring conditions for responsible scaling
- Considering options for responsible scaling strategies

Phase 3: Framing, consolidating, and communicating the situation-specific ToS

CRITICAL GAPS AND NEXT STEPS

The ToS approach was introduced in:

Wigboldus S, with Brouwers J (2016). Using a Theory of Scaling to guide decision making. Towards a structured approach to support responsible scaling of innovations in the context of agrifood systems. Wageningen University and Research, Wageningen and can be downloaded from: www.theoryofchange.nl/resource/using-theory-scaling-guide-decision-making

This is a first step and work in progress, providing material for further development and improvement. Additional fine-tuning and field application will be needed to turn this into an approach that is sound and offers sufficient guidance and illustrations of field application.

A 3-day masterclass on ToS is in the making.

LOGOS

