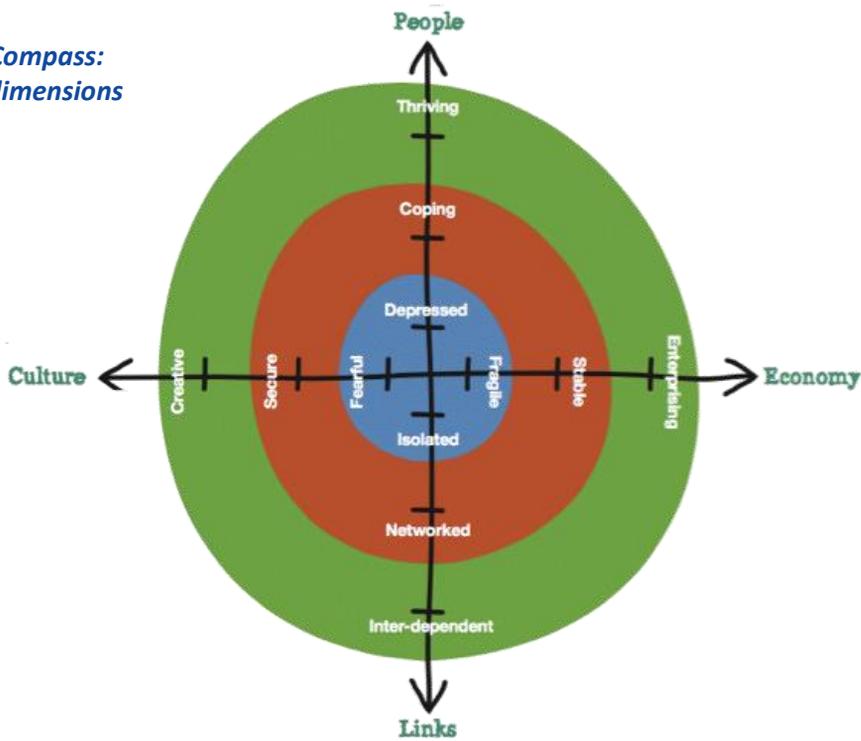


TESS (Towards European Societal Sustainability) is a research project exploring the role of community-based initiatives in transitioning to a sustainable and low-carbon Europe. The project brings together an interdisciplinary team of researchers and develops methodologies and tools for monitoring and reporting the social, political, economic, technological and environmental impacts of community-based initiatives.

The [TESS Resilience Compass](#) is an online tool that we have developed to encourage initiatives to assess and reflect on the resilience of their community, i.e. are they prone to breakdown or are they capable of transforming challenges (social, economic, political, environmental) into positive change? You can find the tool at www.sustainable-communities.eu/tools and read more about it on the following pages.

**The Resilience Compass:
3 states and 4 dimensions
of resilience**



Introduction

A community's resilience determines the way in which it responds to short-term shocks and long-term change. More resilient communities are more likely to persist in and adapt to a changing world. They are also more likely to develop positive responses to the local manifestations of wider societal unsustainability.

Because communities are complex systems, resilience can not be measured precisely. However, recent work by Nick Wilding suggests a basic framework for evaluating community resilience, which we have built on to develop our online tool. In this information sheet, we describe the key elements of this framework and then explain how you can apply them to your own community using our online tool.

See: Nick Wilding. 2011. *Exploring community resilience in times of rapid change. What is it? How are people building it? Why does it matter?*, Carnegie UK, Dunfermline. ISBN: 0900259825

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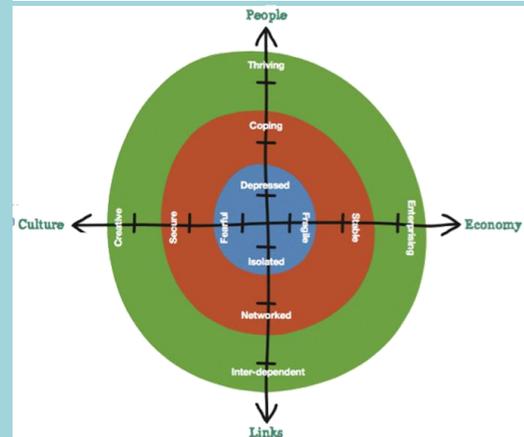


We invite you to explore a simple framework for thinking about community resilience. It is based on two ideas:

1. The idea that there are four broad dimensions that contribute to making a community resilient:

- **Healthy and Engaged People** – relating to individuals’ physical and psychological well-being, strong and healthy personal relationships, connection to nature and learning and sharing new skills.
- **Creating a More Localised Economy Within Ecological Limits** – relating to the creation of a different sort of local economy which positively stewards the local environment and resources, enhances biodiversity and creates meaningful locally based livelihoods that are less dependent on fossil fuels.
- **Cross-Community Links** – relating to links and partnerships with groups in other communities, support networks and across sectors (including public sector/government and business).
- **Building a Creative, Inclusive Culture** – relating to how a community addresses social inclusion, equity and justice, supports social and technical innovation and how open it is to exploring different ways of working.

The resilience compass has 4 main dimensions:



2. The idea that a community may be in one of three distinct states of resilience:

- **Breakdown:** fragile and at risk of collapse without outside help.
- **Breakeven:** able to cope with disruptions, absorb shocks and bounce back to something approximating ‘normal’.
- **Breakthrough:** able to thrive on change and to use outside shocks as a stimulus to create a better future.

These 4 dimensions and 3 states can then be represented in a table. Note that we have filled the table with generic descriptions. We encourage you to imagine what these states would specifically look like in your own community.

	Breakdown	Breakeven	Breakthrough
People	Feel isolated and cautious	Feel in control and able to plan ahead	Feel excited by change, take risks, active learning
Economy	Too many eggs in one basket, lack of local control	Diverse enterprises and organisations	More localised economy creating virtuous economic cycles
Links	Inward looking, each for themselves	Networking with like-minded folk	Pro-active cross-community collaboration
Culture	Passive consumption of mass culture	Celebrate sense of place and belonging	Creative, embracing diversity, open to change



Applying the resilience compass to your community: qualitative and quantitative approaches

RESEARCH
FOR LOW CARBON
INITIATIVES

Qualitative self-assessment

Our online tool provides an easy way to apply the resilience compass to your community:

1. Rate your community on a scale of 1 to 9 for each dimension of resilience.
2. Explain each rating, identifying the things that are going well and the things that could be improved.
3. Review your answers to the questions above and brainstorm a list of actions that you could take to improve your community's resilience as a whole.
4. View the "balance" of your community's resilience and download your answers as a pdf.

Remember that this exercise is most powerful when the answers are discussed and developed in a group!

Resilience Score
Breakdown Breakeven Breakthrough
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Initiative name: Transition University XYZ
Download as pdf

TESS resilience self assessment compass
for Transition University XYZ

Healthy Engaged People 8
ave many active, engaged people.
Sometimes burn out or leave.

A more localised economy 2
Some local shops, dying out.
i.e. tourist-driven, student economy

Cross-community links 6
Many links to external networks
develop links to other comm. orgs

Creative inclusive culture 7
different types of events & people
Need more "family appeal"

Action points
Annual festival with other community organisations, with a focus on families' needs and local businesses.

Resilience Compass
People
Economy
Links
Culture

Quantitative self-assessment

For those groups interested in thinking about this in even more detail, we propose the following quantitative indicators to assess your initiatives' contribution to your wider community's resilience:

- Number of participants active in running your activities. [*participants*]
- Number of local people who benefit from your activities [*beneficiaries*]
- Total annual financial savings made by your beneficiaries (e.g. reduced car mileage, reduced domestic energy consumption, reduced food bills, etc) [*savings*]
- Annual turnover of your initiative and any associated enterprises [*turnover*]
- Annual in-kind labour contributed by your participants [*volunteers*]
- Number of other similar groups with which you have a relationship and the importance of these relationships [*vital links, very important links, important links, not important links*]
- Proportion of participants who already knew each other prior to becoming involved in your initiative. [*acquaintance proportion*]

Coming up with these numbers and reflecting on their significance sometimes turned out to be a stimulating exercise for the groups participating in the TESS research. Although complex communities and community-based initiatives cannot be described by a simple series of seven numbers, adding this quantitative layer of self-analysis can help community groups to reflect more deeply on their success and impact in relation to the resilience of their wider community, particularly if this is done as a group exercise.

You can use the online tool to relate your answers to those of our case studies. We turn the seven input variables into four indicators as follows:

People Indicator = participants/beneficiaries x 100%

Economy Indicator = (savings + turnover + labour)/100

Links Indicator = 1 x vital links + 0.75 x very important links + 0.5 x important links + 0.25 not important links

Culture Indicator = participants x acquaintance proportion / beneficiaries

Please turn the page for an example of what this looks like in our online tool.

How do you relate to the TESS sample of initiatives?

The last page of the online tool allows you to enter the variables described on the previous page and to see how you relate to the 63 very diverse initiatives in the TESS sample:

1. Enter your data in the input fields. click the info icons for more instructions.
2. View how your score for each of the four indicators relates to the scores of the TESS initiatives.
3. Again, the page also allows you to download your answers as a pdf report.

Q: What is a percentile?

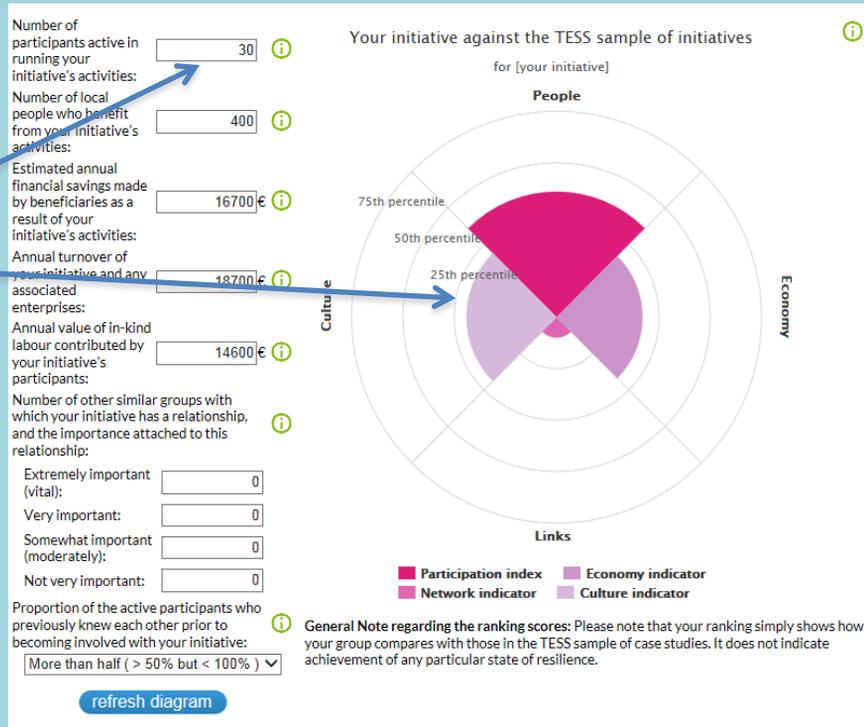
A: Your scores are presented as percentiles. This expresses the percentage of the TESS sample (63 initiatives) that have the same score or less, for that indicator.

Q: How are the scores calculated?

A: See the formulae on the previous page.

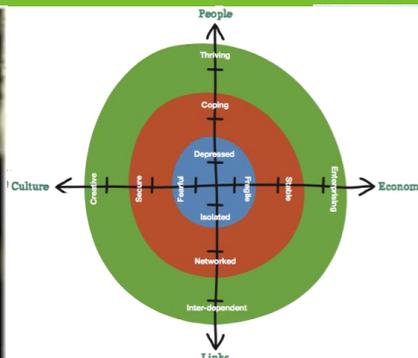
Q: How does this relate to breakdown, breakeven and breakthrough?

A: There is no simple correlation here. We encourage you to reflect on these numbers in your own specific context.



Putting the Resilience Compass in Context

The TESS Resilience Compass is a tool to help you reflect on how your initiative is contributing to your community's resilience. It highlights three possible states and four domains of resilience, and by doing so it provides a framework for discussing and prioritising actions in a complex field. However, it is ultimately up to you to translate the reflection and self-assessment into informed and effective action!



For more information:

www.tess-transition.eu www.sustainable-communities.eu  TESStransition  @TESStransition



The content in this leaflet reflects the author's views. The European Commission is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein. The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme under Grant Agreement No.603705 (Project TESS).