

## **BSI "Urban Trees" workshop for researchers and local stakeholders - Wednesday 19 June 12.30-16.30**

### **Context of the workshop and description of the thematic axes**

Trees play a number of key roles in regulating the quality of the urban environment (air, temperature, permeability, biodiversity). It is also known that trees and green spaces in general have a significant impact on physical and mental health. It is therefore expected that they will play a key role in helping cities to adapt to climate change, particularly in public spaces, in an attempt to reduce the socio-environmental inequalities that already exist. However, the many protests against urban development projects, and more broadly the questioning of tree management, show that there is no consensus on how to develop the potential of trees in the city.

The [Brussels Studies Institute](#) (BSI\*) has therefore decided to develop a new research theme focusing on urban trees, in order to make significant progress on the issue of the importance of trees in the Brussels region, through research projects that identify and document new practices to improve the potential of trees in the Brussels Capital-Region.

An initial workshop bringing together academics from the BSI network helped to structure the issues at stake in the Brussels region into 3 thematic areas:

#### **1. Database and mapping**

One of the main challenges would be to bring together and unify existing databases (regional, municipal, academic, citizens' initiatives), to pool this fragmented data and make it freely accessible (open data). The question of data collection methodologies, particularly participatory approaches, is at the heart of this strand.

#### **2. Representations and values**

The social representations of trees are manifold and often differ between laymen and experts (citizens, administrations, professionals, academics), but also between scientific disciplines ("hard" sciences and human sciences). The vision that people have of a tree, whether a specific individual or a specimen within a 'park', shapes the practices of users, residents and professionals in charge of management.

#### **3. Management and governance**

The fragmentation of the Brussels territory distributes tree management among various institutional players. However, associations and citizens are keen to get involved, as a long-term vision is crucial if the full potential of trees is to be realised.

We can link up these axes: bring together the databases (1.), by integrating new indicators that reveal the wealth of representations (2.), with a target of transparent management (3.). The purpose of data collection must be built around a narrative that brings together the different representations (2.) and issues (3.) of each stakeholder.

In addition, these axes have been designed around trees planted in public spaces, but the question could be extended to private spaces.

We would like to continue this work during a second workshop, which aims to discuss this initial academic reflection with the reality in the field, by inviting associations, administrations (municipal and regional) and academics who are involved, active and interested in the subject of urban trees.

The aim of this workshop is to bring these different stakeholders together to discuss the 3 axes of work, to identify the blind spots, the disagreements, but also the areas of convergence. It is through these exchanges that we will be able to define priorities and also identify possible collaborations to implement research and concrete actions.

*\*The Brussels Studies Institute (BSI) is an inter-university, inter-disciplinary and inter-community platform supporting integrated research on and for Brussels. [FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE BSI](#)*