

THESIS ABSTRACT

Community Participation In Parks Planning Addressing Environmental Degradation on Providence's South Side

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May 20, 1992

Specific Focus

Question:

How can the degradation of parks in low income urban areas be avoided?

Answer:

Community participation in parks planning gives low income people control over the parks in their communities. This community control improves the impact of parks on the quality of life of low income residents. Their physical needs are more adequately met because they have a hand in designing their open space system, and participating in parks planning gives low income people the opportunity to invest in community parks in a way that does not require money.

Broader Issue

Question:

How can the environmental degradation of poor areas be avoided?

Answer:

The way to avoid environmental degradation is to put the control of a resource in the hands of someone who has an interest in managing it sustainably. In theory, both private property and regulated public property accomplish this objective, but poor communities lack access to both public and private forms of control, because they are deficient in both economic and political power. Thus the way to avoid environmental degradation in poor areas is to increase the power of poor people to control the resources in their communities.