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## A vision on urban nature

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# BUILDING AS A LANDSCAPE

ENGLISH PUBLICATION



# A VISION ON URBAN NATURE

*We envision the city as a vibrant landscape, teeming with opportunities for nature-inclusive and bio-based building. This perspective is a green thread running through our ongoing research. **Jacques Vink**, architect and author of *Stadsnatuur Maken* and *Stadsnatuur Bouwen*, shares his insights on this vision as an external advisor for our project.*

**“A Dutch poet once wrote, ‘The environment of humans is fellow humans,’ displayed on a building on the Nieuwe Binnenweg in Rotterdam. My version would be, ‘The environment of humans is urban nature; an ecosystem of fellow humans, plants, birds, and animals.’ This may not be as eloquent, but I am not Jules Deelder,” Jacques Vink reflects.**

## **The Importance of Urban Nature**

The necessity to integrate nature fully into our urban landscapes is more critical than ever. With increasing urbanization, more people are living in close quarters, and the need for plants and animals to thrive in these urban environments is also rising. Often, urban areas are the last refuge for many species.

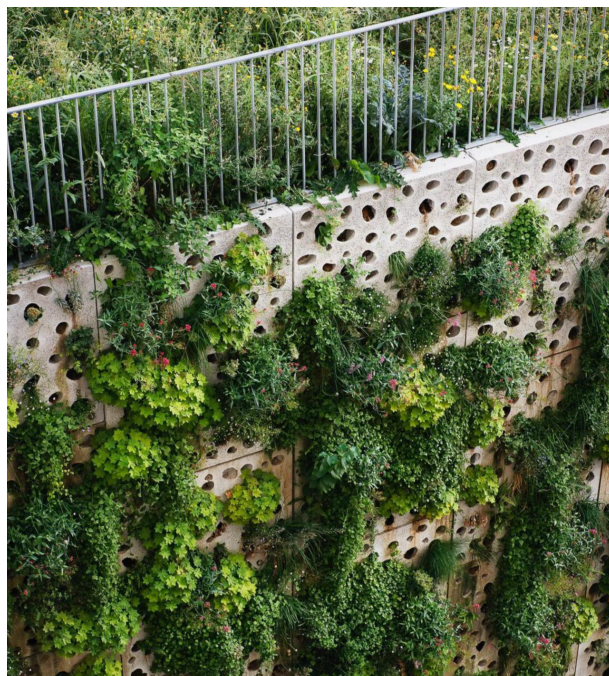


PHOTO CHARTIER DALIX

## **The City as a Rich Biotope**

Cities can be surprisingly rich in biodiversity. For instance, the variety of bird species in green suburbs often surpasses that found in rural areas, rivaling many natural habitats. Not only birds but also other animals and plants are now more commonly found in cities than in the surrounding countryside.

Nature is an integral part of the urban ecosystem, crucial for the livability of human residents. A herb-rich green roof, for example, is a blooming biotope that also cools the building beneath. A green schoolyard benefits wild bees and butterflies and serves as an educational tool for children.

## **The Vulnerability of Urban Nature**

Despite its richness, urban nature is vulnerable. Human activity constantly reconfigures the

environment, often rendering animal species homeless. Therefore, nature-inclusive building practices are essential to provide ongoing space for urban flora and fauna. By considering all city dwellers, we can create a harmonious coexistence.

### **Balancing Control and Freedom**

Ecologists debate the best approach to nature development and management. Should we preserve existing species or allow nature to take its course? This balance between control and natural evolution is crucial. Most projects fall somewhere between these two extremes.

Jacques Vink advises, “Don’t make it harder than necessary. Design alongside nature. Most of it is already there, and the process rarely starts from zero. Make buildings inviting for species, plants,

and animals already present. For urban nature, creating the right living conditions for interconnected species is more important than targeting specific species in a ‘designed’ location. Sometimes, a bit of ‘laziness’ - letting nature take its course - can be productive.”

### **Towards a Healthy Urban Ecosystem**

We aim for a natural cycle that creates a healthy living environment for all city dwellers: urban animals, plants, and humans. By embracing and integrating nature into our urban landscapes, we can build cities that are not only livable but also thriving ecosystems.

### **Jacques Vink**

# COLOPHON

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