

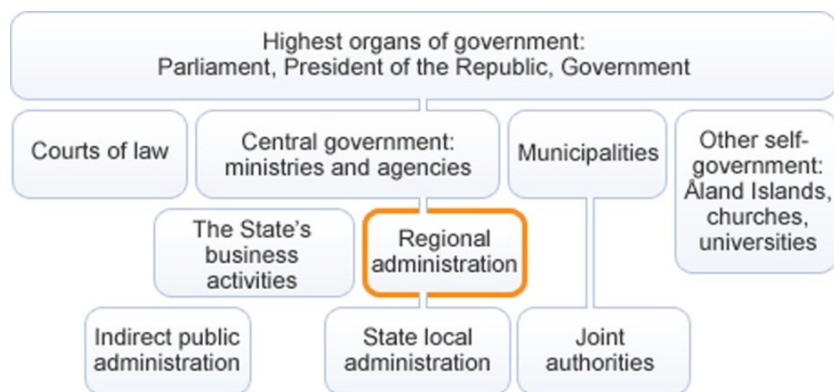


1. Finland in numbers

- Inhabitants (2012): 5 403 543
- Regional Councils (2012): 18 (excluding Åland)
- Municipalities (2012) 336 (of which 108 are cities)
- Average inhabitants of a municipality (2012): 16 000
- Median inhabitants of a municipality (2012): 5 850
- Land/Total Areal 303 893 km²/390 903 km²
- Biggest cities and their inhabitants (2012): Helsinki (596 364, capital), Espoo (252 838), Tampere (215 333), Vantaa (203 372), and Turku (178 794).

2. Regional and sustainable development – Finnish perspectives

Regional development consists of regional planning and regional policy. In Finland, the 'regions' are usually referring to villages, municipalities, counties, or the state. Regional planning empowers regional development. Basic means of regional planning are the nationwide planning institutions, and also different plans, programmes, and action plans by the Regional Councils that are unions of municipalities. Regional planning is also conducted by municipalities, and the central and regional administration.



Finnish public administration © suomi.fi 2012.

Basic means of regional policy are the policies that have regional impacts, and more targeted tools for regional development that can for example be driven nationally or/and by the European Union. One example of the first mentioned policy is the ongoing consolidation of municipalities in Finland. It is not only matter of central administration, but also political and ideological aspects. It should proceed from bottom-up, starting from the level, where the everyday life is lived, but is easily the opposite, and proceeding top-down. The targeted tools are in character often programme based, and offering direct resources and means. One example of the latter policy could be the Structural Funds of the European Union.

Regional development should be in principle sustainable, and communicative. Against these aims, it is promising that since the late 1980s, Finland has strived for strengthening the role of sustainable development in mainstream politics. The Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development has been working since 1993, and the Commission's activities are based on open dialogue with the Government, public administration, business and industry, and the civil society. Four national policy documents for sustainable development have been prepared and endorsed and, beside the newest one from 2006, implemented and assessed as well.

In addition to environmental considerations, the social, cultural and economic aspects of sustainable development have increasingly gained foothold in Finland. Still, it is difficult to say, how the sustainable and communicative means have been realised in Finnish regional development, but it is really promising that Finnish municipalities have been active in promoting sustainable development. For example in 2007, two thirds of the Finnish municipalities had either established or were in the process of establishing their own Local Agenda 21. The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities has a big role in supporting local sustainable development work in the municipalities.

Regional development should create means for regions to develop from their own premises. Thus, within Hybrid Parks, it is important to take this into consideration, and think carefully, what the 'region' is, and how parks are, and could be, part of the 'regional development' of that 'region'.

3. Basis for regional development - parks and urban environments in Finland

Periods of Garden Art in Finland

(In parentheses, no gardens remaining, only archival data)

<i>13th–15th century</i>	<i>(Mediaeval garden)</i>
	<i>(Renaissance garden)</i>
<i>17th century</i>	<i>(Baroque garden)</i>
<i>Late 18th–early 19th</i>	<i>Classicist / Physiocratic formal garden</i>
	<i>Early landscape / Picturesque garden</i>
<i>Early 19th century</i>	<i>Urban plantings of the Empire period</i>
<i>Late 19th–early 20th</i>	<i>'Fin de siècle' landscape garden</i>
<i>1910s–1930s</i>	<i>Architectural / Formal garden</i>
	<i>20th century landscape garden</i>
<i>1930s–1940s</i>	<i>Functionalist gardens</i>
<i>1950s–1960s</i>	<i>Modernist landscape architecture</i>

The earliest parks and gardens in Finland were parts of manors and other notable buildings, later also presbyteries. The period of landscape parks started in the end of the 18th century. There have been public promenades from the end of the 18th century, and the first parks were founded in the beginning of the 19th century (e.g. in the Cities of Helsinki, Turku, and Hämeenlinna). The fact that many cities are by the water, have influenced the urban parks, and promenades and parks by the waterfronts are characteristic in Finland.

From the 1880s, parks were constructed according to plan and financed by the municipalities according to Nordic and continental ideologies. The idea of parks and gardens diffused, and the first peasant gardens appeared in the early 20th century. In the countryside, railway stations, canal areas, schools, and hospitals had the first public parks. During the 20th century, planning of single parks was replaced with zoned and integrated landscape planning of areas in the city centres, later also in the suburbs, and parks were eventually divided into functional elements as plantings, playgrounds, lawns, etc. From the 1980s, the idea of park re-entered within the city densification plans.

Although there are even many medieval cities in Finland, Finland has been urbanised quite lately compared to many other European countries, mainly after the world wars, and from the 1950s. Suburbanisation started in the 1950s–1960s, and culminated in the 1970s, at the same time as Finland became motorised. Half of all the buildings in Finland are constructed after the 1970s, and three fourths of the buildings

are detached houses. That makes Finnish urban environments in general young, designed for car owners, and built spaciouly. Most suburbs have also been built to the forest-like areas, close to 'nature'.

Urbanisation continues still strong mainly because of the work-related migration, and concentrates into the biggest and still growing cities, mostly into the regional centres and dynamic university cities. Two thirds of the Finnish inhabitants can now be considered as urban. Continuing urbanisation means more densely populated city centres and sprawling residential areas around the city centres. City densification is scattering the green areas, and downsizing the old parks in the city centres, and on the other hand, sprawling impacts on other cultural landscapes and environments, and changes the surroundings also around the cities. Parks are still self-evident parts of the Finnish cities, even if their value and role as part of the historical and present urban environments have stood out only during the last decades. Finnish National board of Antiquities has listed app. 400 historically valuable parks and gardens in the 90s, but they are not inventoried.

4. Statutory planning, management, and protection of parks

Finnish land cover consisted of forest (77 %), agricultural land (9 %), other (10 %), and built environments (4 %) in 2010. In the metropolitan area, the share of built environments can be over 50 % of the total land use, while in Lapland, it can be just a few per cent. Statistic Finland defines that built environments include also parks. Of the record, there are now over 3 300 objects that are over 0.5 hectares, public or private, holding trees, and managed by aesthetic considerations.

Land use, spatial planning, and construction have been for a long time controlled by law. One of the most important laws has been the Building Act from the year 1958, which was replaced with the Land Use and Building Act in 2000, and completed with the Decree. It is the most important legislation controlling the land use, spatial planning and construction in Finland at the moment.

The Land Use and Building Act aims to:

- organise land use and building to create the basis for high quality living environments
- promote ecologically, economically, socially and culturally sustainable development
- ensure that everyone has the chance to participate in open planning processes
- guarantee the quality of openly publicised planning decisions and participatory processes
- ensure that a wide range of planning expertise is available.

The land use planning system consists of:

- National objectives for the use of the regional areas / Council of State
- Regional plans / Regional Councils
- General plans / Municipalities
- Local detailed plans / Municipalities.

The land use planning system covers different levels and more general plans must be respected in the more detailed plans. Regional and general plans can also direct construction, and other land use. In Finland, municipalities have the planning monopoly, and the state or regional administration only supervises the legality of planning. Even so, the state and regional environmental authorities and conservation authorities like the Finnish National Board of Antiquities have the right to give pronouncements of the plans.

The territorial defining and the Land Use and Management plan of the National Urban Park are the only documents that are still confirmed by the Finnish Ministry of Environment, and for example the City of Helsinki has established its Helsinkipuisto, which is very similar to National Urban Park, within its own general planning and without the confirmation from the Ministry.

As a curiosity, Finland has a national official website (otakantaa.fi) by the Ministry of Justice, where citizens can leave their comments about the public administration and planning. At this moment, there is an open discussion about the Land Use and Building Act going on. The aim is to assess the law, and open the discussion to develop and revise it.

Among the Finnish legislation, public spaces like streets, parks, plantings, and other suchlike open accessed areas, and if they are placed on local detailed plan areas, must be taken care of and kept clean by the owner of that area, usually by the municipalities. In Finland, only some of the parks are protected by laws for example as notable nature and/or cultural sites, otherwise they are protected by standard planning, and the Land Use and Building Act. The new Act brought along the fact that there are no longer parks as such, but they are included in other land use types. Protection of parks can vary between municipalities, because municipalities don't necessary have the sufficient expertise to parks in planning, and in implementing and monitoring of the plans.

5. National Urban Parks in Finland

The Land Use and Building Act has given one supreme way to develop both the cultural and natural aspects of the urban parks, because it has enabled the designation of National Urban Parks (Chapter 9). The original ideology behind the National Urban Park thinking came from Sweden. The world's first, and so far the only National City Park in Sweden, was established in Stockholm in 1995. The difference between Sweden and Finland is that in Sweden, the park is established by a law stated for that special park, but in Finland, it is integrated into the Land Use and Building Act, and more flexible. The heavy procedure is probable the main reason that there is now only one National City Park in Sweden. On the other hand, the practice in Finland does not guarantee for strong protection for the National Urban Parks.

There are now five National Urban Parks in Finland, in the cities of Hämeenlinna, Heinola, Pori, Hanko, and Porvoo. Cities of Turku, Seinäjoki, and Savonlinna, among others, have planned and prepared to apply for the status. The Ministry of the Environment states that there can be some ten National Urban Parks in Finland in all.

City councils wishing to designate a National Urban Park must prepare applications in consultation with local citizens, property owners, and the environmental authorities - usually including the Ministry of the Environment. The decision to establish a National Urban Park is made by the Ministry of the

Environment. Regulations concerning the National Urban Park must be considered while planning the areas of the park, and in other planning and decision-making affecting the area.

The Ministry of the Environment has defined four criteria (below) for identifying and evaluating suitable areas for designation as National Urban Parks. These national criteria guarantee that all cities are assessed on an equal basis, and that suitable urban parks will be preserved at the national level:

1. Diverse environments: National Urban Parks should contain:
 - natural areas important for the preservation of urban biodiversity
 - buildings and other cultural milieus of historical importance nationally or locally
 - parks and green areas with scenic or aesthetic significance.
2. Central urban location: National Urban Parks should form part of the urban structure, beginning in or in the immediate vicinity of the urban centre.
3. Extent and interconnectedness: Parkland or green areas in National Urban Parks should be:
 - extensive enough
 - interconnected enough to allow people to walk through them from one district to another.
4. Ecology and continuity, National urban parks should:
 - help to form ecological corridors that facilitate the movements of wild species
 - form direct links with natural or rural areas outside the urban area.



Some parts of National Urban Park of
C. of Hämeenlinna
© DEVEPARK 2010

6. University of Turku within Hybrid Parks

The University of Turku (Est. 1920) is an internationally acknowledged, multidisciplinary scientific university, and one of the major universities in Finland with over 21,000 students and 3,500 employees. The University offers its partners qualified employees and experts, wide-ranging networks, high quality, multi-disciplinary research cooperation and versatile adult education opportunities. The University promotes the Turku region and the Southwestern Finland as a centre of high-quality education, research, and innovation. Universities have an autonomous status in Finland.

The Brahea Centre for Training and Development and the Degree Programme in Cultural Production and Landscape Studies are responsible units from the University of Turku. The Centre is one of the leading higher education centres for regional development in Finland, and the Degree Programme is qualifying BA and MA, and the leading Finnish academic programme offering Cultural Heritage, Landscape, and Digital Culture Studies.



Left: Main campus of University of Turku is sited in the city © U. Turku 2012
Right: Cities of Turku and Pori are sited in Southwest Finland © Europa 2012

University of Turku implements a best practice study and a workshop themed 'Policy of National Urban Parks in Finland'. The workshop is held in the picturesque City of Pori in September 2013. The City of Pori was given the National Urban Park status in 2002. University of Turku has long-lasting contacts with the existing and coming Finnish National Urban Park Cities, and the managing body, the Finnish Ministry of the Environment. The best practice study is two-pieced, and

includes also the policy of 'Raising public awareness on biodiversity in municipal and regional co-operation'. Both units have extensive co-operation for example with cities, municipalities, and regional authorities, and both of the best practice study themes have also been in on the DEVEPARK project (Sustainable historic park management and development in Finland and Estonia 2009–2012) that the University of Turku is involved with.

7. References and links

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Websites of the National Urban Parks in different Finnish cities:

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Additional information about Hybrid Parks and INTERREG IVC:

www.hybridparks.eu