

Tea Lobo

### **Mediating Wilderness: The City's Self-Demarcation from and Participation in Nature**

Traditionally, the city has been viewed as the place where humans become truly human (Aristotle 1253a30). In early modernity, cities were thought to discipline and civilize (from *civitas*), and non-city dwellers were considered "raw" in comparison to urban dwellers (Brett 2011, 7; Taylor, 2007 99-103). This positive view is challenged by the observation that early nomads were healthier than early city dwellers, and that cities were foremostly institutions of slavery (Scott 2017). The city can be seen more neutrally as mediating to the wild (Hampe 2020, 63, 113), as providing protection and a structured context for the articulation of various social roles and relationships (Griffiths & von Lünen 2016; Schwarte 2015). In this sense it is a technology for adapting the environment to human needs and for providing principles for the spatial ordering of society, thus conceptually self-demarcating human beings from non-human and first nature. Modernity's aspiration was to control nature by building geometrical constructions, imaginatively interlinked with the sphere of the human mind as opposed to the wild (Klein 2016; Psarra 2009, 217-9). Recently, with developments like biomimicry, the use of biologically active hybrids in the built environment and notions like connected intelligence, this equation is changing (Komninos 2019; Brownell & Swackhamer 2015). The idea is no longer to control the environment, but to insert precisely those unpredictable and vivacious elements of the wild into the urban environment. It is to be investigated how these developments might conceivably alter human perceptions of the city.