

Helsinki – a city for humans and non-humans alike

Helsinki interspecies equality act 2024

INTRO

Following the ongoing crisis of the biodiversity loss, interspecies challenges brought by the climate crisis and adjacent riots by the non-human species Helsinki decides to act.

In the year 2024 Helsinki establishes as its new guiding principle and slogan “Helsinki – a city for humans and non-humans alike” and goals to be a first life-centric city without species discrimination. Acting after the general extended principles of Human and non-human rights declaration, it takes as its new principle that:

A: All beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

B: Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person.

C: Everyone has the right to rest and leisure

E: Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their family, including food and housing

(F: All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law)

Accordingly, as the first mission following the new leading principle, the Eastern Archipelago revival is addressed under this umbrella. Helsinki wants to include all the user groups and negotiates with the representatives of marine life (algae, bacteria, fish....), archipelago fauna (insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals including endangered bats), archipelago flora (mushrooms, plants, trees) and cultural species. The aim is to get to the bottom of what are the different interest groups’ needs, hopes, and wishes for the future of the archipelago use.

Helsinki – a city for humans and non-humans alike seeks fair and joyful archipelago environment for all the species with these principles.

- All design choices support freedom, well-being, and joy of all the user groups, human and non-human alike.
- All added design; areas, spaces, and structures, should enhance biodiversity, healthy biotopes, and ecology of the area.
- All existing structures and materials are primarily saved and rethought, if not harmful, since extracting virgin materials is harmful to species living environments.

Zoning for Co-Existence and Biodiversity Preservation

To ensure a harmonious co-existence between humans and non-humans and protect the rich biodiversity of our project, we have divided the areas into three distinct scales: the archipelago, the islands, and structures. These zones are designed to strike a balance between human use and non-human utilization while safeguarding vulnerable species and providing a comfortable experience for both customer groups.

Large Scale: Archipelago

At the archipelago level, we address the entire area as a unified entity. To achieve a harmonious co-existence, we have categorized the islands and islets into the following groups:

1. **Non-Human Islands and Islets:** These areas are restricted from human access, allowing the biodiversity to thrive undisturbed and fostering the flourishing of sensitive species. We prioritize the rewilding of these fragile and biodiverse terrains.
2. **Islands and Islets with Minimal Human Intervention:** Although open to human presence, these areas are not directed for human use. They lack human facilities or structures for landing and are intended to preserve their relatively fragile biodiversity and terrain, with rewilding efforts if necessary.
3. **Joint Use Islands and Islets:** These areas accommodate a combination of non-human and human use, ranging from non-human dominating zones to joint-use areas with varying degrees of human intervention. We aim to concentrate heavier human use in specific zones to protect the more delicate islands. Landing structures and facilities are developed to cater to the majority of human visitors, including those using public and service boats, kayakers, and boaters. Biodiversity restoration and enhancement, along with re-wilding, are integrated into the design.
4. **Military Islands (X):** These are joined islands with restricted human use and varying levels of human interference. Some areas may contain health hazards, such as discarded ammunition, posing risks to both non-human and human users.

Middle Scale: Islands

Within the archipelago, each island is assigned different uses to support both human and non-human to thrive together or separately in varying degrees. Landing Sites for example are designed to be relatively more human centric, natural areas more non-human centric, and in roads efforts are made to find a balance between human needs and minimizing disturbances to non-human habitats.

Islands will also be made available in winter for year round use with the help of winter bridges and ferries.

Small Scale: Structures

Even within structures, a clear focus is placed on either human or non-human usage. Certain buildings will be designated for humans, featuring amenities like grilling places and accommodations. Simultaneously, other structures, such as bat towers and insect hotels, will be designed specifically to cater to the needs of non-human inhabitants. Yet other structures serve both humans and non-humans alike. For example by accommodating plants on roofs, blurring the lines of ownership.

By thoughtfully zoning the project across the archipelago, islands, and structures, we aim to create a sustainable and balanced environment that allows both humans and non-humans to thrive while preserving the richness of biodiversity.

The structures are highly modular, using the same basic structure for walls, floors, piers and deck boards. The structures can take a variety of shapes through the use of different corner pillars which the basic structures can be attached to with bolts. The foundation system is strong, minimal, minimally interfering and easily adjustable making it suitable for any location.

The modular structure itself is also modular and is entirely dismountable and recyclable. Making it easy to maintain and repair.

The structures will be made with construction waste wood and other non-virgin wood where possible. The insulation will also be recycled, consisting of non-virgin sawdust.

Development

I. Planning and Research

We analyzed existing data on the archipelago's biodiversity, human activity, and climate patterns to guide our decision-making.

II. Stakeholder Engagement

We engaged with a diverse range of stakeholders. We visited the islands and talked to the people we met there. We investigated the landscape and studied the multitude of non-humans we encountered along the way.

III. Design

With the help of stakeholders we were able to sketch out our design ideas, such as humans and non-humans thriving together, zoning, the modular structure design, architecture and landscape architecture.

IV. Environmental Impact Assessment

Before implementation, it is important that an in-depth environmental impact assessment will be conducted throughout to ensure the project's sustainability. This assessment will include ecological surveys, carbon footprint analysis, and an evaluation of the potential effects on local wildlife.

V. Implementation Process

The implementation process was divided into several phases, each demanding precision and patience.

- Infrastructure development will start on the designated islands with a keen focus on adhering to eco-friendly construction practices.
- Rewilding and biodiversity enhancement will be done alongside infrastructure development to balance out the infrastructural construction and development.

VI. Regular Monitoring and Adaptation

The success of the "Helsinki – a city for humans and non-humans alike" project heavily depends on regular monitoring and adaptation. Adaptive measures are taken to address emerging challenges, ensuring that the project remains effective and relevant over time.