

THE FATE OF URBAN CIVILIZATION

As climate chaos unleashes its uneven and combined disasters, its impact is particularly apparent in big cities. Two great tides are converging on the world's cities today, and as a result, we are seeing one of the greatest threats to the sustainability of urban existence. The first of these is a human tide. In 2007 humanity became a predominantly city-dwelling species. Of the approximately 7 billion humans currently living, 3.3 billion live in cities. But if the human condition is now an urban one, this urban humanity is not spread evenly across the world's cities.

Although urbanists in the Global North often regard urbanization through the lens of city-building processes in Europe and North America, most of today's urban population lives in the developing world. These city-dwellers are often refugees from policies of agricultural deregulation and financial liberalization - policies that have pushed millions of peasants off the land and into slums in the largely deindustrialized urban conglomerations of the Global South. This bitter harvest of the worldwide agrarian crisis has been one of the largest transformations in human history. The neoliberal world order has generated forms of extreme urbanization rooted in inequality. In the cities of the Global South, from one-third to half of the urban population lives in informal settlements. Residents of these unplanned zones face highly difficult conditions in their struggle to survive. As Mike Davis put it, "Instead of cities of light soaring toward heaven, much of the twenty-first century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement and decay."

The hazardous nature of what Davis calls slum ecology is a key element of contemporary urbanization. The only land available to the poor tends to be located in the most disaster-prone precincts of cities, on terrain that has not been developed because of the natural perils - from landslides to floods - that make it unsuitable for elite habitation.

Nearly two-thirds of the world's cities with more than 5 million inhabitants are partially located in low-elevation coastal zones where they are subject to ever-more-frequent and intense cyclones and coastal storms catalyzed by climate change. Compounding the threat of rising sea levels, the land on which most coastal cities are built is simultaneously sinking in a process known as subsidence. Such subsidence was directly responsible for the devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans, but it is a process unfolding around the world in fast-urbanizing river deltas. **From Egypt's Nile delta to China's Yellow River delta, more than 500 million people currently live in the world's river deltas, which are subsiding at an alarming rate of 10 centimeters or so a year.** Over the past decade, 85 percent of the world's major river deltas experienced flooding, killing hundreds of thousands of people.

In tandem with this process of subsidence, coastal erosion is destroying the natural barriers that protect cities from increasingly severe storms and their surge waters. This convergence means that increasing numbers of the world's coastal cities will soon fall below sea level. As the drowning of Houston has so poignantly underlined, coastal cities the world over face a future of ongoing systemic crisis as a result of climate change. **Tropical storms and cyclones currently affect 1.4 billion people each year, 24 percent of the world's contemporary urbanized population. But that number is projected to double by 2050.** The areas most prone to such disasters extend in a band across the planet's tropics, including urban regions in Central America, the Caribbean, the Bay of Bengal, China, and the Philippines.



In this urban "tropics of chaos," the calamities that befall slum dwellers must be seen not as "natural" disasters, but as anthropogenic climate disruptions in which uneven development and social inequality play a key role.

The catastrophic climax is not unfolding in the Global South alone. The threat posed by climate change to wealthy nations is real, present, and escalating. Perhaps the starkest warning of the mayhem to come was the European heat wave of 2003 when unrelenting temperatures - over 100 degrees even at night - caused stagnant air to mix with pollutants, creating a kind of toxic smog. An estimated 70,000 European city-dwellers died from the heat wave that summer, a figure that dwarfs the 1,800 deaths from Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

More visibly, rising sea levels will affect many of the world's powerful global cities, the key command-and-control nodes of the global capitalist economy. Most of these metropolises happen to be port cities, a fact largely ignored in the literature on the global city. The United States for example has eight key global cities: New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco-Oakland, Washington, D.C., Miami, and Philadelphia, all lying in coastal zones (Chicago is located on the inland coast of Lake Michigan). Rising sea levels and intensifying storms threaten almost all of them.

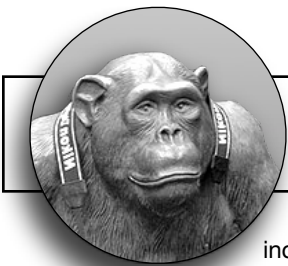
In global terms, the top ten cities whose populations are exposed to natural disasters today are almost evenly split between developed and developing countries: Mumbai, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Miami, Ho Chi Minh City, Kolkata, Greater New York, Osaka-Kobe, Alexandria, and New Orleans. **In terms of imperiled economic assets, however, the list tilts heavily toward the Global North,** with Miami, Greater New York, New Orleans, Osaka-Kobe, Tokyo, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Nagoya, Tampa-St. Petersburg, and Virginia Beach topping the list. **Although these cities contain 60 percent of threatened economic assets, they are located in only four countries: the United States, Japan, the Netherlands, and China. There will be extremely grave ramifications for the global economy if any of them are seriously damaged by the storms to come.** It is projected that the threat to these cities' wealth will multiply tenfold by 2070, while the total population exposed to natural disasters could triple to around 150 million people. *These statistics highlight the fact that vulnerability to extreme weather is not simply a result of the exposure of masses of people to hurricanes, cyclones, and droughts, but a product of the complex interplay of populations, infrastructures, economic and political institutions, and anthropogenic climate change.*

As we are already finding out, our great reckoning with the planetary ecocide caused by the fossil-fuel capitalist system will come above all in the world's cities. **If today's cities are one of the major drivers of climate chaos, they are also its principal victims.** This global convergence of urbanization and climate change has created the "extreme city," urban spaces with stark economic inequality where the most important struggle for human survival will take place. How a city copes with stratifications of race, class, and gender (or how such inequalities are left to fester) has everything to do with how well it will weather the storms that are bearing down upon humanity.

Ashley Dawson,

adapted from her book,

Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change.



MUIR REPORT: WHO KILLED COCK ROBIN?

All the major networks, including Fox, MSNBC and CNN agree that Jeffrey Epstein committed suicide and anyone who questions that conclusion is a tin hat wearer. Where would one look if they wanted to investigate? Ask anyone from New Jersey what the hell happened.

I started by asking my 62 year old sister, who's lived her entire life in New Jersey. She laughed and said the entire metropolitan area has sold out of aluminum foil. Anyone who lives there knows a whack-job when they see it. They've seen enough of them to be experts. Everyone knew, when he was denied bail, he was as good as dead. The bookies were already posting odds as to when it would occur.

He was put into a jail specifically built to house high profile people like El Chapo. You have a police agency for everything, ICE, TSA, Park Police, State Police, City Police, Transit Police, etc, but they didn't have enough money to hire guards to watch what possibly could be the biggest criminal this decade. You'll never see a picture of his cell because it has nine foot ceilings, no bars and nowhere to hang yourself. The sheets are super thin and the bunk beds are both on the floor.

Do you think no one ever thought that someone, who was almost killed a couple of weeks ago, would be purposely put into a cell which provided him with the

opportunity to hang himself, and who was the mysterious roommate who was transferred to another cell on the day of the murder? You can't get off suicide watch in two weeks, you barely get your prison slippers in two weeks.

He hung himself without dropping from somewhere and broke a bunch of bones in his neck. How does that happen? Our neighbor worked as a guard before he retired. He says all high profile, suicide or murder risks are put into cells which have close captioned television on 24 hours a day. Unless orders come from the top to change protocol, something that never happened once in the 32 years he was a Corrections Officer. Of course, the cameras were not in use for that period of time, **duh...**

No, he was whacked, the special guard who came in to work, the sleeping on duty, the camera being off at the time of the murder, even though the other inmates reported hearing screaming coming from his cell. As usual, they whacked him and blamed it on incompetence. A few lower level peons will take the blame and get a handful of cash, see if they divulge who they are and watch for them to be killed a month or so later, usually in a car crash or attempted robbery. The warden will get a transfer to a nicer prison, all the money designed to go to the victims will disappear, as will all the financial records.

The guy investigating the murders is probably the guy who ordered them. The feds are investigating themselves. The fox is investigating the death of the chickens. You can pin it on whoever you want, he had enough enemies and enough dirt to sink people as far up the ladder as presidents and dukes. Our neighbor thinks it was Clinton or Mossad. Charlie (husband) thinks it was the British secret service. I think it was Trump because he was already denying he murdered Epstein before anyone suggested it, trying to shift the blame to the Clintons, like kids trying to determine who farted, "whoever smelt it, dealt it." The next Attorney General should be from New Jersey....

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