NATURVATION
cities — nature — innovation

Mainstreaming Urban Nature-Based Solutions

Build co-financing arrangements

Governance arrangements that involve both public and private sector actors can help facilitate innovative co-financing for nature-based solutions. The municipality of Amsterdam cooperated with the accommodation reservation website Booking.com to finance a scan of all hotel rooftops in the city to kickstart the adoption of green rooftops. Green roofs could also be financed as an energy efficiency measure through mortgage credit for new homeowners, as was attempted by Green Deal Green Roofs and ASN bank in the Netherlands. The Dutch Municipality Bank (Bank Nederlandse Gemeenten, BNG) developed a financial instrument that allows homeowners with low credit scores to invest in energy efficiency measures. Another model, the Natural Capital Investment Plan in Manchester, UK, aggregated a pipeline of projects into a larger portfolio to present to investors, with the aim of blending public and private finance.

The Scottish Green Infrastructure Fund is a £15 million grant programme financed by the Scottish European Regional Development Fund to support green infrastructure projects in disadvantaged urban areas. The programme co-finances 40 percent of a project while proponents secure the other 60 percent through mechanisms such as City Deal Funding or Heritage Lottery Funding. The Fund targets initiatives that deliver multifunctional benefits such as conservation, improved health and wellbeing, and community engagement. While this model can create opportunities for learning how to deliver multifunctional benefits, challenges include the capacity of local governments to find matching funds and the need for on-going funding to support maintenance.

Mainstreaming Nature Based Solutions

Promising Pathways for Sustainability Goals

Climate Change

With the race to reach 'net zero' targets and build back resilience, nature-based solutions are increasingly seen as a critical tool for responding to climate change. Whether by cooling cities and reducing energy demand or providing new ways of managing flooding, nature-based solutions are gaining support globally. We identify four pathways through which mainstreaming is taking place: recognising their potential as a climate solution; investing to reduce climate risk; integrating climate action with other sustainability goals; and learning through practical experience on the ground.

Biodiversity

As the world seeks to develop a transformative agenda for biodiversity over the next decade, we explore how mainstreaming nature-based solutions can enable cities to conserve, restore and thrive with nature. Four pathways are identified based on regulating for 'no net loss' of biodiversity, developing co-governance arrangements for public-private finance, integrating biodiversity with existing sustainability priorities, and integrating biodiversity into urban development and the built environment.

Social Inclusion

Nature-based solutions such as new parks, rooftop gardens, and tree-lined streets play an important role in improving wellbeing and enhancing community spaces. However, the potential for gentrification and displacement of lower income groups means that these solutions must actively foster social inclusion and tackle inequalities. We identify three pathways that strengthen social inclusion: broadening community participation, securing genuine political commitment and policies that support social inclusion, and pursuing social inclusion measures as a way of achieving health and wellbeing.

Economic Regeneration

Nature-based solutions can create economic regeneration through increasing economic activity and employment and by improving the quality of life. Nature-based solutions both directly contribute to economic vitality and well-being, and leverage new forms of economic activity in cities that generate opportunities. Mainstreaming for economic regeneration takes place through developing partnerships for investment, increasing our knowledge of their economic value, seizing opportunities emerging from other sustainability initiatives, and stimulating market demand for nature-based solutions.

Sustainable Development Goals

To achieve the SDGs, urban development must prepare for growing populations while also creating sustainable and inclusive cities. Nature-based solutions can address a range of sustainability goals from climate resilience to health to economic development. For example, green space provides cooling, reduces pollutants, and encourages physical activity. Pathways that engage urban nature-based solutions to address SDGs include: involving diverse actors, strengthening local engagement, addressing multiple sustainability objectives simultaneously, establishing institutional arrangements that integrate sustainable development, and monitoring and assessing sustainable urban transformation.