

Book review

A Transformation Journey to Creative and Alternative Planetary Futures

Edited by Motti Victor Vahidi
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In this short monograph, Motti encourages the reader to take a cerebral journey into the future rather than a physical one to a distant destination in our, or any other, solar system. The traveller traverses multiple cultural and philosophical perspectives (science, religion, philosophy and mysticism) across the landscape of futures studies. The voyage, or “transcendence to a collective consciousness”, will, in the main, be challenging though pleasantly short and certainly accessible. As such it is not directly relevant to tourism futures except that it opens up the important aspect about the future of futures studies and the extent to which this might impact on how to view developments in tourism.

The main contribution of the book to futures studies is to continue the move beyond an exclusively North American and Euro-centric perspective and to view the future through, in this case, a more Middle-Eastern viewpoint most notably Zoroastrian. This is particularly the case with its take on the future of Asia in Chapter 5. For some this may well be a welcome introduction, or a timely reminder to others and, as such, the book extends and enhances the field of futures studies. It does so in the tradition of Causal Layered Analysis and Integrated Futures as initially proposed by Sohail Inayatullah and Richard Slaughter and through a series of binary oppositions.

While Motti's thesis of a pantheistic worldview ranges widely and wisely across the important themes of our times, to provide a vision of an “anticipatory planetary era”, there is no significant recognition of the complex and, possibly, insurmountable difficulties of how this vision might come to pass. Geopolitics, institutional barriers, social change and identity politics will all influence the prospects of obtaining the transformative shifts required. In so doing, Motti risks joining other idealistic visionaries from many cultures across the ages in providing a highly appealing vision of the future that inspires but leaves to others the daunting, and potentially unsuccessful, task of stimulating, harnessing and ultimately delivering change. If this were to be an emergent property of the current globally connected society there is insufficient evidence presented here to support the case.

Motti draws on a modest but eclectic bibliography ranging from classic futures studies texts to contemporary books and journal articles supported by a hefty number of pieces from the grey literature and through cinema. The style is clear and accessible though the book would have benefited from a more rigorous proof read. The voice of the author is present in the use of the first person and in various comments on events and authors which gives the monograph a more intimate and less academic point of access. As such a reader seeking a wider perspective on futures studies should enjoy their potentially transformative journey to explore Motti's planetary futures.

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