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Climate change, securitisation of nature and resilient urbanism

Abstract

Climate change is a powerful reminder of the interdependencies of human-nature relationship and the fallacy of the modernist assumption about our ability to tame nature for our exploitation with little or no consequences. However, this paper argues that such reflexivity is being subverted by the dominant discourses of climate change which portray: nature as risk, our relation to it in terms of security and, the quest for urban resilience as emergency planning. By construing nature as a *threat to* rather than *an asset for* cities, they signify a departure from sustainability discourses. They represent hark back to a pre-modern conception of human-nature relations that was centred on what nature does *to us* rather than what we do *to nature*. Seeing nature as risk ushers in deep concerns with security. The ‘risk society’ becomes entwined with security society. The paper examines the political implications of this discursive shift and argues that as securitization becomes the hegemonic discourse of our time, the postpolitics of *hope*, which underpinned sustainability, is giving way to the postpolitics of *fear* which underlies climate change.

Keywords: Nature, climate change, risk, security, emergency, postpolitics, resilient urbanism

1. Introduction

We are frequently reminded that the 21st century is the first urban century. For the first time in history, the majority of the world’s population live in cities and by 2050 three out of four people will be urban dwellers. What is less frequently rehearsed is that the urban age is the prevailing manifestation of ‘the age of man’ or, as the Dutch atmospheric chemist Paul

Crutzen¹ calls it, the ‘Anthropocene’. The idea is that we no longer live in Holocene, a 10,000-year-old geological epoch of relative climate stability². That, we have entered a paradigmatically different epoch called the ‘age of man’ in which “dam by dam, mine by mine, farm by farm and city by city” humans have remade nature (*The Economist*, 2011:3). For the first time in history, human activities have brought about planetary changes whose significance is on par with geological forces. As McKibben (1989:8) asserts, “we are at the end of Nature” by which he does not mean the end of the world but, the end of “nature as eternal and separate”. In the Anthropocene, what was once non-human nature has been turned into “something contingent and coincident with human society” (Luke, 1999:10). A compelling evidence of this is the reconfiguration of the planet’s carbon cycle by anthropogenic release of quantities of fossil carbon over the past couple of centuries that took the planet hundreds of millions of years to store away. This is now causing global warming, sea level rise, melting of the Arctic, changes to oceans’ chemistry, and all that which is attributed to climate change.

Climate change has unravelled, perhaps more than any other environmental change, the intimate and inescapable interdependencies between human and non-human nature (hereafter called nature). It has revealed our complex and precarious relationship with nature and the fallacy of the modernist assumption about our ability to conquer and exploit nature with little or no consequences. It has led to “growing scepticism” about “advances on knowledge and technology” (EC, 2000:5) which, as some commentators argue, have washed away “a certain set of human ideas about the world and our place in it” (McKibben, 1989:8). The main argument of this paper is that such awareness and reflexive environmentalism is increasingly

¹ He shared a Nobel Prize for discovering the effects of ozone-depleting compounds and is credited with coining the term Anthropocene in a conference in 2000.

² This is stable and temperate part of the quaternary period which was distinguished by regular shifts into and out of ice ages.

displaced by the dominating discourses of climate change which portray nature as risk and frame our relationship to it in terms of security. It is also argued that by construing nature as a *risk to*, rather than a finite *asset for* cities, they mark a departure from sustainability discourses. The focus is shifting from seeing nature as a resource to be sustained *for* cities to considering nature as a threat *against* which cities are to be secured. This securitisation of nature has profound implications for how the environment is treated and valued, what kinds of environmental policies are formulated, and what types of environmental politics are mobilised. As Botkin (1990) suggests, “the potential for us to make progress with environmental issues is limited by the basic assumptions that we make about nature, the unspoken, often unrecognized perspective from which we view our environment”.

The paper is divided into five main sections. After this introduction, section two provides an overview of the evolving meanings of nature. Section three examines the risk-laden language of climate change and the securitisation of nature, focusing in particular on two referent objects that dominate climate security discourses: cities and nations. Section four discusses the emerging postpolitics of securitization, arguing that while climate change is underpinned by a similar consensual politics to that of sustainability, its rhetoric is shifting from the postpolitics of hope to the postpolitics of fear. Section five concludes the paper.

2. Multiple meanings of nature

“Every age has its own unique view of nature, its own interpretation of what the world is all about. Knowing a civilisation’s concept of Nature is tantamount to knowing how a civilisation thinks and acts.” (Rifkin, 1983: 20)

Although there are multiple, conflicting and contested meanings of ‘nature’, it is possible to distinguish between two broad perspectives: the anthropocentric and the bio-centric. The anthropocentric perspective places humans at the centre of Universe and nature at their service. As the Anthropocene is the defining geological age of our time, so is the anthropocentric perspective its defining environmental ethics. From this human-centred view, nature has *instrumental* values. It is a means to other ends, or as maintained by Aristotle, “nature has made all things specifically for the sake of man” (cited in Brennan and Yeuk-Sze, 2011). This is in contrast to the bio-centric perspective which considers humans as members of an interconnected ‘web of life’ (Marshall, 1994) and an integral part of nature, rather than its master or steward. From the bio-centric perspective nature has *intrinsic* values. It is an end in itself. Although the bio-centric view predates the anthropocentric one, it has remained subservient to it since the Enlightenment era. Within the dominant anthropocentric perspective three meanings of nature that have been particularly influential. First is nature as clockwork which imbued modernity and its desire to conquer nature. Second is nature as finite asset that permeates the reflexive environmentalism of the sustainability agenda. And, third is nature as risk which legitimises the securitisation of climate change. Elsewhere, I have explored how these world views have been articulated in policy discourses of spatial plans in the UK (Davoudi, 2012a). Below, a consolidation of that work is presented in order to lay the foundation for the argument in favour of the discursive shift and its political implications.

2.1 Nature as clockwork

Seeing nature as a mechanical machine became dominant after the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century and particularly the rise of Newtonian mechanics. It replaced the previous meaning of nature as a metaphysical order with a divine origin and instead portrayed

it as a machine whose behavior could be predicted by mathematical rules and monitored by command and control systems (Botkin, 1990). It was believed that by uncovering the secrets of nature through instrumental reason, humans could conquer the clockwork Universe and overcome its material scarcity. By stripping nature from its divinity and symbolic values, science and technology gave humans both the means and the right to exploit it (Bowler, 1992). Francis Bacon's assertion sums up these anthropocentric views of the world:

“Man, [...] may be regarded as the centre of the world [...] For the whole world works together in the service of man, and there is nothing from which he does not derive use and fruit [...] insomuch that all things seem to going about man's business and not their own” (cited in Marshall, 1994: 184).

The Enlightenment project was, thus, driven by a desire not just to explore nature, but also to exploit it (Bowler, 1992; Cronon, 1995); a desire which was materialized on an industrial scale in the nineteenth century. Cities in the western societies turned into fossil-fueled powerhouses of the Industrial Revolution which brought wealth for some, misery for others and left behind unprecedented environmental scars notably the reconfiguration of the Earth's carbon cycle. As Jameson (1991: ix) argues, one manifestation of the completion of the modernism project is that “Nature is gone for good”, and “what was once God's wild Nature” has become “technoscientific managerialists' tamed ecosystem” (Luke 1997: 9 drawing on Grubb *et al*, 1983) which is out there to provide us with: a storehouse of material resources to be mined, a sink for absorbing waste and pollution, a container of goods, a repository of functional services, a source of aesthetic pleasure, and a backcloth for urban development (Davoudi, 2012a). While the mechanical view of nature was challenged as early as the

nineteenth century by, for example, the Romantic movements³ in Europe, the functional utilitarian approach to it continued to define the treatment of the environment in urban policy and planning in the UK (Davoudi, 2012a). Furthermore, the initial welfare orientation has been increasingly turned into commodification and marketization, a trend which is now intensified by the discourses of ‘ecosystems goods and services’ (MEA, 2005). Open spaces, for example, which were seen as the ‘green lungs’ for the cities of the twentieth century are now assigned with new functions and services such as: cooling ambient temperature, draining flood waters, storing carbon, and ‘weatherproofing’ cities. As Higgins (2012:30) suggests, by putting price tags on nature “we are [...] commoditising the Earth. [...] We create more property rights over Nature, and markets take precedence over the intrinsic value of land”. We return to this commodification trend in the discussion about risk and security, below.

2.2 Nature as finite asset

While Romanticism has been considered by some as an elitist attempt to preserve “the environmental artefacts” “*for* ‘the Nation’, but *from* ‘the public’” (Newby, 1990:6), the challenge posed by the environmental consciousness of the mid-twentieth century was more widespread. In the 1960s the idea that nature could be exploited with no consequences began to be contested. Nature turned into a set of ‘environmental problems’ for which specialised, techno-scientific solution had to be found and implemented through environmental management and regulation (Dryzek, 1997). The emphasis was shifting from what we could get out of nature to what we had done to it and what could be done to rectify the damage. The impetus was mixed ranging from the material impacts of environmental catastrophes⁴, to the symbolic influences of seeing the Earth from the space and to the alarming messages of

³ For example, John Constable and William Turner, the British Romantic painters, who considered nature as a source of inspiration; and, William Blake for whom nature was where the industry was not (Williams, 1972); it was ‘England's green and pleasant land’ that was endangered by the ‘dark Satanic Mills’ (*Milton: a poem* 1808).

⁴ Such as the widely publicized Minamata disease in Japan and the Love Canal in New York

Rachael Carson's *Silent Spring* (Carson, 1962) and The Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* (Meadows *et al*, 1972). The latter, produced by a team of scientists and computer modellers, was particularly influential in provoking the discourse of survivalism which resonated with the earlier carrying capacity concerns of ecologists (Dryzek, 1997) and the Malthusian anxieties of population biologists. Indeed, some referred to the Club of Rome as 'Malthus With a Computer' (Freeman, 1973). Although survivalism was rendered a seal of approval by the discovery of a 'hole' in the ozone layer, its salience was sidelined by the Brundtland Report (WCSD, 1989) and its promise of a win-win, sustainable development solution to environmental problems. The Report asserted that, "Growth has no set limits in terms of population or resources use beyond which lies ecological disaster" (WCSD, 1989:45) because, the "accumulation of knowledge and the development of technology can enhance the carrying capacity of the resources base" (WCSD, 1989: 45). Its confidence in humans to "have the ingenuity to change" (WCSD, 1989: 205) and its rhetoric of a positive-sum relation between growth and environment played a major part in its widespread currency. Its message was a reassuring one: "we can see and study the Earth as an organism" and that would give us "the power to reconcile human affairs with natural laws and to thrive in the processes" (WCSD, 1989:1). The rhetoric of sustainability - eternalised in Brundtland's definition of sustainable development- reimagines nature as a finite asset which should and could be safeguarded for the generations to come. Its focus is less on limits and more on capacities; and less on apocalyptic futures in which humans' survival is threatened and more on promising futures in which humans flourish alongside a sustainable and tamed ecosystem.

This paper argues that the reflexive environmentalism which imbued the sustainability agenda is increasingly displaced by the dominant discourses of climate change that are shifting the attention from nature as *asset* to nature as *risk*. This goes beyond Hamdouch and

Zuindeau's (2012:430) suggestion that, "a world increasingly subject to risks" is the latest changes that have happened to the "concept of sustainable development". The argument here is that a *new* way of seeing nature is emerging which is radically different from the one evoked by sustainable development. Imagining "nature as risk is hark back to a pre-modern conception of human-nature relations which was centred on what *nature does* to us, rather than what *we do* to nature" (Davoudi, 2012a: 62-63). In the environment versus development debate, this can lead to being more concerned about the impact of the environment on development (as in adaptation assessment) than the impact of development on the environment (as in environmental impact assessment). There is, however, a fundamental difference between now and the pre-modern time and that lies in the distinction between hazard and risk, as discussed below.

2.3 Nature as risk

"A spectre is haunting the entire world: but it is not that of communism [...] Climate change – no more, no less than nature's payback [...] is revealing itself" (Levene, 2005 cited in Swyngedouw, 2010:214).

People have always been exposed to natural hazards such as earthquakes and erupting volcanos. In the pre-modern time these were viewed as divine retributions to which people were passively exposed. Human action was incapable of changing these 'strokes of fate' (WBGU, 2000) decreed from on high by divine forces such as *Fortuna* - the Roman goddess of fate and often translated into English as fortune. The Enlightenment project sought to bring nature as the demonic other under human control by moulding the world to their purposes. *Fortuna*, seen as the enemy of order, had to be tamed. The interventions meant that natural hazards which were previously seen as external to and beyond the social realm

became increasingly entwined with it. Modernity and its “technoscience turned what was nonhuman Nature into something contingent and coincident with human society” (Luke, 1999:10), and by doing so it transformed *hazards* into *risks*. The distinction between the two lies in the role of human intervention in nature (Luhmann, 1991). Whereas hazard refers to a natural event, risk is an artefact carefully crafted by humans (Dillon, 2008:322). “Risks are made, hazards naturally occur”, as Ulrich Beck (2012: 13-15) puts it. It is this understanding of risk which is at the heart of Beck’s ‘risk society’ and the hallmark of what he calls ‘reflexive modernity’ (Beck, 1996); an era “when modernity is dealing with problems literally of its own making” (Dalby, 2008:445). Beck argues that, “the basic problems today are not of the environment or nature, and not a simple matter of social irresponsibility or lack of respect for nature” (cited in Siedman and Alexander, 2001:20) but, of the way in which nature is socially interpreted and culturally constructed in late modernity. Thus, to suggest that nature as risk is a social construct does not simply mean that nature reacts to social intervention. Rather, it means society forms and shapes the natural (including the climate systems) in terms of risk. It is about nature being “figured as a ‘risk’ in and of itself” (Baldwin and Stanley, 2013:2).

It is true that some discourses of climate change are similar to those of sustainability and highlight its anthropogenic causes and the need for mitigation measures. Some challenge the framing of vulnerability and adaptation as a mere environmental problem and put the emphasis on the role of social structures in the production and reproduction of such vulnerabilities (see for example, Adger *et al*, 2001). However, these reflexive views are increasingly displaced by those that accord agency to nature and render it an independent force which is ‘out there’ waiting to strike back, despite “modernity’s proclivity to dominate, destroy, manage, cajole or modify Nature” (Baldwin and Stanley, 2013:3). This externalized

and disembodied nature is then blamed for the social and ecological problems that are in fact “caused by modernity” and are “integral part of the relations of global neoliberal capitalism” (Swyngdouw, 2009: 613). Wisner *et al* (2004) trace a similar re-assigning of responsibility from human to nature in the early literature on disaster risk. Although since the 1970s, many analysts have stressed that disasters (as opposed to hazards) are not natural and should be considered as failed development (O’Brien *et al.*, 2006), “this view remains widespread” (Schipper and Pelling, 2006:26). The dominant climate change discourses reinforce this view by bringing back “the wild autogenic otherness of Nature” which was replaced by “the anthropogenic systems of ‘the environment’” after the 1960s (Luke, 1997:9)⁵. The tamed ecosystems are being reimagined as the unruly nature. This engenders a change of priorities from safeguarding nature as a resource *for* the future, to safeguarding the future *against* nature seen as a threat.

To some extent, these are analogous to the narrative of survivalism and its emphasis on: limits, projection of a seemingly relentless trajectory, and the suggestion that the fates of cities and localities are to be swept up in the global malaise. Note, for example, the early discussions on climate change and the argument that, as “climate change affects life support systems [...] survivalism- the most elemental of human goals and the first duty of all governments- is called into serious question” (Wilson 1983:71). The similarities between the two maybe due to the institutional contexts in which they were produced and more specifically the predominant role played by science and computer models in constructing and representing a particular meaning of nature. In his response to *Limits to Growth*, Freeman challenged the claim to objectivity and neutrality of computer modelling that were used for establishing ‘limits’ and argued that, “The apparent detached neutrality of a computer model

⁵ This is not to suggest that any statement of ‘risk’ associated with environmental hazards is necessarily and consciously related to an underlying discourse that accords agency to nature.

is as illusory as it is persuasive. Any model of any social systems [...] involves assumptions [...] that are necessarily coloured by the attitudes and values of the individual or groups concerned.” (Freeman, 1973:7-8). Hajer and Versteeg (2011) make a similar point about the formation of climate change discourses. Drawing on Miller (2004), they state that until the second half of the twentieth century *climate* was almost synonymous to weather. It signified an aggregation of locally specific *weather* averages which although could cause major damage to particular localities, it was not seen as a global risk. This changed radically with the rising awareness of global warming. The term climate began to represent “an ontological whole, an integrated system” (Miller, 2004: 54). When the debate on climate change started it was seen as one of several global effects of environmental problems. After the first World Climate Conference in 1979 (organised by the World Meteorological Organisation in Geneva) climate became “a theme in its own right” with its own scientific community (Hajer and Versteeg, 2011:85) to whom the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has given a unified and consensual voice. Since then, climate change has become the emblematic environmental problems. As Whatmore (2008: 1777) suggests, “the term environment is being subsumed under the hegemonic imperative of climate change”. With their computer models, visualizing graphic and statistical matrices, scientists not only perceive, but also perform climate change (Demeritt, 2001). In doing so, they shape a particular understanding of it which is increasingly ossified in the narrative of risks and “fused with a pervasive apocalyptic imaginary” (Swyngdouw, 2009: 602) which encourages “drastic neomalthusian scenarios” (Nordas and Gleditch, 2007:627). In this context, the political question is not just who decides but also who imagines the future (Aradau *et al*, 2008: 152).

One implication of seeing nature as risk is the displacement of the modernist (false) sense of certainty and its over-rated confidence in human ingenuity and technology that imbued the

Brundtland Report, by the narratives of uncertainty, inevitability and insecurity that are now prevalent in all aspects of policy. This, however, is not to suggest that the modernist quest for controlling the seemingly clockwork Universe is abandoned. On the contrary, the risk-laden discourses of climate change elevate the demand for control, for policing nature and for security (see below). A key characteristic of risk, as opposed to danger or hazard, is its perceived calculability and controllability by technical experts who are “given pole position to define agendas and impose bounding premises *a priori* on risk discourses” (Lash and Wynne, 1994:4). The imaginary of climate change, produced by the scientific community and exaggerated by the popular media (see Table 1) evokes the Pascalian⁶ understanding of risk as probabilities “by means of which the uncertain future [...] is rendered knowable and actionable” (Aradau *et al*, 2008: 150) as long as better forms of calculations, models and management techniques are employed.

A corollary to the rising risk-based approaches to environmental issues is the affirmation of the 1960s’ outmoded view of urban planning as a technical-rational decision making process and a growing use of quantification, calculation and engineering-based modeling in urban planning. This may not only undermine the qualitative and judgmental basis of planning decisions by conflating ‘matters of facts’ with ‘matters of concerns’ (Latour, 2004), but also foreclose political disagreements. It can lead to a politics that “legitimizes itself by means of a direct reference to the scientific status of its knowledge” (Žižek, 2006: 1888) rather than, for example, its ideological foundation. As Pidgeon and Butler (2009) argue, the risk-based approaches are articulated not only as technical knowledge practices, but also as political rationalities. For example, Pattberg (2012: 623) suggests that through “the agency of nonstate actors”, such as investors and financiers, and specific “techniques of governance”, such as

⁶ Pascal is said to be the first to invent probability in order to win at gaming but his invention also highlighted the value of mathematical ways of translating contingency into risk and “turning numbers into [...] policy as well as profit” (Dillon, 2013:318).

carbon disclosure, “climate change has been manufactured into a specific type of (business) risk”. Thus, risk tools are used not simply to aid decision-making, but as an assemblage of government technologies. Drawing on Foucault’s biopolitical framing of risk, Dillon (2008:323) contends that by measuring and commodifying our exposure to contingency⁷, “risk rules”. It becomes “the rule for the conduct of conduct in a new governmental order of securitizing” (ibid:324). Paradoxical as it may sound, the risk-laden narrative of climate change simultaneously evokes pessimism about the apocalyptic future and optimism about our ability to securitize it through technologies of risk.

3. Securitisation of nature

Seeing nature as risk ushers in a deep concern with security. Ironically, our knowledge and manipulation of nature to fit it to our purposes and to free us from its hazards seem to have led to our greater fear of its risks and, hence, greater demand for security. The more we have ‘fabricated uncertainties’ (Beck, 1996) the greater our sense of insecurity. And, the more nature is conceived of as a threat to humankind and civilization, the more our relation to it is framed in terms of safety and security. In these ‘ecologies of fear’ (Davis, 1999a) the risk society becomes intertwined with the security society. Although the discourses of (in)security may be seen as an accentuated discourse of vulnerability (Barnett, 2003), not all vulnerabilities are elevated to the status of insecurities. Defining and selecting what is at risk and what vulnerabilities should be upgraded to insecurity are contested political acts, even though they are often masqueraded as technical-rational risk assessments.

Like risk, security is socially produced but, “whereas risk threatens, security promises” (Zedner, 2003:176). It gives people both a *sense of* being safe and *the means to* achieve that.

⁷ Within the biopolitical framework contingency is not simply uncertainty, it is the condition of emergent life

It promises a condition in which risk is non-existent, neutralised, avoided (ibid) or underwritten (Dillon, 2008). While non-existence of risk is utopian, the desire for neutralization, avoidance of risk provides the rationale for relentless pursuit of security. Risk and security, therefore, feed from one another in the sense that keeping up the demand for security requires maintaining a heightened sense of risk. As Dillon (2008:326) suggests “risk satisfies the desire for security by upping up the ante and thereby massively increasing exposure to contingency, which it further translates into new risks”. Attraction of such circularity has led to a large number of social and environmental problems, including climate change, to be increasingly articulated as security problems (Spitzer, 1987). With regard to the environment, the axis of debate is swinging from development versus nature to the question of which security should take precedence. For example, the debate over energy crops is turning into a competition about which security is more important: food or energy security⁸. In many respects, this is an anathema to traditional environmental agendas because increasingly food security trumps biodiversity, energy security trumps renewable energy, and climate security trumps sustainability. The securitization of nature, therefore, reflects and reinforces the wider and dominating global discourses of securitization (Aradau, 2009).

The recasting of climate change as a security problem became prevalent following the Toronto Conference in 1988⁹ which focused on the ‘dangers’ of climate change and announced that its “ultimate consequences could be second only to a global nuclear war” (cited in Barnett, 2001:4), an analogy later used by Smil (1997). Since then, there has been a growing literature that frames climate change in terms of security (for a full review see Barnett, 2001; Barnett and Adger, 2007) with some using belligerent language similar to the above. A key milestone in the securitisation of climate change was its inclusion in the

⁸ I am grateful to Philip Lowe who raised these points in an email exchange in May 2011.

⁹ The conference: *The Changing Atmosphere: Implications for Global Security* was the first international meeting on climate change in which scientists and political actors were brought together.

meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on 17 April 2007 (Nordas and Gleditsch, 2007) by the UK and on 20 July 2011 by Germany (Oels, 2013). The latter led to the UNSC Presidential Declaration that, “possible adverse effects of climate change may, in the long run, aggravate certain existing threats to international peace and security” (UNSC, 2011:32). Of the various referent objects that dominate climate security discourse, cities and nations have a prominent position as discussed below.

3.1 National security and climate 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).

The above quote is an example of a growing trend to recast climate change problems as *national* security problems which in turn call for military planning. The quote is from the report: *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change* published by the CNA Corporation, a think tank in the United States and produced by a Military Advisory Board consisting of eleven top retired admirals and generals. One of whom is cited to suggest that climate change acts as a “*threat multiplier*” (CNA, 2007:6 emphasis added) and “will provide the conditions that will extend the war on terror” (ibid: 17). Two years later, the UN General Assembly Report confirmed the framing of climate change as a “threat multiplier” (UN GA, 2009:2). In 2011, a special meeting of the UNSC was convened to consider the possibility of expanding “its mission to keep the peace in an era of climate change” by introducing a new ‘environmental peacekeeping force’ with ‘green helmets’ (instead of blue) who “could step

into conflicts caused by shrinking resources” (*The Guardian*, 2011). The suggestion was that, “The security council should join the general assembly in recognizing climate change as a threat to international peace and security; it is a threat as great as nuclear proliferation or global terrorism” (ibid). Adding to these sentiments, the UK's Climate and Energy Security Envoy to Durban Submit (2011) posted a note on the website of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office explaining “why climate change can be a threat multiplier”¹⁰. Evidence about similar development in other nations about similar development in other nations is provided by Wisner *et al* (2007).

This heightened call for national security can turn the conflict over the distributive implications of climate change into a new geopolitics in which nation states may withdraw “into the safe haven of territoriality” (Bauman, 1998: 117) and consider military strategies as acceptable responses to the conflicts over who is exposed to what climate risk, and who has access to what climate security. At the centre of all this is the perceived threat of ‘climate refugees’, an emotive term which first appeared in June 2009 in the draft text, prepared by the Ad hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action¹¹ and introduced into climate negotiation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Warner, 2012:1065). Although it was dropped from the subsequent negotiations and official texts, concerns about migration and displacement remained on the agenda, partly due to the efforts of “science and advocacy” especially the IPCC’s *Fourth Assessment Report*, 2007 and the *Stern Review*, 2006 (Warner, 2012:1068). The latter indicates that by 2050 there will be some 200 million additional “environmental refugees” (quoted in Nordas and Gleditsch, 2007:632) with a potential for conflict in host communities. While the dystopian narratives can be beneficial in attracting greater attention and even commitment to global humanitarian issues,

¹⁰ <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/global-issues/climate-change/priorities/global-security/> (Accessed 5/8/2012)

¹¹ This is a subsidiary body created by the COP 13 (Bali) Action Plan in 2007, whose intention was to pave the ground for agreement on the successor of Kyoto Protocol (Warner, 2012: 1065)

it can also lead to “denial, paralysis, apathy or even perverse reactive behaviour” (Hulme, 2007:818) including the portrayal of “the vulnerable –such as climate refugees- as a threat to national security” (Bettini, 2013 drawing on Hartmann, 2010).

The discourses of climate change are increasingly engulfed by and reinforce the dominant global discourse of securitization (Aradau, 2009). While in the early 2000s climate change was competing with terrorism as to which one represents the greatest threat to the established western way of life (Blühdorn and Welsh, 2007), today that competition seems to be over because climate change is now portrayed as a *condition for* terrorism; as a ‘threat multiplier’; it is construed as the ‘mother’ of all threats. Similar forms of geopolitics became prevalent at the time of crisis in the natural resources in the 1970s. Then, it was advocated that, “whoever who controls world resources control the world in a way that mere occupation of territory cannot match” (Barnet, 1980:17). Today, as the Arctic is melting, some of the most powerful countries, such as the US, UK and Russia, are positioning themselves to have a larger share of the Arctic oil reserves. The environmental morality which surrounded the discourse of ‘endangered polar bears’ is fast becoming sabotaged by economic rationality and geopolitics, reaffirming that nature-for-nature sake has remained subaltern to nature-as-storehouse of resources, and that anthropocentric and utilitarian view of the world continues to prevail.

3.2 Climate change and resilient urbanism

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

The above statement by the President of a security firm in the United States (cited in Davis, 1990b: 250) indicates that security is not just a means to an end (i.e. protection from risk), but an end in itself. It is a positive good, “sold as a desirable product in and of its own right”

(Zedner. 2003: 160). The pursuit of security is as much about security providers seeking *raison d'etres* for their operations as it is about risk prevention. As a commodity with a price, climate security becomes factored into both private suppliers' (notably the insurance companies) and urban governance's strategic decisions and calculations. For urban governance climate security is now a highly sought-after commodity which competes with other commodities in terms of economic and social costs. As Sassen (2011) suggests, security is increasingly urbanized. Cities are in competition with one another in positioning themselves on the world's league tables of 'safe places'. London, for example, boasts to be "a safe place for business" (GLA, 2010:109). The price to pay for the pursuit of a *safe* utopia is the ever expanding landscape of securitisation which now covers a wide range of risks from crime and natural hazards to terrorism and cyber-attack. Climate change is a relatively newcomer to this terrain but, the more nature- as- asset discourse is subverted by nature- as- risk, the greater the inclusion of climate into urban security packages. In the market-utilitarian view of nature (mentioned in section 2.1 above), this also signals a change of what is perceived as the prime commodity. In the city marketing strategies of the mid-20th century the prime commodity was nature itself with all its goods and services. Now, the prime commodity is the security against nature and its threatening, dystopian prospect. Climate security in terms of both material goods (such a flood defences) and symbolic goods (such as flood warning systems) is now packaged with other securities and placed in the competitive global market of 'safe cities'. So, the Mayor of London reassures the corporate world of business that "London will be weather-proof" (GLA, 2010:6); that, "London is less vulnerable (to climate change) than some of its principal world city competitors" referring to New York and Tokyo (GLA, 2010: 109). Similar claims are made by the Netherlands where businesses and investors are reassured that the flood defences of her port cities, such as

Rotterdam, will be able to withstand sea level rises of significant magnitudes (Meyer *et al*, 2012).

The race to the 'safe city' has profound distributive, environmental and democratic implications. Hodson and Marvin (2011), for example, refer to the emergence of a new 'urban ecological security' where cities, such as London, New York and Shanghai, are creating safe havens of segregated infrastructural security with important distributional implications (Bulkeley, 2010). The intricate entwining of the urban age with the age of man construes cities as key strategic sites of not only "military, economic, cultural and representational struggle" (Graham, 2002:589), but also ecological struggle. A clear example is urban surveillance practices (Coaffee *et al*, 2008) which have now penetrated into all aspects of urban governance ranging from monitoring of crimes and civic disobediences to 'environmental incivilities'¹² and energy consumption behaviours. Urban securitisation has fully embraced climate risk. Despite this, the securitisation literature has remained divided between two main camps: those who focus on urban security and leave out climate change (see for example Special Collection of *IJURR*, 2002) and those who focus on climate security and leave out military urbanism (see for example Special Issue of *Geoforum*, 2013).

In the securitisation turn, one common corollary is the concept of resilience. The growing avalanche of resilient cities literatures by international organisations (such as the World Bank and the United Nations), national and urban governments, academics and think tanks (notably the Stockholm Resilience Alliance) are 'selling the *concept* of resilience' (to paraphrase the quote that heads this section) as the key strategy for urban securitisation for a whole range of perceived risks, from terrorism to climate change. They are creating a new form of urbanism

¹² A term used to refer to activities such as littering, flyposting and graffiti (Ellaway *et al*, 2009)

which can be summed up as ‘resilient urbanism’, whose defining characteristic is not so much about long term adaptive capacity building but, short term emergency responses. A large body of resilient cities literature is preoccupied with an out-dated engineering understanding of the resilience (Fünfgeld and McEvoy, 2012; Davoudi, 2012b; Davoudi *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, a speedy return to an elusive equilibrium has become the goal of many off-the-shelf resilience building toolkits. They consider resilient urbanism as the ability of cities to bounce back from external shocks into ‘normality’ without questioning the desirability of ‘the normal’ (Davoudi, 2012b). From this perspective, radical transformation (which underpins evolutionary resilience of complex adaptive systems) is considered not as a desirable outcome but, as a system failure. Here, resilient urbanism is often defined by the physical stability of the urban infrastructure. Climate events are construed as sudden, external shocks imposed by nature, rather than slow burn effects of urbanisation and its social-ecological processes. Such a view privileges reactionary responses in the form of emergency planning with an emphasis on the traditional disaster risk management practices of ‘prevent, prepare, respond, and recover’. This linear, equilibrium-based understanding of resilient urbanism is a far cry from Holling’s ecological (1973) and evolutionary (Holling and Gunderson, 2002) resilience. The latter rejects the existence of systems equilibrium altogether and considers nature not as orderly, mechanical and reasonably predictable (the clockwork Universe), but as complex, contingent and inherently unpredictable. This advanced understanding of resilience is rarely found in resilient cities literature. Their over-emphasis on short term emergency responses pre-empts the potential for long term adaptive capacity building and the pursuit of transformative trajectories (Davoudi, *et al.*, 2013). In the caldron of this limited view of resilient urbanism, creative potentials become stifled by formulaic procedures. The need for urgent action overrides the demand for inclusivity and legitimizes the evacuation of ‘the political’; the points to which we return in the next section.

4. From the postpolitics of *hope* to the postpolitics of *fear*

Contrary to the rhetoric of sustainable development which imbued environmental discourses with optimism of win-win solutions, the language of climate change discerns a sense of pessimism (Blowers et al, 2009). The rhetoric of sustainable development was projecting images of a safe and sustainable future for humans and non-humans, while the dominant discourses of climate change are conjuring up images of a future defined by the inevitability of climate risks. Analyses of the media representations of climate change in the UK confirm how such pessimism is reproduced and exaggerated by media headlines (see Table 1) in which “fear, misery and doom” are prevalent (Boykoff, 2008:561). The environmental apocalyptic imaginaries “leave behind any hope of rebirth or renewal”. They advocate “an unquenchable fascination with being on the verge of an end that never comes” (Jay, 1994:33) but, hangs over humanity’s head like the sword of Damocles. They “preach an apocalypse without redemption” (Swyngedouw, 2010:218).

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

Table 1: Media headlines on climate change

Source: Adapted from: Boykoff (2008:561), Swyngedouw (2010:218) and Wisner *et al* (2007:12)

More importantly, Blowers *et al* (2009:313) argue that climate change has led to a “shift from an environmental politics of cooperation and consensus” which underpinned sustainability “to a politics of securitisation”. This is a kind of politics that centres on instantiating a regime of knowledge/power relations that capitalises upon crafting, circulating and techno-managing risk. However, the politics of securitisation is also *consensual* politics because it crowds out ‘the political’ and prevents the politicisation of particulars (Mouffe, 2005) in the name of security. The de-politicisation of climate change is assisted by the foregrounding of: calculative practices (Miller, 2008; While, 2012), technical-rational risk assessments, and managerial approaches to urban planning. However, what distinguishes the consensual postpolitics of sustainability from that of securitisation is their different rhetoric. For sustainability the rhetoric is centred on the *promise* of a bright win-win future; for climate change it is placed on the *threat* of an apocalyptic future. The former instils hope, the latter imbues fear. Although postpolitics of fear does not eradicate contestation, it can lead to elimination of “genuine political space for disagreement” (Swyngedouw, 2009: 609) and for radical alternatives. This is not to suggest that depoliticisation is a neutral process. On the contrary, it is highly political and often results in “the affirmation of the dominant relations and practices” (Bettini, 2013:69). The postpolitics of fear call for “the suspension of democratic safeguards and the uncoupling of checks and balances (Bluhdorn and Welsh, 2007: 191) in the name of urgency, emergency, resilience, risk and security. These pervasive idioms provoke strong emotions that can legitimise extraordinary exercise of power. They perform three themes, as suggested by Calhoun (2004).

Firstly, they “naturalize what are in fact products of human action” (Calhoun, 2004: 376). Climate events are signified as act of nature in the same way as famine was once seen as the consequence of drought, rather than factors such as poverty, inequality and economic

colonisation (Davis, 2001). Žižek (2010:328) refers to this as “(re)normalisation” of ecological problem in mainstream policy, which reinterprets climate change “as simple fact; as just another part of ‘carry on as usual’”. Secondly, they “represent as sudden, unpredictable and short-term what are usually gradually developing, predictable and enduring clusters of events and interactions” (Calhoun, 2004: 376). Climate events are seen as an unpredictable, abnormal and sudden act of nature which is challenging the global order of which these events are exceptions rather than outcomes. Thirdly, they “simultaneously locate in particular settings what is in fact [...] produced [...] by global forces, and dislocate the standpoint of observation [...] to a view from nowhere” (ibid). Flooding in Bangladesh becomes a *local* and natural emergency that is observed across the globe but, disconnected from the global social-ecological processes of which it is an outcome. Those affected by it are portrayed as unfortunate victims of a ‘natural disaster’ with no historical or contextual link to the social-ecological relations that originate vulnerability (Manzo, 2010). By provoking urgency and emergency, the language of risk and security can renounce or displace social conflicts and “foreclose a proper political framing” (Swyngedouw, 2010:2019). They can ostracize the arenas in which questions about justice, fairness and conflicts can be raised. In the postpolitics of fear, technical fixes (such as nuclear power) which were off the sustainability agenda, can be justified in the name of energy security with little political questioning (While, 2012). Critiques of mainstreaming resilience in all aspects of urban policy and translating the concept from ecology to society uncritically have raised similar questions such as, “resilience from what to what, and who gets to decide?” (Davoudi and Porter, 2012:331).

5. Conclusion

There are two terms that have come to define the twenty first century. The one that we hear often is the ‘urban age’ and the one that we hear rarely is the ‘age of man’. Both are, however, closely related. It was on the path to urbanisation that we paved the Earth, retrofitted nature to fit our purposes, and created the Anthropocene. What has made this process materially possible and ethically acceptable is the anthropocentric view of the world that has prevailed since the Enlightenment era. A striking manifestation of the contingencies of human-nature relations is the anthropogenic climate change. Despite this, the increasingly dominating discourses of climate change tend to accord agency to an independent nature which is striking back and putting humans at risk. This view of nature as *risk* is side-lining the sustainability discourses which portray nature as finite *asset*. It shifts the attentions from what we do to nature to what nature does to us; from safeguarding nature for urban futures to securing urban futures against nature. Furthermore, the risk-laden language of climate change ushers in a deep concern with security. Thus, the hallmark of the reflexive modernity is becoming not just the risk society, as Beck suggests, but also the security society. The recasting of climate change problems as security problems reflects and reinforces securitisation as the hegemonic discourse of our time. Feeding from each other, risk and security can provoke strong emotions, legitimise extraordinary measures, and lead to practices which are otherwise indefensible. They can create imaginaries of fear which renounce social conflict, foreclose politics, and crowd out descending voices. They can suspend democratic safeguards in the name of urgency, emergency and resilience. The framing of climate events as sudden natural shocks can redirect the attentions away from long term capacity building and social transformation towards short term emergency planning, that is increasingly placed at the centre of debate on resilient urbanism. More alarmingly, the perception of climate change as a ‘threat multiplier’ may lead to the justification of exceptional measures as the undisputed and necessary action. Such a slippery slope to

potential militarisation is a reminder of what Mouffe (2005) considers as the dangers of succumbing to liberal rationalism as the infallible and omnipresent form of consensual politics.

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