

Hubricity

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Abstract

“Hubricity” is a timely, convenient neologism, and may be useful for a guided in-classroom discussion that aims to explore nature (Nature?) of Modern cities. Hubricity is a compound term comprised of the two English-language words “hubris” and “city.” This paper argues that the Modern hubri-city is a “built environment” designed, constructed and inhabited by a super-diversity of “swarming” human animals, and who count on their collective “hive” mentality/productivity to enable them to successfully compete, survive and evolve into the future (in a Darwinian sense) as individual human organisms. The Modern hubricity “progresses”/“develops”/“advances” (risking catastrophic collateral socioeconomic and environmental damage) by spatially integrating itself at myriad geographical scales within a chaotic and complicated ideological context of global capitalism, dogmatism, authoritarianism, scientism, and technophilia. To do so, Modern hubris-citizens choose to alienate themselves from Nature, This results in their hubris.

Keywords: Hubricity; Ideology; The Human Swarm; Architecture; City; Built Environment; Hive as Habitat; Human as Organism; Honeybees; Murder Hornets; Walt W. Rostow; Klattu barada nikt; Nature’s Principles of self-organization in physical space.

Introduction

Not long ago, I ordered a highly recommended book, hot off the press. The author is Mark Moffett, an evolutionary biologist. The book’s title, *The Human Swarm*, is provocative - and chilling. The title floats the notion of the reality of human beings as “swarming animals. Is this notion absurd? Is it heretical? Blasphemous?. Many, if not most, humans living in cities today believe with certainty that human populations are not only different from, but also superior to, thus better than, swarming insects. Especially, to disgusting, annoying, dangerous, and swarming, insects; for example, mosquitoes, cockroaches, and locusts. Moffet’s book title, and the unusual, unbelievable, unpopular notion it purveys, is an insult to humans, and to human intelligence [1,2] . Is it not?. I am reminded as I pose this question of Franz Kafka’s absurdist story titled *The Metamorphosis* (1915), wherein he writes about a man, Gregor Samsa, who “[awakes] one morning from uneasy dreams” to discover himself transformed, in his own bed, into -- a gigantic insect (!). Anyway, when this book, *The Human Swarm*, landed in my university mailbox, I hastened to begin to read it, with critical, academic, passion. Driving my enthusiasm was a lot of deep-seated emotional and intellectual, curiosity, shaped by my past learning experiences; my residential, camping, and school-room experiences. Shaped by my entire adult lifetime of cross-disciplinary critical reading, critical thinking and critical writing. It occurred to me also that some ineffable, unfathomable, intuitive force, mindlessly drove my enthusiasm [3]. Was it my own animal instinct? More mindfully, then, I pondered several questions: Am I

not also a human organism – a chemical energy system? [4] Thus, kith and kin with myriad other life forms? Plants? Animals, large and small? ... Insects? And I asked myself: Suppose a human being, asleep in bed, experiencing nightmares, does wake up to realize that she or he is an insect. Isn’t this experience the same as an epiphany (“a sudden, striking, realization”)? [5].

This uncommon notion of human social animals being a swarming species (with myself, for example, being one individual in the swarm), sharing in a “hive intelligence” and inhabiting with them all a hive-like built environment, all seems ripe and overdue for a college-level classroom discussion [6,7]. It is this story that fascinates me, and perhaps it is fabulation – but if so, it is a fable that seems, somehow, real and plausible.

This provocative notion of the human swarm, and further, related, notion that it inspires, the notion of a hive-like “hubricity” inhabited by “hubricitizens,” are already proving themselves useful for my teaching purposes in my graduate-level geography classes these days -- just as I hoped, and expected, that they might.

I am a Berkeley School cultural geographer out of UCLA, I earned my PhD in 1984 [8]. While at UCLA I particularly enjoyed urban fieldwork with landscape geographer Kit Salter, and coursework with animal geographer, Professor Charles Bennett [9]. A few years later, during my brief Visiting Professorship at Central Michigan University, I co-published a research paper with a geographer-entomologist, Dr. Howard Richardson. Our paper focused

on the trans-Oceanic Hurricane-borne diffusion of the insect species, *Schistocera gregaria*; which is the notorious, swarming, African Desert Locust of Biblical repute. My presentation today briefly elaborates far beyond my earlier fascination with hurricane-borne desert locust swarms in the Windward Islands [10]. The “hubricity,” as suggested in my conference Abstract, addresses my present-day concerns about humankind’s seriously “damaged” relations with Nature. My key words are a selected pastiche of interrelated terms and concepts that I have introduced in my body of published works, rather sequentially, over the past four decades [11].

“Hubricity” will be the most recent chapter in my sequential body of published works. My purpose? I want in some original way, through the agencies of both my academic writing and teaching, to help sound the alarm, to bear witness, and to warn others about what I have perceived and written about, and what I continue to perceive and write about; that is, the extensive collateral damage to Nature/Human relations that accompanies economic growth ideology [12,13]. For effect, in some of my publications, I have chosen to blame Walt W. Rostow, economic advisor to American presidents, and author of *The Five Stages of Economic Growth*, a Capitalist manifesto. His book is now widely adopted around the world as an ambitious economic planning model for the nearly 300 nation-states that presently constitute our present day global Capitalist economy. Perhaps I am to ardent an anti-colonial, post-national, anarchist, for having imagined up, and published about, a futuristic authoritarian [14], “stateless, international order” See “Blissful Devolution,” Nemeth [15]. These days, I am focusing my critical reading and thinking on innovative

ideas [16,17] published in the works of two acclaimed academics, Professors Donna Haraway [18] and Peter Singer [19]. Neither are academic Geographers, but many contemporary academic Geographers consider both “key thinkers on space and place.” Donna Haraway and Peter Singer are storytellers. Their best stories lament “existential threats” now facing humankind and other forms of life on Earth. I consider Donna Haraway’s *Companion Species Manifesto* (2003) to be a powerful, inspiring, challenging, and convincing example of academic critical reading. Australian academic Peter Singer is a bioethicist and moral philosopher, a prolific and influential author. One of his most powerful and thought-provoking books is *How Are We to Live? Ethics in an Age of Self-interest* (1993) [20].

Among those key words and concepts I intend to introduce, elaborate on in more detail, and integrate, in my final version of “Hubricity” are: human-as-organism, honeybees, murder hornets, hive as habitat, and Nature’s principles of self-organization in physical space. To these, I have added the phrase: “Klattu barada nikto!” from the classic Sci-fi Hollywood film *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. It is a strong command to Earthlings to cease and desist from harming the global habitat. I will conclude my presentation today by asserting that it is now my belief that swarming humans are creative and destructive forces, and thus Natural agents of change - in Nature [21]. Their swarms inhabit hives -- cities. Currently, urban geographers and planners study Modern human cities as designed, constructed, inhabited and controlled by humans, but not by human swarms. I would ask them, “What do you see when you look into a mirror?”



Figure 1: Hubricity’s tragic architecture of ideology.

Few urban geographers and planners, I conjecture, would see, or would claim to see, an academic insect, much less the image of 1) an arrogant ape 2) attempting to manage Planet Earth 3) resulting in a tragedy of collateral damage. Nor, 4) would many urban geographers envision a catastrophic, anthropogenic, self-destruction of Planet Earth in the making. Why not? Hubricity [22]. In sum: I have a notion that in the late Anthropocene, and especially during the past 400 years, humans deliberately chose to alienate themselves from Nature, where upon there rapidly emerged Hubricity, inhabited by hubricitizens (Figure 1). I also have a notion that there are several principles at work by which Nature self-organizes itself in physical space. And, I harbor an optimistic belief that humans are still capable of reconciling themselves with Nature in order to learn to appreciate and apply these self-organizing principles as part of a bold plan to help salvage Planet Earth -- before it is too late. Ergo, "Klaatu barada nikto!". Toward achieving this, a renewed solidarity with Nature, I have articulated for the use of urban planners a tentative list of these Principles, found in several of my publications, as: centrality, connectivity, hierarchy, symmetry (or proportion), periodicity, similarity at different scale, and completeness. Perhaps there are more?.

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