

Paul Raskin, *Journey to Earthland: The Great Transition to Planetary Civilization*. Boston: Tellus Institute, 2016.

As we are bracing ourselves for the great unknown of the Trump presidency and the global rise of the political right, the sense of instability and imminent change in the world seems palpable. The list of problems facing the humanity is long: the economy, ecology, climate, refugees, social inequities, adverse consequences of automation, religious extremism and others. This raises the following question: Are we heading for the intensification of these problems or are we simply witnessing an accumulation of fuel for a future disruptive change for the better? The slim volume *Journey to Earthland: The Great Transition to Planetary Civilization* by Paul Raskin takes on this question by envisioning possible future scenarios and the pathways for reaching them. It is a beautifully written and thought-provoking essay, based on detailed technical scenario work and drawing on the author's prodigious knowledge of the history of human civilization – from the Stone Age through early civilization and the modern era.

Journey to Earthland represents a further elaboration of the author's ongoing work over the past two decades under the heading of Great Transition Initiative. The scenarios were first developed in the 1990s by the international Global Scenario Group and followed with detailed quantifications for 11 global regions, which were generated using the data-intensive PoleStar System (www.polestarproject.org). The results have been summarized in several venues, including the 2010 and 2014 articles in Sustainability (respectively, vol 2, no. 8: 2626-2651, <http://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/2/8/2626>, by Paul Raskin, Christi Electris, and Richard Rosen; and vol 6, no. 1: 123-135, <http://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/6/1/123>, by Michael Gerst, Paul Raskin and Johan Rockström).

In this volume Raskin draws on the previous data-rich work but focuses primarily on its implications for social change. The essay starts with the premise that the humanity has entered a planetary phase of civilisation whereby the growing interdependence of nations and regions has made them into a single community of fate, the overarching proto-country Raskin christens Earthland. The book is divided into three parts. Part I provides a brief overview of the dilemma facing the humanity and outlines three possible trajectories by which the future is likely to unfold: Barbarization, Conventional World and Great Transition. Barbarization would result from allowing the current troubling trends to continue with little intervention and might manifest itself in two possible endgames: a fortress world, in which a tiny minority would live in great luxury while continuously defending itself from threats presented by the miserable humanity; or total collapse and chaos. The Conventional World is the future we might create by responding over time to the growing crises by way of market forces and policy reforms, including reforming global institutions and an emergence of inspired cross-national leadership. But these incremental changes will over time not keep up with the growing crises in ecology, politics and human wellbeing. They might prevent a disaster but not create the conditions for the flourishing of humanity.

The Great Transition represents a fundamentally different vision of the future, and the only one of the three that provides the conditions for human flourishing. As depicted in Part III of the book through three potential archetypes, and located in a richly symbolic Mandela City in 2084, this world would be characterized by a new consciousness of global citizenship, a shift in dominant values – from individualism, consumerism and anthropocentrism to human solidarity, quality of life and ecocentrism – and radical change in global institutions, governance system, modes of ownership and wealth creation, and social relations. The three archetypes, derived from Greek roots, are Agora, Ecodemia, and Arcadia. They differ from each in the economic arrangements and dominant lifestyles and institutions (highly regulated corporate capitalism, worker- and community-owned enterprises, and communalism and simplicity respectively) while sharing the same core values.

Part II of the book considers the feasibility of achieving the Great Transition. The technical scenario work indicates that it is a viable economic and ecological model. But is it politically feasible? What forms of collective action and consciousness can redirect us toward such a future? Who will lead the charge? What trajectory will it take? Raskin envisions a painful and non-linear process over the next seven decades, in which the growing crises will be addressed through increasingly inadequate market and policy reforms, coming ever so closely to the abyss of the fortress world but never quite succumbing to it. Through this lens, we are currently deeply immersed in that process. The long list of global problems and the so far ineffectual attempts to address them are but manifestations of the series of increasingly deeper crises on that road. In Raskin's rendition the most powerful change agent in the evolution toward the Great Transition would be a global citizens movement, which will co-evolve together with the new institutions. While the author soberly discusses the challenges such movement would confront to get off the ground and grow, this book is essentially one of hope that it can succeed.

And this is where I see the need for another key scenario. In order to make a credible case for the Great Transition a fleshed out analysis and accompanying compelling narrative are needed focusing on the emergence of a global citizens movement. Such a scenario would build on the literature on social movements but also account for some fascinating recent developments in relation to information technology, automation, work and livelihoods, the topics that have been for the most part left out by scholars of social movements. Some of the questions to address would include: What have we learned from the failure to create viable labour movements in the developing countries where much of the global production has been taking place over the past decades? With regard to an emergence of global consciousness, what are the implications of automation and other technology-driven changes in the modes of creating livelihoods among educated classes? What role is there for the social media in fostering global consciousness and a shared agenda? What are the implications of the growing income inequality for the emergence of a citizens movements?

This book is an excellent resource for stimulating a thoughtful contemplation among educated laypersons, and for classroom debates from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives: economics, sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, political science and others. For

scientists and technically oriented readers, who may wish to consult the earlier technical publications summarizing the results of the scenario work, this book puts a poetic, humanistic and erudite clothing on the dry sets of tables and graphs that usually accompany high technical scenario work. I would hope that this book will stimulate further work on the core scenario on which the proposed Great Transition depends.