



**Politecnico
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Honors Thesis

Master of Science in Architecture Construction City

Abstract

Can the postnatural speak?

Tutor/Correlator

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The thesis explores the territory of the river Scheldt in Northern Europe and the spatial relations within its water basin and network. Through an articulated survey rooted in genealogical, socio-economic, and political aspects, the research shows that the very existence of the river Scheldt has been determined by the relation with other subjects, mainly humans, through their existence and actions. In fact, we are dealing with an economic corridor and a freshwater supplier for crops, that has been subjected to so many transformation that is impossible to recognize its physiological behavior. In a way, the river can not be defined as a "natural" element but a hybrid system of interactions or even a machine. According to such an assumption, the river Scheldt is an example of a radical interaction that questions the very idea of Nature itself. On this base, the hypothesis of the thesis is that Nature does not exist anymore, or maybe it has never existed, and proposes a paradigm shift from the concept of Nature, as traditionally and culturally intended, to the one of Post-Nature, as an operational concept. The work explores such a concept in three different ways: a theoretical development, a territorial survey, and an alternative cartography. The first part aims at defining the Postnatural starting from Posthuman Studies: in spite of being identitarian and binarian, postnatural subjects are nomadic and relational. This means that their very existence is bound to the existence of other subjects and their mutual relationship: relationality is what makes evolution possible. Hence, the contraposition between man and nature, human and nonhuman, becomes obsolete in favour of a paradigm shift that considers living beings as equally capable of acting and self-regulating. The second part explores instead the territory of the Scheldt and eventually focuses on a complex survey with the aim of understanding how the postnatural machine works in terms of hydrological and societal relations and by disassembling its foundational elements. The last part reflects on the implications of the Postnatural hypothesis on the relation with humans. Also if to one extent human subjects have radically transformed the river into a machine, on the other side they kept on describing, designing, and managing it as a natural separated element by neglecting its hybridity. An alternative for designing otherwise may eventually come from the recognition of this status of the river: is there a specific form for it of relating and expressing? For allowing "the postnatural to speak", this part adopts traditional technological tools such as remote sensing and GIS with the aim of "listening otherwise". Summing up, the thesis proposes the concept of Postnatuality not only as a lens for better understanding the relation between space, humans and climate, but also as an eventual operative shift in Urbanism discourse.

