RUSH

CONNECTING FOR A BETTER FUTURE

A collection of essays in response to the RUSH x AUT Techweek Roundtable Discussions

October 2021

Connecting for a Better Future; a collection of essays
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Huge thanks to the teams at RUSH and AUT who brought this event together as part of Techweek 2021, managing the logistics of what turned out to be a wonderfully engaging event.

Our MC on the day was the brilliant David Downs who generously donated his time and his speaking fee to charity Take2 - Breaking the Cycle of Crime through Tech.

And a special thank you to all the table hosts who gave their valuable time to challenge us with their topics and provide us with an experienced lens to see these discussions through. Because of you, we all left the event smarter than we arrived.

AUT RUSH

techweek2021

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FOREWORD

In 2018, RUSH articulated our focus on work which is meaningful, impactful and relevant to the future of the world. Based on everything we'd already done, and our ambitions for the future, it felt like the right way to say "this is why we're here was this: **We design technology to better serve humankind.**

This was way before COVID-19. And then the pandemic hit in 2020 and we had an opportunity to do work that really validated that purpose. The NZ COVID Tracer app in particular enabled the Ministry of Health to build a first-ever national consumer app channel. This product massively opened the gates for a new model of public healthcare and how we own our own health.

If you Google the adoption of refrigeration and see the spikes it had during the world wars, it's obvious that major national or global events can usher in widespread adoption of new technology. There are so many areas for humankind to make improvements, and when we see how readily consumers can mass-adopt digital new channels, and be engaged in those channels, huge value and opportunity is created.

At RUSH we consider ourselves united by our love for technology and its potential for making lives better. It was clear from the guests and collaborators at the Techweek 2021 event that we aren't the only ones.

Under the theme of "Connecting for a Better Future", we brought together leaders and influencers to have challenging and inspiring discussions with students, the tech sector and academics.

Technology has a significant role to play in wellbeing, sustainability, digital inclusion, climate change and making the world a better place. This year's Techweek event was an example of how a group of keen and innovative minds can come together to discuss making a difference in the world.

Humankind's problems cannot be ignored, and in these problems we find opportunities to make things better; to improve the world, and our experience of it. This paper captures some of the observations, ideas and challenges that were discussed during our event.

We hope you enjoy reading it, and share our passion to shape where things go in the future.

Pavan Vyas

CEO, RUSH

Photo courtesy of RUSH

TABLE HOSTS

Our Techweek roundtable event asked eight leaders and influencers in sustainability, innovation and technology to pose a challenging question to inspire discussion.

These essays are not authored by the table hosts and do not necessarily reflect their views, but summarise the varied points raised by all participants in the group discussions.

Danu Abeysuriya

Founder & CTO, RUSH

With millions of people globally leaving large cities and a dramatic shift in how the world lives and works, what innovation opportunities does the post-COVID world offer to improve citizens' lives, and that of humankind?

Dr David Hall

Senior Lecturer, AUT
Chair, Vice-Chancellor's Sustainability Taskforce

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Founder & CEO, Take2

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National Manager, Kiwibots

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Tane van der Boon

Co-Founder & Technical Lead, MAUI63

The economics of conservation tech: when the private sector funds purposeful not-for-profit tech projects, is this a win-win or do we risk selling out nature by aligning with those who are the biggest threats to biodiversity?

Helen Klisser During

Global arts advisor, curator, and photojournalist

Do you think the digital era — and all that comes with it, like increased accessibility, selfie tourism, social media and short attention spans — is improving or ruining the experience of art?

Gavin Lennox

Group CEO, The Icehouse

You can't manage what you don't measure. How can businesses practically measure how they are progressing to meaningful sustainability with technology, and its impact?

With millions of people globally leaving large cities and a dramatic shift in how the world lives and works, what innovation opportunities does the post-COVID world offer to improve citizens' lives, and that of humankind?

Danu Abeysuriya, RUSH

IMPROVING SOCIETY IN A POST-COVID WORLD

When COVID came along, it called into question where we live, how we work, how we shop, how we spend time, and how we use technology.

Almost overnight, all of the trappings that make a city lifestyle appealing vanished. Shops, cafes and bars; shut. Public transport; risky. Friends; online only. Generally speaking, many Aucklanders spent lockdown trapped in densely populated suburbs, enjoying the lack of traffic yet lamenting the loss of almost everything else.

It's obvious why domestically and internationally, people have seen their city lives in a new light — and one that didn't contribute positively to their worsening mental health. The physical and mental freshness, the housing affordability of rural areas, lack of traffic and associated parking or fuel costs, the "back to basics" environment so often sought by modern parents.

A late 2020 report titled 'Kiwis shifting from cities to regions' revealed that 7 of 13 New Zealand cities show an internal migration outflow last year, and cited the pandemic as a supercharging factor in the shift in working patterns. For just over a third of the population, as long as there's a stable internet connection work can be done remotely. Now that employment doesn't have to be the deciding factor on where you live, we discussed what people need to make this "new normal" life work.

REFRAMING OUR MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH

Health globally has suffered. There's no need for a citation there — it's a reality we see in the fog around us. Right off the bat during our roundtable discussion, mental health was raised as an important current global issue — with the COVID pandemic significantly contributing to that. Increased anxiety, fear and isolation has been brought on by lockdowns and social distancing.

Certainty is what people look for when confronted with anxiety, but without the ability to control the events in the world, or even their own ability to move around at times, individuals instead set about reframing personal priorities and taking control of their mental health.

In the first 11 months of 2020, Calm reportedly brought in $99.4 million in revenue with a little over 28 million installs, and collectively the top 100 mental wellness apps cleared over $1B.

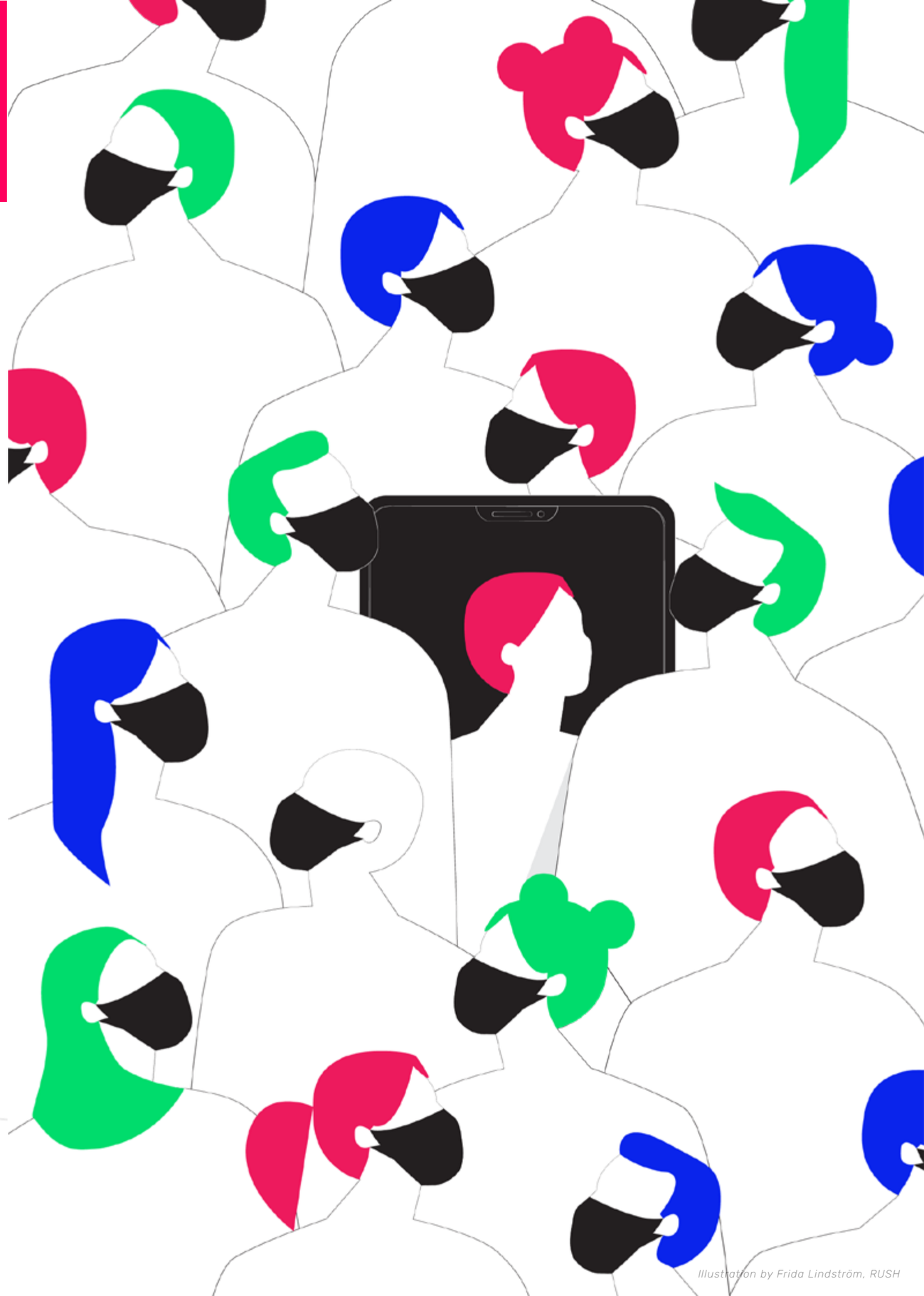
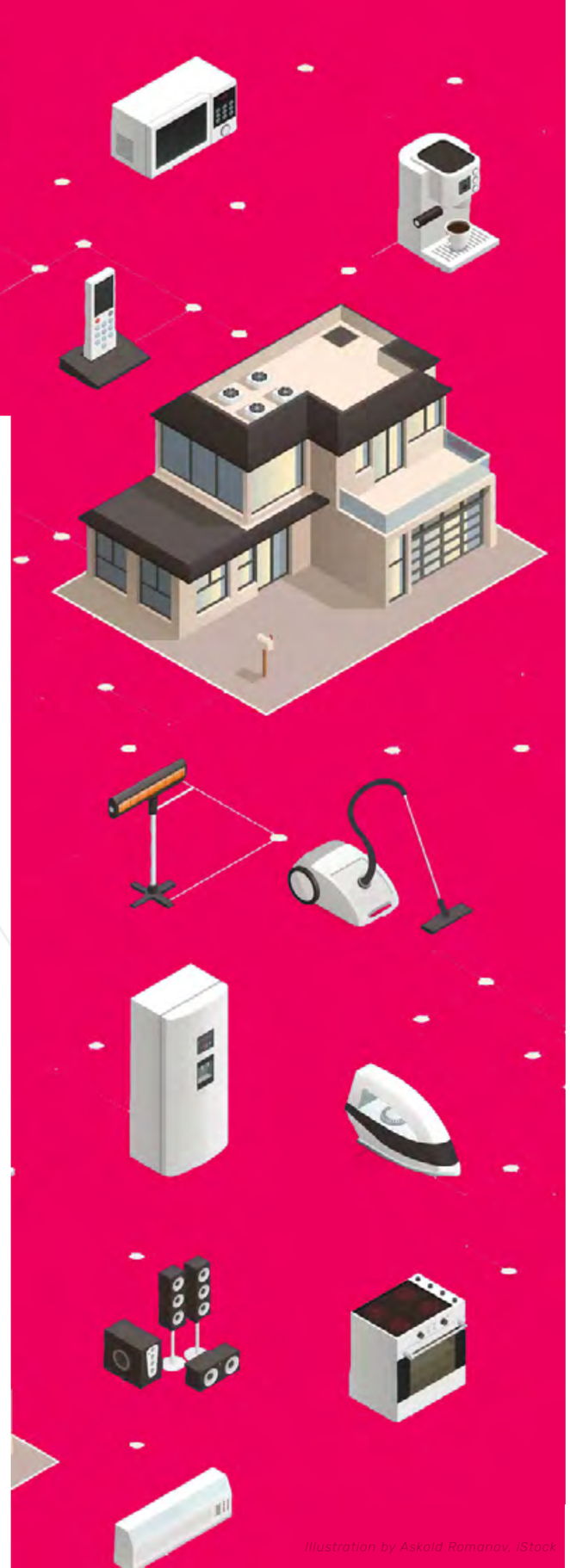


Illustration by Frida Lindström, RUSH

There's a general assumption that everybody has access to the internet. We can only move forward with creating a smarter, digitally enabled world when everyone has basic access.



RUSH client, Ignite Aotearoa fast-tracked portions of their mental wellness platform during the 2020 lockdowns and have now rolled out their complete online Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) offering — an area set for high growth post-pandemic.

The unique set of challenges brought into a workplace by the pandemic means that support for employee mental health needs and new ways of working are a priority.

A SMARTER, MORE CONNECTED WORLD

While there may be mental or physical health improvements associated with remote or hybrid working, collaboration and keeping the company culture alive are harder to coordinate when teams aren't physically together.

The global Internet of Things (IoT) Market is forecasted to grow at a rapid rate of 26.1% from USD 245.08 Billion in 2019 to USD 1508.01 Billion in 2027**.**

So with the rollout of 5G technology, improved access and affordability of connectivity, there is an invitation to innovate to ease the stress caused by isolating situations, or connect our lives up in a smarter way.

- *What if we created a virtual water cooler to encourage friendly banter when people are remote?*
- *Imagine a smart connected fridge, and as you open it to get something to drink, you might say "hey Dad, we're out of milk, can you bring some home?" and this voice activates a task.*
- *What about simply creating a work or study environment so that as you sit at your desk you can opt to be part of the ongoing chatter — there's no particular purpose other than feeling like your colleagues are sitting there with you.*

Connectivity could expand to connect smart homes or smart workplaces to each other in a community — but **we must consider how we democratise access.** There's a general assumption that everybody has access to the internet, but one of our roundtable participants described living 100 kms from Auckland where connectivity isn't very reliable.

Also, when around 2 billion people live in poverty globally, how can we keep forging ahead when so many are still far behind? This pandemic has brought awareness to other realities and an opportunity to develop open source access to technologies to help all humankind. We can only move forward with creating a smarter, digitally enabled world where people choose where they live and work, when everyone has basic access.

This text reflects the group discussion, not necessarily the views of the table host.

Illustration by Askold Romanov, iStock

LEARN FROM THE ANTHROPAUSE

Without disruption, humans will continue doing the same things - even in the face of climate change. But lockdowns really changed our physical world. Traffic disappeared, the skies cleared up, birdlife was more abundant and greenhouse gas emissions dropped dramatically. To be precise, 4.5% over the year from March 2020 to March 2021. **The sad fact is that, in Auckland anyway, traffic returned quickly to pre-pandemic levels like nothing had changed.**

Vehicle technology is already advancing with electric cars, but what if personal transport was better regulated - or even banned? The carbon credits that we generated could be used to pay for free public transport? This may seem drastic, but we experienced how much better life was without traffic and air pollution, and we still went back to our old ways. We must be able to incentivise the reduction in private vehicle use, that's an innovation worth pursuing.

While we haven't (yet) developed the tech to answer these questions, we have translated our successful experiences and learnings into a set of remote guidelines and a hybrid working policy — our **Head of People & Culture, Molly**, would gladly share her insights around how this was developed for RUSH.

And Danu has more than a few ideas for how we get rid of private cars… at the very least let him sell you on the **benefits of an electric vehicle.**

If a technology contributes to climate change, should we be shy about dis-inventing it?
Dr David Hall, AUT

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

The inspiration for this question was taken from an 1872 book called Erewhon by Samuel Butler, an Englishman who spent time in New Zealand as a sheep farmer. One of the early examples of science fiction, this novel explores artificial intelligence and what society might be like if machines were outlawed due to their dangerous nature.

Pretty remarkable that in the 19th Century, people were already considering machine consciousness and the ramifications that might have on humanity.

At this time, the industrial revolution had made its impact and — much like in current society — when a new piece of technology is released into the world, with all of its positive effects we can't help but wonder; have we made a mistake bringing this to the world? Will it do more harm than good?

TOUGH CROWD

Modern transport has made it possible for humans to travel anywhere, but in its wake has left us with about one fifth of the world's damaging carbon emissions. Cryptocurrency such as Bitcoin is incredibly energy intensive and has the potential to produce enough emissions to raise global temperatures. Advances in software force upgrades in hardware which add to our growing global e-waste problem.

But when suggested to the roundtable that a fair response to the climate crisis was to dis-invent some of these technologies? Definite pushback. Tough crowd.

The fact is that we're human and we like things to be easy. Multiple studies have shown that as a species we're hard-wired to take the path of least resistance, and so once we're introduced to a technology that makes life easier or simpler — it's hard, if not impossible, to eradicate it from our minds and collective knowledge. We don't want to let go.

Instead of a complete removal of the protagonist tech, can we instead suppress or mitigate the problem, and focus on steering technology in a new direction?

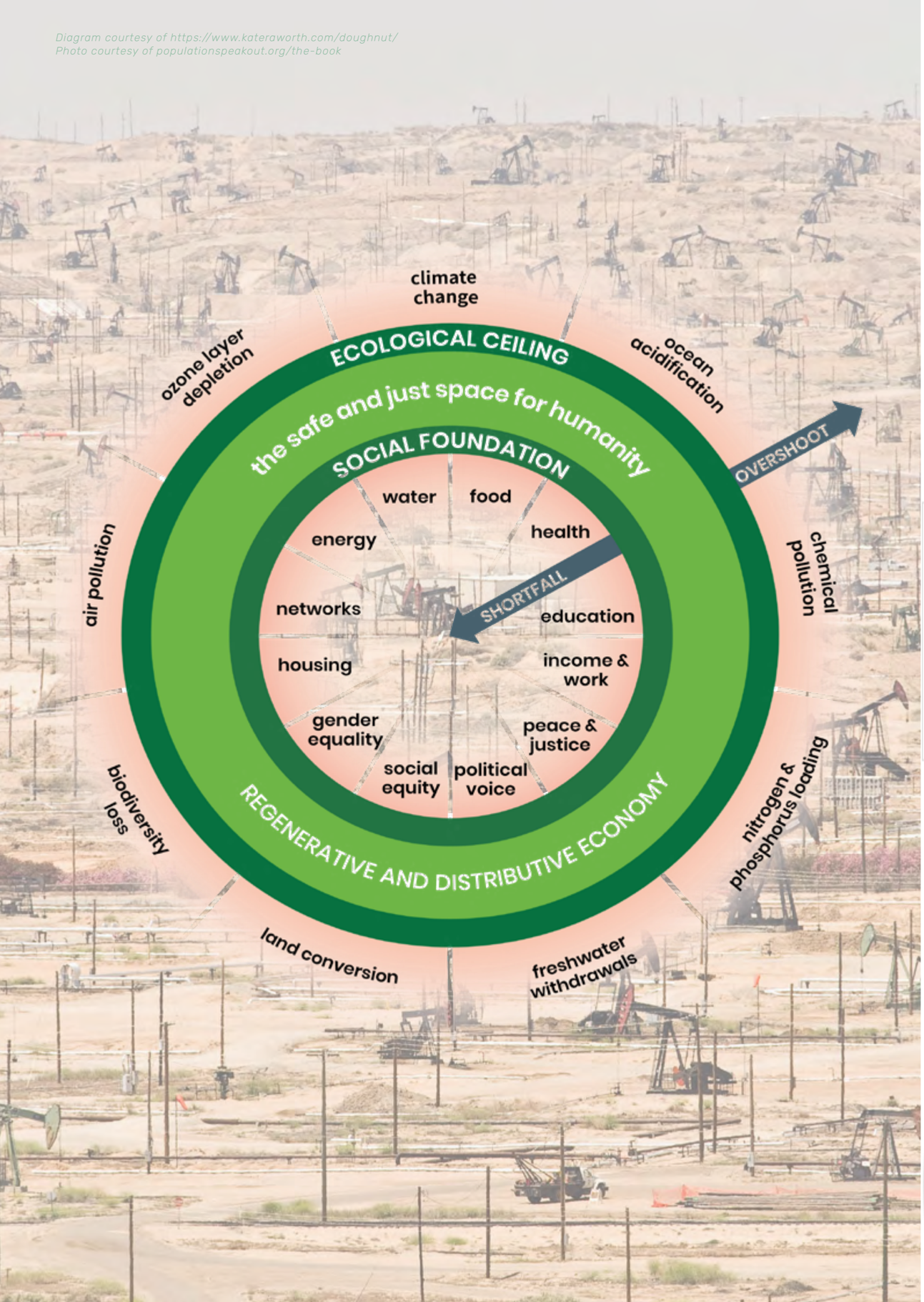
Social media, for example, is here to stay in some form or other. But if we deconstructed Facebook and its underlying programming then that would make space for new knowledge in the programming of a new type of social media.

Perhaps that's what Jimmy Wales is doing with WT Social - the news-focussed, ad-free alternative to Facebook, but even that platform hasn't been able to hit a million users in the two years since it's been live.

This text reflects the group discussion, not necessarily the views of the table host.

Photo courtesy of populationspeakout.org/the-book

Diagram courtesy of https://www.kateraworth.com/doughnut/
Photo courtesy of populationspeakout.org/the-book



TOP DOWN

If humanity can't be trusted to take away something even when it's not doing us, or the planet, any good — **should we rely on the public & private sector decision makers to make the healthy choice the only choice?**

If technology companies start to integrate human and environmental outcomes into their business models, rather than just be driven by profit maximisation, then we may start to see positive changes.

Kate Raworth's 'Doughnut Economics' is a brilliant model to introduce here — describing how humanity should operate within both planetary boundaries and the complementary concept of social boundaries. The social layer includes complex issues and systems such as politics, justice, education, energy, housing — things which require a level of regulation or taxation and there was a lot of discussion about carrots and sticks. **Should tax be a tool for disinventing bad tech?**

However in the case of Bitcoin their intent is to sit outside of the system of regulation, and increasingly tech companies have the means to be "territory-free." When **regulation doesn't move as fast as innovation**, these loopholes can be exploited. It was suggested by the table that the Government could work in agile… which sounds absurd based on what we thought we knew. But as Kate Raworth noted, and we have all experienced in the last 18 months, the pandemic has shown us just how fast policy change can happen. **When needed, it's overnight**.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

The last five years have seen environmental and social issues rise to the forefront of our collective consciousness, reaching a crescendo in 2020. While in global lockdowns, we saw the wondrous effects of the "anthropause", the best and worst of people's tolerance, eyes glued to screens witnessing suffering and resilience.

The problems are evident, and their roots are generations old. So it takes a bit of looking around at who is responsible for creating the solutions? For making the sacrifice, or the change? **Who makes the decisions about what technologies we disinvent or reinvent, or try to steer?**

Short of reinventing capitalism, we aren't going to be able to put everything on the government to determine the direction of technology. A lot of expertise lies within the individuals inside technology companies, and tagged to those roles should be a commitment to accountability for what is created, and a risk assessment against measures that go beyond financial returns.

"Primum non nocere"

First, do no harm.

This Medium article lays out the very idea where your brain may have already ended up… **Perhaps the tech world needs a Hippocratic Oath of its own.**

The tech industry faces significant skills shortages, along with low rates of diversity and inclusion. If steady employment reduces recidivism of previously incarcerated individuals, should the tech sector support the removal of criminal records inquiries from employment applications?

Cameron Smith, Take2

A NEW WAY TO FILL SKILLS SHORTAGES

New Zealand continues to have one of the highest incarceration rates in the western world. Our prisons house a disproportionate representation of Māori people; 15% of Aotearoa's general population but accounting for 51% of the prison population.

In the year after release, up to 80% of prisoners can be unemployed, and the impact of a criminal conviction means that even after serving their time according to the justice system, society serves a second sentence which doesn't allow for true reintegration.

In a seemingly unrelated part of society, the tech talent pool feels so small that one RUSH employee recently called it a 'talent puddle'. In our rapidly growing sector, available, skilled staff are high in short supply. A recent report from NZ Tech names the skills shortage as a crisis which will impact all parts of the economy.

Tech is also a field which scores low on access and diversity. The training for tech careers can be largely out of reach for vulnerable or low socio-economic groups, females and Māori and Pasifika peoples, meaning that there's a mismatch between the potential talent and those considered 'skilled'.

Non-profit organisation Take2 looked at these two issues, saw experimentation happening overseas and then brought the model to home shores by offering intensive web development training and ongoing support to incarcerated individuals — but this is only the first part of the solution. For anyone exiting prison, a key challenge is the impact a criminal conviction makes on your ability to land a job.

Under current NZ law, prospective employers can request a candidate or employee's relevant criminal history from the Ministry of Justice or get Police vetting information, but only if the person agrees in writing. It's easy to imagine that a candidate denying this request is likely to be met with scrutiny, and unlikely to proceed successfully through the recruitment process.

The Clean Slate Act passed in 2004 means that convictions are automatically concealed under specific eligibility criteria. **However this does not apply to people who have served a custodial sentence such as prison, and our recidivism rate remains around 61%.**

Removing criminal records inquiries is a significant leap. Our roundtables tried to look at this topic from three relevant perspectives.

This text reflects the group discussion, not necessarily the views of the table host.

THE SITUATION

15,000
People released from prison every year

80%
Unemployment rate after one year of release

6,100+
computer system design jobs created over the past 5 years

73%
of companies reported these job vacancies were hard to fill

Statistics courtesy of take2nz.org
Photo courtesy of Hédi Benyounes / unsplash.com

ORGANISATIONS

Organisations need to look at their policy for criminal conviction checks and decide what's right for them. **Blanket bans on hiring people with convictions were discussed as being regressive**, but everyone acknowledged there are occasions where it is necessary and examples of this may be where the nature of the workplace (eg. bank) is misaligned with the crime (eg. fraud).

Freelance or remote work is an opportunity for the employer to provide an opportunity to hire a previously incarcerated individual whilst mitigating initial security concerns. Another option is a **trial period** done remotely, before full workplace integration.

The workplace may also be in a position to provide specific types of professional development or wraparound support, and if a criminal charge is not known then there may be missed opportunities for ensuring that **all parties are getting the most out of their contract**.

Taking a leaf out of other equal-employment-opportunity initiatives, the Rainbow Tick was raised as an example of organisations signaling their inclusivity which could extend to fair chance employment, as it relates to people with a criminal conviction. There is potential to create an accreditation around hiring policies that open pathways for previously incarcerated individuals, as well as creating a supportive **ecosystem for the community of employers** to share their experiences and support each other.

CURRENT EMPLOYEES

Everyone has their own view in relation to the idea of working with someone who has spent time in prison which will be informed by personal experience, media, political views or values. Where one employee sees inspiration and opportunity to become a mentor, someone else may feel jealousy at the perceived imbalance, or even fear.

Not every employee may be able to find peace with working with someone with a criminal record — for example a survivor of a criminal act. Also, people have a right to privacy. So while a previous criminal conviction may be known to HR, it doesn't mean it's disclosed to all employees.

In the instance of the Take2 programme, the existence (not details) of a conviction is likely to be known, so that **an environment of support, education, and connection is built.** The more time we spend with a person, and the more we know their story, then the more ways we find for relating to one another. This in turn reduces the stigma around criminal convictions.

PREVIOUSLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

The greatest change to be made by challenging the way in which we approach criminal record checks is to the livelihood of a person with a conviction on their record.

The cycle of crime is strong, for example a child with a parent in prison is seven times more likely **to also end up in prison.** So we can break this cycle by changing the lives of people currently in the system, willing to make a change for the better when they are released.

The stigma of having been a criminal is damaging, and it keeps people stuck without a way to move forward. Programmes like Take2 not only provide the training and support, but will also feed the success stories back into prison where more offenders are exposed to a possible alternative. **These changes positively affect not only the individual - but also their partner, children, parents, friends and community.**

SO DO WE REMOVE CRIMINAL RECORDS INQUIRIES?

Instead of removing the checks entirely, the roundtable felt more positive about **intentionally building an inclusive, accepting environment that promotes fair chance opportunities.**

If workplaces can commit to taking a look at their hiring policy and stance on criminal convictions and create room for previously incarcerated individuals, then we can truly impact the cycle of reoffending in this country.

There's not one right way - this process needs common sense, so it's up to companies to decide what their version of fair-chance employment looks like.

- *Get your team onboard with social responsibility.*
- *Educate your team on the problem statistics, the opportunity and the impact to be made.*
- *Allow open discussion for your team to share thoughts.*
- *Allow private discussion so vulnerable employees can safely raise concerns.*
- *Review and update hiring policy if relevant.*
- *Create guidelines for what 'good' looks like when it comes to inclusion and fair chance hiring.*

As RUSH and other tech companies work through the process of hiring new tech talent with Take2, **we will share what we can about our journey and welcome conversation around fair chance employment.**

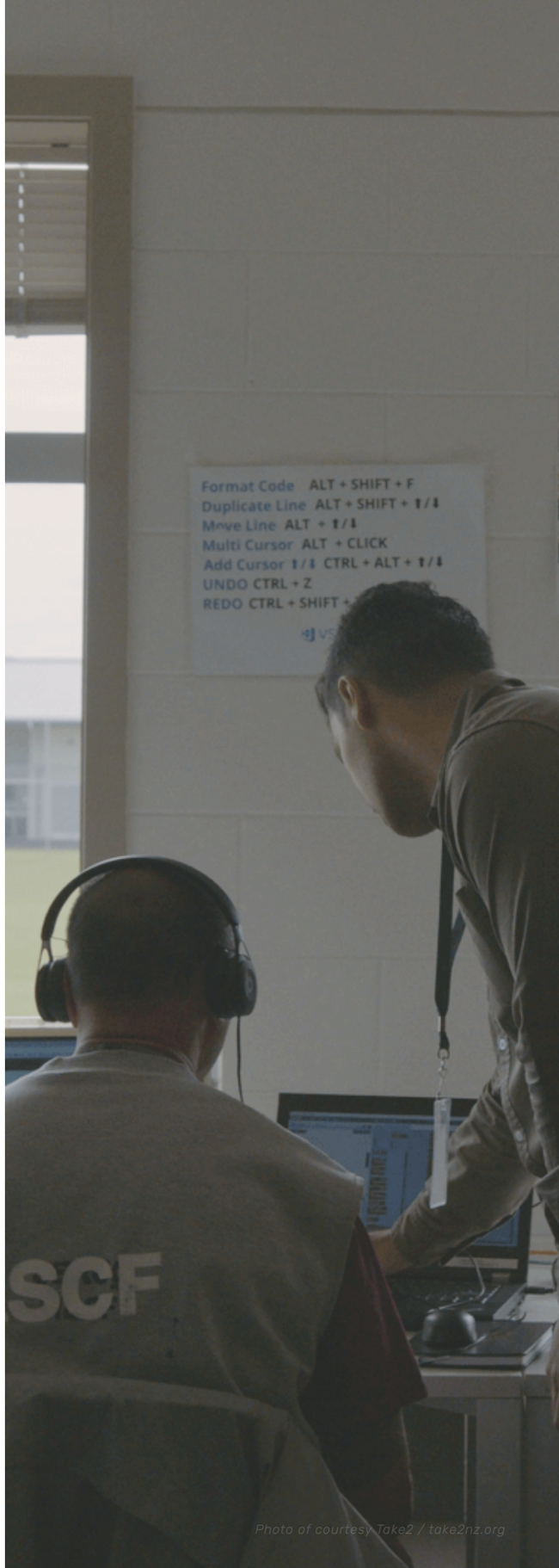


Photo of courtesy Take2 / take2nz.org

How do we use technology to create equality and access for indigenous and vulnerable communities to engage in decisions that lead/contribute to their wellbeing?

Charmeyne Te Nana-Williams

What Ever It Takes

OWNERSHIP OF WELLBEING FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

When forced to engage with a mainstream healthcare system, Māori communities often speak of feeling compromised, disengaged and isolated.

Ministry of Health statistics show **Māori are almost three times as likely as non-Māori to have experienced unfair treatment in healthcare, based on their ethnicity.** In addition to that, mainstream models of care don't fully understand what indigenous peoples practices and rituals regarding well being mean to them.

In a system which has long prioritised a western approach to medicine, groups such as What Ever It Takes have the goal of supporting whānau to have a voice and a choice when it comes to their family wellbeing.

This roundtable discussed how we might create a better relationship, and therefore better outcomes, between healthcare practitioners and their patients.

INCREASE UNDERSTANDING

The current healthcare system isn't set up to truly understand the practises and principles of indigenous populations. While training and recruiting more indigenous clinicians was raised as a necessity, the health sector needs to widely recognise and embrace Māori health models.

Putting whānau at the centre of care and genuinely accepting Māori knowledge and spirituality as equally valuable to a clinically driven approach respects that whānau are experts in their own health. So how can this be furthered through technology?

One idea floated at the roundtable was to create a tech platform which guides practitioners through making choices which are aligned to different indigienous models of care, or offer the ability to understand and respect certain rituals and ceremonies at the right times throughout a process such as rehabilitation.

Image courtesy of TVNZ / My Māori Midwife

INCREASE ACCESS

Telehealth was raised as an obvious example which can improve access to healthcare — and it's only 'obvious' because of the widespread use of this method of care during the pandemic, this would not have been so mainstream five years ago.

Interestingly, telehealth as a means of improved Māori access was implemented in 2013 to service the 300 residents on the remote Bay of Plenty island of Matakana. By making a GP from a Māori health provider clinic in Papamoa accessible by video every weekday, patients received more regular support and more accessible healthcare.

It's also a form of engagement which can foster and nurture more empathetic clinical behaviour. Video calls may allow people to see into the lived reality of others, which requires that people check their biases or acknowledge privileges afforded by a system set up to deliver westernised healthcare.

TECHNOLOGY COULD ALSO:

- *Connect communities/whānau who are going through similar things*
- *Facilitate mentoring people to looks after themselves*
- *Provide self-assessment tools*
- *Create and enable aspirational goals for the patient*
- *Share stories and songs*
- *Translate language, rituals or behaviours for mainstream healthcare*

MEASURING IMPACT FOR FUNDING

Changing a healthcare system, or adopting new practices into mainstream care is not cheap. It takes a lot of time, effort and money to steer such a large ship in a new direction.

When we consider the application of tech to open up more to whānau-centred care, the roundtable raised its ability as a tool for better reporting, delivering metrics which provide the evidence that indigenous systems work and are worth investing in.

Reporting platforms can identify trends or barriers to client progress, monitor, review and mitigate risk, and provide data to inform decision making for funding. **By using technology to capture evidence around the value of whānau support on healthcare outcomes, data could be provided to translate the true impact of a new model of healthcare for funders.**

With greater access to more funding, individuals could access a level of care that's currently being held back from them.

As technology like the app currently being built by Charmeyne and What Ever It Takes make its way into the world, a new global standard will be set for the way indigenous communities receive and inform healthcare.

Technology is the enabler for richer cultural experiences and quantitative measurements that emphasise whānau being active participants and leaders in their journey to hauora.

This text reflects the group discussion, not necessarily the views of the table host.

Photo courtesy of NZ Stories / toolkit.nzstory.govt.nz

As STEM education sees technology introduced earlier in life to future-proof children for a digital world, is enough being done to also protect them from the physical and mental health repercussions of tech?

Janet Van Kiwibots

Photo courtesy of Kelly Sikkema / unsplash.com

FUTURE-PROOFING CHILDREN FOR A DIGITAL WORLD

Digital Natives. A term Marc Prensky coined in 2001 to describe the generation of people who grew up in the era of ubiquitous technology including computers and the internet. While **those of us on the early 1980's side of the** Millennial **spectrum may still have memories of a device-free childhood**, by the end of high school we were starting to complete essays on a computer and text our friends.

Since then, the integration of digital technology into one's childhood has ramped up to the point where now we have apps designed for toddlers, basic coding in primary school and kids making PowerPoint pitches to their parents as to why they should be allowed a puppy.

Most 'kids these days' cannot possibly imagine a tech-less life.

And wonderful things have been done with technology. Kids can quickly and easily bond with far away relatives — something that's been crucial to maintaining connection during a pandemic. Smart wearables like Fitbits encourage movement and gamify physical challenges. There is **unprecedented access** to educational resources, tools and videos.

However, as we scroll through the news or one of a dozen social feeds, the headlines are quite confronting. Anxiety at an all time high. Attentional problems. Instant gratification. Cyber bullying. Body dysmorphia. Depression. Loneliness. Young people radicalised by an online community.

Sci-fi movies and TV shows have imagined a dark and serious world impacted by technology - Black Mirror, The Social Dilemma, even Wall-E - but these are not so far from the truth.

In a popular 2016 talk, Simon Sinek says in regards to Millenials: "We know that engagement with social media and our cellphones releases a chemical called dopamine[…] Dopamine is the exact same chemical that makes us feel good when we smoke, when we drink, and when we gamble. In other words, it's highly, highly addictive[…] **An entire generation has access to an addictive, numbing chemical called dopamine through social media and cell phones**."

The very best and the very worst of humanity is reflected in technology — and passed on to our children. We can't turn back the clock, they need to stay tech literate to compete in this world. So what can we do to minimise the bad while we amplify the good?

The roundtable groups pooled their diversity of experiences as a mix of Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants (those who weren't brought up with tech, but had to learn and adapt as they aged). They have experience as parents, as students, people with a long career in the tech industry, and people just entering it.

Over and over, we heard the word 'balance'. The difficulty is defining what balance means or looks like in relation to technology and children. Is it an equal share of screen time and physical activities? Is it the balance of online engagement with being present and learning mindfulness?

If we dig into the analogy of technology being like an addictive, numbing drug — our thoughts may immediately go to social media, or maybe gaming. You don't necessarily think about technologies like GoPros, or calculators, or LEGO Technic, or apps that scan and identify bugs. **So there is a whole set of technology which is not so much about looking for a numbing escape, but about using imagination, problem solving and innovating.**

A kid putting together a robot and programming it to compete in a national or international competition, as seen in the Kiwibots programmes, does not have the same negative, addicting effects as putting a cellphone in the hands of a child and giving them access to social media.

NOT ALL TECH IS CREATED EQUAL

Perhaps the balance may be related to the input, and the output. If they put in their boredom, their worries, their judgements or their naivete, that comes back — twisted or amplified.

If a child is putting in their curiosity, their energy and their imagination, out comes a creative solution, an invention, a new way to experience the world.

As parents, guardians and educators, we're the first gatekeepers to technology, and the role models of how to interact with it. Yet many of us, especially in the tech sector, spend so much of our day in front of a screen for work. Are WE role modelling disconnecting from tech as much as we would recommend children do?

A good balance seems to be about encouraging tech to be used for creative problem solving or imaginative play, and minimising the use of it for escapism or distraction. We should also foster a healthy mix of online and offline interactions and physical activity. This blend will look different at different ages, and the main outtake was that **families need to create a system that works best for their children.**

In his talk, The Millennial Question, Simon Sinek signs off by saying: "We know, in industry — whether we like it or not we don't get a choice — we have a responsibility to make up the shortfall. **To help this amazing, idealistic, fantastic generation build their confidence, learn patience, learn the social skills, find a better balance between life and technology becse, quite frankly, it's the right thing to do."**

This text reflects the group discussion, not necessarily the views of the table host.

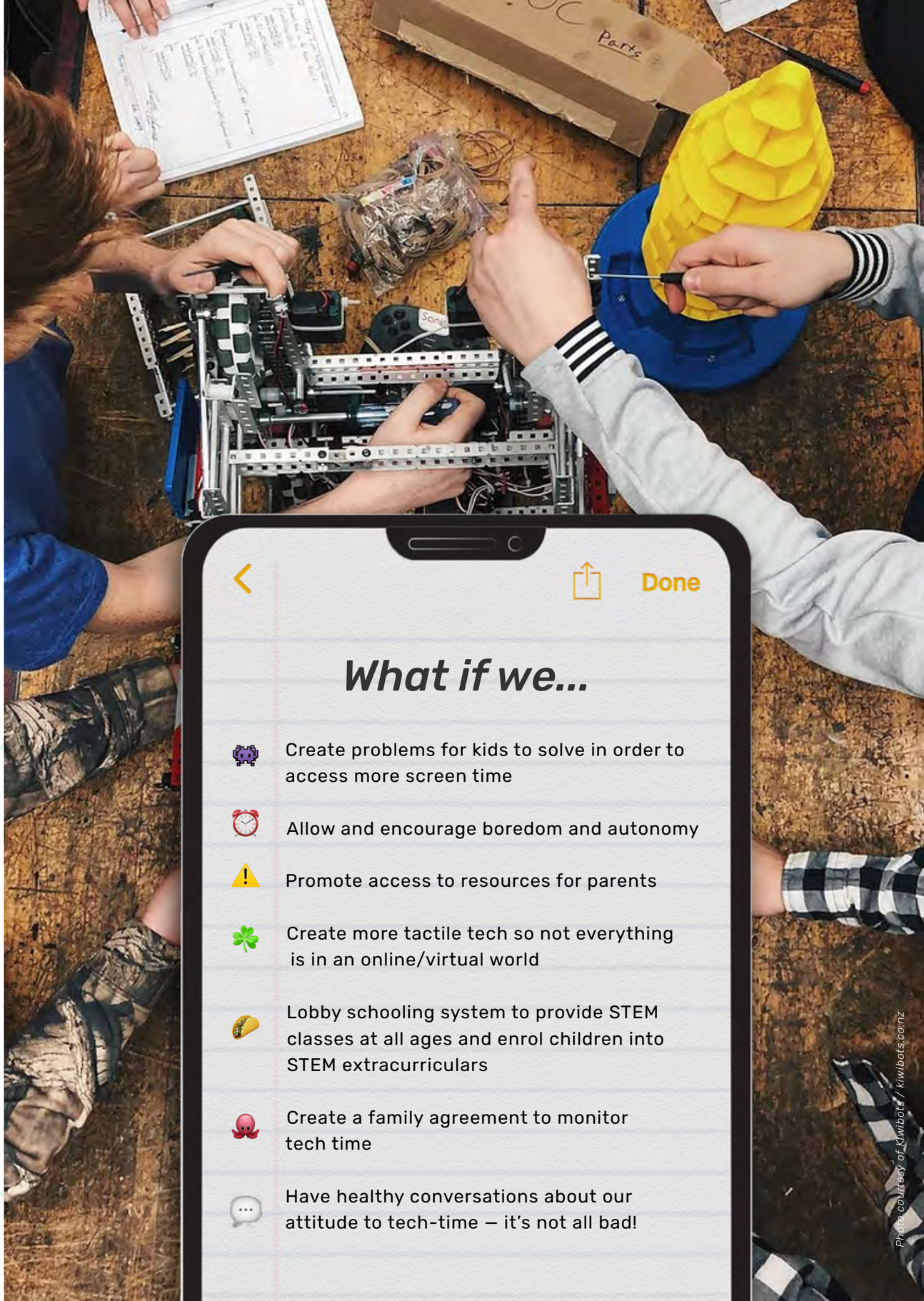


Photo courtesy of Kiwibots / kiwibots.co.nz

The economics of conservation tech: when the private sector funds purposeful not-for-profit tech projects, is this a win-win or do we risk selling out nature by aligning with those who are the biggest threats to biodiversity?

Tane van der Boon

MAUI63

Photo courtesy of populationspeakout.org/the-book

WHEN TO SAY NO TO CHARITABLE FUNDING

This roundtable discussed a real-world problem faced by Tane of MĀUI63 - an issue that many charities face. Whether or not to accept 'tainted' money.

One one hand, taking money from nefarious philanthropists is damaging, and some take the Marxist view that any money gained through capitalist practices could be considered tainted.

On the other hand, Salvation Army founder William Booth is famously quoted as saying, **"the problem with tainted money is there t'aint enough!"** Basically, donations get "washed clean" when used for the greater good.

Both stances can be heavily debated, which means that sitting squarely on one side puts nonprofits in a complicated spot.

MĀUI63 collects information about the critically endangered Māui dolphin, in order to save them. Threats to the dolphins can come from oil and gas companies and the fishing industry in the form of pollution, boat strike, entanglement and bycatch.

Some of these organisations also offer donations to MĀUI63, which helps them fund their purposeful work.

You can see the issue.

'Greenwashing', coined by environmentalist Jay Westerveld in 1986, describes a business practice where companies market themselves as environmentally friendly instead of actually making changes to the impact they're making on the environment.

Adjacent to this is the slightly newer mid-2000's term 'causewashing' which covers a broader set of social causes; for example companies donating to Black Lives Matter initiatives yet overlooking employee racism, or appearing to get behind gender equity while having no female representation on their boards.

There are moral and ethical challenges with taking money from a company who isn't contributing to the cause outside of making a donation, or even worse, is exacerbating the problem that the nonprofit is trying to fix.

The roundtable posited that the ideal position to be in, would be to be so self-sufficient that a nonprofit could choose their funders — but this is far off for small nonprofits or those just starting out, and when the problem is here and real change could happen now.

This text reflects the group discussion, not necessarily the views of the table host.

Not accepting money might mean a WIN on morals, but a LOSE on effectiveness. If a charity such as MĀUI63 were to cease to exist due to lack of funding, and they are doing good in the world, and the corporation gets to continue their harmful business practices regardless, then is it really a win?

If the alternative is a LOSE on morals, but a WIN on effectiveness, then the nonprofit may suffer criticism because they're leaning into that which they stand against.

SO WHAT WOULD A WIN/WIN LOOK LIKE?

Firstly a nonprofit has to unpack their ethics and operations, and build an assessment framework around these which lays down what is a hard-no. If you were the Cancer Society for example, no amount of money from a tobacco company should be accepted.

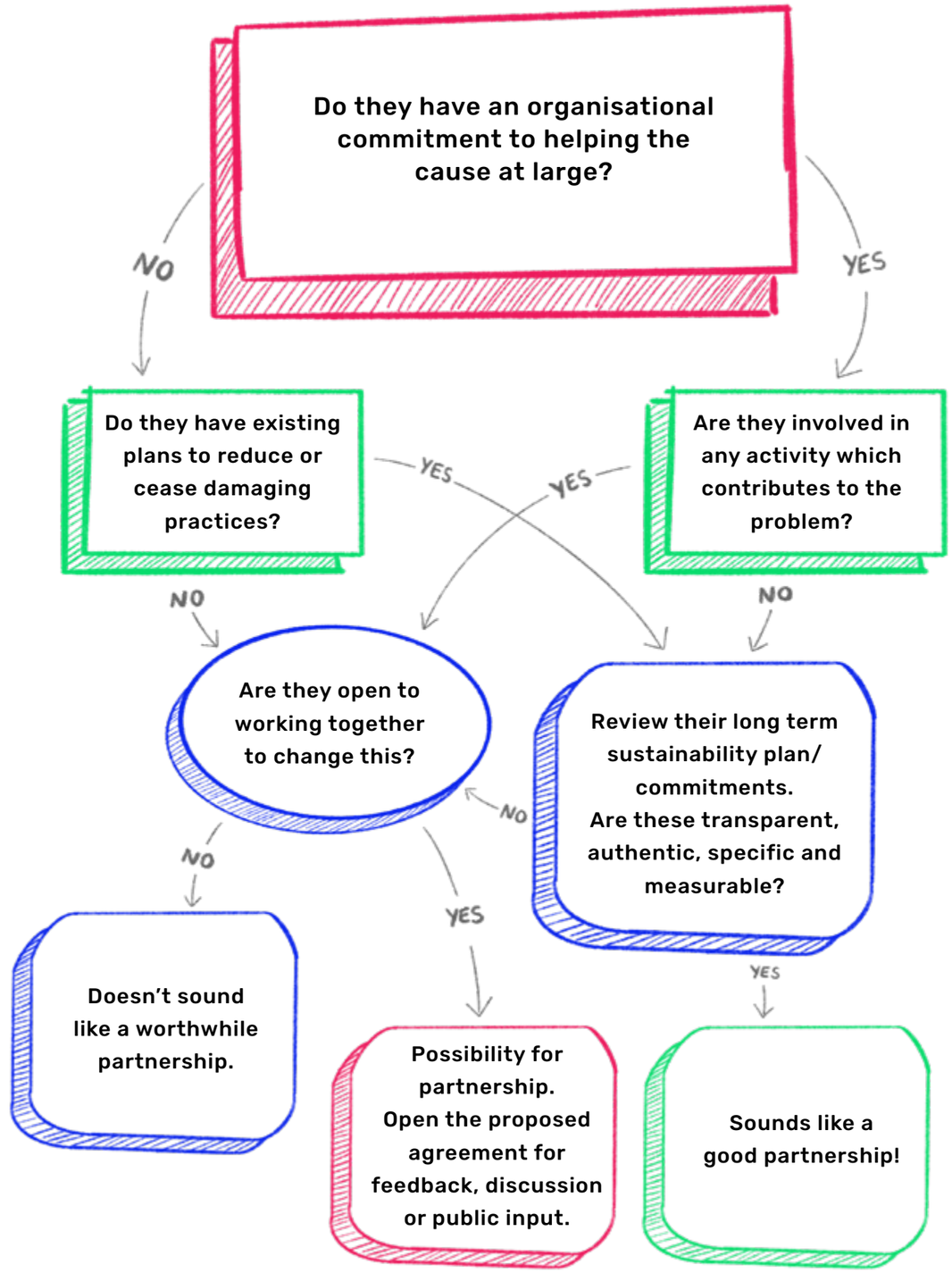
But outside what is a hard no for each individual organisation, they may be able to assess alignment with potential donor companies that have a sustainability roadmap for making positive change by reducing their damaging practices. **There is extra value in these relationships, such as the opportunity to affect change inside the corporate and gain leverage in the media to promote awareness of the cause.**

Bringing it back to MĀUI63, seafood companies Sanford and Moana are examples of corporate partners who are committed to making sustainable changes to better protect marine life and enhance marine ecosystems, as well as supporting the charity with financial contributions. They're exploring how to reduce the risk of Māui and Hector's dolphins coming into contact with fishing nets using the drone technology and research from MĀUI63, and are both committed to their own Māui Dolphin Protection Plan.

Illustration courtesy of Akshit & Aayushi / loopymagazine.com

CREATING A FRAMEWORK FOR PARTNERSHIP

Our roundtable came up with the following assessment questions for starters to help non-profit managers assess corporate funding and partnerships.



Do you think the digital era — and all that comes with it, like increased accessibility, selfie tourism, social media and short attention spans — is improving or ruining the experience of art?

Helen Klisser During, Arts Advisor

THE CHANGING FACE OF ART IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Robert Hughes, in his introduction to 'The Shock of the New', asked the following: *"How has art created images of dissent, propaganda, and political coercion? How has it defined the world of pleasure, of sensuous communion with worldly delights? How has it tried to bring about Utopia? What has been its relation to the irrational and the unconscious? How has it dealt with the great inherited themes of Romanticism, the sense of the world as a theatre of despair or religious exaltation? And what changes were forced on art by the example and pressure of mass media, which displaced painting and sculpture from their old centrality as public speech?"*

Now read through those again, but replace the word art with social media, or the internet…

Often called the greatest art critic of all time, Robert Hughes passed away at age 74 in 2012, so while he was not a stranger to the world of technology, the current art world has seen some dramatic leaps in the past almost-ten years. No wonder then, that the roundtable jumped straight to NFTs.

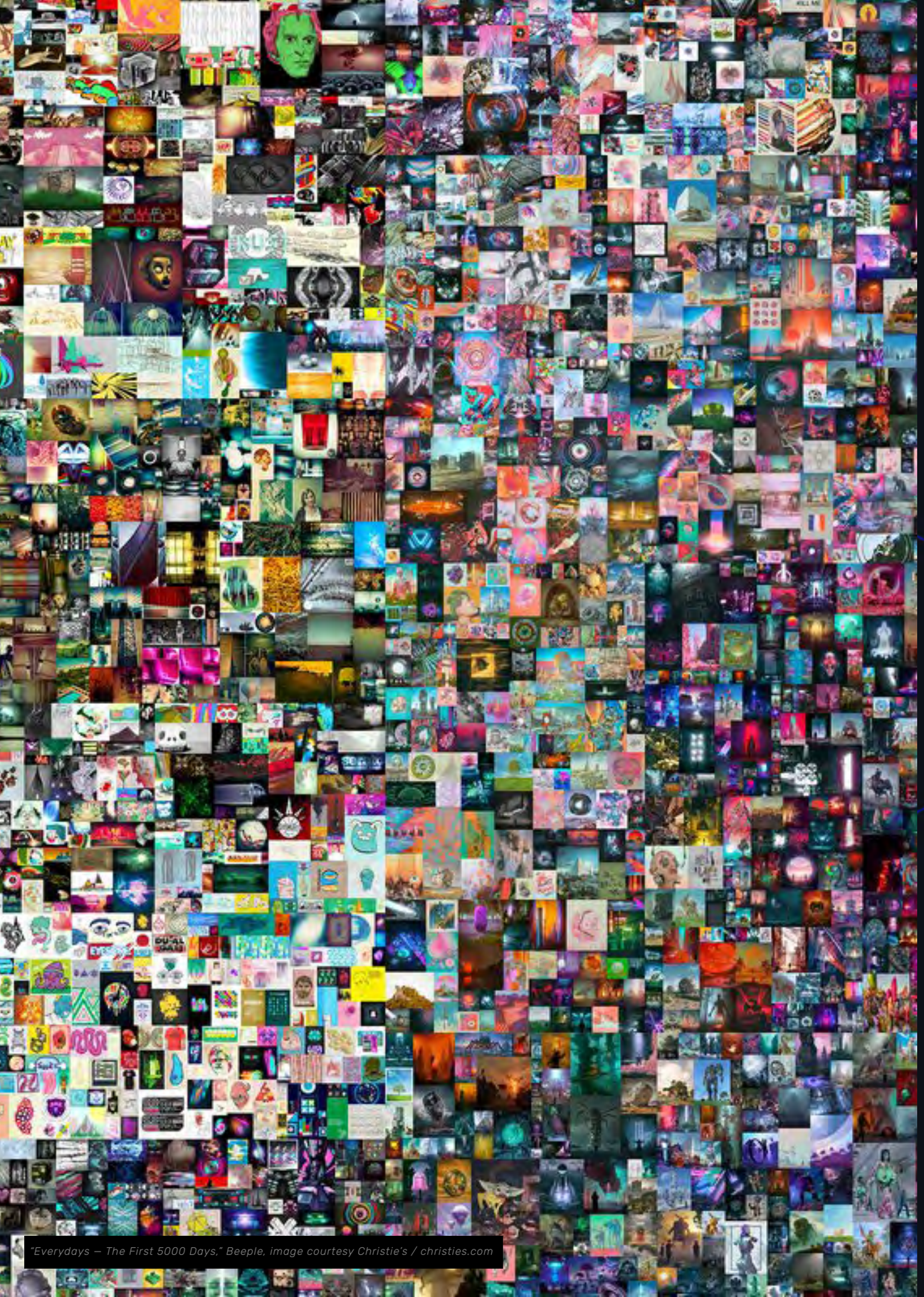
While the first one-off NFTs was created in 2014, the NFT market value tripled in 2020 reaching more than USD$250 million — and by the first quarter of 2021 NFT sales exceeded USD$2 billion. It's very empowering for an artist to be able to track their work, create a business and build a career without losing out on the profits over time. With Beeple's NFT artwork fetching USD$69M in March 2021, this **technology is really grabbing the mainstream and shaking it up.**

NFTs also find themselves at the centre of controversy with the reported negative effect on climate change — so we were very lucky to have new media artist, Joseph Michael, join the roundtable discussion with his unique perspective as someone who uses technology in his practice, and has found a muse in the climate crisis.

In his 2019 installation, Voices for the Future, Joseph used technology in both the creation and the presentation of the artwork. A life-sized iceberg was projected onto the exterior of the United Nations General Assembly and Secretariat buildings in New York ahead of the UN's Climate Action Summit and global school strikes. Visitors were able to hear the creak and crack as sections of ice broke off, forcing people to **acknowledge the effect that human behaviour is having on the climate.**

This text reflects the group discussion, not necessarily the views of the table host.

Image courtesy of Joseph Michael / joemichael.co.nz



"Everydays — The First 5000 Days," Beeple, image courtesy Christie's / christies.com

Aside from being the tool for creation, instances like this demonstrate how technology opens the doors for access. Projecting something to tens of thousands of people live, or even millions online, is entirely and only possible because of the connected world we live in. **Art is successful when it touches an audience, and widespread appreciation of an artist can increase their work's value, therefore making art more accessible is beneficial to the artist.**

It's also beneficial to the audience, bringing new art to their consciousness. Take the example of the Van Gogh Alive installation which was recently hosted in Auckland. It was commented that while art world aficionados, museum directors or gallerists would not revere such an installation, this exhibition allowed the freedom of excitement and curiosity in relation to the art, bringing it away from a high brow gallery wall and sharing it with small children who delighted in crawling along the floor amongst the patterns of sunflowers: "How wonderful to have a moment to appreciate an artist from a time and place so far away from 2021 in New Zealand."

NECESSARY EVIL?

While the pandemic saw a rise in connection on social media and online, and allowed artists to stay in touch with their audiences and know them better, the downside is feeling like a pawn. Artists lose their identity in the chase for followers, heightening their anxiety as they change to please the fast-paced modern audience.

Art piracy and illegal downloading are also concerns for artists, especially those in the musical space. The table benefitted from the perspective of a musician, who spoke about vinyl and CDs, and what a far cry we are from that way of experiencing music when you can ask Alexa to play something.

The freedom to create, versus the requirement for funding is a tale as old as time, and isn't too different from the charitable funding argument. How can artists independently thrive and create when they're cut off from royalties by streaming services or algorithms?

This is where technology could be a great enabler for artists. Take inspiration from examples like Christo and Jeanne Claude who recoup the millions of dollars spent on their projects by selling project documentation. Or platforms like Patreon which connect artists and creators to fans, developing an income stream which allows for creation.

In these ways, **technology enables the public to contribute to the work and be part of it's story and creation**, building an infrastructure around artists to ensure they're fairly compensated, that they're not exploited and that they can keep their artist vision pure.

Does this bring us all the way back to the blockchain and carbon emissions? Well here's some hopeful innovation. Pop on Lorde's new album Solar Power, and let your mind be taken away to a dreamy, summer coast knowing that if she managed to create this certified carbon-neutral album, then we can trust that the purity and creative vision of artists may have as much of an impact on the future as any technological development.

Image courtesy of Christo and Jeanne-Claude

You can't manage what you don't measure. How can businesses practically measure how they are progressing to meaningful sustainability with technology, and its impact?

Gavin Lennox
The Icehouse

THE MEASURE OF IMPACT

The world changed dramatically at the start of 2020, and with it came an acceleration in the demand for accountability and sustainability of corporations. Vocal populations — made more so thanks to social media - are calling out brands and businesses for their historical or current impact on the environment, marginalised communities, their employees, and their bottom line. Some businesses were already moving towards a higher standard of conduct, some have been there for a long time, some are just coming to grips with accountability.

One thing is apparent — **there is no escaping the requirement for sustainability.** It's no longer the nice-to-have in the annual report or the goodwill gesture. It's a driving force, and it covers everything from environmental and social impact, to corporate governance, to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Photo courtesy of populationspeakout.org/the-book

"If you can't measure it, you can't improve it," is a quote attributed to management thinker Peter Drucker. **How will anyone know whether their efforts are successful or not, unless we can define where we are now and then establish a metric for measuring progress?**

In New Zealand, the government will introduce a law that requires the financial sector to disclose the impacts of their investments on climate change and explain how they will manage climate-related risks and opportunities. This is one step towards what it looks like for a business to measure their activity.
But this is only one sector and only one metric, climate-related risks are not the sole indicators to watch for true sustainability to be achieved. A huge amount of conversation around the table circled the question: **Who decides the goals for sustainability and what are the metrics?**

The last few decades have started to produce frameworks or tools such as the Triple Bottom Line Reporting and B Corp Certification. The problem is there is no single marker for improvement because "sustainable" balances so many different elements and requires a dashboard of reporting to be kept in check.

We can agree that a positive impact is beating the data baseline on a particular indicator: ensuring we have made things better, or at least not made them worse. Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics was raised for the second time in this Techweek event; how can humanity operate within both planetary boundaries and social boundaries?

This opened up the next question: **How do we find the baseline? How do we know where the boundary is?**

The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals launched in 2015 are widely accepted as the framework that will lead innovative efforts to build sustainable societies. This could be a good place to start.

APPLES AND ORANGES

97% of NZ businesses are classified as SMEs. Transport is responsible for the most emissions. Supermarkets can impact the lives of an entire population with their no-plastic bag mandate or supply choices.

It's clear that not every business has the same baseline or goals. And not every business makes the same amount of impact with the same type of change.

It's a valiant effort for a small tech startup to achieve a B Corp certification, but in reality the big players — **enterprises and corporations — need to implement these initiatives to make an impact at scale**, affecting a whole city or country.

One person at the roundtable had an idea for challenges between companies on sector-relevant goals; some friendly pressure. When one supermarket leads the way in sustainable initiatives, the rest tend to follow.

Since Techweek, Kiwibank announced they were a Certified B Corporation which proves that this is an achievable endeavour. Will other banks follow suit?

THE POWER OF PEOPLE

Much of the roundtable discussion was around *who* was responsible for the goals, the metrics and the reporting.

The rise of hiring people with the sole job of "sustainability" within an organisation has been steadily increasing for years, so hiring someone who has the experience and education to assess all markers related to their specific workplace can lead the charge towards meaningful sustainability.

Outside of an organisation, consumers have a long history of demanding and realising change from corporations.

A fashion & textile industry report from 2020 states that more than 50% of executives believe consumers are driving the increased focus on sustainability.

Just last month, New Zealand's Emma Lewisham became world's first carbon-positive beauty brand, and has effectively open-sourced their circular blueprint model so that the industry as a whole can change. By prioritising sustainability goals and making that demand evident with purchasing power, we can change things.

MEASURE WITH TECH

So where is the tech in all this sustainability change and reporting?

CoGo is an example which helps individuals measure their carbon offset, platform Good On You for sustainable and ethical fashion information and Best Fish Guide for sustainably sourced seafood - **the list of consumer apps is long and constantly growing.**

It might not be as easy for businesses yet to simply plug in the numbers to measure all their sustainability points, but **this is a high growth space.** Toitū Carbon & Environmental Certifications has great calculator tools, and two RUSH start-up clients are making an impact: Frankie enables smart and efficient maintenance processes to increase the lifespan of buildings, and UnravelCarbon is looking to measure carbon emissions by tapping into financial systems — CoGo for business.

Sustainability measurements and indicators are constantly evolving, along with our evolving world. As our collective social, economical and environmental conditions change, it's up to businesses to collect the data, make a choice on where improvements should be made, and align improvements with action.

We don't do it because it's easy, we do it because it's right.

This text reflects the group discussion, not necessarily the views of the table host.

Photo by Lewis Parsons on Unsplash

CLOSING

As we finish off this paper and send it out into the world, Auckland remains in lockdown. The word 'languishing' has been used a lot. We're getting on with it — a little more cynical, a little more weary. The last 18 months have been profoundly difficult, it could be fair to think the coming 18 months might not be particularly easy either.

That's why pulling our heads up out of the daily grind of lockdown is so essential. Returning to these roundtable topics after a couple of months has been quietly energising.

When we look at the BIG problems (and I say this with all due respect for individuals suffering hardship in their lockdown bubbles) such as climate change, education and equity for indigenous communities, we're afforded a bit of perspective. We can take our outrage, or cynicism, or frustration and use it as the fuel for problem solving.

The most exciting thing I recall about this event was the buzz of many heads turning a problem over and assessing it from every angle. Throwing out random ideas to the table, making new connections, finding ways to make a change. Believing there can be a change.

I hope this paper delivers you the sense of optimism that I feel now. While there is a lot of heaviness happening in the world, and in our industry, I'm confident that there are enough people who want to do what's right and solve these problems.

If you want to join us on our mission to design technology to better serve humankind, in any capacity, please reach out. We want to take these problems and build products that move the needle in a positive direction.

Alaina Luxmoore

Document author
Marketing Manager, RUSH

Photo courtesy of RUSH / rush.co.nz

we design technology to better serve humankind.

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