

RESILIENT CULTURES AND THE ROLE OF INNOVATION IN BUILDING CAPACITY



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Resilient cultures

Much of the work of resilience is in rebuilding and reconnecting communities. We have to be able to communicate and innovate as a group, as well as across and with other groups to make resilience possible.

There is no single term for resilience and as a result it can be difficult to define what it is. This is because resilience is context specific and how one group of people are resilient can be different to another. For example, a community may be resilient because they have a high level of connectivity, mobility and resource availability. A business may be resilient because it has planned redundancies in its system and a flexible workforce.

Attributes that are common to resilience definitions are: flexibility (elasticity) and the capacity to recover effectively from shocks and continue to thrive.

Whether it is a work place, a community or a region, the type of culture created will be dependent on how particular individuals and groups think.

Resilience requires **nomadic thinking** which allows people to move through new situations and work with the unknown and unexpected while still maintaining a direction. This type of thinking is:

- collaborative.
- reflective and responsive
- innovative and curious
- flexible and open to change.

It is important to avoid **fortress thinking** which creates defences and anchors responses into what is known. This style of thinking often manifests in siloed approaches that use linear processes and is resistant to change.

Understanding innovation

At the core of innovation is people, how they communicate, the decisions they make and the values that shape this.

Innovation is the process by which innovations obtain value through being adopted and used by individuals, then diffused (spread) across groups of people, (see Figure 1). Innovations can be inventions, new ideas, processes or technologies that meet existing and emerging needs. There are many different types of innovations that have transformed our lives and the world we live in.

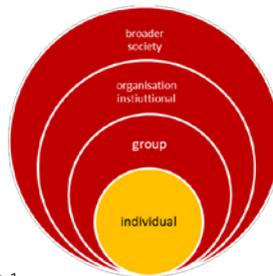


Figure 1

Why is it useful for resilience?

- It combines new and existing knowledge, technologies and systems.
- It is a continuous process which assesses and adjusts as it progresses.
- It is collaborative, end users are central
- Communication, social systems and change are key aspects of innovation.

Connecting through communication

Communication that is responsive and actively engages its audience is pivotal for resilience and innovation. It is the central part of a connected culture that is able to respond effectively to shocks. Key aspects that enable this communication are:

- The creation of safe spaces for honest conversations.
- Using the systems in place to communicate.
- Two way listening, dialogues not monologues
- Talking your audience's language
- Trust, acknowledgment and respect.



Developing and integrating new Knowledge

Development of new knowledge and integration into current social and operational systems is a key part of innovation and supports the building of resilience. Continuous learning is central to this process. Key aspects that enable knowledge activities are:

- Understanding what different knowledge stakeholders offer and how best to work with this.
- Ascertaining the types of systems, networks and structures needed for new knowledge development. Also what pre-existing systems, networks and structures can be used to enable this.
- Development of knowledge communities and networks to support ongoing activities and learning.

Leading change

Building cultures in communities and organisations that are resilient and able to respond effectively to change it is key to innovation and resilience. It requires leadership that manages the different responses people may have to change, to create a positive culture that facilitates ownership and agency to act. Key aspects that enable change are:

- Developing change with people not imposing it – inclusive practices.
- Creating shared visions and understandings.
- Continuous and flexible frameworks and methods that allow for reflection and response.
- Encouragement and support of new thinking and ways of acting.

"Leadership is changing, it is not about being a hero anymore it is about facilitating others to be heroes"

Andy Lipkis Treepeople

