Manaaki Whenua
Landcare Research

Moving the Middle:

Empowering land managers to act in complex rural landscapes

Suzie Greenhalgh & Fraser Morgan

Partners: MWLR, NIWA, AgResearch, ESR, Cawthron, CSIRO Australia, Universities of Otago, Waikato, Lincoln, Canterbury, Maine and Göttingen, Matatihi, JD Reid, LHL Consulting, Deliberate, Guthrie, Small, Cunningham, Waikato Regional Council, Southland Regional Council and Beef+Lamb NZ.

What we were seeing…..

Many farmers were willing to voluntarily take steps to reduce their environmental impacts….but the journey was slow

Context:

Farmers are facing multiple, sometimes conflicting, pressures simultaneously

Operational environment around farmers decision making often not recognised

Organisations & institutions in a farmers operational environment create decision pathways that farmers find hard to follow

Regulation is the primary lever used by govt; no recognition of farmer willingness to take voluntary actions

Existing financial lending options reduce farmer agency & locks in status quo

Farmers are increasingly influenced by a wider group of people; we aren't leveraging these people to support farmer change

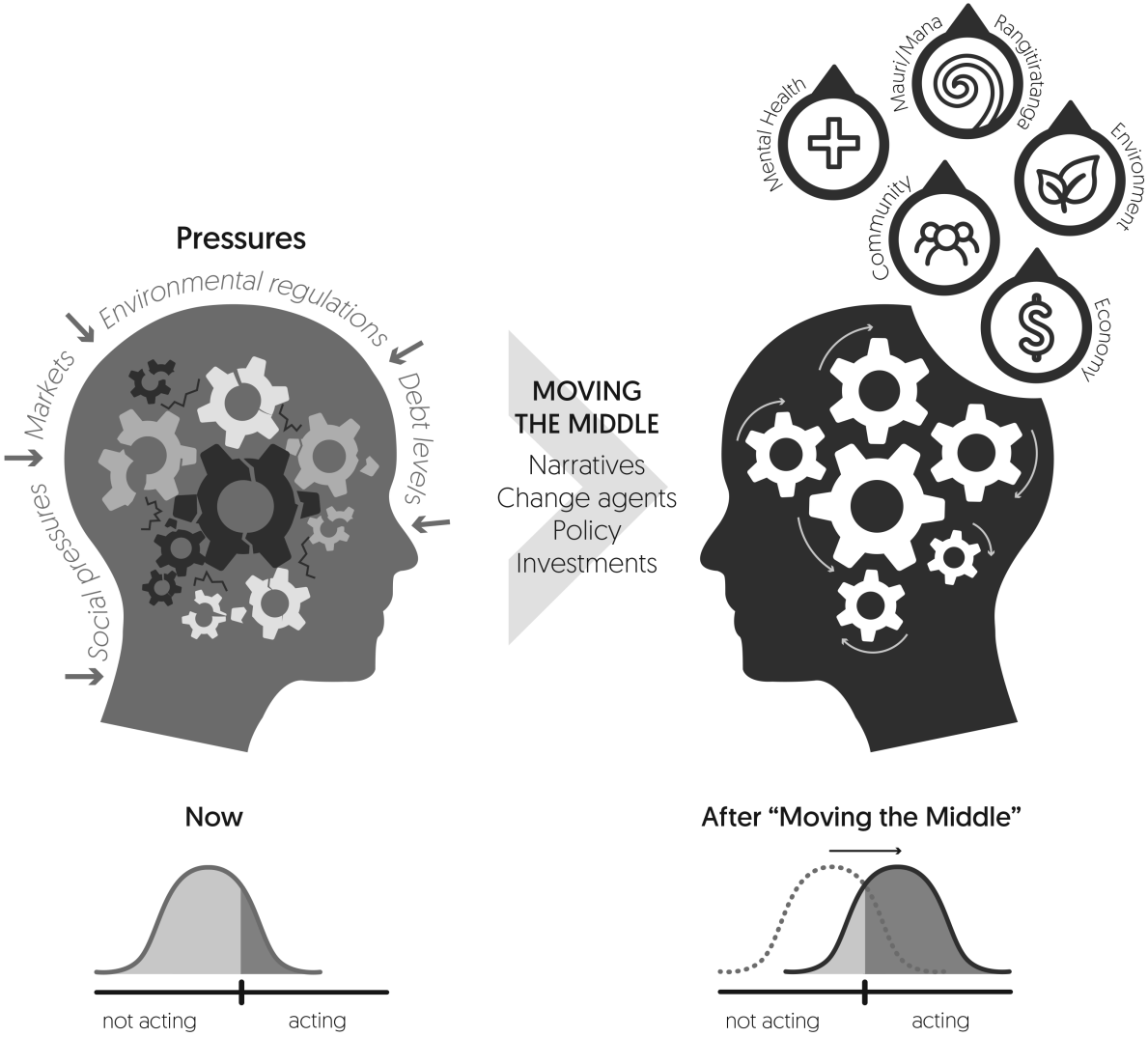
Public & private narratives reinforce negative viewpoints of farmers

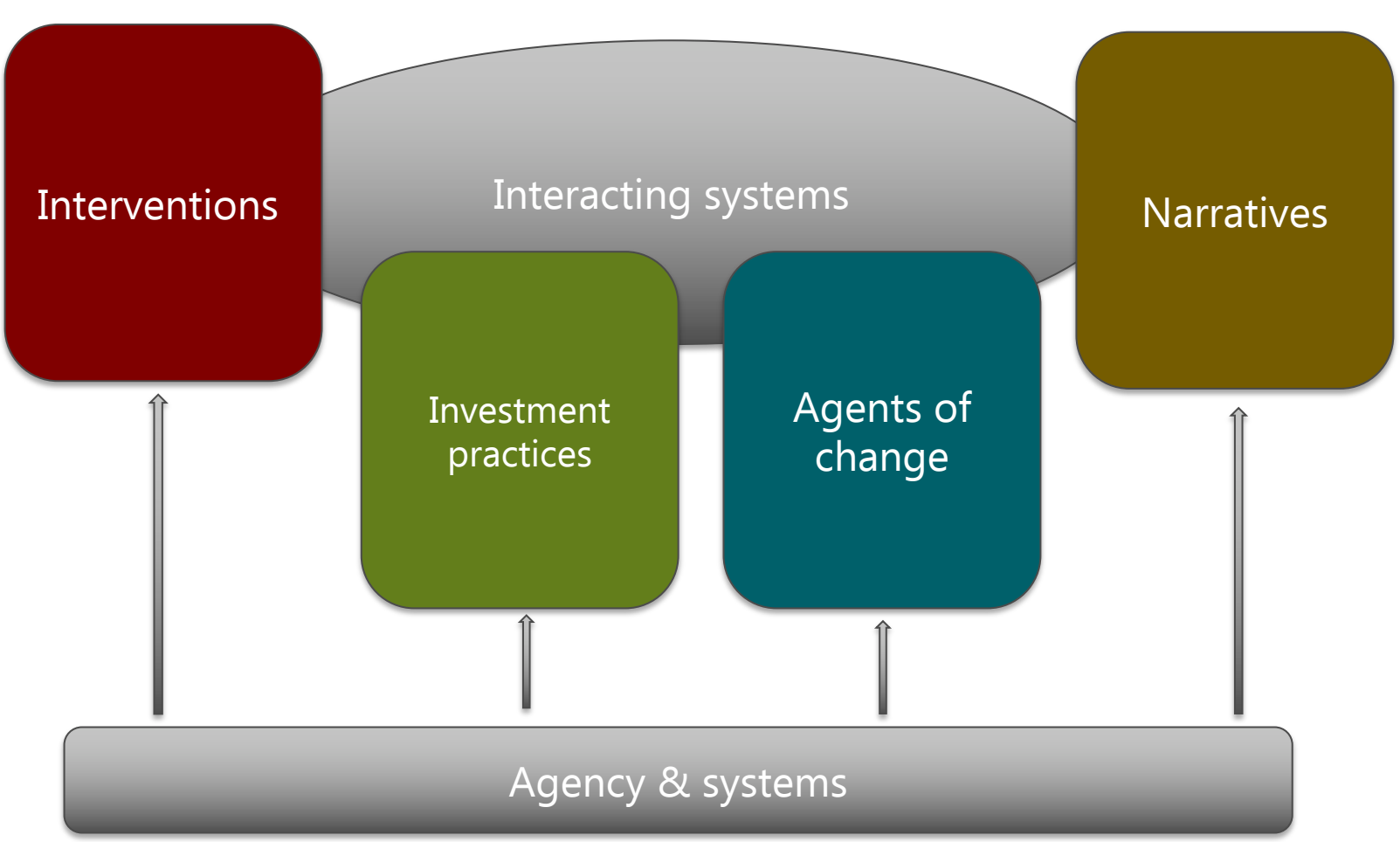
Little research focus on farmers & their decision-making process

Moving the Middle

Goal: To **give land managers greater confidence & agency** to voluntarily improve their environmental performance

By **identifying & using leverage points for change** in systems affecting land manager decisions




Interventions
Interacting systems
Narratives
Investment practices
Agents of change
Agency & systems

Systems & Agency

- Develop the conceptual framing for our research
- Explore the interactions between the systems in farmers operating environment
- Identify leverage points not covered by the research

Emerging challenges from the systems that surround farmers

- Everything, everywhere, all at once (cumulative effects)
- Contradictions and conflicting goals
- Optimising (with diminishing returns) or satisficing
- Untrustworthy, unfair and incompetent
- Fishbowl farming
- Farming by numbers
- Myopic system

Policy Interventions

Nudges

- Regulation
  - Eliminate choice
  - Restrict choice
- Fiscal
  - Fiscal disincentives
  - Fiscal incentives
  - Market incentives
- Non-fiscal
  - Non-fiscal incentives
  - Non-fiscal disincentives
  - Property rights
- Decision Information
  - Translate information
  - Make info visible
  - Provide social reference point
- Decision Structure
  - Change choice defaults
  - Change option-related effort
  - Change range of composition of options
  - Change option consequence
- Decision Assistance
  - Provide reminders
  - Facilitate commitment

Policy Interventions

Identify interventions – policy & processor

- Literature review
- Insights from stakeholder workshop

Test interventions in lab & behaviours via games

- Using lab experiments to test range of interventions & designs
- Using a board game to explore behavioural responses

Test interventions in the field & via modelling

- Take the most promising results from the lab to test at wider scale in catchments
- Use modelling to determine impacts at wider catchment scale

Range of interventions & designs effectively incentivise voluntary change being used

Investment practices

Alternative lending arrangements

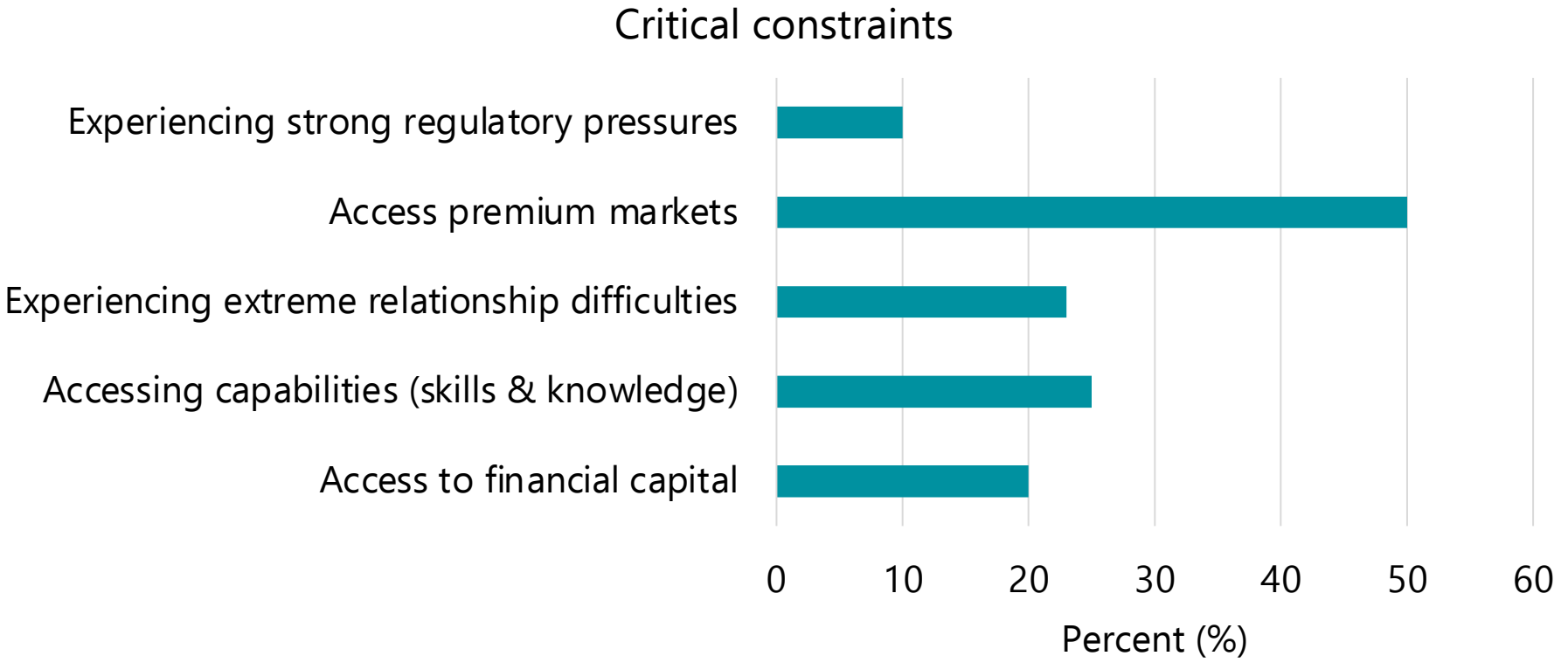
- Explore bank-lender relationships around:
  - Borrowing arrangements (debt levels, how debt allocates financial/natural capital risk, bargaining power)
  - Loan re-negotiation mechanisms
  - Dynamic regulatory environments
- Focus on farmers with high-indebtedness
- Compare between ownership structures

Facilitating Māori farm growth

- Characterise Māori farming models, transition pathways, interaction with banks & lending practices to identify alternative pathways for Māori

More lending options available to farmers to facilitate greater environmental performance

Māori agribusiness collectives – 5 critical constraints



Actual size of cohorts is unknown; % based on expert judgement from on literature
% do not add to 100

Agents of Change

- Identify range of human and non-human agents of change, e.g.
  - advisers, artists & art, schools & students, insects, social movements, native plants, & connection with land
- Understand influence approaches they use
- Gather evidence on
  - approaches currently supported, e.g. by councils
  - effectiveness of agents & influence approaches
- Determine how the approaches work under increasing complexity
- Make the range of effective agents more visible, relatable & supportable

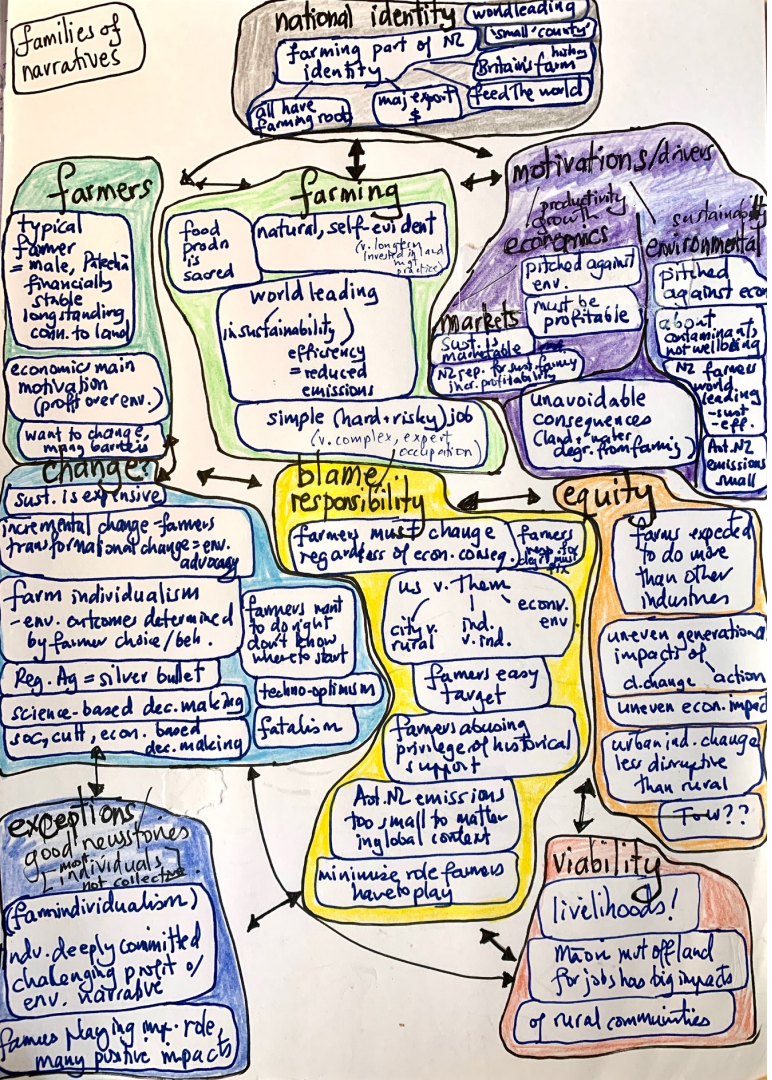
Effective influence approaches are used across different types of Agents of Change to facilitate greater on-farm environmental actions

Narratives

- Identify narratives in communities about farmers
- Understand what farmers are hearing and how they are responding
- Reframe narratives; focus on what to say & not to say
- Socialise the narratives within communities
- Understand how narratives influence policy development & deliver narratives to 'right' decision makers to influence policy

Narratives:

- Provide positive emotional cues to farmers
- Enable policy formulation that accounts for the farmer 'frame of mind'

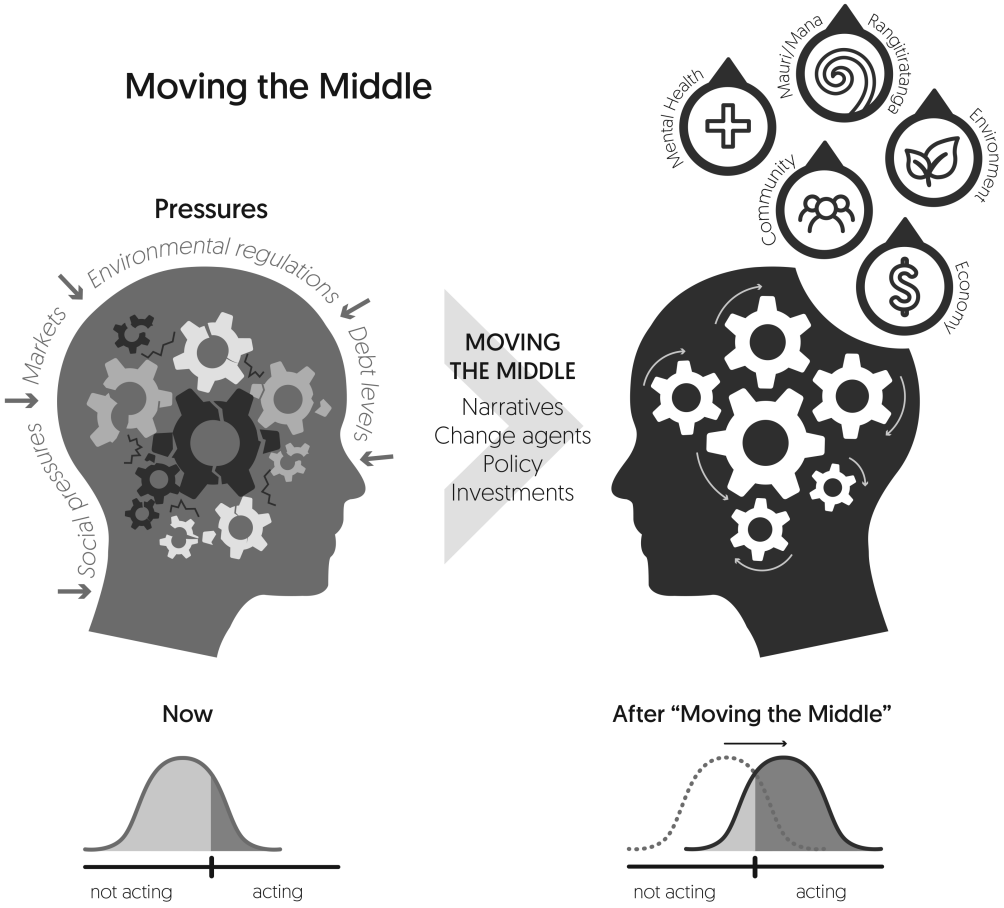


Example of narratives that resonate with 'this persona'

- We need change now, and
- it needs to be big and holistic to ensure we are able to protect our environment for future generations.
- At present, we're not being good kaitaiki as the balance between productivity and environmental impacts is damaging our whenua.
- We need to get industry on board so the incentives are there to make major transformations now.

Based on narratives people who interact with farmers are hearing

Contact Us

Suzie Greenhalgh
greenhalghs@landcareresearch.co.nz

Fraser Morgan
morganf@landcareresearch.co.nz