

*The work that parks do: Urban environmental management and its alternatives*

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Abstract: As cities come to be seen as both the source of and the possible solution to a variety of environmental concerns, and as hubs of economic activity, it is increasingly important to understand the shifting meanings that are applied to them, their economies, and their connection to the non-human world. In this dissertation, I examine the city as a site of environmental discourse formation, where knowledge about the environment is produced, shaped, and changed, and where notions of “nature” and “society” develop in conjunction with an emerging understanding of environmental responsibility and identity. Through an examination of the establishment of urban parks in Philadelphia from the 19th century to the present, this project sheds light on the processes through which the urban and the natural have been and continue to be constituted. The central concern of this project is to understand how and why a particular knowledge of urban nature emerged, to uncover the techniques employed that produce and reinforce it, and to trace the positioning of subjects within urban, economic, and environmental discourses. To do this, I identify the sites in which this discourse is (re)produced, the disciplinary techniques and specific practices that produce parks as unique kinds of spaces or landscapes in the city, and the consequences of these framings for the way cities are imagined. I employ a range of research methods that includes text analysis, visual discourse analysis, participant observation, and focus group interviewing techniques.