

## **PUBLIC OPINION TO THE AVAILABILITY OF GREEN AREA**

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***Abstrak:** Penelitian survei ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pendapat masyarakat terhadap ketersediaan ruang terbuka hijau di Kota Hatyai, Thailand. Dari survei yang telah dilakukan diketahui bahwa sebagian besar masyarakat Kota Hatyai berpendapat bahwa ketersediaan ruang terbuka hijau di kota mereka adalah tidak mencukupi.*

***Kata Kunci:** pendapat masyarakat; ruang terbuka hijau*

**Abstract:** The aim of the survey is to find out public opinion to the availability of green area by taking place in Hatyai City, Thailand. The survey found that most of the citizens think that the availability of green area is not enough in Hatyai City.

**Key words:** public opinion; green area

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this century known that “half of the world’s 6.8 billion people live in urban areas and each year, about 63 million people, an average of nearly 7,200 per hour, are added to such areas. Such intense population pressure makes most of the world’s cities more environmentally unsustainable every year.” (Miller & Spoolman, 2009) Most of the world’s cities get lack of vegetation because most trees in urban areas are destroyed to make way for buildings and roads. Most cities hence do not benefit from vegetation that would absorb air pollutants, give-off oxygen, provide wildlife habitats, and give aesthetic pleasures.

Green areas are truly important for the cities and the people who reside in. So the city governments all around the world attempt to serve their people by the availability of green areas. Singh et al. (2010) find wide variation both in coverage and per capita availability of green spaces. “There are, however, some discernible trends emerging from cities renowned for their urban green spaces: approximately 20 to 30 % coverage of the total geographical area, and 15 to 25 m<sup>2</sup> urban green spaces per capita (Singh et al, 2010). To supply green area available proportionately to the people is an intricate problem for big and dense city. The city government often own limited funds and vacant lots to be allocated to green area.

In the case of Bari, ninety three percent of the citizens think “that at present green areas are insufficient in number and that green space should be increased especially in residential areas and the outskirts. This should be done mainly through the creation of parks (36.9 %) and gardens (27.0 %).” (Sanesi & Chiarello, 2006) The most complicated problem is nonetheless not so much the land as the people, but how to accommodate varied interests and opinions. This research was aimed to find out the public opinion towards the availability of green area of Hatyai City. The analysis of vector data capture informs that there are 2.35 km<sup>2</sup> green areas available in Hatyai City; with the most green areas is para rubber (Fithriana, 2014).

### **Green Areas in the Region of Songkhla Province**

According to the Ministerial Regulation B.E. 2543, green area of cities, towns, and villages in the region of Songkhla Province is classified into the following land use categorizations:

1. Rural and agricultural land use. That is, land used for agricultural, or related to agriculture and institutions of government, public utilities, and public assistance mostly.
2. Open land or recreation and maintain environment quality. That is, land owned by the State to use for recreation or about recreation and preservation environmental quality only. Land may also private land which is possessed legally to use for recreation or related activities, preservation environmental quality, public benefit, plant agriculture or habitation only.
3. The open land for environmental quality to use for maintenance of environmental quality, tourism or related tourism, aquaculture, coastal fisheries or public benefit only.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research takes place in Hatyai City Municipality. Hatyai City Municipality covers 21 km<sup>2</sup> administrative territories and 157,682 citizens. It was a small village and local administration form in the earlier time. Hatyai City Municipality has been greater then since the territory was growing larger indicated by the expanding area, the growing population, the increasing economy, and the raising buildings. The territory of Hatyai is a major city in Songkhla Province, southern Thailand, located in a low-lying plain of the downstream area of Khlong U-Taphao Basin, and surrounded by mountain ranges.

A questionnaire survey was performed to obtain systematic set of primary quantitative data. To perform the survey, the constructed questionnaire is validated firstly. Secondly, the questionnaire is translated from English to Thai. Thirdly, the questionnaire in Thai is distributed to thirty citizens of Hatyai City in the pilot survey to test external reliability of the questionnaire. In the main survey, finally the questionnaire is distributed to 239 citizens of Hatyai City by asking the citizenship and willingness of a relevant respondent to join the survey. The questionnaire is then self-administered by the respondents.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Urban citizens absolutely need green area to support their healthy and green life. Hatyai City Municipality serves the needs of the citizens by green area. The green area is both active and passive green areas. Based on the Ministerial Regulation B.E. 2543, Hatyai City green areas are land used for agriculture, environmental quality preservation, recreation or tourism, and other public utilizations. We put orchard, grassland, paddy field, wood, municipal garden and community garden as the type of Hatyai City green area. Of the types of the available green area, wood is viewed as the type of green areas does Hatyai City have the most by the citizens (36.8 %).

That viewpoint showed us that most citizens of Hatyai City use green area. The citizens of Hatyai City use green areas to do activities, such as: to sit under trees, to do exercise (like basketball, tennis, and fitness), to do nature observation, to garden or grow crops, to walk around, and to gather and relax with family and friends. From 239 citizens both males and females, 28.9 percent use green areas in Hatyai City the most to do exercise and the other 28.9 percent to gather and relax with family and friends. Rarely of the citizens of Hatyai City never use green areas.

Our survey asked the citizens two options, i.e.: enough and not enough to find out the opinion of the availability of green area. From the survey, we found that the percentage of females who think that the availability of green areas in Hatyai City is enough is 6.4 percent lesser than males, but the percentage of females who think that the availability of green areas in Hatyai City is not enough is 6.4 percent higher. It has a sense that the females think that the availability of green areas in Hatyai City is not enough more than males. By age, the old think that the availability of green areas in Hatyai City is not enough more than the young. 25.3 percent of the 91 samples in the age class of 18-27 years old think that the availability of green areas in Hatyai City is enough and so do 14.8 percent of the 81 samples in the age class of 28-37 years old. None of the samples in the age class of 58-67 years old think that the availability of green areas in Hatyai City is enough. By level of education, the highly educated much think that the availability of green areas in Hatyai City is not enough. By length of residency, the percentage of whom have stayed longer thinking that the availability of green areas in Hatyai City is 5.9 percent lesser than whom have stayed shorter, but the percentage of whom have stayed longer thinking that the availability of green areas in Hatyai City is not enough is 5.9 percent higher.

Those thinking that the availability of green areas in Hatyai City is not enough (87.6 %) strongly agree green areas bring benefits to Hatyai City. 77.5 percent of those thinking that the availability of green areas in Hatyai City is not enough agree green areas allow people to get closer with nature. Those thinking that green areas availability in Hatyai City is not enough (87.7 %) strongly agree the amount of green area availability has to be increased. To increase the availability

of green area in Hatyai City is a shared responsibility between the public and government. 18.8 percent who agree green area availability is a shared responsibility between the public and government are those thinking that the availability of green areas in Hatyai City is enough and 81.2 percent are those thinking that the availability of green areas in Hatyai City is not enough.

To increase the availability of green area in Hatyai City, strategies are required by the public and municipality. The strategies are for example creating new green areas in municipal's land, creating new community gardens, embellishing city's parkways and boulevards, optimizing the existing green areas, offering incentives to private sector developers to add-up green areas, promoting green roofs, having partnership to greening schoolyards for public use, improving flyover underground for green areas, preserving and making canals as green areas for public use, or buying and developing land as green areas for public use. On the average of Hatyai citizens who had given their opinion in our survey agree to optimize the existing green area rather than create a new one in the land of municipal.

## **CONCLUSION**

The public opinion towards the availability of green area was positive. Most of citizens of Hatyai City thought that the availability of green area is not enough. They agreed strongly that the green area availability has to be increased in Hatyai City. It should be a shared responsibility between the public and municipality.

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