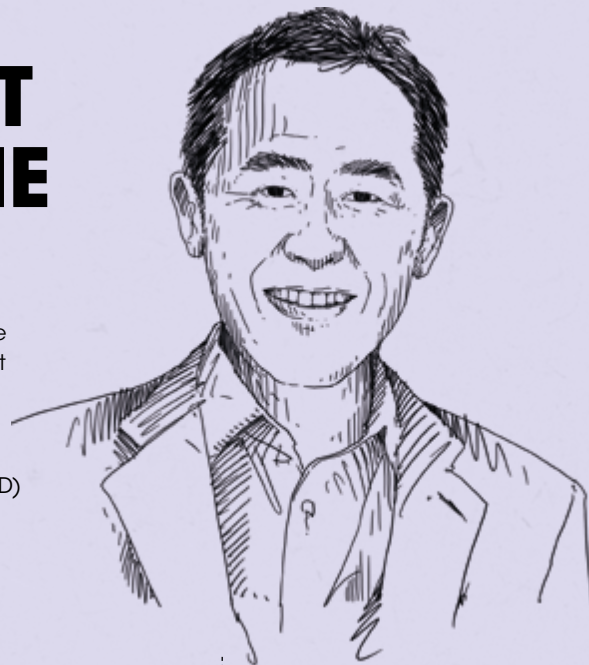


HOW TO ADDRESS BIODIVERSITY IN CITIES

NO ONE LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT CAN DO IT ALONE

Quote as: Matsumoto, T. How to Address Biodiversity in Cities. No One Level of Government Can Do It Alone. P. 240. In: Mejia, M.A., Amaya-Espinel, J.D. (eds.). *BiodiverCities by 2030: Transforming Cities with Biodiversity*. Bogotá. Instituto de Investigación de Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt. 2022. 288 pages.



Tadashi Matsumoto

Head of Sustainable Urban Development Unit, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The share of the world's urban population is projected to reach 55% by 2050.¹ While urbanization is a significant driver of economic growth and wellbeing, it has also put stress on our environment. Biodiversity loss is now considered among the top global risks to society, along with climate change.² COVID-19 has reminded us that human interference with biodiversity, particularly land-use change and wildlife exploitation, helps create the conditions for zoonotic diseases.^{3,4} Meanwhile, citywide lockdowns have made us remember the essential human need to live with nature, which opened a window of opportunity to advance more biodiverse cities.

Cities play a crucial role in enhancing biodiversity and delivering on national and international biodiversity commitments. The 2020 Edinburgh Declaration for Sub-national Governments, Cities, and Local Authorities on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework is a crucial milestone, recognizing and promoting the role of cities.

A recent OECD paper, drawing on policy practices from Scotland (UK) and France, identifies many new local programs and initiatives, verifying the momentum created by the Edinburgh Declaration.⁵ Emerging approaches are also integrating biodiversity and climate action. For example, Glasgow's Climate Emergency Action Plan is creating new Local Nature

Reserves to help mitigate the urban heat island effect while supporting biodiversity. And the Paris Rain Plan (*Paris Pluie*) encourages nature-based solutions, including green roofs, to increase water absorption and rainwater use, to name a few. Such measures help avoid the overflow of saturated drainage systems from heavy rains while benefiting biodiversity.

Another promising action area is the re-use of existing urban space for enhancing biodiversity. The UK government included additional brownfields on its priority sites to protect the natural environment. It recognized retaining and enhancing biodiversity as an additional benefit of the Green Belts, designated to prevent urban sprawl around large built-up areas. In Mulhouse, France, abandoned allotment gardens, once polluted by asbestos, are being re-natured to benefit local biodiversity and citizens' access to nature.

Despite these advancements, key challenges remain. These include developing clear and measurable bio-

diversity targets at the city scale to advance nature-based solutions in cities and ensure multi-level policy coherence and coordination. The geographical scale will be critical to designing policy frameworks since opportunities for mainstreaming biodiversity vary across places (e.g., urban fringes, urban centers). It is also crucial to recognize that biodiversity action is a shared responsibility among multiple actors and that each of them has a specific role in achieving a common target. Practices in Scotland highlight multi-stakeholder partnerships as an effective tool, especially when engaging national and subnational governments with local communities.

To conclude, cities have a crucial role in delivering national and international biodiversity commitments. Still, we must bear in mind that no one level of government can do this alone; accelerating and mainstreaming biodiversity action in cities will require a whole-of-government approach.