More than growth

Scaling out, up and deep in circular and sharing economy initiatives

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Four initiatives, three assessments

DENMARK

Repair Café Denmark

About 150 volunteer-run repair cafés with a small secretariat

NORWAY

Furniture reuse, Asker municipality

A warehouse, a digital platform and one furniture manager

LATVIA

Nomales and Vietalvas, Riga

Two construction-material exchange points run by the waste company CleanR

POLAND

Długi Stół, Poznań

A grassroots group rescuing surplus food from a city market every Saturday

Baseline · early 2025 → Midterm · autumn 2025 → Final · mid-2026

The question for today: what does it take for initiatives like these to scale, and what should a municipality or a funder look for?

Does it scale?

Asker municipality reuses its own furniture: a platform, a warehouse, one furniture manager. By the final assessment:

29,848

items registered on the platform to date: furniture, ICT, building materials (18,089 in January 2025)

951

orders placed through the platform, September 2025 to May 2026

157 t

of CO2 avoided through reuse over the same eight months

NOK 4.8 m

in avoided purchases over the same eight months

Growth is one of three ways to scale. The other two decide whether it lasts.

Three ways to scale

Scaling out

more sites, more flows

What changes: Sites, participants, material flows
How: Replication, diffusion, transfer
We look for: Site counts, throughput, spread

Scaling up

into policy, rules and budgets

What changes: Institutions, rules, policies, budgets
How: Embedding, political anchoring, advocacy
We look for: Procurement, policy, a secretariat, legal status

Scaling deep

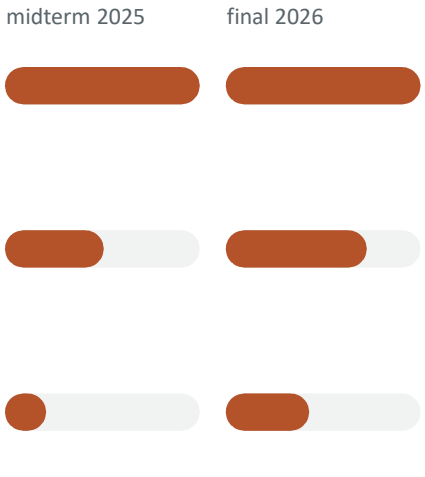
into habits and meanings

What changes: Meanings, competences, social relations
How: Learning, narrative shifts, routinisation
We look for: Practice elements durable across sites and carriers

Out and up can happen without the practice changing. Scaling deep has to be checked separately.

Scaling deep, made concrete

A practice is three elements. Furniture reuse in Asker, at the midterm and a year later:



Materials
things, tools, infrastructure

Warehouse, platform, agreements: across the municipality and 14 others. From autumn 2026 an employment-centre team runs the warehouse.

Competences
know-how and skills

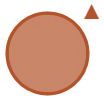
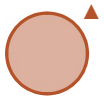
Judging by need, ordering in the platform: partly there at midterm. Ordering routines and guidelines now being built.

Meanings
why it makes sense

“Reuse first” barely there at midterm, held by a few. Now political backing in one municipality, a procurement policy in another.

The elements are settling; the dependence on one person is being designed out.

Four profiles: no initiative is strong on all three

	Out	Up	Deep	Shape at the final assessment
Repair Café Denmark Denmark				**All three, deep the thinnest**
Furniture reuse, Asker Norway				**Up ahead, deep catching up**
Nomales and Vietalvas Latvia				**Out without deep, so far**
Długi Stół Poland				**Deep, now dormant**

High · Moderate · Low · ▲ up and ▼ down since the midterm rating

Ratings: the team's reading of the final assessment, relative across the four cases; midterm ratings as published in the appendix

REPAIR CAFÉ DENMARK

profile at final assessment Out Up Deep

Growing on purpose, and carefully

149
cafés, one in Nuuk; about 4,000 volunteers

28 → 12 → 5
new cafés in 2024, 2025 and so far in 2026

461 → 534
repairs in four Copenhagen cafés, 2024 to 2025

Bringers surveyed, 41 responses (self-selected):

24 had been before

30 recommended it to others

14 tried a repair at home since

"Then it becomes a factory!" A volunteer on longer opening hours at his café: don't wear out the volunteers.

What holds it

- Volunteers open the cafés; the secretariat provides brand, guidance, registration
- Right to Repair Europe and a Danish network for influence on regulation
- Secretariat lead since 2025; from October a public-affairs director; pop-up format

FURNITURE REUSE, ASKER, NORWAY

profile at final assessment 

Numbers as currency, and a single point of failure

What holds it, and what made it fragile

- Metrics are the currency: NOK 7 m in avoided purchases, against a billion to save
- Fourteen follow-on municipalities in an innovation partnership
- One half-time furniture manager: the warehouse closed for half of 2025

What changed by the final assessment

- An employment-centre team of three to five runs the warehouse from autumn 2026
- Staff will order reuse directly in the platform
- B hires its own furniture manager; L adopts the platform and a procurement policy; R has guidelines
- REDO Interreg carries the work to 2028

Sources: midterm assessment (Hvid et al., 2025); final assessment D5.4 (Hodal and Ingeborgrud, NIFU).

NOMALES AND VIETALVAS, RIGA, LATVIA

profile at final assessment ● Out ○ Up ○ Deep

Expansion ahead of participation

69%
of Latvians have never heard of building-material exchange points

8%
used one, or the platform, in the past year

29%
say they are likely or very likely to use one

4.3 / 5
agree they are a good way to reduce waste

National survey of 1,008 Latvian residents, 2026 (FinTech, University of Latvia)

At the sites

- Two sites, two models: car-oriented with staff nearby; urban self-service
- No reservation function, no monitoring at Vietalvas, no 2026 flow data
- Events reframe a salvage yard as a community reuse space

The attitude–enablement gap

- Positive attitudes are not enough: information, logistics, storage and accessibility score lowest
- 59% name lack of information; half say municipalities should pay
- Students' concept: an AI-supported self-service exchange point

Expansion needs to be accompanied by measures that enable participation and support everyday reuse.

DŁUGI STÓŁ, POZNAŃ, POLAND

profile at final assessment Out Up Deep

Deep without out or up, by choice

> *“We’re very happy that we’re reducing our activity … because less food is wasted. So the less comes in, the better.”*
>
> Długi Stół volunteer, interview IDI_PL_1

By the usual metrics it does not scale. By the practice reading, the most settled case at midterm.

What it does

- Every Saturday: market surplus sorted and shared with pensioners, families, migrants
- Food waste as a moral problem; sharing as mutual aid, not charity

What holds it

- Deliberately little: an association, a market, cars, crates, messaging groups
- No platform, no metrics, no funder: staying unmeasured protects the meaning

Poznań, a year on: a life cycle, and why it declined

Emergence · 2020

Three markets, three collections a week; 20–30 t in six months; ~100 parcels a day

Consolidation · 2021–24

One Saturday collection a week at Rynek Jeżycki

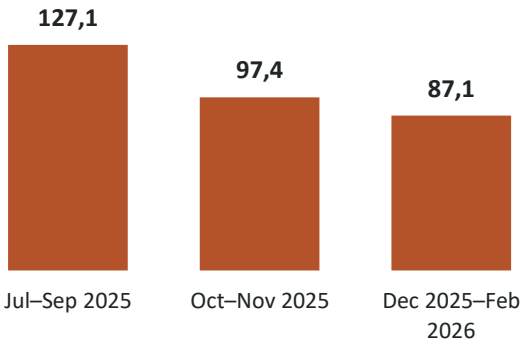
Maintenance · 2025

Eleven measured sessions: 1,250 kg of produce, 679 kg CO2e avoided

Decline · 2025–26

Four sessions to 28 Feb 2026: 349 kg; crates 18.5 → 9.5; parcels 100+ → 20–30

Produce recovered per session, kg (mean)



Why

- Cars and fuel the group never owned
- A small core carrying a weekly cycle: coordination fatigue
- Fewer recipients coming
- Less surplus: with higher prices, traders discard less

The twist

The values held, so smaller collections read as less waste. The elements persist: dormancy, not dissolution.

“Less how to scale such initiatives than how to sustain them.” (D5.4)

Three things we take from this

1

Scaling deep is not a residual

It decides whether out and up hold: Asker's closed warehouse, Riga's unknown sites, Poznań's values outliving its routine.

2

Numbers do double work

They win budgets: NOK 7 m in Asker, tonnes for Denmark's advocacy. They also define what counts; what is not counted cannot scale up.

3

Sustaining is the policy question

Growth is one outcome among several. Volunteers resist longer hours; Poznań's contraction was success by its own lights.

What follows in practice

For municipalities and funders

- Build routines, not only platforms; guidelines before the warehouse fills (Asker)
- Design out single-person dependence and protect the carriers: a team, a second manager, new cafés rather than longer hours
- Enable participation before adding sites: information, logistics, storage, trust (Riga)
- Support grassroots initiatives lightly: a van, fuel money, premises, a standby arrangement (Poznań)

For how we assess initiatives

- Read scaling deep as practices becoming ordinary, not customer behaviour
- Pair tonnes and CO2 with a practice reading: travelling, settling, carried by replaceable people?
- Scaling does not guarantee environmental benefit: actual substitution and rebound still need assessing (Panel 3)
- Assess across phases; let deliberate non-growth count as success

Four questions to ask of any initiative

1. Are the practice elements (materials, competences, meanings) travelling, or only the infrastructure?
2. Are they settling into a routine that runs without continuous input?
3. Who carries the practice, and how replaceable are they?
4. What holds it in place when sites multiply and carriers change?

Preprint: *More Than Growth: Scaling Out, Up, and Deep in Circular and Sharing Economy Initiatives* (Dorland et al.), on Aalborg University's research portal, VBN.

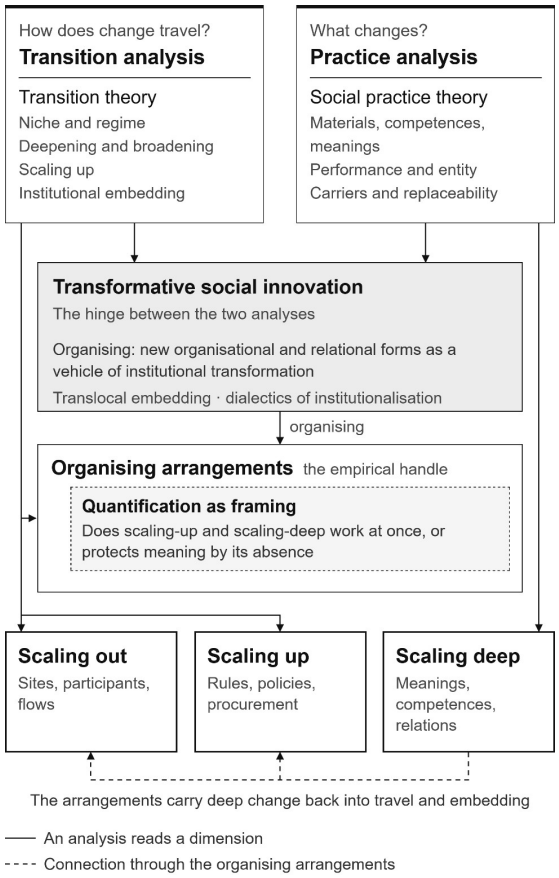
dorland@plan.aau.dk

Thank you

What scaling looked like, case by case

	Repair Café Denmark	Furniture reuse, Asker	Nomales and Vietalvas	Długi Stół
Out	149 cafés; 28 → 12 → 5 new ones a year; new cafés and pop-ups rather than longer hours	Platform in 14 municipalities, L now building its own; 18,089 → 29,848 items	A second site built as a different model, urban and self-service; no further expansion in 2026	Replication tried and abandoned; three markets in 2020 → one Saturday → irregular
Up	A public-affairs secretariat; Right to Repair Europe and a Danish network for influence on regulation; repairs counted in tonnes	NOK 7 m in avoided purchases wins the budget; procurement policy in L, guidelines in R; REDO to 2028	A company and an NGO; formal municipal integration limited; half of Latvians say municipalities should pay	No funder, no partner, by choice; the final assessment recommends light municipal support
Deep	24 of 41 surveyed bringers had been before, 30 recommended it on, 14 tried repairs at home; consumption effect unknown; 85% of volunteers over 50	“Reuse first” versus “if convenient”; ordering routines being built; a team on the warehouse	Approval 4.3/5, awareness 31%, use 8%; no reservation function, no monitoring at Vietalvas	Values held through the decline: “the less comes in, the better”; routine lapsed; dormancy, not dissolution

One observed example per cell, from the midterm and final assessments; ratings on slide 6.



Appendix: the framework

What changes?

The practice itself: its materials, the competences of the people who carry it, and what it means to them. Read through social practice theory (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012).

How does change travel?

Through organising arrangements: a platform, metrics, a coalition, a framework agreement, a funder's logic. Read through transition theory and transformative social innovation.

Where the two meet

The same arrangement can make a practice travel, hold it in place, or, by its absence, protect what it means. Quantification does both at once: Asker's metrics win the budget and give staff a language in which reuse becomes ordinary; Denmark's registration feeds advocacy and shapes the practice.

Figure 1 of the paper (Dorland et al., preprint on VBN).

Appendix: scaling profiles as published (Figure 2a)

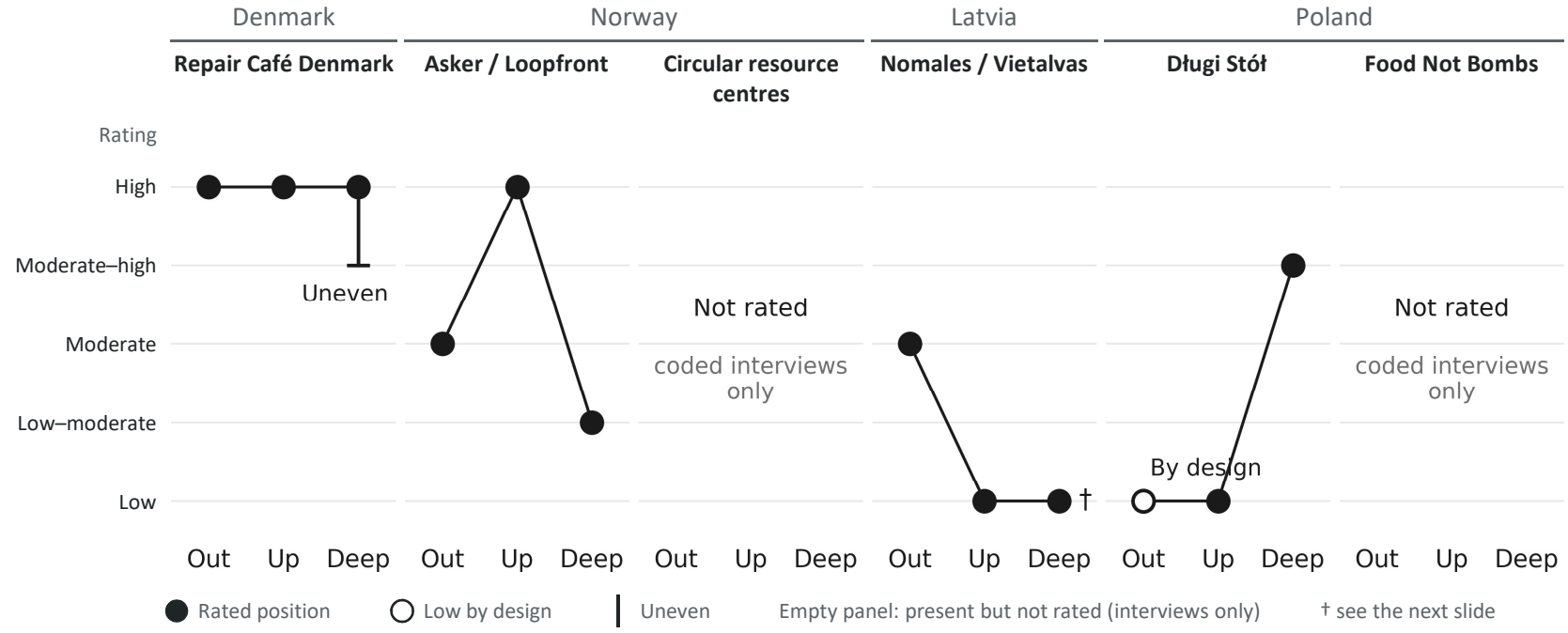


Figure 2a of the paper; relative ratings at midterm across the four assessed cases. Oslo and Food Not Bombs were evidenced through coded interviews only.

Appendix: what the interviews emphasise

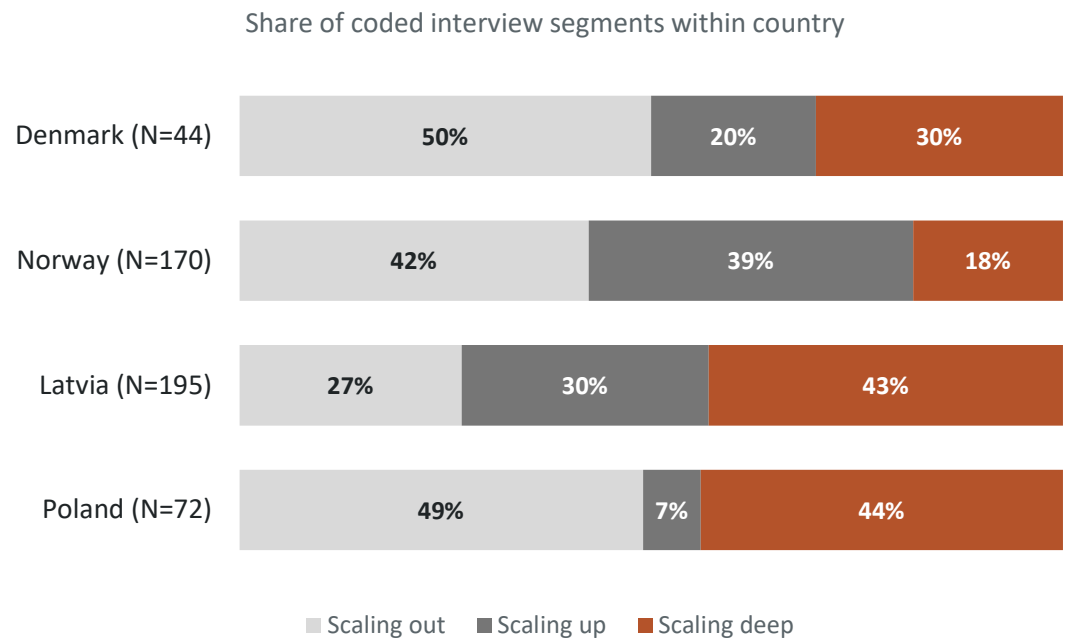


Figure 2b of the paper, redrawn: 481 coded segments in all. Counts index emphasis, not the extent of scaling.

Latvia

The Latvian interviews carry the second-largest share of talk about scaling deep: 43 per cent of coded segments. The rating is Low.

What people describe is prescription, not achievement: schooling, campaigns, regulation. The 2026 survey confirms the gap between approval and practice.

Coding measures emphasis in the interviews. The rating measures what has happened.