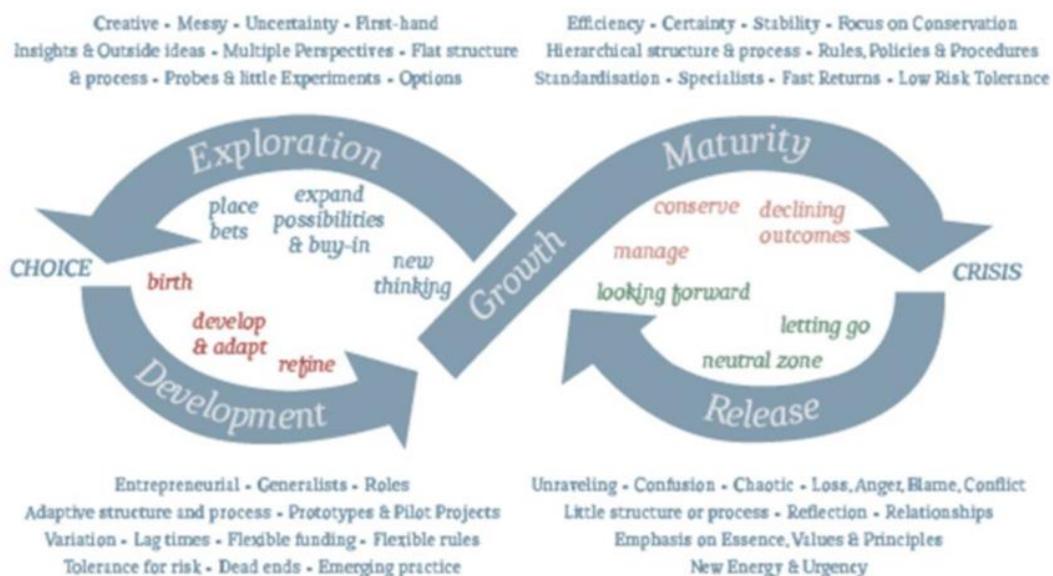




Eco-cycle Planning Resource

How do we do this work when everything keeps changing?



Source: Mark Cabaj, Here to there, 2013

We live in a world where everything keeps changing. Things don't go always according to plan. So we need to keep learning and adapting our responses. But how? A good place to start is by listening and observing so we can identify where the energy, resources, risks and opportunities are.



The Eco-cycle Framework helps us make sense of what we are noticing by drawing on metaphors and research from the natural sciences. Imagine you are looking after a forest; working with the different seasons, weather patterns, soil conditions, fires and storms that come through. See what new insights this resource offers you in working with the different seasons of your community.

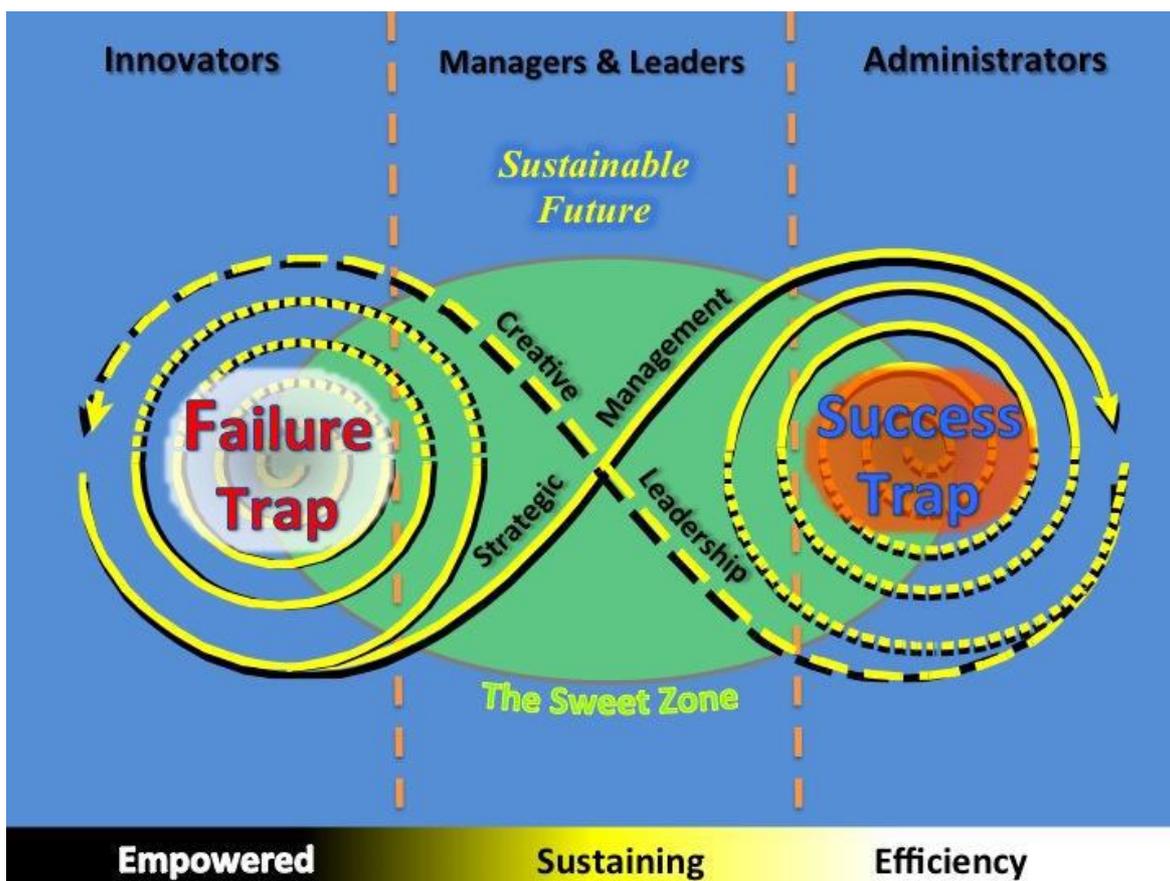
How to use this framework

You can use this framework to map where you, your project, organisation or initiative are on the eco-cycle and discuss, for example:

- What does the mapping identify for our work? E.g. where we have been, where we are now...
- Are there some things from the past that could still be resources for future growth and possibilities?
- What are some of the developing possibilities that might need further investigation?
- What are some possibilities that we have already explored that we are now ready to develop, or take to a larger scale?
- What does the mapping indicate about where the energy is right now? Are there any gaps or blockages?
- What does this thinking suggest about how we are sharing our energy and resources? How has this changed over time and does anything need to shift for the future?
- What risks and challenges can we identify related to “traps” in the eco-cycle? E.g. what do we need to do more or less of to progress towards goals and also achieve a healthy balance in our work?
- Given how we are evolving from a lifecycle perspective, and where we want to get to, what are some possible next steps?



Failure and Success Traps



Source: <http://www.davidkhurst.com/clayton-christensen-at-davos-an-ecological-perspective/>

In the exploration and development phases, we have to invest heavily in our ideas to transform them into change and action – getting our seedlings to grow. In a forest however, not every seedling makes it to the top of the canopy. It's the same with the many ideas we seed in our communities. Not everything will or should take off. There is a fine balance between the number of ideas and the resources and capacity at hand. If we kick too much off with too few resources, initiatives fail to get traction and nothing succeeds. This is a **Failure Trap**.

When things are working really well and everything's stable, it feels like you can stand back and reap the rewards of all your hard work. You're probably in the maturity phase. But when your resources, energy and ideas are all at capacity, the walls still can come crashing down. By doing things the way they have always been done and not innovating or responding to what may have been changing around you, you can fall into a **Success Trap**.



In nature though, a forest fire isn't always seen as a disaster. Sometimes it can be a release. An essential part of release is the creation of space for new ideas, growth and resources to emerge, and the cycle to begin again.

Three additional traps to watch out for

- **The Charisma Trap:** Often without meaning to, charismatic leaders or drivers of initiatives can also present major problems for growth and renewal cycles. When things become dependent on one person and they leave, it can be hard to carry on with the initiative.
- **The Chronic Disaster Trap:** After the release phase there can be so much change, grief, messiness and complications going on that people can feel helpless, isolated and unable to cope. When this happens, it helps to take time to re-group, look for bright spots, reduce things down to bite size chunks and promote a sense of collective purpose.
- **The Innovation Trap:** Sometimes starting something new can stretch or exhaust resources and capacity as well as putting strain on existing relationships. You can also miss the chance to leverage off existing successful community efforts and initiatives.

Evidence suggests that strategically observing and understanding where each initiative is on the eco-cycle helps leaders and collaborators to better understand and manage initiatives more effectively. It's also good to remember that different community initiatives can be at different points of the cycle at the same time.

For another Eco-cycle resource, here's [The Tamarack Institute's one](#).



ABOUT



Inspiring Communities catalyses locally-led change, to achieve sustainable, effective outcomes.

We are the reference point for community-led development in New Zealand, building on international and local practice-based evidence to grow and share expertise.

Inspiring Communities operates across many sectors at multiple levels.

Talk to us about your CLD training, workshop needs, coaching, support and opportunities in your community or region. We understand diversity! We can tailor packages to your specific requirements.

Email us exchange@inspiringcommunities.org.nz



RESOURCES

Harakeke/Flax - from the root to the flower the harakeke shares its properties.



ADVICE

Korimako/Bell Bird - fluent, graceful speaker.



EVENTS

Whakaatu/Presenting - the peak of the mountain as a stage to present from.

