

Youth-Driven Digital Innovation as Infrastructure for Sustainable Development

From technology transfer mechanisms to enabling ecosystems

Göksu Aslan, PhD

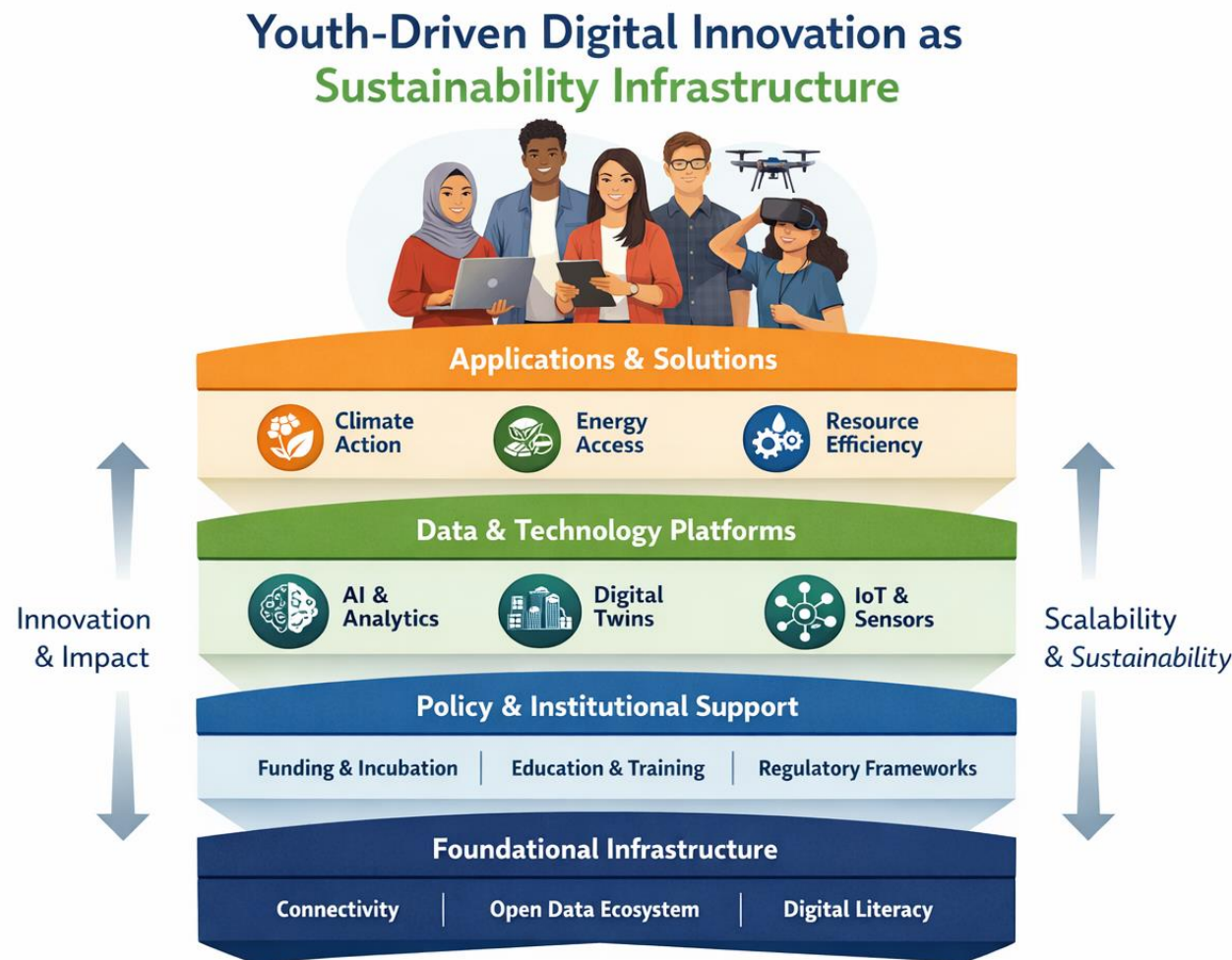
Yildiz Technical University, Istanbul, Türkiye & Zayed University Abu Dhabi, UAE

&

Marco Gallieri, PhD

Independent Researcher, Lugano, Switzerland

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The position: youth innovation needs a different transfer logic

Technology transfer frameworks were largely designed around firms, universities, laboratories, and public agencies.

Youth-led innovation often emerges differently: through adoption pathways, social enterprises, open-source communities, civic platforms, and local problem-solving.

Are existing technology transfer mechanisms in the Asia-Pacific equipped to capture, validate, and scale innovations originating from youth? What structural reforms are needed to make these mechanisms more responsive to youth-led models?

Existing mechanisms are partially equipped, but not yet systematically responsive to youth-led models.

OLD TRANSFER LOGIC



Source → recipient
Technology → adoption
IP/licensing →
commercialization

YOUTH-RESPONSIVE LOGIC



Problem → co-creation
Prototype → validation
Pilot → public/market
embedding

Why the article calls youth-led digital innovation “infrastructure”

Digital tools are not only apps. When they deliver essential services repeatedly, they become infrastructure-like.

They connect communities to actionable data.

They reduce transaction costs in service delivery.

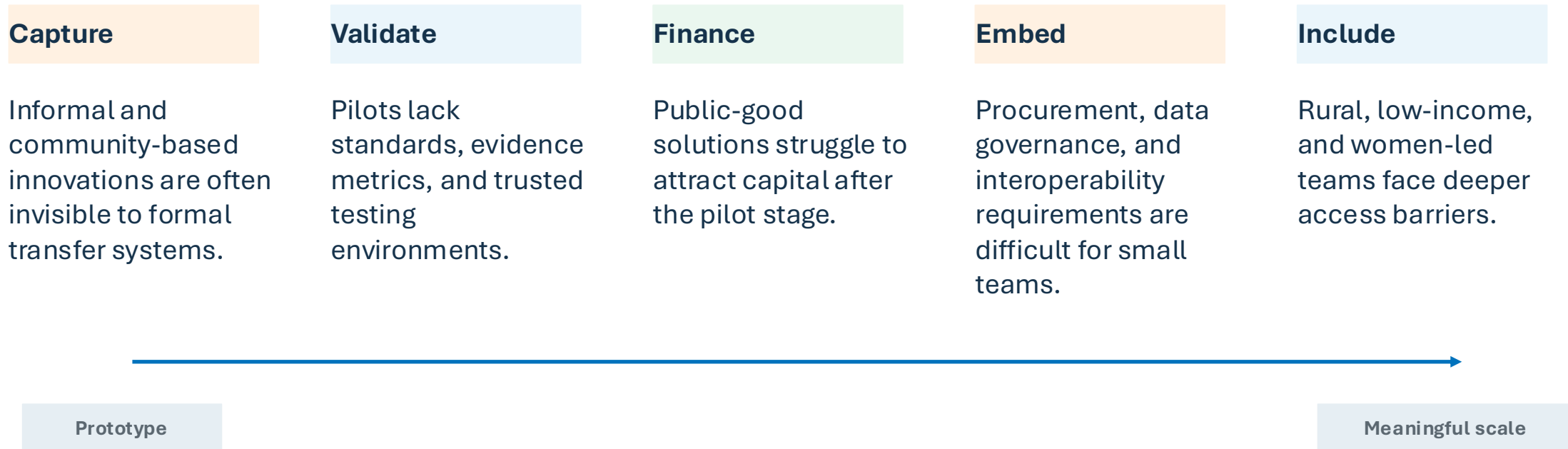
They improve resilience, resource efficiency, and institutional reach.

Transfer policy should therefore ask: how do we maintain, govern, and scale these systems?



Where current mechanisms fall short

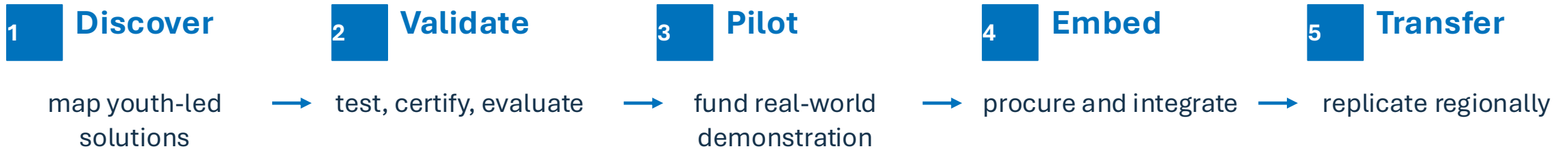
The problem is not lack of youth creativity. It is weak pathways from proof-of-concept to institutional adoption.



Most youth innovations do not fail because the idea is weak; many fail because the transfer pathway is incomplete.

A youth-responsive technology transfer pathway

Reform should make the pathway explicit: from discovery to validation, public adoption, and cross-border learning.



Policy implication: technology transfer offices and regional platforms should not wait for mature firms; they should help build the maturity of youth-led solutions.

Three examples: different domains, same ecosystem lesson

Selected case studies of youth-driven digital innovation
for sustainable development



iFarmer: Digital Agriculture
& Finance for Smallholders
(Bangladesh)



MyH2O: Community Water
Monitoring & Safety
(China)



Alerto PH: AI-Powered
Disaster Risk Alerting System
(Philippines)

iFarmer • Bangladesh

Agri-fintech platform connecting farmers to finance, inputs, advice, and markets.

MyH2O • China

Citizen-science platform filling rural water quality data gaps through open data.

Alerto PH • Philippines

AI-enabled emergency alerts linking sensors, local governments, and responders.

Common lesson: youth innovations scale when they connect to institutions, data systems, finance, and users.

Role of governments, regional bodies, and intergovernmental organisations in building ecosystems that recognize, resource, and integrate youth innovation

Recognize

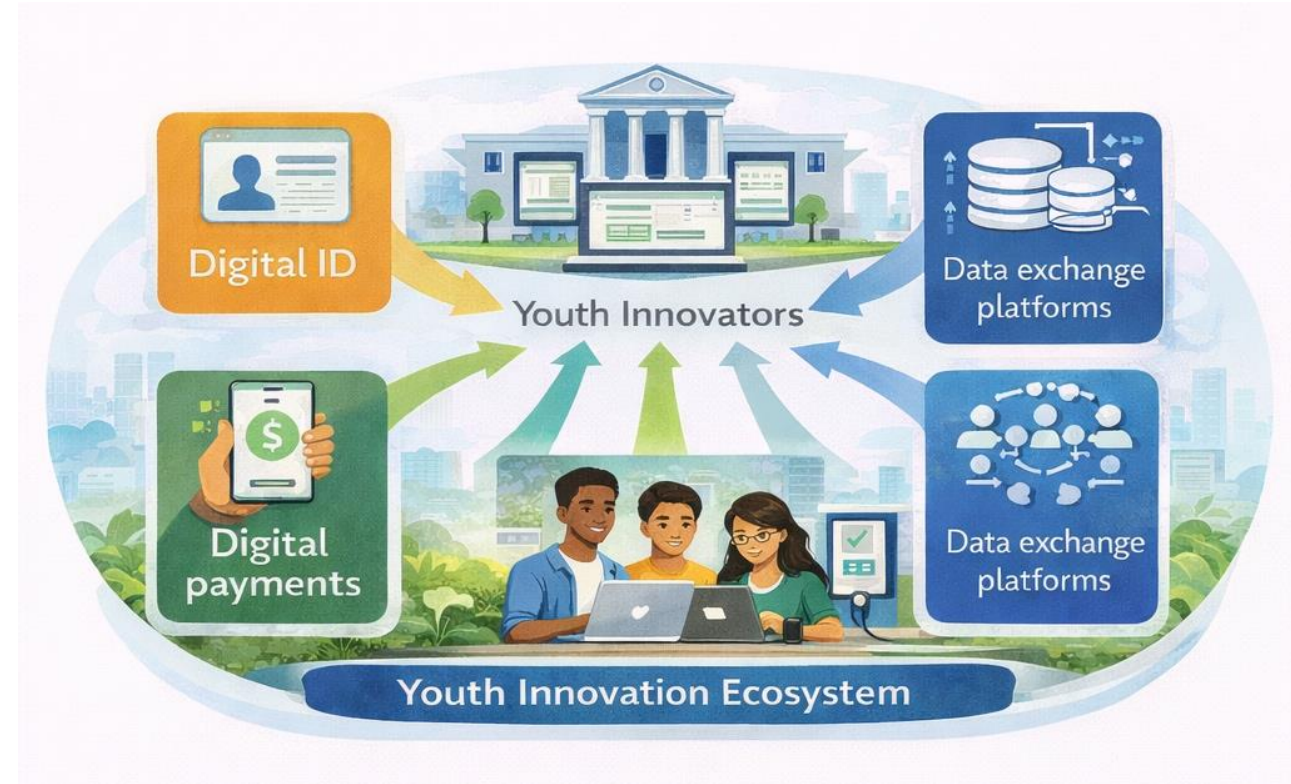
Create formal visibility: youth innovation registries, challenge pipelines, evidence standards, and public-interest innovation maps.

Resource

Move beyond awards: pilot-to-scale funds, procurement windows, vouchers for testing, and regulatory support.

Integrate

Connect youth-built solutions to digital public infrastructure, data protocols, service portals, and regional technology transfer platforms.



What each institution can do now

Governments

Adopt innovation-oriented procurement
Expand regulatory sandboxes
Invest in connectivity, skills, and open data

Regional bodies

Document transferable models
Harmonize standards and safeguards
Build peer-learning networks

Intergovernmental organizations

Finance pilot-to-scale mechanisms
Support responsible AI governance
Create regional evidence and metrics

Most important: create adoption pathways, not only innovation events.

A youth innovation ecosystem becomes durable when prototypes can move into procurement, public service delivery, regional replication, and long-term maintenance.

Closing message

Do not ask only: “How do we include youth in technology transfer?”

Ask: “How do we redesign technology transfer around the way youth actually innovate?”

That means recognition, resources, adoption pathways, interoperability, safeguards, and inclusion from the start.

Thank you