

## Inclusive and participatory management of urban parks in Puerto Vallarta: perspectives and challenges in a tourist context

### Gestión inclusiva y participativa de parques urbanos en Puerto Vallarta: perspectivas y desafíos en un contexto turístico

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#### Abstract

This article examines the inclusive and participatory management of urban parks in Puerto Vallarta, a rapidly growing city with a strong tourism orientation. Using a mixed-methods approach, it analyzes inequalities in access to public spaces, the lack of citizen participation, and the impact of tourism on sustainability. A bibliometric analysis and cartographic review identified the state of the art, case studies, and the distribution of parks within the city. Successful participatory management models from Mexico City and Medellín are highlighted, emphasizing the importance of involving the local community in decision-making. The findings propose a balanced management approach that integrates the needs of residents and tourists, ensuring equity and sustainability in the use of urban parks.

Goals	Methodology	Contribution
This article aims to analyze the inclusive and participatory management of urban parks in Puerto Vallarta, focusing on identifying inequalities in access to these spaces, evaluating the impact of tourism on their sustainability, and proposing management models that integrate the needs of the local community and tourists, ensuring equitable and sustainable use.	The research combines qualitative and quantitative methods. A bibliometric analysis was conducted to identify the state of the art, a cartographic review was carried out to map the parks within Puerto Vallarta's urban structure, and a field evaluation assessed their current condition. Additionally, successful participatory management cases in cities like Mexico City and Medellín were analyzed, providing insights applicable to the local context.	The study identifies key inequalities in the access and use of urban parks in Puerto Vallarta, highlighting the impact of tourism and the limited citizen participation in their management. As a contribution, it proposes a participatory management model that balances local and tourist demands, offering a practical, context-adapted framework to promote sustainability and equity in the use of urban public spaces.

#### Resumen

Este artículo explora la gestión inclusiva y participativa de los parques urbanos en Puerto Vallarta, ciudad en rápido crecimiento y orientada al turismo. Mediante un enfoque mixto, se analizan desigualdades en el acceso a espacios públicos, la falta de participación ciudadana y el impacto del turismo en la sostenibilidad. Un análisis bibliométrico y una revisión cartográfica identificaron el estado del arte, casos de estudio y la distribución de los parques en la ciudad. Se destacan modelos de gestión participativa exitosos en Ciudad de México y Medellín, subrayando la importancia de involucrar a la comunidad local. Los resultados proponen una gestión equilibrada que integre las necesidades de residentes y turistas, garantizando equidad y sostenibilidad en el uso de los parques.

Objetivo	Metodología	Contribución
El artículo busca analizar la gestión inclusiva y participativa de los parques urbanos en Puerto Vallarta, enfocándose en la identificación de desigualdades en el acceso a estos espacios, la evaluación del impacto del turismo en su sostenibilidad y la propuesta de modelos de gestión que integren las necesidades de la comunidad local y los turistas, garantizando un uso equitativo y sostenible.	La investigación combina métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos. Se realizó un análisis bibliométrico para identificar el estado del arte, una revisión cartográfica para mapear los parques dentro de la estructura urbana de Puerto Vallarta y una evaluación de campo sobre su estado actual. Además, se analizaron casos exitosos de gestión participativa en ciudades como Ciudad de México y Medellín, permitiendo adaptar aprendizajes a las características locales.	El estudio identifica las principales desigualdades en el acceso y uso de los parques urbanos en Puerto Vallarta, destacando el impacto del turismo y la limitada participación ciudadana en su gestión. Como aporte, propone un modelo de gestión participativa que equilibre las demandas locales y turísticas, proporcionando un marco práctico y adaptado al contexto local que promueve la sostenibilidad y la equidad en el uso de los espacios públicos urbanos.

#### Participation, Urban, Contexts

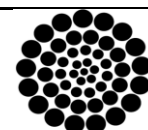
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## Introduction

Inclusive and participatory management of urban public spaces has been recognised as a fundamental pillar for improving the quality of life in contemporary cities. Parks and gardens play a central role in promoting social cohesion, public health and environmental sustainability, especially relevant in growing cities such as Puerto Vallarta, where the coexistence of tourism and local life poses multiple challenges. This article, part of an ongoing research project, explores the prospects for inclusive and participatory park management in Puerto Vallarta, highlighting the importance of integrating citizens into decision-making processes and balancing the needs of both residents and tourists. Based on an analysis of the current state of urban parks and a review of successful models from other Latin American cities, a theoretical and methodological framework is proposed to enable a more equitable and sustainable management of these spaces.

## Justification

Puerto Vallarta's urban growth has been significant in the last decade, with a population increase of 22.4% between 2010 and 2020, according to INEGI data (2021). This growth has generated pressures on urban infrastructure and public spaces, particularly in areas where tourism activity is intense. While Puerto Vallarta has a varied offer of parks and gardens, these spaces are not always equally accessible to the local population. The Ministry of Agrarian, Territorial and Urban Development (SEDATU, 2020) highlighted the unequal distribution of green areas, especially in the more peripheral areas, where inhabitants have limited access to quality parks. This context justifies the need to develop a management approach that promotes active community participation, which is considered key to ensure that parks respond to local needs and are maintained in a sustainable manner over time.

## Issue

Inequality in access to public spaces and lack of citizen participation in their management have been recurrent problems in Puerto Vallarta.

On the one hand, the tourist boom has favoured the creation of attractive public spaces for visitors, especially in the city centre and the coastal zone, while in less privileged residential areas, parks are scarce or poorly maintained. In addition, decisions on the design, maintenance and use of parks were often made without the inclusion of local communities, leading to a disconnection between the population and public spaces. This not only affected the perception of the parks, but also their use and conservation, as the lack of ownership by residents contributed to a reduced sense of shared responsibility.

Another relevant challenge was the impact of tourism on the sustainability of the parks. Although tourism represented an important source of income for the city, overuse of the parks by visitors led to accelerated wear and tear on the infrastructure and increased maintenance costs, often resulting in poor service for local residents.

## Objectives

The overall objective of this research was to analyse perspectives for inclusive and participatory management of urban parks in Puerto Vallarta, with a focus on equity, sustainability and citizen participation. The specific objectives were:

- To assess the current state of urban parks in Puerto Vallarta, with a focus on the equitable distribution of spaces and access for different social groups.
- To identify obstacles to citizen participation in park management, considering residents' perceptions of decision-making processes and the management of these spaces.
- To explore successful models of participatory park management in other cities in Mexico and Latin America in order to propose recommendations adapted to the Puerto Vallarta context.
- Analyse the impact of tourism on the sustainability of urban parks and propose strategies that balance the needs of residents and tourists.

## Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this research was based on the concepts of inclusive city and participatory management of public space, as proposed by authors such as [Ostrom \(1990\)](#) and [Carr, Francis and Rivlin \(1992\)](#). These authors argued that public spaces, particularly parks and gardens, not only serve a recreational function, but are also crucial for promoting social equity and community well-being. In this sense, inclusion and citizen participation are conceived as key tools to ensure that parks are sustainable in the long term and respond to the diverse needs of the different social groups living in the city.

The concept of an inclusive city implies the creation of urban environments where all inhabitants, regardless of social class, gender or age, have equal access to public spaces and services. In the context of urban parks, this means ensuring that decisions about the design, use and maintenance of green spaces are made in a participatory manner, involving both local authorities and residents.

## State of the Art

The literature on public space management has increasingly highlighted the importance of community participation in the planning and management of urban parks. According to [Wolch, Byrne and Newell \(2014\)](#), parks need to be managed in a participatory manner if they are to fulfil their role in promoting social cohesion and improving quality of life. This view has been supported by studies by [Cohen et al. \(2015\)](#), who noted that participatory management not only improves the perception of safety in parks, but also increases users' sense of ownership of the spaces.

In Latin America, the experience of cities such as Mexico City and Medellín has shown that participatory park management can generate significant benefits in terms of social cohesion, violence reduction and urban revitalisation. These case studies have served as a reference for the analysis in Puerto Vallarta, as they provide examples of how inclusive management models can be adapted to complex urban contexts, characterised by socio-economic inequality and tourism pressure.

## Methods and Instruments

To carry out the research, a mixed approach was adopted, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. The following methods and instruments were used:

- Surveys of local residents: A structured survey was designed to assess the perception of the inhabitants of different areas of Puerto Vallarta on the quality, accessibility and management of the parks. Questions included both Likert-scale items and open-ended questions to capture the diversity of opinions and experiences of respondents.
- Semi-structured interviews: Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including local government representatives, NGOs and community leaders, to understand their perspectives on park management and citizen participation in decision-making processes.
- Direct observation: Direct observation was carried out in several urban parks in different areas of the city (downtown, hotel zone and peripheral residential areas), assessing the quality of infrastructure, the use of spaces and the dynamics of interaction between tourists and residents.
- Case study analysis: A comparative analysis of participatory management models in cities such as Mexico City and Medellín was carried out, with the objective of identifying successful practices that could be applied in Puerto Vallarta.

## Results

### *Inequality in access to urban parks*

The results obtained from the surveys and direct observation in various urban parks in Puerto Vallarta revealed a marked inequality in the distribution, quality and accessibility of these spaces.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in the differentiation between the tourist areas, located mainly in the city centre and on the coast, and the peripheral residential areas, where the majority of the local population is concentrated. In tourist areas, urban parks are attractively designed, well maintained and easily accessible. These spaces not only serve the recreational needs of visitors, but also form part of the tourism infrastructure that the city has developed to enhance the tourist experience. The parks in these areas, often equipped with modern facilities suitable for entertainment, reflect a high level of investment in terms of maintenance and services. These parks tend to be visible, well signposted and connected to the city's main thoroughfares, making them easily accessible to both tourists and residents living nearby.

In contrast, in peripheral residential areas, where a considerable part of the local population lives, green spaces are scarce and, where they do exist, they are often in a deteriorated condition. The parks located in these areas present problems ranging from a lack of adequate infrastructure to a lack of regular maintenance. This situation means that residents of these areas not only have fewer recreational options, but also face a lower quality of public spaces. In many cases, these parks lack basic facilities such as children's playgrounds, rest areas or well-maintained green spaces, limiting their use and enjoyment.

This disparity has not only physical but also social implications. Residents of peripheral areas tend to perceive a lower quality of life due to lack of access to adequate public spaces. The scarcity of well-maintained parks contributes to a sense of exclusion and marginalisation, as infrastructure investments seem to concentrate on areas that are meant to attract and serve tourism, while the needs of local inhabitants are neglected. This situation creates a divide between tourist zones and peripheral areas in terms of enjoyment of public goods.

The lack of accessibility to quality parks in peripheral residential areas directly affects the health and well-being of residents. Studies have shown that green spaces play a key role in promoting healthy lifestyles by providing places for physical activity, recreation and social interaction.

The lack of such spaces in less favoured areas can contribute to social isolation and reduced community participation, which in the long term has a negative impact on social cohesion and residents' sense of belonging.

Another relevant point is the disconnection between local residents and decision-making processes related to park management and maintenance. In many of the interviews conducted, stakeholders pointed out that decisions about the management of public spaces tend to be made without consultation or participation of local communities, which reinforces the perception that parks are not designed to meet their needs. This lack of inclusion in management processes not only generates frustration among residents, but also limits the development of a sense of shared responsibility for the use and maintenance of parks.

The research findings reveal that unequal access to urban parks in Puerto Vallarta is a significant problem that affects both the quality of life of local residents and equity in the enjoyment of public spaces. While tourist areas enjoy well-maintained and accessible parks, peripheral residential areas face a lack of adequate green spaces, limiting recreational opportunities and well-being for their inhabitants. To address this situation, it is essential that the city's public policies adopt a more inclusive approach that considers the needs of all social groups, ensuring equitable access to urban parks in all areas of the city.

#### *Introduction to the Participation Analysis of Park Management in Puerto Vallarta*

The analysis process examined citizen participation in the management of parks and green spaces in Puerto Vallarta according to the Ecology Regulation, using Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Participation as an interpretive framework. The review identifies key competencies of the bylaw, assesses levels of citizen participation, and highlights opportunities for improved government-community collaboration.



## Article

The Ladder of Participation allows a ranking of levels of inclusion in public decisions, from non-participation to delegation of power, which makes it easy to see where citizen involvement in environmental management can be increased.

The table, entitled ‘Analysis of Competencies and Gaps in Participatory Park Management in Puerto Vallarta’, organises the relevant competencies in the regulation along with the gaps in participation according to Arnstein's levels. The analysis is based on the following levels of the Ladder of Participation:

*Non-Participation* - The community is informed without interference in decisions.

*Informational Participation* - Citizens receive information, but cannot contribute to change.

*Consultation* - A space for opinion is provided with no guaranteed impact.

*Symbolic Participation* - Citizens are minimally included, with little effect.

*Collaboration* - Intervention in projects is allowed under municipal supervision.

*Delegated Power* - Control of certain decisions is transferred to the community.

Each relevant article of the bylaw is assessed against this framework to identify the current level of participation and to point out areas where citizen inclusion can be increased, encouraging more collaborative parks and green space management. The table below details the results of this analysis:

<b>Box 1</b>			
<b>Table 1</b>			
Competence and Gap Analysis of Participatory Park Management in Puerto Vallarta			
Article	Competition	Description	Shortcomings according to the Ladder of Participation
Article 56	Establishment of municipal natural protected areas	Includes municipal ecological parks as protected areas of municipal interest.	Limited consultation: Although the regulations designate natural protected areas, no direct community consultation process is specified, leaving the decision in the hands of the municipality without including the voice of local residents in decision-making.
Article 61	Protection and conservation of green areas	Promotes nurseries, wooded areas and ornamental plants in parks and gardens.	Informational participation: The community is informed about protection actions, but there is no clear mechanism for citizen involvement in the design or implementation of these green area projects.
Article 67	Environmental education	Promotes respect and maintenance of parks and green areas under municipal jurisdiction.	Symbolic participation: Although the aim is to raise public awareness, environmental education here is more oriented towards communication than participatory action, lacking programmes that actively integrate the community in environmental management.
Article 207	Urban vegetation management	Regulates the planting, maintenance, pruning, removal and transplanting of species in public spaces and parks on a technical basis.	Technical consultation without community collaboration: Vegetation management activities are carried out under technical regulations without citizen involvement, reducing the opportunity for local collaboration or volunteerism in these processes.
Article 204	Administration of vegetation management	Establishes the City Council as responsible for vegetation management in	Control without participation: Responsibility rests solely with the City Council, limiting

		public property, including parks.	transparency and not allowing the community to influence or collaborate in the management of these spaces.
Article 68	Education and environmental dissemination policies	Promotes park conservation policies through educational systems and the media.	Information without community involvement: Although there is environmental communication, the community is not included in the creation of these policies or in the evaluation of their effectiveness, resulting in a low level of participation.

Source: Own elaboration 2024.

Table 1 allows us to emphasise the flow of participation and inclusion in the management of parks in Puerto Vallarta:

1. **Clarity in the Distribution of Powers:** The table shows how the bylaws concretely assign various competencies to the City Council in relation to the management and conservation of parks and green areas, providing a regulatory framework that structures municipal responsibilities in these environmental issues.
2. **Levels of Citizen Participation:** Most of the competencies reflect an informational or consultative participation approach, where citizens have access to information on environmental actions and policies but with limited opportunities to influence final decisions. This suggests that, although the community is aware of the measures taken, their ability to directly influence them is limited.
3. **Inclusion Mechanisms:** Although there are instances of consultation and environmental education programmes, active community participation in decision-making and policy implementation is perceived as limited. Park management processes remain largely in the hands of the municipality, which may reduce active citizen collaboration.

4. **Educational and Awareness Raising Function:** Several articles highlight the importance of environmental education and awareness raising as management tools. This approach implies an effort to raise awareness, although without integrating citizens directly into the planning or implementation of park conservation policies.

5. **Protection and Conservation of Green Areas:** Provisions on the creation and maintenance of green areas support municipal green infrastructure. However, the implementation and regulation of these policies is centralised in the municipal government, without clear mechanisms that allow the community to actively participate in decision-making or direct management of these spaces.

6. **Opportunities for Community Collaboration:** Although some articles suggest possibilities for community participation in technical and maintenance activities, their role appears to be secondary, acting more in support or oversight roles than as actors with real control or influence over management decisions.

These findings indicate that, while the regulation establishes a solid framework of competences, citizen participation in park management is mainly limited to an informative or consultative level. This suggests a participatory structure in which the community is kept abreast of decisions, but not deeply or actively involved in the management of green spaces.

### Lack of citizen participation in management

Analysis of the interviews conducted during the research revealed a clear lack of citizen participation in decision-making processes related to the management, design and maintenance of urban parks in Puerto Vallarta. Community leaders and other key stakeholders stated that although parks are a fundamental public good for social cohesion and community well-being, local residents are rarely consulted when decisions are made about these spaces.

One of the main findings is that decisions related to the design and management of parks are generally made by municipal authorities without effective mechanisms for citizen consultation. This unilateral process not only ignores the needs and expectations of local residents, but also generates a sense of disconnection between inhabitants and public spaces. As a result, parks do not reflect the priorities and particular characteristics of the communities that use them, undermining their value as meeting and recreation points.

Representatives of local communities indicated that this lack of inclusion in decision-making has reinforced a perception of exclusion, especially among the most vulnerable sectors of the population, who tend to live in the peripheral areas of the city. The interviews reflected that many inhabitants do not feel part of the planning and development processes of the parks, which has resulted in a lack of ownership and responsibility over these spaces. The lack of direct participation limits the possibility for residents to take ownership of the parks and actively contribute to their maintenance and care.

Furthermore, the lack of citizen participation mechanisms undermines opportunities to implement a more equitable and sustainable management model for urban parks. International studies have shown that when communities are involved in the management of public spaces, they are better maintained and more valued by users. However, in the case of Puerto Vallarta, the exclusion of citizens from these processes has contributed to parks in peripheral areas remaining in poor condition and lacking adequate services, some of which were identified in the documentation process as not having access infrastructure and not being legible to residents.

Lack of participation not only affects the quality of parks, but also has a negative impact on residents' perception of public spaces. Not feeling involved in decisions, many residents see parks as foreign spaces, which decreases their use and contributes to the deterioration of facilities. This phenomenon is particularly visible in areas where parks are not well maintained, as residents do not see the point of investing time or resources in their care if they feel they have no say in their management.

On the other hand, community leaders noted that efforts to include citizens in park decisions have been limited and ineffective. While some initiatives have attempted to integrate residents into the dialogue on urban planning, these initiatives have been sporadic and have failed to institutionalise a true culture of citizen participation. This reflects a lack of political will to establish participatory processes that empower communities and allow their voices to be heard in park management.

The lack of citizen participation in the management of Puerto Vallarta's urban parks is a significant obstacle to the development of public spaces that are truly inclusive and equitable. The disconnect between local residents and decision-making processes reinforces existing inequalities in access to and use of parks, especially in the most vulnerable areas of the city. In order to move towards more sustainable and equitable park management, it is essential that municipal authorities adopt effective mechanisms for citizen consultation and participation, allowing residents to be an active part of the design, use and care of public spaces.

### **Impact of tourism on park sustainability**

Tourism in Puerto Vallarta, as a key economic driver for the city, has a profound impact on the sustainability of urban parks, particularly those located in tourist areas. These parks, located in areas with a high influx of visitors, are subject to intensive use, resulting in a rapid deterioration of their infrastructure. The paths, green areas and street furniture in these parks are often underutilised, resulting in the need for constant and costly maintenance. This pressure on infrastructure impacts not only tourists visiting the parks, but also local residents, who often perceive a decline in the quality of services and the state of conservation of these spaces.

Local residents, who also use these parks, are affected by tourist overexploitation, as the accelerated wear and tear of the spaces leads to a decrease in their functionality and attractiveness. As a result, residents perceive that the parks, instead of being a quality recreational and leisure space, are mainly oriented towards tourist use, with a prioritisation of investment in tourist areas over residential areas.

This creates tensions between the interests of residents and the demands of tourism, which could lead to a negative perception of the tourism sector by the local population.

The high cost of maintenance is another significant challenge arising from tourism.

The constant flow of visitors demands increased investment in the repair and renovation of parks, which increases operational costs for municipal authorities. In many cases, this priority investment in tourist areas diverts resources that could have been allocated to improving parks in peripheral or residential areas, deepening disparities in access to quality green space between different parts of the city.

Despite these challenges, urban management stakeholders recognise that tourism can also be a crucial source of revenue to improve infrastructure and ensure adequate maintenance of urban parks. Tourism generates resources through taxes, access fees and commercial activities that take place in parks, which could be reinvested in park maintenance. However, for these revenues to effectively contribute to the sustainability of parks, it is necessary to implement a balanced management that considers both the needs of residents and tourists.

In this sense, a more equitable management would imply allocating the resources generated by tourism not only to parks located in the areas with the highest tourist influx, but also to those located in residential areas that require urgent improvements. Furthermore, it would be essential to establish clear limits on the intensive use of certain parks to avoid accelerated deterioration, promoting the development of policies that better distribute the flow of visitors to other less saturated areas of the city. By rethinking the use and concepts of public space, [Carrión, F. \(2003\)](#).

Tourism represents both an opportunity and a challenge for the sustainability of urban parks in Puerto Vallarta. While the intensive use of parks in tourist areas accelerates their wear and tear and increases maintenance costs, tourism also provides a vital source of income that, if properly managed, can contribute to the improvement of these spaces.

To ensure that the benefits of tourism do not compromise equity in access to urban parks, it is necessary to develop strategies that balance tourism demands with the needs of local residents, ensuring that all Puerto Vallarta residents can enjoy quality green spaces.

### Successful models of participatory management

Comparative analysis of successful models of participatory management in Mexico City and Medellín revealed that the active involvement of citizens in the management of urban parks can generate important benefits for both the sustainability of spaces and social cohesion. In these cases, participatory processes have allowed local communities to become directly involved in decision-making related to the design, use and maintenance of parks, which has strengthened the sense of ownership and responsibility towards these public spaces.

In Mexico City, for example, the implementation of participatory projects in parks such as Alameda Central and Parque Bicentenario has shown that the inclusion of citizens in the planning and management process significantly improves the perception and use of parks [Carrión, F. \(2016\)](#). Local residents, feeling involved in the creation and maintenance of these spaces, have developed a greater sense of ownership, which translates into better care of the facilities and more intensive use of the parks for community, recreational and cultural activities. This approach has also allowed for greater equity in the distribution of resources, as decisions reflect the needs and priorities of local communities.

On the other hand, Medellín has been internationally recognised for its innovative participatory public space management policies, such as the Library Parks and Green Corridors project. These initiatives have transformed previously unsafe or abandoned areas into vibrant and accessible spaces, where the community plays a central role in the daily management of the parks. In addition to improving the infrastructure and services offered in the parks, community participation has reduced perceptions of insecurity and contributed to urban revitalisation. These spaces have become symbols of social inclusion, promoting interaction and cohesion between different social groups living in the city.



These examples of success in Mexico City and Medellín provide a valuable frame of reference for the development of a participatory approach to the management of urban parks in Puerto Vallarta. Implementing similar participatory processes could address challenges identified in the city, such as unequal access to parks and lack of ownership of public spaces by local residents. Involving communities in park management would not only contribute to better conservation and use of parks, but would also foster greater spatial justice by ensuring that decisions about park design and maintenance reflect the real needs of local people.

In addition, a participatory approach in Puerto Vallarta would balance the tensions between tourism demands and the needs of local residents. By incorporating the voice of citizens in park planning, strategies could be developed to ensure that parks serve both tourists and the local community, ensuring equitable and sustainable use of parks. This would be particularly relevant in peripheral areas, where citizen participation could drive the creation or improvement of parks that are currently in poor condition, generating a positive impact on both the quality of life of residents and the social cohesion of communities.

Successful models of participatory management observed in Mexico City and Medellín show that active community involvement in the management of urban parks is key to promoting their long-term sustainability and improving the quality of life of residents. Applying these approaches in Puerto Vallarta would offer a unique opportunity to address inequalities in access to public spaces and foster a greater sense of responsibility and ownership of parks. Citizen participation would not only ensure that parks reflect the needs and desires of the community, but would also contribute to creating more inclusive, equitable and sustainable spaces. In turn, the analysis of other models applied in tourist cities such as the case of Barcelona, Spain, Crespi Vallbona, M. (2022) or models of integrated management linked to private initiative such as the experience of El Salvador is maintained,

## Conclusions

The research concludes that inclusive and participatory management of urban parks in Puerto Vallarta is essential to address inequalities in access to public spaces and ensure their sustainability. The results reveal a marked difference in the quality and accessibility of parks between tourist areas and peripheral residential areas, affecting mainly the local population. In addition, a lack of effective mechanisms for citizen participation was identified, contributing to the disconnection between residents and parks.

It is highlighted that while tourism represents a challenge in terms of sustainability, it also offers an opportunity to generate the necessary resources for the maintenance of the parks. However, it is essential to balance the use of these spaces between tourists and residents, to prevent economic interests from affecting equity in access and use of the parks.

Finally, participatory management models analysed in other Latin American cities proved to be an effective strategy to improve social cohesion and ensure a more equitable and sustainable management of parks. The implementation of participatory practices in Puerto Vallarta can contribute significantly to the revitalisation of its urban parks and the strengthening of the link between the community and public spaces.

## Discussion

The findings of this research raise important questions about how to balance the needs of residents and tourists in a growing city like Puerto Vallarta. Unequal access to urban parks highlights the urgency of developing public policies that promote a more equitable distribution of green spaces, especially in peripheral areas. The lack of citizen participation in the management of these spaces underlines the need to create mechanisms that actively involve the community in decision-making processes, which could improve not only the quality of parks, but also residents' perception and ownership of them.

The impact of tourism on urban parks is an issue of particular relevance in this context because, although it generates income that can be used for the maintenance of these spaces, it also implies an overexploitation that compromises their long-term sustainability. Participatory management, as observed in the cases of Mexico City and Medellín, offers a viable solution to face this challenge, allowing a more equitable use of parks and guaranteeing their conservation.

This study opens the door for future research to further explore the dynamics between tourism, sustainability and citizen participation in urban park management, and to analyse how to adapt these successful models to the particularities of Puerto Vallarta. The implementation of inclusive and participatory policies will be crucial to ensure that parks are not only recreational spaces, but also catalysts for social cohesion and urban sustainability.

## Statements

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest. They have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that might have appeared to influence the article reported in this paper.

### Authors' contribution

The contribution of each researcher in this research was defined based on:

*Reyes- González, Alberto:* Contributed to the conceptualization of the research and the methodological design of the project. Participated in the initial drafting of the article and in the overall coordination of the fieldwork.

*Valdez-Olmos, Fernando Daniel:* Supported the literature review and the development of the theoretical framework. Contributed to the data analysis and the drafting of sections related to participatory management and inequality in access to urban parks.

*Reyes-González, Andrés Enrique:* Collaborated in data collection and the systematization of the results obtained through surveys and interviews. Also participated in the final review of the document.

*Odetti, Jimena Vanina:* Conducted semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and participated in direct observation of urban parks. Assisted in drafting the conclusions and reviewing the final version of the article.

### Availability of data and materials

All data and materials used in this research are available and can be consulted through the links and references provided by the authors.

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### Abbreviations

INEGI - National Institute of Statistics and Geography.  
ONGs - Non-Governmental Organisations.  
SEDATU - Ministry of Agrarian, Territorial and Urban Development.

### References

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