



# exploring community resilience

in times of rapid change

what is it? how are people  
building it? why does it matter?

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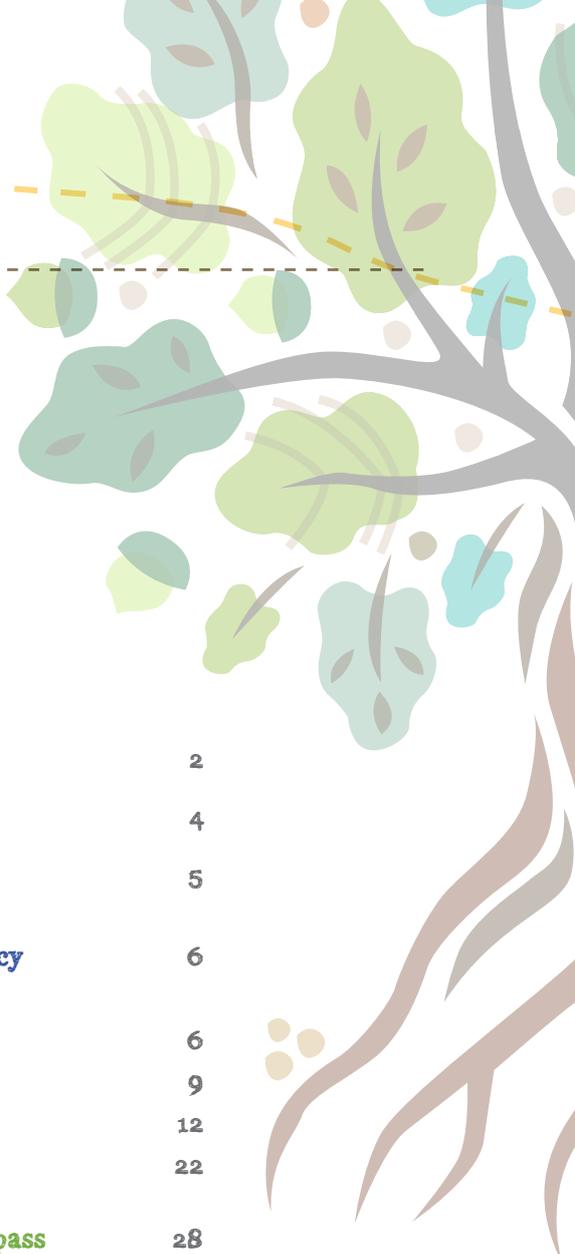
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CHANGING MINDS • CHANGING LIVES



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# Executive Summary

## How this handbook came about

In late June 2009 a member of Carnegie's rural development community of practice posted a blog on [fieryspirits.com](http://fieryspirits.com/profiles/blogs/rural-communities-opportunity).....

<http://fieryspirits.com/profiles/blogs/rural-communities-opportunity>

The blogger reported that he'd just come out of a meeting with Scottish Government emergency planners concerned with "the unfolding scenario of a pandemic flu outbreak". Officials had been working flat-out trying to prepare for the worst case scenario: no-one could be sure how deadly or contagious the flu would be. And although Prime Minister Gordon Brown had assured the country that robust plans..... were in place, our blogger wrote that "most of our central infrastructural systems are already running in failure mode.

See for example The Independent, 22nd July 2009 - <http://tinyurl.com/3h44wyy>

A small glitch in any one of them can rapidly trigger failure across the board. For example, our pandemic simulation showed how quickly core services can buckle if some of the worst-case scenarios unfold this coming winter." He went on: "emergency planning is not the same thing as creating genuine resilience - certainly as community activists would understand the term... is this a theme worth developing in the fiery spirits community?"

By the time Glaxo Smith Klein and Baxter began delivering the government's order of 132 million doses of vaccine, swine flu had left the headlines. November 2009 had brought massive flooding to Cumbria - and shortly thereafter disruption on roads, rail and air as the UK and Ireland experienced its first white Christmas since 2004.

These events underlined the timeliness of our discussion, now focussed around three core questions:

- what is community resilience?
- how are people building it? and
- why does it matter?

Two years on, we have produced this handbook to share what we've learned more widely. It is full of stories offered by activists and professionals about what's working in practice - and the sources of inspiration underpinning their work. And it suggests how some of these ideas might connect with wider policy conversations now in vogue.

## Proposing a community resilience framework - and some key lessons

As the book came together, we invented a new framework (opposite) to make it simpler to navigate this complex area. This proposes four key characteristics (or dimensions) of communities that are becoming more resilient:

- Healthy and engaged people
- An inclusive culture creating a positive sense of place
- A localising economy - towards sustainable food, energy, housing etc.
- Strong links to other places and communities

This framework has helped reveal a growing body of practical know-how about how to engage positively with rapid change. As one participant observed, 'community resilience is like a muscle which, when exercised, builds both strength and flexibility.'

We have learned that:

- **Activists** are experimenting with asset-based approaches - including tools like community-led mapping, risk analysis and oral history. These help to build trust and a sense of common purpose. Virtuous circles of activity begin to build, and with it hope for the future;
- **Professionals** can collaborate between sectors and disciplines to serve local agendas: this involves learning new, enabling roles and taking a 'humbler approach' to management; and
- **Funders and policy makers** can help by resourcing action research into 'what works' in building community resilience in real places. This investment is most effective when it also supports exchange and learning between communities with diverse experiences of coping with - and preparing for - rapid change.

Crucially, we suggest that a new form of 'break through' resilience can emerge as activists, professionals and policy makers collaborate together - combining graft with high levels of creativity and fun to invent better futures than we may previously have thought possible.



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## Next steps

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This handbook is the product of a collaborative research and writing process.

We would very much appreciate feedback – and even better, our readers' active involvement in some next steps.

### 1) FierySpirits.com

Fieryspirits.com hosts an ongoing focus on the theme of 'inquiring into community resilience'. To join in, sign up to the site, which has many more resources to browse. There is also space to offer your feedback on this book:

- Do you have a resilience story to share?
- Do you want to ask for support for a thorny issue you're working through?
- How do we build on this book?

We welcome contributions from diverse perspectives – activists, practitioners, funders, policy makers, students, volunteers and more.

### 2) Email

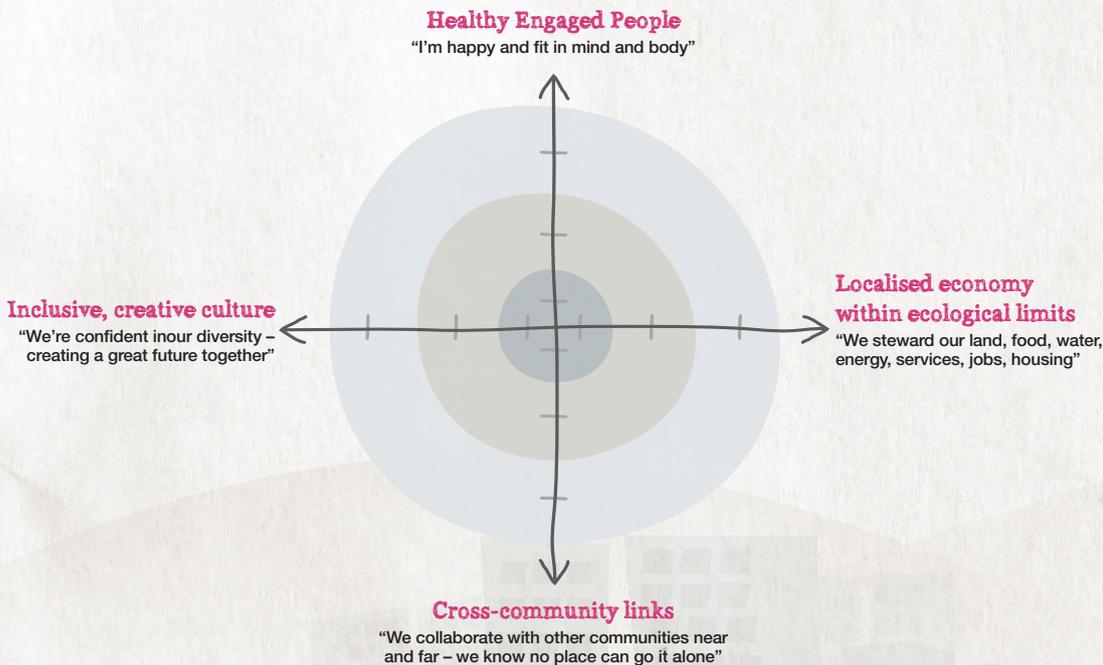
Contact report author Nick Wilding direct ([nick@carnegieuk.org](mailto:nick@carnegieuk.org)) to discuss this report – or opportunities connected with the Community of Practice more widely

### 3) Twitter ([twitter.com](https://twitter.com/comresilience))

Follow @comresilience for live updates and news.

### 4) Community Resilience animation

Content from this handbook has been developed into a lively animated film. Find it at <http://fieryspirits.com/page/inquiring-into-community>





# Foreword

## A note on defining community resilience

**... if resilience is the ability to respond constructively to the unknown – to the shocks that come upon us in society – those shocks can come from anywhere. We can anticipate some of them but surely not all of them. How do you prepare yourself for that degree of not known?**

*participant, Rural Convention*

**There is no universally agreed definition of**

**'community resilience'**. This may be a good thing. It means that local people can be free to come up with the definition that works for them. In some places using the term 'community resilience' might help to galvanise a group into action; in others, it might be off-putting. Ultimately, it doesn't really matter what this work is called: what matters most is that it helps people future-proof their communities on the basis of agreed values. From this starting point, this book sets out to explore questions that include:

'Resilience' is a relative term that can look wildly different in different contexts and according to different developmental stages of community life. Likewise, 'community' is a contested idea that makes different kinds of sense according to the values, location and perspective of the reader.

- How are communities already resilient? ... and is it possible to 'break through' to create communities which are more resilient in the context of future challenges?
- What is community resilience, anyway? Can we boil it down to a few dimensions to keep in focus?
- What outside help from other communities, funders, government and others might be useful?

## How to read this handbook

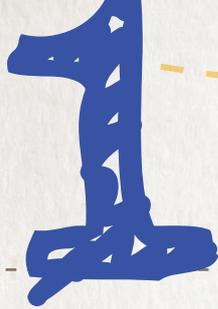
The book has two parts, with appendices:

- **Part 1** sets the scene, investigating the opportunities and challenges for community resilience during turbulent times; and
- **Part 2** proposes a simple way of thinking about community resilience – a 'resilience compass' – that suggests four crucial dimensions of resilience building. We investigate each dimension in turn using quotes from CoP participants, case studies, and insights from the resilience literature.
- **Appendices:** There are three appendices: a summary of the Community of Practice events that this book builds on, a sample 'resilience compass' workshop outline, and an introduction to a related 'parabola' model of change in organisations.

## Optimised for reading on screen.

The downloadable version of this handbook is optimised for on-screen reading, including many 'live' links to make it very easy to click through to toolkits, references, newspaper articles and much more. There are internal links too – such as the page numbers in the table of contents.





**Resilient – it means that you’re strong and flexible doesn’t it – as a community, it means you’ve the strength to sustain yourself as a community and a bit of flexibility, a bit of muscle....**

*Cornish community activist, interviewed at ‘Sense of Place event’, Eden Project 2009*

This part of the book sets some broad context – looking at issues of both practice and policy – which later sections build on. It begins by looking again at something of what’s been learned following the Cumbrian floods of November 2009.

## 1.1 Case Story: resilient responses to the Cumbria floods of 2009

On Thursday 19th November 2009 over sixty Cumbrian communities experienced a torrential downpour. Each has a story to tell of those days when British records were broken two towns in particular – Cockermouth and Workington – were thrust into the spotlight as the national news media streamed dramatic pictures of the Cocker and Derwent rivers as they broke their banks, plunging businesses, shops and homes under water. In Cockermouth levels rose to 2.5 metres (8ft 2in). As the waters rushed downstream, PC Bill Barker lost his life as the Northside Bridge collapsed and not long afterwards two further bridges collapsed, splitting Workington in two.

1200 properties lost their electricity supply and people were stranded but local volunteers and emergency services quickly rose to the challenge. While RAF helicopters from three bases rescued 48 people, the RNLI deployed forty-one volunteers within five hours in nine inshore lifeboats, rescuing about 300 people, Mountain Rescue volunteers worked tirelessly. The full extent of the voluntary effort could be glimpsed at Christ Church, in the town’s South Street, which became a local hub of operations. Cumbria Voluntary Agencies Committee and Cumbria Constabulary worked side by side to ensure the immediate response was co-ordinated and effective.



thanks for <http://www.visitcumbria.com/cockermouth-floods.htm> for this image

Comprising Rotary International, Churches Together in Cumbria, the Red Cross, St John Ambulance, the Salvation Army, Raynet, WRVS, Mountain Rescue and Samaritans

Margarette Driscoll, writing in the *Sunday Times* (18<sup>th</sup> July 2010), described how “some volunteers were handing out tea and cake; others were organising teams to go into flooded homes and rescue precious pieces of furniture or photo albums. The Red Cross was on hand for medical emergencies, Age UK was helping with shocked and shaken elderly people and a new organisation, Street Angels, was just being set up to offer support when the waters subsided and people attempted to return to their homes.”

A few days later in Workington, Royal Engineers set to work building a new footbridge, to be named after PC Barker. On its completion, the BBC interviewed Inspector Mark Wear (Workington Police): “This footbridge is a tangible symbol of how we are starting to rebuild the area and getting back to normal”.

Pictures: grateful thanks to Visit Cumbria site at <http://www.visitcumbria.com/foot-and-mouth-disease-in-cumbria.htm>



<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/cumbria/8398538.stm>

Resilient  
within  
called  
research  
might  
leadership  
professionals  
Orleans  
system  
enough  
resilient  
volunteers  
key





Thanks for <http://www.visitcumbria.com/cockermouth-floods.htm> for this image

Mitchells old warehouse on Lorton St is converted into a 'market' – a temporary home to several businesses. Photo by David Stephenson. With thanks to <http://www.visitcumbria.com/cockermouth-floods.htm>



There are many more stories of Cumbrian resilience to be learned from. Terry McCormick of Action with Communities in Cumbria has noted that “Keswick had/has one of the best emergency plans in place in the UK and this enabled a ‘bounce-back’ to ‘Keswick is open for business’ in a matter of days”. In our conversations with Cumbrian activists and volunteers, we picked up a determined urgency to their continuing work, now focusing on building on and sharing lessons from what has been achieved so far: the question on their minds is when, not if, more shocks will arrive. The sector has been assisted in this task by the Big Lottery, which has demonstrated considerable foresight by pro-actively funding local organisations to capture lessons learned. The Northern Rock Foundation has also been notably active supporting learning and the recovery work of local organisations.

The research tests how resilience thinking can be better built into community-led planning processes; and trialing ‘Community Emergency Plans’ in four rural communities – to enable communities to survive without outside assistance for 36-48 hours following a future emergency event.

Quoted in Third Sector 25th January 2010, online at <http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/News/Article/979198/Emergency-response-Cumbria-floods/>

### There are already insights worth noting:

1 Deb Muscat, of the Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund, has testified that the shocks of Foot and Mouth in 2001 and then flooding in Carlisle and surrounding area in 2005 left people better prepared for the events of 2009. In particular, there are today improved systems of preparation, co-ordination and collective learning. It seems that the idea that resilience is like a muscle is born out in practice – a sentiment reaffirmed by the Global Resilience Network:

**Resiliency is like a muscle ... that must be developed in advance and consistently exercised [to] be both strong enough to withstand severe challenges and flexible enough to handle a wide range of unpredictable forces.**

<http://www.globalresiliency.net>

- An RNLI volunteer, interviewed by *Third Sector* newspaper, said that “some of the fire and rescue service boats weren’t capable of doing the job.... We were more or less the experts in the field, so we were tasking people as we saw fit”. This anecdote suggests the ways in which such events can catalyse new working arrangements between voluntary organisations and emergency services – representing a step-change in the effective deployment of resources?
- The Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund has amassed a lot of insight into how best to support families long after the initial event. This know-how will be valuable for others to learn from.

## 1.2 Learning from Katrina

In November 2009, Community of Practice members met in Kendal, Cumbria just as the flood waters were beginning to rise. One session focused on community resilience – and attracted sixty participants who didn't need reminding about the significance of the howling wind and lashing rain outside. Over ninety minutes, we thought hard about what community resilience was about – and shared some of our questions about the topic.

One contributor came from a social enterprise called Hillholt Wood in Lincolnshire. Hillholt has attracted local and national attention of late because, at a time when councils are cutting budgets, Hillholt is growing, and fast. The initiative started from what many would view as an unpromising and depleted scrap of woodland. Over several years, the dedicated staff and volunteers have unlocked the potential in this asset, and in the process have generated employment and training opportunities and a hive of community activity.

See <http://hillholtwood.com/about/>

Hillholt co-founder Nigel Lowthrop is a regular contributor into the Community of Practice. During our Cumbria workshop, Nigel recalled hearing social capital pioneer Tom Sander speak about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (2005) in New Orleans. He recalled that Sander had compared the experience of New Orleans with that of the villagers in Indonesia following the Tsunami of 26<sup>th</sup> December 2004:

Sander contributes to 'the Saguaro Seminar' at John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University – see <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/>

**... in the most advanced technological largest economy in the world, America ... thousands of people were moved out of New Orleans for their own safety and have never gone back ... [whereas] Northern Indonesia was hit by that big wave and it recovered remarkably quickly in part due to fact that it did have social capital...'**

*Nigel Lowthrop (transcribed from Cumbria event recording)*

The story hit a nerve in the room. As contributions followed, it became clear that many people concurred that social capital is a helpful framework for thinking about resilience building – and that the case of New Orleans is instructive. Following up the lead, a google search revealed an article that Sander wrote for the Boston Globe in November 2005:

**'Social capital' describes the benefits of social networks. Having friends and being involved in groups not only secures jobs – more Americans get jobs through who they know than what they know – but improves one's health, education, and happiness...**

**Relatively recently our hearts were pained by a sea of black and poor victims, trapped on the Gulf Coast pre-Hurricane without an exit. We notice that they were carless and lacked money for bus fare, meals, and hotels. But far fewer notice that the poor were equally trapped by a dearth of these social connections, especially crossing economic lines. Specifically, they lacked affluent friends to give them a ride, lacked contacts to negotiate heavily discounted hotel rates, and lacked out-of-town relatives with extra bedrooms.**

*Boston Globe November 14th 2005*

For the Boston Globe article, see [http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial\\_opinion/oped/articles/2005/11/14/a\\_friend\\_in\\_need/](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2005/11/14/a_friend_in_need/)



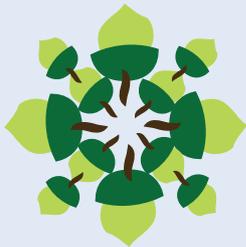
# Theory spot:

## Three types of 'Social Capital'

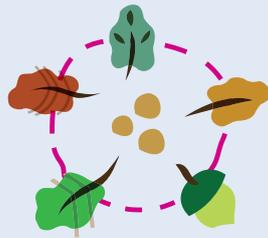
Building community resilience involves developing the 'social capital' of a community. A growing international movement has developed the practice and theory of social capital since the 1970s. Robert Putnam's book *Bowling Alone* built on previous work by Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman by describing the ways we can enhance wellbeing by strengthening "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." Putnam's research showed that "in measurable and well-documented ways, social capital makes an enormous difference to our lives."

Robert Putnam (2000) *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American community*, New York: Simon and Schuster.

**Tom Sander has outlined three types of social capital:**



**Bonding capital** is the close ties between people in similar situations – such as family and close friends. It builds trust, reciprocity, and a shared sense of belonging and identity.



**Bridging capital** is the looser ties to similar people, such as loose friendships, colleagues, or perhaps people we meet through social networking sites. It builds broader, more flexible identities and enables innovations to be shared across networks.



**Linking capital** helps ensure that people with different levels of power and status meet and learn from one another. It is the ability of groups to access networks of power and resources beyond their immediate community.

Sander's article points out how the disaster revealed how Katrina revealed the rifts between New Orleans' citizens. Whilst some used their savings and 'linking' capital to escape, others had little choice but to stay and risk death.

Eighteen months after the hurricane, the Washington Post reported how thousands of volunteers were supporting residents in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward to gut houses so they could be eligible for federal rebuilding funds. By 2010, a Community Reinvestment Conference meeting in New Orleans brought together many hopeful stories in a podcast called *Lots of Feet on the Street: Communities, Culture and the Rebuilding of New Orleans*.

Meanwhile, a resurgent private sector was celebrating its success in driving forward major reforms in public service provision. On August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010 Newsweek reported how the entire schooling system had been re-designed in favour of new private charter schools.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/26/AR2006122600774.html>

<http://www.newsweek.com/2010/08/26/new-orleans-s-charter-school-revolution.html>

Listen here: <http://www.frbsf.org/community/conference2010.html>



The article quotes Paul Vallas, a superintendent of the Recovery School District: “We used Katrina as an opportunity to build—not rebuild, but build ... an overwhelmingly publicly funded, predominantly privately run school system.” The article did not, however, point out the controversy surrounding this move: many African-American parents fought the move, fearful that the principle established by the civil rights movement that all children should receive the same standard of education might be reversed.

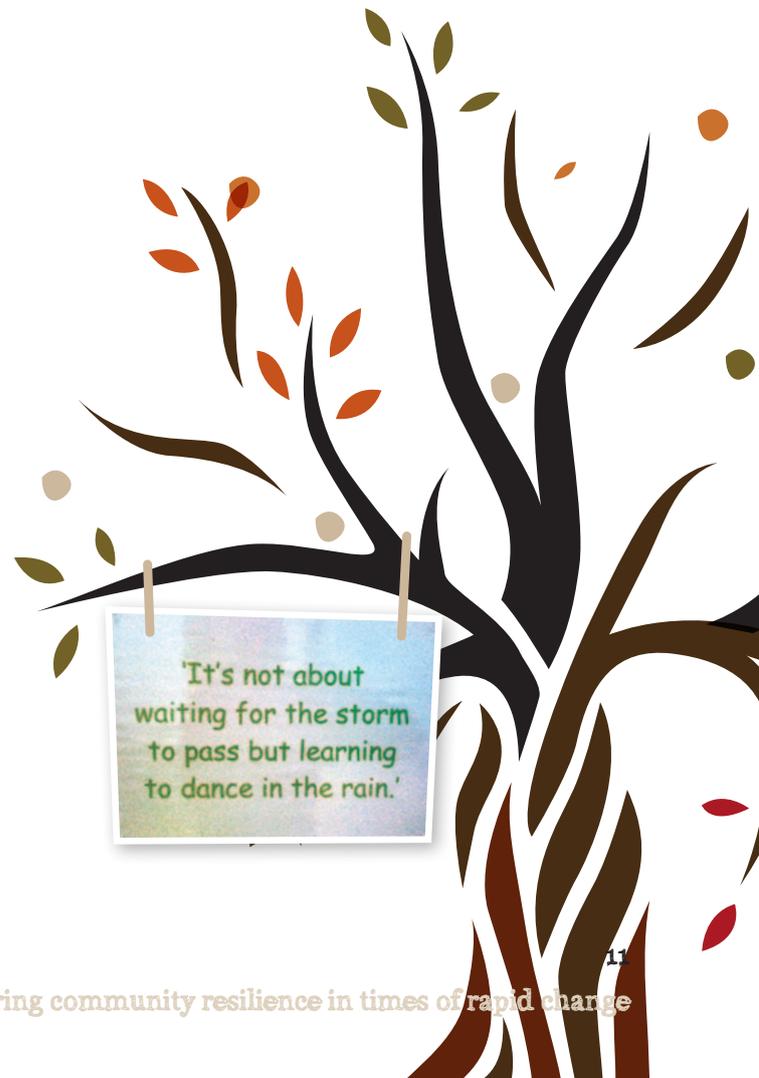
The speed and scale of these changes reveals how shocks can open opportunities for those promoting radical change – whatever the values informing this change. In her book *The Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein makes a similar point when she quotes Milton Friedman’s 1962 manifesto for free market economics, *Capitalism and Freedom*:

**Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable... a new administration has some six to nine months in which to achieve major changes; if it does not act decisively during that period, it will not have another such opportunity.”**

Both Friedman quotes are Klein (ibid.) quoting Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962: 2).

Klein goes on to note that three months after the New Orleans levees broke Friedman chose as the topic of his final Wall Street Journal column (he died shortly afterwards) the opportunity presented to the Bush administration to promote a voucher system enabling charter school development.

At the end of our Cumbria workshop, groups reported back on the topics they’d chosen to focus on. Some had looked at issues of leadership. One group in particular reported a conversation about how civil society leadership is crucial during times of shock: these are moments when civil society organisations need to be at their most active, organised and effective – and yet these are also the times when it can be hard to look beyond immediate questions of community and organisational survival. Others responded to the conversation by asking how community based organisations can stay on the ‘front foot’ during these times – holding vested interests to account through the democratic process – and ensuring that positive, community-led solutions win visibility and support. During times of rapid change, one contributor suggested, the direction of transformation will be determined by the values of those ready and willing to exploit these times.



## 1.3 Leading community resilience: sources of inspiration

**This small community has just built its own community centre, new church and a curling rink and homes for seniors, which is what they call their older people. They have attracted some funding in from government but most of that was physically done with their own hands ...they realised that if they wanted something they had to do it themselves and they had the skills within their community. It is that local intent and community leadership that has led to quite remarkable achievements in a very small very rural community which was focusing on the local leadership...**

*Participant, 2009 Carnegie UK Trust Rural Convention, reporting on a visit to Nova Scotia*

**Significant community development takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort.... community builders are refocusing attention on capacities and assets, and are inventing new methods for mobilising neighbourhood residents.**

*Kretzmann and McKnight, Building Communities from the Inside Out (1993)*

Across the UK and Ireland there are many, many activists and practitioners whose work often flies under the media radar, but who can play a role in shaping the resilience-enabling policy of the future. They range from social entrepreneurs in Argyll and Bute who are coming together with council staff to sustain (through re-invention) local services even as austerity measures bite hard;..... to unlikely alliances of retired servicemen, ethical bankers and land campaigners who are creating community land trusts to deliver affordable local housing and many other benefits. .... They are logistics experts in Devon who have invented a new way to distribute healthy food direct to people on low incomes, ..... and we have learned lessons from the dedication of a tiny team who put on an annual 'festival of stewardship' for

See [www.absen.org.uk](http://www.absen.org.uk)

See <http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/>

10,000 people on a shoestring budget. ....

See the Big Tent festival, Fife at [www.bigtentfestival.co.uk](http://www.bigtentfestival.co.uk)

And in Tipperary we have

met a tenacious group that, over ten years, has changed planning legislation to bring world-class rural development to Cloughjordan bringing jobs, businesses and hope even as the wider Irish economy buckles. ....

See [www.thevillage.ie](http://www.thevillage.ie)

These practitioners are redefining what we understand by community leadership. Rather than the more traditional idea of a community 'gatekeeper', we understand a leader to be someone (anyone) who steps forward to take initiative with the support of local people. To this end, community of practice events allow participants the space to recognise, celebrate and at times challenge each others' practice as community leaders. Often some big insights can come when we use this space to explore the assumptions, motivations and sources of inspiration that underpin our work.

Whilst professionals might describe these sources in terms of their role or training in a particular tradition (such as 'asset based' or 'endogenous' development), activists may take a more eclectic stance, involving 'hoovering up' good ideas wherever they can be found – and applying them whenever they seem to 'fit'.

See Carnegie UK Trust's publication *Appreciating Assets* has already offered an overview of some of these traditions.

This section weaves between these two stances to reveal some of the sources of inspiration that are informing the work of the resilience pioneers we have met.



Cumbria event

See the Stroud Co Food Hub (with open source software) at [www.stroudco.co.uk](http://www.stroudco.co.uk); the Fife Diet at [www.fifediet.co.uk](http://www.fifediet.co.uk); and Falkland Centre for Stewardship's report *Our Mutual Food* at <http://www.centreforstewardship.org.uk/oneplanetfood.htm>



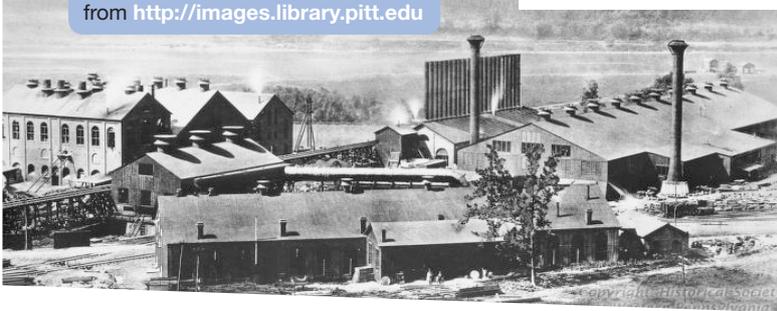
## Moses Coady and the Antigonish movement

Moses Coady was born into a large Irish Catholic family on a farm in the Margaree Valley of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, in 1882. As a boy, he saw young men and women leaving the valley for industrial jobs far away – in coal mines and steel mills such as Edgar Thomson Steel Works in Braddock, Pennsylvania, where Andrew Carnegie started his steel empire. Coady would go on to spend a lifetime searching for solutions that would mean young people had a choice about whether to leave or not, addressing what he termed a “*weird pessimism (that) so benumbed everybody that nothing has been attempted to break the spell.*” In 1927, Coady testified before a Canadian government commission that adult education – which he summed up as learning skills in critical thinking, scientific methods of planning and production, and co-operative entrepreneurship – could transform and revitalise local rural economies.

Jim Lotz.  
The Humble Giant:  
Moses Coady, Canada's  
Rural Revolutionary.  
Novalis, Ottawa, 2005,  
pp. 14-16 quoted in  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/  
wiki/Moses\\_Coady](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses_Coady)

from the collection of the Heinz  
History Center HSWP, accessed  
from <http://images.library.pitt.edu>

Andrew Carnegie's Edgar Thomson  
Steel Works, 1875: a visible emblem  
of another period of rapid change



Having won the endorsement of the Maclean Commission, Coady and his colleague Father Jimmy Tompkins won the support of both the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations to expand the reach of what they called the Antigonish movement. In the following years, and through the voluntary efforts of thousands of villagers engaging in study clubs, a raft of new credit unions and co-operatives were established, supporting agricultural marketing, fish canning, dairy farming, retail sales and housing.



These credit unions offered what many would call micro credit today, enabling farmers, fishers and miners to survive the toughest days of the Great Depression of the 1930s. By 1945 there were over 400 credit unions, with 70,000 members and \$4.2 million in assets. Reflecting on this success, Coady summed up the Antigonish philosophy with the phrase ‘use what you have to secure what you have not’.

Today, the Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia continues to evolve the Antigonish tradition of ‘igniting leadership’ “with innovative people and organisations to create effective, practical and sustainable solutions to reduce global poverty and injustice”..... <http://www.coady.stfx.ca/>

## Popular education: ‘rehearsing’ resilience

The Antigonish movement can be seen as part of a broader popular education movement that emerged in many places through the early twentieth century. What Coady called ‘weird pessimism’, Brazilian Paulo Freire termed a ‘culture of silence’ that he proposed came about as rural people uncritically accepted the view of ‘oppressors’ that they were by nature backward and unable to rise about their station.

Breaking this culture of silence, Freire proposed, involved changing education from a ‘banking’ model (which assumes that people are empty vessels to be filled by other peoples’ knowledge) to an approach that enables people to decide what to learn, and how to learn it, for themselves. He called this new way of learning ‘conscientisation’ – becoming more conscious of the potential in places and people, and critical of the structures in society which maintain power imbalances.

Contributions such as Freire’s helped people to understand how to recover from the adverse impacts of colonisation. It helped to inspire a mass literacy movement amongst the landless poor in Latin America throughout the 1960s and 1970s, which was supported by a radicalised Catholic clergy. This movement sowed ideas that still reverberate across Latin America (as well as Africa, India and even the UK and Ireland) today.

See Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1974) or his more readable *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum Publishing Company (1994).



This history helps to explain why some CoP participants find popular education methods good resources for thinking about resilience today (see, for example, Anne Hope and Sally Timmel's *Training for Transformation* books, full of exercises for use by community groups):.....

Training is offered by Partners in Ireland – <http://www.trainingfortransformation.ie/> and Re:generate Trust (<http://www.regeneratetrust.org/>). In Scotland, the Centre for Human Ecology ([www.che.ac.uk](http://www.che.ac.uk)) also developed the approach over several years. <http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-poped.htm>

For example, some popular educators have discovered the power of using simulation exercises to enable community groups to 'rehearse' real life scenarios before they encounter them. The same idea is behind Lord Sugar's *The Apprentice* TV show, which pits young executive hopefuls against each other through a gruelling series of sales tasks; likewise, the armed forces and

emergency services regularly conduct exercises as if they were in real-life combat or responding to nuclear power accidents, terrorist incidents and the like.

When set up by skilled trainer, simulations can generate learning that may otherwise take years to amass: the Cumbrian story has already demonstrated that rehearsal may be a crucial element in exercising the resilience 'muscle'. Workshops can last anything from an hour to many days: groups are plunged into exaggerated scenarios that involve heightened stress, hazards, opportunities, and challenges. If done outdoors in unfamiliar environments, the learning can be even greater as participants aren't able to fall back on their usual routines or knowledge. Crucially, an effective simulation exercise must build in enough time for 'unpacking' the learning afterwards – in this way, blind-spots are revealed, confidence increases, and community capacity can be strengthened.

## Resources

Resources CoP members are finding useful include:

- The 'Bare Foot Guide' – see <http://www.barefootguide.org> – developed by the Cape Town based Centre for Developmental Practice.
- Conflict transformation and resolution approaches; .....
- Carnegie UK Trust's handbook and guide to 'power analysis'.....

See [http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/democracy/power\\_tools](http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/democracy/power_tools)

Thanks to Gary Alexander of Transition Towns Network (<http://www.earthconnected.net/earthconnected/Home.html>), Verene Nicolas (a non-violent communication trainer – see <http://www.verenenicolas.org/effectivecomm.html>) and Helen Fairweather, Resources for Change (<http://www.r4c.org.uk/>) for sharing their experience about working with conflict. See also 'community conflict' resource pack produced by the UK Government Home Office in 2006 – <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/884762.pdf>





## Participatory Action Research

... there's a risk of making 'resilience' an output ... [for example, acting in new voice:]  
"I'm a community network manager: I'm going to manage your resilience, you'll be more resilient under me!... And I represent the organisation that has made you so poor in the first place – but it's OK!"

*Carnegie UK Trust Community of Practice participant*

'Sustainability' smacks of academia, clever people coming in to tell you what to do, whereas 'resilience' smacks of something you do for yourself or you do for your community... A group I work with ...middle aged, Welsh speaking men finding a way of existing, continuing, building in a community and in a society that's rapidly changing around them. It's related in a sense to resistance... so you have resistance, and then you build resilience... they've been resisting for so long you can get stuck in the negatives ... but with resilience you can actually move the thing on

*Participant, Sense of Place event within Fiery Spirits Community of Practice, 2008*

A recurrent theme at Community of Practice events is frustration voiced by activists about professionals who hold onto power inappropriately; and the frustration of professionals who feel themselves trapped within institutions and ways of working that don't match their values. But we have also heard how an approach called 'participatory action research' (PAR) can help to break the impasse ... by enabling the 'co-production' of resilience outcomes.

PAR has its roots in the 1980s and 90s when some development professionals started questioning their work within the international 'aid industry'. In his book *Challenging the Professions*, Robert Chambers (of the Institute for Development Studies, Sussex) proposed replacing or re-skilling 'normal professionals' to become 'new professionals', skilful in enabling service of community-

Chambers, R. 1993. *Challenging the Professions: Frontiers in Rural Development*. London: ITDG Publishing.

led agendas (rather than imposing change from above/ outside). The phrase 'on tap, not on top' was coined: these people would be first and foremost accomplished listeners, trust-builders, networkers and facilitators. Courses were developed to help professionals make the shift.

In this way, PAR facilitators would support communities as they took ownership of their own research agendas. Research would be 'with people, not on them', and the values of diversity and inclusion would be at the heart of the approach: the assumption is that social justice outcomes are more likely if the full diversity of community voices can be heard and respected.

These are values that resonate with many members of our Community of Practice. Ensuring inclusion remains at the core of effective community development work, and workshop participants affirmed their view that PAR tools (which have evolved considerably) continue to be some of the best ways to ensuring diverse local voices play a full part in resilience building.

As communities take more charge of their own research agendas (and see their developing story as a valuable community asset in itself), local researchers can learn about patterns of resilience or vulnerability within a community. Rather than relying on outsiders to design research purposes, methodologies and write up results, PAR puts local people in the driving seat. Local people decide if and when to draw on outside expertise. They then define the terms on which this expertise is hired (often in the role of a 'critical friend' to challenge local blind-spots and assumptions, as well as offering technical expertise).

This kind of work is particularly well developed beyond the UK and Ireland. International relief and development agencies such as Christian Aid, ActionAid, Practical Action, and Oxfam have long track-records championing participatory approaches to benefit the most vulnerable communities and regions. Many of the fruits of their work are available online. For example, ActionAid International's *Participatory Vulnerability Analysis* toolkit begins by acknowledging how daunting it can be for local people to begin this work:

Action Aid's 'Participatory Vulnerability Toolkit' is available for download, along with many other international agency toolkits, from <http://www.proventionconsortium.org/?pageid=39>. For example, ActionAid's toolkit has as an early step a table about identifying 'available information' and 'information gaps' in existing knowledge towards better understanding the 'vulnerable situation' (its extent and ability of people to cope); the causes of this vulnerability; and the community assets and sources of external support available.





Anyone faced with the prospect of eating an elephant would be daunted. Too big! Where to start! But faced with manageable pieces the prospect appears more comprehensible. So with vulnerability – faced with such a complex concept there seems little prospect of addressing it. But if analysed as a participatory process, some specific solutions will become apparent for any particular context.

Roger Yates, Head of International Emergencies Team, Action Aid

Christian Aid has developed and tested an integrated approach to disaster risk reduction incorporating innovative ideas such as encouraging local communities to track their own experiences of unusual weather events, and then compare them with climate science models. A formula has been designed to inform this process:

$$\text{Climate Risk} = \text{Climate change trends and variability} \times \text{Likely exposure to these trends} \times \frac{\text{vulnerability}}{\text{capacity to adapt}}$$

A particularly useful innovation in the Christian Aid approach is an appreciation that local knowledge and climate science can help each other to develop more accurate models:

Where science and local knowledge agree, confidence increases. Where they disagree reveals interesting points for discussion. For example, a low-density network of meteorology stations may miss flash floods cited by the community as a major emerging threat. On the other hand, community knowledge may be vulnerable to biases which need to be addressed by the scientific record.

Christian Aid's approach as summarised in Richard Ewbank presentation at December 2009 Practical Action Seminar, further useful international resources all available from: <http://www.practicalaction.org/reducing-vulnerability/integrating-approaches-seminar#posters>

Knowing about 'climate risk' really matters in places where impacts from disrupted weather patterns can make the difference between life or death.

Professor Paedar Kirby is one of the first residents in an 'ecovillage' development within Cloughjordan, County Tipperary, Ireland. His work has taken him all around the world, especially to Latin America, working alongside communities who are surviving against the odds and fighting for their basic human rights. Paedar has seen how trends in economic globalisation and climate change has contributed to bringing some communities to their knees, whilst others survive with community spirit intact. A key lesson of his travels is that "to really know how resilient we are, we must first understand our vulnerability".

## Whole systems thinking

### 'Vulnerability is the flip side of Resilience'

Professor Paedar Kirby, University of Limerick, Ireland

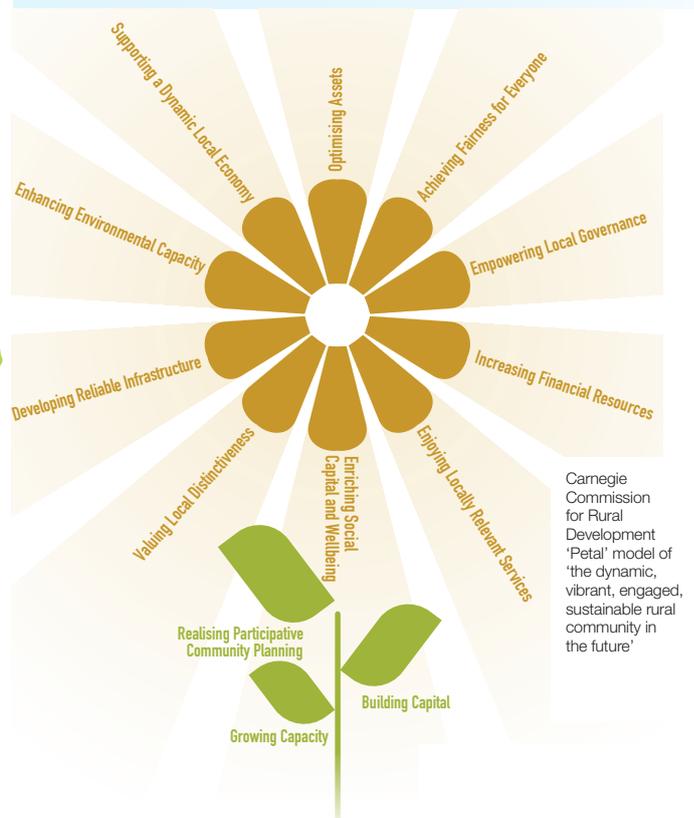
### There is no power for change like a community discovering what it cares about

Margaret Wheatley, author of *Turning to One Another*

In 2007, Carnegie UK Trust's Commission for Rural Development published a *Charter for Rural Communities* that adopted a 'flower' metaphor to propose twelve characteristics of the 'rural community of the future':

The Commissioners' job, as they saw it, was to open urban and rural eyes to the capital assets of the countryside, and to give the people who live and work in rural areas the keys to a sustainable future. It was a radical change in policy for the Commission's parent, the Carnegie UK Trust, who had to move beyond their traditional focus on rural grass-roots funding to the bigger picture: an overview which identified the structural and systemic challenges in rural areas, examined the whole mechanism for sustaining rural life and proposed solutions.

Dame Diana Brittan, Chair, Commission for Rural Communities (2007)



As the Commission's Chair made clear, a key innovation coming from the work was to take a systems view of rural development – stressing how the most successful rural communities are those which take a 'joined up' view of developing all manner of community assets.....

Carnegie UK Trust published a follow-up document to the Charter in 2009. *A Manifesto for Rural Communities* gives many examples of asset based development in action.

This insight has much in common with innovations that have emerged in other areas of policy making in recent years. For example, in 1999 the UK Department for International Development (DfiD) set out a 'livelihoods' framework through a series of guidance sheets (see [www.livelihoods.org/info](http://www.livelihoods.org/info)) suggested that a "livelihood is sustainable when a person or household can face or recover from shock and stress and at the same time maintain or improve their resources and capacities without deteriorating their natural resource base". The idea was that community well-being involves five core resources (or 'capitals') – human, social, natural, physical, and financial.

DfiD's 'capitals' approach was part of a wider shift in development thinking that Caroline Moser has summed up in her book *Reducing Global Poverty: the case for Asset Accumulation*:

**Asset-based approaches in development focus on how [people] use their resource base to develop strategies for acquiring, mobilising, expanding, and preserving their assets... asset-based approaches address inequality in resource endowments and access to opportunity, providing a concrete way to measure empowerment and ultimately sustainable reduction in poverty... Ownership and effective mobilisation of assets help establish personal and family security and encourage risk taking and diversification of productive and social activities.**

*Caroline Moser: Reducing Global Poverty: The Case for Asset Accumulation*

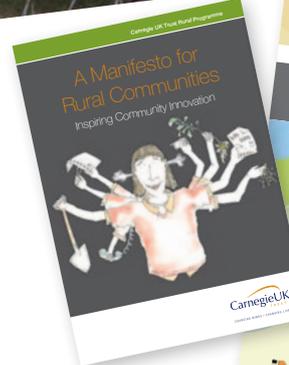
Moser's definition is careful to reflect the complexity of communities: resilience is a function of personal, family, whole community and larger scale interactions. Livelihoods approaches recognise that communities are fluid: each place follows its unique evolutionary path, increasingly influenced by patterns of migration and virtual connectivity through high speed internet connections which mean that 'local' people may hardly relate even to the street in which where they live.

This complexity gives rise to lots of practical and policy challenges. Some researchers in Carnegie's *Rural Action Research Programme* tackled this by setting out to unearth how one person's 'asset' may be another's 'liability' – and how this perspective might change as their circumstances alter.....

Community activists might recognise this issue more concretely, asking how it is fair that one resident can enjoy Mediterranean cruises whilst a neighbour might fall ill from being unable to heat their house (whilst their home heating oil prices sky-rocket).

See for example work undertaken by the New Economics Foundation for Carnegie's Rural Action Research Programme: Enterprise Ecology, Multi-strand Livelihoods and Rural Community Development available from [http://rural.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/rarp/sustainable\\_assets/new\\_economics\\_foundation](http://rural.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/rarp/sustainable_assets/new_economics_foundation)

Big Tent Event



As capitals approaches have evolved, they have attempted to tackle this reality. For example, some CoP members are experimenting with a 'seven capitals' assets approach originally developed by Cornelia Flora and colleagues at the North Central Regional Centre for Rural Development, Iowa State University:.....

Flora, C.B. and J.L. Flora. 2008. Rural Communities: Legacy and Change. (3rd Edition) Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

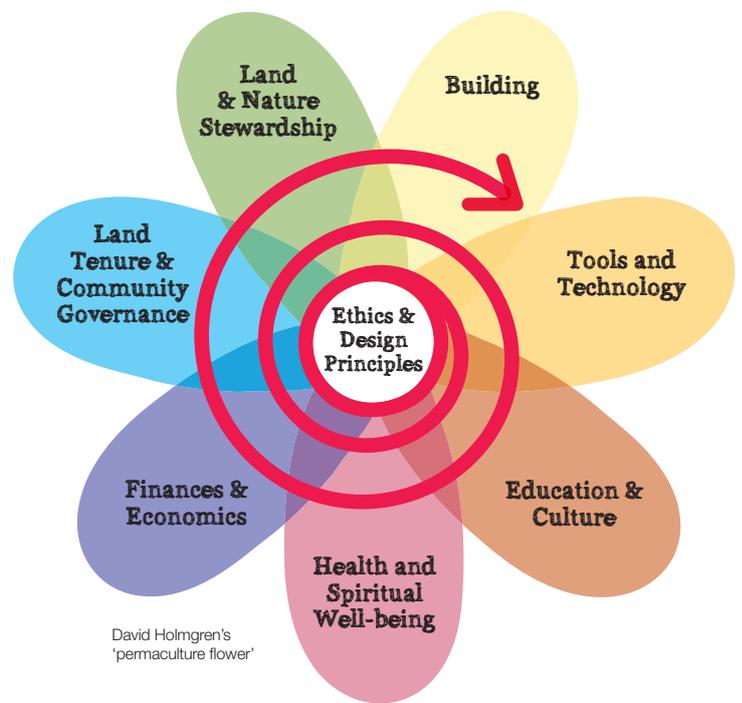
**Based on their analyses of entrepreneurial communities, they determined that the communities that were successful in supporting healthy sustainable community and economic development (CED) paid attention to seven types of capital: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial and built... this approach focuses on the interaction among these seven capitals and how they build upon one another... evaluators can trace how an investment in human capital, for example leadership training, might impact financial capital as leaders use their skills to acquire new funds and better manage existing funds. Social capital may then be impacted as members of the leadership program develop new bonds among themselves and new bridges among the groups with whom they interact. The same leadership course might consequently expand political capital by providing information about how the political system works and how to access resources within the community; it could also help participants develop key linkages to other sources of political power.....**

Quoted direct from <http://www.soc.iastate.edu/staff/cflora/ncrcrd/capitals.html>

Some practitioners infer from Flora et al.'s seven capitals model that community resilience relates directly to building circles of virtuous activity between these seven capitals. This is an example of how this theory can help to simplify the everyday 'mess' of community action in ways that help to sharpen resolve and steel nerves in order to keep going through what can seem like daunting challenges. The framework can also be useful

for professionals deciding how and when to respond to requests for support by local leaders. As more and more practitioners report on their experiments using 'seven capitals' approaches, we will be better able to gauge how effectively this approach supports resilience outcomes.

Another source of inspiration founded in systems thinking cited often by resilience pioneers is a well established approach to community and agricultural design called permaculture. Australians Bill Mollison and David Holmgren are widely regarded as founding this movement through a series of publications in the 1970s:



Today, permaculture is a flourishing and well established field. Evidence of its influence and reach is clear through the fast-growing Transition Towns movement, which emerged out of the work of a group of permaculture students tutored by Rob Hopkins in Kinsale, Ireland. David Holmgren's 'Permaculture Principles' internet site is a good resource for beginners – and also uses a 'petal' metaphor to communicate this sophisticated approach:.....

<http://www.permaculture.org.uk>

<http://permacultureprinciples.com/flower.php>

**Permaculture (Permanent Agriculture) is the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way. Without permanent agriculture, there is no possibility of a stable social order...**

**The philosophy behind permaculture is one of working with, rather than against nature; of protracted and thoughtful observation rather than protracted and thoughtless action; of looking at systems in all their functions rather than asking only one yield of them; and of allowing systems to demonstrate their own evolutions.**

*Bill Mollison's Permaculture: A Designer's Manual*

Systems thinking is not confined to any one discipline or practical field. Instead, it has evolved in many different fields. Early pioneers include Kurt Lewin who famously said that 'if you want to truly understand something, try to change it', and applied systems thinking principles to developing a new approach to research – 'action research'. It was also systems thinking that gave academics the tools to begin to think rigorously about what makes systems 'resilient' in the face of change.

Lewin proposed that action research involves "a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action" (Lewin 1946). Action research attempts to embody democratic values, and emphasises practical action toward beneficial outcomes in the future. For an excellent overview of the field, see [http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/pdf/handbook\\_of\\_action\\_research.pdf](http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/pdf/handbook_of_action_research.pdf)

An early pioneer was Canadian ecologist Crawford Stanley Buzz' Holling who, in 1973, applied the term 'resilience' to describe how forests persist through cycles of change. His paper challenged forest management orthodoxy with a deceptively simple message:

Look at the 2008 Volvo prize video, summing up Buzz Holling's contribution to resilience thinking at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XX5qJaJDjSs>. His 1973 paper was: Holling, C. S. 1973. *Resilience and stability of ecological systems*. *Annu Rev Ecol Syst* 4:1-23.

For most of the time, Holling observed, a forest matures at a slow pace. However, as the forest ages, young trees are crowded out and species diversity dwindles. This makes the forest increasingly vulnerable to shocks, to the point when it can 'snap' as (for example) a fire rips through at speed. However, such fires (when not lit by humans) are part of the natural cycle and perform vital regenerative functions: as the old wood burns up, dormant seeds germinate and receive light from new shafts of sunlight that reach the forest floor once more. The forest is resilient by virtue of this cycle of continuous renewal. ....

There is a lot of excellent material on the website of the Stockholm Institute <http://www.stockholmresilience.org> and the Resilience Alliance network <http://www.resalliance.org>, including interviews with Holling and many academic reports on resilience in socio-economic-ecological systems.

The lesson was that forest managers needed to learn how to recognise phases of stability, increasing brittleness, and then rapid change – and to work with them. We can sum up the lesson as: if you 'work with nature, rather than against her', then the system will be naturally resilient. In recent years, ecologists had undertaken enough research to begin to propose how lessons from natural systems might be transferable to human systems, too. To support this work, they propose definitions of resilience which tend to stress the capacity of a system or organisation to evolve without losing its core sense of identity or purpose:

- 1 the amount of change a system can undergo and still remain coherent;
- 2 the degree to which the system is capable of self-organisation; and
- 3 the degree to which the system expresses capacity for learning and adaptation. (Carpenter et al. 2001, Walker et al. 2002, Folke 2006).

International agencies have gone on to build on this work, including the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) which defines resilience as:

**The capacity of a system, community or society potentially exposed to hazards to adapt, by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure. This is determined by the degree to which the social system is capable of organising itself to increase its capacity for learning from past disasters for better future protection and to improve risk reduction measures.**

## Resilience: self-organisation through diversity, modularity and feedbacks

An early example of applying resilience thinking to human systems is the work of Donella Meadows (1941-2001) and colleagues who wrote a report called 'Limits to Growth' (1972) – one of the first examples of computers being used to model future scenarios of population growth and resource depletion on the planet. The Limits to Growth report originally caused a stir because its 'World3' model, based on 12 scenarios using data from 1900 to 2100,

predicted catastrophic 'overshoot' (human activity growing too big too fast) of the earth's capacity to sustain human civilisation. Today, there is much in the media about what

The process of understanding how things influence one another within a whole. In nature, systems thinking examples include ecosystems in which various elements such as air, water, movement, plants, and animals work together to survive or perish. In organisations, systems consist of people, structures, and processes that work together to make an organisation healthy or unhealthy. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Systems\\_thinking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Systems_thinking)

<http://www.sustainer.org/meadows/>

In 1992, the team wrote a twentieth anniversary update called Beyond the Limits, which presented new evidence that by the early 1990s human civilisation had already 'overshot' the natural limits of many of earth's life-support systems. Ten years later, *Limits to Growth: The 30Year Update* suggested the process of break-down, or 'collapse', had begun as spirals of over-extended resource use, accelerating loss of species, poverty and climate change connect and feed off each other. See [http://www.mnforsustain.org/meadows\\_limits\\_to\\_growth\\_30\\_year\\_update\\_2004.htm](http://www.mnforsustain.org/meadows_limits_to_growth_30_year_update_2004.htm)

happens when ecosystems are pushed beyond 'tipping point' – and many people are recognising the connections between the over-exploitation of fisheries, mines, forests, the collapse of rural economies, and the social shocks that follow.

See for example the End of the Line – a powerful film that spells out the consequences of over-fishing: <http://endoftheline.com/>

In the 1970s this way of thinking was still in its infancy and the early ecologists struggled to broadcast their findings.

Meadows' response was to start a regular column in her local newspaper.

In one article, she wrote: .....

See, for example, A Tale of Two Fisheries at <http://www.pcdf.org/meadows/twofisheries.html>

**The ability to self-organise is the strongest form of system resilience. A system that can evolve can survive almost any change, by changing itself... insistence on a single culture shuts down learning and cuts back resilience.**

Fast-forward nearly forty years, and Resilience Scientists are becoming increasingly well resourced and influential. Stockholm's Resilience Institute works with governments, international agencies and others, and a number of authors have begun to translate complex systems ideas for lay audiences.

After her death, colleague Diana Wright edited together *Thinking in Systems: a primer* (available from Amazon); including highlights of articles such as her invitation to 'dance with systems' available at <http://www.sustainer.org/pubs/Dancing.html>

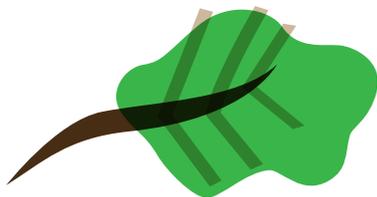
In their book *Resilience Thinking*, Walker and Salt (2006: 121) draw attention to three key aspects of any system's resilience: diversity, modularity and tightness of feedbacks:

### Diversity

The more diverse a system is, the more capacity it has to withstand shock – because there are more options available to fall back on.

Many people intuitively understand this principle, captured by the phrase 'don't put all your eggs in one basket', or the idea of a 'buffer'.

Mathematicians have used network theory to define resilience as made up of two key variables – diversity and interconnectivity. In a paper applying this thinking to explain why the global financial system remains instable following the 2007 credit crunch, economist Bernard Lietaer describes resilience as the opposite of 'efficiency':





**“In general, a system’s resilience is enhanced by more diversity and more connections, because there are more channels to fall back on in times of trouble or change. Efficiency, on the other hand, increases through streamlining, which usually means reducing diversity and connectivity... Because both are indispensable for long-term sustainability and health, the healthiest flow systems are those that maintain an optimal balance between these two opposing pulls”.**

[http://www.lietaer.com/images/White\\_Paper\\_on\\_Systemic\\_Bank\\_Crises\\_December.pdf](http://www.lietaer.com/images/White_Paper_on_Systemic_Bank_Crises_December.pdf)

In the same paper, Lietaer proposes that the ‘optimal balance’ is found when resilience is valued about twice as highly as efficiency.

This is not an abstract point. When business or government goes for ‘greater efficiency’ by cutting ‘waste’, there is the danger that longer term sustainability will be undermined. For example, The Scotsman newspaper reported on 16 February 2011 that campaigners fear that cuts to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) were implemented before the risks of these cuts were adequately understood. One of the threatened services are tug-boats. The campaigner’s concern is that without enough spare tugs, do risks of a major environmental disaster from a tanker oil spill increase dramatically?

For the sake of short-term efficiency, could the resilience of marine ecosystems (and communities relying on the health of the seas for their sustainability) suffer? The April 2010 Deepwater Horizon Gulf of Mexico spill underlines these questions.

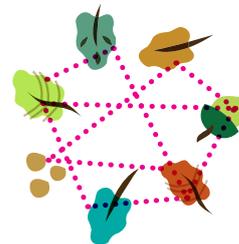
A New Economics Foundations’ 2008 booklet *Nine Meals from Anarchy* applies the same principle to take on ‘just in time’ practices that supermarkets employ to stock food: “Imagine that the the petrol stations ran dry. The trucks would stop rolling. The supermarket shelves would be bare within three days. We would be nine meals away from anarchy.”

Food campaigners make other, related points, such as the importance of retaining diversity and distinctiveness in town centres. Without small shops and a unique sense of identity that comes from having pride in a local place, it’s that much harder to build a resilience local economy.

<http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/nine-meals-anarchy>

## Modularity

This principle is about ensuring that if one part of a system breaks, it doesn’t bring everything else down with it.



The Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) at Machynlleth, Wales has long pioneered leading edge renewable technologies. During 2010, CAT ran a series of seminars on how to create a Zero Carbon Britain. One contributor, Gunna Olsen of the European International Network for Sustainable Energy (INFORSE) spelled out the importance of ‘modularity’ by explaining Denmark’s strategy for creating a distributed or ‘cellular’ energy grid:

<http://www.inforse.org/>

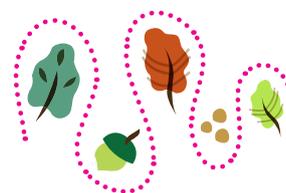
**cells in the grid can, if necessary, be separated from the rest of the grid... the idea is, where it’s difficult to restore the full grid [after a system crash], you can just keep all those cells that happen to be in balance at the time of the crash staying working... and then quickly restore the rest of the system...**

*Gunna Olsen, INFORSE*

As with diversity, we can apply the ‘modularity’ idea to look again at many things communities take for granted today. For example, continuing with our food example – depending on only a few supermarkets to supply the vast majority of a nation’s food (each reliant on very long supply lines) might suggest greater food vulnerability than many people realise – especially as climate change and speculation begin to have real impacts on commodity prices.

## Feedback

As an aspect of resilience, feedback means being able to quickly see and understand the consequences of our actions.



If you’re learning to drive a car, and steer too hard right, you immediately realise the mistake and take corrective action. But you may not also see the consequences of the carbon dioxide that is coming out of the exhaust – in this case, the feedback will take a long time to register, if it registers at all. In a sixty-second public information film ‘Tomorrow’s Climate – Today’s Challenge’ released in 2005, the UK government Department for Environment



Food and Rural Affairs

attempted to 'tighten' this carbon dioxide feedback loop. The script reads "if we could see the gasses, the causes of the problem would be obvious" – whilst the images make visible greenhouse gas emissions spewing from planes, factories and cars. Today, 'smart meters' that show us the electricity we are using and its cost operate on the same principle.

[http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/films/1979to2006/filmpage\\_climate.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/films/1979to2006/filmpage_climate.htm)

Resilience depends on 'tight' feedbacks: that is, systems that are able to learn quickly from good information. The assumption is that the further away (in time or space or both) from the impacts of a decision, the greater the risk that a system's resilience will be diminished. As Michael Shuman, author of 'Going Local', argues, "a guaranteed way to ensure that a car does not pollute is to stick the exhaust pipe into the passenger section. Similarly, a community committed to self-reliance will be mindful not to foul its own nest" (1998: 49).

## 1.4 The politics of localisation: addressing the resilience imperative?

Shocks can act as wake-up calls, shaking us out of our habitual 'silos' as we come together to search for solutions to newly revealed challenges as well as existing thorny issues. For example, the aftermath of the 2007 credit crunch opened new kinds of spaces where policy makers and practitioners are asking how to build a more sustainable economy. The new politics of 'localisation', shared across major political parties, is one result.

As asset-based pioneers already know, local knowledge can lead to better local decisions – especially when a full range of local voices can participate in decision-making. Likewise, for policy makers sceptical about the efficacy of top-down decision making by a 'nanny state', thinking about the importance of tight feedback in systems can reinforce a view that local decisions are more likely to result in better outcomes.

This section looks briefly at how today's policy makers are starting to address a 'community resilience' agenda.

### Local communities facing Global Risks

**Anything that helps us reflect and look at what we're doing is going to be helpful ... in particular, looking into whatever the future might be**

*Community activist interviewed at Sense of Place, Carnegie UK Trust sponsored Community of Practice event, 2010*

FierySpirits Community of Practice is activists, practitioners and policy makers building more resilient communities ([www.fieryspirits.com](http://www.fieryspirits.com))

### Can we cope with the demands in the future on water? Can we provide enough energy? Can we do it, all that, while mitigating and adapting to climate change?

*John Beddington, the UK government's chief scientific adviser, speaking on 24 August 2009*

As we have listened to Community of Practice and heard in depth about Cumbria's responses to flood events, it has become clear that people in communities the length and breadth of the UK and Ireland (and beyond) are already grappling with the opportunities and challenges of times of rapid change.

Although there are those who maintain that climate change is yet to be proven, or that a return to 'business as usual' growth is both possible and desirable following the global credit crunch, many others are taking very seriously evidence of a raft of extraordinary new risks to community and national wellbeing into the future. The three most cited risks are the impacts arising from global shortages of resources including oil, runaway

See, for example, the New Economics Foundation's Great Transition project <http://www.neweconomics.org/projects/the-great-transition> – "we must re-engineer our economies to tackle debt fuelled over-consumption, accelerating climatic instability and volatile energy prices underpinned by the approaching peak in global oil production. It means re-thinking how we bank, generate energy, travel, and grow the food we depend on."

For an entertaining 300 second animation about peak oil see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJ-J91SwP8w&>. In November 2010, the International Energy Agency (IEA) published its World Energy Outlook report 2010: "The oil price needed to balance oil markets is set to rise, reflecting the growing insensitivity of both demand and supply to price... if governments act more vigorously than currently planned to encourage more efficient use of oil and the development of alternatives, then demand for oil might begin to ease soon. As a result, we might see a fairly early peak in oil production, which would help prolong the world's oil reserves." See [http://www.worldenergyoutlook.org/docs/weo2010/WEO2010\\_ES\\_English.pdf](http://www.worldenergyoutlook.org/docs/weo2010/WEO2010_ES_English.pdf) page 6. Critics argue that the IEA figures over-estimate reserves and impacts significantly.

climate change, and perhaps most fundamentally for the ecological health of our planet, the continuing acceleration of species loss (biodiversity).

In August 2009, UK chief scientist John Beddington warned that all these issues are inter-connected. Climate change, he said, is amplifying a 'perfect storm' of rapidly escalating food, water and energy costs: 'tipping points' in the earth's climate system mean that it is becoming increasingly likely that future changes will be large and abrupt, rather than slow and gradual as many people imagine. Beddington's speech echoed key insights that have emerged about the nature of change in natural systems that have emerged in recent years from the field of resilience science:

In Nagoya in October 2010, delegates from 193 countries met under the auspices of the United Nations to agree to put under protection 17 percent of land and 10 percent of oceans by 2020 to stop the loss of plant and animal diversity in their ecosystems.

2010 was the hottest year ever recorded, with catastrophic flooding across swathes of China and Pakistan and increasing resource conflicts in Africa: surviving rapid, abrupt change is already the day to day experience of the majority of people living in poverty in rich and poor countries alike. As pressures increase on states, survival becomes harder. Internationally, the coal-face of resilience work is undertaken by international emergency relief organisations, such as Action Aid, Oxfam, World Vision and United Nations agencies such as the UN Development Programme and the UN Environment Programme – see for example <http://www.unep.org/climatechange/UNEPsWork/Adaptation/tabid/241/Default.aspx>

**Sometimes change is gradual and things move forward in roughly continuous and predictable ways. At other times, change is sudden, disorganising and turbulent .... Evidence points to a situation where periods of such abrupt change are likely to increase in frequency and magnitude. This challenges the adaptive capacity of societies.**

*Stockholm Resilience Centre, What is Resilience?*

See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8213884.stm>. See also Thomas Homer-Dixon's (Centre for International Governance Innovation Chair of Global Systems at the Balsillie School of International Affairs in Waterloo, Canada) work on simultaneously catastrophic collapse, eg. <http://www.theupsideofdown.com/>, and the video output of FEASTA's 2009 conference *New Emergency Conference: Managing Risk and Building Resilience*, at <http://vimeo.com/feasta/videos>. It is likely that international reports – such as that of the IPCC – significantly under-report the scale and speed of the global crisis. For example, Reuters reported in 2009 that a member of the IPCC told an American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting in Chicago that, due to the unpredictable nature of climate feedback loops (making them difficult to prove and therefore report), "the actual trajectory of climate change is more serious" than any of the climate predictions in the IPCC's fourth assessment report in 2007.

This tipping point (or 'threshold') science means that the earth's climate system may rapidly 'flip' into a state that will make it impossible to bounce back to 'normal'. Instead, as Jim Lovelock has observed in *Revenge of Gaia*, the earth's 'new normal' may be uninhabitable for much of humanity. Ice core samples from the North Pole prove that the earth has 'flipped' in this way before (See IPCC, 2007; UNDP, 2007; and Stern, 2007).

Periods of such turbulence are, it seems, already becoming normal. For example, during a very short period in the early winter of 2010, French protestors blockaded fuel supplies in protest at Sarkozy's pension reforms; voters in the US mid-term elections returned 'Tea

There is an excellent introductory video about ecological resilience available from <http://www.stockholmresilience.org>



Party' candidates angry at all existing politicians; the UK coalition government faced growing union and student militancy; and crowds gathered in front of Ireland's parliament furious that the Government support for the Irish banks had resulted in losing control of the Irish economy to the IMF and European bankers. As the winter of 2010/11 progressed, we witnessed epic climate-related floods of Queensland, Sri Lanka and Pakistan's Swat Valley. And then, following the catastrophic Tsunami off Japan's North East coast in March 2011, events in Fukushima reminded the world of the potential consequences of the bargain that energy hungry economies have struck with nuclear power.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/aug/05/pakistan-floods-failure-state>





During the autumn of 2010, however, another kind of story had caught the attention of the world's media. For 69 days, thirty-three miners awaited rescue deep in the bowels of a Chilean mine. Video technology gave us a unique glimpse into their experience and coping strategies. Then, on 14<sup>th</sup> October, tens of millions watched as a subterranean pod shuttled each man to the surface in turn. When the final miner, Luis Urzua, stepped free, President Sebastian Pinera captured something of meaning of the moment: "We had strength, we had spirit, we wanted to fight, we wanted to fight for our families, and that was the greatest thing... You are not the same, and the country is not the same after this." Had the Chilean mine rescue resonated because it touched something of the spirit of resilience of human beings everywhere? Did the international media pick up on the story with such passion because surviving in the face of tough odds speaks to something of the spirit of our age?

## A new politics of leadership and localisation

**We believe there is a great deal of latent talent, knowledge, ability and willingness in people to improve their communities that is currently not being used. The Government has a key role in unlocking this talent."**

*Building resilient communities – From idea to sustainable action, Risk and Regulation Advisory Council*

Download this readable short report from the Talent and Enterprise Taskforce UK site:  
<http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file52720.pdf>

Just a week before the rescue in the Atacama Desert, David Cameron had attempted his own Pinera moment at the Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham. Cameron's rallying cry was for a 'Big Society' where people everywhere pull together. He talked of austerity as a time of opportunity as well as challenge, the opportunity for entrepreneurs of all kinds to escape from the barriers of red tape and suffocating bureaucratic restrictions on innovation. "We need to change the way we think about ourselves, and our role in society", Cameron announced to the hall of Tory stalwarts. Fellow proponents of this thinking, such as Philip Blond of think-tank Respublica, have called for a major shift in the relationship between citizens and their state:

**The welfare state nationalised society because it replaced mutual communities with passive fragmented individuals whose most sustaining relationship was not with his or her neighbour or his or her community but with a distant and determining centre.... this 'benefits culture' can be tied directly to the thwarting of working class ambition by a middle class elite that formed the machinery of the welfare state, yes to alleviate poverty, but also to deprive the poor of their irritating habit of autonomous organisation.... This new civil state will turn itself over to its citizens; it will foster the power of association and allow its citizens to take it over rather as it had originally taken over them.**

*Phillip Blond, The Future of Conservatism (speech)*

<http://www.respublica.org.uk/articles/future-conservatism-0>

It is clear that a 'localisation' agenda has implications across the full range of government activity – including resilience and emergency planning. In October 2010 the UK government published its latest national security review – 'Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty'. In the forward,

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dg/groups/dg\\_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg\\_191634.pdf](http://www.direct.gov.uk/prod_consum_dg/groups/dg_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg_191634.pdf)

Coalition leaders David Cameron and Nick Clegg proposed to be "more thoughtful, more strategic and more coordinated in the way we advance our interests and protect our national security". Their conclusions chimed closely with those in a *Draft Strategic National Framework on Community Resilience (2010)*, published by a previous UK Cabinet Office taskforce which called for the formation of "local Community Emergency Groups or using existing community networks and structures to engage with local emergency responders to ensure a co-ordinated response".



Coalition leaders David Cameron and Nick Clegg proposed to be "more





In practice, emergency services, local and national government planners, and voluntary groups are increasingly working to develop emergency response strategies fit for scenarios from terrorist attacks to flu pandemics to coastal flooding to extreme snow events.

As our inquiries have developed, however, we have heard many local voices suggesting that we have a long way to go. They identified a 'resilience deficit':

how many emergency planning groups have adequately factored in the impacts of escalating oil prices? Where are local 'transition town' groups working in close partnership with the emergency services? And in our age of austerity, how do we resource ourselves to take steps to mitigate the future impacts of economic, social and environmental change?

In England, the Environment Agency has online interactive maps which reveal risks of flooding in different locations: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/31650.aspx>

In Resilient Nation, DEMOS suggested that 'nudge' economics might help – reflecting a wider swing toward 'nudge' thinking across public policy circles. The idea is to give people choices in a way that 'helps' us to make better decisions than we'd have otherwise opted for:

Download from [www.demos.co.uk/publications/resilientnation](http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/resilientnation)

Nudge thinking is fast becoming standard issue in UK government policy circles – there is even a Behavioural Insight Team established at Downing Street, applying the thinking across many areas of government – beginning notably with public health (obesity, diet and alcohol policy).

DEMOS has reported that local authorities are beginning to apply nudge thinking in relation to

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/behavioural-insight-team-launches-health-report>

emergency planning. For example, North Norfolk District Council wanted to prevent residents from over-ordering sand-bags in advance of flood risks – too many people were inappropriately stockpiling them to protect gardens and outbuildings. This led to an unsustainable demand for the bags, and the risk that the bags would disintegrate come the actual floods because they degenerate over time. According to DEMOS, the Council's decision to charge £2.50 for each bag beyond the first six delivered constituted an example of a 'nudge' in the right direction.

Nudge thinking has helped to fuel a wider critique of conventional approaches to policy making that have tended to propose more top-down, target-driven interventions – sometimes with perverse and unforeseeable impacts. For example, economist John Kay expounds on this shift through advocating for what he calls 'oblique' approaches:

**Nudges allow central government, local authorities, emergency planning officers and the emergency services to influence public behaviour – a fundamentally important task in making society more resilient. Nudges also help readdress the imbalance between management by institution and public expectation. By shifting some of the responsibility of resilience planning and management to communities and individuals, institutions can focus on the most vulnerable people.**

At [www.nudges.org](http://www.nudges.org), Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein update their influential book *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. This approach is not without its critiques, however – see for example <http://blogs.independent.co.uk/2010/11/08/it%E2%80%99s-time-to-give-nudge-the-elbow/>

**In complex systems the blind watchmaker may be more effective than the sighted one. The ant colony is a social and economic organisation of subtlety and complexity, and no one planned it. Small children judge the size and speed of an approaching object with an accuracy that complex optics and computers find hard to emulate. If there is a one-line explanation of the power of obliquity, it would be: 'Evolution is smarter than you are.'**

*John Kay, Obliquity, 2010:139*



Kay is drawing on the field of complexity thinking – which shows how many individuals can act together for the greater good – especially if that co-operation is guided by an agreed set of working principles and sense of common purpose. The message is that ‘complexity’ can turn out to be a much simpler way to achieve policy outcomes than older command-and-control approaches: instead of the need for gate-keepers in communities or in key positions in organisations of any size, the leadership role becomes one of enabling collective innovation through many personal actions focused in favour of collective goals.

A new policy language of ‘wicked issues’ has developed to describe areas where complexity approaches may offer fresh hope. Building community resilience might be understood to be one such wicked issue: community

In a sister report to *Resilient Nation*, DEMOS took this line pointed out how a growing number of activists and academics are using the term ‘wicked issue’ as a short-hand term for issues that can’t easily be solved by out-dated, ‘gate-keeper’ leadership. DEMOS’s definition of a ‘wicked issue’ describes well the resilience challenges that many communities face:

- The site of persistent (policy) failures;
- The source of profound disagreement – over what the problems are, as well as over the improvements to be made;
- Unbounded in scope; the issues sprawl outwards and interconnect with many other problems;
- Resistant to completion; wicked issues cannot be ‘solved’, once and for all
- Complex, in the technical sense of being in principle unpredictable.

Connecting the Dots – See <http://www.demos.co.uk/projects/connectingthedots>



development workers have long recognised that on-the-ground work is always ‘messy’ and requires special leadership qualities if people are to be well supported in taking collective charge of a community’s future (and constructively addressing conflicts in the process). Seamus Boland of Irish Rural Link succinctly summarised this in one session:

**The question really is how do you manage a system where leaders are active, where they are in tune with the knowledge and are in tune with the solutions?**

*Seamus Boland, Irish Rural Link (speaking at Kendal)*

The leadership challenge is sometimes described as being able to switch easily between seeing the big picture and getting on with day to day tasks:

**Once you have got a picture in your mind ... you can then start working towards it ... but if you don’t know what it is that you are trying to create you are just stumbling forward...**

*Hugh McLean, Atlantis Leisure, speaking at Carnegie Rural Convention, Kendal November 2009*

Similarly, many others have advocated that the most effective community leaders are those who can be humble in the face of uncertainty – and who are always open to learning:

**What’s appropriate when you’re learning is small steps, constant monitoring, and a willingness to change course as you find out more about where it’s leading.**

*Meadows, Dancing with Systems, The Systems Thinker, Vol. 13, No. 2 (March 2002)*

**Effective decision-makers are distinguished not so much by the superior extent of their knowledge as by their recognition of its limitations. Problem solving is iterative and adaptive, rather than direct.**

*John Kay, Obliquity: 9.*



**When one moves away from thinking that one has to manage the whole system, one pays attention to one's own participation in one's own local situation in the living present. Perhaps this humbler kind of 'management' is what the 'knowledge society' requires.**

*Ralph Stacey Complex Responsive Processes in Organisations: 235*

There are increasing links being made between leadership development and disciplines of meditation and yoga, which offer training in becoming aware of how ego can cloud good leadership judgement and action, especially in complex contexts.

Today, professionals and activists are un-learning old gate-keeper rigidities – and experimenting with how to live the insight that 'evolution is smarter than you are' in practice. Some, borrowing a phrase coined by Mahatma Gandhi, emphasise that the key is to 'be the change you want to see in the world'. This is not usually a straightforward task – often involving being open to personal development in order to address old and sometimes quite stuck personal and professional habits.

Julian Dobson, a founder of the 'OurSociety' social network, has translated this insight for a public policy audience: "Devolution starts with a state of mind: those who take decisions in the usual places, surrounded by the usual people, are highly unlikely to give us the unusual. You can't use a hierarchy to create a network."

Such thinking – and preparedness to be open to personal and professional development – can help practitioners see more clearly the opportunities and risks presented by an age of unprecedented change. Part Two of this book illuminates some early findings from such experiments.

Julian Dobson, founder of OurSociety network <http://www.respublica.org.uk/blog/2011/02/delivering-big-society>

## Section 1 – Facing into a 'perfect storm': resilience practice and policy in times of rapid change

### Summary Points

- 1 Community resilience is like a muscle which, when exercised, builds both strength and flexibility.
- 2 Future social, economic and environmental disruptions may well be bigger and faster than we imagine – a 'perfect storm'.
- 3 Especially in turbulent times, civil society plays a vital role examining the values underpinning local visions of 'community resilience'.
- 4 Assets (strengths-based) approaches are core to resilience building. There is much to learn from international experience, community development.
- 5 The disciplines of systems thinking and social capital underpin resilience thinking, stressing the importance of feedback (trust & learning), diversity (don't put all your eggs in one basket) and modularity (localised infrastructure).
- 6 Policy makers are recognising resilience as a complex 'wicked' issue: dynamic, unpredictable and likely to confound 'command and control' mindsets.
- 7 Funders can help by enabling local action researchers to innovate together – and share their learning through communities of practice. This is most effective when people work together who wouldn't normally collaborate.





## 2.1 Introducing a 'compass' of community resilience

The terms 'resilience' and 'vulnerability' are opposite sides of the same coin, but both are relative terms. One has to ask what individuals, communities and systems are vulnerable or resilient to, and to what extent.

*Characteristics of a Disaster-Resilient Community: A Guidance Note, John Twigg for the DFID Disaster Risk Reduction Interagency Coordination Group*

Available for download from:  
[http://www.climategovernance.org/theme\\_citizen.htm](http://www.climategovernance.org/theme_citizen.htm)

Community resilience is a youthful and vibrant field. People are constantly innovating and finding ways to share these innovations. We have already flagged up how Carnegie's *Rural Development Community of Practice* is one of many networks that enables people to do this. Through a series of workshops and conversations over two years, CoP participants have challenged and supported each other to look more deeply into what community resilience is all about through questions such as:

- What are communities doing to build their resilience – and does their action help others to do likewise?
- How can we tell if our hard work is having the desired effect?
- When you boil it down, what is a resilient community anyway?

In addition, community support organisations are taking the next step and translating their on-the-ground experience into manuals and toolkits. For example, the Community for Community Enterprise in Canada developed a comprehensive *Community Resilience Manual* in 1999 and in San Francisco, *Bay Localise* actively updates their own *Community Resilience Toolkit*. In Australia, the federal government's Social Inclusion

This describes 23 characteristics of a resilient community based on lessons being learned by rural communities in British Columbia – <http://www.cedworks.com/communityresilience01.html>

<http://www.baylocalize.org/toolkit>

Board has published a booklet (2009) of principles which defines resilient communities as "equipped to help themselves and are also able to reach out and support one another in times of crisis – this has been seen in the

recent Victorian bushfires". Similar work is underway in the field of public health – see for example

<http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/LatestNews/Pages/BuildingCommunityResilience.aspx>

Davis and Cook's 'THRIVE' tool, introduced in their article 'A Community Resilience Approach to Reducing Ethnic and Racial Disparities in Health'. And the

<http://ajph.aphapublications.org/cgi/reprint/AJPH.2004.050146v1.pdf>

Young Foundation have also recently developed a tool that will be useful for local authorities called 'WARM' ('Wellbeing and Resilience Measurement').

<http://www.youngfoundation.org/publications/reports/taking-temperature-local-communities>

Pioneers are often regarded as mavericks by mainstream society – until the value of their foresight is recognised as times change. Despite the difficult choices of times of austerity, investing in resilience pioneers may prove vital in times to come. Two examples from a different age illustrate this point well:

*Through the early 1930s, aircraft engineer R.J. Mitchell doggedly pursued his vision for a superior fighter plane, despite a failure to win investment from the British Air Ministry. Eventually, he secured funding from Vickers-Armstrongs to develop a prototype. The fact that the prototype was available meant that when the Air Ministry eventually realised that the Spitfire could offer a crucial tactical advantage, production lines could be established very quickly.*

*Winston Churchill's own story is similar – for many years, his warnings about Hitler were dismissed as exaggerated – people preferred to believe that Chamberlain's Munich appeasement pact would stave off war. The pact failed, Chamberlain was forced to prepare for war, and Churchill was eventually appointed Prime Minister on 9th May 1940. Biographers have suggested that his unflinching self-belief and phenomenal capacity for work were infectious, helping the nation survive the Battle of Britain until the Russians and USA brought relief the following year.*

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All these resources offer up clues about how communities might decide to measure their resilience. In addition, during the development of this book, we have noticed a growing number of media and other organisations experimenting with generating resilience indicators of their own (for example, see box). Measurement is important for several reasons – not least to track and communicate progress locally and to evidence bids for support from government and other external agencies. However, as our discussion in Part One has demonstrated, resilience is a ‘wicked issue’ and is not easy to pin down – it is probably best understood as a function of an ever changing system. Particular tools of sets of tick boxes may on occasion be useful as guides for communities – but maps are never the territory, especially when navigating uncharted waters!

# Introducing a ‘compass’ of community resilience

This is a favourite example of Paul Allen, co-author of the significant report *Zero Carbon Britain* from the Centre for Appropriate Technology. Paul compares Mitchell’s work with the need to prepare today for the coming impacts of peak oil.

For more on Churchill, see Digby Jones and Prof. David Reynolds interviewed at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00tpsvk>





As the Community of Practice resilience inquiry gathered pace, the in-box started to overflow with toolkits, stories, anecdotes and flashes of inspiration from workshops. The challenge was how to create a simple route through this material – which keeps in view the complex and systemic nature of the topic?

Authoritative literature reviews including those by Walker, Brian, & Salt, David. (2006) and Magis (2007).

Gradually, four themes emerged that connected practitioner stories and key insights from a wide resilience literature. This handbook therefore proposes four key dimensions of community resilience building:

- Healthy people: supporting individuals' physical and psychological well-being;
- Inclusive, creative culture: generating a positive, welcoming sense of place;
- Localised economy – within ecological limits: securing entrepreneurial community stewardship of local assets and institutions;
- Cross-community links: fostering supportive connections between inter-dependent communities.

These themes can act as a navigation aid for practitioners wanting to steer a course towards resilient outcomes for their community. Rather than heading in only one direction, however, the point is to connect initiatives in each dimension – work in one area is likely to benefit and amplify that in another:



This picture looks a little like a compass – and the idea of a compass makes it easy to reveal an underlining stance – or approach – that some of the most effective resilience pioneers seem to adopt:

### Making it up as we go along:

For centuries, compasses have given explorers added confidence as they set off into the unknown. A compass can point out a general sense of direction, but the adventurer has to decide whether to climb over or walk around the mountain.



### Enabling everyone to work together toward a common goal

The very first compasses were invented in China during the Han Dynasty (206BC-220AD). They didn't point North – but were used instead by Feng Shui practitioners to assist with bringing order and harmony to buildings and places (see picture, left, from Wikimedia commons). Resilience practitioners are increasingly recognising the importance of learning skills in transforming community conflicts to better enable everyone to contribute to the bigger goal – of working together to thrive through turbulent times.

### Having fun

Many of the best resilience stories are about the times when people were loving what they are doing together. Although there is a fine tradition of solo explorers bagging Munros, conquering the Poles or sailing single-handed around the planet – most of us prefer to party with friends along the way. Just as Douglas Adams put the words 'DON'T PANIC' on the cover of his *Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, it seems that it would be a good idea to put a sticker that says 'HAVE FUN!' on the back of the compass.

## Experian's 'resilience rankings'

In the run-up to the UK Government announcement of its comprehensive spending review of October 2010, the BBC commissioned research company Experian to develop 'resilience rankings' comparing the potential economic vulnerability of the 12 BBC regions (comprising 324 local authority districts). Experian took an approach that focused on indicators designed to reveal the strength and adaptability of each area:

- Strength of local business base: for example, is it dominated by sectors hit by the recession of those that are relatively unscathed such as agriculture, forestry and fishing, banking and insurance? Have local firms and start-ups already proven their adaptability?
- Community vulnerability: for example, the percentage of households vulnerable to declines in disposable income or to long term unemployment, alongside a survey question that asked of people "Do neighbours look out for each other?"
- Personal vulnerability: for example, the size of the working age population, skills, average earnings and number of professionals (managers) compared to low-skilled workers (such as labourers); and
- Place: for example, median house prices, local crime rates, and green space availability.

Experian must have deployed significant number-crunching power and professional expertise to undertake such a study so quickly. It seems unlikely that local community initiatives had any opportunity to help to design the research or define the indicators – but in an age when the science of measuring resilience is still in its infancy, the investment by the BBC in the Experian research indicates that in the future there may be good opportunities for local communities to develop local media partnerships that would support the development and reporting of resilience indicators that are genuinely owned by local people.

Rob Hopkins, author of the *Transition Towns Handbook*, has recently completed a doctorate where he looks in more detail at promising indicators emerging through the experience of Transition Totnes and other initiatives (personal communication).

The islands Orkney and Shetland were amongst the top ranked areas.

Different BBC regions reported local results from the survey – to find the results for your area, do a search of the BBC news site. For example, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-11199638>



Describing the four dimensions of the compass – and some principles that inform how resilience builders might go about using it – misses a crucial part of the exploration of what resilience actually is.

It is as if we have told an alien visitor to the planet about the idea of ‘north, south, east and west’, offered them a pair of hiking boots, but omitted to explain that the compass needle points North because it follows the earth’s magnetic field.

Where magnetism is the force that makes a navigational compass work, knowing how to understand and navigate *change* (or ‘change literacy’) is a core skill for any effective community resilience practitioner.

Everyone is ‘change literate’ to a degree: over the course of our lives, we get to know about our own patterns and cycles – from feeling stuck and depressed to times when there’s a skip in our step and we feel particularly energised and alive. After living through a few of these cycles, it gets

easier to recognise that nothing is constant for very long – that, as Heraclitus said thousands of years ago: ‘the only constant is change’.

‘The only constant is change’ is a saying attributed to Heraclitus (c.535 BC – 475 BC), who also said that ‘everything flows, nothing stands still’ as well as introducing the idea of ‘reason’ (‘logos’); in the East, the Chinese *Book of Changes* (I Ching, dating back as far as 2800 BC) carries the same principle into a powerful guide to chance and the impermanence of life.

Evidence from our inquiries suggest that change literacy is a skill that is worth honing. As one possible starting point, this Handbook proposes getting to grips with three states of change that communities can experience – ‘break through’, ‘break even’ and ‘break down’. These can be easily mapped onto the compass. In this way, local people can begin to gauge whether their community is becoming more or less resilient over time.

## 2.2 Break Through, Break Even and Break Down: three responses to change

**Community resilience is ... the existence, development and engagement of community resources to thrive in a dynamic environment characterised by change, uncertainty, unpredictability and surprise. Resilient communities intentionally develop personal and collective capacity to respond to and influence change, to sustain and renew the community and to develop new trajectories for the community’s future.**

*Community Resilience: literature and practice review (Magis 2007)*

This definition was written as a result of an exhaustive literature survey for the US Forests’ Service in 2007. It helpfully integrates insights from ecological systems thinking and asset-based development.

Part One introduced ecologist Buzz Holling’s work about resilience in natural systems like forests. In his most recent work, Holling and colleagues at the Stockholm Resilience Institute have developed a sophisticated new resilience model that they call ‘panarchy’. This work now integrates human as well as natural systems<sup>83</sup>. Significantly, the model shows that systems can undergo ‘step change’ transformation to either much greater, or significantly less resilience. This thinking lies behind the proposal in this Handbook that communities experience (at least) three kinds of change: break through transformation, break even ‘bounce back’, or break down collapse (see box).

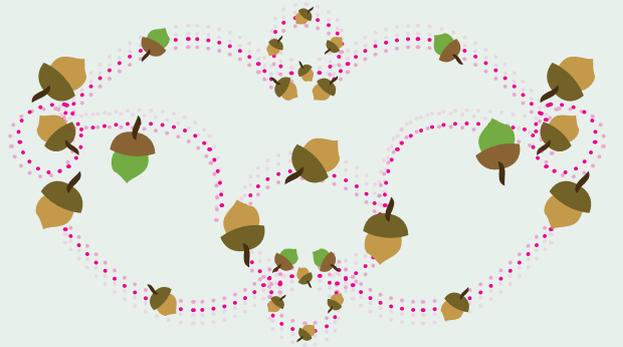


## Break through communities

A break through community anticipates and responds to shocks by taking co-ordinated collective actions toward a commonly agreed vision of a better future.

This is a little like a sports team whose sustained efforts enables them to break through to the next league.

Another way to think about this is to imagine a master juggler who has mastered the basics – and moved on to try new, more complex tricks. From learning how to ride a bicycle without stabilisers, to learning a new language, many of us have experienced how, after hours of practice, we might wake up one day and succeed where we failed before. This book calls this experience a step change: rather than being daunted by the challenges, we seem to thrive. Some people call this place of rapid learning a 'learning edge'; others call it an experience of 'flow'.

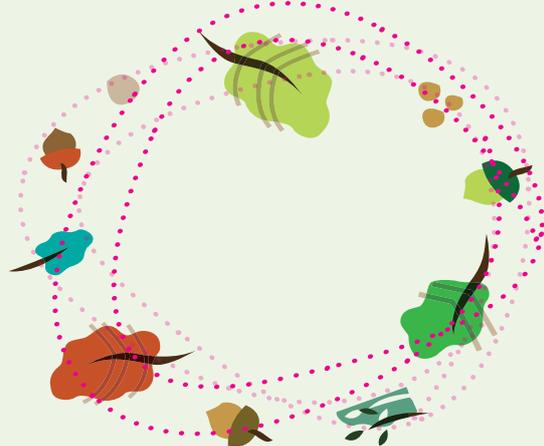


'Flow psychology' is a fast developing field, part of the positive psychology movement. For a good summary, see Csikszentmihalyi M. The contribution of flow psychology of positive psychology. In The science of optimism and hope: research essays in honour of Martin P. Seligman. Gilham JE. Philadelphia PA: Templeton Foundaiton Press 2000, pp387-95.

## Break even communities

Communities can often cope with disruptions and bounce back to something approximating 'normal' after having learned important lessons about their vulnerability – in this book, we call these 'break even' communities. There is often a groundswell of effective co-operative action in these places, but it may not have yet resulted in a step change towards significantly greater resilience: break even communities cope reasonably well day to day, but become vulnerable if unexpected shocks come too thick or fast. People in these communities could benefit from reassessing their vulnerabilities – in other words, the risks they face from local, national and global impacts, and the communities' likely capacity to be able to endure them.

These communities are like sports teams whose performance has fluctuated through a season. Retaining the confidence of a loyal fan base, they avoid relegation.



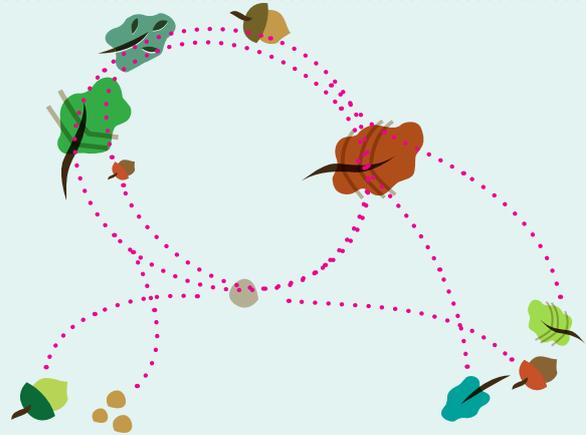
Returning to the juggling analogy: from working mums to volunteer directors of community organisations (and they may be the same people), many of us know what it means to try to keep all the balls in the air when there are many competing demands...

## Communities at risk of break-down

Especially when one shock comes on top of another, and often despite the best efforts of dedicated local people, communities may need emergency support from the outside to prevent break down.

Returning to the example of the sports team, if a club suffers multiple, unexpected setbacks from injuries, conflict in the boardroom or other misfortune, morale can be sapped and a negative cycle can set in creating more and more stress until things become 'brittle' and can suddenly snap – and the club is then vulnerable to bankruptcy or takeover.

The juggling analogy: If we're over stressed by attempting to juggle too many demands, we may be on the road to burn-out or 'dropping the ball'. It's important



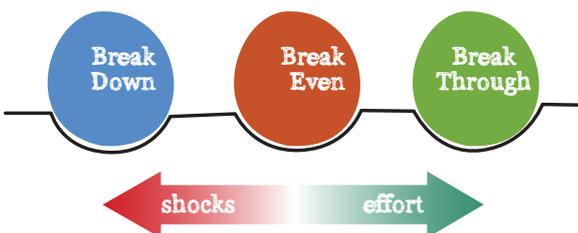
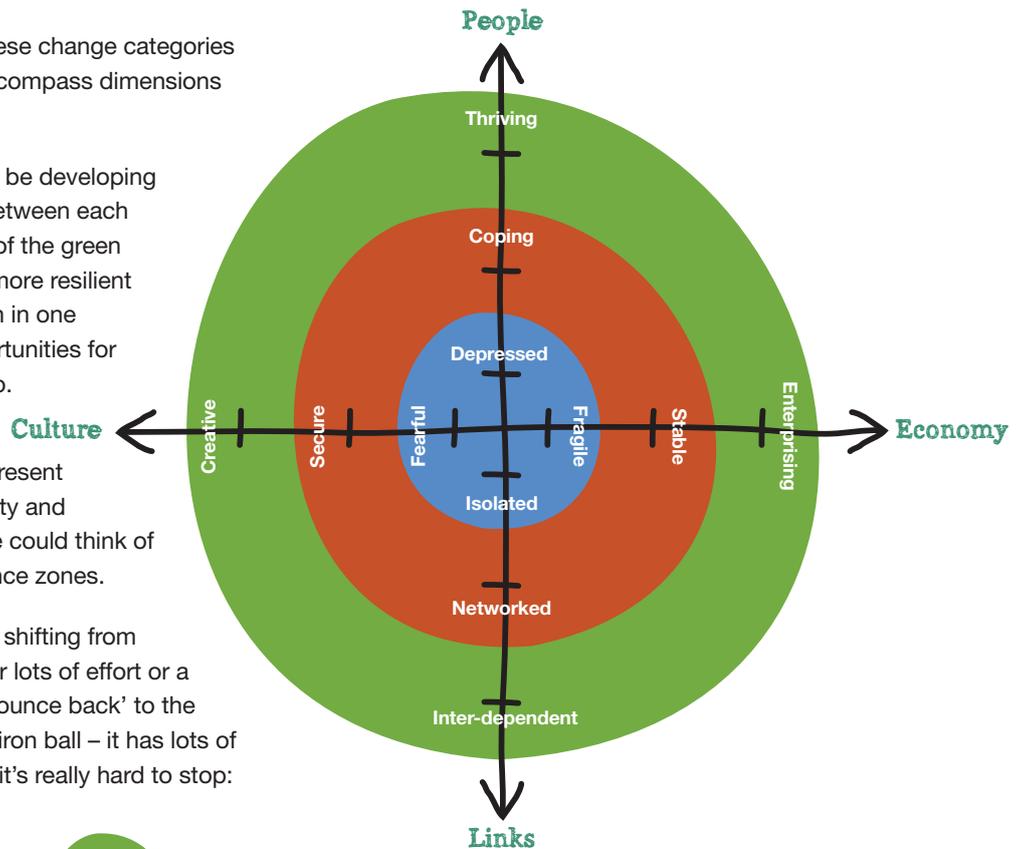
to ask for help before this happens – but the experience of running faster and faster to keep up can make even asking for help seem very hard.

It's now possible to visualise these change categories by overlaying them on the four compass dimensions introduced earlier:

A breakthrough community will be developing strengths in and connections between each dimension, expanding the size of the green circle (the larger the circle, the more resilient a community will be). A strength in one dimension will likely open opportunities for creative action in the others, too.

The orange and blue circles represent decreasing flexibility, connectivity and capacity to mitigate shocks. We could think of these circles as different resilience zones.

Resilience theory suggests that shifting from one zone to another takes either lots of effort or a shock big enough to prevent 'bounce back' to the existing state. Imagine a heavy iron ball – it has lots of inertia, but once it starts rolling it's really hard to stop:



In the normal course of events, a moderate push on one of the balls might disturb it a little, but won't shift it out of its dip (see diagramme, above). However, a big push in either direction could roll it into the next-door dip.

The idea of shifting from one zone or state to another is well animated in *Wake Up, Freak Out*: <http://wakeupfreakout.org/film/tipping.html> – which illustrates how our planet may be on the verge of shifting from one climate-stable state to another if 350ppm carbon dioxide is sustained for too long.

In the sections that follow, bear these change dynamics in mind. Each section brings one dimension of the compass to life with real-life stories and literature references shared by participants in the resilience inquiry.

If you're keen to skip straight to seeing whether the compass could be of some help in your place, there are two appendices at the end of this book that might be useful:

- **Appendix 2** imagines a workshop session translating these categories into the context of a local community; and
- **Appendix 3** shows how this thinking can be helpful in planning the future sustainability of community organisations.

## 2.3 Personal resilience: healthy, engaged people

**How we weather those coming storms, to me that's what resilience is ... it's going to be our ability to cope ... so I put 'personal resilience' as well ...**

*Irish participant, Dunfermline Resilience seminar*

**The National Youth Agency's Youth Work Week in November 2009 focused on two key qualities – Resilience and Resourcefulness. This approach urged youth workers to consider the factors that help children and young people manage, cope and even thrive in the face of adversity and disadvantage. It recognises that personal development, family support and community influence positively impact on young people's resilience, their ability to bounce back from life's disappointments and setbacks and enable them to achieve their full potential.**

*Bud Simpkin, CEO of Young Suffolk*

personal communication from Bud Simpkin, Chief Executive Young Suffolk

### Deciding to live

Amid a continuing media frenzy, Edison Peña, one of the rescued Chilean miners, ran in the November 2010 New York Marathon. The Guardian reported that "for the first 18 days when he was trapped, he gave up hope, and curled up, waiting for death. Yet once contact had been made with the outside world and he believed life might continue, he resumed his running, covering up to six miles a day in the dark: 'I ran to forget I was trapped ... I became two people: the weak person who wanted simply to give up and the person who chose to be strong – to run and survive. Eventually, I chose to live'".

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/07/chilean-miner-new-york-marathon>

Peña's experience is not unique. In a previous age, Victor Frankl wrote and talked about his experiences of surviving Nazi concentration camps:

**Everything can be taken from a man or a woman but one thing: the last of human freedoms to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way... Man does not simply exist but always decides what his existence will be, what he will become in the next moment.**

Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (2004)





Today, there is a wealth of research and practice on helping people to develop and maintain personal resilience. Some of it challenges the popular view that resilience can be summed up with the phrase ‘bouncing back’:

**Bouncing back suggests a rapid and effortless recovery from adversity.... This might be the ideal that some wish to aspire to, yet it seems to be more of a comic-book view that may well trigger self-depreciation (seeing oneself as weak or inadequate) if this ideal is not realised in times of crisis... imagine you have been injured in an accident and now suffer from chronic pain... ‘bouncing back’ suggests little time for [a] slow process of adaptation and discovery.**

Michael Neenan, *Developing Resilience: a cognitive-behavioural approach* (2010) Routledge. London. Page 3.

Others contrast ‘survival’ with ‘resilience’:

**Unlike the term survivor, resilient emphasises that people do more than merely get through difficult emotional experiences, hanging on to inner equilibrium by a thread. Because resilience best captures the active process of self-righting and growth that characterises some people so essentially [italics in original]**

O’Connell Higgins, quoted in Neenan (ibid.) page 7.

Most importantly for our exploration of community resilience in this book is that there is a growing consensus amongst personal resilience experts that it’s by no means only about individual actions – instead, we are learning how it is our relationships that are critical for effective ‘self righting’ (friends, family, community).

Social isolation, especially when combined with an inability to cope with emotions or to make sense of events, are important indicators of vulnerability. Reviewing

fifty years of resilience psychology in children, Masten says that in the early days, some researchers thought ‘resiliency’ might be a trait that special people possess... but that today, it is accepted that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary:

**What began as a quest to understand the extraordinary has revealed the power of the ordinary. Resiliency does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary ... minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and relationships, and in their communities.**

Masten (2001:235)

Since 2007, Austerity measures in the Republic of Ireland have resulted in job losses and other forms of severe disruption for many people. Statistics on the Irish suicide rate released in September 2010 already show an increase of 24% over the previous year. Young men, as with previous years, were shown to be disproportionately at risk. Ireland’s National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) suggested that: “the impact of the economic downturn in 2008, and particularly in 2009, has led to substantial increases in both self harm and suicide numbers.”

**Mental health is about how you think and feel and your ability to deal with ups and downs. Your mental health does not always stay the same. It can change as you move through different life stages or in response to difficulties in your life such as losing your job or having money worries.**

National Office for Suicide Prevention, Ireland Annual Report ([www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie)) Published September 2010: 1

For example, Aaron Antonovsky is a Professor of Medical Sociology who has gained recognition in the field of personal resilience with his finding that people who manage stress best tend to share three characteristics: they can make sense of events, they feel they can take care of things, and who really care about what happens. (His ‘salutogenesis’ model is outlined in his 1979 book *Health, Stress and Coping*).



Whilst figures such as those in the NOSP report represent vital information for policy makers charged with making difficult decisions about prioritising public sector spending, and professional theories about resilience can be helpful in targeting those most at risk, a focus on the numbers or theory alone risks obscuring from view the scale, breadth and power of the work happening every day in communities on preventing personal tragedies from becoming abstract statistics.

## Relationships matter

Alongside the Samaritans and other help-lines, people are supporting each other as an everyday part of community life. We are all likely to find ourselves offering a friend or family member help to survive dark days... and to then learn how to cope with the after-effects. Our own experiences of being similarly supported in the past can help us, in turn, feel confident when stepping forward to help others.

Healthy eating, keeping fit, drinking lots of water and following a faith or meditation practice can significantly enhance personal resilience. We know that regular exercise really helps, too – whether it’s yoga, dance, walking, cycling, running, swimming, surfing or climbing the stairs instead of taking the lift. But the evidence suggests that even the strongest, bendiest, most calorie-controlled individuals rely on good friends and strong relationships when times get tough.

A four-year study into ‘Capability and Resilience’, published in 2007 by Professor Mel Bartley and colleagues at the University College London Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, affirmed “the enormous capabilities and resilience that people already show in their everyday lives and under crisis conditions”, and underlined that “it is social relationships that are most effective in maintaining resilience in the face of adversity”. They concluded that resilience building needs to begin by making “best use of the many assets for well-being and social and economic development that already exist in communities”.

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/capabilityandresilience/index.htm>

A good example of this approach is a ‘self-management’ programme run by Hackney-based Social Action for Health (SAfH). Over six half days, lay people with long-term conditions guide others in similar situations through a course (involving action planning and group problem solving activities) aimed at helping them come to terms with the impacts on their lives and emotions. SAfH claims

that lay people are able to do this work “as effectively, if not more effectively, than health professionals”. The course also encourages participants to think about diet, medication usage, exercise and communication skills as well as techniques for relaxation and breathing exercises.

[http://www.safh.org.uk/safh\\_new/scripts/page/home.php](http://www.safh.org.uk/safh_new/scripts/page/home.php)

## Resilience in young people in Brighton and Suffolk

Another area where personal resilience practice is very well developed is in working with young people. In Brighton, Professor Angie Hart and colleagues at the Community University Practice Partnership (CUPP) have been translating academic resilience concepts to help build practical programmes that give hope to disadvantaged children and families. Hart starts from a definition of resilience as ‘bouncing back... and a little bit more’, or

**The kinds of things we need to make happen (e.g. events, parenting strategies, relationships, resources) to help children manage life when it’s tough. Plus ways of thinking and acting that we need ourselves if we want to make things better for children.**

Source: Aumann and Hart 2009

In practical terms, a network of support workers use ‘five potions’ to guide conversations with children toward enabling them to make good choices in their lives. The potions focus on:

- basic security – such as ensuring access to ‘good enough’ housing;
- belonging – for example, involving securing more ‘healthy relationships’;
- learning – such as ‘help the child organise her/himself’;
- coping – for example, ‘understanding boundaries’; and
- core self – involving, for example, affirming a ‘sense of hope’.



There are, of course, many different ways of concocting such potions. Community of Practice participant Bud Simpkin of *Young Suffolk* emphasises how important shifts in school curriculums, already underway, hold the promise of sowing resilience skills in children from their earliest years. However, he adds that it's not just the curriculum that needs to change – as society becomes more concerned about issues of resilience in the round, we might need to think deeply about the whole balance between informal and formal approaches to learning:

**In addition to the informal education setting of Youth Work, the Whole Education movement teaches social and emotional competence as well as developing the capacity of individuals to collaborate and forge strong relationships with each other. This is considered to be a fundamental aspect of a new curriculum that focuses on a well rounded education combining practical skills with theory, vocational with academic and steers away from a “passing exams” mentality for education.**

[www.wholeeducation.org](http://www.wholeeducation.org)

At the heart of the work of Young Suffolk is a focus on developing young peoples' self-esteem and confidence. Why is it that so many young people growing up in such a sophisticated society find it difficult to make good life choices? Bud suggests that young people today have fewer opportunities to hone their decision-making skills than in the past.

This is where initiatives such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, The Princes Trust and the new coalition Government plans for a National Citizen Service can help. These programmes can enable young people to experiment, take risks and make mistakes in supervised settings. They help young people to take responsibility for their actions, and to learn how to work co-operatively and collaboratively – the core skills of any community resilience worker!

personal communication  
from Bud Simpkin, Chief  
Executive Young Suffolk

## A Big Noise in Stirling

In Raploch, Stirling, Scotland a new music initiative is a very practical example for how innovations in almost any field can help to create more resilient people. The idea behind 'El Sistema' began in Venezuela in 1975, when young musicians from Caracas and the interior of the country came together to form the first National Symphony Youth Orchestra of Venezuela. By 2008, El Sistema's philosophy of "passion first/refinement second" had enabled more than 400,000 disadvantaged children to join over 130 orchestras. Inspired by this approach to mass participation in collective creative expression, El Sistema was established in Scotland with the support of grants from the Scottish Arts Council in 2008 (in Venezuela, El Sistema is resourced through the State Foundation for the National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras of Venezuela). Going under the name 'Big Noise', it has begun working with children in Raploch, Stirling and quickly achieved publicity from papers and the notice of decision makers. Chair of El Sistema, Richard Holloway, summarised the approach in a speech at No.11 Downing Street:

**By recruiting children and immersing them in orchestras, we can slowly, year upon year, build them into something stronger and greater and more enduring than the despair that surrounds them. They learn discipline, they experience joy, they co-operate passionately with each other to create excellence, and a wonderful beauty is born.**

For more on El Sistema, see <http://www.sistemascotland.org.uk/>



Friday Feast, Falkland

## Enjoying a 'Big Lunch'

We can see that there is already a huge amount of work being undertaken in communities around building personal resilience – whether it is for young people, those recovering from illness or accidents or shocks such as terrorist incidents, or others. All this work is crucial in developing more resilient communities – but it may not be sufficient. We are learning how to help (to quote running miner Peña) individuals make choices to 'run and survive' rather than 'giving up hope'. How do we come together to exercise such a choice collectively?

The *Big Lunch* initiative shows how possible and fun it can be. *Big Lunch* aims to 'make isolation history' by acting as a "catalyst facing up to tough issues" of crime, domestic violence, homelessness and children living in poverty. The website illustrates with statistics that shows that in too many places isolation has become the norm:

- Two million more single person households by 2019.
- More rich, poor and ethnic ghettos than ever before.
- 7% annual drop in trust between neighbours from 2003-05.
- Social trust in the UK halved and now is among the lowest in Europe.

Source: [www.thebiglunch.com](http://www.thebiglunch.com)

The idea is that every year people roll out the bunting and hold a street party for their street with the idea that "when doors open up, people open up and neighbourhoods open up... we call this phenomenon 'human warming'".

**We only knew our immediate neighbours before. But at the end of it, we felt we had a community spirit. Its a little bit like when Christmas comes you can write a card to every single neighbour in that street because you actually know their names and their children's names.**

Participant in 2010 *Big Lunch*, quoted in <http://www.mirror.co.uk> June 29<sup>th</sup> 2010

The message from events like *Big Lunch* and the everyday experience of communities where people already know and trust each other is that by connecting with others we feel more confident that we belong in a place... and more ready to step forward to help others:

**Thanks to the Big Lunch, I went from being a normal(ish) 32 year-old-guy to being the Chairman of a Residents Group/social community group. How did that happen?**

2010 *Big Lunch* organiser, quoted in <http://www.mirror.co.uk> June 29<sup>th</sup> 2010

Mental health experts agree that getting out and getting involved can be an excellent antidote to some forms of depression. The *Big Lunch* is an excellent example of how important it is that communities address loneliness. No matter how individually fit, healthy or rich we are... when we 'open up' and celebrate being part of a wider community, benefits flow all round.

In 2008, the UK Government's Foresight project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing worked with the New Economics Foundation's to propose 'five ways of well being': connect, be active, take notice, keep learning... and give. This is an excellent resource for those wanting to dig deeper into the evidence base behind the psychology of personal resilience:

The concept of well-being comprises two main elements: feeling good and functioning well. Feelings of happiness, contentment, enjoyment, curiosity and engagement are characteristic of someone who has a positive experience of their life. Equally important for well-being is our functioning in the world. Experiencing positive relationships, having some control over one's life and having a sense of purpose are all important attributes of well-being.

See <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/five-ways-well-being-evidence>

Volunteer Cornwall is an organisation with a long track record of working with over 1600 local groups (including many people with physical and learning disabilities) in this kind of work. Ian Jones, Volunteer Cornwall CEO, is also a passionate resilience advocate. He reports how the organisation is creating 'virtual hubs' where local people – even those who are housebound – are able to connect with services with the help of people who are visiting their house anyway – such as a postman, handy person or shopping delivery driver. In order to get such a system up and running, Jones describes how "the work is focused on distributing leadership and not controlling what happens": the ethic of Volunteer Cornwall's approach is to enable people and organisations to work across 'fuzzy boundaries' – breaking down the walls between the public, private and voluntary sectors.



## 2.4 Economy: towards enterprising self-reliance... within energy and ecological limits.

**Economic assessments, strategy, policy and delivery have tended to work in isolation from their social and environmental context. Resilience allows us to think about the broader palette of aspects that make a place sturdy. In turn that enables us to assess a local economy's brittleness, its vulnerability and weak points. This leads us to better develop policy and action which fully considers a locality's power of recovery and understands what can drive it.**

*Neil McInroy, New Start, January 2010*

The drive to devolve power and responsibility to individuals and communities is sometimes called 'localism' – a significant driver of policy innovation in our age of austerity. For community activists, localism can be most meaningful when it is connected with the idea of local self-reliance – that is, where communities establish and maintain control over their own, diversified economy, thereby minimising exposure to external shocks.

In this way, communities are effectively localising their economies – helping to ensure that money and savings keep circulating through local shops and businesses rather than quickly 'leaking' out. As Part One has pointed out (eg. the Moses Coady story), credit unions and co-operatives are well tried and tested ways to achieve this end.

International experience affirms how critical such initiatives are. For example, Bangladesh is regularly hit by floods, earthquakes, and typhoons. It is also the birthplace of the Grameen Bank – a micro-finance institution whose operating model is based on an understanding that its clients often experience extreme conditions as well as more stable times. After major flooding in 1998, some households lost their ability to generate income for up to 90 days. Some people lost their homes and access to their crops or animals, and at the same time, day to day costs of food, transport, and other essentials rose steeply. Grameen and other institutions responded by innovating new savings products – some compulsory, some voluntary – which were designed to release resources to clients only in the event of a future emergency.

Although the impacts of flooding have yet to match the severity of conditions in Bangladesh, far-sighted organisations such as the New Economics Foundation have long championed the importance of innovating local financial instruments to 'plug the leaks' in the local economy to help ensure local well-being through thick and thin.

See for example the 'Plugging the leaks' at [http://www.pluggingtheleaks.org/resources/plm\\_ptl.htm](http://www.pluggingtheleaks.org/resources/plm_ptl.htm)

This move towards economic localisation raises important questions about how comparatively wealthy communities who have effectively plugged some leaks can quickly move on to share their talents and financial resources with less resourced communities. This is an issue that the Fair Trade Towns and Counties movement has begun to address: Fair Trade is about ensuring that farmers and producers everywhere can achieve a fair price for their labours.

There are many, many stories from the Fiery Spirits Community of Practice about economic and energy self-reliance in action. Entrepreneurial people are inventing exciting new forms of community based organisations to hold, finance and steward local assets. This section draws from a small portion of such stories, culminating with a story from the 2001 currency crisis in Argentina. The Argentina experience prompts a question of how to ensure that this groundswell of economic localism continues to gather pace, supported by new experiments in complementary currencies that may help to buffer the impacts of continuing global economic commodity and currency turbulence.



For a full review of *Microenterprise Best Practices* see Development Alternatives briefing no. 3 at [http://gdcrc.org/icm/disasters/bangladeshi\\_experience\\_in\\_adapting\\_financial\\_services.pdf](http://gdcrc.org/icm/disasters/bangladeshi_experience_in_adapting_financial_services.pdf)



## The Scottish Highlands and Islands: hotbed of localisation innovation

A visit to many of the remote communities in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland can be illuminating for anyone interested in getting to grips with what resilience is all about. Island communities in particular reveal the limits of modern life, where long distances and harsh weather challenge the robustness of globalised supply chains, and reveal the resourcefulness of remote dwellers.

Sit in a traditional music session in a Scottish pub, and likely as not, in between some fast jigs, the fiddlers might weave in the haunting tune 'Calum's Road'. It was penned by Donald Shaw (the accordionist in Capercaillie) to commemorate the story of Calum MacLeod of Raasay who, when the local council refused to build a two-mile road to his croft, did the job himself. Some time in 1966, with a sledgehammer, pick-axe and his piece (sandwich) in a wheelbarrow, Calum set about a task that would take him the best part of twenty years.

Roger Hutchinson has published this powerful story with Birlinn, Edinburgh in a book by the same name (2006): "Calum's road would become a powerful and beautiful symbol of one man's defiance against the erosion of his native culture".

Visit many crafting townships today and variations on this spirit of stubborn self-reliance is achieving equally remarkable results. These are places where residents have learned to turn their hand to almost anything, including organising community buy-outs of over 400,000 acres across the Highlands and islands since land reform legislation was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2003.

The Islanders of Eigg were pioneers who helped put land reform back on the agenda in the first place. On 12<sup>th</sup> June 1997, they bought their island for £1.75 million after a huge public appeal for support which yielded a private, anonymous donation of £1 million. They then set about the long road to transforming a 'run-down and unstable' community:

**The old tearoom was dilapidated and tilting above the pier road; the pier was inadequate for anything but flit boats to laboriously transport cargo and passengers ashore from the ferry which served the island; and much of the housing scattered around the three-by-five-mile island was in a state of constant disrepair.**

**Worst of all, the future of its people – the underpinning of any community – was unstable. There was no way for residents to put down roots. Croft land is limited on Eigg. Leases were virtually non-existent, and the entire island had been in the hands of increasingly erratic private owners.**

Bill Currie quoting Islander Maggie in the West Highland Free Press, 13th June 2002.

In 2010, the Islanders were back in the headlines, this time taking a winner's share of a £1 million 'Big Green Challenge' prize awarded by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) for community-led climate change action. As well as the technical achievement of installing Europe's first community-owned renewable energy grid, it was the integration of carbon reduction activities into the everyday lives of islanders that particularly impressed the judges.

See Lucy Conway's 'FierySpirits' blog post for the full story: <http://ruralresilience.ning.com/profiles/blogs/thoughts-on-winning-l300k-in>

see <http://islandsgoinggreen.org/>

The Eigg system is novel because households are fined £20 if they exceed their 5kwh domestic limit, with the money going to the community. The story raises questions about whether other communities may be willing to go down a similar road in the future?

The Highlands and Islands are full of similarly inspiring stories. Eday lies in the heart of Orkney's Northern Isles, 16 miles north of Kirkwall, and the 150 strong population have owned the community shop for over two decades. If all goes according to plan, in 2011 the Eday Partnership will significantly scale up their ambitions by taking ownership of a £1.67 million, 900KW wind turbine. Partnership Chair Clive Brookes believes this investment will "put us in control of our own destiny" by generating up to £120,000 annually for further community investment. A Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) scheme called 'Initiatives at the Edge' has helped to develop the Partnership that has made the plan possible, offering islanders development resources and a route beyond 'volunteer fatigue'. The Partnership – which employs several specialist staff including a Ranger and a 'Powerdown Officer' – has also helped to secure grants for capital developments at the Hostel, the old Baptist Church (now a heritage/visitor centre), and for a new slipway.

However, challenges remain on Eday. Only “real and meaningful employment” can help sustain momentum once grant funding ends: “we all need to become a lot more business-minded” (to quote Clive Brookes again). This process has already started. In summer 2010 the Partnership carried out a pilot ‘fast boat’ project to test the market for a fast and more direct service between Eday and its neighbours – which also doubles up as a tourist trip for spotting porpoises, seals, and the nearby European Marine Energy Centre’s test site. HIE staff member Chessa Llewellyn-White from HIE points out that the coming of the turbine and fast boat businesses have been “a bit of an eye-opener”, presenting new challenges of complex cash flows and organisational growing pains – such as putting in place new systems to separate out income generation from charitable activities, and generating reliable financial reports to ensure a £1 million loan is paid back.

Today, a string of community land buy-out communities are supporting each other to generate housing, energy and employment initiatives sufficient to lure young families to contribute to the future life of remote communities. These places show how it might be possible for communities everywhere to steward more actively their local land, institutions and other assets – from food and water to buildings and the supply of finance. Community land ownership is proving itself a powerful catalyst for activity on all these fronts in these contexts. One Community of Practice participant put it this way:

**All our livelihoods and energy needs are ultimately met through our direct or indirect interaction with the natural systems on which we depend. There is a real danger here of continuing the analysis that blames the poor for their poverty and for the degradation of their environments. What is needed is an analysis and proposal which places defending or re-establishing community ownership and use of natural resources as the solution to poverty and environmental degradation (local people know they depend on the resources around them)**

*participant Carnegie UK Trust resilience seminar, 2008*

However, land ownership is no instant panacea. When a community takes responsibility for land, what safeguards will ensure it is managed well? Without additional support, many communities may struggle to find enough people with sufficient skills to steward local resources effectively. Building these skills takes time, investment, and mentors who can build local confidence: without such supports, the resilience skills gap will be difficult to close. This is an area where LEADER funding from Europe has proven its worth in the past, and remains a unique source of external support.

For a closer look at the potential of LEADER, see the booklet *A Common Rural Development Policy?* which proposes that a comprehensive and well-financed policy of supporting rural enterprises and community initiatives alongside farming interests will help address the continuing challenge of low farm incomes and need for new business start-ups. [http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/a\\_common\\_rural\\_development\\_policy1](http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/a_common_rural_development_policy1)

## Recognising vulnerability to energy price hikes

Energy price volatility is an increasing concern for everyone. Just a few years ago conversations about ‘Peak Oil’ were confined to oil industry insiders and *Transition Towns* activists. With rapidly escalating oil prices impacting everyone in 2011, such activists don’t need to offer screenings of films such as *The End of Suburbia* and *How Cuba Survived Peak Oil* to spell out the likely impacts of the end of cheap oil.

<http://www.endofsuburbia.com/> and <http://www.powerofcommunity.org/cm/index.php>

Nevertheless, these resources continue to help community groups think carefully about the risks of not preparing for peak oil. The argument goes that severely oscillating prices (or sustained high prices) threaten extreme disruptions to our way of life in the near to medium term future. The longer we wait to make the transition to a lean economy, the harder the landing is going to be.

An excellent primer on this and connected issues is Chris Mastenson’s crash course, at <http://www.chrismastenson.com/page/crash-course-one-year-anniversary>

In February 2010, a report of an Industry Taskforce on energy and peak oil comprising Virgin, Arup, Scottish and Southern Energy agreed that latest oil futures research (supported most recently by a report of the International Energy Agency itself) suggests that global crude oil demand may have already outstripped supply.

See, for example, the Centre for Alternative Technology's *Zero Carbon Britain* report and a February 2010 report of an Industry Taskforce on energy and peak oil comprising Virgin, Arup, Scottish and Southern Energy and others: <http://peakoiltaskforce.net/download-the-report/2010-peak-oil-report/>

Rather than resulting in sustained high prices, most peak oil models suggest that the global economy may experience increasing frequency and scale of economic 'bubbles' that burst as oil price volatility distorts markets and severely disrupts the capacities of businesses, small and large, to plan. The most forward-thinking local business people are already trying to factor in such risks. For example, a researcher from the University of Liverpool interviewed by *Future Proof Kilkenny* illustrated how he had helped a dairy farm to conduct an 'oil vulnerability analysis':

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/researchintelligence/issue34/oil.htm>

**Some of the initial findings were shocking. When we did our first analysis we looked at 5 particular elements connected to oil price; fuels, energy, petrochemicals, man-made materials and components. When we did the initial analysis of the farm we found that around 17% of the costs related to the price of oil. But the beauty of the audit is the way in which it breaks down an analysis of the component activities and processes. So when we began to look at the cultivation of the plants to feed the 200 herd cattle we found that 80% of the costs of cultivation related to the price of oil. This was petrochemicals such as herbicides, pesticides, insecticides and fertiliser, not really a petrochemical but hugely dependant on hydrocarbons. Once we understood that we shot from 17% oil vulnerable up to 70% oil vulnerable. 17% is bad enough but 70% is shocking.**

<http://futureproofkilkenny.org/?p=405>

In some cases, recognising the growing urgency of questions about 'peak oil' has prompted traditional community development organisations to evolve their ways of working. For example, in Northern Ireland Rural Community Network (RCN) has traditionally only responded to issues raised directly by local people. However, during 2009 RCN conducted an experiment to invite local people to think about what might happen if oil prices rose to £5 per litre. Project worker Aidan Campbell reported that the exercise worked well – and that it seems that many people in traditional rural areas are already aware of the potential consequences on transport, jobs and the future viability of traditional rural communities. Few groups, however, had yet developed action plans to address this knowledge. Aidan termed this a 'values

See Aidan's presentation at <http://ruralresilience.ning.com/video/resilience-podcast-no4>

action' gap. It is this gap that projects like LightFoot Enterprise's *Household Energy Surveys* are beginning to address.

## Household Energy Surveys in the Marches

In 2005 in the Marches, a small group of residents set out to construct a community-owned Household Energy Service (HES) with a view to putting power to manage energy use in the hands of householders. Local volunteers carried out a home energy survey which made tailored recommendations for conserving energy, reducing energy consumption and switching to local and renewable energy sources. Word spread about the service as people started to transfer what Light Foot Enterprises, who run the scheme, call 'energy wisdom'. The idea is that this energy wisdom enables a new local energy market to emerge. Rachel Francis of Light Foot says:

**In Bishops Castle, where engagement of households now amounts to over one in five of the population, demand is growing for a range of energy services at local level as well as affordable deals and renewable options.... It's no good if our service simply passes people by or just stays within the circle of the existing green community. We have drawn heavily upon marketing know-how and research into sustainable behaviour to help broaden engagement.**

(personal communication)



Light Foot's work is characterised by a process of trial-and-error: as with many community-led solutions, lessons from one place can't always be easily replicated in others. Instead, it's a process of trial and error – such as replacing the requirement for an initial survey with a 'leader' offer of offering a free draught excluder as a first step into the process. Rachel Francis sums up the experience:

**We have to stay dynamic, uncluttered and able to prioritise community needs, but even that is not easy at times. Our strategies work when they are authentic, warm and honest. That too is part of resilience.**

## Questions of size and scale of local energy initiatives

The house-to-house work that Rachel and colleagues in the Marches are engaged with is part of a bigger picture about how we create more resilient systems for producing and distributing energy. These are questions taxing national politicians who are charged with ensuring we don't face black-outs as existing power stations come to the end of their lives. In December 2010, the UK Energy and Climate Change Secretary Chris Huhne laid out three connected challenges in this way:

- First, our demand for electricity could double by 2050 as we shift from fossil fuels to electricity for our vehicles and our residual home heating.
- Secondly, around a quarter of our generating capacity is ageing plant that will shut down within 10 years, and has to be replaced.
- Thirdly, that replacement cycle – entailing some £110bn of investment, or more than double the normal amount in the next decade – must be in low-carbon and secure sources like renewables, nuclear, clean coal and gas if we are to meet our climate change targets. Left alone, the current market will not deliver these objectives at the lowest cost.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/energy/8204586/The-biggest-energy-market-shake-up-in-25-years.html>

At a community level, it's possible to complement large-scale redesign of national energy systems by creating local energy generation solutions (turbines, biodigestors etc.). Usually, these systems feed into the national grid, and so are vulnerable if the grid fails. Resilience thinking suggests that 'modular' – or distributed – grids will be better at withstanding and then recovering from shocks than relying on the centralised national grid alone.

Experiments such as Eigg's community-owned electricity grid demonstrate that it is possible for a local community to establish its own system – but the cost of this energy sovereignty are strong limits on local consumption:

If everyone did this, it would mean that together we'd all use a LOT LESS electricity, which would mean power companies wouldn't need to generate as much thus closing the 'energy gap' and (the really cool bit), saving you money! Spreading the load is good too – means the poor old national grid isn't trying to deal with huge swings from high to low demand.

Eigg isn't in a position to fall back on the national grid in the event of failure – instead, the old system of noisy oil-powered household generators would kick in again. However, even though Eigg's situation is unlike most communities in the UK, the Eigg Electric story has sparked the interest of many. It demonstrates why the experience of remote communities can be particularly valuable to society as a whole: innovations 'at the edge' challenge the rest of us to consider questions of energy justice. Could we achieve a more equitable distribution of energy use between energy-intensive and energy-lean local economies? Would other local communities voluntarily accept limits on energy use in the way that Eigg residents have done? Is it important that local communities own their own electricity generation and distribution systems?



Centre for Alternative Technology

### One workshop commented:

**...I think it is important to put some control over those huge resources in the hands of the communities and not leave it to the multinationals that currently come in and set up massive operations with a token gesture to the local community council, you know ten thousand pounds a year for community activities, but actually when communities take control of those assets like in Gigha and they put up their own turbines and that helps fund their own housing issues then that can make a real difference and that is how rural communities can be more resilient but they have to be given the support in terms of the initial capital investment to make that work...**

*Participant, Rural Convention 2009*

On a tour around the Centre for Alternative Technology at a conference called Power and Place, we learned how CAT has for many years been asking such questions in relation to running their own onsite electricity generation grid. In the early days, CAT pioneers were determined to be as self-sufficient as possible, without relying on the wider world. In the end they gave up however – recognising that isolating themselves from the mains supply meant limits on the organisation's ability to grow. Peter Harper (long term CAT staff member) reflects:

**It's interesting ... at the beginning of CAT back in the 70s we definitely shared the view that [the future] was going to be a collective, rather decentralised and rather self-sufficient economies. For one reason or another we've abandoned that... now we are serving for a globalisation – I don't want to deny the need for resilience – we need to build that in... but we're thinking of reaching out to Europe, to supergrids, exporting our gold mine North Sea... having a more integrated rather than a less integrated Europe.**

*Peter Harper, CAT*



Peter introduced important issues into the People and Place conversation: How do different scales connect? What is the right balance between local grids and super grids? CAT publication *Zero Carbon Britain* is a good place to look for some answers. The report was written to show how climate tipping points can be averted. The recommendations are often revolutionary, not least proposing major changes in land use, transport, and diet.

Energy supply and money availability are closely connected in today's globalised economy. With a growing realisation of the vulnerability of national currencies, an increasing number of resilience activists are experimenting with local currencies. Recent Irish and Argentinian experience can help to explain why – and how.

### **Towards resilient local money: how Irish activists are learning lessons from Argentina's currency crisis**

During 2001, Argentina experienced a currency crisis that accompanied its economic collapse. As part of an international attempt to stabilise its currency, Argentina agreed to peg the value of its peso to the United States dollar, but investors lost all confidence and a flight of capital followed. Five presidents came and went, people were only allowed to withdraw about 200 pesos a week, and the government began seizing public servant pensions. A run on the banks ensued, and all bank accounts were then frozen for 90 days. By December, violent rioting broke and the government defaulted on its debt obligations. There was soon no cash at all circulating within the Argentine economy. Into the vacuum, barter markets swiftly emerged. Those with some experience in barter systems trained others and the idea spread rapidly: market organisers required newcomers to attend training sessions before they could participate in these new markets. Schools, parks and gymnasiums were used as exchange sites:

With thanks to Kate Bodi and her first-hand article published 31st October 2010 on Culture Change website <http://www.culturechange.org/cms/content/view/681/1/>

The whole book is available for free here: <http://www.feasta.org/documents/shortcircuit/contents.html>

There's a good workbook – 'The Sharing Solution' – available for free at [http://files.uniteddiversity.com/Money\\_and\\_Economics/The\\_Sharing\\_Solution.pdf](http://files.uniteddiversity.com/Money_and_Economics/The_Sharing_Solution.pdf) Douthwaite's more recent *The Ecology of Money* is available to read online at <http://www.feasta.org/documents/moneyecology/contents.htm>

**Members were expected to arrive early and help set up tables. Before each session, people first browsed the market in order to plan their trades. Market rules and guidelines were created to help the process run smoothly and fairly. They also developed strategies so that entertainment was provided for children to keep them occupied away from trading areas. Street theater, clowns, musicians not only improved the atmosphere for the young, but also gave an avenue for expression that served to diffuse conflict. Thus, a culture flourished alongside trade.**

Over time, communities with the greatest degrees of local production in value-added areas such as food, wood, and even specialty commodities like honey were much stronger than communities with less local production: regional trade was only possible through such value-added goods. Civil servants and white-collar workers had to rapidly drop their prices whilst farmers were most secure. Meanwhile, more complex systems of exchange – local currencies – emerged as people started manufacturing and trading durable goods. Some of these systems experienced inflation, for example in the market for spare parts not manufactured locally. Solar and outdoor ovens became more prevalent, though they had limited seasonal use. Services fared best in areas where they were run by local community cooperatives whose members had a strong interest in maintaining them.

The story of the Argentine money crisis was brought to the attention of a large Irish audience in Tipperary at a *Community of Practice* event hosted by Tipperary Institute in Thurles. 'New economics' author Richard Douthwaite gave a talk that began by suggesting that society has still to learn the real lessons of the credit crunch, predicting further difficulties for the Irish economy which have since played out as Europe and the IMF offered a bailout later that year. Douthwaite has long foreseen the global economic instability that caught many of his contemporary economists unawares in 2007. For example, in *Short Circuit* (1996), Douthwaite was already proposing how communities could implement community owned wind energy, local currencies, community supported agriculture and many other innovations which are today becoming widespread.

Douthwaite's talk in mid 2010 centred around a little known event that happened as the Lehman Brothers bank collapsed: oil tankers bound for Ireland were halted in the tracks at Gulf ports. They were not sailing for shortage of oil, but because banks had stopped trusting each other to honour their promises. This meant that the oil companies couldn't get the credit slips they needed to guarantee they would be paid for the shipments at the other end. Above, we have pointed to a film that shows how Cuba rapidly adjusted to the consequences of a rapid hiatus in oil supplies following the collapse of the Soviet Union. There are also lessons to learn from closer to home.

In September 2000 across the UK lorry drivers and farmers blockaded oil facilities for several days in protest at proposed fuel duties. By Monday 11th September, panic buying of petrol began to close some petrol stations; the next day, 3,000 petrol stations were reported closed and the BBC reported that the government's emergency committee had begun to mobilise the military to get supplies to critical services – including the NHS, which was put on red alert. Perhaps most worrying was that the major supermarkets warned they would run out of food within days. The government was forced to back down and had learned how vulnerable the nation was to future disruptions in oil supplies.

In the 2008 credit crunch, it was not refineries that were blockaded, but the banking system that was blocked from enabling business as usual. Faced with no food on supermarket shelves, governments felt they had no option but to bail out the banks by borrowing colossal amounts of money – and then printing money to pay it back.

There are, fortunately, opportunities for local communities to conduct experiments keeping money circulating which national governments can't propose easily. Whilst the national media focuses on bigger and bigger bailouts as even countries threaten to go bankrupt, Totnes, Lewes, Stroud, Brixton and other places are trialling alternative systems. Like the Argentina experience, such initiatives have forerunners in the regional trade tokens that used to be used in the UK and Ireland throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century. In County Mayo, Douthwaite and colleagues now want to go one step further to establish a regional 'liquidity network':

See a picture report at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/gallery/2010/sep/21/trade-tokens-local-currencies>

**A Liquidity Network is an innovative payment system to enable local authorities and businesses to maintain services, exchange goods and pay salaries without the need for euros. Combining the best features of local trading systems such as the Swiss WIR with electronic payment systems used in Japan and elsewhere, they are an emergency measure to help local economies keep business moving and prevent further job losses**

From <http://theliquidnetwork.org/>

More and more local communities are starting to recognise the value in experimenting with local money systems in view of the risks associated with full scale dependence on national currencies, and the risks of further recessions in the global economy. Unlike in Argentina, we might see this time as one where we have the privilege to learn what works before the robustness of these systems is tested at scale and for real:

**Like the old story of the frog in hot water, if the situation is gradually deteriorating, as it is in Ireland at the moment, we may not respond... if there's a sudden crash, we do recognise that things can't go on the way we have been going.**

*Richard Douthwaite, FEASTA, speaking at Tipperary Institute Summer 2009*

This is the apocryphal story of the frog that fails to jump out water that is being brought slowly to the boil – see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boiling\\_frog](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boiling_frog)



## 2.5 Cultural resilience

### Whatever is given can always be re-imagined

*Seamus Heaney, The Nettle Bed*

quoted in 'Learning for Rural Resilience', Shan Ashton and Bryan Collis, Bangor University, Carnegie UK Trust Rural Action Research Programme 2008

### The world may come to an end, but love and music will endure

*Gaelic proverb*

When I think of 'resilience' it immediately makes me think of the Welsh word 'hyfywedd' which I suppose translates as vital or strong – so resilience is a much more positive, descriptive word of where we're at within the work of Theatre Felinfach and where I think the work of communities is at – more positive descriptions...

*Dwynwyn Lloyd Evans, Theatr Felinfach, Ceredigion*

### Learning from an oral history of the 1966 Seaman's strike, Lewis

In September 2009, BBC Radio Scotland's early morning 'Thought for the Day' programme was presented by Alastair McIntosh, a theologian and human ecologist whose book *Soil and Soul* tells the story of growing up on the Island of Lewis – and his subsequent work as an activist and advocate of community resilience in the Highlands and Islands. In the broadcast, McIntosh aired his perspective on what makes a place resilient – informed by new research about whether the Outer Hebrides are

Eden, L. 2009 *When the Ship Doesn't Sail: Measuring Socioeconomic Resilience on the Isle of Lewis*. Unpublished thesis, University of Edinburgh.

more, or less, resilient today than forty years ago (Eden 2009). The researcher, Lauren Eden, used the powerful research method of oral history – a great way

for any community to begin to seek old resilience wisdom that is lying waiting to be discovered in every community:

For guidance on starting an oral history project, try <http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/advice/index.php>: "Before interviewing someone it's useful to have done some background research. Have a look at any books, maps or old newspapers that might be relevant in your local library or record office or on the web. Prepare a list of questions but be careful that this does not make you too rigid in your questioning approach..."

It's a year ago today since our banking systems were very nearly engulfed following the collapse of the Lehman Brothers in America. And I bet I'm not alone in wondering what if our own government's financial bail-out had not happened and succeeded.

Not only might the hole-in-the-wall have stopped talking to us. But our globalised food supply system could also have been thrown into chaos, because without the banks doing their bit you don't get the deliveries coming through.

I've thought a lot about this recently while working with an Edinburgh University student seconded to my supervision. She went up to Stornoway and interviewed people about what happens when the Ullapool ferry fails to sail because of bad weather. ...



... She learned that the supermarket shelves quickly go bare, and it's not just panic buying. It's also because restocking is on a just-in-time basis, and so there's no slack to make up for any disruption in the system.

For the sake of comparison she then went on to interview people who could remember the six week long seamen's strike in 1966, that forced Harold Wilson to declare a national state of emergency.

Most people said they'd avoided hardship because crofting was still vibrant. They had their own potatoes, hens, sheep, and maybe a cow for milk or a fishing boat moored in the loch. But above all, they had an ethos of sharing.

This gave the local economy the resilience by which it could stand up to knocks. But in contrast, today we have greater efficiency, but it's also a more brittle system – like the banking crisis could very nearly have taught us.

The lesson is that economic efficiency is vital, but only if matched by the community resilience that makes for true security.

That's why such principles as Fair Trade, farmers' markets and local entrepreneurship are all so important.

They remind us that the economy should be not just about money, but also about the human handshakes that reflect right relationships ... for they're what counts when the ferry fails to sail.

*Transcript of 'Thought for the Day', 15<sup>th</sup> September 2009, reproduced from [www.alastairmcintosh.com](http://www.alastairmcintosh.com) (with permission)*

For McIntosh, it is the 'human handshakes' of indigenous crofting culture that underpin true community resilience. In this culture, resourcefulness and flexibility are second nature: it's not really necessary to invent a concept like 'resilience'. Living folk memory – through dance, music, poetry, story – already keeps alive understandings of what it means to sustain 'right relationship' between human and natural communities.

A number of film-makers have attempted to make bring an indigenous world-view to the cinema screen. See for example James Cameron's block-buster film Avatar and the 1982 film Koyaanisqatsi – see <http://www.koyaanisqatsi.org/> (taken from the Hopi language meaning 'life out of balance' or 'life in turmoil') – which used time-lapse photography to reveal how out of kilter the speed, technology and energy profligacy of modern economies is with traditional ways of living close to the land.

Global indigenous rights and climate justice movements have long struggled to secure the cultural survival of marginalised cultures and communities. These struggles continue today in many places.

see for example <http://www.ienearth.org/>

These movements have won a UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) which now enshrines rights to "strengthen [indigenous peoples] distinctive spiritual and material relationship with their lands, territories, waters and coastal seas".



Gaelic poet Iain Crichton Smith (1928-1998) was intensely aware of the decline of his native language and of the threat to his culture's resilience. In his book *Towards the Human* (1996) he says why Gaelic must not be allowed to die:

To be an islander is to inhabit real space on a real earth.... He has his proverbs, his philosophies, the cemeteries and cradles of his hopes: his tasks and his loves: his language. Behind the judgment made on him by the bureaucrat is the idea that his world is in some way irrelevant...

If there is no Gaelic left, will not the islander live in a disappearing landscape, as an Englishman would if his language were slowly to die? ... If he were to wake one morning and look around him and see "hill" and not "cnoc," would he not be an expatriate of his own land? For we are born inside a language and see everything from within its parameters: it is not we who make language, it is language that makes us....

To live is to be conscious of a history... the possibility of a future means that the children must grow up in a world that they recognise as being as important as any other ... It requires a government that is concerned for all its people including those who speak a language that they do not understand.

*Crichton Smith (1996)*

Whilst Crichton Smith is fearful of what might be, McIntosh's tone is much more up-beat. In his poem *The Forge*, he suggests that a vibrant cultural renaissance is underway that connects people, place, and language:

### The Forge

What is the point of land reform  
so that remote communities  
can be preserved  
as threatened cultures  
at a massive social cost  
to the nation as a whole

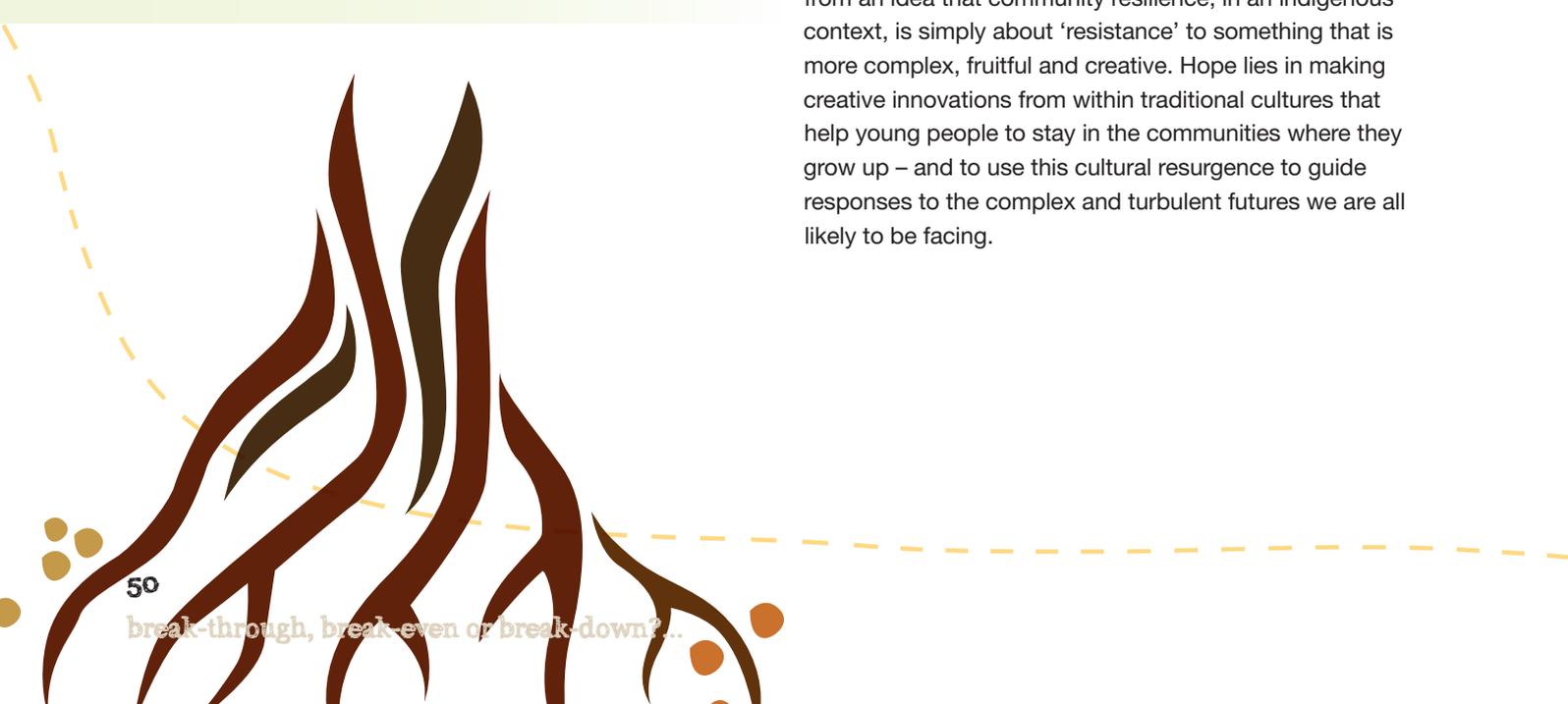
... [we] stoke the glowing hearth anew to smelt  
and skim and pour a precious shimmering  
stream refined by sense of place and ancient  
lore

... and hammer out the beauty, of the braided  
crofting way ...which is our greatest export, to  
this world that's gone astray...and that's the  
point of land reform

in the politics  
of today.

*Alastair McIntosh, excerpt from 'The Forge',  
pub. In The Crofter, No. 73, Dec. 2006, p. 5*

In the dialogue between the despair of Crichton-Smith and the hope in McIntosh's poems is a call to move from an idea that community resilience, in an indigenous context, is simply about 'resistance' to something that is more complex, fruitful and creative. Hope lies in making creative innovations from within traditional cultures that help young people to stay in the communities where they grow up – and to use this cultural resurgence to guide responses to the complex and turbulent futures we are all likely to be facing.



## Ferment: lessons from Celtic Neighbours

From 2004-2009, Carnegie UK Trust worked with the BiG Lottery, UK to support a major rural action research programme (RARP). One stream of the RARP was an ambitious programme called 'Celtic Neighbours', which developed cultural exchanges across Wales, Scotland and Ireland:

**Imagination, language, creativity, culture ... Can you think of anything else that can transport people and bring them along on a journey of the imagination? These are the things that give us the spirit and resolve to make our own path into the future and to make this future better**

*Dermot Maclaughlin,  
Chief Executive Temple  
Bar Cultural Trust, from  
Ferment*

Download 'Ferment' from  
<http://www.voluntaryarts.org/uploaded/map11386.pdf>

Meic Llewellyn, Celtic Neighbours co-ordinator, is passionately committed to harnessing the creativity within cultural traditions in service of navigating challenging, changing times:

**Alongside our economic and aesthetic resources, and long-standing traditions of sustainability, generosity and thrift, the everyday business of cultural production is a key driver of development here.**

*Meic Llewellyn, from the introduction to 'Ferment'*

Celtic Neighbours sought to catalyse and enhance new innovations in 'cultural production' by establishing a new network to broach new connections between diverse Celtic-speaking communities across the UK and Ireland. This very practical work continues today, with touring artists offering workshops and performances, and cross-community events supported by simultaneous translations into Irish Gaelic, Scots Gaelic and Welsh. Against a background where many traditional communities have become used to resisting change at all costs in order to preserve a cultural inheritance that has been at risk of

extinction, the work of Celtic Neighbours introduces new and more creative ways of relating to change. Meic and colleagues maintain that celebrating and encouraging this shift is vital for renewing and enhancing Celtic language community resilience. As Gwyn Jones, contributor to *Ferment*, puts it:

**I feel it's important that our work is innovative and cutting-edge, even when the form is a traditional one. Looking to the future, we have to ensure our cultures are alive and inviting for the young, and they don't feel that to be daring or cool they have to use English... Only last week, when we had a technical hiccup sorting out our Hebridean weblink, I made contact with a school on Anglesey who have linked with one in Lesotho, and they helped me find a way round it. Developing the links we know exist between us as Celts and because of our shared historical and economic experiences doesn't mean we close our minds to the rest of the world – in fact, the opposite is true. But we do have a huge amount to learn from each other. Look how far ahead the traditional music scene is in Ireland compared to us, or story-telling in the Hebrides.**

*From Ferment: culture, confidence and regeneration in rural Celtic communities.*

One stream of RARP partners followed a similar trajectory. Focusing on resilience skills, several organisations undertook action research to test out a 'skills bank' that had been developed for rural community development practitioners. In Wales, Shan Ashton and Bryan Collis, of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) called their project Learning for Rural Resilience. As with the Celtic Neighbours,

It's useful to note that many advocates of the 'peak oil' movement stress that the skills gap is perhaps the most alarming deficiency of modern society potentially facing a need to many more farmers, renewable energy engineers, etc.. There remains work to be done to integrate this analysis into the tradition community development skills bank...

One output of Carnegie's Rural Action Research Project (RARP), available at [www.carnegieuk.org/rural](http://www.carnegieuk.org/rural)

the work was based on an appreciation of the power of valuing traditional cultural values, and enhancing the creative spark that is already alive in places. In an echo of Moses Coady's earlier work in Nova Scotia (see Part One), Ashton and Collis wanted to challenge a view that although "change is happening and inevitable... these changes are most often perceived as threatening or limiting". Again, exchange visits and learning sessions were established to open up opportunities to reflect on how change is perceived within traditional Welsh farming communities:

**...cultural history is empowering. In order for rural people to invest in their place, they need to believe their rural place has value... ordinary working people are capable of social inquiry and analysis, and that this capability can be enhanced by practice...**

*Ashton and Collis*

Key references shaping Ashton and Collis' approach were Nachttegall P & Hass T, 2000, Annenberg Rural Challenge: School Reform From a Slightly Different Point of View In J C Montgomery & A D Kitchenham (eds) *Proceedings of the Rural Communities and Identities in the Global Millenium International Conference*, Malapino University College, Rural Communities Research & Development Centre, British Columbia. See also Rahman A, 1993, *People's Self Development: perspectives on participatory action research*, Zed Books.

In another innovative move, Bangor University awarded a 'community certificate' to groups that successfully completed the programme.

## Welcoming migrant workers, Northern Ireland

In Derry, Northern Ireland, Eddie Kerr and colleagues at Seeds Co-operative have demonstrated an inspiring and different route toward fostering greater cultural diversity – and therefore resilience. SEEDS began life in 2004 to offer support to new residents from many different countries – and today, the organisation has over 490 members from 38 nationalities. The Seeds website picks up the story:

**Because inward migration is a relatively new phenomenon to Northern Ireland, the indigenous communities are coming to terms with the influx of new citizens. This has created many issues and concerns and these must be addressed urgently. Many migrant workers are ill prepared to live in a society that is currently coming to terms with centuries of sectarian politics. We are working closely with many statutory bodies and community representatives to reduce the impact of change in a society going through transition. We need to find methods and techniques of working with all parties creating a safe and supportive environment for all people living and working in this region. ...**

The skills focus of this initiative helped maintain a focus on practical outcomes for groups. For example, one exercise invited local people to create a strategy to prioritise local actions based on a local skills audit:

Ashton S et al, 2007, *Skills for Rural Community Development: Wales Report*, Carnegie Trust UK (RARP), Section 6.4 Discussion

Thread	Existing knowledge/assets in the community	How to use them	Knowledge/assets needed	Where to access the knowledge/assets
Community Energy Company	Wide range of knowledge and technical skills available	Ensure the project is understood as a grass roots led project for the benefit of the community	Knowledge about appropriate business form	Wales cooperative Centre



... As a first step in this direction SEEDS has opened a 'One World Centre' (incorporating a Multi-Cultural Centre) providing a range of services and activities promoting integration and meeting unmet needs. We want to respond to the needs of the growing number of new citizens and migrants to the North West of Ireland region and represent a link between the North West's immigrant community and statutory and voluntary services. This is the first One World Centre of its kind in Ireland and now houses seven different ethnic minority groups as well as the Foyle Language School.

[http://www.seeds.ie/aboutus\\_alt.html](http://www.seeds.ie/aboutus_alt.html)

Seeds came into existence after a small number of community workers acted in response to their awareness of change in their community – in this case as large numbers of migrants attempted to find their feet in a community with a complex history. In the future, it is likely that many more people will be displaced by economic and environmental disruptions. Whilst national politicians will continue to argue about how open a country's borders should be, at a community level organisations such as Seeds show that it is possible to rise to the challenge of integrating incomers in ways that reflect positively on the values of local people:

**Integration is not an automatic consequence of learning the language of the host community. Individuals must also participate in the life of the community. SEEDS language courses have always been underpinned by the importance of a social integration programme. In 2008 this programme expanded to include visits to places of practical and cultural interest – libraries, service providers, local museums, theatres, galleries, and sites of cultural and historical significance. We have designed a programme encompassing local cultural aspects as well as oral history lessons.**



Cornish Pipes

SEEDS, 'RARP Progress Report.' Carnegie UK Trust, (2009).

What motivates people like Eddie to throw themselves into this kind of work, often at great personal expense? In his contribution to the Celtic Neighbours book *Ferment*, Eddie reflected on how creative writing and community work aren't so far apart:

**I don't see the processes of writing and community work as essentially different... They're both about creating, and responding to need. They both contribute to releasing the creativity in people and making life more rewarding. Both demand innovative thought, and both can be heartbreaking when results won't come, and better than any drug when they run away with you.**

*Eddie Kerr, quoted in Ferment, ibid.*

## Place Based Learning in Cornwall

Cornwall is a hotbed of cultural activism – and has offered many stories of community innovation into Carnegie's Rural Development Programme over the years. The outreach team at the Eden Project have been trailblazers, working with artists to dream up inspiring ways for local people to get involved in community planning. It was through our Eden colleagues that learned of an inspiring young peoples' dance group from Camborne, Cornwall called the TR14ers (after the local post-code), who are breathing a sense of infectious life and energy into a community suffering multiple disadvantage. The group is run by and for young people, and research has shown how their activities helps people to move 'from apathy to anger to positive energy'.

For the full story, see *Appreciating Assets*, a sister publication from Carnegie UK Trust [www.carnegieuk.org](http://www.carnegieuk.org); and the work of C2 is described at [www.healthempowermentgroup.org.uk](http://www.healthempowermentgroup.org.uk)

Young people are also at the heart of another Cornish cultural initiative led by Will Coleman – a story-teller and bagpipe player whose passion is to put place-based learning at the centre of the school curriculum. Will and colleagues create materials and experiences for children which underline the value and uniqueness of their places, and the potential to make a good future life there. Beyond the virtual worlds of Facebook and YouTube, place-based learning engages all the senses by getting out and about exploring local history, wildlife,

business, farms. The approach surfaces old local stories – as well as encouraging the invention of new ones. Working with stories in this way can help to shift ‘stuck’ ways of seeing a place, to realising instead its potential. Launching a report on place-based learning at a Carnegie event in Cashel, Ireland, Will told a story about how his experiences as a teacher – where he saw children being encouraged to get ‘up and out’ of their community to ‘get on’ – led him to search for a way to enable local young people to stay:

**Schooling often encourages young people to reject their home communities and to seek elsewhere for the ‘good life’ depicted by the media.... Media and advertising reinforce individualism which inevitably leads to uprooting, lack of participation, economic dependency and community breakdown.**

[http://rural.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/place-based\\_learning\\_report-will\\_coleman](http://rural.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/place-based_learning_report-will_coleman)

By extending the boundaries of the classroom to include the whole local area, place-based learning immerses students in local heritage, culture, landscapes, enterprises, and all the many assets, seen and unseen, of a place. This kind of approach can help young people become more confident in taking responsibility for growing the vitality and resilience of the places. As we saw in the section on personal resilience, it is therefore a promising area for policy innovators to explore as we investigate how young people might be encouraged to get more involved in resilience-building. This was a message first mooted by Carnegie UK Trust in its Charter for Rural Community Development (2007):

**Governments, the curriculum development agencies, local education authorities and the teaching profession to support place-based education as a cross cutting feature of the primary and secondary curriculum in rural schools**

The Carnegie Commission for Rural Community Development (2007) “A Charter for Rural Communities” p63

## Resilience through craft revival: the GalGael Trust, Govan

Place-based learning is about practical application of skills – and can include reviving skills that may be in danger of being lost. In Govan, Glasgow, there is an inspiring initiative that shows the power of this philosophy in action – and how everyone (not just younger people) can benefit.

Trust founders Gehan and Colin Macleod realised that after the closure of the Govan shipyards that unemployed master wood craftsmen could be brought together with a younger generation of long-term unemployed people, many with drugs and alcohol habits, to share skills and establish a ground-breaking social enterprise which has revived an ancient tradition of Birlinn (a form of Viking longship) building on the Clyde.

[www.galgael.org](http://www.galgael.org)

Whereas long-term unemployment can be a recipe for loneliness and hopelessness, the GalGael have helped many people to stay active, learn transferable skills, and recover a sense of pride in belonging in Govan. In this way, a negative cycle of depression is broken and a ‘beneficial cycle’ of positive, practical action is taking its place.

Visit the GalGael today, and the sense of energy and hope can be highly infectious, even in the face of depressing news from the wider world media. GalGael is not a one off ‘project’ but a way of life for a growing community of locals in Govan. Like many other stories in this book, the Trust is a social enterprise, generating income based on the artistic calibre and craft skills of local people.

## Artists Rehearsing Resilience: Tooting’s Trash-Catchers Carnival

**the time is right for an urgent re-examination from the widest possible perspective, of the role creative expression already plays and could play even further, in driving the social innovations and in building the individual and collective resilience we will need to survive and thrive in an increasingly uncertain future**

Clare Cooper, *Mission Models Money*

see <http://www.missionmodelsmoney.org.uk/>



Although the London borough of Tooting can seem a world away from rural Cornish villages where Will Coleman and colleagues champion place-based learning, in both places it is creative artists who are unlocking creative cultural expression within local communities. Fiery Spirits member Lucy Neil has described how she worked to create a 'Trash Catchers' carnival involving a partnership between *Transition Tooting* and two professional arts organisations.

The idea was to draw hundreds of local people into the streets – 'reclaiming' the A24 arterial High Road (which carries 10 million cars a year) as a 'community space' one Summer's day. The celebration took a year to prepare. Instead of throwing stuff away, people were encouraged to keep it to be transformed into impressive, shiny decorations, puppets and floats. The message would be that it's possible to transform every place into something beautiful:

**Nothing like this had happened before... over one year we ran workshops in half terms and put up publicity until people started to say 'heh this is happening – they are going to shut the High Road!'. This quickly gathered a sense of excitement and possibility ... lots of community groups and schools got involved.... The idea that it would be our own story... early workshops writing, poetry, walking around streets, food ...**

*Lucy Neil, co-ordinator of the carnival (personal communication)*

In our interview, Lucy went on to describe how, as the day neared, excitement mounted. One puppet was called 'Our Lady of Tooting'; another was a 'Sankofa' bird which, according to legend, could look forwards (to the future) and backwards (to the past) in the same glance. Head teachers allowed hundreds of local schoolchildren the day off to participate. Although the traffic authority refused permission to stop the traffic, so much momentum had gathered that the event was unstoppable:

**On the day itself the sun shone... and we jettisoned idea of getting permission from Transport for London. Instead we registered as a direct action, and were given safe passage by the local police.... We stopped traffic.**

*Lucy Neil, co-ordinator of the carnival (personal communication)*

800 'Carnivalsters' processed down the High Road and into a 50 acre green space that is usually inaccessible. Local businesses and restaurants provided food for 1000 people for free, and people were handed out packets of seeds – to grow new things to share in follow-up food festivals.

When we invited Lucy Neil, the Carnival's co-ordinator, to reflect on what putting on a carnival had to do with building community resilience, she was clear that in her view resilience is fundamentally about harnessing creativity: the carnival proved that local artists can be deployed to harness the power of imagination - a crucial resource for creating a low-carbon future. Neal stressed that artists have many skills in co-ordination, planning, and project management – and that local groups can benefit from these too. And finally, Lucy stressed that the carnival, in her mind, is a kind of rehearsal for a more resilient future – in the same way that a theatre company rehearses in the weeks and months before a performance, a community that is rehearsed before a crunch time has a far better chance of not fluffing its lines:

**... We don't get these opportunities very often – but they are critical times to see ourselves differently: they are points of re-invention, renewal, and of giving our imagination the chance to fly ...we think "If I can do that, then what else can I do?" It's an experience of joy – a radical force... it shows that the community is able to do far more than it may believe itself to be capable of... and it showed how artists can help to raise the game in terms of ambition, aesthetic, organisation – helping people to do something they never dreamed they would be capable of.**

*Lucy Neil, personal communication*



## 2.6 Cross-Community Links: 'no community can go it alone'

**It is very important that communities recognise their interdependence with other resilient communities and not trying to do an isolated island because that's not going to work and that is going to cause conflict**

- participant, *FierySpirits Community of Practice*

**Despite current ads and slogans, the world does not change one person at a time. It changes as networks of relationships form among people who discover they share a common cause and vision of what is possible ... Rather than worry about critical mass, our work is to foster critical connections'**

*Margaret Wheatley, author of Using Emergence to take Social Innovations to Scale*

<http://www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/emergence.html>

**God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.**

*Mahatma Gandhi (1928)*

In the past traders, monks, wandering minstrels and more all brought news from the outside world to people who rarely travelled far themselves. Today, the globalised economy and internet mean that many take for granted instant access to news, online shops, and the ability to stay in touch with friends who may live very far away. However, there are down-sides. Instead of too little information, the experience of the internet can feel like we're drowning in it. And there are many, especially in remote and rural communities, who aren't able to access technology and services.

A key finding of the 2007 *Carnegie Commission* was that rural community activists – which the report called 'Fiery Spirits' – often feel isolated. It called on governments to support networking opportunities for rural activists, building on the powerful experience of LEADER (a European Union initiative) which has demonstrated how networks can kick-start rural regeneration across Europe. Today, there are many good examples of such networks. For example:

- Scotland's National Rural Network (<http://www.ruralgateway.org.uk/>) is a Scottish Government initiative benefitting from significant funding from Europe;
- Transition Network (<http://www.transitionnetwork.org>) is another inspiration: a bottom-up initiative resourced primarily from the passion, skills and dedication of volunteers; meanwhile
- 'Our Society: Social action. Honest exchange. Grounded learning' (<http://oursociety.org.uk/>) has begun to cause a stir; and
- Project Dirt (<http://www.projectdirt.com>) – an initiative of the Low Carbon Communities Network – shows how even in cities networking can bring communities closer together

The transition towns movement is a powerful example of an international grassroots network that is beginning to transform places on the basis of a hard-headed analysis of the local risks from the future impacts of the combined global trends of climate change and peak oil production. Self-organising groups tackle the initiatives they are most interested in, informed by a whole community 'energy descent action plan' which has set a guiding vision for how local people can take responsibility for building resilience over a period of twenty years or so. This 'scenarios' approach to community planning is a feature of many community resilience initiatives and resources.

This chapter explores how these and other resilience-building networks (including [www.fieryspirits.com](http://www.fieryspirits.com)) can help to build cross-community links in support of greater community resilience everywhere.



## 'Imaginal cells': the power of a good network

Davie Philip is a natural networker – a passion for promoting sustainability has motivated him to spend twenty years convening hundreds of events throughout Ireland. Davie is a member of many cross-cutting networks – and has been an active member of *fieryspirits.com* since its inception. During a workshop at the Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth, Wales, he shared some of the inspiration behind his work by using the metaphor of a butterfly: “After eating hundreds of times its own weight, the caterpillar forms its chrysalis and inside its body new cells start forming – called imaginal discs. At first the discs find it hard to survive the caterpillar’s immune system – but soon they multiply and connect – and the butterfly emerges”.

We learned from Davie about how even a small group of under-resourced but committed people can have a big impact. We made a connection to the novelist William Gibson’s phrase ‘the future is here, it’s just not widely distributed yet’ as Davie invited us to see ourselves as ‘imaginal discs’, beaver away in our own places, and yet sensing how important it is to connect together to build a strong community resilience movement: “as the old structures of society break down thousands upon thousands of us are already living the future – and it’s better than what we’ve got today!”. The session seemed to fire us up. The butterfly metaphor had helped us to glimpse why networking is such a crucial part of effective community resilience building.



## Resilience’s ‘dark side’: why no community should try to ‘go it alone’

This book opened with the story of how Hurricane Katrina revealed fault-lines between New Orleans communities: wealthier residents escaped whilst many poorer people perished. We suggested that community resilience is not about establishing easy ‘escape routes’ for the rich, but rather building connections between communities, often within the same city or region.

Throughout our workshops, the imperative of social justice was raised repeatedly. On one occasion, a participant raised the question of a ‘dark side’ to community resilience: of places that ‘bunker down’, fighting change – especially that which is perceived as being imposed by outsiders:

**Sometimes the idea of resilience reminds me of Dr. Strangelove – build a big bunker underground to perpetuate the race...**

*Participant, Dunfermline seminar*

She was referring to Stanley Kubrick’s cult film *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), where a war room full of politicians and generals frantically try to prevent a paranoid general, USAF Brigadier General Jack D. Ripper (played by Peter Sellers), from starting a nuclear war. In one memorable scene, Ripper explains his warped logic:

**General Jack D. Ripper: Mandrake, do you recall what Clemenceau once said about war? Group Capt. Lionel Mandrake: No, I don’t think I do, sir, no. General Jack D. Ripper: He said war was too important to be left to the generals. When he said that, 50 years ago, he might have been right. But today, war is too important to be left to politicians. They have neither the time, the training, nor the inclination for strategic thought. I can no longer sit back and allow Communist infiltration, Communist indoctrination, Communist subversion and the international Communist conspiracy to sap and impurify all of our precious bodily fluids.**

*Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964)*



Sellers' brilliant portrayal the twisted psychology of war touched a nerve – and helped the film become a cult classic. General Ripper would have seen his actions as defending his nation's resilience – whilst all the while blind to the bigger impact of nuclear Armageddon.

We agreed that this reference helpfully raised questions about a 'dark' side to resilience: how, in a scenario of community conflict and break-down, the idea of 'resilience' could be misused to garner support for extremist politics. As the conversation turned to the British National Party's messages of repelling outsiders and scape-goating minorities, we also asked ourselves whether we hadn't secretly also asked ourselves 'what would we do if it all goes pear-shaped?'. Would we gang together and head to the hills with some guns, like the cannibal gangs in the film *The Road*?

This scenario has been painted in many 'doomsday' films over the years, such as *The Road* and *Day of the Triffids*. It has been vividly animated in Leo Murray's excellent short film *Wake Up, Freak Out* and tipping points in climate change: <http://wakeupfreakout.org/film/tipping.html>

Shortly after we met, the IPPR released a report (April 2010) that examined why the British National Party seemed to be gaining ground in some constituencies. In most communities in England, the IPPR study found, it is not the direct experience of immigration, but "the slow-burning mixture of frustration, isolation and sense of powerlessness people are feeling in some communities".

<http://www.ippr.org.uk/pressreleases/?id=3957>

A flavour of our conversation continued at other events. By and large, the conclusion was that it is most healthy to be aware of this possible 'dark' side to a resilience agenda: it may help to remind residents of wealthier areas that it may well be fruitless to develop an all-singing and dancing resilient community initiative if, down the road, 'frustration, isolation and powerlessness' is building into pent-up rage. No community, we conclude, can or should try to 'go it alone': resilience, we realise, is a function of a community's capacity to foster diverse connections to other places, near and far. We now look at some ways this can be done.

## Local food: catalysing global networking and solidarity

**You can't just have one resilient town, you need to link into other communities, and their learning...**

*Mike Small, Fife Diet*

**Whilst rich countries are responsible for most of the emissions pumped into the atmosphere it is the poorest communities in the world that are being hit the hardest by climate change. But rather than providing compensation for causing climate change rich countries are using it to trap the world's poor into new and dangerous debt.**

*World Development Movement (WDM) 'Climate Debt' campaign at <http://www.wdm.org.uk/climatedebt>*

In the face of historic and continuing profligacy of resource use by the rich world, we have found that many people we have met who are working to build local community resilience in the UK and Ireland are also active supporters of organisations such as WDM and the Fair Trade movement.

In 2009, Tipperary Institute (based in Thurles) host a large scale community resilience event as part our Community of Practice. Many of the presentations advocated for local food activism as a powerful starting-place for community resilience initiatives. Some also stressed a global food justice imperative: they are motivated to find a new system, beyond inequitable trade and the domination of the international food system by a small number of multinational companies.



From Transition Town Totnes, Devon, Rob Hopkins showed maps of the region that showed the 'food footprints' of local settlements to try to answer the question 'can Totnes feed itself?'. Mike Small, from the Fife Diet project in Scotland, told us how they had spent the

<http://transitionculture.org/2010/07/27/can-totnes-feed-itself-a-section-from-my-forthcoming-thesis/>

previous year experimenting with whether they could survive on a diet sourced 85% locally: they had held dinners, swapped recipes, received offers of land for allotments, and learned a lot about how difficult it is to buy local – even from farmers in the same village. We also heard how another Fife initiative – *One Planet Food* – is attempting to take lessons from the Fife Diet as well as ideas being generated by an international peasant movement, Via Campesina, to influence regional and national food policy:

The 'Food Sovereignty' report is available at <http://www.centreforstewardship.org.uk/oneplanetfood.htm>. See also a video snapshot of a project co-ordinated by St. Andrews University aiming to catalyse similar outcomes: <http://fieryspirits.com/video/fife-councilcommunity-food>

**a community with a lot of bonding social capital but no bridging capital is not very resilient when faced with an unfamiliar problem – it doesn't know who to ask ... and it is important to know who to ask who is not from your local community if you are going to be more resilient**

*Pete Ritchie, Farmer and One Planet Food programme*



## Next steps

We hope you have found this handbook useful and stimulating. As a next step, why not:

- 1) Try out the 'resilience compass' in your own community. See Appendix 2 for a sample workshop.
- 2) Offer feedback via [www.fieryspirits.com](http://www.fieryspirits.com)
- 3) Follow updates via twitter – @comresilience

The event made it clear that food is one of the most powerful starting points for community resilience initiatives – and by the final session, two new groups were swapping notes about plans to start a 'Munster Diet' and a 'Cornish Diet'.

The Fife Diet is at <http://www.fifediet.co.uk/>; Cornish diet is at <http://www.transitionnc.org/node/45>; Tipperary Diet news is at <http://tipptatler.ie/?p=1784>

Evidence from our conference in Tipperary suggests how powerful cross-community linking can be – especially when we make the local-global connections. It also shows how simple, catchy ideas like a Fife Diet has the capacity to 'go viral' – inspiring others near and far. As our Community of Practice develops, these are lessons we are learning from.

## Section 2 – Building more resilient communities – guided by a compass of community resilience

### Summary Points

- 1 Community Resilience is a youthful and vibrant field. This handbook offers a 'compass' of community resilience to make it easier to navigate the many toolkits, stories, theories and definitions that already exist.
- 2 Achieving 'break through' resilience will likely involve high levels of creativity, co-ordination and even fun across four dimensions of personal, cultural, economic and inter-community collaboration.
- 3 Personal resilience is an active process of 'self righting' involving feeling in control of life, getting fit, and being positively engaged in community life.
- 4 Local economies can 'plug the leaks' by stewarding their own energy, water, money, housing, food and other resources.
- 5 Creativity, fun and a strong and inclusive sense of identity, belonging and place are at the heart of cultural resilience.
- 6 No community can or should try to 'go it alone' – more resilient communities are learning how best to support other places when needed.

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# Appendix 1: Events informing this book

## Sense of Place, Eden

September 2009

Attendees at a 'Sense of Place' talked about building a strong 'sense of belonging' – and how this can help build community resilience too. Presenters' stories included creating a Cornish language school curriculum, re-inventing local festivals in Cumbria to bring life back to villages, baking bread from local ingredients in Fife, and many many more captured using 'graphic facilitation' (see right).



## Power and Place conference, CAT

October 2009

CAT hosted the Power and Place conference in addition to a series of seminars on writing a new 'Zero Carbon Britain' report, with the idea of showing, very practically, how the UK economy could make a transition capable of preventing runaway climate change. CAT's emphasis is on 'transition technologies' showcased pioneer communities who are pioneering locally appropriate solutions to transport, energy etc.. Two presenters went on to share a £1 million prize from NESTA's *Big Green Challenge* later in the year.



## 'Resilience' Ceiluradh, Tipperary Institute

Oct. 2009

Ireland is suffering badly from the credit crunch. House prices in free fall and a government crisis coping with crippling debt, with public sector workers having to accept big pay cuts. This was the backdrop to TI's annual *Ceiluradh* themed 'resilience'. Food, money and community innovation were big topics. A major part of this event included workshops where all delegates did some hard thinking about to to build resilience in their context. Report available from TI, as well as a video summary on [fieryspirits.com](http://fieryspirits.com).





# Appendix 2: Resilience Compass Community Workshop

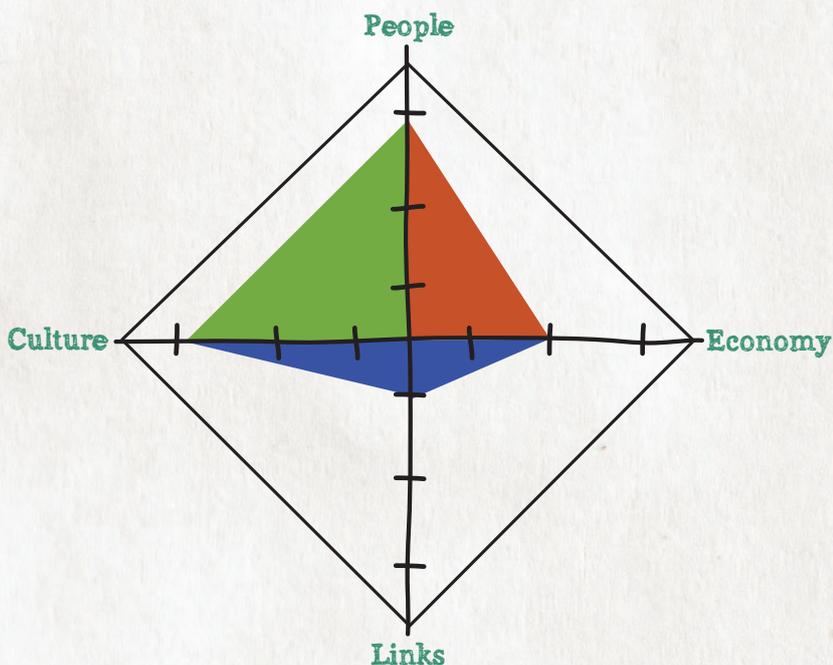
Brain-storming a local index of resilience can be very helpful for communities starting down the track (or indeed reviewing progress to date) of building greater resilience. This Appendix suggests a sample format for how to run a starter session of 90 minutes with about 12 people, using the compass of resilience introduced in Part Two of this book:

- 1 Welcome participants and invite people to talk in pairs or threes about a real life experience where they have learned something about 'resilience'. Next, ask participants to feedback any insights from the experiences they shared. Ask each speaker to be brief, and to note down the insights in a way that everyone can see them (a flipchart laid flat on a central table can work well). After everyone who wants a go has had a chance to report back, switch chairs and ask people whether they see any common themes in what's been said (30 minutes).
- 2 Briefly introduce the 'Resilience Compass' in a way that makes sense to you (using your own examples, ideally). Ask whether people would like to experiment with seeing if it can add anything to the insights that have just been noted down. The idea will be to invent labels for the compass that are unique to your place! If people aren't interested, don't force the suggestion. Instead, see where the ensuing discussion leads! (5 minutes).
- 3 Hand out copies of the blank compass (see next page). Invite participants to self-organise into four groups of three, with the task of rapidly coming up with locally relevant labels that explain the break through, break even and break down stages under each heading 'people', 'culture', 'economy' and 'links'. It might help to brainstorm these into a table to begin with (generic example below) (15 minutes)

	Break Through	Break Even	Break Down
People	Feel excited by change; take risks; active learning	Feel in control and able to plan ahead	Feel isolated and cautious
Culture	Re-create local story to fit changing times	Celebrate sense of place & belonging	Only consuming outsider culture
Economy	Localised economy, many 'virtuous circles'	Diverse infrastructure and organisations	Too many eggs in one basket
Links	Pro-active cross-community collaboration	Networking with like-minded folk	Survivalism: hunker down



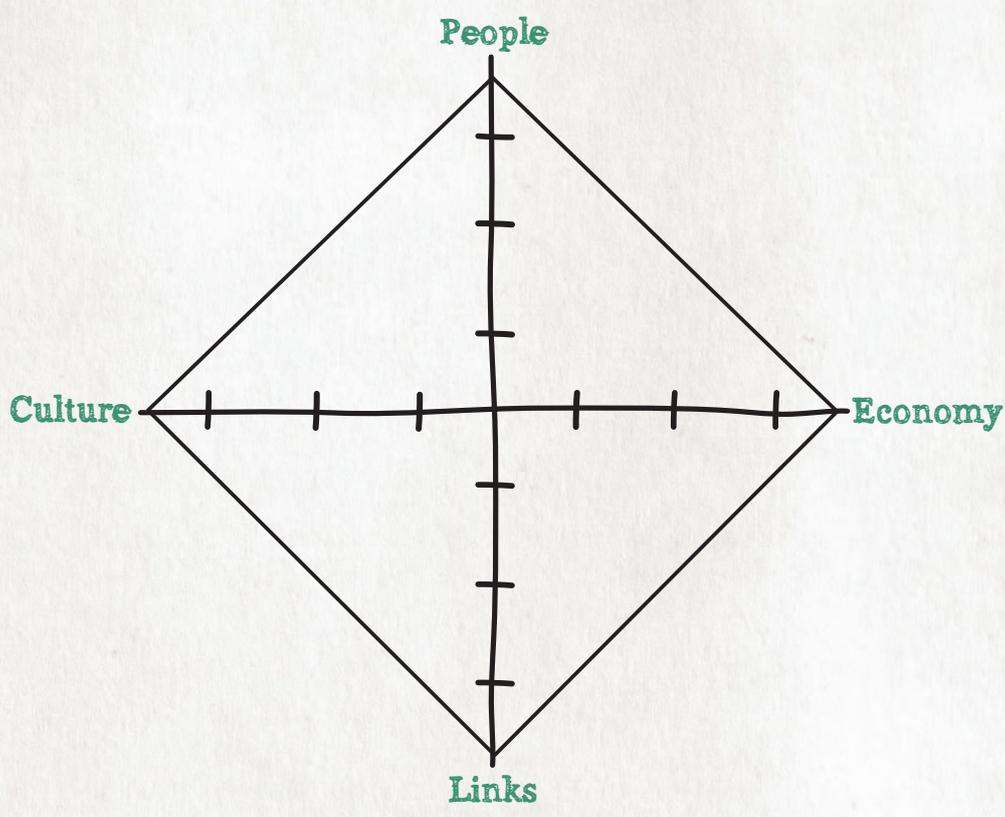
- 4 Next, keep everyone in groups and ask them to consider each axis in turn: how well are we doing in our community? By the end of the conversation, there should be one coloured in compass per group (sample, below). (5 minutes)
- 5 Now bring the groups back together and each briefly reports back. Take time to notice any similarities or differences between the labels the groups came up with, and the shapes of the diagrammes that have been drawn on the compasses. (10 minutes)
- 6 Spend time de-briefing the exercise. Was it helpful? Did it throw any new light on the local situation? How about involving the wider community as well – perhaps each person present could conduct two or three small focus groups with friends and neighbours, and bring all the compasses back to a future meeting. If the group decides to go in this direction, why not ask local people to map the untapped potential of the community at the same time? It might generate some great ideas for taking next steps towards ‘break through’ resilience!
- 7 If this exercise worked for you, how about writing a blog about how it went at [fieryspirits.com](http://fieryspirits.com), suggesting improvements to this workshop? Feel free to contact [nick@carnegieuk.org](mailto:nick@carnegieuk.org) for help on how to do this.





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# Compass Worksheet

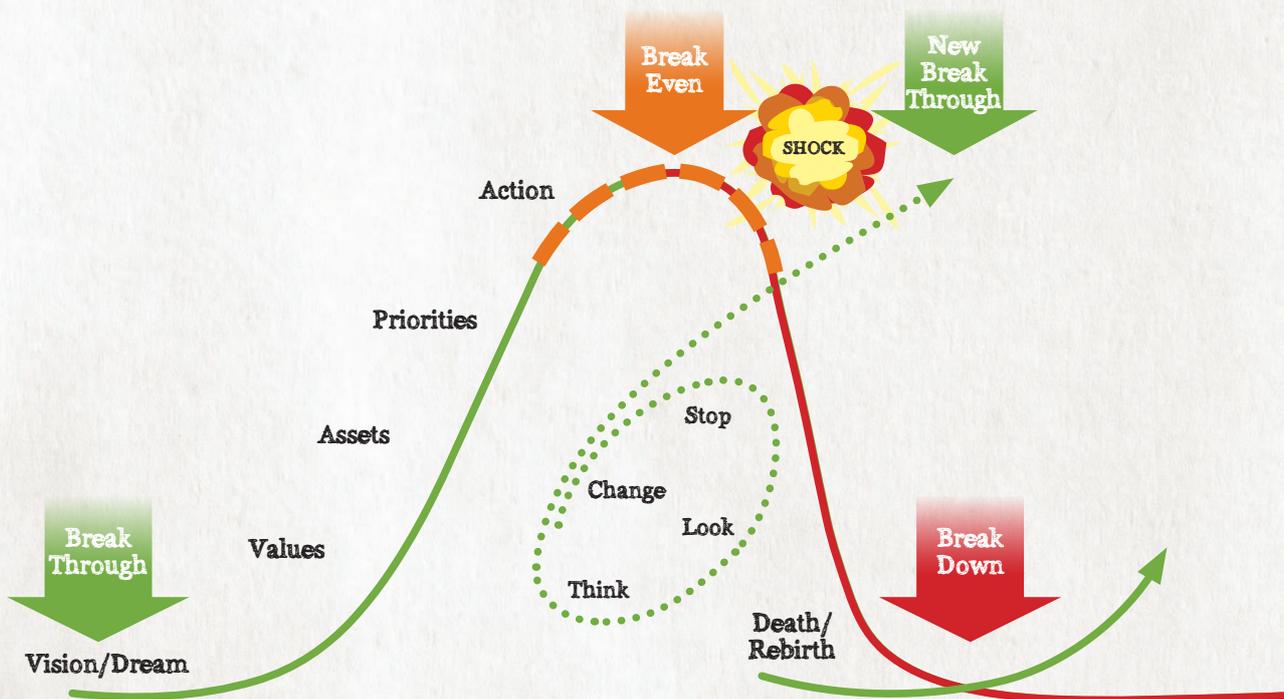


	Break Through	Break Even	Break Down
People			
Culture			
Economy			
Links			

# Appendix 3: Break-through in the life-cycle of organisations

In Part One of this book, we pointed to the *Training for Transformation* resources that were compiled by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel, building on Paulo Freire's insights into popular education. In the third book in the series, the authors introduce a 'parabola model' that helps to describe the life cycles of projects and organisations in communities. The diagramme below adapts the parabola model to show typical points of break even, break through and break down in such a cycle:

See *Training for Transformation* (ITG) book 3, page 85. For an exploration in greater depth of the evolutionary dynamics of living systems and the implications for leadership development, read Peter Merry *Evolutionary Leadership* available from <http://www.integralleadershipreview.com/book/book-merry-peter.php>



The parabola model is designed to be read from left to right: it describes typical steps that pioneers follow as they establish new organisations, groups or even communities. There are several lessons that can be drawn. For example, even if a community feels things are going reasonably well – ‘breaking even’ – it would be wrong to grow complacent. Instead, this is the time to get ready for a new burst of innovation and creativity. Building regular cycles of action and reflection (action research) can help with this.

The parabola also reveals lessons for founders of initiatives. For example, it shows why succession planning is vital to ensure that an organisation isn't overly constrained by existing ways of working. If the life goes out of a community of organisation (the red curve), doubts can creep in. The longer these doubts are not brought to the surface and addressed, the deeper they can become until people may wonder if the organisation should still exist. The *Training for Transformation* manuals identify three stages of doubt down the red slope: operational, strategic and ethical.



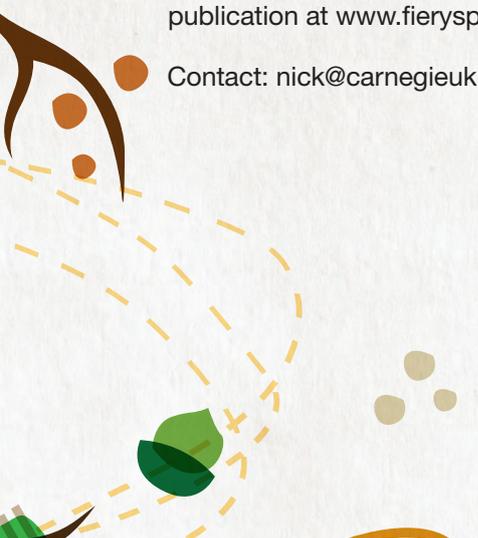
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**Lively, easy to understand and packed with useful metaphors and practical tools for applying resilience thinking**

Community activist (Scotland)

**The compass model is very useable ... really beneficial in my work supporting local community leaders**

Community development worker (Ireland)

**Brings home different aspects of resilience ... the section on resilience and creativity is inspiring!**

Social entrepreneur (England)

**Inspiring stories that make the theory come alive – and a theoretical framework that makes sense of the stories**

Sustainability Academic (Wales)

**I love the ‘commitment to bringing people together who didn’t know they needed to meet’ – it’s the guiding principle for the handbook**

Foundation professional (England)



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