

Global Simulation Models: A Comparative Study.

JOHN CHAIKIN and SAUL CLARKE

John Wiley, London, 1978. vii + 135 pp. £5.75.

This slim volume is, to quote the authors' own words, "a 'technology assessment' of the computerisation of social models". It describes critically the major world modelling programmes and discusses in general terms the problems and potential of development in this field. In fact, the title rather belies the contents, since only a small proportion of the book is directly concerned with the comparative study of global simulation models. Introductory chapters on first generation (Forrester, Meadows) and on later (Majumdar-vic-Pestel, Bariloche, etc.) world models are followed by three further chapters which consider aspects of the problems and methods of systems modelling. A selective review of attempts at modelling various aspects of global problems, including examples taken from ecology, macroeconomics and urban planning, is provided in the next chapter, which also considers the role of models in policy determination. A final chapter returns to the state-of-the-art in the field of global modelling and suggests the direction for future development.

The book may perhaps best be viewed as a follow-up to "Thinking about the Future", the SPRI critique of the first world modelling exercises, and the authors make some useful criticisms of the work which has been carried out in more recent years. The major problems associated with work in this area, including divided responsibilities, uncertain time horizons, data limitations and simple ignorance of system behaviour, are given a thorough airing, and it is good to see these issues having the prominence they deserve. However, one is bound to feel that this 'snapshot' of the global modelling field will quickly become dated, and that too many digressions into the general problems of model-building, coupled with a tendency to dwell on semantic issues, detract from the value of the book to other researchers. By contrast, those unfamiliar with the area will find the treatment of the models discussed too sketchy to provide a good basis for comparison, although their shortcomings are clearly explained. It is probably for its discussion of the role and context of global modelling activity, both now and in the future, that this book will be of the greatest value and may be recommended.

J. W. BRYANT

REFERENCE

- [1] S. D. GALE and coworkers (1971) *Thinking about the Future*. Clarendon and Wadsworth, London.

Global Simulation Models A Comparative Study

Harry Lehmann



Global Simulation Models A Comparative Study:

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