

# URBAN EXPANSION: AN ALLY OF BIODIVERSITY

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Many urban spaces in developing countries that were intended as protected areas were not adequately protected. Due to inadequate land and housing management policies, these high ecological value land became a housing solution for low-income populations, especially in cities hosting rural communities. These occupancy patterns have reduced the supply of areas where citizens can connect with nature, reinforcing the notion that nature has no place in cities.

It is no secret that cities depend on peri-urban and rural areas for water, air quality and food security. Green areas are spaces for us to meet and interact with our natural heritage. The alternative, viewing it as a barrier, will result in proven adverse effects on nature. A recent example is the tropical rainforests, rainforests or dry forests of Colombia.

Indeed, of the 32 capital cities in Colombia, 27 are located on rivers. Even though most of them are terribly degraded, urban biodiversity in the area is still high. Given the projected growth of cities in the world's most biodiverse areas, it is essential to position these ecosystems as service providers to the cities. This is not only a moral call but also an opportunity—the World Economic Forum indicates that investing in nature could lead to a potential investment of USD 583 billion. By capitalizing on the value of natural services and biodiversity in our cities' peripheral areas, we can



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improve our quality of life in cities. Other benefits include becoming better adapted to climate change and a structural solution to the chronic deficit of public space.

Professor Partha Desgupta argues that we must promote a positive biodiversity approach in the current economic model. As a first step, we need valuation for ecosystem services, payment for metropolitan environmental services, investment in nature-based solutions, exchange of building rights for transfer of tit-

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le and restoration of urban ecosystems. This must be accompanied by adjusting the country's land use planning regulation, Decrees 1076 and 1077 and Law 388.

Dreams of cities surrounded and integrated with natural paradise is possible. Pollinators can become part of our urban landscape again. In fact, the pandemic has shown us that if we give nature a break, it will return to life. In summary, it is a question of biodiversity co-inhabiting cities with us