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by Planum. The Journal of Urbanism  
Supplemento al n. 38, vol. I/2019  
ISSN 1723-0993  
Registered by the Court of Rome on 04/12/2001  
Under the number 514-2001

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(ibidem) è un progetto ideato da Marco Cremaschi.

Impaginazione: Francesco Curci  
Progetto grafico: Nicola Vazzoler  
Immagine di copertina:  
Manifesti disegnati da Karine Savard per il  
documentario *Rêveruses de villes* diretto da Joseph Hillel.  
Montréal, Canada | Foto Cigdem Talu 2019 ©

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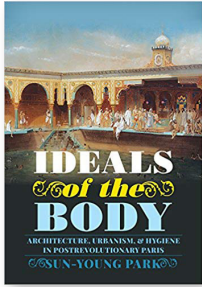
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Per la seconda volta (ibidem) compie un percorso tematico attraverso la letteratura recente sugli studi urbani. Questo numero privilegia un punto di vista al femminile e dunque il contributo delle donne, per lungo tempo misconosciuto, alla pratica e al pensiero della città. In un breve racconto fantascientifico – *Consider Her Ways* – lo scrittore John Wyndham immaginò come sarebbe una società esclusivamente femminile, basata su valori alternativi a quelli della sua epoca. Sfogliando molti testi classici dell'urbanistica e dell'architettura si prova la medesima sensazione straniante di una città concepita e disegnata esclusivamente al maschile, e non si tratta di fantascienza. Grazie all'opera meritoria di studiose, come quelle i cui libri sono recensiti in questo numero, emerge dal passato e dal presente una città che si potrebbe dire 'androgina' perché mostra le caratteristiche di entrambi i sessi. Questa città era sotto gli occhi di tutti, eppure invisibile. Il documentarista Jacob Riis nel 1890 pubblicò il volume fotografico *How the Other Half Lives*, dedicato agli invisibili emigranti di New York. Non è che un piccolo esempio di come la visibilità apra un cammino al riconoscimento del diritto alla città per chi ci vive in una condizione di minorità. Non è il metodo che sorprende bensì il tempo che è stato necessario, dopo varie ondate di femminismo dalla fine dell'Ottocento in poi, per iniziare a rendere visibile il contributo intellettuale e pratico delle donne alla costruzione della città. Un antico proverbio cinese dice che 'le donne sostengono la metà del cielo'. Soltanto riscrivendo con sagacia moltissimi capitoli di storia, etnografia e pianificazione urbana si potrà mostrare agli uomini che le donne costruiscono almeno la metà della città.

L.G.

Cigdem Talu

# Ideals of the Urban: Architecture as Echoes of Bodies Who React



Sun-Young Park

**Ideals of the Body: Architecture, Urbanism, and Hygiene in Postrevolutionary Paris**  
University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh 2018  
pp. 352, \$45.95

The social and architectural landscape of nineteenth-century Paris is the focus of much scholarly research on experiences of modernity, changing societal norms, and urbanism. The convergence of these themes often involves studies of Haussmannian Paris through the lenses of industrialization, technology, architecture, urbanism, tourism, media, consumerism, and identity (Harvey, 2003; Van Zanten, 1994). In her book, Sun-Young Park, an assistant professor in the Department of History and Art History at George Mason University, uncovers a less tended era: the transformation of the built and urban environment in postrevolutionary (pre-Haussmannian) Paris. Park explores the inter-disciplinary networks and urban actors that affected this era, including the role of emergent notions of body ideals, identity, and gender in new architectural programs concerning health, hygiene, and movement. These new programs included gymnasiums, public parks, swimming schools, and leisure gardens. Park successfully examines these overlooked spaces and situates them in a larger ur-

ban framework of hygienic theories, leisure-making, and quotidian experiences, while negotiating social reforms of gender and class. Her central thesis is that hygiene and health theories were politically charged and directly affected the design of relevant spatial materializations. These spaces, in turn, formed and were transformed by gender and class identities. *Ideals of the Body* is a compelling historical account of uncommon architectural spaces, where socio-political subtexts and users are recognized as significant spatial performers, often more so than the architect.

After the decline of the first Napoleonic Empire (1804-15), French reforms predominantly focused on the physical and moral well-being of citizens. Ideologies of the period – amplified by anxieties about public health and tumultuous social order – gave way to a new physical culture. This situation was embodied in both the emergence and urgency of physical activities (modern gymnastics) and the buildings that would host such activities. In her introduction, Park argues that corporal ideals were actualized in physical practices and new architectural forms, charging the latter with meaning and influencing developments. The construction of the French conception of modernity thus occurred in multi-layered negotiations, «through a series of local processes, experiences, and negotiations, rather than a wholesale, mythic rupture with the past» (p. 7). The rupture Park is referring to is Haussmann's totalitarian application of an urban vision to Paris and the citywide development projects that ensued after 1853. Throughout the book, the key developmental issue is the consolidation of the everyday practices of citizens and the materialization of ideologies in built environments. Park identifies the environments she studies (gymnasiums, recreational gardens, pedagogical institutions, swimming pools etc.) as 'architectural thresholds', a concept she uses both metaphorically and literally. These spaces accommodate both recreation and exercise; they are at once enclosed and open, built



with contemporary technological advancements such as iron and glass. The chapters are organized around social actors: the soldier, the schoolboy, the *demoiselle*, the *lionne*, and finally the sportsman.

Park initially focuses on the implementation of the newly emerging physical culture in the military in the early nineteenth century and the political vision of the body. The shifting political landscape of the post-revolutionary era shaped hygiene theories, which then affected the architectural and the urban. Park analyzes representations from fine arts and medical imagery. Later on, she investigates the ways ordinary citizens encountered modernity in these built environments, and what kind of urban network was formed through the exchange between these practices and disciplines. Park argues that modern gymnastics, from its earliest applications in the military, has always been a politicized practice. Most of the first chapter focuses on Colonel Amoros who developed a gymnastics method (completed with moral education) in the 1810s and influenced theories of hygiene and movement for decades to come. In the next chapter, the discourse shifts from the military ground to the pedagogical field, a crucial point that will give way to experimental architectural practices – especially initially in private boys' educational institutions – and later will spread out to the whole city, in the form of public institutions, parks, and sports centers. Considering boys' and girls' schools separately, Park talks about how the educational environment played the role of the threshold between the private and public spheres. The drawings and plans of these institutions reveal the makeshift aspect of their spatial organization. An original statement other scholars working on the same time period and similar contexts did not previously make (Gribaudo, 2014; Bowie, 2001) is weaved into chapter 3. Looking at the development of gymnastic programs in girls' schools, which stemmed from conservative interests to prepare girls for motherhood, Park remarks these programs ended up creating potentials for the female body in subversive ways through increasing (or inadvertently encouraging) their participation to the public sphere. Park consequently examines the figure of the *lionne* (a term coined by Alfred de Musset in poem *L'andalousse*), an early incarnation of the *flâneuse* or

Vésuviennes, locating her as an active female in public and amusement parks of Restoration-era Paris. Through a sportive activity, the *lionne* takes up space that was not previously hers, reclaiming a position in the public sphere. As conditions in the city declined politically and spatially, amusement parks and leisure gardens became the materialization of escapism, while serving as an experimental ground for new ideas of social appropriateness, gender identities, and consumption of mass culture. By giving examples from the Tivoli and Ruggeri gardens, Park notes: «in turning its back on the city and constructing this cosmos of artificial nature, the leisure garden subtly acknowledged the urban condition by addressing the new physical and spatial necessities it had called forth» (p. 218). *Ideals of the Body* is ultimately a reconsideration of the liminal spaces of an emerging modernity, which Park rightfully claims are not part of the typical categories of urban public sphere. She is looking at a different image of Paris, «the Paris that was lived and experienced by its ascendant subjects in the post-revolutionary era was also a city of enclaves and enclosures, of social thresholds bridging the private and public spheres, seeking to redress external and environmental pressures given the new demands being placed on urban citizens. (...) If these environments and constructs south to 'work on' the subjects within, those bodies worked back» (pp. 294-7). Escaping a formulaic Foucauldian discourse analysis by initially focusing on small-scale connections (both between people and institutions) instead of vast power relationships, Park anchors her arguments and the procession of themes in the materiality of the case studies and her minutely detailed evidence-based approach. Her writing style is clear and compact. Through a very close reading of drawings and plans from various resources (namely Musée Carnavalet, the Bibliothèque Nationale Française, Archives de Paris, and Archives Nationales de France), Park employs a forensic methodology in her archival analysis and pays a great deal of attention to the material conditions of architecture. The most dominant examples Park initially investigates have a common point: most military and pedagogical institutions implement their hygienic agendas and gymnasiums in existing buildings. For instance, Park shows how





existing gardens or interiors were shifted into outdoor activity grounds or interior gymnasiums. Just before the July Monarchy, however, these design practices begin to change. In later chapters, we see Park giving examples of public pools designed in Moorish style (given the Orientalist tendencies and trends of the period) and public gymnasiums that have the monumental scale of temples. Through a centralized state, the environments Park looks at are translated from the institutional sphere to the public one. As Park puts it, «ideas figured at the local, architectural level, reacting to the eroding metropolis they sought to keep out, found spatial expression at the scale of the city» (p. 299). This gives way to a network of gymnasiums, public parks, the short-lived *jardins de divertissements*, and public pools.

Her textual primary resources are also very abundant and include official reports, periodicals, manifestos, manuals, *observations*, and *considérations* written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Park re-centers each case study around her fundamental question: how was a particular situation played out in the larger context of the city, informing design practices of different disciplines and urban spaces? This structure creates a dialogue between her sectional arguments and inhibits the mass of material from becoming isolated themes.

If there is one conjecture we can tease out of the book, it is that architecture is unpredictable. In their material forms, mechanisms of change rarely abide top-down applications of policies or ideologies because all architecture leaves holes, both figuratively and literally, for new and unexpected appropriations. This is perhaps most evident on chapters exploring women's appropriation of architectural and urban spaces. *Ideals of the Body* is oriented for architectural and urban historians, scholars of history of science, medicine, and sports. The exploration of the archives is an important contribution in its own right. Park's book not only advances our understanding of how health and hygiene ideologies affected gender and corporal identities in the architectural and urban scale, but it also shows us how to overturn expansive research questions that might implicate multiple theoretical approaches with numerous types of material and disciplines into a meticulous and inventive investigation.

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