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# Planning intercultural urban nature

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# Urban nature and cultural diversity

- urban nature areas: areas in or around built environment in which people can experience nature
- people with different cultural backgrounds > heterogeneity of values, needs, practices related to urban nature
- multicultural: here used as a descriptive – not normative – concept, referring to diversity of cultures
- intercultural: normative concept, referring to active, positive interaction between different cultures (Wood & Landry 2008)
- from multiculturalism to interculturalism (Wood & Landry 2008)
  - policy of multiculturalism has led to cities of fragmented differences; interculturalism, instead, is based on the idea of co-created cities that make the most out of their diversity
  - a more heterogenous nation is better equipped than a homogenous one to cope with changes
  - enormous untapped resources available from the creative power of heterogeneity > focus on intercultural exchange

# Cultural diversification in the Helsinki MPA

- in Helsinki, people with a foreign background comprise 9% of the population (foreign citizens and foreign born Finnish citizens)

- people with a foreign background are to comprise 75% of the predicted population growth (130 000 new residents) in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area by 2025

- ten largest groups with a foreign background in Helsinki: people from Estonia, Russia, Sweden, Somalia, China, Germany, UK, USA, Turkey, India, Irak (Population of Helsinki... 2008)

- How can planning for urban nature areas address the developing of a positively intercultural urban nature, supporting the well-being of different groups?

# Urban nature in the Helsinki MPA

- cities in Finland set within and surrounded by forests, which is typical in the area of Northern European forest culture (Bell et al. 2005)

- City-owned nature areas in Helsinki (Saukkonen 2009):
  - 6300 ha, of which 4000 ha forests
  - forests comprise 22% (185 km$^2$) of the total land area, while the average in cities of Central Europe is 12%
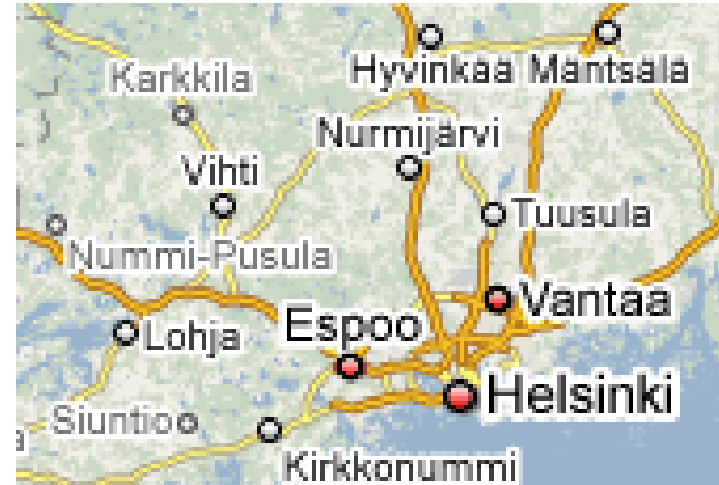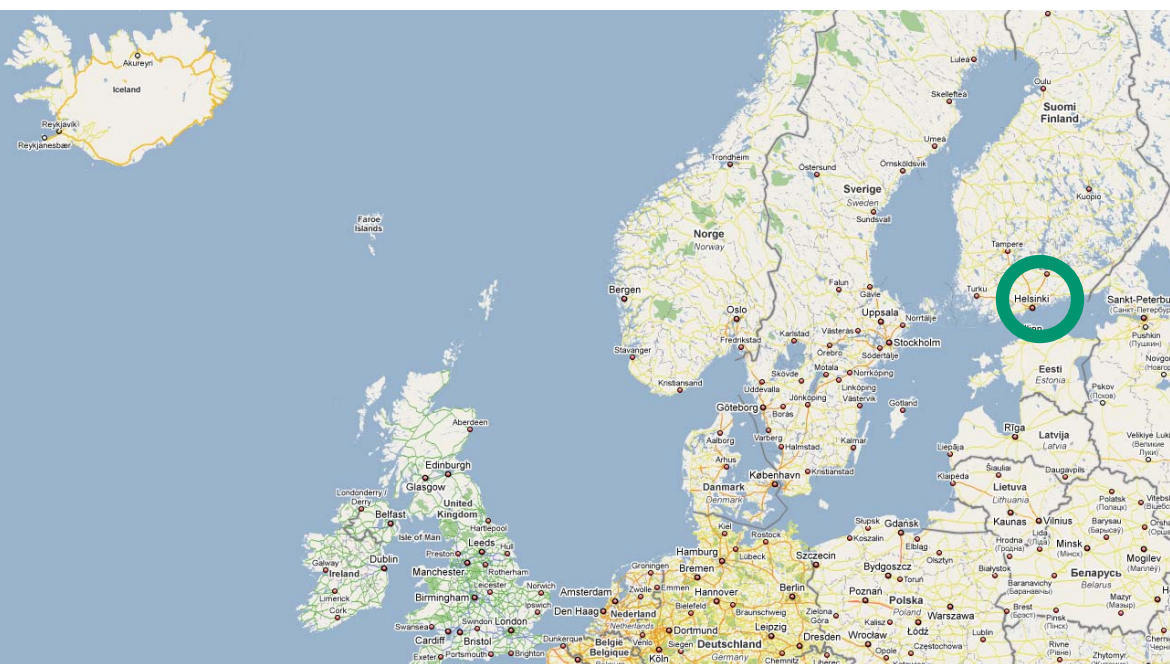
# Multicultural Urban Nature, HENVI 2008-2010

## Objectives

(1) to finalize the developing of a theoretical framework and a practical tool to evaluate the use of social information in planning and decision making concerning urban nature ('Greendecision')

(2) to find out what information is available for policy and planning on the ethnic minorities' values and needs concerning urban environments, especially urban nature areas

(3) to find out how this multicultural social information is used in policy and planning processes such as land use planning and green space planning

(4) to address how the use of this information in policy and planning could be promoted so that it supports the developing of liveable and healthy urban environments and the integration of ethnic minorities with other population groups

# Implementation

2008-2009

- finalizing the work for the objective (1): testing of the evaluation tool and futher developing of it
- statistical study of immigrants in the Helsinki MPA
- literature review on immigrants' relation with nature

2010

- international examples of using multicultural information: research visit to Montreal and Vancouver
- in the Helsinki MPA: expert interviews with representatives of ethnic minorities, planners and decision makers, analysing policy and planning documents
- 'intercultural supplement' to the evaluation tool

# Cultural relationships with nature

- images of nature (beliefs and normative views) influenced e.g. by childhood environment (Buijs et al. 2009)
- nature relation bound with ecological literacy (Lisberg Jensen 2009; Ouis 2009)
- "us/them" thinking can be criticized, but some group thinking needed in recognizing differences in ecological literacy (Ouis 2009)
- describing cultural differences requires some generalizations, such as "favourite places of residents are more often in nature areas (especially forest areas) than in built-up environments" (Tyrväinen et al. 2007)
- cultural-geographical classifications: e.g. close relation with forests in the North European forest culture, while in the Southern European forest culture, the urban culture and forest culture have grown apart (Bell et al. 2005)

# Nature as service and disservice

- In a study in Tampere, immigrants from Russia valued urban forest highly, much in a same way than Finns, while for immigrants from Asia and Africa, forest was rather a place for fear (Virtanen 2007)

- Winter with snow and ice
  - as service: snow games, ice-skating, peaceful white landscape (Finnish people can enjoy it)
  - as disservice: slippery surfaces, cold climate
  - as disservice: for an Arab, winter means you cannot get in touch with nature: sounds of leafy trees, waves, birdsong, colours, visible growth are missing (Abu-Hanna 2007)

- Picnic or barbecue in a park
  - as service: in Stockholm, having a good time by barbecuing with family and friends was popular among people from the Middle East and Africa, not among Swedes (Bradley 2009)
  - as disservice: noisy, can also prevent other uses

# Integration of immigrants into the new society and environment

- Integration: immigrants engage with the new society but keep their own culture (Berry 1997)

- integration is about being involved in the society on equal terms and that means a need to support outdoor life that attracts all (Ouis 2009)

- urban woodlands could play a role in social integration due to their symbolic identification potential and as a space for social interactions (Jay & Schraml 2009)

- environmental citizenship: participation, responsibility, environmental identity (e.g. Luque 2005, Kumpula & Pirjatanniemi 2007)

# Improving immigrants' opportunities to use urban nature

- developing the physical environment
  - opportunities for gardening: e.g. intercultural gardens in Berlin prevented prejudices against other cultures and increased interaction between cultural groups (Maier 2007)
  - Unlike many Finns, Somali people typically avoid dogs (Tiilikainen 2003) > understanding opportunities and limits of combining activities in a certain area

- increasing awareness
  - People from Somalia were interested in Finnish nature, but didn't use it much as they didn't know where they are allowed to go (Rinkinen 2004)
  - In Scotland, immigrants didn't know much about recreation areas and language was a barrier for getting information (OPENSpace 2006)
  - nature guides – especially with immigrant background (Ouis 2009)

**LAND USE PLANNING**

**PLANNING OF NATURE AREAS**

**ISSUES AFFECTING NATURE EXPERIENCES**

**Normative**

Land use policy

Nature area policy

- **Variety of area types on city scale**
- **Accessibility of different nature areas**

**Strategic**

Master planning

Strategic urban forest planning

- **Quality of the near nature**
- **Availability of attractive recreation opportunities close to home**

**Operative**

Detailed planning

Nature management planning

Park planning

-**Management affecting feeling of safety**
-**Cultural meanings of species: trees, plants, animals…**

Construction planning

**URBAN NATURE AREAS**

**Applied from Sipilä et al. 2009**

# Ways of seeing the role of residents in planning

| Residents as a resource for planning | Residents as experts in experiencing nature | Residents as a part of the community | Residents as learners | Residents as executers of the law |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Residents participate to bring social information that is useful in many ways | Social information is useful as it concerns nature | By participating residents develop community feeling | Residents participate to learn of planning and the area concerned | Residents participate because there just must be some participation |
| **OPPORTUNITIES IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY** | | | | |
| Social information from immigrants can help developing the planning system | Getting new social information on nature | Developing relations between population groups | Educating people on different cultural values and practices related to nature | |

**Applied from Sipila et al. 2009**

# Towards intercultural urban nature

- managing not only biodiversity but diversity of cultural-ecological combinations

- what should be the goal with integration?
  – minimum level: urban nature does not disturb integration
  – advanced level: urban nature supports integration, also by using new opportunities brought by increased diversity

- how to make the most out of the diversity with planning?
  – supporting positive interaction between groups both out in the nature areas and by participatory planning processes
  – co-creation of social values, practices, hybrid cultures

- research can help by clarifying preconditions and opportunities for integrating multicultural information in planning and for utilizing the diversity, and by developing tools for practitioners

Thank you!