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## What Is Posthuman Architecture/Cities as A Potential and Emerging Term of Post-Pandemic World

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### Abstract

The term posthuman reminds agencies like robots or transhumans that will possibly steal the central role of human beings by defeating the humanities. As technology is linked to posthumanism, smart cities are usually interpreted as posthuman architecture and urban structures. However, what posthuman subjects and actors mean in terms of the architectural and urban realm is not clear yet since it is a pretty new term for architecture. This paper takes Rosi Braidotti's posthuman approach to define and discuss the meaning of posthuman in terms of architecture and cities while developing new alternative meanings.

**Keywords:** Posthuman Architecture, Posthuman city, Architectural and Urban Theory, Post-Pandemic Era.

### 1. Introduction

By the end of 2019, humanity has understood that human beings are not the world's most essential and powerful occupants. Since covid created a pandemic era, the fragility and weakness of the human body could easily be defeated by the virus. Nevertheless, the pandemic is not the only threat to the extinction of humanity; climate change and scarcity of food are the new danger to the world, even though some countries prepare themselves by building stores like Doomsday Vault (Fava, 2013). Moreover, covid has not ended yet, and according to scientists, some new viruses are expected soon. All these threats can be the end of humanity. Therefore, this research springs from these unknowns of humankind. What could be the occupants and subjects of the world if humanity disappears? What do other subjects already exist who are waiting to collaborate with human beings to postpone the end of the world or human beings? These actors who came after humans are the posthuman subjects already dwelling in the world with human beings. However, because of the centrality of human beings and anthropocentric designs, these posthuman subjects are not as visible as humans (Amen & Nia, 2020). Also, the word posthuman is not widely known, and it is not clear what posthuman means. So, what is posthuman, then? What are posthuman spaces, and how can posthumans form architectural space. This paper will try to answer these questions. It aims to teach the term posthumanism with a point of architecture and spatial design by taking the posthumanism of Rosi Braidotti at the centre of this paper.

### 2. Material and Methods

Discovering this problem creates the following questions what are human or humanist spaces? What are those spaces that are not used by a human then? How should they be called if there were not designed for humans or not used by a human?

Coronavirus thought us that, a human being is not the most powerful subject in the world anymore. Since the central role of human beings has been changing by the development of technologies, there are more alternative actors and actants threatening the anthropocentric role of humans. Those alternative actors are posthuman.

Given these questions, this paper will take the posthumanist theory of Rosi Braidotti as a methodological approach to reveal what posthuman spaces are. Rosi Braidotti, a posthumanist theorist developed various interrelated fields of post-anthropocentric enquiry. She believes that becoming posthuman is a process of being. She categorises this process into three groups and labels them as "becoming-animal, becoming earth, and becoming machine" (Braidotti, 2013). Consequently, this paper first briefly presents these actors. Then, since the parameters of humans' design humanist spaces, this paper will consider and interpret posthumanist spaces that should be designed according to the parameters of posthuman subjects above. Thus, different posthuman spaces will be illustrated and exemplified by the various designs.

### 3. Posthuman Theory

The heart of the discussion about posthumans started with the classic ideal man of Protagoras (Berkel, 2013). He formulated "The man" as "the measure of all things". After that during the Italian Renaissance, Leonardo Da Vinci reintroduced the Vitruvian man as a universal model (Figure 1). This ideal and perfect body had mental, spiritual and discursive values. His physical and mental perfection advocate the definition of what a human is (Creed, 1986).

However, this figure set some standards for cultures as well as individuals. Because of this model, humanism became a civilizational model was formed European ideas and ideals.

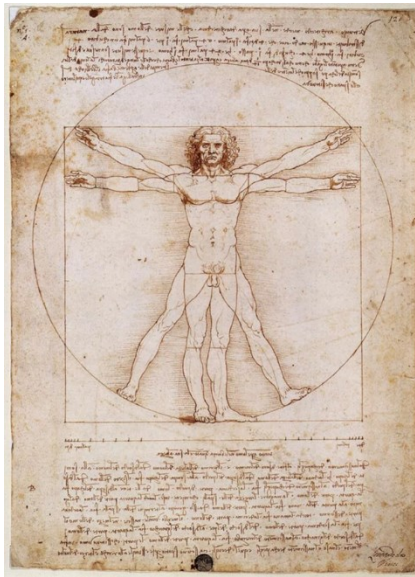


Figure 1. Vitruvian Man by Leonardo da Vinci (URL 1)

The ideal man was European. Therefore, its euro-centric paradigm created a separation from other civilizations by creating by emphasising the difference. Differences caused many people to get labelled as “the others”. They are naturalized, racialized, and sexualized others. They were disposable bodies that were reduced to less than human status (Braidotti, 2013). This segregation is the beginning of the posthuman discussion. Posthumanism aims to end this opposition between humanism and anti-humanism. It assumes the historical decline of the humanism, and explores alternative ways of conceptualising the human subject rather than “The Vitruvian Man”

Posthuman covers disciplinary fields such as; cultural study, history, philosophy, and classical humanity. The key question here is what comes after the anthropocentric subject?

Rosi Braidotti, a posthumanist theorist developed various interrelated fields of post-anthropocentric enquiry. She believes that becoming posthuman is a process of being. She categorises this process into three groups and labels them as becoming-animal, becoming earth, and becoming machine (Butler, 2014). Becoming animal transforms and displaces anthropocentrism and it recognizes trans-species solidarity based on our being environmentally based (Sagan and Margulis, 1999). Becoming earth has a planetary dimension, and it underlines ecology and climate change issues. The becoming machine re-evaluates the division between technology and human to introduce biotechnologically mediated relations as initial for the construction of the subject.

### 3.1 Posthuman as Becoming Animal

Post anthropocentrism dislocates the single hierarchical and central role of “man” as he is the measure of all things. This displacement creates an ontological gap and this gap is filled with other species. As the perfect man is expected to have a perfect functional physical body that implies, health, normality, and youth in white masculinity. Thus, all other bodies were cast out of the subject position even though some of them are anthropomorphic other such as non-young, non-normal, non-white, disabled, non-masculine, non-healthy, malformed, and enhanced people along with zoo-morphic, earth and organic others. Moral and aesthetic ideals were based on white, masculine and heterosexual Europeans. Nonetheless, all these others are rendered as anomalies, deviance and monstrosity (Braidotti, 2013).

For the Anthropos, the animals are necessary, familiar and appreciated other. There is fantastic interaction between animals and humans gains another dimension in posthumanism (Beckman, 2013). For example, in the movie Avatar, the blue human-animal hybrid creature represents a non-anthropomorphic subject as a lead role. In these Posthuman days, animals have some surprising proximity to humans such as having equivalence life-forms with animals as in pet diet clinics and pet grooming places. The familiarity between human and animals are linked to the economy and labour force (Schmeink, 2017). The bodies of animals while the tusk of an elephant, the silk of a caterpillar, and the wool of sheep have been industrial sources.

By the time and development of technology today, animals are the actors in experiments for biotechnological agriculture, the cosmetics industry, drugs and other parts of the economy. Some animals like mice or pigs are now

genetically modified to produce organs for humans. As it can be remembered from Dolly the sheep and Onco-mouse, capitalism already took those animals as tradable and disposable bodies and post-anthropocentric disposable. Similarly, some dogs and monkeys replaced human beings and they were sent to space as part of space exploration programmes.



**Figure 2.** Dolly the sheep (1996-2003) (URL 2).

As can be seen in many science fiction movies, human beings will be cloned soon like Dolly (Figure 2). However, these cloned bodies are not natural bodies but a heterogeneous mix of organisms and machines. Therefore, Dolly was neither a machine nor an animal but a posthuman icon. Similar to Dolly, Onko-mouse is a posthuman, a transgenic organism created to sacrifice herself to cure breast cancer and save the lives of women. Establishing a new interaction with human beings these animals construct themselves as posthuman subjects.



**Figure 3.** Dog Groomer (URL 3).

As their construction process is not natural, architectural spaces were designed by the parameters of these subjects. For example, the scale of a dog beauty clinic focuses on the size and breed of its prospected customers (Figure 3). Laboratories or science buildings are arranged at the ideal temperature and formed according to the size of the targeted animals. Therefore, the Vitruvian man has been removed from the chart and replaced by these posthuman subjects.

### 3.2 The Posthuman as Becoming Earth

The meaning of nature today is not as positive as it was in the past because humans damaged the earth for years (Amen, 2021). Anthropocene created geo-morphism that includes severe problems related to climatic change, ecological sustainability, or environmental crisis. Coronavirus is a posthuman subject and it is a good example of posthuman earth because none of the ecological and geographical problems is local anymore but global.

Posthuman as becoming earth is a process to have a different planetary relation. Therefore, dominant party, Anthropos, should negotiate and have goodwill to other non-human others. The best method will be de-familiarization from their dominant subjectivity. They need the action of “deterritorialization”. Hence becoming earth is taking nature as a positive subject to heal to get what it was in the past (Braidotti, 2017).

Therefore, the position of human subjects and location should be considered fluid, almost homeless rather than settled, multi-gendered rather than man, and finally, they should be the human of the planet. Therefore, Braidotti calls them nomadic subjects (Hanafin, 2014). As Human and non-human occupants living on the same planet, the question of what could be a geo-centred subject look like to have alternative renewable subjectivity.



**Figure 4.** Mel Chin, The Revival Field, Minnesota (URL 3).

Non-human situations appear due to ethical crises such as natural disasters, racism, colonialism, genocide, misogyny, and violence. It causes poverty, starvation, homelessness, and biopiracy that push women, children, animals and others off the stage. While smart, technological habitation is heaven for some subjects, it also determines who could live in this habitat. Nonetheless, human beings should create a vital link with Zoe and create spaces related to Zoe to have a hominid line in the future.

In The Revival Field, Mel Chin represents this goodwill to non-human others for the future of the planet. He created and implemented *Revival Field* (1990), a project that was a pioneer in the field of “green remediation”. He used plants to remove toxic, heavy metals from the soil (Figure 4). It was a conceptual artwork intending to sculpt a site’s ecology in Minnesota. The area was implanted with unique hyperaccumulator plants to extract heavy metals from contaminated soil. Scientific analysis of biomass examples from this area proved the prospect of “Green Remediation” as an on-site, low-tech option to existing expensive and inadequate remediation techniques (Cieri and Peeps, 2000). As in Mel Chin’s work, Posthuman spaces of becoming earth concern sustainability and renewability of nature.

### 3.3 The Posthuman as Becoming Machine

The issue of technology is at the heart of posthuman. The posthuman displaces the relationship between, machine and organism, metal and flesh, organic, inorganic, born and manufactured, organic nervous system and electronic circuits (Braidotti, 2013). Machines do not represent something but deliver the information. Human beings become bio-mediated in this era. Vitruvian man has transformed into cyborgs that are not only the appealing high-tech bodies, or film stars but also masses of the underpaid, digital proletariat.

Human beings have created a new relationship with technology. This dependency gives a protagonist role to technology by developing new software and devices (Dinello, 2021). At some point, humans cannot think about everyday lives without technology. Becoming machine is the biomediated others. It merges with a technologically mediated planetary environment. Autopoiesis creates a link between organic matter and technology or machine (Figure 5). Schumacher believes that Autopoiesis architecture organises itself besides creating a new connection with its occupants (Schumacher and Flores, 2011).



**Figure 5.** Smart Cities (URL 4).



It promises new proximity to animals, technology and planetary along with high-tech mediation. Therefore, becoming machine can be seen in smart buildings and cities that are built with the latest technology. Buildings that deliver their information, does not depend on human subject to sustain themselves. Also, they promise a new lifestyle that merges human, animal, earth, nature and technology within the same constitution (Aziz Amen, 2022). The technological devices and equipment do not represent something because they deliver the information as a nervous system. Therefore, posthuman spaces of machine beings are like cyborg cities and buildings that were equipped with technology.

#### **4. Discussion**

Architecture might answer the needs of different subjects rather than seeing them as problems. However, considering the description of the human as a subject is already problematic itself, as was explained previously.

Therefore, design has become a matter.

Throughout this presentation, I tried to illustrate three different posthuman becoming processes. In each process, many possible alternative subjects can emerge. Therefore, there is neither one unique posthuman subject nor posthuman space as each of them creates and needs its own space. I tried to take attention that, human beings are not the only subject of architectural and environmental design as it was in the renaissance. Therefore, today's world and technology need architects who are aware of that.

#### **5. Conclusions**

As the prefix "-post" means after, posthumans can be received as subjects that come after humanity. The term posthuman is usually associated with robots that will take priority over human beings. Therefore, it is linked to technological developments. Nonetheless, its relationship with technology is not as shallow as monstrous robots or technologically equipped or updated bodies that are transhumans. The relationship between technology and posthumans is deeper than cyborgs and robots because it has economic, cultural, and climatic aspects. According to Braidotti, posthuman does not mean species that defeat humans or came after when human beings are erased from the earth. Instead, they are the subjects of design and actors of the planet who appear to question the central role of Vitruvian's perfect man. Therefore, post- means alternative actors to Vitruvian man. Thus, the posthuman does not address "getting rid of humans" but rather "moving humans away from the centre of our inquiry." Therefore, Anthropocene can be an opportunity for architects to think about how to build for multiple species, creating a broader idea of what life forms should be given to inhabitants. Therefore, architects should take every possible occupant as their client. For example, Shanghai has been locked down again because of having a new virus. In England, lots of kids are infected by mysterious hepatitis and now it spread to Canada and Japan. Moreover, scientists are warning us of solar flares because of global warming. All those visible and invisible posthuman subjects already shifted the central role of humanity in the world also they can be the end of humanity. So, what should be an architectural design for the future environment in an extremely hot environment that is also full of fatal diseases? Or what kind of design should be given to human and non-human subjects for the continuity of their species?

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#### **Conflict of Interests**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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