

## USING A FOCAL ANIMAL AS A 'PROBE FOR LEARNING' IN CREATING ADAPTIVE GOVERNANCE OF URBAN FORESTS

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### **Abstract**

Adaptive governance has been recognized as an important approach when increasing urban resilience toward global changes. Urban forested landscapes are important in this effort, but there are problems concerning how to get over tough dichotomies such as forest management vs. urban planning, social vs. ecological, expert vs. lay knowledge, and form vs. function. To overcome these boundaries when enhancing resilience of urban-rural systems, a new collaborative approach is introduced in this paper. The approach is based on using a forest-living focal animal species as a probe in cooperative efforts to learn more process-oriented ways of managing urban-rural landscapes. The approach has been developed in a research project focusing on the Siberian flying squirrel, a fairly common animal species living in Finnish spruce-dominated forests both in cities and countryside and moving across ecological and institutional landscapes. Its population dynamics, secretive habits, and strict protection by the EU legislation make it a usable focal animal. The flying squirrel has caused severe land use conflicts in the study area, but the project has shifted the focus from conflicts to cooperative exploration and learning of new ways of conservation. Practical experiences and research findings based on the use of this approach are discussed in the paper.

### **Key Words**

resilience, co-management, adaptive governance, flying squirrel, institutional learning

### **Key References**

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