Best Practices for Urban Tree Management Begin with Sound Institutional Support and Legislation

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- Causes of poor tree management and maintenance in Hong Kong
- Outcry for a tree ordinance
- Obstacles of having a tree ordinance in Hong Kong
- Recommendations for improvements under existing institutional structure
METHODOLOGY

- Interviews
  - Government representatives (5)
  - Professionals and scholars (4)
  - Practitioner (1)
  - LegCo member (1)
- Interview with Mr. S.K. Ganesan, Deputy Director of National Parks Board, Singapore
- Second-hand data, including literature review, tree opinion poll conducted in Hong Kong, online articles and Legislative Council meeting minutes
Causes of poor tree management and maintenance in Hong Kong

- Inappropriate regulations and guidelines
- Inadequate capacity building
- Public and workers’ attitude towards tree preservation
Inappropriate regulations and guidelines

Good regulations: state performance standards, the enforcement method and penalties

Parks and Trees Act (2005): appointed commissioners to carry out duties, fine SGD$ 25,000 for tree violation

**Hong Kong**

→ No regulations to guide tree preservation on valuable species

→ ‘Tree Preservation’ TC: tree retention, transplanting and removal

→ No tree preservation, no protection for trees on private lands, penalty for tree violation not included
Inadequate capacity building

**Insufficient training and education courses**

- Courses in VTC, IVDC and CICTA: **too general, introductory and elementary level**
- Courses **not within the formal education system**
- **Quality? Quantity?**
- **Tertiary Education: Diversity?** Landscape Architecture ONLY. Plant pathology and botany degree courses?
- **Performance of contractors? Assessment?**
Inadequate capacity building

Lack of experts

• Existing education is insufficient in training professionals

• May still fall short of experts in future

• Tenderfoots may not be able to take up responsibilities from the experienced in future
Public and workers’ attitude towards tree preservation

**Public**

- Emotional behavior is understandable (Maryknoll ghost tree case)

- Rationality should be exercised concerning public safety
Public and workers’ attitude towards tree preservation

Workers

→ Performance standard? Usefulness of training?

→ Workers’ working attitude and responsibility?
OUTCRY FOR TREE ORDINANCE

- The purpose of legislation
- The need of a tree ordinance
The purpose of legislation

- **Government**: Tree maintenance
- **Professionals and scholars**: Improvement in tree management work and safety concern

→ Different views → obstacles to enactment of a tree ordinance

**Safety concern**: within the tree ordinance, but not the only consideration
The purpose of legislation

Protection of trees on private land

- Unknown percentage of trees standing on private areas without the tree preservation clauses
- ‘Spontaneous approach’ instead of legislation

→ Planning approach

→ Effective? Comprehensive?
The need of a tree ordinance

Public opinion:

→ Realize the insufficiency of existing regulations

→ Knowing the lack of trees protection in private areas

→ ‘need to regulate’ ??????
The need of a tree ordinance

- Regulations and guidelines ≠ legislations
- Legislation: ultimate goal for comprehensive tree management
- HK: poor working attitude and discrete standards
- Regulations and guidelines: inadequate authority to monitor tree growth and management
- ‘Parks and Trees Act’ : stated penalty, empowers commissioners with authority, clear hierarchy
- Absent in HK’s regulations and guidelines
The need of a tree ordinance

- Tree ordinance is a ‘must’
  → Able to engage community support
  → Optimize the use of limited resources

Tree ordinance:

- Not solely for tree maintenance work!
- Also seeks improvement in the tree management!
- More effective and efficient utilization of resources!
OBSTACLES OF HAVING A TREE ORDINANCE IN HONG KONG

- Priority concern
- Different perspectives towards the values of a tree ordinance
Priority concern

- Need experts to possess relevant technical skills in tree care and management
- Takes time to formulate a comprehensive and viable ordinance
- Obstacle to have legislation at present time only
- But the need of legislation is still there
Different perspectives towards the values of a tree ordinance

- Tree ordinance ≠ guidelines and practice notes
- Different in level of authority, content and significance
- Suggestions for improvement in task force report: matching facilities, not substitute to legislation, should be viewed as prepared for legislation
RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

- Amendment of regulations
- Improvement in the capacity building of tree professionals
- Discussion of legislation
- Managerial strategy
Improvement in the capacity building of tree professionals

- Provision of courses with different levels and objectives
- Formulation of comprehensive education framework for the training of professionals and skilled labor
- Clear career path with ongoing practices and development
- Government promotion to stimulate demand
Discussion of legislation

- Tree ordinance cannot be replaced by guidelines and regulations
- Clear definition of authority and empowerment
- A ‘promise’ to public and stakeholders
- Tailor-made
- Respect the tree values
Managerial strategy

- Tree planting
- Tree management
- Tree maintenance
Managerial strategy

- Enactment of tree ordinance to ensure performance standards and workers’ qualification
- **Ultimate goal** is to achieve a good and comprehensive administrative policy
REFERENCES

- Taiwan tree law. 臺北縣樹木保護自治條例. 北(例)80-1. (1989).
Thank You