

The Localization Reader

Adapting to the Coming Downshift

Edited by Raymond De Young and Thomas Princen

Energy supplies are tightening. Persistent pollutants are accumulating. Food security is declining. There is no going back to the days of reckless consumption, but there is a possibility—already being realized in communities across North America and around the world—of localizing, of living well as we learn to live well within immutable constraints. This book maps the transition to a more localized world.

Readings that point the way to a peaceful, democratic, and ecologically resilient transition to an era of localization, limits, and societal opportunities.

Society is shifting from the centrifugal forces of globalization (cheap and abundant raw materials and energy, intensive commercialization, concentrated economic and political power) to the centripetal forces of localization: distributed authority and leadership, sustain-able use of nearby natural resources, community self-reliance and cohesion (with crucial regional, national, and international dimensions).

This collection, offering classic texts by such writers as Wendell Berry, M. King Hubbert, and Ernst F. Schumacher, as well as new work by authors including Karen Litfin and David Hess, shows how localization—a process of affirmative social change—can enable psychologically meaningful and fulfilling lives while promoting ecological and social sustainability. Topics range from energy dynamics to philosophies of limits, from the governance of place-based communities to the discovery of positive personal engagement. Together they point the way to a transition that can be peaceful, democratic, just, and environmentally resilient.

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The authors have committed all royalties to two community organizations that exemplify localization. *Growing Hope* is an organization dedicated to helping people improve their lives and communities through gardening, healthy food access, and local food security (www.growinghope.net) and *People's Food Co-op* has long sought to feed a community with wholesome food and good work (www.peoplesfood.coop).

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Part I - Drivers of Localization - An understanding of biophysical limits leads to one unmistakable conclusion: high-consuming societies will be making a fundamental transition away from fossil fuels and toward lowered consumption of material and energy. Social complexity may decline but equity and quality of life may well increase.

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|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Fossil Fuel Decline | <i>M. King Hubbert</i> |
| 2 Energy Returned on Energy Invested | <i>Adam Dadeby</i> |
| 3 The Inevitability of Transition | <i>Joseph A. Tainter</i> |
| 4 Less Energy, More Equity, More Time | <i>Ivan Illich</i> |

Part II - Localization in Practice - Accepting the inevitability of lowered consumption levels is separate from adapting to likely consequences. Examining scenarios of possible outcomes allows the envisioning of self-reliant communities while existing practices demonstrate their feasibility. Together, scenarios and practices help prefigure the needed institutions, economies, physical structures, norms, and behaviors necessitated by biophysical constraint.

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| 5 An Arc of Scenarios | <i>Rob Hopkins</i> |
| 6 Inhabiting Place | <i>Robert L. Thayer</i> |
| 7 Locally Owned Business | <i>Michael H. Shuman</i> |
| 8 Daring to Experiment | <i>Warren A. Johnson</i> |
| 9 Civic Agriculture | <i>Thomas A. Lyson</i> |
| 10 A Whole New Way of Life | <i>Karen Litfin</i> |

Part III - Philosophies of Localization - Philosophies of localization affirm the possibility of flourishing while living with less and staying within natural limits. The arguments are clear and have been around a long time, but have been overshadowed by a consumerist culture, a focus on growth, and a cultural presumption that bigger and faster is always better.

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| 11 The Decentralist Tradition | <i>Kirkpatrick Sale</i> |
| 12 Technology at a Human Scale | <i>Ernst F. Schumacher</i> |
| 13 Provincialism | <i>Josiah Royce</i> |
| 14 Local Enterprise | <i>Wendell Berry</i> |
| 15 Conserving Communities | <i>Wendell Berry</i> |

Part IV - Bringing Out the Best in People - A challenge with localization, as with sustainability generally, is to provide a positive framing of a materialistically simpler existence. Fortunately, knowing what deeply motivates people makes this possible: localization can indeed be meaningful and fulfilling while it is simultaneously ecologically compatible.

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| 16 Abundance and Fulfillment | <i>Sharon Astyk</i> |
| 17 Motives for Living Lightly | <i>Raymond De Young</i> |
| 18 Enabling the Best in People | <i>Rachel Kaplan and Stephen Kaplan</i> |

Part V - Appropriate Governance - While localization entails transforming society, it is not about rejecting all modern institutions. Rather, localization is about reorienting, retasking, and rightsizing those institutions. To ensure a gentle transition, planning and decision making must be participatory, collaborative, equitable, and mutually accountable.

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| 19 Ecological Democracy | <i>John S. Dryzek</i> |
| 20 Towards the Regional | <i>Gar Alperovitz</i> |
| 21 Global Problems, Localist Solutions | <i>David J. Hess</i> |

Part VI - Tools for Transition - Understanding the embedded benefits in the transition and having the motivation to start do not provide the procedural knowledge needed to act effectively. Some tools for making fundamental change already exist; others will certainly be needed.

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| 22 Adaptive Muddling | <i>Raymond De Young and Stephen Kaplan</i> |
| 23 Promoting a Partnership Society | <i>Lester W. Milbrath</i> |
| 24 Tools for the Transition | <i>Donella Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and Dennis Meadows</i> |
| 25 Downshift/Upshift: Our Choice | <i>Raymond De Young and Thomas Princen</i> |