

Kelman, I. and T.A. Mather. 2006. "Living with volcanoes: A framework for analysing volcano-related opportunities". Presentation in Symposium V "Risk Management" at Cities on Volcanoes 4, Quito, Ecuador, 23-27 January 2006.

Abstract:

In addition to attempts to reduce vulnerability and avert disasters, humanity frequently employs risk management techniques to generate opportunities from hazards. Volcanoes are rich in resources and have often been tapped for benefits including geothermal energy, agriculture, tourism, mineral extraction, and landscape advantages such as harbours.

International development and risk management practitioners are increasingly adopting the view that long-term sustainability in the face of extreme environmental events, including volcanic activity, would be promoted through not only changing societies to minimise risks, but also "living with the risk" or "knowing the risk". Achieving a balance between the two is an immense practical challenge but yields significant rewards.

As a contribution towards this process, understanding why and how people live in volcanic habitats and using that knowledge to better integrate communities with volcanoes is liable to achieve safer and healthier communities than attempts to effect change by separating the people from the volcano. A framework is proposed for investigating and analysing the opportunities within volcanic habitats based on past and current examples of sustainable use of volcano resources. Suggestions are also made regarding future possibilities. Due to the power and unpredictability of much volcanic activity, explicitly articulating constraints in such endeavours would be necessary. Communities which understand and live with their volcano may then be in a better position to identify and respond to any volcanic threats.