



Social Information to Promote Sustainable Use of Urban Forests

Forest Recreation & Tourism Serving Urbanised Societies

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**Maija Sipilä, Liisa Tyrväinen
& Johanna Jokinen**

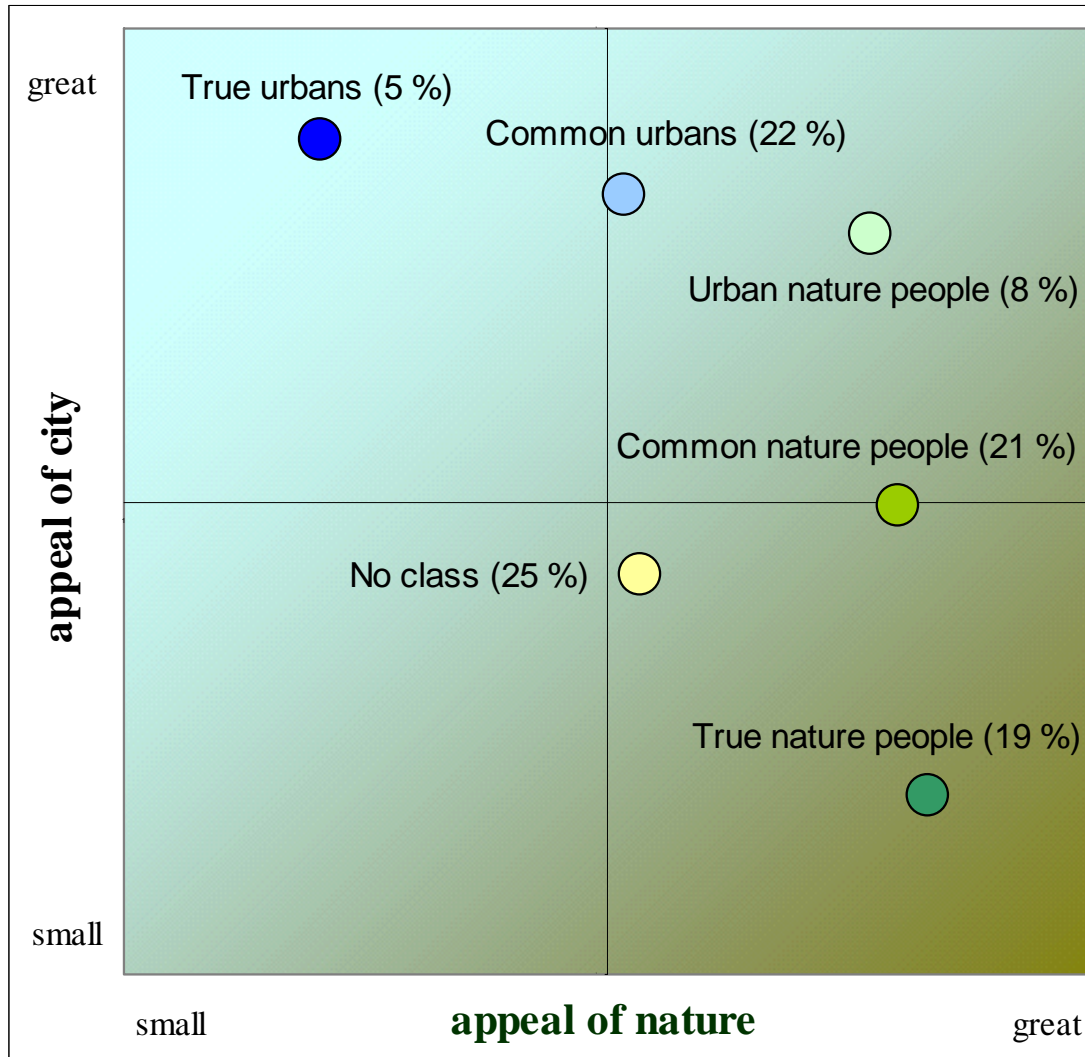
**Finnish Forest Research Institute &
Department of Geography, University of Helsinki**

METLA

Social sustainability of using urban forests

- possibilities to use and enjoy urban nature are important for human health and wellbeing
 - favourite places of residents are more often in nature areas (especially forest areas) than in built-up environments (Tyrväinen et al. 2007)
- land use and nature management decisions are important in defining these possibilities
 - changing nature areas into built-up areas can permanently restrict the possibilities of future generations to gain health and wellbeing from urban nature
 - lack of long-term thinking in nature management can leave future generations for instance with wide forest areas in need of regeneration at the same time
- need for well-informed planning decisions
 - what kind of and how managed environment is healthy and positively experienced?
 - how can social aspects of urban nature be considered together with other, such as ecological and economical aspects?

Classification of residents

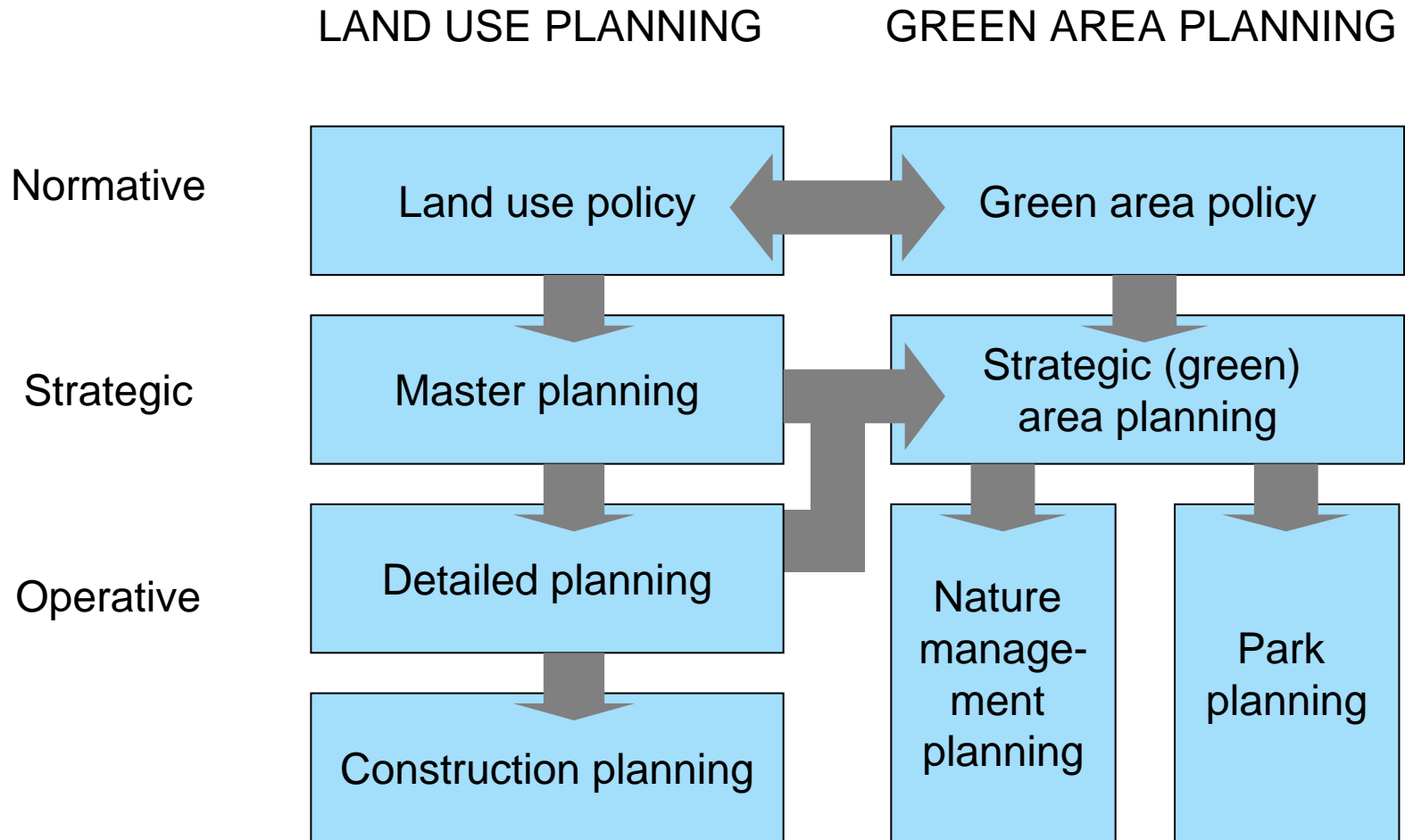


(Tyrväinen et al. 2007)

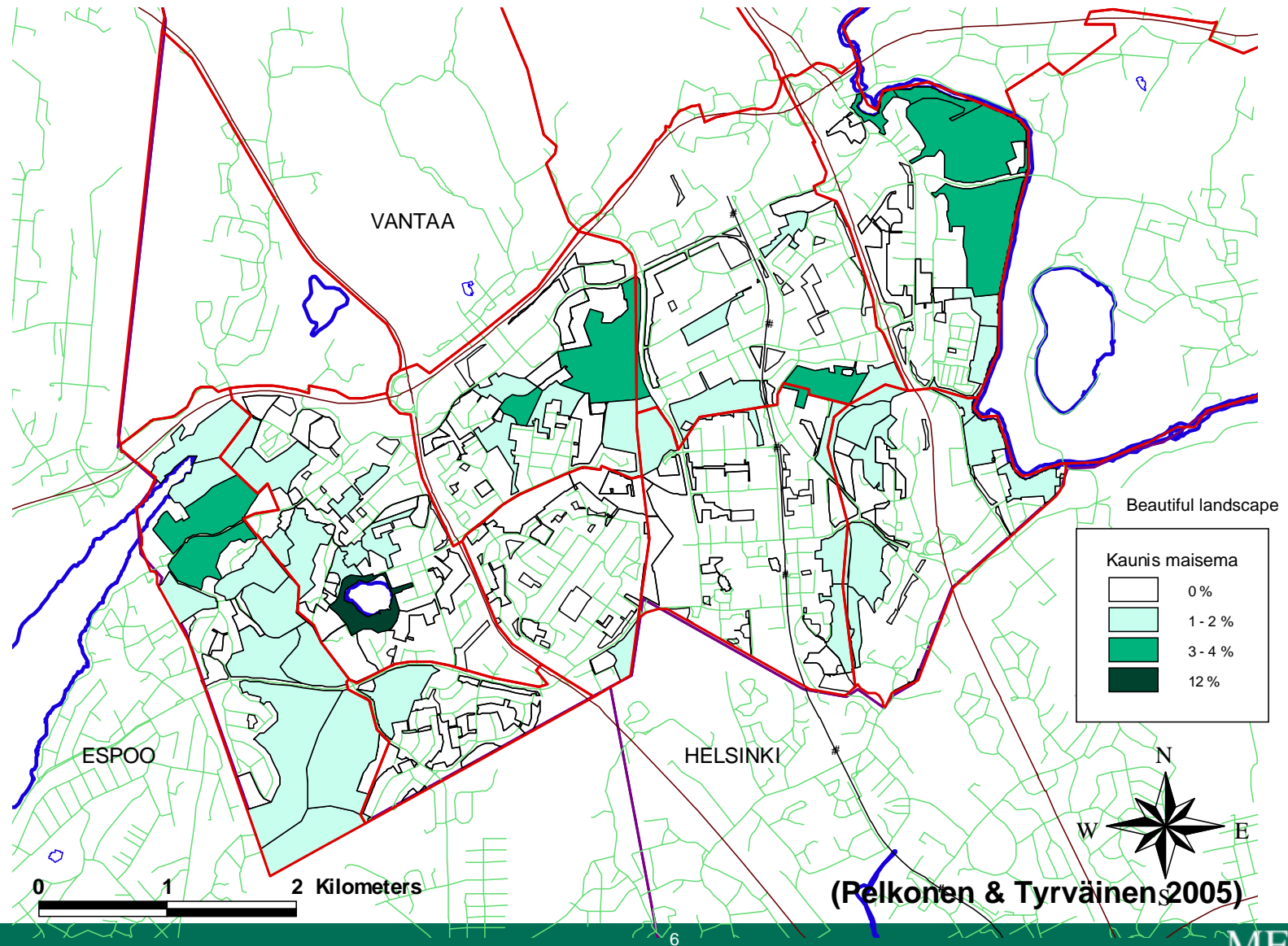
Social information for planning and decision making

- social information: information on residents' needs, values and opinions concerning the urban environment
- information needed e.g. on the meanings of urban nature, residents' needs for and possibilities to use it, qualities supporting and preventing restorative nature experiences
- residents' expertise on local ecological issues valuable alongside with scientific ecological information (Yli-Pelkonen 2006)
- social information can be relatively easy to collect as urban nature is a nice theme to discuss (compared to e.g. locating a dumping place)
- but discussion can be challenging as there are many different and conflicting interests
- social information is often very emotional
- how and with what arguments it is defined what information is valid and usable? (Bäcklund 2007)

Urban green area planning system



Urban green areas of Western Vantaa: beautiful landscape



Integrating social information in urban planning

- sub-study of GREENDECISION - Integrating ecological and social information in urban planning
- Academy of Finland 2006-2008
- Finnish Forest Research Institute & University of Helsinki

The research team

Prof. Jari Niemelä, Dept. Biol. & Env. Sciences, University of Helsinki

Prof. Liisa Tyrväinen, Finnish Forest Research Institute

Dr. Vesa Yli-Pelkonen Dept. Biol. & Env. Sciences

MSc Maija Sipilä, Finnish Forest Research Institute

The steering group

Dr. Stephan Wild-Eck, Head of Sports Promotion, Dep. Social Affairs and Security, Canton of Zurich, Switzerland

Prof. Harry Schulman, Dept. Geography, University of Helsinki

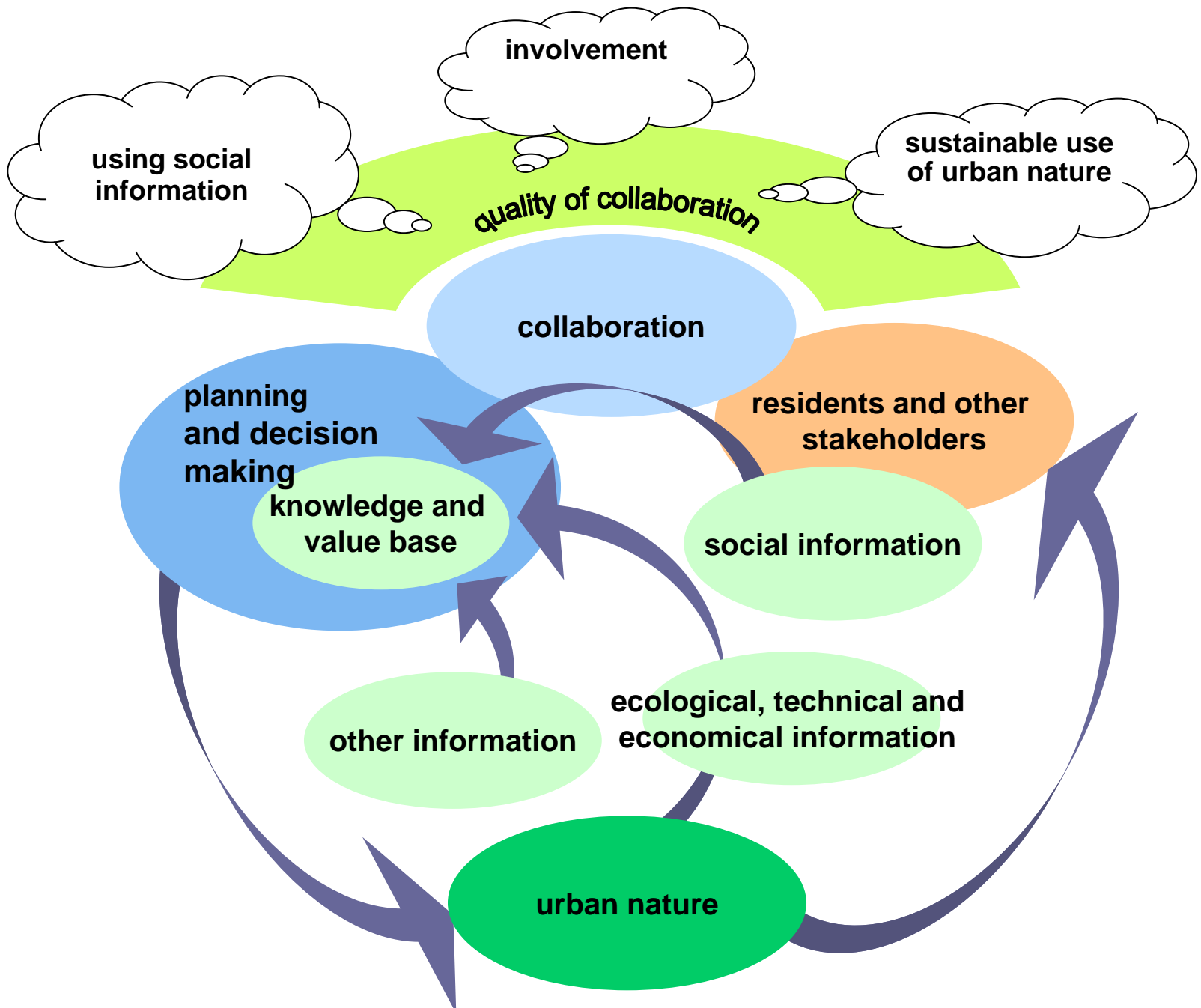
Dr. Pia Bäcklund, City of Helsinki Urban Facts

MSc Stephen Venn, Dept. Biol. & Env. Sciences, University of Helsinki

www.metla.fi/hanke/7220/index-en.htm

Key research objectives

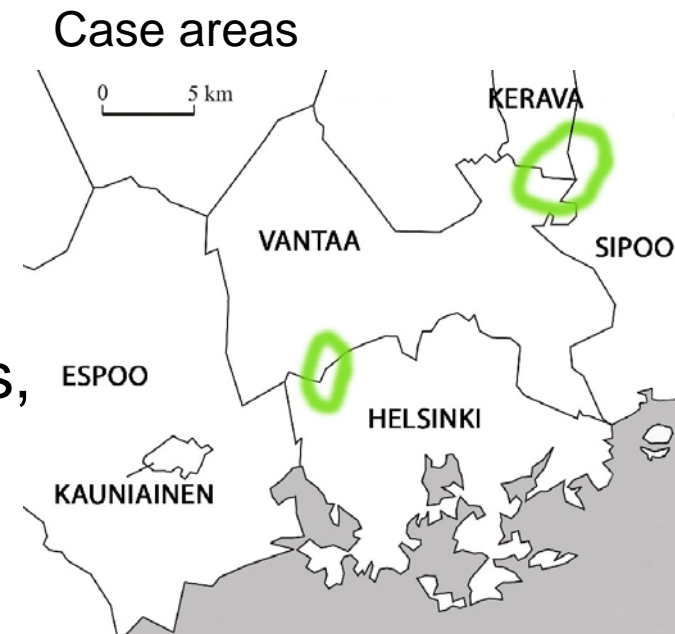
- (1) criteria for evaluating land use and green area planning processes in terms of social information on green areas and public involvement
- (2) addressing the availability, quality and use of social information in urban planning and decision making
- (3) addressing the quality of urban planning processes, including e.g. quality of participation and decisions
- (4) understanding the relation between social and ecological values in stakeholders' relationship to the environment, and in planning and decision making



Research methods

Developing the evaluation tool

- 2007: semi-structured expert interviews
 - 33 actors who had been involved in planning processes on case areas
 - decision makers, city authorities, citizens, landowners
- > draft of an evaluation tool
- 2008: classification: ways to see the role of collaboration
- 2008: focus groups
- 2008: testing the tool: structured interviews/questionnaires, document analysis, media analysis, participatory observation



Case Mätäoja (Helsinki-Vantaa)

Current planning processes:

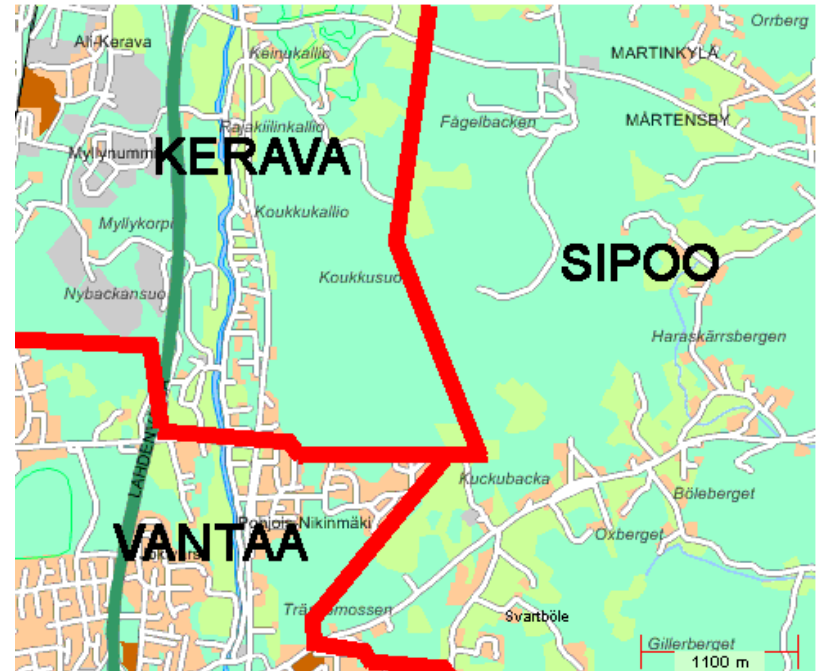
- Mätäoja general plan
- Kaarela area plan
- Kuninkaantammi partial master plan
- Vantaa master plan
- Kaivoksela 3B detailed plan
- Ring II general plan



Case Kerava corner (Kerava-Vantaa-Sipoo)

Current planning processes:

- Vantaa master plan
- Sipoo master plan
- Kerava master plan
- Jokitie detailed plan
- Vantaa green area program update



How should social and ecological perspectives be considered in defining the quality of the urban nature?

Equally

- "these [ecological and social values] should be equal"

Ecology comes first

- "it is the value of nature that has to be the strong argument"
- "people want to get rid of the bushes but they do not necessarily know that there is a lesser spotted woodpecker living there...although they say that the customer is right so in this case the resident is not necessarily right"

Social values can bypass ecological

- "they are such values that sometimes they just do not match but then you just have to accept it. Sometimes it feels that such a great importance in this ragged green structure that is left in this city.. Recreation and landscape values are important too. If there happens to be some winged, they often can move... Does it have to remain in Helsinki, one single occurrence, if there are plenty of it in the country..."

Ecological and social values are not in conflict

- "I would not see there any notable conflict. If ecology is taken into account and for instance some thicket is preserved... I cannot understand that it would disturb someone's life"

Extract from the evaluation tool

Perspectives	Examples of quality criteria for collaboration	Evaluation methods	Examples of possible results
Using social information	efficiency of collecting information, sufficiency of information, impacts on decisions and implementation	questionnaires, interviews, document analysis, integrative analysis on the quality and use of information	"we got information on nature qualities appreciated by the elderly, but information on immigrants' needs was missing"
Involvement	learning, opportunities for participation and influence	questionnaire, interviews, media analysis, integrative analysis on collaboration	"I learned more about the near nature and different interests related to it"
Sustainable use of urban nature	coordination of planning and collaboration with an area perspective, considering the needs of future generations too	questionnaire, interviews (views on the future development of the area)	"locally valuable nature still left for future generations"

Evaluation process

1) Choosing the perspectives: 2) Collecting information: 3) Evaluation outputs:

- use of social information
- involvement
- sustainable use of urban nature

questionnaires,
interviews,
document
analysis etc.

- descriptions of planning processes and their results
- descriptions of their quality

Objects of evaluation:

- planning and decision making processes and their results on a certain area

4) Interpreting the outputs:

- considering different ways to see the role of collaboration

5) Evaluation results:

- interpreted outputs
- plan for using them

Using the evaluation results

Social information to promote sustainable use of urban forests?

- sustainability need to be defined in collaborative processes considering all relevant parties
- evaluating use of social information can
 - increase understanding on costs and benefits of collaboration and different ways to see the role of it
 - help to recognize more and less useful activities in collaboration and thus to develop more efficient planning and decision making processes
 - help the integration of different kinds of knowledge and values by increasing understanding and by making them visible
- a practical evaluation tool tested in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area > more experiences and comparable material would be needed from other urbanised areas in Europe and elsewhere
- the presented research is “a mixed forest” of urban forestry, regional science, urban ecology, municipality research. More multidisciplinary case studies are needed!

Thank you!

