

EXPANDED WILDSpace – Shaping wildlife habitats in an urban setting

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How can architects, urban planners and other professionals deal with the collision of sprawling cities and the natural wilderness? The fast pace growth of urbanity is a global issue, and in many cases, cities are becoming threats to the natural world and its inhabitants, sometimes leading its endemic species to extinction. One example of this can be found in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya and the only capital in the world with a wild national park on its border. The closer the relationship between the built environment and the wild, the more human-wildlife conflicts arise. The challenge of solving these conflicts lies in how the coexistence of these two habitats is formed.

In 1946, the park was unfenced and disconnected from the developing city. Today, residential and commercial development has progressively expanded around the edges of the park, requiring it to be fenced in on three sides. The National Park is today an urban protected area and home to a wide range of wildlife. Some of these species' survival depends on their seasonal migration from the park to the southern open plains. Fencing off these paths would have catastrophic consequences for the ecosystem and its wildlife. Land fragmentation is a big problem on the southern plains, where the amount of farms, private houses and industries are increasing. Abandoned quarries, huge craters of unused space, are cutting off the landscape and disturbing the animal migration. Transforming these spaces could have a positive impact on the welfare of the wildlife in the area. What if the quarries could be used as pit stops for water and food on the migration path for both birds and mammals? Further, research and learning activities could be included in this area, as well as eco-tourism, to create a network of wildlife-friendly tourism, education and protection.

