

## Foreword

In the next four decades, our planet will undergo the largest and fastest period of urban expansion in human history and the new demands of cities will reshape most landscapes and have significant global impacts on biodiversity, natural habitats and the ecosystem services that society relies on.

The challenges of urbanization are hence profound, but so too are the opportunities. This is well described in **Cities for the 21 Century – re-learning to live with nature**. The author shows with many examples that well-designed cities can indeed sustainably offer improved quality of life and allowing for greater resource efficiency and the preservation of larger intact natural areas. Today, cities are increasingly providing exciting opportunities for making the transition to an inclusive green economy in both the developing and developed world.

Through history, cities have given rise to a diversity of views and emotions, from places of pollution and social divisions to centers of ancient and popular culture and crossroads of innovation and new ideas. What is clear from the historical perspective on cities is that urban systems always have and always will display patterns of self-organisation, experience both adaptation and demise, and possess dynamics that play out over multiple scales of space and time. While connections and feedbacks with the hinterland that supported growing urban centres, were often apparent in the past, this has increasingly been lost in a globalized world. At the same time, human domination of the Earth System in which urbanization plays a significant role, is increasingly recognized to reshape the ecology of the entire planet.

In Latin America, more than 80 percent of the population lives in cities, and by 2050 it is expected to reach 90 percent, thus making it the most urbanized of all world regions. This book brings into sharp focus not only the extraordinary wealth of urban biodiversity in cities in Latin America and the rest of the world, but also the pivotal role of urban biodiversity in generating ecosystem services upon which large and small urban populations and communities rely for their food, water, and health.

With some exceptions management of and planning for biodiversity and ecosystem services in Latin American cities are uncommon. This book shows the way forward, away from an urbanization patterns defined by inefficient land use, poor planning, and land prices that do not reflect the biological value of the land to a new era of planning of green infrastructure that value ecosystem services and biodiversity and securing human well-being.

In becoming sustainable, urban areas must indeed offer better stewardship of the ecosystems on which they rely, including by generating multiple ecosystem services through design and restoration and reducing their environmental impact through improved efficiency of material and energy use and by making productive use of waste. Sustainable urbanization is essential for maintaining human well-being. Cities—their inhabitants and governments—can, and must, take the lead in fostering a more sustainable stewardship of our planet's living resources. Many already are, in ways that are innovative, exciting, and inspiring—but so much more remains to be done. This book is a new and valuable tool for steering urban development onto a sustainable path. I hope you will read it, share it, and together with others, take action to help save life and improve human well-being.

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Thomas Elmqvist<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> **Thomas Elmqvist**, PhD, is a professor in Natural Resource Management at Stockholm University. His research is focused on ecosystem services, land use change, natural disturbances and components of resilience including the role of social institutions. He is coordinating a major interdisciplinary research themes as part of the Stockholm Resilience Centre ([www.stockholmresilience.su.se](http://www.stockholmresilience.su.se)) at Stockholm University, focussing on governance and management of ecosystem services in urban landscapes, involving 12 cities around the world. He was involved in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and principal investigator of several multidisciplinary projects in Africa. He serves as associated editor for the journals Ecology and Society, Conservation and Society, Ambio and Sustainability Science. He is currently a co-chair of the Science Committee bioSustainability, as part of Diversitas and participated in the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity project ([www.teebweb.org](http://www.teebweb.org)).