Holistic value model for nature based solutions

Background / Topic:
What is the value of nature based solutions in European cities, who benefits from it and how do we go about creating it?

The concept of “nature-based solutions” (NBS) has emerged as an important concept governing the development of cities around the world. Directly addressing urban challenges through “solutions” that are inspired by or utilise “natural” systems, appears to be an effective means of integrating more, and protecting and enhancing existing, blue and green infrastructure in cities, which has demonstrated range of economic, environmental and social benefits. Yet some municipalities are embracing the approach more than others and the concept appears to be manifesting itself in various cities under different contexts in a range of manners. Furthermore, funding and financial resources (or the lack thereof) are often quoted as one of the key barriers to achieving successful nature based interventions in urban areas. Thus, a distinct emphasis needs to accentuate our understanding of how value is created through nature based solutions, what its quantifiable and “qualifiable” and multiplier effects are, and how we might fund the creation of that value.

UNaLab is an EU SCC-2 (Demonstrating innovative nature-based solutions in cities) project which aims to demonstrate nature based solutions to address a variety of urban challenges in three forerunner European cities and facilitate the transfer of these approaches to five follower cites, and beyond. A central component of the project is to develop a “Holistic Value Model” for NBS. The model will enable the understanding of the flow of value and where it is being created, while defining the key benefits, beneficiaries and potential sources of finance and capital for the uptake of NBS in cities. In the context of these activities, there is significant potential for the development of research questions to guide a master thesis. There is also potential for a range of different epistemological and theoretical approaches and many project activities that could be utilised for a range of data collection methods.

Overarching objective:
Identifying the key beneficiaries, benefits and sources of finance and capital needed in order to create holistic value stemming out of NBS in cities.

Addressed Disciplines
Economics, Business, Finance, Urban Planning, Geography, Sociology or equivalent

Further requirements
Oral and written skills in English (must). Good understanding urban economics/business models/ multiplier effects/stakeholder roles and being able to apply quantitative analytical tools. An understanding of nature-based solutions, ecosystem services, green/blue infrastructure and/or urban planning is an advantage.

Start:
Immediately / after consultation

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