

## **Resilience: a Glasgow Conversation**

The Centre for Human Ecology in Scotland has been a trailblazer in exploring human sustainability and resilience for many years, so I was pleased to be invited as co-lead for this evening in Glasgow for them recently.

The round table discussion started with three speakers: myself, Alf Young, co-author of *The New Road*, a book on community resilience in Scotland, and Pam Candea, my colleague from Stirling.

The discussion we sparked was lively, well informed and involved twenty of us. It offered some diverse, unusual views on what resilience is and how to enhance it.

Here are some highlights :

**The meaning of resilience:** the word is used in many different ways, not always positively. A PhD student exploring military culture explained that the military view of resilience is immunity to feelings, whereas she felt the ability to be vulnerable is crucial to real resilience. Someone observed that capitalism seems quite resilient. However our explorations did not lead us to a better word for the positive aspects of resilience.

**Personal Resilience :** Several people saw spiritual and nature connections as the root of this. This can be translated in a workplace context as being 'more human at work' and 'showing up with love in my heart'. A Gestalt therapist said that resilience is not about systems, but approaching people with compassion. Helping people feel accepted and loved is a great way to raise their resilience.

**Community Resilience :** Alf Young observed that the catalyst for action is often a cutback which provokes an 'enough is enough' reaction. As his book shows, once a community achieves one resilience-raising project, it often feels so empowered it moves on others.

There was a shared excitement in the group that the Scottish independence referendum had raised empowerment in many local communities and this is feeding into a range of new initiatives : the Common Weal movement is one example. We also discussed the value of ritual and story in strengthening groups and the debilitating effect of high levels of inequality.

**Propagation :** There was a consensus that the social, environmental and economic pressures we'll all face over the next 10-20 years make resilience skills an urgent need. However it's hard to bring them into a mainstream society still hooked on materialism and in widespread denial. However, we saw great value in creating pockets of expertise which the mainstream can draw on when the need becomes pressing.

The evening was also helpful in making contacts for the formation of a Scottish Posse – see separate story.