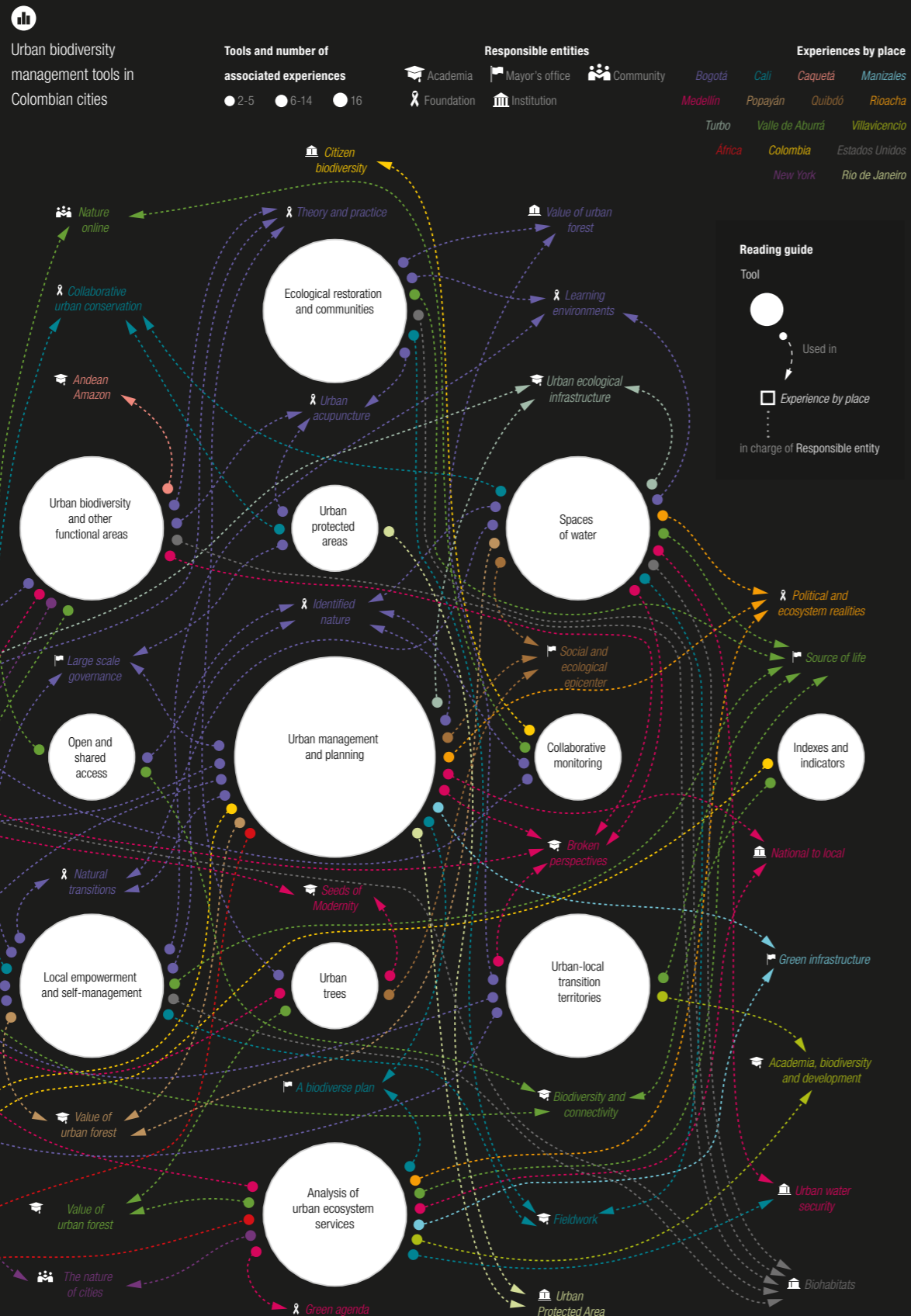


411 Challenging the Urban Model

Urban Nature: a platform of experiences

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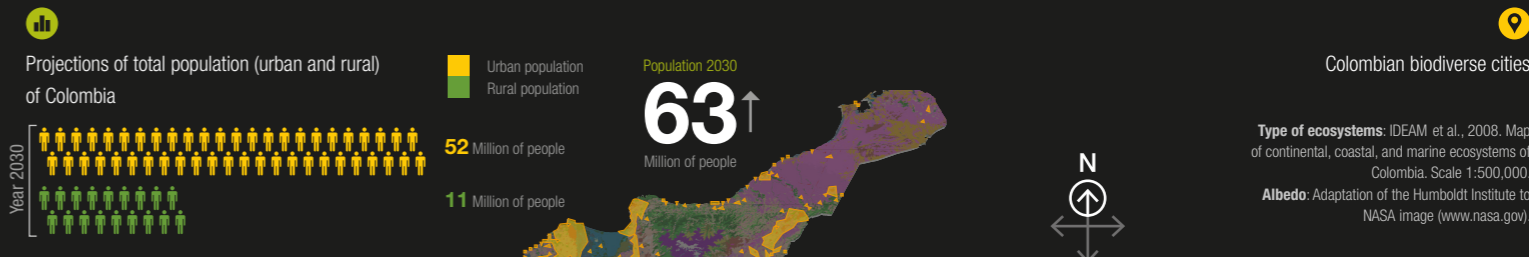


AS EVIDENCED IN THE COLLECTIVE EXPERIMENT CALLED *NATURALEZA URBANA* (URBAN NATURE), THE CONSTRUCTION OF A MODEL OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE CITIES THAT MANAGE THEIR BIODIVERSITY FROM DIFFERENT SCALES, SECTORS, AND APPROACHES IS POSSIBLE.

In cities, the conservation of biodiversity faces a duality between challenges and opportunities. The Colombian context is one of an increasing number of people living in urban landscapes, where profound transformations and impacts on nature are being generated and the rupture between inhabitants and ecological processes that support life is augmenting. Consequently, the approach of research about **urban biodiversity**, which covers not only the descriptive analysis of related issues but also its in-

corporation of urban biodiversity as a strategic element in planning and environmental management in multiple cities around the world, has changed.

In 2016, the Humboldt Institute developed a collective experiment. It evidenced that cities are willing to improve their relations with nature, and local abilities may exchange ideas and inspire solutions based on biodiversity at different scales and from varied perspectives. In *Naturaleza Urbana: Plataforma de*



"The experiment consists on creating a toolbox that would be available for managing biodiversity in Colombian cities. It would be a platform on which local capacities could dialogue and inspire solutions based on nature at a national scale".

Colombia's megadiversity, reflected in more than 85 general types of ecosystems and 8,000 specific ecosystems (Ideam et al., 2008), and the lights proceeding from human settlements reveal the potential of a sustainable future that cities must lead, stimulate, and manage through urban models based on their biodiversity.

The north of this project's research chiefly lies in the interest of creating a vision of city in Colombia that considers multiple social and ecological realities of the country and is based on the recognition of the variety of actors and social systems involved in the conservation of urban biodiversity.

URBAN ECOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE. Source: Henry Garay-EcoNat. The accumulated knowledge about ecological functioning in suburban and rural areas that surround urban centers has, without a doubt, facilitated advances in territorial planning, which may ensure the persistence of ecosystem services that are used by urban centers but originate in rural zones. However, when analyses inside urban centers are made, the importance of producing large amounts of information that may lead to new practices and uses is even greater since these areas have density indexes disproportionately larger than rural areas. From this perspective, there are many social and economic relations woven into urban surroundings. The knowledge about these dynamics faces the challenge of restoring ecological functionality in urban centers to accomplish better living conditions and sustainability of those productive processes with multiple economic and social repercussions. One of the greatest difficulties in restoring ecological functionality of urban centers is their permanent evolution in social and economic dimensions that play a role in determining their identity. In other words, between the inhabitants of a city, there are different visions about the future. So the social context plays a major role in coordinating basic aspects to reorient the continuous construction of cities. In this complex situation, the role of applied scientific knowledge is to provide elements for different social parties to make judgements and finally reach basic agreements. In this sense, Colombia has become a pioneering country concerning the social debate of urban ecology¹ by integrating various systems of knowledge for the management of urban biodiversity.

It is in the hands of the emerging group of activists, investigators, urbanists, and decision makers to stimulate an urban model that is distanced from speculation and instead serves collective interest². There must be a change of paradigm in urban decisions in such a way that biodiversity becomes a principal element in the processes of urban planning and environmental management, creating a scenario in which citizens live in closer contact with biodiversity.