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Habitecture: an avian experience for the integration of people and the natural environment

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Fig.8: Conceptual relationship between development and nature.
(Author's Work, 2019.)

Abstract

Urban sprawl has created an environment of separation between human-made and the natural. As land is developed, habitats are demolished, and species are forced to relocate. Natural ecosystems are destroyed, creating vulnerable and threatened species.

This research proposal questions if the degree of separation between developed and natural can be minimised through correction to environmental damage caused by development, creating conservational efforts for species affected.

The solution would be in creating a space which brings these two worlds together, the built environment and the natural as one, in a way that allows for urban development to continue but still protects nature. This result could lead to a symbiotic relationship between the two sectors. Conservation of nature would, therefore, be the primary focus; this would be done through research and education. As for people, the primary focus would be a space of rest away from development, connecting with nature through ecopsychology, and creating a space which works on mental and physical skill development. However, these two focuses do not remain separate, as, in order for one to work, it requires the other's input. In other words, nature's conservation requires the input of people to conserve it through research and education which, and conservation of nature allows for green spaces in which people can use, increasing biodiversity.

The architectural intervention will, therefore, be to house the research and educational facilities but also spaces which promote integration with the environment and people. The architectural intervention would need to blend between human-made and natural, referring back to the initial statement, where the two should become one, in a way that they are functional in their own rights but also provide benefits for each other. This process would be achieved through biophilic design as the natural is brought into the human-made, and the artificial becomes a secondary habitat for wildlife.

To create this interaction between people and nature, the two need to share a space. It would be of no benefit to either side if conservation were done without public engagement, leading to a lack of awareness and the continuation of development and destruction. This led to the chosen site and the related species at focus. As there is not much wildlife roaming free within our urban developments, due to habitat destruction, birds are brought to focus as they can fly into and out of developed areas. This access to and from developed areas has led to birds becoming synanthropic - which means they can live alongside humans and adapt to the changes people create in the environment. Birds ability to adapt does not mean that they do not suffer as much as other wildlife who are being pushed to the outskirts of developed areas. There are 1300 bird species threatened with extinction and 150 already extinct due to habitat loss, broken food chains, poaching and climate change - all reasons caused by people and the invented technologies. These reasons make it appropriate to pay special attention to birds as they provide some nature into the concrete jungle. Birds also provide services, such as fostering the growth of the environment and therefore encouraging the environment to produce more. Even though the best solution for people would be to create more green spaces in an urban context, this is not always plausible for nature. Wildlife, such as birds, have many threats and dangers found within city centres such as cars, power lines and interferences such as noise, air and light pollution. The environment proves to be unfavourable as urban spaces would not promote wildlife biodiversity and growth of the population.

With this in mind, Delta Park, along with the Florence Bloom Bird Sanctuary is the chosen site, with its closeness and access to people, while still being a natural environment catering to bird's needs (and people's need for nature). It allows for free-flying birds while still providing a space for protection, and the public has access and the ability to be integrated with nature at no cost to the environment. Through research, the proposed scheme will create a space where wildlife and people can co-inhabit and benefit from each other, both being able to call this space an oasis.