

Building psychological resilience in the Nordic Region

Insights from serious gaming

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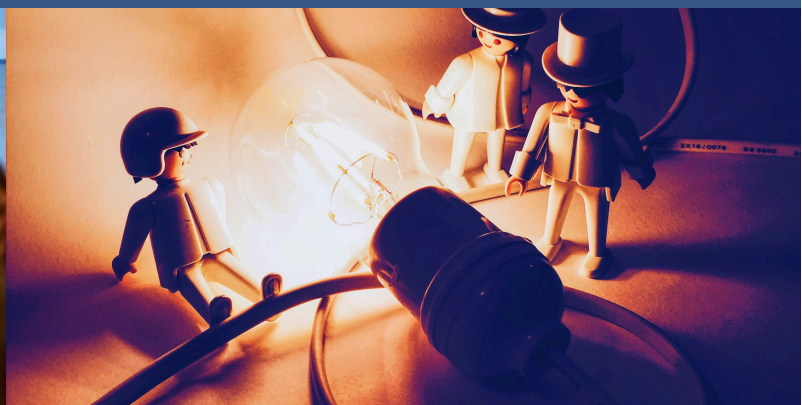


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Introduction



Images: Tommi Mattila/Nordregio Forum 2025 (left), Aaron Lee Kuan Leng/Unsplash (right)

This working paper discusses the concept of *psychological* (or mental) *resilience* in the context of scenario-based play. The paper takes an exploratory approach for understanding this relatively new policy term, first by considering its theoretical background and related concepts, and then by showing how serious gaming was used as a tool for understanding the concept in action.

The paper is constructed as follows:

- First, we will briefly introduce the theoretical understanding of **psychological resilience** as understood from academic literature and Nordic policy documents, including its links to other closely related concepts such as preparedness and total security thinking.
- Next, we will share insights on how these ideas were expressed in a **game scenario** organised during a decision-makers' workshop at Nordregio Forum 2025, and what the discussions during the gameplay tell us about the practice of psychological resilience.^[1]
- The final annex of the working paper includes instructions to the **Building Resilience game** for anyone wishing to play it themselves.

This working paper is written under the project [Recognising and supporting psychological resilience: Approaches across the Nordic countries](#), funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

1. Nordregio Forum is the annual flagship event of the Nordic development and policy research centre, Nordregio. In 2025, the theme of Nordregio Forum was Navigating Crisis and featured speakers representing research and policy work on resilience, as well as hands-on workshops among participants. Nordregio Forum 2025 took place in Lahti, Finland, on 3-4 December 2025.

Background



Images: Markus Spiske/Unsplash (left), Omar Albeik/Unsplash (right)

Resilience as a concept revolves around the ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a crisis (typically by way of adaptation or transformation). Within security politics, resilience is a strategy for navigating the contemporary threat landscape whereby numerous kinds of crises may emerge—or indeed be embedded—in everyday life (Wigell et al., 2022; Larsson, 2024). When threats remain uncertain, resilience is an approach that accepts the unknown, and “change becomes a matter of adaptation to new circumstances” (Berling & Petersen, 2021, p. 132).

There are many different forms of resilience that have been conceptualised within academia as well as in political discourse ranging from socio-ecological resilience to community resilience, adaptive and exaptive resilience, and economic resilience. Within the Nordic countries, terms such as civil resilience (in Norwegian, *sivil motstandskraft*), societal resilience (see the Icelandic *áfallaþol samfélaga*) and collective resilience (Sweden's *gemensam motståndskraft*) emerge, among others. Each of these describe national or local abilities to prepare, cooperate, respond, and recuperate from various forms of crisis, including war.

What is psychological resilience

Psychological resilience (in Finnish, *henkinen kriisinsietokyky*) has emerged as a key term within the Finnish security landscape during the last decade. The latest (2025) Finnish comprehensive security strategy describes psychological resilience as “the ability of individuals, communities, and society to withstand the stress caused by crisis situations and to recover from their impacts” (Finnish Government, 2025, p. 22).

The strategy continues:

The foundation of psychological resilience is created in normal conditions, and it plays a key role in the maintenance of functional capacity during crisis. Good psychological resilience promotes recovery from crises. Psychological resilience is manifested in the will to take action to maintain the stability of society, the population's living conditions, security, and ultimately, the state's sovereignty. Building, strengthening, and maintaining psychological resilience is long-term work that takes place throughout society as a whole. (Finnish Government, 2025, pp. 22-23).

This definition has been the point of departure for the *Recognising and supporting psychological resilience* project, setting a basis for both the *Building Resilience* game and further qualitative research among the Nordic countries.

Components and background of psychological resilience

The concept of psychological resilience is just one expression of resilience taken up in Finland's comprehensive strategy. It relies heavily on trust—in each other, in authorities, and in society as a whole. According to the strategy, there are seven components of psychological resilience (see Box 1). State, institutional, and private organisations play a role in providing the prerequisites for and maintenance of psychological resilience. This includes general social networks, non-profit organisations, religious communities, sports/recreational associations, youth communities, cultural institutions such as libraries and museums, public media services, voluntary civic activities, and various government agencies and ministries. These services, spaces, and communities are where local trust and fellowship among citizens are formed, democratic values are instilled and practiced, community identity is shaped, and common experience is shared. These elements are foundational for motivating a *will to act* (e.g., to prepare for potential crises, protect or defend during a crisis, or respond and rebuild after a crisis). The motivation to act is deeply entrenched in a notion that there is something—some identity, community, quality, value, or sovereign territory—worth protecting, and a belief that that some threat or series of threats has put such things at risk.

The 2025 comprehensive security strategy is not the first time the Finnish government has referred to the idea of psychological resilience. In fact, according to an interview with the Secretariat of the Security Committee, Finland has used the concept since at least 2003. The formulation as it stands in the latest strategy is a near-identical repetition of its expression in the former strategy (2017) which states that "psychological resilience is expressed in the citizens' will to defend their country's independence as well as in the determination to maintain the livelihood and security of the population in all situations" (Finnish Government, 2017, p. 22).

The concept of psychological resilience is related to several other concepts in the realm of security, defence, and civil preparedness (e.g., spiritual defence^[2], psychological defence^[3], civil preparedness^[4]). While it has been prevalent in the Finnish context for several years, it is less concrete in the academic and political discourse in the other Nordic countries. However, within their whole-of-society security approaches—which emphasise the involvement of state and private actors (from communities down to the individual)—all Nordic countries describe some elements of psychological resilience within their strategic security policies.^[5]

Box 1. Seven components of psychological resilience

1. Maintaining cultural services and protecting cultural heritage
2. Ensuring the basis for religious activities
3. Ensuring the continuation of youth work and activities, as well as civil sporting activities
4. Communications (to strengthen trust, inclusion, and faith in the future)
5. Combatting social exclusion and inequality
6. Promoting voluntary activities
7. Recovery

(Finnish Government, 2025)

All-of-society security strategies in the Nordics: New forms of responsibility and trust

While any crisis makes planning a challenge, globalisation and the interconnectedness of various systems and supply chains also means that a singular crisis can have more severe and overlapping ramifications, indicating an era of polycrisis (Keinänen et al., 2025). Furthermore, hybrid threats—which involve disinformation, manipulation, and “coordinated actions designed to create confusion and dilemmas across sectorial lines of responsibility”—undermine democracy and trust (Sandbakken & Karlsson, 2024, p. 165; Borch & Heier, 2024). Recent scholarship also raises the idea of creeping crises whose effects are felt over time (Boin et al., 2021). Thus, the threat landscape of today lies distinct from that of former times in that defence and security strategies must consider not only acute crises but *everyday* security threats.

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2. See *henkinen kriisinkestävyys* (Finnish Government, 2025; Hyvönen & Juntunen, 2021) or *ådenlig oprustning* (Bjerre, 2025, citing Mette Fredriksen
 3. See *psykologiskt försvar* (MSB, 2021; Ördén, 2025)
 4. See *civil beredskap* (MSB, 2021), *robust national beredskab* (Styrelsen for Samfundssikkerhed, 2025), *felles egenberedskap* and *totalberedskap* (Meld. St. 9, 2025)
 5. Countries outside of the Nordic Region, such as Ukraine, have also put more emphasis on the role of social cohesion during active military threat (Dvulit & Slätmo, 2025).

The transition from tackling specific crisis moments to maintaining a general state of crisis preparedness challenges notions of exceptionalism and raises difficult questions around responsibility, governance, and strategic planning (Carlsson & Engström, 2025; Liebetrau, 2021; Hyvönen & Juntunen, 2021; Larsson, 2021; Berling & Petersen, 2021). Thus, all Nordic countries have organised some version of total defence as a security approach. Total defence is "a way to prepare and organise for potential threats and crisis that are essentially understood as transboundary in nature" and involves a combination of actors (Berndtsson, 2024, p. 152). Beyond armed forces, total defence expresses the joint efforts made through civil defence, by which the civilian population participates in security efforts, often through acts of preparedness (i.e., civil preparedness). Nordic security strategies and risk assessments refer to war or armed conflict as one form of many potential crisis situations, and the idea of state and private actors cooperating to prepare for and respond to the most dramatic of external threats has also been applied to the logics of societal security in a broad sense.^[6] Thus, crisis situations bleed into the everyday, and individuals and communities play a large role in preparing for and safeguarding their own life and health.

In this totalising security landscape, new questions emerge regarding the responsibility held and shared by different actors. It also challenges how communities cooperate, communicate, organise themselves, or work together in everyday and acute situations. The idea of preparedness in recent years has led to an emphasis on *self-preparedness* and how the individual bears responsibility to ensure his or her own safety (see, e.g., Larsson, 2021). Whether this is the case for all crises, and how this responsibility is allocated to individuals, taken up by grassroots organisations and institutions, or claimed by state actors remains a complex issue which lies at the heart of psychological resilience in practice (Hyvönen & Juntunen, 2021). On the one hand, granting more responsibility to the individual can empower him or her and make use of the existing community linkages at the local level. On the other hand, a shift towards greater individual responsibility means that those who, for various reasons, cannot ensure their own safety or are already marginalised from various communities may be at risk of increased vulnerability in crisis situations. The idea of sharing responsibility before, during, and after a crisis is present across the Nordic countries, both in policy and in the literature, but it remains uncertain how these responsibilities might be divided amongst actors who either already have a mandate to act in times of crisis or who take up new responsibilities in an ad hoc way.

The idea of *trust* has often been mentioned as a significant and unique element of Nordic societies (Berling & Petersen, 2021; Selle & Wollebæk, 2015; Larsson & Rhinhard, 2021). Developing trust central to psychological resilience, and how it is developed during everyday situations may influence which communities, institutions, or state services people turn to for guidance and provision during acute crisis situations. It is this notion of psychological resilience that the *Building Resilience* policy game sought to explore.

6. See, for example, Swedish Government (2024), Danish Societal Security Agency (2025), Office of the Prime Minister of Norway (2025), Finnish Government (2025), Parliamentary Consultative Committee (2025).

"Serious gaming" as a tool for discussion in policymaking

In academic literature around security planning and policy, several authors categorise current security threats as "wicked problems," referring to the seminal work by Rittel & Webber (1973; see also Selle & Wollebæk, 2015; Hyvönen & Juntunen, 2021; Sandbakken & Karlsson, 2024). This is because security threats are multiple, complex, and often unclear, making it difficult to respond with a single solution or fixed strategy. Practices such as scenario-making, role-play simulations, narrative building, and reflection can be used as tools for both diagnosing the complexity of the problem and developing pathways forward (Geurts et al., 2007; Wardekker et al., 2020; Alejandro et al., 2024). This can be especially useful within resilience thinking or disaster management due to the nature of intertwined systems which mean challenges must be tackled from multiple angles and need to involve a range of stakeholders and fields to find a solution (Wardekker et al., 2020; Solinska-Nowak et al., 2018).

Based on such methods, the researchers developed a scenarios-based game, designed to facilitate planning and policymaking discussions, reflection, and strategic thinking around psychological resilience. The *Building Resilience* game acted as a social learning tool for an array of civil servants working at national, regional, and local level ministries in the Nordic countries. As a "serious game" (Solinska-Nowak et al., 2018), the method enabled these practitioners to exercise experimental thinking in several threat scenarios, combining their own expertise with personal reflection to imitate, explore, critique, and evaluate actions and strategies throughout the three main phases of resilience: preparation, response, and recovery/adaptation (Thomas, 2024).

Building Resilience game



Images: Tommi Mattila/Nordregio Forum 2025 (right), Miia Itänen/Nordregio (left)

Setting

The *Building Resilience* game was developed for the Nordregio Forum 2025, where it was played in a setting of four tables with approximately 20 participants consisting of Nordic policymakers, planners, and other regional development experts. The game consists of five possible Nordic geographic settings—**island community**, **rural village**, **small town**, **suburb**, and **large city**. Due to the number of people, four of the five settings were played: island community, rural village, small town, and city.

The game begins with groups taking stock of infrastructure items already in place. These include transport points such as bus stops, train stations, or harbours, as well as cultural landmarks such as churches, set up by the facilitator in advance and correlating to the specific setting. After the facilitator has described the setting, the group decides together upon 3-5 items (depending on the size of the community) they will add to build an ideal Nordic community using the building blocks provided. This could be schools, grocery stores, libraries, community halls, hospitals, police stations, sport centres, or other community spaces in the environment.

Once the group has made their decision, the facilitator describes a crisis scenario that has hit their community.^[7] The list of crises ranges from storm damages and 72hr+ power cuts to contaminated drinking water and misinformation attacks (see Table 1). These crises were developed based on common threats outlined in existing Nordic national risk assessments or security strategies. The common denominator amongst all the scenarios is that the crisis urges the participants' playable characters to leave their homes and discuss the situation with other community members (i.e., the other group members).

7. The crises were developed based on common threats outlined in existing Nordic national risk assessments or security strategies.

Table 1. Summary of the game set-up and choices selected by game players during the Nordregio Forum event (December 2025).

Geography	Initial resources	Added resources (selected by players)	Crisis situation	Final addition (selected by players after reflection)
Island community	Sheep, Ferry terminal, Church	Grocery store, School, Healthcare centre	Power cut following a storm	Satellite communication system powered by solar panels
Rural village	Bus station, Church	Grocery store, School, Healthcare centre, Community centre	Water contamination of unknown reason	Tower security instalments <i>(Group was happy with all original choices)</i>
Small town	Church, Kebab restaurant, Train station	Sports centre, Store, Library, Emergency room	Long power cut and disturbed supply chains	School
Large city	Metro station, Main square, Church	Hospital, Powerhouse, Grocery store, Police station, School	Digital systems collapse followed by misinformation attack	Library, Community centre, or Voluntary organisation (e.g., Red Cross)

Using the infrastructure items that they placed on the site during Step 1, they must decide where to go for reliable local information on what has happened and whether something is being done to help with the situation. Who do they wish to talk to? Where do they seek refuge? The groups discuss the situation together but can make individual choices, moving their playable character to their chosen location.

During Step 2, the group reviews their first choices as the facilitator provides details about the further development of the crisis. For example, the players may need to decide which place would be most suitable to find supply deliveries or they may wish to find out whether there is organised help for more vulnerable members of the community. When seeking to meet these needs, the group members once again review the mix of public and private sites/institutions at their disposal and continue to discuss their choices for seeking trusted authorities during their crisis situation.

In Step 3, the facilitator informs the group that the crisis is coming to a resolution. The group now has an opportunity to use "recovery funding" to help the community bounce back and invest in one more infrastructure item. This step invites the group to review the community they built from the viewpoint of recent events: did they have everything they needed, or had they neglected some essential authority, institution, cultural site, or community location that could have provided key support during the crisis?

When the game was tested during the Nordregio Forum event, the game concluded with an interview, where the groups discussed the logic and emotions behind their decisions, also based on their personal experiences with similar crisis situations in their own contexts.

Discussions on psychological resilience

In our final discussions, we noticed that the four groups were largely satisfied with the choices they had made before knowing about the crisis, and all were able to decide on which places to visit for guidance. In addition, some members pointed out that, in a real situation, they would likely not leave their homes in the event of a short-term crisis. The first gathering places included the church (island community), the community centre (rural village), the library (small town), and the school (large city).

Throughout the game, smaller communities relied more on social ties and informal organisations, while the groups in more urban settings expected more from formal institutions and faced more challenges in coordinating their actions. People playing in the large city setting had more initial uncertainty before deciding on where to go, possibly due to the more scattered geography of an urban setting and the broader variety of choice. In smaller places, the prevailing sentiment was that it would be relatively easy to find where the more knowledgeable members of the community were. Similarly, a notable difference between the urban setting and the most rural setting was the formality of support sought: in the city, the group was drawn towards various actors representing the public sector (the library, town hall, or hospital) whereas in the rural setting, the group agreed that there would be a trusted community member who would informally take on the responsibility of organising activities and informing others.

The role of traditional first responders such as hospitals and the police was relatively small during the game. The groups discussed seeking advice from these authorities (for example in the case of contaminated drinking water) but also viewed that, in a less acute situation, it would be better to seek help from a place that could handle large groups of people. In other words, the public places were selected not because of their crisis-response roles but because of their role as social infrastructure and community event organisers (such as libraries, community centres, and schools). The group that selected the church as their gathering place (the island community) did so mostly for practical reasons: the church bell could be rung to gather people together. At a later stage in the game, the players were asked to search for the possible distribution of emergency supplies. Sports centres and schools were preferred as spaces to wait out the crisis together due to their size equipped for handling larger logistics.

As new tasks were introduced, people from smaller and assumedly more tight-knit communities experienced less need to review their choices, as they were more likely to trust that the information would find its way to them if they remained in one well-known, central location. During the rebuilding stage, some groups wanted to address the situation of not having any specific preparedness-related actors in their settings, investing in resources such as the Red Cross or stronger communication links. Some groups also decided to invest in building a stronger community for people living there by building a new school in the area.

In all scenarios, the group members reported that they believed they would feel safe waiting for supplies or relying on their neighbours, even if it were a real-life scenario.

Key findings



Images: Miia Itänen/Nordregio (left), Aedrian Salazar/Unsplash (right)

The significance of informal responsibilities and social infrastructure for enabling psychological resilience

The relatively free-flowing format of the *Building Resilience* game allowed the players at Nordregio Forum to imagine resilience responses that did not necessarily follow security strategies or previously instructed action. We also notice that people's choices did not directly correlate with the immediate responsibilities of certain institutions, namely in the sense that many institutions were viewed as capable of taking on a broader set of responsibilities should a crisis hit. Public institutions (instead of private buildings) were clearly preferred for seeking trusted information and for use as gathering points. Institutions that serve their communities in a more general sense—libraries, community centres, even schools and churches—received most traction as communal anchors. These results suggest that psychological resilience is not solely about knowing *what* exactly should be done at a certain event; rather, knowing *how* and *where* to go to find out the *what* can play an essential role.

Another key finding from the play scenarios was the pivotal role that informal social structures and networks of trust played in the imagined communities, especially the smaller and more rural ones. The importance of these two pillars—public institutions able to take on a variety of roles and informal community actors—points to the already existing alternatives to resilience-related actions mainly as individual responsibility. The game discussions point towards investing in and maintaining everyday social infrastructure and long-term community building as a way of ensuring that people have access to spaces during possible crises that support them in remaining calm and making rational choices. A question that remains open, however, is whether the national states and regions should utilise informal community actors (such as voluntary neighbourhood organisers) and their positive informal influence to greater effect in building resilient communities, or whether assigning more formal responsibilities would, in fact, limit the flexibility that makes them so easily adaptable to different needs.

Building Resilience

Game handbook



Building Resilience Game handbook

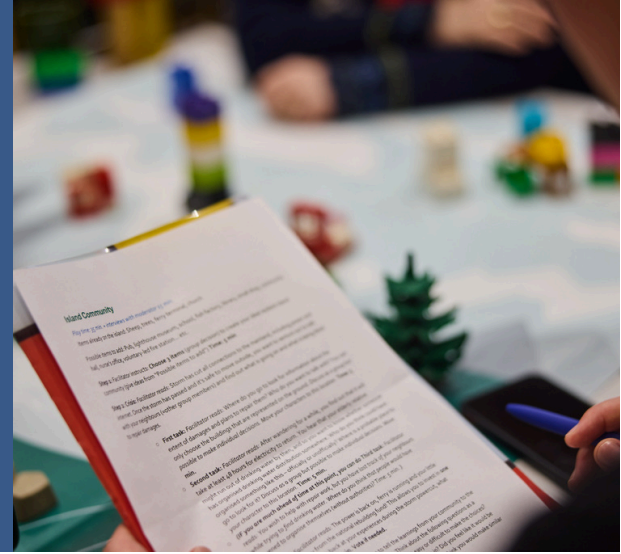


Image: Tommi Mattila/Nordregio Forum 2025

This handbook is used for facilitating the **Building Resilience game**.

These instructions were developed for and used at Nordregio Forum 2025 during the workshop *Building resilient communities: A hands-on workshop on psychological resilience*.

Workshop materials

- **1-5 tables** with a facilitator who reads instructions from the handbook. Ideally the tables should have 3-5 players. Each table represents a different Nordic location: island community, rural village, small town, suburb, and large city
- **Play materials** to represent various infrastructure items such as shops, schools, libraries, healthcare centres etc. The original workshop used Duplo and wooden blocks.
- **Play pieces** to represent playable characters. The original workshop used Playmobile dolls, but any object or material could be used to represent the player.



Workshop timeline (1 hour)

- **Introduction to workshop:** 5 minutes
- **Gameplay:** 40 minutes (approximate)
- **Final discussion between groups:** 15 minutes



Workshop steps in five Nordic locations

- Island community
- Rural village
- Small town
- Suburb
- Large city



Island community: Storm & power cut



Image: Vidar Nordli Mathisen/Unsplash

Items already in place: Sheep, trees, ferry terminal, church

Possible items to add: Pub, lighthouse museum, school, fish factory, library, small shop, community hall, nurse's office, voluntary-led fire station

Crisis: Power cut following a storm

Step 1 - Start

Facilitator instructs: Choose 3 items (group decision) to create your ideal resilient island community (list the items above for inspiration).

(Time: 5 min)



Step 2 - Crisis

Facilitator reads: A storm has cut all connections to the mainland, including power and internet. Once the storm has passed and it's safe to move outside, you want to venture out to talk with your neighbours (other group members) and find out what is going on and what is being done to repair damages.



First task

Facilitator reads: Where do you go to look for information about the extent of damages and plans to repair them? Who do you want to talk with? You can only choose the buildings that are represented on the ground. Discuss as a group but possible to make individual decisions. Move your characters to this location.

(Time: 10 min.)



Second task

Facilitator reads: After wandering for a while, you find out that it will take at least 48 hours for electricity to return. You hear that your elderly relative might run out of drinking water by then, and so you want to know whether someone has organised drinking water distribution somewhere. Who do you think could have organised something like this—officially or unofficially? Where is a probable place to go to look for it? Discuss as a group but it is possible to make individual decisions. Move your character to this location.

(Time: 5 min.)



Third task (optional)

Facilitator reads: You wish to help with repair work, but you have lost track of your neighbours while trying to find drinking water. Where do you think that people would have convened to organise themselves (without authorities)?

(Time: 5 min.)



Step 3 - Rebuilding stage

Facilitator reads: The power is back on, ferry is running and your little island was granted some money from the national rebuilding fund! This allows you to invest in one more infrastructure item. Looking back at your experiences during the storm power cut, what should you add to the island?

(Time: 5 min.)



Step 4 - Final thoughts

Facilitator reads: Prepare to tell the learnings from your community to the moderator (one group member represents the group). Think about the following questions as a group: Why did you chose the locations that you did? Was it easy or difficult to make the choices? Who seemed like someone you can trust in the situation you were in? Did you feel like it would be possible to find them? Think about your real-life community: do you think you would make similar choices in the same situation there?

(Time: 10 min.)



Step 5 - Discussion round

The table attends final discussion round with other tables to compare processes. This step can also be done with a moderator.



Rural village: Water contamination



Image: Simon Dreher/Unsplash

Items already in place: Church, bus station

Possible items to add: School, daycare, sports field, minimarket, gas station, church, library, café, community hall, clinic

Crisis: Water contamination of unknown reason

Step 1 - Start

Facilitator instructs: Choose 3 items (group decision) to create your ideal resilient rural community (list the items above for inspiration).

(Time: 5 min.)



Step 2 - Crisis

Facilitator reads: The village's freshwater system shows signs of contamination. You try to google the issue and call some numbers, but all essential call lines have crashed under hundreds of calls, social media is filled with rumours and even company chatbots are of zero help. You decide to go out to talk with your neighbours (other group members) and find out what is going on.



First task

Facilitator reads: Where do you go to look for reliable local information about the reason and extent of contamination and plans to repair it? Who do you want to talk with? You can only choose from the buildings already placed on the ground. Discuss as a group but possible to make individual decisions. Move your characters to this location.

(Time: 10 min.)



Second task

Facilitator reads: After wandering for a while, you find out that some squirrels had gotten into the main water tower and died there, contaminating the drinking water for a long while to come. You hear from a reliable source that the regional centre is planning to deliver some safe drinking water to the village, but no one knows where and all phone lines are still down. Discuss: Where do you go to check first for possible water distribution? If it's not there yet, who do you wish to talk with? Where do you feel safe waiting for an undetermined time? Discuss as a group but it is possible to make individual decisions). Move your character to this location.

(Time: 5 min.)



Third task (optional)

Facilitator reads: You find some water for yourself, but during your rounds, you have heard that several elderly people are unable to get the water delivered to them. You want to help but cannot do it by yourself—you need help organising people to do this task. Who do you want to talk to and where do you go?

(Time: 5 min.)



Step 3 - Rebuilding stage

Facilitator reads: The water tower has finally been sanitised after several harrowing weeks of chlorine-smelling water! Better still, your village has been granted some money from the regional attractiveness fund to invest in something to build a stronger community in the future to help battle the derogatory "dead squirrel smell" jokes going around. This allows you to invest in one more infrastructure item. Looking back at your experiences during the contaminated water struggle, what should you add to the village?

(Time: 5 min.)



Step 4 - Final thoughts

Facilitator reads: Prepare to tell the learnings from your community to the moderator (one group member represents the group). Think about the following questions as a group: Why did you choose the locations that you did? Was it easy or difficult to make the choices? Who seemed like someone you can trust in the situation you were in? Did you feel like it would be possible to find them? Think about your real-life community: do you think you would make similar choices in the same situation there?

(Time: 10 min.)



Step 5 - Discussion round

The table attends final discussion round with other tables to compare processes. This step can also be done with a moderator.



Small town: Long power cut & snowstorm



Image: Freysteinn G Jonsson/Unsplash

Items already in place: Church, kebab restaurant, train station

Possible items to add: School, daycare, sports centre, store, gas station, library, regional museum, emergency room, sawmill, milk farm

Crisis: A long power cut during a heavy snowstorm, cutting off electricity and disturbing supply chains

Step 1 - Start

Facilitator instructs: Choose 4 items (group decision) to create your ideal resilient small town community (list items above for inspiration).

(Time: 5 min.)



Step 2 - Crisis

Facilitator reads: A heavy snowstorm has cut electricity for 72+ hours during a very cold winter, leaving most people to survive with their fireplaces. No one knows when it will be repaired. In addition, supply chains have been disturbed in the same storm, limiting the amount of gas available. You decide to bundle up in winter gear and walk out to talk with your neighbours (other group members) and find out what is going on.



First task

Facilitator reads: Discuss: Where do you go to look for reliable local information about the extent of damages and repair plans. Who do you want to talk with? You can only choose the buildings that you chose in Step 1. (Discuss as a group but possible to make individual decisions). Move your characters to this location.

(Time: 10 min.)



Second task

Facilitator reads: After wandering for a while, you find out that the power cut will last for at least 24 hours more. There is talk of fuel and other supply distributions coming, but no one is sure where. Discuss: Where do you go to check first for possible supply distribution? If it is not there yet, who do you wish to talk with? (Discuss as a group but possible to make individual decisions). Move your character to this location.

(Time: 5 min.)



Third task (optional)

Facilitator reads: You find some water for yourself, but during your rounds, you have heard that several elderly people are unable to get the supplies they need delivered to them. You want to help but cannot do it by yourself—you need help organising people to do this task. Who do you want to talk to and where do you go?

(Time: 5 min.)



Step 3 - Rebuilding stage

Facilitator reads: The power has been repaired, snow has melted and spring has come! Better still, your village has been granted some money from the regional attractiveness fund to invest in something to build a stronger, more attractive community in the future. This allows you to invest in one more infrastructure item. Looking back at your experiences during the snowstorm crisis, what should you add to the town?

(Time: 5 min.)



Step 4 - Final thoughts

Facilitator reads: Prepare to tell the learnings from your community to the moderator (one group member represents the group). Think about the following questions as a group: Why did you chose the locations that you did? Was it easy or difficult to make the choices? Who seemed like someone you can trust in the situation you were in? Did you feel like it would be possible to find them? Think about your real-life community: do you think you would make similar choices in the same situation there?

(Time: 10 min.)



Step 5 - Discussion round

The table attends final discussion round with other tables to compare processes. This step can also be done with a moderator.



Suburb: Large-scale power cut



Image: Jacco Rienks/Unsplash

Items already in place: Metro station, central square with café, spiritual centre

Possible items to add: School, daycare, ice rink, library, cultural and event venue, bar, gas station, shopping centre, emergency room, police station

Crisis: Large-scale urban power cut that lasts 72+ hours

Step 1 - Start

Facilitator instructs: Choose 5 items (group decision) to create your ideal resilient small town community (list items above for inspiration).

(Time: 5 min)



Step 2 - Crisis

Facilitator reads: A large-scale power outage hits the suburb and nearby city districts in November. There's no electricity, heating, mobile signal, or internet. Public transport halts, payment systems fail, and you cannot ChatGPT answers to your questions. You take your flashlight and walk out to talk with your neighbours (other group members) to find out what is going on.



First task

Facilitator reads: Discuss: Where do you go to look for reliable local information about the cause of out power outage and repair plans. Who do you want to talk with? You can only choose the buildings already placed on the ground. (Discuss as a group but possible to make individual decisions). Move your characters to this location.

(Time: 10 min.)



Second task

Facilitator reads: You find out that the situation will last at least 24 hours longer, and your home is getting very cold without heating. You decide to find someplace warm to huddle in for the night with hopes of finding also food supplies. Discuss: Where do you go to seek for warmth and possible supply deliveries? Where do you feel safe waiting for some hours? Who do you wish to talk with? (Discuss as a group but possible to make individual decisions). Move your character to this location.

(Time: 5 min.)



Third task (optional)

Facilitator reads: You find a place to shelter for yourself, but during your rounds, you have heard that several elderly people are unable to move to shelters by themselves. You want to help but cannot do it by yourself—you need help organising people to do this task. Who do you want to talk to and where do you go?

(Time: 5 min.)



Step 3 - Rebuilding stage

Facilitator reads: The power is back on! The city was moved by the community spirit your suburb demonstrated during the crisis and wishes to support it by funding you a new infrastructure project for some commonly agreed good. This allows you to invest in one more infrastructure item. Looking back at your experiences during the power cut crisis, what should you add to the suburb?



(Time: 5 min.)

Step 4 - Final thoughts

Facilitator reads: Prepare to tell the learnings from your community to the moderator (one group member represents the group). Think about the following questions as a group: Why did you chose the locations that you did? Was it easy or difficult to make the choices? Who seemed like someone you can trust in the situation you were in? Did you feel like it would be possible to find them? Think about your real-life community: do you think you would make similar choices in the same situation there?



(Time: 10 min.)

Step 5 - Discussion round

The table attends final discussion round with other tables to compare processes. This step can also be done with a moderator.



Large city: Hybrid attack



Image: Alexandr Bormotin/Unsplash

Items already in place: Metro station, main square, church

Possible items to add: School, daycare, bouldering hall, library, bar, concert venue, gas station, shopping centre, hospital, police station

Crisis: Hybrid attack involving severe disturbances in supply lines and severe disturbances in all digital systems.

Step 1 - Start

Facilitator instructs: Choose 5 items (group decision) to create your ideal resilient small town community (list items above for inspiration).

(Time: 5 min.)



Step 2 - Crisis

Facilitator reads: All digital systems suddenly stop working—mobile networks, payment systems, public transport ticketing, and government websites. No one knows how long it will last. You suspect a hybrid attack, because there have already been severe disturbances in supply chains (affecting supply of food, gas, medicine) and the social media is filled with rumours. It's impossible to know what is going on.



First task

Facilitator reads: You decide to go out to find a reliable source of information to find out the cause of the systemic breakdown and what is being done to fix it. Discuss: Where do you go to look for reliable local information? Who do you want to talk with? You can only choose the buildings that you chose in Step 1. (Discuss as a group but possible to make individual decisions). Move your characters to this location.

(Time: 10 min.)



Second task

Facilitator reads: You find out that it will take at least 48 hours to fix the system, and that there are some supplies distributed by the city, but the people you talked with don't know where. Discuss: Where do you go to seek for possible supply deliveries? If the supplies have not yet arrived, do you feel safe waiting here for some hours or should you go to a third place in the meantime? (Discuss as a group but possible to make individual decisions). Move your character to this location.

(Time: 5 min.)



Third task (optional)

Facilitator reads: You find some supplies for yourself, but during your rounds, you have heard that several elderly people are unable to get the food supplies they need delivered to them. You want to help but cannot do it by yourself—you need help organising people to do this task or alert a proper public official about the problem. Who do you want to talk to and where do you go?

(Time: 5 min.)



Step 3 - Rebuilding stage

Facilitator reads: The digital systems have been fixed! However, the city is concerned by the speed that rumours and misinformation spread and wished to make an investment to support stronger neighbourhoods to make them more resilient should this happen again. This funding allows you to invest in one more infrastructure item. Looking back at your experiences during the digital systems crisis, what should you add to the city?

(Time: 5 min.)



Step 4 - Final thoughts

Facilitator reads: Prepare to tell the learnings from your community to the moderator (one group member represents the group). Think about the following questions as a group: Why did you chose the locations that you did? Was it easy or difficult to make the choices? Who seemed like someone you can trust in the situation you were in? Did you feel like it would be possible to find them? Think about your real-life community: do you think you would make similar choices in the same situation there?

(Time: 10 min.)



Step 5 - Discussion round

The table attends final discussion round with other tables to compare processes. This step can also be done with a moderator.



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