

Kelman, I., E. Karnes, M. Brownlee, and L.M. Hanthorn. 2006. "Relocalisation as a Disaster Risk Management Education Tool". RiskPost (New Zealand Society for Risk Management), issue 6, no. 2, October 2006, pp. 4-5.

Relocalisation as a Disaster Risk Management Education Tool

As one item within our vast portfolio of educating people and communities about disaster risk management, a new approach termed "relocalisation" has emerged. Relocalisation means re-establishing activities at the local level (re-local-ise), reversing the disempowering trend of centralisation and larger organisations. Diseconomies of scale and economies of smaller scales are employed, rather than the traditional economies of scale.

Relocalisation originated in concerns about "peak oil", the time when the extraction rate of oil--now expanded to all fossil fuels--reaches its maximum, leading to an increasingly restricted supply of fossil fuels used for energy and electricity. Crises envisioned include food supplies being reduced because of limited transport to supermarkets; blackouts during hot and cold temperature extremes where electricity generating plants depend on fossil fuels; and emergency services being unable to respond promptly.

Relocalisation aims to make services such as food, energy, health, manufacturing, and disaster risk management more locally-based so that they will be minimally affected by fossil fuel restrictions and any other sudden or long-term crises.

For disaster risk management education, relocalising means ensuring that disaster-related activities originate at the local level, focusing on bottom-up approaches without neglecting external or top-down guidance and support where useful. The responsibility of everyone to become involved--for example, by maintaining local caches of emergency supplies rather than expecting external assistance after an event--is not always known or accepted, requiring education to overcome apathy, disinterest, or fear.

Relocalisation tackles such concerns by educating about simple steps which can be taken by individuals, families, and communities.

Brief examples of relocalised disaster risk management education are:

- Simple messages: In an earthquake, drop, cover, and hold
<http://www.earthquakecountry.info/dropcoverholdon>
- Simple skills: Learn first aid including CPR and self-treatment.
- Simple actions: If living in a flood-vulnerable location, consider using flood-resistant materials for at least the ground floor and keep off-site back-up copies of all valuable documents and files.

The main strength of relocalisation education is reinforcing the already-established approach to disaster risk management of developing and using local skills and capabilities. Relocalisation should complement, not supplant, other approaches. By introducing a new factor, that of peak oil consequences, relocalisation educates a sector of the community concerned about fossil fuel limitations and can place that concern within the context of all disaster risk management activities.

See also:

<http://www.relocalize.net>

<http://www.peakoil.net>

<http://www.ilankelman.org/relocalisation.html>

<http://www.boulderrelocalization.org>