

## MULTIFUNCTIONAL PLANNING OF MUNICIPALLY OWNED URBAN FORESTS IN FINLAND

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### Abstract

Municipalities own most of the urban forests in Finland. In this study urban forests are defined as urban woodlands with indigenous vegetation and located close to residential areas. The main aim of the study was to gain an overall picture of the planning processes of municipally owned urban forests and to discover together with the urban forest practitioners the main development needs of planning processes. Another aim was to study the applicability of multi-criteria decision analysis and advanced decision-support tools to urban forest planning. The research methods used were interviews of urban forest planners, working groups and seminars involving forest planners as well as analysis and follow-up of ongoing municipal forest management planning processes.

The study showed that most municipalities did not have clear objectives for planning and managing urban forests (Löfström et al. 2007, Mikkola et al. 2008). Most of the municipalities had management plans for their urban forests. However, there was a considerable variation in the planning standards and practices. In most cases, alternative forest plans and management schedules were missing. Shortsighted planning and the lack of planning objectives were partly due to insufficient resources and the lack of forest practitioners in municipalities.

Municipalities had actively inventoried biodiversity values of urban forests and involved local inhabitants and stakeholders into forest planning processes (participatory planning). However, one of the practical problems was the integration of various qualitative data into numerical forest planning. Multi-functional forest planning, multi-criteria decision analysis and advanced decision-support tools are rather new approaches in the field of urban forestry. However, this study showed that these modern methods could be useful tools for integrating multiple values – such as recreational, ecologic, cultural, aesthetic values- into planning process and thus to improve the quality of urban forest planning.

### Key Words

Multi-functional urban forest planning, municipally owned forests, multicriteria decision-support

### Key References

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