The Workshop

Mapping the landscape:

how to talk about systems change in Aotearoa, New Zealand

Version 1.0 August 2021
www.theworkshop.org.nz

Peter McKenzie Project

TOKONA TE RAKI Māori Futures Collective

The Southern Initiative

Contents

About this report

This ‘mapping the landscape’ report summarises a Peter McKenzie Project-funded collaboration between The Workshop, Tokona Te Raki and The Southern Initiative to provide advice on how to talk about systems change in ways that will deepen understanding and build public support for the changes we are all working towards. Central to this aim, we were interested in what we could understand about systems change from kaupapa Māori and other Indigenous perspectives, in order to find messages that would resonate more strongly here in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

How we developed this report

The following sections outline findings from both a literature review[1] and five participant interviews with Māori and Pasifika systems change knowledge-holders and practitioners – Anna Jane-Edwards, Dr Eruera Tarena, Dr Daniel Hikuroa, Angie Tangaere and Tania Pouwhare – for which we thank them. The report has been designed to draw from this background research alongside The Workshop’s five building blocks narrative methodology to offer some immediate recommendations that might assist our ngā kaikōkiri community and others working in the area of systems change in communicating their work. We have also outlined some of the interesting themes that emerged which could be explored further in an extended systems change messaging project.

We would like to also thank our peer reviewer, Morgan Godfery, whose thoughtful reflections have been included.

1 Jordan Green, “Literature Review: How to Talk about Systems Change” (Wellington, New Zealand: The Workshop, 2021).

How to use this report

- This report offers recommendations for your communications based on a research literature review of Aotearoa specific literature referring to systems change and systems work, and from an established body of literature on strategic communications and how to communicate systems change. It also draws on the analysis of five knowledge-holder interviews with systems change practitioners.
- Based on this research and The Workshop's unique evidence-based framework for narratives for change we are able to tell you with some confidence, some of the things you should stop doing in your communications based on what we know to be unhelpful.
- We also have some recommendations of techniques and suggestions for you to start using that might be helpful.
- Since these recommendations are yet to be tested, we don't yet know how the messages we have included will work in the context of systems change in Aotearoa NZ.
- What we are able to offer in this guide are well informed predictions and, if we are able to expand this project to include message development and testing, we will have the opportunity to see how these messages land with our own persuadable audiences (see next steps).
- For now, we encourage you to start experimenting with these messages to see how they work with your audiences. Notice how people respond to them, which parts people resonate with most and let us know how they are being received.

Why we need more helpful ways to speak about systems change

- To build a shared understanding of what systems change means among our communities of practice.
- To lift the public's gaze to systems and how they can support the changes that will have the greatest impact for the people and communities we work with.
- To be able to clearly communicate the impact and process of systems change work with funders, decision-makers and our communities.

Key recommendations:

seven things you can do right now with your communications about systems change

In this list you will find:

- ➔ seven things you can do now to build greater support and understanding of your systems change work
- ➔ some ideas on how you can navigate around unhelpful public thinking by using different language and communication strategies.

The recommendations are those which we have good reason to be confident will help your communications. These are the findings which align broadly with what we have found in previous research across a range of topics.

More detail on our findings and each of the recommendations can be found in the sections following.

Key recommendation

1

Lead with a vision of a better future and an articulated pathway to a new system

Start with the concrete vision of what our day to day looks like where the changes we are working towards have already been made, then create a pathway to that vision.

Be specific in your vision. Describe:

- How people's lives will be better in concrete ways
- How specific aspects of our environment will look different

E.g., "We can have a future in which whānau have everything they need to realise their mana motuhake. Most of us want whānau to have more time to spend together, and more safe spaces to play in together. Young parents are confident and enjoy having children. Children are cheeky and fun. Parents are relaxed."

Be specific about your pathway. Name:

- The people responsible
- What needs to change
- And how

E.g., "To create this future, we need people in government to value and prioritise children, parents and nurturers in spending and policy. People at the Treasury need to consider the impact of Budget bids on children and their caregivers and focus on prevention."

Key recommendation

2

Build people into our systems change stories

Agency is important for building support for systems change, where audiences are able to clearly see how people have contributed to systemic issues, and how they themselves can contribute to change. To achieve this, we need to communicate how systems have been designed a certain way, by certain types of people making choices and decisions. This shows that with different people designing them, we can create different and more equitable outcomes.

Example of an inagentive sentence

"To create a better future, our economy needs to be redesigned to prioritise people and the planet."

Example of naming an agent

"Our economy was designed by *people in banks and businesses* to prioritise profit over human and environmental wellbeing. In order to redesign our economy, *people in government* need to make whānau and te taiao a priority in spending and policy."

Key recommendation

3

De-jargon the way we talk about systems change

A key communication challenge identified by both international framing researchers, and our ngā kaikōkiri practitioners, was the need to make systems change easier to understand by replacing some of the jargon we use to explain the doing of systems change.

Here are some of our suggestions:

Avoid	Embrace
➔ Systems change	➔ Changes that will make the biggest difference[2]
➔ Radical transformation	➔ Re-designing our economy with concrete policies in mind
➔ Co-design and collaboration	➔ » Explain what you mean by co-design or collaboration, i.e., "those most excluded by systems leading in re-designing them". ➔ » Use self-direction values to explain why people most impacted should have a say and drive decisions, i.e., "people who have been excluded from our human designed systems should be able to realise their own dreams and make decisions on how these systems could better support our collective wellbeing".

2 JRose Hendricks and Nicky Hawkins, "Six Ways to Change Hearts and Minds about Climate Change" (FrameWorks Institute, September 15, 2020), https://www.onroadmedia.org.uk/2020/09/15/six-ways-to-change-hearts-and-minds-about-climate-change/

Key recommendation

4

Build support by drawing on the following intrinsic values

Rebalancing opportunity and inclusion

E.g., "Our systems have been designed by people in government and corporate powers to benefit certain communities while excluding others. We need to redesign our systems to be more equitable by rebalancing opportunities, and ensuring that those most harmed by our current systems lead in deciding how we can better support our collective wellbeing."

Whanaungatanga and manaakitanga (benevolence values of love, care, and reciprocity)

E.g., "We all want the best for our whānau and future generations. To ensure we are all supported to live a good life where we have time to do the things we enjoy doing with the people we love, we need people in government to centre the wellbeing of people and the planet in policy and funding decisions."

Responsibility and pragmatism

E.g., "It's important we take responsible steps to manage the issues facing our communities, including the inequitable outcomes of human designed systems. We need to listen to the people who know what works to solve these problems, and take the best steps to deal with them. The most practical approach to addressing inequality is preventative and long term approaches which address systemic causes and centre lived experience."

More detail on using values in your communications can be found on p.21.

Key recommendation

5

Bring agency and inclusivity into our stories **by avoiding these frames and terms**

➔ Complexity	**E.g., "wicked problems"**
➔ Innovation	**E.g., "agility, lean, design thinking"**
➔ Individualism	**E.g., by talking about "choices, lifestyles and behaviours"**

And embrace these frames and terms instead:

- ➔ Design for rebalancing opportunity
- ➔ Whānau/hapū centred
- ➔ Tīpuna wisdom

More examples and detail on how to use frames in your communications can be found on p. 25.

Key recommendation

6

Develop shared understanding by using metaphors

These include:

- Upstream/downstream
- Reprogramming our systems (through tīpuna algorithms)

And avoid unhelpful metaphors like:

- 'Levers' which does not provide a good explanation about systems.
- 'Silos' which isolate human designed systems instead of reflecting the ways they are interconnected.

Metaphors can be helpful to build better understanding when used in an explanatory chain. More examples and detail on how to use metaphors in your communications can be found on p. 29.

Key recommendation

7

Use explanatory chains to link your work back to systems change concepts

Be clear on what you mean by systems change, and link the issues you are communicating back to this explanation.

➔ We recommend doing this by moving through the following:

- » Foreground the issue
- » Identify the cause of the problem
- » Accounts of the indirect and direct impacts (including a few facts)
- » Naming the solutions

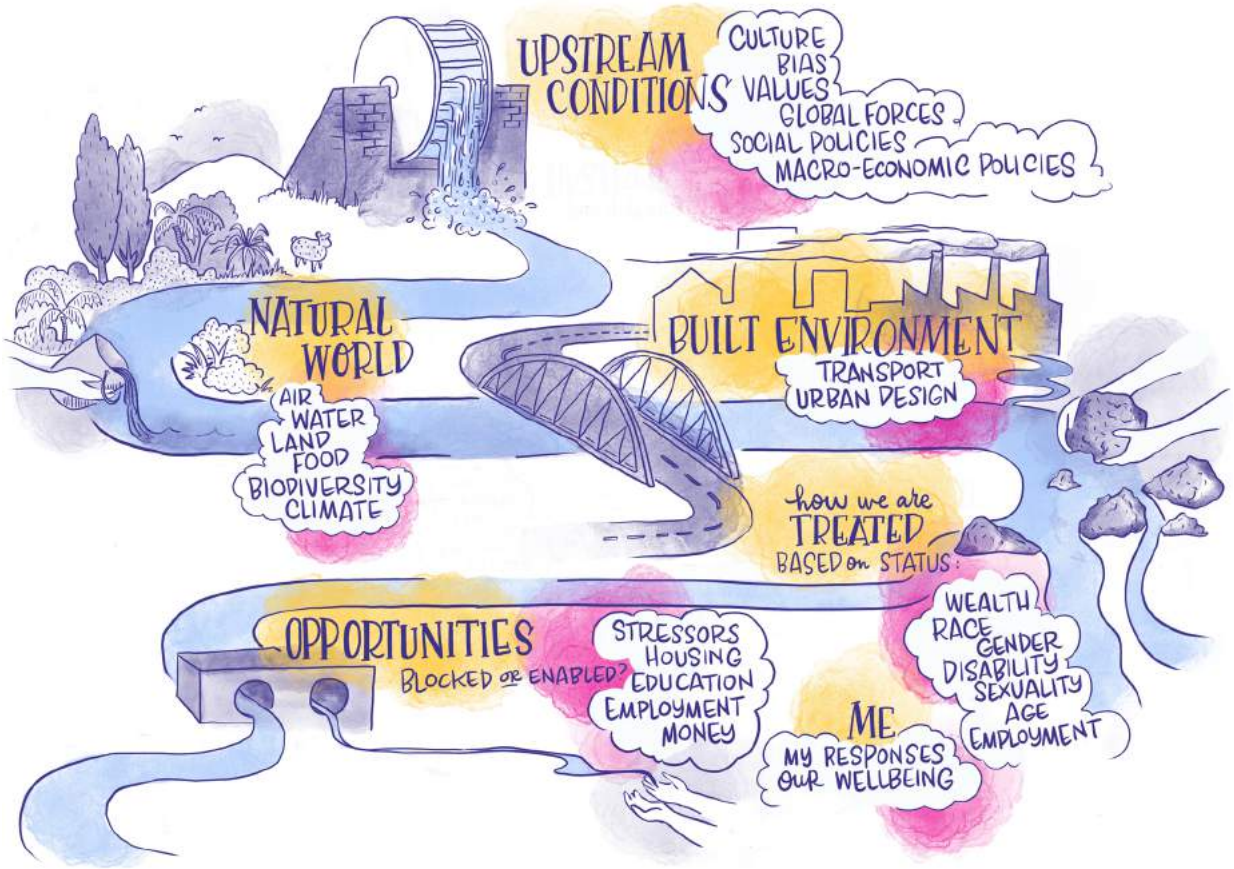
Other general principles for your systems change communications:

Avoid	Embrace
➔ Choices, lifestyles, and behaviour	➔ Options available to us[3]
➔ Wicked problems	➔ Upstream conditions ➔ Issues that have many contributing factors
➔ Talking about 'silos' or systems in isolation	➔ Emphasise the way people and systems are "working together"
➔ Levers	➔ Upstream changes and changes that make the biggest difference
➔ Service users as being 'hard to reach' when what we mean to say is that services are ineffective or hard to reach	➔ System redesign with whānau and those who need our support at the centre

3 Hendricks and Hawkins.

Our understanding of systems change

At the Workshop, we understand systems change to mean the *changes that make the biggest difference* for people and the planet. To explain this, we use the upstream/ downstream metaphor of an awa or river.



Downstream, where most people stand, are all of the visible problems we collectively wish to overcome. As we walk upstream we can see the social, environmental and cultural conditions that shape our lives and experiences. For example, the way in which people in our public institutions treat us, our information environment, how our transport systems and cities are built, the policies the government puts in place (or doesn't), the rules of the economy, and our cultural beliefs and values.

Extensive bodies of research show us that, in changing some of these conditions, we can make the biggest improvements to the most people's lives over the longest timeframe, for the least individual effort. Many of the big issues of the world can't be solved at the downstream level (for example, by asking individuals who experience poor outcomes to change their behaviour) while the issues that caused the problems upstream remain in place. However, much work being done by people and organisations downstream is critical to support those experiencing poor outcomes.

The role of narratives in mindset shift and systems change

The Workshop researches and advises on 'narratives for change', a set of narrative and communication strategies that research has shown can help deepen and shift public thinking on complex social and environmental issues, improve decision-making, and contribute to evidence-informed system changes. In *The Waters of Systems Change*, the authors identified mental models as a critical condition that keeps problems stuck in place, and which require shifting in order to support change across all of the other structural and relational levels of systems change work.[4] In narrative work, we refer to these mental models as mindsets.

Mindsets play a central role in people's ability to think deeply about and support any kind of change. Mindsets are deeply embedded, often invisible, ways that people think about how the world works and the particular issue of concern.

These mindsets can play an even more crucial role when we are asking people to think about and support the kinds of big changes that experts say will make the most difference to people's lives. These mindsets are informed by enduring narratives or stories in our cultural discourse. Mental short-cuts we all use, which help us survive in an information rich world, also serve to protect our existing mindsets. It is difficult for researchers, advocates and policy-makers to make evidence-driven shifts to policies and practices if existing mindsets and cultural narratives are shallow or out of date.

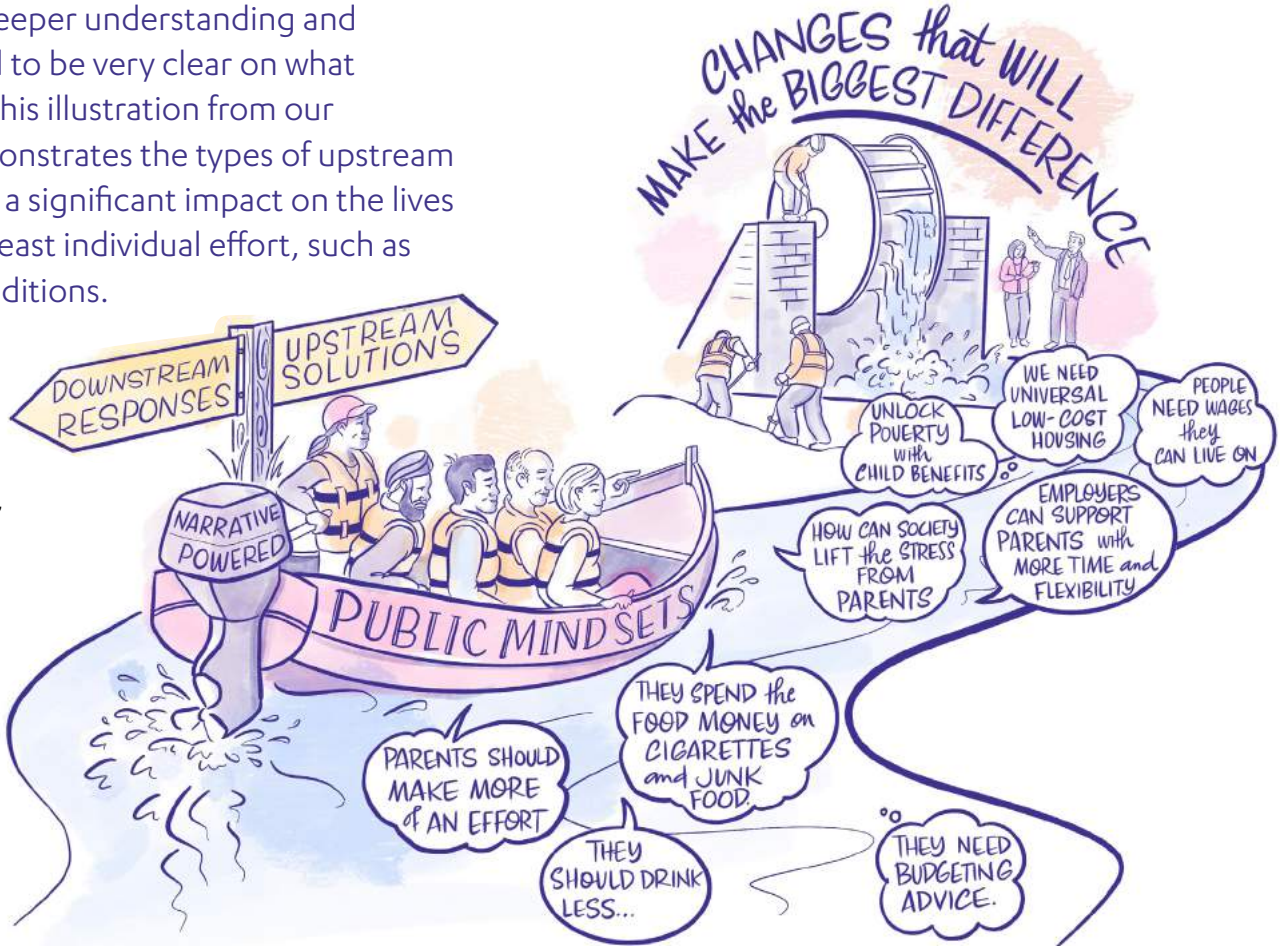
For people to be willing to support and actively engage in best policies, investments and practices, we need to deepen people's understanding of the causes of problems and the changes that are needed and possible. Researchers have found that shifts in people's thinking, and ultimately shifts in systems, are driven by scientifically developed and tested narrative strategies. They are a critical tool for anyone working on changes that will make the biggest difference to our long term wellbeing.

4 John Kania, Mark Kramer, and Peter Senge, "The Water of Systems Change" (FSG Reimagining Social Change, May 15, 2018), https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change

Topic specific example of systems change: child poverty

In order to speak in ways that build deeper understanding and support for systems change, we need to be very clear on what systems change is, and what it isn't. This illustration from our narrative work on child poverty[5] demonstrates the types of upstream solutions that we identified as having a significant impact on the lives of children and their whānau for the least individual effort, such as changing living and employment conditions.

The downstream responses represent the sort of personal choice and behaviours solutions we are used to seeing discussed by the public and sometimes policy-makers. Programmatic responses that focus on downstream problems, while still important, are not systems change as the conditions causing these problems upstream remain in place.

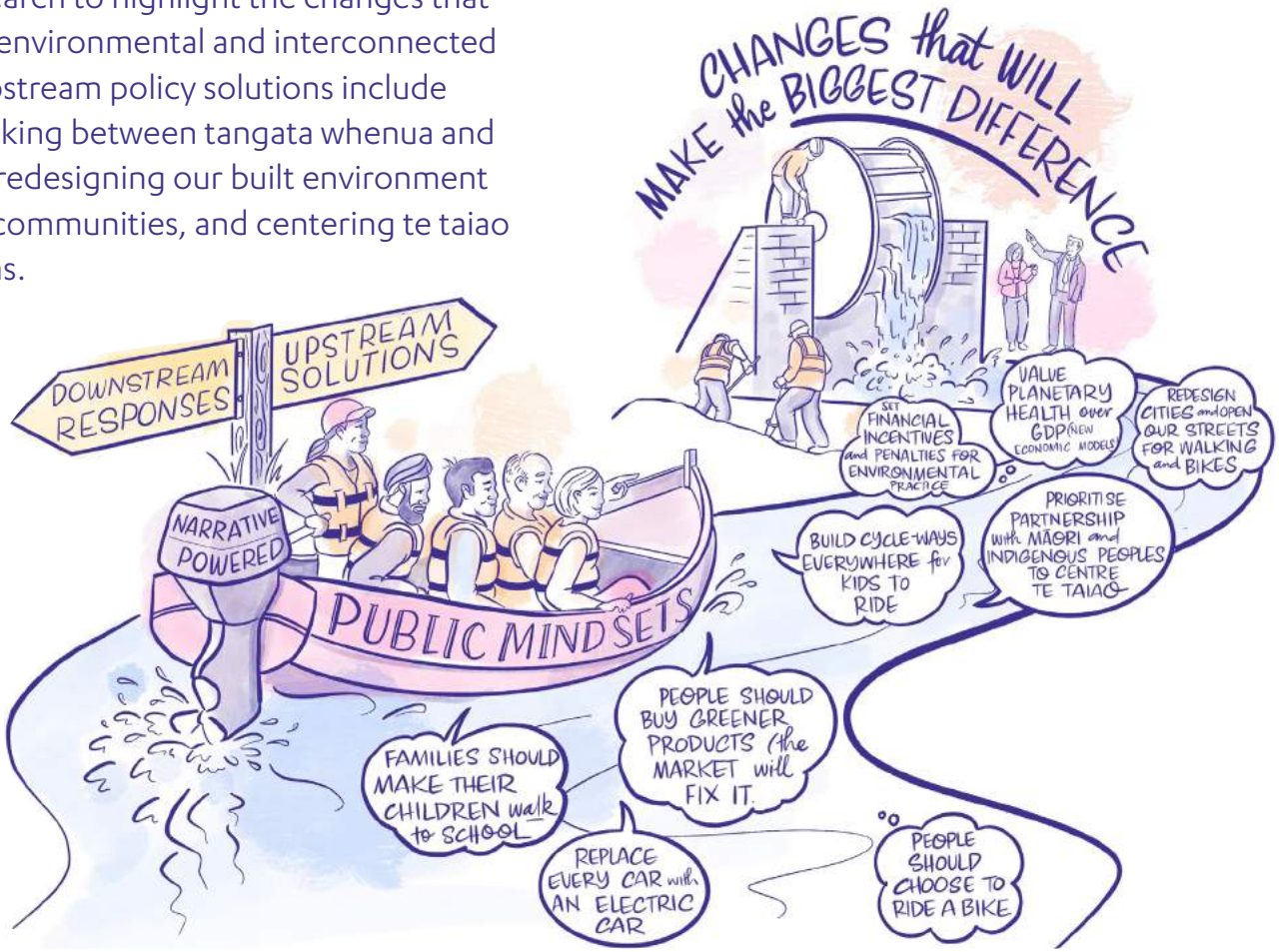


5 Jess Berentson-Shaw and Marianne Elliott, "How to Talk about Child and Family Wellbeing: A Toolkit, 2019" (Wellington: The Workshop, 2019), https://www.theworkshop.org.nz/publications/how-to-talk-about-child-and-family-wellbeing-a-toolkit-2019.

Topic specific example of systems change: environmental health

The second example draws from across many of our different messaging guides and narrative research to highlight the changes that will make the biggest difference for environmental and interconnected human health and wellbeing. The upstream policy solutions include partnership and shared decision-making between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti (people of the Treaty), redesigning our built environment for active transport and connected communities, and centering te taiao in all of our human-designed systems.

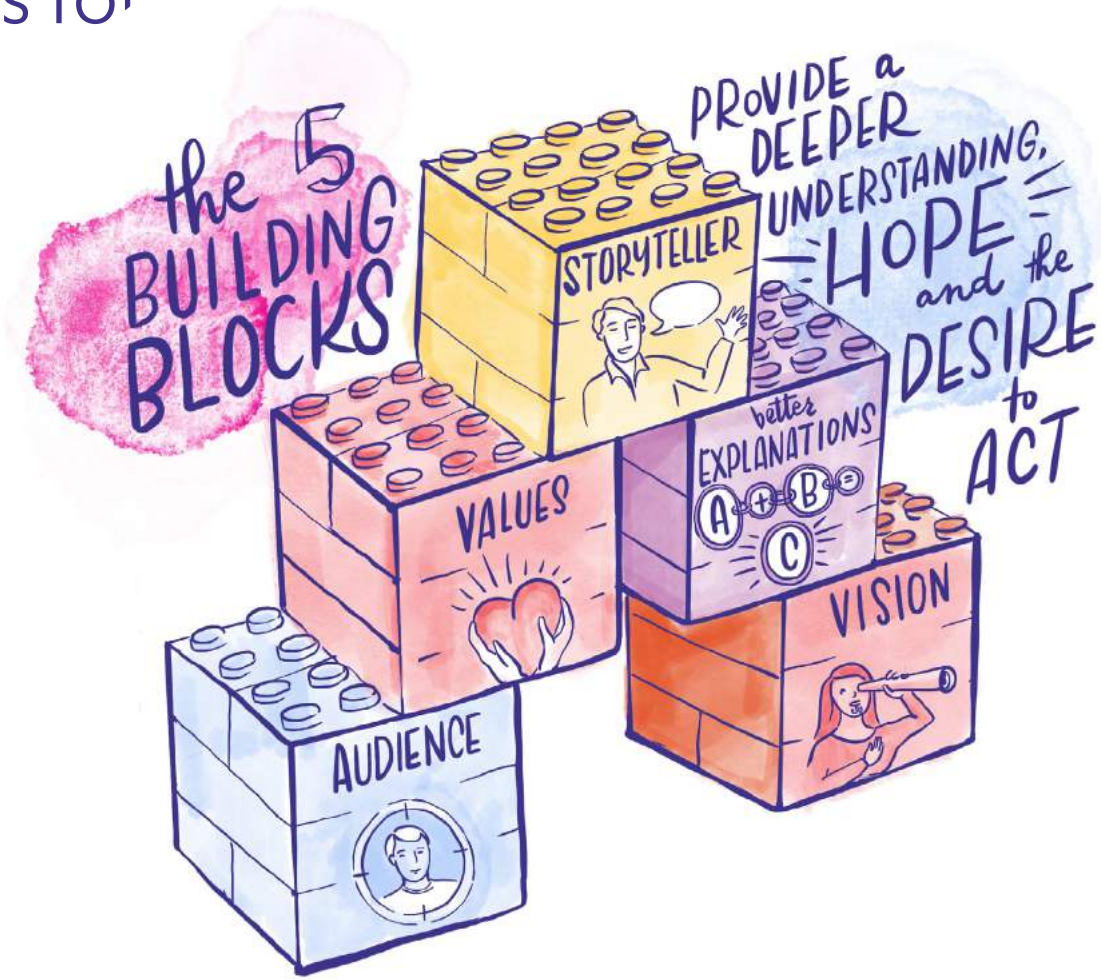
Through effective narrative strategies we are able shift public mindsets toward these upstream solutions through better understanding – not necessarily of the entire systems and how to change them – but by clearly articulating a pathway to a new system and outlining how things could be different.



The five building blocks of narratives for change: evidence based tools and techniques for deepening thinking

The following is a summary of our findings from our literature review and knowledge-holder interviews. These draw on our five building blocks framework and aspects of narrative change to help deepen understanding and shift unhelpful mindsets.

We have looked at international narrative strategies and Aotearoa systems change talk to provide greater detail on the ways we might be informed by mātauranga Māori and other Indigenous knowledge systems to build support for systems change work in Aotearoa.



Building block 1. Know your audience

Many communications are aimed at the noisy few – the hardest to move, the least likely to understand. When we focus on these people, we amplify their message – we myth bust or negate, and don't tell our own story. So before thinking about what we say, we think about who we are talking to. There are three main groups of people to consider – those already persuaded (our base), those firmly opposed and unlikely to be persuaded (opposition), and those who don't have a fixed view (persuadables or fence-sitters). Focus on finding effective ways to communicate with persuadable people.

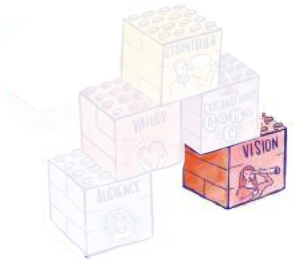
When talking amongst our ngā kaikōkiri community of practice, we will often be talking to those in our base. However, even among our base, knowledge-holders recognised a need for our community of practice to develop a shared language and understanding of systems change that resonates here in Aotearoa.

Two specific audiences for communications to build greater support and understanding of your systems change work also emerged. These were whānau and the communities that practitioners work with, who are often positioned downstream within our upstream/downstream metaphor. And the second group – government agencies, funders and decision-makers who fund our work – who are represented in our metaphor as those making decisions upstream. People in these two audiences may sit in your base, persuadable or opposition audiences.

Different strategies emerged to communicate with intersecting audiences – base and persuadables. One strategy of communicating with whānau came through strongly, and can be used for the benefit of persuadable people across all groups. Avoid using jargon and the specific language of systems change that most of us as practitioners are familiar with. Instead of leading with systems change language, one of our kaikōkiri shared that she frames systems change to whānau as, "we want to work alongside you to understand how we can do things differently so our tamariki can be really well".[6] Through these conversations we can highlight the desired outcome or most impactful point of change for those we partner with and work backwards from that point.

The next step for our community of practice might be to think about how we use these alternative messages with other groups, including government agencies, funders and decision-makers, to build a shared deeper understanding of systems change without needing to rely on industry/practitioner jargon. (See p.8 for a table of helpful language shifts.)

6 Angie Tangaere, Systems Change Interview with The Workshop, March 11, 2021.



Building block 2. Lead with a concrete vision for a better world (vision-led stories)

When we talk about these big changes, we are asking people to see something that is not yet in place, and to go against embedded ways of thinking and seeing the world. To create space for them to consider new information we need to provide them with a clear picture of a different world in which evidence has been followed and the changes that make the most difference have happened.

Most people are unaware of systems and the values that underpin them, let alone able to imagine an alternative way of doing things across entire communities. We need to provide people with a concrete vision of what the outcomes of a reimagined system would look and feel like on a day t o day, real life scale.

> **E.g., "We can have a future in which whānau have everything hey need to realise their mana motuhake. Most of us want whānau to have more time to spend together, and more safe spaces to play in together. Young parents are confident and enjoy having children. Children are cheeky and fun. Parents are relaxed. To create this future, we need people in government to value and prioritise children, parents and nurturers in spending and policy. People at the Treasury need to consider the impact of Budget bids on children and their caregivers and focus on prevention."**

In visioning what this new way of doing things looks like, we can follow the wisdom of Kīngi Tāwhiao Pōtatau Te Wherowhero – ki te kāhore he whakakitenga ka ngaro te iwi – without vision the people are lost. Māori need to lead in our own vision, and in a shared vision, which we are all responsible for realising. Similarly, Pacific peoples and other communities should also be able to lead in their own visions.

Pathway to vision

Across our knowledge-holders, the work of visioning emerged as naming the pathways to Māori/Pasifika centred systems that would look entirely different from what we currently have. They named the values we would collectively prioritise and what it would look like if our systems legitimised and included different ways of knowing and being.

- Overwhelmingly, these overlapping visions included manaakitanga – empathy and upholding mana – as a force for transformation.
- Different people, ordinary people, would be responsible for making decisions that impact them and several generations into the future.
- The outcomes of this work would look like mana motuhake, rebalanced opportunity, whānau feeling safe, empowered and experiencing self-determination, as well as having the time and resources to do the things that they love with the people they love. Ultimately, this acknowledges that these are the things where ora (life/health) originates for our peoples.

Barriers and agents

Part of the responsibility of tangata tiriti, is to help make changes that make the biggest difference in our economic and policy-making systems. The specific things that needed changing were identified as:

- system prioritisation of capital and growth (i.e., capitalism)
- layers of bureaucracy in proving accountability
- under resourcing of 'by Māori, for Māori' initiatives
- the need to demonstrate progress according to a capital-based model
- a lack of cultural understanding
- decision-making and power imbalance
- systems designed by and for Pākehā
- and status quo mindsets which assume Western worldviews as the norm and make systems informed by these worldviews invisible.

It is critical to name the pathways to realising a vision of reimagined systems in our communications. But research shows that the order in which we present our message matters. A strong, compelling message starts with the ways people's lives will be better in concrete ways, and then goes on to outline the changes that need to happen to achieve that, ideally naming the people who can make those changes.

There is more work that can be done to get more concrete with our ngā kaikōkiri vision of systems change. There could be an opportunity for future research, see our 'next steps' section, and this may overlap with work already being done in this space through the PMP-funded vision-making project led by ActionStation, Tokona Te Raki, Whakaaro Factory and The Workshop.

3

Building block 3. Connecting with what matters to people: values

Values are core to effective communication about important and complex social issues because they lie at the heart of human motivations. Values are the 'why' of life – the things that are most important to us, or that we aspire to. They inform our beliefs, our attitudes and our actions, but don't always align with them. Values inform how we come to believe certain things about our human-built systems.

They influence what solutions we believe are needed ('programmatic change' of programmes which address need but not root causes vs. 'redesigning our social support systems'). People often talk about engaging with audiences' values to better communicate. However, people hold a very wide range of values, and often communicators misinterpret what values most people hold most dear. It's the values we hold about taking care of each other and the planet, about discovery and creativity, and reaching our own goals that motivate people to act on systems change for collective wellbeing.

Key Insight: Why values matter in communications

We are motivated by a wide range of basic values, some are intrinsic in nature (they have inherent internal rewards), for example love, responsibility, and self determination. Some values are extrinsic in nature (they have external, often material rewards), for example, status, wealth, power, and achievement.

We are also motivated by security for ourselves and our in-group (family, community, country, etc.). This often looks like being motivated by fear for ourselves or family's health and safety.

Research shows that if we want to encourage people to support and take actions for collective benefit we need to:

- ➔ surface the intrinsic values that most people hold (but may not express), and
- ➔ avoid the extrinsic and security values people hold.

Surfacing and engaging people's intrinsic and collective values helps them think about and understand complex collective social and environmental problems and solutions.

For one map of basic human values researched by Shalom Schwartz and colleagues see the Common Cause values maps.

The following are values that came through strongly from Aotearoa-based literature and from our interviews. These values are used as part of narrative strategies to raise people's gaze to systems, and to help them imagine different ways of doing things. Values are used to engage people in the issues we are communicating and motivate them to act on collective goals. Here they are named alongside the explanations they were used in. The values used most commonly in the literature and by our knowledge holders were all intrinsic values which evidence tells us are most effective in changing our systems to support collective wellbeing. We are interested in testing their effectiveness in building support for systems change work here in Aotearoa.

Rebalancing opportunity and inclusion

- The primary value described by knowledge-holders and found in the literature is that of rebalancing opportunity (a useful way of expressing the value of equity) and inclusion as meeting the needs of all people and the importance of whānau and communities having equal access to opportunity. By pointing out how our systems have been designed by and for certain people, while excluding others, advocates communicating systems change are using intrinsic values to talk about what inclusive systems could look like and how they would benefit everyone.

What does this sound like?

"Our systems have been designed by people in government and corporate powers to benefit certain communities while excluding others. We need to redesign our systems to be more equitable by rebalancing opportunities, and ensuring that those most harmed by our current systems lead in deciding how we can better support our collective wellbeing."

Whanaungatanga and manaakitanga (love, care and reciprocity)

- In values research, benevolence is the term used to describe a group of values that emphasise the importance of caring for and supporting the people we know and are in our lives. However, these values sit in a set of universalism values which extend beyond caring about those we know to encompass wider communities and care for people who we may not know. Generally, these benevolence values are about preserving and strengthening others' wellbeing.
- This value is what knowledge-holders and researchers claim is missing in our current systems. More inclusive systems would have these relational values at their centre (rather than economic ones).
- These benevolence values, used in combination with our equity and inclusion values, can help people connect with the people in systems, especially the people who our systems are not currently working for.
- Intergenerational – for our knowledge-holders part of caring for each other means that we need to encourage those with the power today to prioritise the ora of future generations.

What does this sound like?

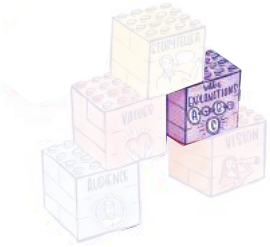
"We all want the best for our whānau and future generations. To ensure we are all supported to live a good life where we have time to do the things we enjoy doing with the people we love, we need people in government to centre the wellbeing of people and the planet in policy and funding decisions."

Responsibility and pragmatism

- This value communicates that it is important to solve our communities' problems by doing what works. Pragmatism values, or taking a 'common sense' approach, replaces approaches that don't work (like "fiddling around the edges") with 'proven alternatives'.
- This value was used in communications directed at decision-makers, but was also used among practitioners. Asking questions such as "what are our responsibilities to our communities", and "which changes will make the biggest impact for them", is a helpful way to engage this value.
- When using this value, it is important to connect the overall vision of change with the pathway to achieving this vision. Make sure to lead with a concrete vision and a clearly articulated pathway to achieving this vision, where you clearly specify who needs to do what.

What does this sound like?

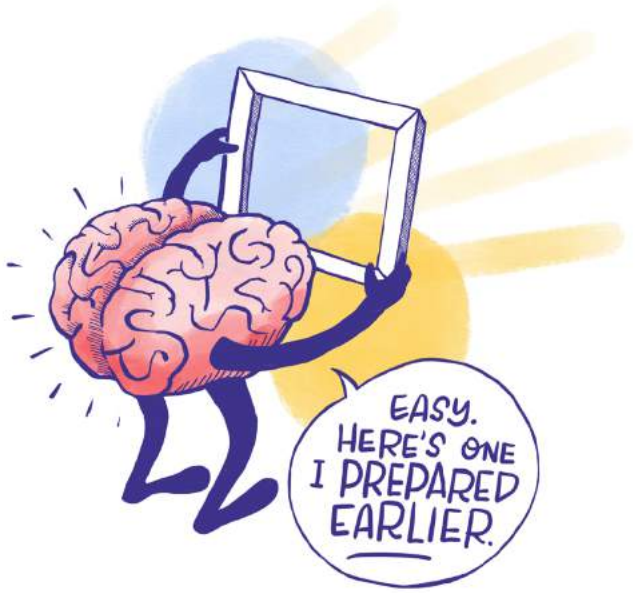
"It's important we take responsible steps to manage the issues facing our communities, including the many negative outcomes experienced by whānau caused by human designed systems. We need to listen to the people who know what works to solve these problems, and take the best steps to deal with them. The most practical approach to addressing inequality are preventative and long term approaches which address systemic causes and centre lived experience."



4

Building block 4. Provide better explanations

To surface better understandings for people about systems change work, we also need to move away from simply describing the things we already know about a problem or a solution and provide better explanations for how the problem happens, what the impacts are, and then the solutions. In strategic communication, a good explanation works with people's fast-thinking brains and is an invitation for people to slow their thinking down. There are effective explanatory tools and simplifying models that communicators can utilise. These include frames, metaphors and explanatory chains.



Key Insight: What is a frame?

A frame is a lens through which we can present particular issues. Each frame comes with a bundle of neurologically hard wired associations and existing understandings and explanations.

Different frames lead people to think and act in different ways. For example, if we frame solutions to social issues by talking about the changes parents need to make in their choices and behaviours, this leads to individualism thinking (individualism frame) – that solving these issues relies on individual behaviour change rather than upstream policy changes.

Every issue we talk about is framed, regardless of whether we are aware of it or not.

Economic and individualistic frames are common but unhelpful when we want to deepen understanding of collective problems, solutions and effective action.

Frames

➔ Whānau and hapū centred (vs. individual centred)

» This collective framing is the most important distinction and critique of Western-designed systems which assume an individual at the centre of social services, and centralised decision-making by government.

» From many Māori and Pasifika perspectives, it is the whānau or the family at the centre of the system. This is often one of the primary reasons systems based on individuals are failing our people. One of the knowledge holders explained it as, "the cultural dynamic of 'I am not just me I am we'".[7]

» In addition, hapū and local communities are reframed as being the best decision-makers for their own distinctive communities. Expertise is reframed in terms of lived experience and proximity, as opposed to qualifications or education.

What does this sound like?

"Our current systems, such as social development, education and health, have been designed based on outdated ideas that the best way to help communities is to support individuals who need it. However, what we know works for our Māori and Pasifika communities is supporting the wellbeing of individuals as part of a collective, just as the wellbeing of children is interconnected with that of their parents/caregivers. The best way to support all people in our communities is for people who design policy to centre the entire family, whānau and 'aiga in decision-making and service delivery."

➔ Designed inequality/Design for rebalanced opportunity

» This frame, used commonly across our practitioners and research, helps to make visible the human decisions being made at the centre of our governance systems.

» Using this frame brings humans into systems, as recommended by narrative research.[8] By doing this, it avoids 'fatalism thinking' as it highlights human agency and explains how systems have been designed, for what purpose, and by which people. It helps explain why all of our current systems are failing Māori and Pasifika whānau and communities.

» This can sound the same as the example for rebalancing opportunity values:

E.g., "Our systems have been designed by people in government and corporate powers to benefit certain communities while excluding others. We need to redesign our systems to be more equitable by rebalancing opportunities, and ensuring that those most harmed by our current systems lead in deciding how we can better support our collective wellbeing."

7 Anna-Jane Edwards, Systems Change Interview with The Workshop, March 2, 2021.

8 Nat Kendall-Taylor and Bill Pitkin, "We Need to Talk about How We Talk about Systems Change...," The Communications Network, 2020, https://www.comnetwork.org/insights/we-need-to-talk-about-how-we-talk-about-systems-change/.

➔ Partnership/solidarity

» The idea of partnership and solidarity has emerged in research we have done on co-governance of our bioheritage,[9] and highlights the need for joint tangata whenua and tangata tiriti decision-making in the design of all of our systems.

» What this frame does is lay out a role for tangata tiriti to support Māori designing, leading and strategising to achieve the collective dreams of our ancestors in signing Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It illustrates how we can draw from different knowledge bases and broad expertise – instead of Māori only being invited into participation and collaboration.

» For realising a Māori vision of mana motuhake, and after centuries of Pākehā-led visions, partnership and solidarity was described as the responsibility of tangata tiriti allies to consider, "how do they be good teina under the tuakana of a Māori vision?".[10]

What does this sound like?

"In order to best care for our collective wellbeing, we need to realise the shared hopes and ambitions of our ancestors in signing Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This agreement provides the foundation for partnership and balanced decision-making for the benefit of our collective wellbeing and the environment we all wish to protect."

Key Insight: Solidarity/ kotahitanga

We consider that solidarity may be an alternative and perhaps less overused concept to partnership to help our persuadable audiences better understand the role of tangata tiriti in supporting Māori visions of mana motuhake, decision-making and leadership.

Morgan Godfery, our peer reviewer, shared that kotahitanga may have greater resonance in te ao Māori to express solidarity than partnership. As he explained, just as solidarity implies uniting with others, kotahitanga also implies a unity, especially a unity in purpose. Partnership may not always imply this unity in purpose, feeling, or action and can often be entered into because of circumstance.

We are interested to see how kotahitanga lands with different audiences, and offer this insight here as it may speak more clearly to audiences in the spaces you work in as systems change practitioners and communicators.

9 The Workshop, "Short Guide: How to Talk About Co-Governance of Our Bioheritage" (Wellington, New Zealand: The Workshop, 2021).

10 Dr Eruera Tarena, Systems Change Interview with The Workshop, March 3, 2021.

➔ Tīpuna wisdom

» Through this idea of tīpuna wisdom, our past and our contribution to the future as Māori and Pasifika can be reframed to counter common harmful narratives which have rendered our ways of knowing as irrelevant to the design of governance systems.

» It describes how we can draw from the strengths passed down to us, of skillful navigation, of cumulative environmental observations, making sense of complexity through whakapapa, and of koha-based collective economies – as examples of wisdom we can follow to guide our future.

» Instead of 'looking back', which may have negative connotations in Pākehā conceptualisations of progress and modernity, knowledge holders highlighted the strength and potential which can be brought to systems change work through Māori and Indigenous perspectives and leadership.

A caution in using the Tīpuna wisdom frame

While acknowledging the more general strengths-based uses of this frame, our reviewer reflected that some care should be exercised when engaging this tīpuna wisdom frame. In order to avoid inadvertently misappropriating aspects of mātauranga, those who wish to use this frame should do so in co-development with and under clear directive from the relevant Māori descendents from whom the wisdom comes.

➔ Health starting where we live, learn, work and play

» Significant hauora (health) Māori experience and thinking has brought social determinants of health to the centre of our conceptualisations of wellbeing. These challenge the notion that the body and the brain are separate from broader social circumstances, or that there is a distinction between material and spiritual when it comes to health and illness.

» Such thinking has challenged medical practitioners to broaden their understanding of wellbeing, and set the conditions for more inclusive healthcare.

» These ideas can be extended across all of our systems to highlight that good health can be built upstream through social and environmental changes.

» We can frame this by talking about health starting where we live, learn, work and play.[11]

11 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, E. Carger, and D. Westen, "A New Way to Talk about the Social Determinants of Health" (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, January 1, 2010), https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2010/01/a-new-way-to-talk-about-the-social-determinants-of-health.html

➔ Mauri and interconnectedness between people, ecosystems, and our planet

» Mauri (life force/essence) is used as a common frame to help conceptualise the interconnectedness between living things, for holding together and connecting ecosystems, and as an alternative measure for environmental health.

» Importantly, mauri could be extended beyond the idea of equilibrium to create positive health, to a point where local ecosystems can do more than simply sustain human extraction, but can flourish and have a better chance of withstanding future challenges.

» Our knowledge-holders framed the relationships between people and things as critical to systems change, rather than reductionist approaches which assume that in order to change a system, you only need to change individual components within the system (i.e., hiring a more diverse workforce rather than addressing the underlying power structures and relationships within a workforce or sector).

» Drawing from whakapapa thinking, this frame is also used to emphasise the interconnection between our different human-built systems and the wellbeing of people with the wellbeing of Papatūānuku and the planet. This value could be used to address 'siloed' thinking that keeps systems work fragmented across imaginary divisions in our world.

12 Nat Kendall-Taylor and Bill Pitkin, "We Need to Talk about How We Talk about Systems Change…," The Communications Network, 2020, https://www.comnetwork.org/insights/we-need-to-talk-about-how-we-talk-about-systems-change/.

13 Fiona Cram, Kataraina Pipi, and Kirimatao Paipa, "Kaupapa Māori Evaluation in Aotearoa New Zealand,"
New Directions for Evaluation 2018, no. 159 (2018): 63–77, https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20331.

14 Tania Anderson, "Complex System Design for Social Innovation in Aotearoa" (Victoria University of Wellington, 2019), 62, http://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/handle/10063/8546.

15 Wehi, P. M., Scott, N. J., Beckwith, J., Rodgers, R. P., Gillies, T., Van Uitregt, V., & Watene, K. (2021). A short scan of Māori journeys to Antarctica. Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1080/03036758.2021.1917633

Unhelpful frames to avoid

We recommend you try to avoid the following frames:

➔ Complexity

Narrative research by FrameWorks,[12] recommends avoiding framing that evokes the fatalism frame – the belief that there is nothing that can be done to fix broken systems and that those with the power to do so won't act. Framing problems or systems as complex (e.g., 'wicked problems') may inadvertently evoke a sense of fatalism. In Aotearoa, complexity has also been critiqued for framing the difficulty of the 'problem' rather than examining the suitability of the approach to resolve, for example, Māori health inequity.[13] In other words, it has been used as a scapegoat for failed Western approaches to address inequity and exclusion in systems predominantly designed by and for Pākehā.

Instead, we need to evoke metaphors and explanations that simplify complexity, rather than deepen it. Build people into our systems, and avoid framing people's social conditions as too complex to work with.

➔ Innovation

Qualitative research with systems practitioners highlighted the differing understandings of the term 'innovation' as it is used within this work. Generally, innovation frames things as 'nice to have' and tends to exclude diverse viewpoints outside of a narrow Western worldview. As one practitioner stated, "Innovation is considered innovation so long as it is understandable by Pākehā innovation. Otherwise it is considered to be high risk, to be ill informed, and to not be as valuable".[14]

Instead, we need new ways of talking about innovation that draw on many forms of expertise, and position new ways of doing things as critical to the wellbeing of our people. Instead, we could talk about creative solutions. For example, moving through different stages of curiosity, observing, planning, trying, noticing, reviewing and adjusting. From a Māori perspective we can talk about navigation, charting new waters, and the wisdom and tikanga passed down through the generations which we continue to adjust and adapt based on cumulative learning and our collective needs in contemporary contexts. One example of this might be to talk about the mātauranga, skill and wisdom used by Māori to navigate to Antarctica where it applies to your work.[15]

Metaphors

In the abstract work of systems change, metaphors are a powerful way to explain how systems work, how they are designed and experienced, and most importantly, how they can be changed. The following metaphors include those which have already been tested by narrative researchers with international audiences, those that we have used in our work, and some new metaphors that we heard in this research that may be useful. These metaphors may be helpful for systems change practitioners to explain their work, and we think these would benefit from message testing with different audiences in Aotearoa.

Tested metaphors

➔ Reprogramming the economy

» This metaphor tested in research by FrameWorks[16] helped the British public develop a deeper understanding about how human systems such as the economy work, how they can be changed, and who is responsible for making these changes.

What does this sound like?

"Our economy is like a computer programme that is constantly being revised and updated. Laws and policies are the code that determines how the economy runs – what it can be used to do, and for which users. The economy has been programmed for corporate interests, while most of the public have been locked out. We need to reset the password so that we can reprogramme the economy to work for everyone."

» This metaphor could form a powerful explanation when used in combination with the 'design for rebalanced opportunity' frame, alongside our equity and inclusion values. It could be extended to explain that with a different design and with different people making decisions, our systems could look much different and have different outcomes.

» We suggest experimenting with talking about 'reprogramming the [named] system'.

16 NEON et al., "Framing the Economy: How to Win the Case for a Better System" (New Economy Organisers' Network, New Economics Foundation, FrameWorks Institute & Public Interest Research Centre, 2018), https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Framing-the-Economy-NEON-NEF-FrameWorks-PIRC.pdf.

New metaphors

➔ Tīpuna algorithms

» A comparative, untested metaphor that could be used to ground the reprogramming systems metaphor in mātauranga Māori, was the idea and metaphor of "tūpuna algorithms" described by Che Wilson in a podcast interview.[17] This metaphor was used to talk about an algorithm of success by drawing on our tīpuna wisdom, and additionally outlines an alternative, Māori-led vision for how our systems can be reprogrammed.

» Che described sharing the tīpuna algorithm "to help us see the genius, to help us fall in love with the wisdom, so then we can create magic". One specific example, which also connects with our vision-making recommendations, was Che analysing karakia and explaining that our master navigator tīpuna started by imagining a destination first, then explaining how to get there, and then affirming that they've got there. As Che explained, this mindset meant our tīpuna could explore the biggest waterbody, and these are the algorithms (the protocol and the wisdom) that we as Māori can draw on to guide us in imagining and designing new systems.

» We are particularly interested in testing the interactions between this metaphor and the reprogramming metaphor with our Aotearoa audiences.

What does this sound like?

"Our human made systems, like the New Zealand education system, are like a computer programme. They have been designed by specific people in the Ministry of Education, who use specific coding languages and rules, i.e., Western individual-centred education, in order to determine how the programme is run. We can reprogramme our systems, based on our own tīpuna algorithms, so that our rangatahi can continue in the intergenerational transmission of our wisdom, feel a secure sense of identity and belonging, and live out their own aspirations and those of their whānau."

➔ Whakapapa, weaving and ordering chaos

» Many of our knowledge holders and researchers drew on whakapapa metaphors to express the foundations Māori worldviews, and as a way of ordering and making sense of the world.

» Māori Marsden's woven universe metaphor was used often to speak about a web of existence, relational connections between all things, or of pulling threads back together.

» Whakapapa was also used to outline the material and the intangible, what cannot be observed by the eye alone. Described as creating "the ultimate system, one of connection, bonds and interconnectedness".[18]

» This metaphor, if extended further, could be used to not only describe a worldview and agency through the action of gathering and weaving threads, but also to highlight interdependencies and connections across all of our built and natural systems.

17 PlantBasedMaori, Che Wilson | Te Paepae Waho | PLANTING SEEDS PODCAST, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cilXvLET3dQ&t=2838s.

18 Dr Eruera Tarena, Systems Change Interview with The Workshop, March 3, 2021.

➔ Sea of hidden potential

» The foundation of this metaphor was based on the experiences of Māori evaluators in the current, Western-based human systems. The following whakataukī were invoked to express their experience, "he toka tūmoana he ākinga nā ngā tai – a standing rock in the sea lashed by the tides" and "ko te mauri he mea huna ki te moana – the living force is hidden in the sea".

» We can liken our current systems to a turbulent ocean to visualise the Māori experience of the current system – obscuring the potential of Māori knowledge, and our people and those who wish to change the system as fighting the tides.

» Within this ocean metaphor, as our knowledge holders identified, we need to be able to step out of the water, like a turtle or a hoiho (yellow-eyed penguin), to make systems and worldviews visible and then evaluate, and draw solutions and expertise from outside of the status quo.

» We need to break the tide and remove the challenges that our Māori and Pasifika systems kaimahi face, and draw out the hidden potential.

➔ Growing new systems

» Instead of simply changing systems or patching up old ones, which some might interpret as small and inconsequential changes, some of our knowledge-holders spoke about a process of growing entirely new systems.

» This gardening/cultivation metaphor[19] might resonate more strongly across tangata whenua and tangata tiriti audiences. It can also be extended to describe the agency of the gardeners, the many different growing conditions, interconnections between soil and plant health, and the importance of a polyculture for our collective wellbeing.

» In order to highlight human agency in the process of systems change, be sure to highlight the actions of the gardeners when using this metaphor.

➔ Journey/navigation metaphors for charting uncertainty collectively

» This metaphor, built on tīpuna wisdom framing, was used to compare a fixed course/status quo versus navigation and visioning. Similar to the tīpuna algorithm example, it evokes stories of our tīpuna imagining their destination before setting out in search of it and ultimately discovering Aotearoa.

» It speaks of the need for a navigation mindset, being willing to chart new waters, to lead and discover new ways of thinking and doing things, and of the non-linear journey which that entails.

19 Robin W. Kimmerer, "The Fortress, the River and the Garden," in *Contemporary Studies in Environmental and Indigenous Pedagogies: A Curricula of Stories and Place*, ed. Andrejs Kulnieks, Dan Roronhiakewen Longboat, and Kelly Young (Rotterdam: SensePublishers, 2013), 49–76, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6209-293-8_4.

Metaphors from our existing work

➔ Upstream/downstream

» This metaphor has been used across a lot of our work to make more visible the system level conditions which influence our lives, and in many cases, constrain the options available to us and our ability to affect change at an individual level.

» Downstream where most people stand, are all of the visible problems we collectively wish to overcome. As we walk upstream we can see the social, environmental and cultural conditions that shape our lives and experiences.

➔ One-way path/water channel

» We used this metaphor in our crime and justice work[20] to describe how people were being swept up in the current of the justice system, with no way out. The solutions can be understood as keeping people out of the justice system altogether, while helping those currently in the awa or channel out so they can find a safe landing.

» During our interviews for this systems change research, a few of our practitioners spoke about needing to "break open the pipeline". This metaphor of a fixed path or channel can be adapted for this work, to help audiences understand how the system restrains choices for whānau Māori and Pasifika. It can help people see alternatives of re-designed and more mana enhancing systems where whānau have agency and choice in the many different paths they can take.

➔ A maze with many entries and few exits

» This metaphor was also used in our crime and justice and in digital inclusion work[21] to describe how the justice system traps people in a maze that they cannot get out of.

» It works to make complex systems visible by describing how people can become trapped with a complex arrangement of social services, i.e., in digital equity being stuck navigating between the Ministry for Social Development, power companies, internet companies, intersecting with financing and housing security requirements which prevented families' digital access.

20 Marianne Elliott, Jess Berentson-Shaw, and Justspeak, "How to Talk About Crime & Justice: A Guide" (Wellington, New Zealand: The Workshop, 2020), https://www.theworkshop.org.nz/publications/how-to-talk-about-crime-amp-justice-a-guide.

21 Marianne Elliott, "Out of the Maze: Building Digitally Inclusive Communities" (Wellington, NZ: Vodafone New Zealand Foundation, Internet NZ and The Workshop, 2018), https://report.digitaldivides.nz/.

Explanatory chains

There are many aspects of systems change work that we are trying to communicate: the nature of systems and working with them, the values and mindsets which underpin them, the intersections and connections between systems, the experiences of those they exclude, who is responsible, and how things could be different.

It is not always clear to your audience how these aspects relate to each other, or back to the central kaupapa of systems change. For this reason, we suggest being explicit about what you mean by systems change and linking this with the specific issues and solutions in your area of work, through explanatory chains. We recommend doing this by moving through the following (using an example from our work on child and family wellbeing):

Foreground the issue (with a vision or value)	"We all want children in New Zealand to experience a thriving happy childhood."
Identify the cause of the problem	"People in government have underinvested in key services like public housing and income support that help the lowest-income families."
Foreground the issue (with a vision or value)	"The stress that comes with poverty can erode people's mental and physical health. Showing compassion as a society means making sure no-one has to endure the harms of this poverty."
Foreground the issue (with a vision or value)	"By providing good income support that gives real options in life, the government can make it possible for everyone to do well."

Since most of our systems are made invisible within status quo thinking, our goal is to raise people's gazes to systems, and the values and mindsets which have contributed to their design and outcomes. Most importantly, we want to help people to simplify complexity – rather than deepening it. One of our knowledge-holders referred to "the aunties test" – if you took your explanation to a whānau gathering, would everyone understand what you were talking about?[22]

22 Tarena, Systems Change Interview with The Workshop.

Agents

Research by FrameWorks[23] talks about the importance of naming agents to help avoid people feeling that there is nothing that can be done to fix systemic problems (fatalism). One helpful way of naming agents suggested by one of our knowledge-holders was to place herself in the ecosystem of agents responsible for decisions. As she shared, "It's people like me, I make one decision which goes on and informs another decision which gets rubber stamped by this person. It's people like me making choices".[24]

To be clear to our audiences and those we work with, we should be as specific as possible in naming those people in the system and the helpful behaviours we want to see from them.

Example of an inagentive sentence	Example of naming an agent
"To create a better future, our economy needs to be redesigned to prioritise people and the planet."	"Our economy was designed by *people in banks and businesses* to prioritise profit over human and environmental wellbeing. In order to redesign our economy, *people in government* need to make whānau and te taiao a priority in spending and policy."

23 Kendall-Taylor and Pitkin, "We Need to Talk about How We Talk about Systems Change...."

24 Tania Pouwhare, Systems Change Interview with The Workshop, March 17, 2021.

5

Building block 5. Storytellers

The messengers who convey messages about systems also matter. Research on messengers and trust is complex, but findings suggest we should use:

- ➔ a wide range of messengers
- ➔ messengers who are well qualified to comment on the context of the message
- ➔ unexpected messengers who may align with persuadable people's values, e.g., former National MP Chester Burrows on justice reform
- ➔ intergenerational messengers, e.g., rangatahi talking to pakeke.

Perceived expertise matters more than actual expertise.

In addition to carefully selecting our storytellers, it is important to develop a kete of specific examples and stories that outline how the status quo is impacting our people, and examples of re-imagined systems or alternative outcomes. Our knowledge-holders recommended highlighting the importance of whānau being able to tell their own stories, sharing pūrākau as an example of evidence that extends beyond Western science, and sharing stories that highlight the similarities and differences between worldviews (and mindsets that relate to system design and re-design).

One example of the last point given by Dr Dan Hikuroa[25] was explaining the need for mātauranga to be evaluated with a māturanga lens, similar to systems designed for Māori needing to be evaluated with a Māori lens (by Māori). He explains this as:

> You need to use a mātauranga lens or a tikanga lens to determine the voracity of the mātauranga. And the example would be a taniwha ... the taniwha Karutahi that resides in many places along the Waikato River, including where they planned to put the state highway right near Meremere. And so when the first I knew about Karutahi was, you know, kind of the headline in the Herald ... along the lines of 'mythical creature cost taxpayer millions of dollars', because they have to divert the state highway because there's a taniwha that lives in this area. And so if you use the scientific framing to try and test that you would go and look for a lizard or a creature that appears from time to time and wreaks havoc. You won't find it but if you view that taniwha as a codification for observations made through time, consistent with a Māori worldview you'll recognise that they observed in that place from time to time huge flooding events.

25 Dr Dan Hikuroa, Systems Change Interview with The Workshop, March 4, 2021.

Future research: Interesting stories to explore in Aotearoa systems change messaging

Some stories that came through in our research that we think would benefit from further exploration:

- **Tohu te whenua: tirotiro and learnings from our whenua. The importance of observation, being aware of the tohu that are important, developing and sharing cumulative learnings, and moving with systems like moving with nature.**[26]
- **Ecosystem story: how we can build on understandings of ecosystems from our mātauranga, e.g., maramataka, to help describe systems and systems change.**
- **Worldview story and broadmindedness values:**
  - Exploring further some of the kōrero with Dr Dan Hikuroa and examples of pūrākau and experiences that highlight differences in ways of seeing the world, and how to effectively invite people to understand that others might see the world differently (through broadmindedness values).
  - As he explained: "That is an explanation for phenomena that we see in the landscape consistent with a Māori worldview. So when I say to people I'm not asking you to believe that, what I'm asking you to believe is that some people believe that ... acknowledging that there are other worldviews and that sometimes an explanation for something which seems highly improbable, and completely fantastical and implausible when looked at through their worldview makes entire sense when it's viewed through that other worldview".[27]

26 Te Ao with Moana, Māori Spirituality, Life and Death with Rereata Makiha, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/TeAoWithMoana/videos/m%C4%81ori-spirituality-life-and-death-with-rereata-makiha/143974544264345/.

Phases of narrative change work

There are many ways to think about the process of narrative change. One way is to break down the steps involved in developing and implementing effective, evidence-based narrative strategies to deepen understanding of a complex issue across audiences. These steps can be sorted into three broad phases.

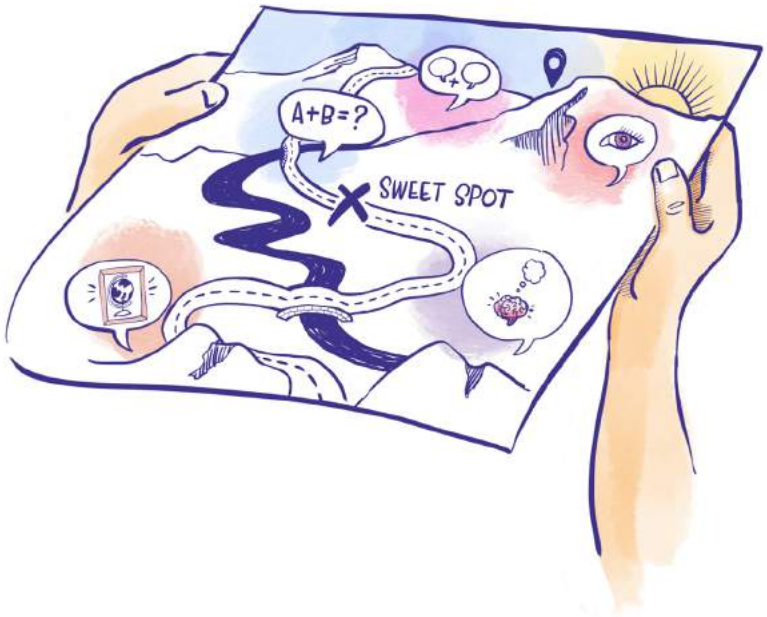
1. **Mapping: Map the terrain of existing narratives and mindsets, including:**
    a. The story experts and advocates want to tell,
    b. The people who need to understand that story,
    c. What those people currently think (helpful and unhelpful mindsets),
    d. The narratives that are currently surfacing and reinforcing those mindsets, and
    e. Who appropriate messengers might be to speak to people who need to understand that story.
2. **Testing: Develop and test narratives strategies to deepen understanding, including:**
    a. Reviewing existing framing and narratives research,
    b. Developing new messages using evidence-led narrative strategies,
    c. Getting input from experts (including the people most affected),
    d. Testing those messages with target audiences, using appropriate messengers.
3. **Implementation: Equip people to use those new strategies, this work can include;**
    a. Developing guides and various other tools to support the use of these narrative strategies,
    b. Training, coaching and mentoring in use of the strategies,
    c. Ongoing practitioner and peer support.

27 Hikuroa, Systems Change Interview with The Workshop.

Next steps

What we did for this mapping the landscape report in order to share some of the helpful ways of speaking about systems change that we can use in our work – and some of the unhelpful things we can avoid – was:

- Conduct a narrative literature review
- Conduct a frame analysis of the way five knowledge holders spoke about systems change.



Some potential next steps we might consider:

- Working with our ngā kaikōkiri community of practice to experiment with, test, and further develop these messages with their communities to see how they land.
- Reflecting with our ngā kaikōkiri on how these messages are being received in action research/feedback sessions.
- Co-developing Aotearoa-specific systems change stories from ngā kaikōkiri and then working with tōhunga and Māori creatives to produce shareable content.
- Message testing our Aotearoa-specific narrative strategies with wider public audiences to see how helpful they are in deepening people's thinking about our systems change work.


THIS IS WHERE WE WANT TO GO!
BETTER FUTURE
WE CAN DO IT.
HOPEFUL
WE NEED to be REPEATEDLY REMINDED of THE BETTER FUTURE we are creating
CREATE a POSITIVE VISION

This report has been prepared by:
Jordan Green (Te Whānau-ā-Apanui; Ngāti Porou); Dr Sharon Bell; Marianne Elliott and Dr Jess Berentson-Shaw of The Workshop - a tangata tiriti; narrative research organisation.

Graphic Design: Catherine Adam
Wonderbird Photography & Design Studio
www.wonderbird.nz

Illustrations: Megan Salole
www.salole.co.nz

The Workshop