# THE TRANSFORMATIVE **POWER OF URBAN RIVERS**

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**As the world's population has migrated to urban environments, the land-use model of the last few centuries has involved a struggle against nature, seen as an obstacle and an opponent. This development model has severe effects in countries where the most diverse and fragile ecosystems on the planet are concentrated. Colombia, a megadiverse country in terms of species and ecosystems, has an extensive network of cities, many of them in places where the biodiversity of one hectare exceeds that of entire countries in other regions of the world.**

The impacts of this model have generated several socio-environmental conflicts and have given rise to conservation approaches based on the artificial separation of what is urban and what is natural. Therefore, it is necessary to find a different model of urban development, balanced and in harmony with our biodiversity, where the approach is not "the city versus nature" but "the city with nature."

In addition, we are a country highly exposed to natural hazards and the impact of climate change, from hurricanes and floods to heatwaves and water shortages. Today there is no doubt that climate change is a reality: the latest IPCC report[1] emphasizes the direct influence of human activity on global warming. Likewise, vulnerability to climate change is concentrated in cities. However, climate change is also an opportunity to rethink our cities and the well-being of their inhabitants, based on the understanding that a solid natural base is the first priority in building urban resilience.

Water is synonymous with life for the entire world and those who live in it. When we think about its availability and accessibility, we find some figures[2] that invite us to reflect and understand the fortune of cities that have rivers in their spatial structure. They have a treasure to take care of and value, not only preserving it but also turning it into a structuring, articulating, and transforming element of the territory. This purpose can be achieved, for example, through the respectful and sustainable planning and intervention of the water corridor, by transforming it into green corridors that promote the ecosystemic connection in its natural environment, integrating actions that not only have a positive impact on the conservation of its ecosystem but also on competitiveness, social integration, and urban renewal.

Aware of the above, and recognizing that Colombia is a world water power, the national government proposes developing urban environments that acknowledge, prioritize, and integrate biodiversity and its benefits toward sustainable urban-regional development. We have named this concept BiodiverCities.

BiodiverCities precisely have sustainability at the center of their development, the relationship between man and nature, natural resources, and their water sources (especially their rivers). From the BiodiverCity, we can mark this path by building this route towards carbon neutrality by 2050 and, in turn, return rivers to the cities and cities to the people.