

Climate Change and Securitisation of Nature



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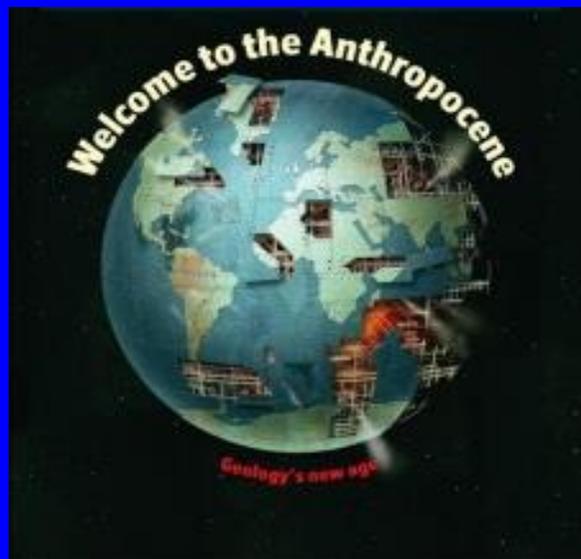
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Urban age is the 'age of man'



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Climate change unravels inescapable interdependencies between human & nature



media headlines on climate change

- **IT IS THE END OF THE WORLD...MAINLY FOR CHILDREN** – *The Express* 17 January 2000
- **HOW THE WORLD WILL END** – *Daily Mail*, 28 Dec 2002
- **WAVE IT GOODBYE: RAGING FLOODS COULD SWAMP OUR CITIES WITHIN A LIFETIME** – *The Mirror*, 16 Sept 2002
- Pentagon warns Bush of **apocalyptic climate change** by 2020 – *The Observer*, 22 February 2004
- **WATER WARS**- Armed forces are put on standby to tackle threat of wars over water - *The Independent*, 28 February 2006
- We have less than **100 months to act** – *Prince Charles*, March 2009

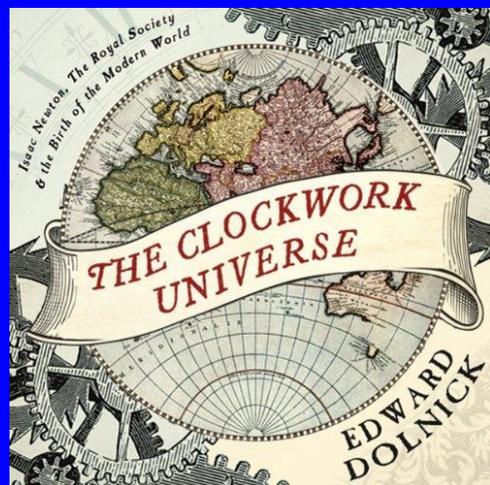
Outline

- Multiple meanings of nature
 - Nature as clockwork
 - Nature as finite asset
 - Nature as risk
- Risk-laden discourses of climate change and securitisation of nature
- Politics of securitisation

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Nature as ‘clockwork’

- Newtonian mechanical view of nature
- **Conquering nature** by uncovering its secrets



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Enlightenment was driven by a desire to not just explore, but also exploit nature.



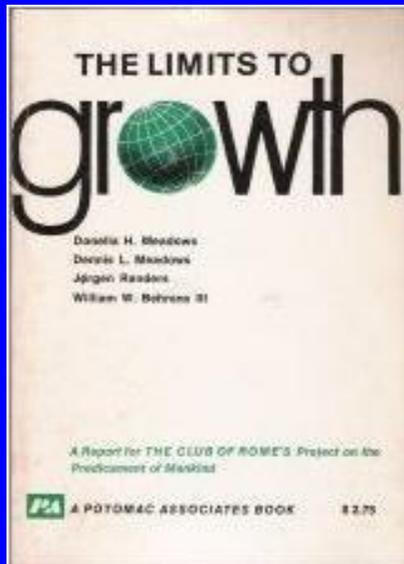
Nature as 'finite asset'

- Nature turned into a set of 'environmental problems' for which techno-scientific solution had to be found.
- Shift from what we could get out of nature to what we had done to it and what could be done to rectify the damage



Impetus for change

- Protecting the environment is crucial for humanity's survival!



Sustainability

- The rhetoric of sustainability – eternalised by Brundtland Report- reimagines nature as a **finite asset to be safeguarded** for future generations.
- Its focus is less on limits, more on capacities; less on apocalyptic futures, more on promising futures



“Growth has no set limits in terms of population or resources use beyond which lies ecological disaster” (WCED, 1987:45)

Nature as 'risk'

- The dominant discourses of climate change portray nature as risk
- Hark back to pre-modern view of human–nature relations that was centred on:
 - what nature **does to us** rather than what we **do to nature**



Hazard and Risk

- “Risks are made, hazards naturally occur”
(Beck 2012: 13-15)
- Risk Society is hallmark of ‘reflexive modernity’:
 - an era “when modernity is dealing with problems literally of its own making”
(Dalby, 2008:445)



Dominating discourses of climate change

- Accord agency to nature, render it as an independent force which is:
 - ‘out there’ waiting to strike back
 - blamed for the social and ecological problems that are in fact integral part of the relations of global neoliberal capitalism
- Discursive shift: from safeguarding nature as a resource *for* the future, to safeguarding the future *against* the threatening nature
- Analogous to the narrative of survivalism

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Implications of seeing nature as risk

- Displacement of the modernist (false) sense of certainty by the narratives of uncertainty, inevitability and insecurity
 - But without abandoning the modernist quest for control.
- The risk-laden discourses of climate change elevate the demand for control.

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Risk as political rationality

- A key characteristic of risk, as opposed to hazard, is its perceived calculability and controllability by technical experts.
- The imaginary of climate change evokes an understanding of risk as probabilities by which uncertainty is rendered knowable and actionable as long as better forms of calculations are employed.
- “Risk rules”! (Dillon 2008:324)

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A paradox

- The risk-laden narrative of climate change simultaneously evokes
 - pessimism about the apocalyptic future
 - optimism about our ability to securitize it



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Securitisation of nature

- Seeing nature as risk ushers in a deep concern with security.
- The **risk society** becomes intertwined with the **security society**
- Whereas risk threatens, security promises
- Risk and security feed from one another:
 - keeping up the demand for security requires maintaining a heightened sense of risk

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Social problems are recast as security problems

- Food security trumps biodiversity
- Energy security trumps renewable energy
- Climate security trumps sustainability
- The securitization of nature reflects and reinforces the wider and dominating global discourses of securitization
 - National security
 - Resilient urbanism

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National security: climate change as a ‘threat multiplier’

- “During our decades of experience in the U.S. military, we have addressed many national security challenges, from [...] deterrence of the Soviet nuclear threat during the Cold War to terrorism and extremism in recent years. Global climate change presents a new [...] type of national security challenge [...], it is important that the U.S. military begin planning to address these potentially devastating effects.”

(CNA, 2007: 1).

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Climate change and ‘safe cities’

“We are not a security guard company: We sell a *concept* of security”.

President of a security firm in the United States (cited in Davis, 1990b: 250)

- Security is not just a means to an end but **an end in itself**
- The pursuit of a *safe* utopia leads to the ever expanding landscape of securitisation

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The race to the ‘safe city’

- “London is less vulnerable [to climate change] than some of its principal world city competitors”—referring to New York and Tokyo.

(Mayor of London, GLA, 2010:109)

- Profound distributive, environmental and democratic implications

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‘Selling the concept of resilience’

- As the key strategy for urban securitisation
- Focusing not on long term adaptive capacity building but on short term emergency responses



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Politics of securitisation

- Instantiates a regime of knowledge/power relations that capitalises upon crafting, circulating and techno-managing risk.
- Foregrounds calculative practices, technical-rational risk assessments and managerial approaches to planning.



The postpolitics of fear

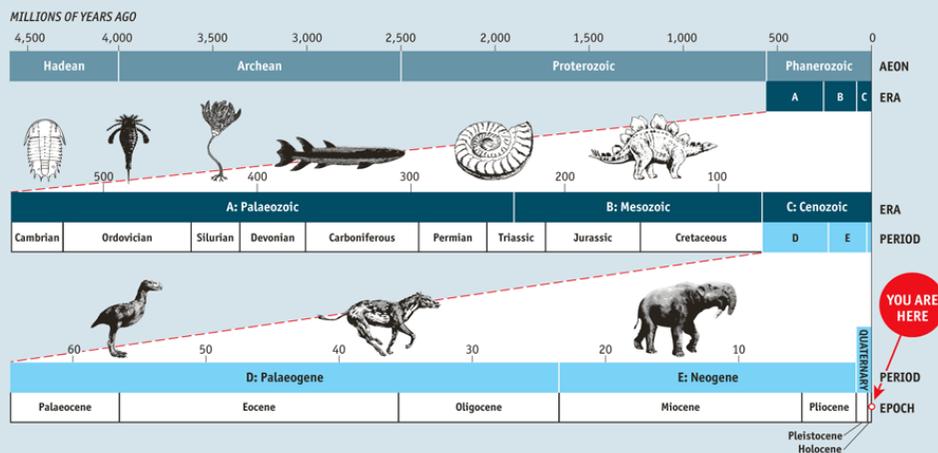
- Suspension of democratic safeguards
- Uncoupling of checks and balances in the name of urgency, emergency, resilience, risk and security
- Provoking strong emotions that can:
 - legitimise extraordinary exercise of power
 - renounce or displace social conflicts
 - foreclose a proper political framing
 - ostracize the arenas in which questions about justice, fairness and conflicts can be raised

Further details and references in:

Davoudi, S. (2014), Climate change, securitisation of nature and resilient urbanism
Environment and Planning C, 32: 360-375

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Urban age is the 'age of man': the Anthropocene



Climate change unravels the inescapable interdependencies
 between human and nature

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