

Intro News

Marianne Zandersen, REGREEN Coordinator, Aarhus University

Welcome to the 5th and final newsletter from REGREEN!

REGREEN is about fostering nature-based solutions for an equitable, healthy and green urban transition in both China and Europe. 20 partners from China and Europe have worked together to combine research and practise to advance knowledge and evidence, to develop and test tools and guidelines to identify good investment models that can really enhance the uptake and investment in NbS and to promote awareness.

Urban Living Labs

A very important part of REGREEN has been the **Urban Living Labs** – in Aarhus (Denmark), Paris region (France), Velika Gorica (Croatia) and Beijing, Shanghai and Ningbo (China). A strength has been a very close integration between researchers and practitioners, facilitated by an equal and full partnership in the consortium. Researchers benefit from the understanding on-the-ground challenges, while the Urban Living Labs can build capacity and insights and at the same time co-create with researchers, validate approaches and improve findings. Last but not least and very importantly, there has been the mutual co-development, learning and training between Urban Living Labs and between China and Europe. You can read more about the knowledge co-creation processes in one of our news items [below](#).

Knowledge & Evidence of NbS

REGREEN has worked across different challenges that NbS can help alleviate in an urban setting, looking at the multiple ecosystem services and benefits of NbS. We started off by collating **experience and best practise, barriers and lessons learned** on NbS from Europe, resulting in [13 fact sheets](#), some of which have also been translated into [Chinese](#) and analysing **the drivers and pressures of urbanisation** (Read the output [here](#)).

Related to urban challenges, we worked with a **typology for green infrastructure and NbS**, evaluating 47 NbS categories against 11 urban challenges and synthesising the evidence. This offers a quick reference tool to aid planning and design of urban NbS in cities but also for researchers to have a good screening base. You can read more about the typology in this newsletter [below](#).

We continued to develop **mapping procedures** of urban land cover and land use in Europe and China as input for modelling the ecosystem services they may deliver. These procedures and **mapping outputs** are essential for all cities to manage and improve NbS systemically. In Europe, this links directly to the upcoming Nature Restoration Law requiring member states to prevent the loss of urban green space and canopy cover by 2030 and to increase urban nature thereafter. You can read more about our work on mapping NbS further [below](#) (and [here](#)) and on setting target values for NbS at city level [here](#).

A central part of REGREEN has been the development of **fine-scaled ecosystem models** of urban NbS covering **air pollution removal, urban cooling, water quality improvement, water flow reduction, noise mitigation, and biodiversity**. We have linked these improved ecosystem models to economic valuation and equity assessments and worked with our Urban Living Labs to evaluate **scenarios** of current and future NbS options. Six simpler versions of these models allow for relatively quick results in GIS. You can read more about these models further [below](#).

We have taken a mixed methods approach to assessing **values and benefits of urban NbS**. This has included working with **causal loop diagrams** to look at the links between street trees and mental health (See further [below](#)); **photo elicitation** with residents in the European Urban Living Labs to evoke information, feelings and memories of especially street trees; surveys in urban parks using **Ecological Momentary Assessment** (read more [here](#)) and **deliberative valuation** with citizens in both Beijing and the three European cities looking at willingness to pay for different increases of urban NbS (canopy cover, access to urban parks, blue infrastructure and green roofs). Last but not least, we have worked with the **value of reduced heat mortality risks** (read more [below](#))

Awareness in governance and education



Awareness of NbS is really fundamental for advancing the uptake of NbS in cities. In terms of **governance and planning aspects**, we found enablers for innovative NbS policies require a policy champion within the local authority with an ability to influence both policy and implementation, but also openness to work across levels and silos and to collaborate with stakeholders, especially those that use and maintain urban green space. One successful way of going across silos and levels has been our work with **interactive walkable floormaps**, instrumental in providing opportunities for dialogue and social interaction. They help to think outside our own limitations and they make the improbable possible, for instance when inviting children and planners in on a walkable floormap together! You can read more about our work with interactive walkable floormaps in schools further [below](#) and access technical guidelines [here](#). In relation to planning aspects, we have worked extensively with guidelines for urban and territorial planning (read more [below](#)) on the issues of no net land take, [depaving and renaturing](#) and on [recommendations for target values](#).

Another important part of building awareness in governance and education is a number of **flexible education tools** that we have created with teacher guidelines. The aim is to engage children in explorative, participatory and action-oriented approaches to nature-based learning and NbS in their cities and their local areas. We found in all the European Urban Living Labs that students respond very well to approaches that allow exploration, discovery and action. However, tools in themselves are not enough, and there are no quick fixes, especially when talking about the education system. There's an ongoing need to engage with schools and teachers to promote and support this experiential and participatory approach to nature-based learning. There is also a need for political support at both local and national level to create that support of educational policy to give the right frames. You can read more about our work on education further [below](#).

Business models & decision support

Cities need a thriving and creative ecosystem of organisations with the right knowledge and sound business models in place to carry out and implement NbS on the ground. REGREEN has produced three distinct initiatives to help in this direction: an **Online Decision Support Tool**, a **Prospectus for NbS Business Investment**, and a **Start-Up Accelerator Program**. Each initiative addresses different aspects of promoting and scaling-up NbS. You can read more about this further [below](#).

If you are interested in getting a **comprehensive overview** of key findings and outcomes from REGREEN, you can read further below about our [REGREEN NbS Transition Handbook](#). It addresses crucial aspects for NbS design, implementation, and governance. You are most welcome to peruse our [final conference report](#), co-hosted with our sister project CLEARING HOUSE in Brussels in November 2023. By the end of February, we will also be publishing a set of topical **policy briefs** to provide a quick go-to for key findings and recommendations.

Our **repository** at zenodo <https://zenodo.org/communities/regreen> will permanently host output from REGREEN, along with our **website** www.regreen-project.eu for the next couple of years, so do keep in contact!

To conclude, with 17 European and four Chinese partners, we are all **very proud and happy** to be sending you this last Newsletter. We hope that our journey can be of inspiration and a resource for practitioners and researchers alike, along with policymakers in both China and Europe to create equitable, healthy and green cities.