

## **Social information – benefit of burden in urban forest planning?**

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In the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, collaborative practices are commonly used in order to integrate residents' needs and values in urban forest planning. This social information is collected on different levels of planning, including city-level strategies as well as local nature management plans, with the idea that it improves the quality of planning decisions. It is, however, unclear how the social information can and should be integrated into planning on these different levels. What, in fact, is the role of social information in planning processes? How is social information linked with other information types, such as ecological information? In all, what kind of collaborative processes are successful in integrating social information in planning?

In a sub-study of the research project 'GREENDECISION - Integrating ecological and social information in urban planning' (Academy of Finland 2006-2008), we are studying these questions in two case areas in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. By combining e.g., planning document analysis, interviews and focus groups with different stakeholders, planners and decision-makers, we aim to produce theoretical understanding and practical interpretations of the efficiency and quality of the urban forest planning system from the perspective of social information. In the study, we also develop methods for evaluating the use of social information in planning. Primary results will be presented on grounds of semi-structured interviews carried out with approximately 30 planners, decision makers, residents and landowners in spring 2007.