# Expanding the circle
helping more people move towards resilience

"That is no way to run the greatest country on Earth. It is a dangerous game we've never played before, and we can't afford to play it now."
President Barack Obama, July 25 2011

The game has changed. Within the last month, the US has come within hours of sovereign default, and Britain has arrested thousands to crush violent riots. Many people no longer believe things are getting back to normal.

Green ideas are being integrated into the mainstream. Most *early adopters* (13.5% of people) are making at least token lifestyle changes like occasionally buying organic.

Rogers Diffusion of Innovation Model
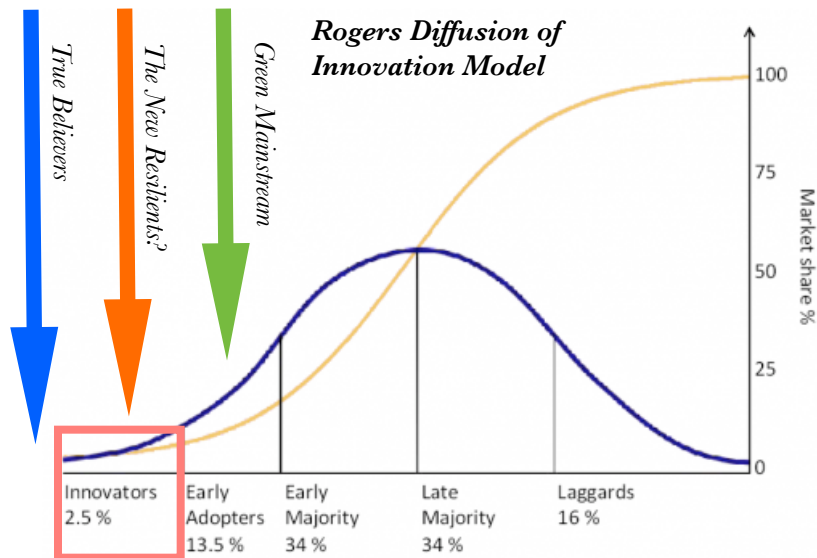
Let's look at *true believers*, the **blue group**. These brave few have made deep lifestyle changes for their green beliefs. They're running Transition Towns groups. They're young activists spending their careers on causes. They're back-to-the-landers. There may not be simple, clear, hard evidence for all of their beliefs, but *they know this is the right thing to do.*

Radical environmental transformation has largely been restricted to true believers, who are less than 1% of the population. It's been hard to get people moving because the evidence of climate change is complicated and there is little support for radical action from authority figures.

All of this has changed for resilience
In the past year governments have fully validated the idea we are in the midst of an extreme crisis with no certain outcome. Unlike the environmental crisis, government is in full motion on the economic crisis which supports our personal decisions to take action to become more resilient.

A person wishing to change their life to be more resilient can point to the recent US sovereign default crisis, the wave of civil unrest spreading across Europe, and ongoing statements and actions from political authority figures to back up their choices. The support for sustainability is less tangible: complex climate science and lukewarm response from government rather than clear panic. Resilience will move from *true believer* (rare) to *innovator* (2.5% of people).

The *culture of resilience* is divided up into several substantial islands. The US branch is heavily influenced by survivalism, rooted in 1970s grass roots civil defense for a nuclear war. The UK, and increasingly other countries have Transition Towns. The government's weight is behind natural disaster response and Civil Contingencies.

Transition Towns involves forming complex social groups which take many years to begin to produce substantial physical resilience benefits. **Survivalism** does not fit existing threat models. **Civil Contingencies** addresses "point crisis" like a flood, not a systemic crisis like an economic collapse. No model precisely fits the needs of ordinary people looking for more resilient lives.

We need a resilience model which is well-suited to ordinary people who want to make a direct change in their lives with solid resilience benefits. We need it to be something people can do where they are today, and we need it to speak to a wide range of levels of belief and investment.

What can we do?

Becoming resilient is not easy. For most people who are awakening to the idea there is a problem, there is a sea of confusing and politicized misinformation. For every book on the details of the USSR or Argentina, there are eleven on complete collapse peak oil scenarios.

We need to steer people towards a rational, graduated approach to risk, including coherent, multi-scenario threat modeling. In the same way that every green step counts, so does every resilient step.

There are at least half a dozen variables, with very little predictability, including currency, energy, commodities, agriculture, climate and politics. What we know is that pressure is increasing to the point where the State is beginning to publicly feel the pressure. Rather than falling into the trap of modeling a specific probable scenario, we should have resilience approaches which work across a range of scenarios. We should plan to not know precisely.

As with any kind of risk management approach, there's always a balance between energy invested and risk mitigated. The key is an evolutionary pathway towards greater resilience, starting with short term risks where you are and working outwards depending on how much risk people perceive and want to invest in mitigating.

Our role

Innovators buy services. True believers are DIY types, but innovators buy services. Transition Towns is a structure for true believers. My suggested model for helping innovators find resilience is *home improvements*, a good model because home improvement is a time- and capital-intensive project that people already understand how to fit into their lives.

The amount of effort and money spent on a good kitchen remodeling is enough to make substantial tangible improvements in the resilience of a family. The effort and cost of building an extension could take a family completely off the grid.

The design phase of a resilience project for a family has much in common with home improvements. The family comes together to discuss their feelings about the future and what they want. A **resilience designer** or **resilience guide** helps imagine a more resilient lives, and makes a plan for them to get there. Some parts of the plan might indeed be a **resilience retrofit** of their home, but other parts might be personal change more in line with **resilience coaching**, for example, people who want to find work closer to home and might need to rethink career.

People are doing a lot of this work themselves already. But the people who are doing it right now are the most motivated, most interested self-starters. To move beyond this demographic into the innovator demographic, we need to meet people where they are, in their current lives. In particular, complex community transformation is beyond the scope of most individuals. We need to encourage community, but not require it. When people have understood what they can and cannot do themselves, cooperating with their neighbors will come naturally. Understanding always brings a widening circle of concern.

The spectrum of resilience

There are at least five major steps that ordinary people can take towards resilience. **First** is the simple Civil Contingencies level of resilience, involving pre-orders of medications and 72 hour kits. Most people don't have these, even people who are resilience minded. Do you? **Second** is household resilience, which may be as simple as insulation and a little solar power for devices, or may be a more extensive transformation. **Third** is the wider lifestyle factors including health, community and resource use. **Fourth** is financial resilience in terms of finding next-economy livelihood and derisking asset portfolios. **Fifth** there is the hardest step of all, psychological and spiritual resilience, which is something we cannot find for people, but we may be able to help them find pathways towards.

Helping innovators become resilient

Helping innovators make their journeys to resilience is going to require an ecology of professionals who are skilled in different parts of the process. At the moment true believers are largely becoming multi-skilled polymaths because there is no professional support framework to enable transformation. Individual tasks, like "put on solar panels" may be subcontracted out, but the core resilience process is something that people face alone.

We can change that, greatly to the advantage of the individuals involved, and the wider culture. We can help.

a service ecology to help <u>innovators</u> achieve resilience