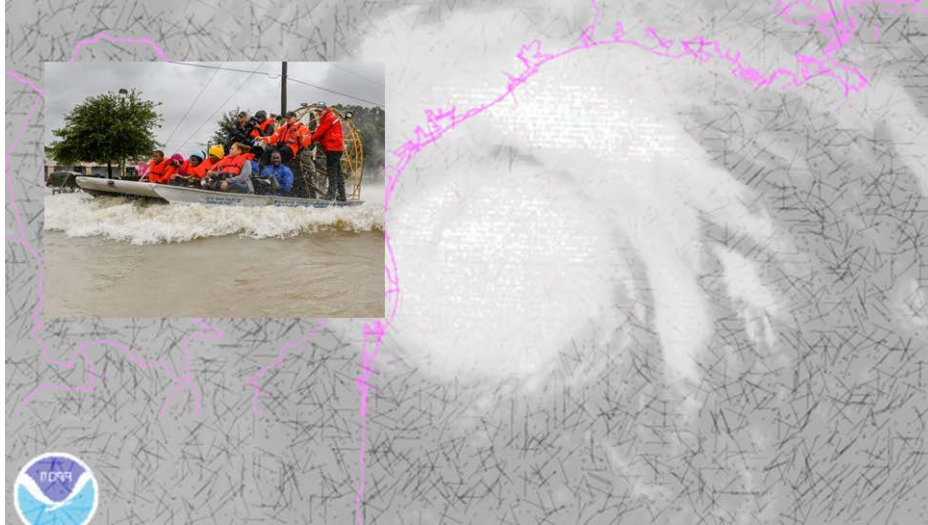


Governing Energy



Collaboration Whips Harvey

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What a difference a couple of weeks makes. In our last blog, we discussed how rude and crude many have become in the current social fabric.ⁱ

Funny thing happened on the way to Communal Armageddon. An Apocalypse actually occurred! For much of the Gulf Coast across Texas and Louisiana, and points north, Hurricane Harvey paid an unwelcomed visit.

A major disaster for those directly affected, this is a global wake up call. Over the days of the storm, this writer (Katy, Texas resident) received calls, emails, texts and even LinkedIn messages from all over the world. People I had not heard from in years provided their thoughts and prayers for me and all in the affected areas. Moreover, the neighborhood pulled together on social media and in person to attack the common foe.

Highly visible across the Houston metropolitan area were the volunteers working closely with local governmental authorities to help their common man/woman/child/pet. While the storm raged and before staged state and federal help could arrive, the global TV and other media were filled with visions of ad hoc and professional teams saving lives—often working together.

This viewer witnessed extensive and often impromptu self-organization for the greater good.ⁱⁱ Behavioral scientist call this process Chaos Theory. This spontaneous behavior is applicable to both physical and behavior systems.ⁱⁱⁱ

Collaborative human behavior occurred in spades during Harvey's presence and afterwards. In end, the storm left the building so to speak and residents of the Gulf Coast triumphed.

Meteorologists will research Harvey for decades and it will be the basis of numerous Ph.D. dissertations. No doubt social scientists will base much future research on this storm as well.

Harvey and its devastation gave a focus to the self-organizing process. A number of individuals were interviewed by TV crews. Questions along the line, "Who told you to do XYZ," meaning who is providing management. Most often the answer was, "No one, I just saw that XYZ was needed."

Leadership for this process was provided by key governmental officials including the Mayor of Houston and County Judges who unabashedly (and often) asked for volunteers of all kinds and their private boats. This welcoming culture rather than a top down Command and Control mentality enabled entrepreneurship.

The hurricane was self-organizing based on physical variables. The humans self-organized to defeat the threat and prevailed!

Business authors and consultants (including this one) have written extensively about Collaboration and all the economic value available to those organizational ecosystems that are world class collaborators. Now we have an actual case study about how a very large multifaceted ecosystem did it.

One interesting group whose business model bears further understanding is the Cajun Navy.^{iv} Using the communications app, Zello, this informal group is by all accounts very effective.

I am reminded of the search and rescue group, Texas EquuSearch Mounted Search and Recovery Team that has supported law enforcement with personnel, equipment and methodology since 2000.^v It is now common to see this group in action when individuals go missing.

One suspects that the Cajun Navy model will be duplicated across the country. Certainly, their visibility in the Houston area is seen as very positive.

Perhaps businesses can use this model to their advantage as well? Can your ecosystem self-organize to meet business challenges?

One suspects that businesses that can take advantage of this approach to collaboration will do better than those that do not. We know it works!

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About the Author

Dr. [Scott M. Shemwell](#) has over 30 years technical and executive management experience primarily in the energy sector. He is the author of six books and has written extensively about the field of operations. Shemwell is the Managing Director of The Rapid Response Institute, a firm that focuses on providing its customers with solutions enabling Operational Excellence and regulatory compliance management. He has studied cultural interactions for more than 30 years—his dissertation; *Cross Cultural Negotiations Between Japanese and American Businessmen: A Systems Analysis (Exploratory Study)* is an early peer reviewed manuscript addressing the systemic structure of societal relationships.

End Notes

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- ⁱ Shemwell, Scott M. (2017, August 22). [Rude](#). Governing Energy. PennEnergy.
- ⁱⁱ _____ (2014, July 2). [Ground Stop Chaos](#). Governing Energy. PennEnergy.
- ⁱⁱⁱ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaos_theory
- ^{iv} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cajun_Navy
- ^v <http://www.texasequusearch.org/>