



BOOK REVIEW

Transitions in a Globalising World

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The Earth System may be the most complex entity that ever emerged in our galaxy, and the contemporary process of “globalisation” may be the most intricate dynamics that will ever pervade that entity: it is the interactive co-evolution of millions of technological, cultural, economical, social and environmental trends at all conceivable spatiotemporal scales that brings about the present fundamental transformation of humanity’s way of life. As a side-effect, all life on Earth will have to prove its fitness for survival in the functional niches assigned by *homo trans-sapiens*. As complex systems tend to change their state abruptly once certain critical thresholds have been transgressed, we should be prepared to face the possibility of irregular (and irrational) responses of nature and society to perpetual globalisation pressures.

The authors of this book make the heroic effort to tame the terrifying complexity of modern planetary development by the intellectual concept of “transition.” The basic idea is

that the global changes unfolding now can be perceived as an entangled family of transitions between qualitatively distinct mega-states of crucial compartments of the Earth System. The task of the analyst is to identify the potential states accessible from the initial ones, to describe the pertinent boundary conditions for transition through fundamental scenarios, and to make at least weak predictions about the likely outcomes. If executed properly, as in this book, the whole exercise is capable of producing a concise “short story of globalisation” that exhibits considerable anticipatory power. I like this approach a lot, especially as it encompasses the notion of “transition management” in the sense of mild but purposeful guard-railing of the globalisation process through multiple forms of governance.

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