

LOCALIZATION: A BRIEF DEFINITION

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Localization is a process of social and behavioral change focused on localities. Its primary concern is how to adapt our goals, expectations and daily patterns to a life lived within the immutable limits of nearby natural systems. In a localizing process, our attention is focused on everyday behavior within a place-based community, a transition that involves adapting-in-place. The ultimate goals of localization are increasing the long-term psychological well-being of people and societies while sustaining, even improving, the integrity and coherence of natural systems, especially those that directly provision our communities.

Localization is not to be confused with a narrowly defined localism or provincialism. Nor is localization simply globalization in reverse. Rather, as biophysical limits re-emerge, communities will shift their attention from the centrifugal forces of globalization (concentrated economic power, cheap and plentiful raw materials and energy, hyper-consumerism and displaced wastes) to the centripetal forces of localization (widely distributed leadership and authority, more sustainable use of natural energy sources and materials, personal proficiency and community self-reliance).

Localization is a logical outgrowth of the end of an historically brief period, one that saw plentiful raw materials, highly concentrated and inexpensive energy sources, and an abundance of liquid fossil fuels whose wastes were dispersed into the environment without monetary costs. That period, aptly named *the efflorescence of oil*, is coming to an end.

How we respond to this re-emerging biophysical reality is one of the defining questions of our time. We can still make a clever transition to durable living; we still have options. The process of localization can be a force for good (e.g., healthy food, less apprehension, more neighborliness). But if we willfully ignore the biophysical signals, letting our options expire, then localization may become a force for evil (e.g., hopelessness, lawlessness, warlords, survivalists, food deserts). Fortunately, positive change has already begun, albeit only in small corners of our society. These small experiments, these harbingers of change, are manifestations of Antonio Gramsci's notion of a "*pessimism of the intellect; optimism of the will.*"

There is no sign up sheet for localization, it is not being covered in the main stream media, and there is no plea made for donations. It is certainly a grassroots response. But to so name it only begins to capture the nature of the change happening around us all. The biophysical reality we face is harsh and will demand a personal response from each of us, soon. But the human motivation to adapt is innate and the reward will be a good life on a good planet.