ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Politics of Space and NIMBY: The Construction of the Poor and Local Resistance to Affordable Housing

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Local resistance to affordable housing, colloquially referred to as Not-in-my-backyard or NIMBY, is a significant barrier to affordable housing production. However, an empirically testable theoretical conceptualization of the NIMBY phenomenon within the context of affordable housing is currently lacking. Much of the scholarly work on NIMBY has focused on environmentally contentious land uses such as the siting of waste processing facilities or resistance to dwellings for certain population groups such as the homeless. This research tests a theory-based model of local resistance to affordable housing. The data for the study was generated using mail and RDD telephone surveys implemented in the City of Anaheim.
In addition to respondent demographic characteristics, survey questions assessed the cognitive and affective components of individual attitudes towards the poor, belief in a just world, political orientation, religiosity, exclusionary attitudes, propensity for NIMBY behavior and prior NIMBY behavior. One of the more novel aspects of the study is that it tests the hypothesis that affordable housing represents multiple threats to identity and the self by including items that measure identification with the home and community. Study findings show that negative beliefs about the poor, just world belief, and identification with the home and community increase NIMBY attitudes. Similarly, women, those who were married and homeowners espoused greater NIMBY attitudes. The study also found some support for the link between NIMBY attitudes and NIMBY behavior. The results suggest the need for further empirical work to unpack the more subtle social-psychological underpinnings of the NIMBY phenomenon.