

# **Aims of URBES – Urban Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services**

**URBIO meeting, Erfurt 22-23 November 2013**

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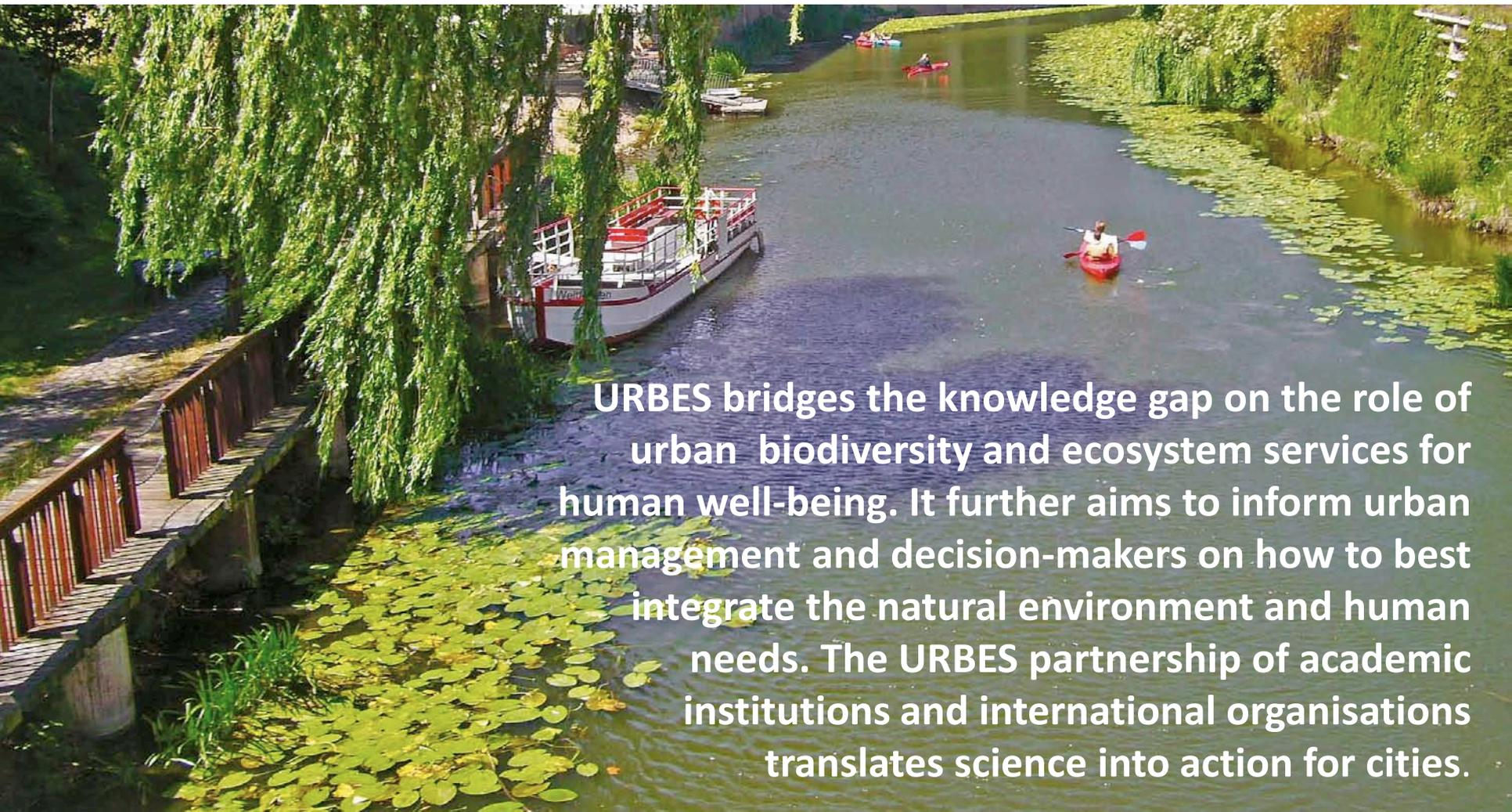
IUCN EU Representative Office, Brussels



- Mobilise and share IUCN scientific knowledge and experiences
- Raise awareness for the values of biodiversity and ecosystem services for the resilience of cities in Europe
- Development of tools and guidelines and exchange of knowledge and best practices
- Partnerships for action to integrate nature based solutions in urban planning, decision making & implementation



# What is URBES?



**URBES bridges the knowledge gap on the role of urban biodiversity and ecosystem services for human well-being. It further aims to inform urban management and decision-makers on how to best integrate the natural environment and human needs. The URBES partnership of academic institutions and international organisations translates science into action for cities.**

# Urbes partners

Stockholm Resilience Centre \* The Humboldt-University \*  
Technical University of Munich\* University of Salzburg \* Beijer  
Institute of Ecological Economics \* Kiel Institute for the World  
Economy \* Mistra Urban Futures \* Erasmus University  
Rotterdam, Dutch Research Institute for Transitions \*  
University of Helsinki \* Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona \*  
New School NYC \* ICLEI \* IUCN



# URBES objectives

- Address significant scientific knowledge gaps in relation to urbanisation processes and the ecosystem services that sustain them
- Build the capacity of cities to adapt to climate change and reduce their ecological footprint
- Raise awareness for the values of biodiversity and ecosystem services for the resilience of cities



I: What is the relationship between urban biodiversity, ecosystem services and land use change?

II: What are the monetary and non-monetary values of biodiversity and ecosystem services for cities?

III: How can cities integrate biodiversity and ecosystem services into planning and management?

IV: How can knowledge be translated into local action?



# Strengthening exchange

- Build the bridge between science, policy and practice
- Close collaboration with case study cities
- Communicating project outcomes to European stakeholders
- Raise awareness for the values of natural capital for the resilience of cities
- Exchange knowledge & best practices for integrating biodiversity and ecosystems services into management and restoration of urban areas



# URBES research (1)

- Modelling ES interactions for urban growth and shrinking scenario's in Berlin
- Quantifying regulating ecosystems services provided by urban forests in Barcelona (air quality and climate change)
- Conceptual framework for policy's efficiency rating to meet environmental objectives: the case of soil sealing management
- Classifying and valuing ecosystem services for urban planning
- Green infrastructure and the urban heat island effect
- Multi-criteria framework for enhancing relevance of urban ES assessments for policy making



## URBES research (2)

- A social-ecological assessment of vacant lots in New York City, identifying hotspots for socio-ecological transformation
- Mapping ES in New York City: Applying a Social-Ecological Approach in Urban Vacant Land
  - Maximizing urban ecosystem services: A Utopian assessment of self-sufficiency in four European cities
  - Land use scenarios as intermediaries for promoting ecosystem services in urban planning and governance: Some methodological concerns
  - Non-monetary ES valuation at site level – defining representative service providing units



## URBES research (3)

- Ecosystem Services in Urban Land-Use Planning: Integration of Challenges in Complex Urban Settings- Case of Stockholm
- A strategic program for transitioning to a water sensitive city
- Urban Transition Labs: co-creating transformative action for sustainable cities
- Review of non-monetary evaluation methods and indicators for cultural ES
- Urbanisation, biodiversity and ES – a global assessment
- Urban ES provisioning and green infrastructure in Europe
- Equal distribution and access to urban green spaces - Berlin



## URBES research (4)

- Assessing indicator and mapping needs in relation to ES, Berlin
- Survey on nature perception and appreciation of diversity by park visitors in Salzburg
- Literature review to value the properties of several structural elements regarding air purification and microclimate regulation
- Structural diversity as a key factor for the provision of recreational services
- Evaluation of ES in Salzburg allotment gardens (recreation, infiltration, biodiversity, temperature reduction)
- Provision of urban green spaces in Berlin, Germany



# EU policy developments



EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020

7<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme

EU Green Infrastructure Strategy

EU Horizon 2020



# Challenges

- Science-policy gap – available scientific information versus the applicability to urban planning
- Integration of biodiversity in urban planning and management is limited
- Incompatibility of research and policy developments
- Needs of decision makers: clear facts and data - ready to use, policy relevant format (visualise synergies and trade-offs)
- Economic perspective – the only common denominator
- Short –term focus: prioritising the political decision making cycle
- Increasing pressure on funding biodiversity objectives
- Climate change receives all the attention
- Nature has the image to stand in the way of urban development



# URBES stakeholder engagement

- Academic publications and conferences
- URBES factsheets for policy-makers and practitioners
- Participation in events and presenting URBES to various stakeholder groups in Europe
- Direct interaction and dialogue with local governments and policy makers at various levels
- Capacity building trainings for local governments
- Collaboration with EU institutions, policy advice
- Social media
- Networks of URBES partners (research institutions, ICLEI and IUCN)



# Integration of research results into policy making SPIRAL

- Reinforce the strategic dialogue
- Recognise that good interfaces are resource intensive
- Increase science policy interface skills
- Consider establishing science-policy platforms or fora
- There is no one-size-fits-all science-policy interface
- Identify areas of research needing long-term support



# Addressing the challenges

## SPIRAL

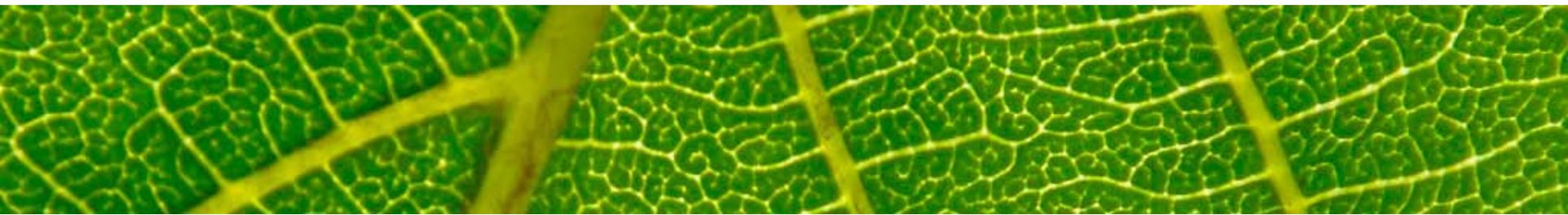
- Framing and addressing the broader policy context – align research with the needs, constraints and perspectives of policymakers and practitioners
- Ensuring continuity of interactions and mutual understanding – involvement of policy makers at design and starting phase of research
- Enhancing and maintaining interfacing experience – include partners in research projects that have this experience to determine key stakeholders
- Integrating SPI activities between different projects and external partners – cooperative approaches for those working on similar themes



# Moving forward



- Align research with needs of cities related to conservation and restoration of biodiversity and ES
- Ensure frequent interaction between scientists, policy-makers and practitioners – make this part of the research plan and communications strategy: SPI an integral part of the project
- Provide practical training and capacity building opportunities
- Research to be translated into natural solutions for urban challenges, including estimation of benefits of biodiversity and ES for human well-being



# the URBES project

# Thank you!



Stockholm Resilience Centre  
Research for Governance of Social-Ecological Systems



UAB  
Universitat Autònoma  
de Barcelona

UNIVERSITÄT  
SALZBURG



## Self-financed partners



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This factsheet is part of a series of factsheets produced by the URBES project.