

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa

Firstly, ngā mihi nui to PANNZ, Creative New Zealand and Auckland Live for creating these platforms for the sharing of information and ideas as we all manage a period of enormous change and disruption.

Greetings and respect to all the previous panellists and to my colleagues today Borni, Renee and Dolina and behind the scenes Louise, Heather, Helaina and Francis.

Secondly I want to send my support to any of you who may have lost loved ones, or are experiencing emotional and/or physical hardship in your lockdown.

Today I just want to humbly share some of the things I've been thinking about as I transition from leading The New Zealand Dance Company – a company that relies on shared space and travelling to audiences to sustain itself – to my new role at Auckland Arts Festival where I began on March 10th to witness a slow motion tsunami devastate the 2020 Festival and 80 performances cancelled.

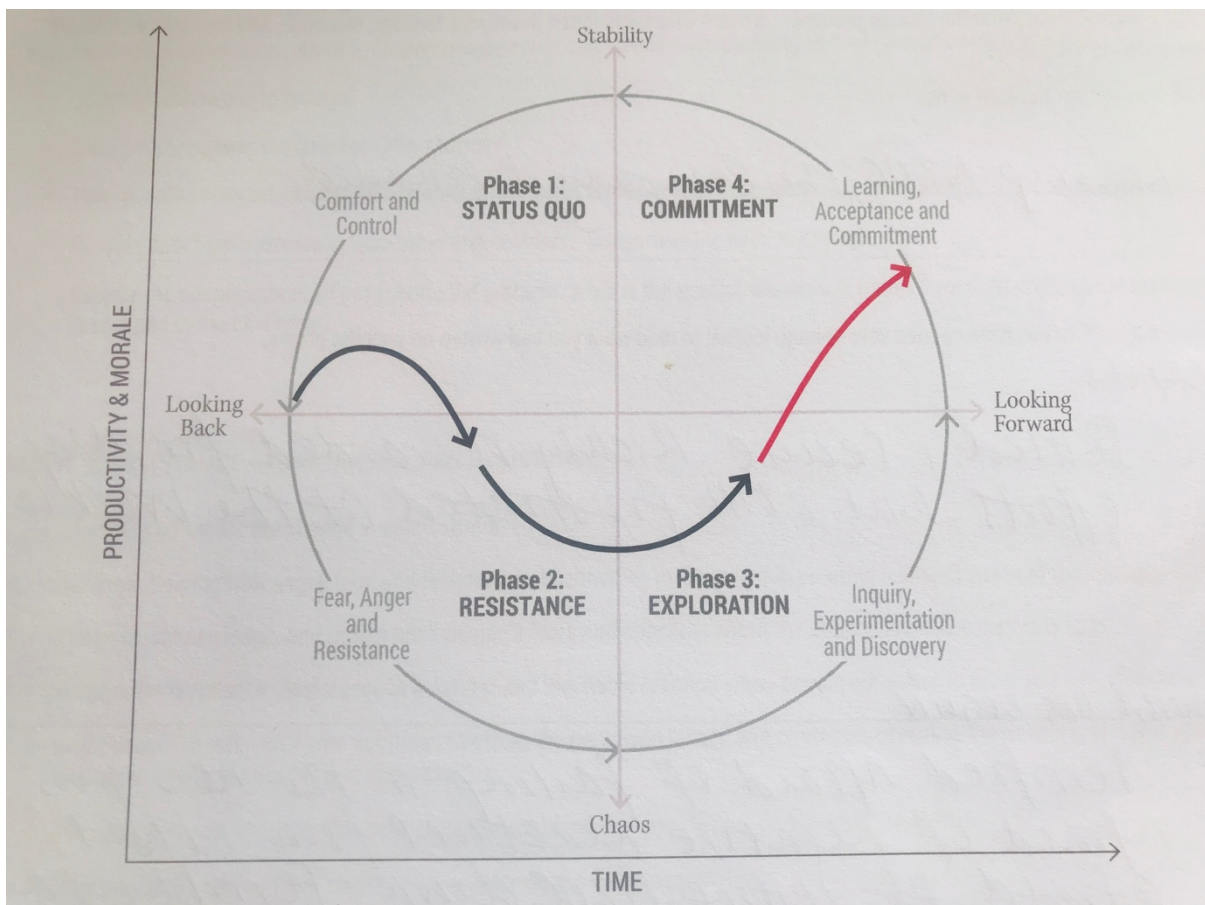
The strength I have witnessed in our sector in response to this crisis has inspired me enormously – the astonishing resilience that individuals, communities and organisations have demonstrated has been so impressive. An innate desire to connect, share thinking and help each other is at the forefront of our minds. I believe we have the capability to create a better outcome for more artists and our sector if we work collectively and collaboratively in response, finding a sense of shared purpose, rather than what sets us apart.

So – I want to talk about four things today. I've made some notes so I don't forget anything so forgive me for that.

1. **Change** – and what we might be experiencing during this seismic shift
2. The difference between **response and recovery phases of this crisis.**
3. **Disruption – not just COVID but what other disruptions this one is laid on top of**

4. And finally thinking about moving towards a new mode of sustainability and new ways of approaching our work.

So starting with what we experience with **change**, I wanted to share with you a model that was originally developed by Elizabeth Kubler Ross to track the stages of grief and has been developed further to reflect the common patterns of behaviour during significant change. You may or may not find it hopeful but at least creates a framework for what we're experiencing which I do find helpful to track where I'm at on this journey.



The Change Curve – from Catapult Leadership Resources.

You'll see at the top of the Change Curve is stability and the bottom is chaos and on the side is productivity and morale and how they might be affected by the radical shift we've experienced between stability and chaos.

The left top quadrant is described as **Status Quo**. In this model it defines as comfort and control – meaning that there was an inherent

order in our environment and day to day activity in work and our home lives. This is our feet on familiar ground. But I want to acknowledge that for many, the status quo has meant varying levels of discomfort and dissatisfaction, and that the ground has not been stable or supportive, and I want to come back to that later. But the point of this part of the diagram is to describe what we are at least familiar with experiencing.

Left bottom quadrant is where we experience feelings in the face of sudden change and the discomfort of the unknown.

We feel safe when we know and understand the world and when we don't we experience feelings such as resistance, fear, anger, guilt and in some cases for people in our sector, immense pressure to solve the problem. Suddenly the world has shifted into insecurity and uncertainty and our stomachs are churning, our pukus feel uneasy. I know that colleagues who are arts marketers have had an incredibly tough time, navigating the plethora of online content and how to strategise a new performance platform, overnight. Also, there are individual artists who are extremely vulnerable at this time – perhaps on their own, or responsible for large whānau and worrying about what the future might hold. This phase of change is Te Kore, the void, the dark where we can't see forward. But out of this darkness, we know that both birth and rebirth emerges. We will be able to see again.

So the third phase of change is where we begin to **look forward**, even if our desire for certainty keeps us yearning for what it used to be like, where we understood what the parameters were. This new phase sees us starting to wonder what the future might hold – and with a sense of curiosity, creativity, experimentation and discovery we start to respond.

This is where we've witnessed an incredible response from our sector – new creations every day that are filled with aroha and kotahitanga – and already a truly increased sense of connectedness - our sense of unity as a sector giving us real security and strength. Our light begins to reactivate.

We also start to imagine that this could be an opportunity for significant change - as many of the aspects of our interrelatedness were working for some, but not all. Searches for answers posed by the change and the solutions we discover might start to become integrated into an emerging re-definition of our new roles, functions and behaviours.

Right now we might be swinging between phase 2 and 3 and this is completely normal, as are all of the feelings that accompany our experience of this change and uncertainty.

Phase 4 – the new future, is still uncertain, but I believe this is a time of great opportunity for each of us which leads me to share some thoughts about response and recovery. This is where we lean forward together.

My second point to discuss is about the difference between **response and recovery phases of this crisis.**

I would like to acknowledge here the incredibly swift action that our government and CNZ took to assuage immediate financial distress, and provide surety in the short term response plan. We personally have been dealing with our own whānau and communities and our own immediate response plan, particularly if we have vulnerable people in our bubbles and communities. As a sector, the number of cashflows that have been updated over the last two weeks is a testament to rapid and depressing number crunching as arts managers provide evidence of the depth of the impact. Individuals have lost all or most of their work in the short term and have had to respond personally to this situation.

After first response, we now need to turn our attention to the recovery phase – which will have short, medium and long term actions and outcomes. And given the uncertainty of how long lockdown will continue, we have to imagine and dream a variety of different scenarios. I've found this quote super helpful to imagine this work.

“When the winds of change rage, don't build a shelter, build a windmill.”

This image of dancing with change gives me great comfort and sees a sector that is fluid and responsive – the only way we can be at present, as every day the situation changes. But this is a time to dream of new paradigms.

My third offering is around Disruption. Disruption brings out the strengths and the weaknesses in us as individuals, as organisations, as communities and as countries. It acts as an amplifier - of our leadership,

our values, and our own thoughts, behaviours and actions as artists and citizens.

Although there is a fundamental equality in the pandemic itself in that no-one is immune, it utterly exposes, amplifies and magnifies the existing inequalities in our communities and society. I want to acknowledge that many people in our arts sector will have fundamental and vast differences in their experience of this pandemic. I hope the arts sector can be a powerful force to help create equity in how we respond.

This COVID disruption is not a singular entity however. It illuminates a series of highly obvious and more insidious disruptions that have been occurring over a long period of time.

We have already been dealing with the disruption of three current revolutions – an ever changing technological environment, and struggling to keep up with those changes, environmental crisis due to the systemic abuse of the natural world, and a radically shifting demographic in populations and therefore audiences and languages and communication, all over the world due to mass migration.

Racism, capitalism and colonisation are just three other distinct and shameful examples of disruptions.

Capitalism has driven and “rewarded” individualism over community, profit over shared benefit. And artists have been shifted to the margins of society rather than as central and valued as the revered prophets of truth, and unravellers of the mystery of life. And yet we have been led to shoehorn our organisations into business models, guided by boards of business people who must know best.

My fourth point is about a new sense of **sustainability**. I believe it's time we rebalanced many things in our sector and our society – and created more regenerative ways of being, which I prefer over the word sustainability actually. This is an often used word, but without encapsulating the sustainability of the entire sector, then it's not true health and wealth. And without renourishing and regeneration our land, our people and our art, it's not truly sustainable.

We need to create systemic change. Most of us want to be able to create transformative experiences for audiences and communities that

also respect our environment and be proud of the resource consumption required to produce them.

We need to question and reject where the money to produce our art comes from – largely the result of gambling which hardly aligns with our core purpose of creating wellbeing and inspiration in people.

We need to listen more carefully as a nation through the uplifting of our treasured artists as vital spokespersons of Aotearoa - whether speaking through their art or about their art.

We need to rebalance the disproportionate domination of sport over art in our media and therefore society.

A shift from individual to collective, competitive to shared health. Not us and them but we. This change can happen within all of us, if we decide to. The arts sector must lead the change it sees as necessary for true regeneration. We have been working far too hard for too long, and valuing metrics of measurable data over human impact, and transformation of lives.

This is a time where we can refashion the frameworks of our priorities and make systemic change to become a high functioning ecosystem. We are all part of linked systems of humans and nature. These are complex, adaptive systems where flexibility and resilience are the keys to sustainability.

One that embraces collective over competitive behaviour and upholds respectful and equitable treatment of our artists. One that sees every voice as valuable. Funding and success measures should no longer be data points but instead see how much truth, beauty and meaning was created.

Easy to say and very hard to make these monumental shifts of societal and personal behaviour. But this is already a required and vital shift for us as individuals with a conscience about the wellbeing of others, and the survival of us - as individuals, organisations, communities and a country.

Our sector as a whole fails if we are not actively engaged with the other ecosystems in advancing our work together towards a healthy state of

being. I'm personally excited about this work and welcome your thoughts. None of these points are meant as a criticism of what's been the status quo, but a true opportunity to rethink and discuss how we would like our future to be.

Neoliberalism is counter to regenerative thinking. Our indigenous people have so much knowledge about regenerative practice and collective health and wellbeing. Let's take the complexity of this situation and refine it to a shared kaupapa, create powerful advocacy, and then this kaupapa will be what is amplified and multiplied, powerfully and collectively like a tsunami of love.

Waiho i te toipoto

Kaua i te toiroa

Let us join together, and not fall apart.

Endpoints

I don't think we should determine who is a leader and who is not at all. I believe we are all leaders, and developing future leaders in this, together, as we are all in our own way leading our own communities, families and organisations. This is co-creation. I believe in the concept of intergenerational leadership.

This is a unique opportunity for us to transform the culture and connection within our community as a microcosm of the macrocosm that we want to create in the world.

Alice Coltrane – don't worry about changing the world, just change your mind.

Useful resources : Arts Leadership – Creating Sustainable Arts Organisations by Kenneth Foster

Research First piece in response to the Christchurch Earthquakes by Carl Davidson

https://www.researchfirst.co.nz/blog/lessons-for-the-covid-19-recovery?utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=85690168&hsenc=p2ANqtz-

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