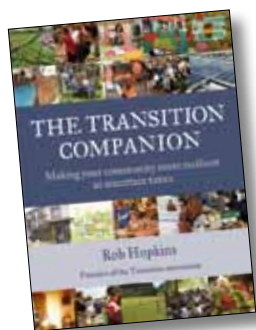


Reviews



THE TRANSITION COMPANION Making Your Community More Resilient in Uncertain Times

Rob Hopkins
Green Books, 2011
197 x 265mm, 288pp
£19.95



Transition is now a worldwide grassroots movement that looks climate change and peak oil squarely in the face and dismisses the utter impossibility of endless economic growth on a planet of finite resources. It offers community based solutions to help people in villages, towns and cities adapt to the inevitable challenges of the oncoming reality of profound economic and social change unflinchingly and with a good degree of humility and good cheer. It's a collection of recipes for building community, environmental regeneration, relocated economies and so much more.

Transition emerged from an energy descent plan process during an in-depth permaculture design course taught by Rob Hopkins at Kinsale Further Education College in the early 2000s and has since spread around the world. Rob's first book, *The Transition Handbook* (2008), introduced the concept and explained how to set up Transition initiatives. It went down a storm. Other titles followed in the series – on local food, money, planning a Transition 'timeline', and how to influence local government with these ideas – by a variety of authors working with Rob and the other co-founders of the movement. Almost a decade of experimentation unfolded. This new volume offers stories of

Transition initiatives from all over the world, plus practical Transition Tools for starting, and perhaps more critically, maintaining a Transition initiative. It's an impressive collection of ideas and praxis.

I read so many books about peak oil, the state of the world, and environmental degradation that I often glaze over. This one is different. It has authority born from practical experience, with a musculature that is immediately engaging, even reassuring. It feels mature. The book is not afraid to catalogue the limitations and failures, even celebrate them, as well as the successes. I like the way the book was crowd sourced. Rob blogged on each Transition Tool and invited feedback and ideas. The participatory aspect brings it alive: here is more than one visionary man's voice but a whole chorus of voices. There's a good degree of futurecasting within its pages: stories from a future that has embraced transition, some not without their humour. As computer scientist, Alan Kay said, "The best way to invent the future is to predict it." That's exactly what this book aims to do.

As a publisher, I like the physical design of the book. It is visually interesting and easy to read but what I really love about it is its honesty. Right from the start Rob says, "Transition is not a known quantity. We truly don't know if it will work. It is a social experiment on a massive scale." What I am convinced of is its validity and critical necessity. The strings of governments are pulled by vested interest. Individuals are lone voices. It is only when we gather together in numbers that we begin to tip the balance of power. Working to transform how we live as a species is the only work worth doing. I applaud Rob and his fellow transitioners for their global experiment and their vision of hope that have awakened so many people. As the old world crumbles, we need to test out new ideas, techniques and technologies. So many are contained here and are reported with the wisdom of experience. This is rich meal for a creative, alternative future.

Maddy Harland

LEAN LOGIC A Dictionary For The Future & How To Survive It

David Fleming
www.leanlogic.net, 2011
216 x 154mm, 736pp
£30.00
ISBN 978-0-95508-496-6

David Fleming was one of the leading thinkers of the British green movement. For many years he worked on this book, *Lean Logic*, but was always determined to have it published by a mainstream publisher. He wanted it to be read by people in positions of influence and have the impact he felt it deserved. Unfortunately that never happened and since his death it has been privately published by his friends and colleagues.

The main theme of the book is how we're going to live after peak oil and the collapse of the market economy. The key to David's vision of this future is his use of the word 'lean'. The modern nation state will be quite unable to exist in a low-energy future and a huge amount of unnecessary activity will go by the board: everything from large-scale transport and electricity grids to social workers and prisons. What's left will be many local communities, lightly networked, each providing for its own essential goods and services locally, materially poor but socially rich.

The book examines the implications of this for every aspect of our lives, from food, buildings and energy to law and order and defence. This is a quite revolutionary approach. Up to now most books on the subject of human ecology have started in the present, discussed what's wrong with it and then proposed ways to transform it into something more sustainable. *Lean Logic* starts with a totally different premise: that the present world economy is not going to last; whether we like it or not it's rapidly reaching its limit and will soon be replaced by something else. That something else is the subject of the book.

It avoids the twin pitfalls of being either prescriptive or fatalistic. It neither tells us what we should do, nor that this is the way it's going to be whether we like it or not.