



Social representations of nature can they contribute to understanding citizen relation with urban trees?

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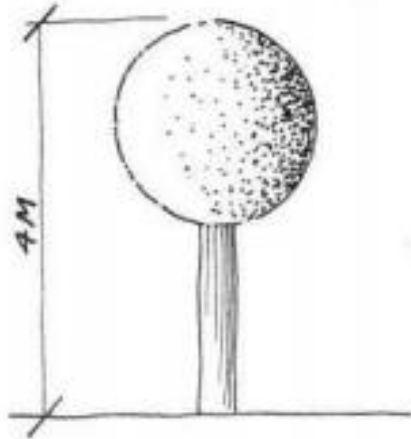


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Social representations theory

- social psychology
- aims to explain **how different social groups may develop different understandings of an issue** based on their particular values, ideas, knowledge, metaphors, beliefs, and practices (Moscovici 2000; Buijs et al. 2008)
- not mere individual cognitive representations, but are **socially constructed through social interaction**, within groups and shared among members of groups and communities (Buijs et al. 2011)

THE TREE, as seen by...



THE PLANNER...



THE PARKS DEPT...



THE PUBLISHER...



THE HIGHWAYS DEPT...



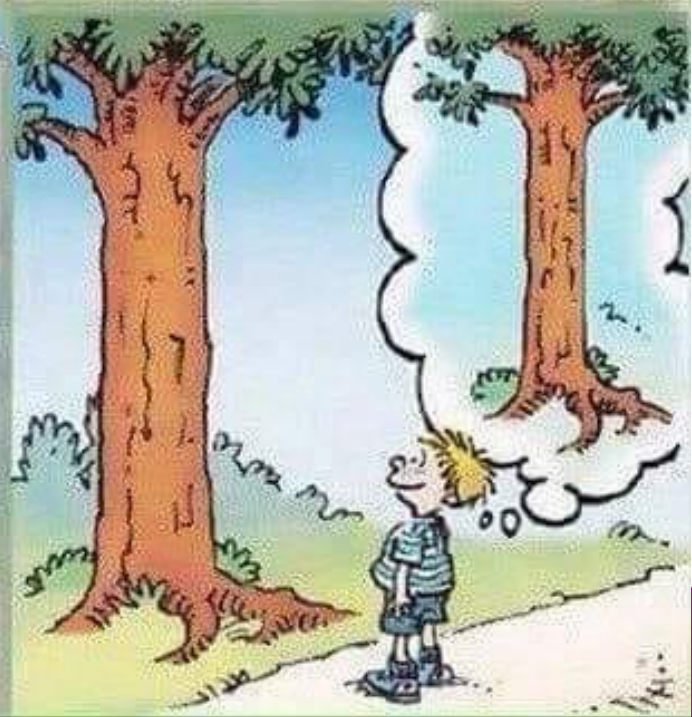
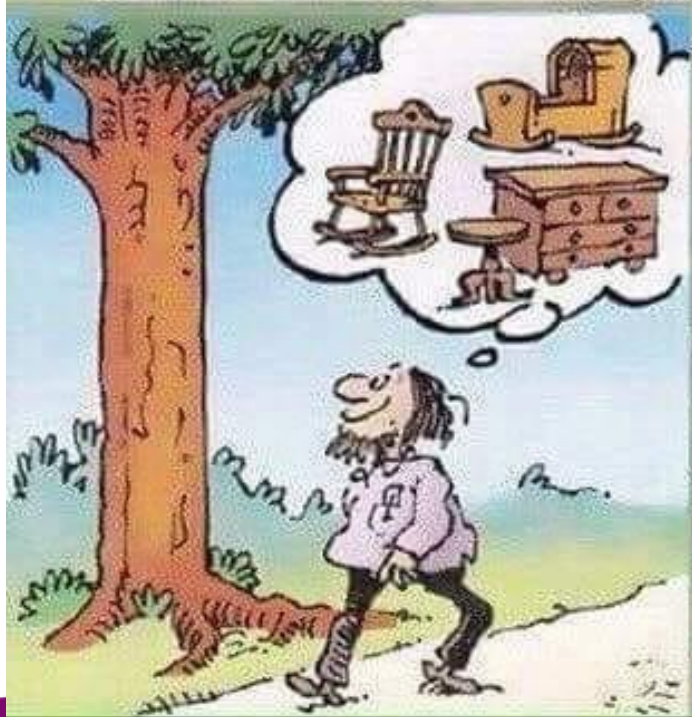
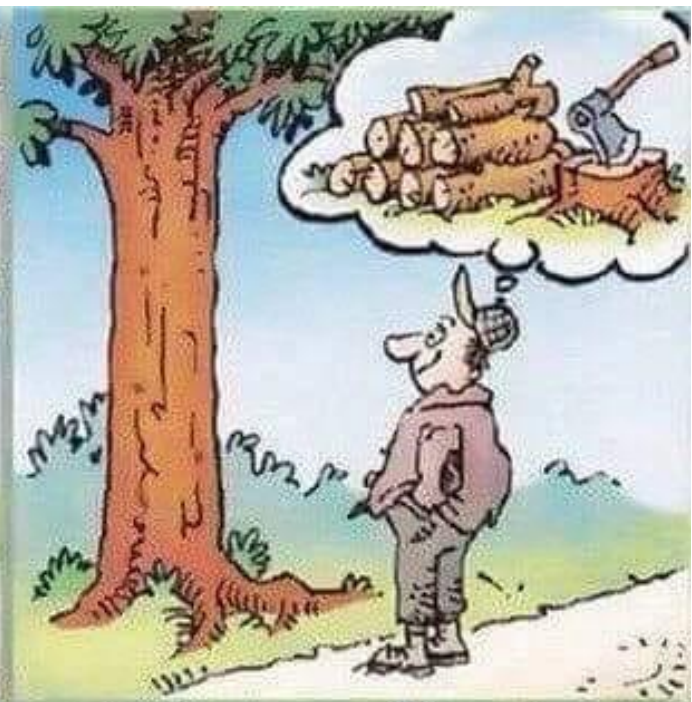
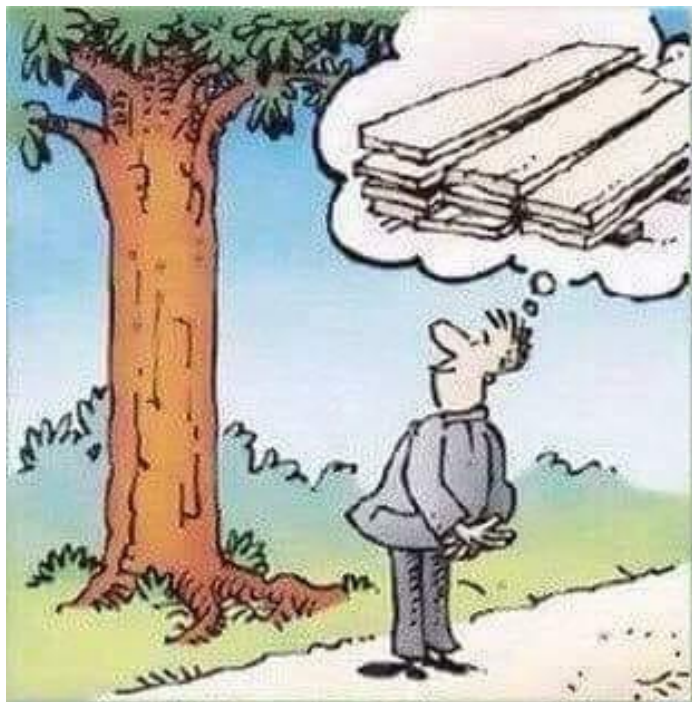
THE DEVELOPER...



THE LANDSCAPE DESIGNER...

Different perspectives of a tree.
Source: www.cyburbia.org

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Residents of the Merelbeek street want monumental beeches to leave as quickly as possible: "Those trees are terrorizing us"

09/05/2018 at 05:52 by Lieven Van Imschoot



■ These people live in the Kerselaarstraat where they suffer from ... beech.
■ And they have to leave, they find.

(PHOTO: LVI)

https://www.nieuwsblad.be/cnt/dmf20180508_03504030

Fuss about cutting six poplars: "Those are monuments, you don't touch"

10/08/2017 at 06:00 [Print](#) - [Corrigeer](#) by Bert Staes - [Print](#) - [Correct](#)



■ Olivier Tjon (in the back) with supporters Mieke Lammens (left to right), Nathalie, Paul Dierckx and baker De Waele: "We feel taken at the nose."

(PHOTO: LIEVEN VAN ASSCHE)

https://www.nieuwsblad.be/cnt/dmf20170809_03011468

Social representations – ground for finding solutions

- Diverging representations lead to conflicts
- Insight in social representations provides handles to find win-win solutions
 - What is important for the stakeholders?
 - How can planners or managers align urban trees with stakeholders' values and representations of nature?
 - What are common grounds to find a solution/place for trees in people's mind?



BENEFITS OF URBAN TREES



Strategic placement of trees in urban areas can **cool the air** by between 2 °C and 8 °C.



Large urban trees are excellent **filters for urban pollutants** and fine particulates.



Mature trees **regulate water flow** and **improve water quality**.

A tree can absorb up to 150 kg of CO₂ per year, sequester carbon and consequently **mitigate climate change**.





Wood can be used for **cooking and heating**.

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Spending time near trees **improves physical and mental health** by increasing energy level and speed of recovery, while decreasing blood pressure and stress.





Trees can **provide food**, such as fruits, nuts and leaves.

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Trees properly placed around buildings can **reduce air conditioning needs** by 30% and **save energy used for heating** by 20-50%.



Trees provide habitat, food and protection to plants and animals, **increasing urban biodiversity**.



Landscaping, especially with trees, can **increase property values** by 20%.

World urban population is growing fast...



Urban Rural
Today
By 2050



...planting trees today is essential for future generations!

- Food for thought: ecosystem services are only partially representing stakeholders' social representations!
- Can we win stakeholders' hearts and minds with the ES discourse?





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Thank you!

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