

PREFACE

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Ecology, the science of nature's interconnections, teaches us that every plant, fungi, mammal, fish, bird, insect, and bacteria is deeply engaged with each other and with water, gravity, pressure, wind, fire, soils, temperature, and climate. The Earth is made out of interdependences, yet we humans have built political, physical, and disciplinary barriers to make sense of our complex world. This paradox of seeking understanding and control while upsetting the balance of the system has led us to the current situation: a compartmentalized planet with siloed subsistence and survival efforts.

Let's take cities as a microcosm of our planet. Cities are living systems con-

nected with forests, oceans, mountains, and valleys. They have intakes, outtakes, and dynamic interactions with their environment and their fundamental parts: nature, the built environment, and social systems.

Cities have grown remarkably in the last decades, resulting in more and more people living in landscapes that are regrettably disjointed from nature and mainly dominated by asphalt, glass, bricks, and cement. Understanding the implications of such growth for nature and society became one of the Humboldt Institute's main objectives in 2012. The Institute has since dedicated substantial efforts to analyzing the causes and effects of urbanization in a megadiverse country.

For such a purpose, we have built networks and alliances with local governments, universities, organizations, and the private sector in

the last ten years and mobilized expert and practical knowledge through multi-stakeholder dialogues at the global, regional, and national scales. These partnerships and exchanges are represented today in twelve 'urban projects' that include wildlife radio telemetry, ecosystem services mapping, urban bioeconomy, ecosystem-based adaptation, nature-based solutions, and citizen science.

In April 2020, during strict confinement due to Covid 19 and immersed in thought about what was happening on the planet, I had a decisive space for reflection with President Iván Duque. He urged me, as recently appointed General Director of the Humboldt Institute, to jointly lead a global contemplation on the role of cities and those of us who live in them in the fight for planetary sustainability.

It was a crucial moment of ambitious drive for **BiodiverCities** – a

national strategy led by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia seeking to contribute to the National Development Plan targets. From that conversation with President Duque, it became clear that this discussion had to be scaled up globally, given the planetary context and the importance of reflection. The aim was then to further the BiodiverCities framework proposed by the Government of Colombia. And we would do so by bringing together two high-level commissions of experts and practitioners from the public and private sectors, academia, and civil society to combine insights and co-create a forward-looking perspective on nature-positive cities.

To this end, we developed a strong partnership with the World Economic Forum, a significantly supporting the implementation of the global ambition of BiodiverCities,

known today as the **BiodiverCities by 2030** initiative. The Forum's Nature Action Agenda has galvanized this initiative to greater visibility and impact through the Global Commission on BiodiverCities by 2030, artificial intelligence systems, and crowdsourcing technologies.

The initiative's first year is coming to an end, with crucial milestones like the BiodiverCities by 2030 Insight Report released in January 2022, a report showcasing investment opportunities for increasing nature in cities. And so, the time has come for the second issue -and final output- of this burgeoning first phase: the BiodiverCities by 2030 book.

The book in your hand brings together knowledge and lessons from transformative actions taking place in Colombia, Latin America, and the world. Each of these experiences from very different con-

texts will provide you with innovative approaches, multiple options, and inspiring opportunities to design, live and enjoy cities in harmony with nature. Today is the time to rethink planetary health from within cities. Today is the time for cities to commit to planetary sustainability. Let's welcome new urban futures that ignite all forms of life. Let's start transforming the planet with BiodiverCities.