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Andrew Newman, *Landscape of Discontent: Urban Sustainability in Immigrant Paris*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. xliii + 253 pp. Maps, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$105.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 9780816689620; \$30.00 (pb.) ISBN 9780816689637.

Review by Minayo Nasiali, University of California, Los Angeles.

In *Landscape of Discontent*, Andrew Newman explores resident activism and urban ecology in northeast Paris. A major focus of the monograph is a close reading of the Jardins d'Éole, a public garden in the eighteenth and nineteenth arrondissements. For Newman, the park is an important site for making sense of debates about the environment, urban development, and belonging in late-twentieth century France. Rather than explore the Jardins d'Éole as a static and natural space, Newman argues that the park is instead a site of multiple, overlapping, and, at times, contradictory urban natures. Focusing on negotiations between activists, residents, urban planners and politicians, he stresses that the book is not simply a study about conflict over the city. Instead, he aims to show how the production of space in sites like the Jardins d'Éole is "a churning, unresolved process that is central to the making of the urban landscape itself" (p. xviii). This process, Newman argues, has been shaped by the so-called "green turn" in urban planning, especially the growing emphasis on making cities sustainable. Importantly, the various local, national and even global practices deployed in the "greening" of cities have created new forms of inclusion and exclusion and raises important questions about understandings of membership in the nation. Newman's monograph lies at the confluence of a number of fields of study, including environmental and urban studies. He also makes an important contribution to ongoing debates about republicanism and the trouble with difference in France.

Newman's characterization of the built environment is deeply informed by Henri Lefebvre, especially Lefebvre's idea of space as dynamic, fluid, and socially produced.^[1] Like Lefebvre, Newman sees the "city as a process," and he aims to illuminate the interplay between imagined and material sites (p. xix). But rather than draw distinctions between what Lefebvre describes as the dominant space of urban planners and the lived space of inhabitants, Newman instead hopes to show how both residents and experts can be producers of space. At stake, for him, is the problematic binary that he believes Lefebvre and other scholars have generated, namely the dichotomy between active expert "planners" and more passive inhabitant "users." Newman argues that this theoretical construct does little to account for the complex and nuanced ways that space is actually produced. Instead, Newman prefers the term "designer," a term he argues captures both the efforts of planners and other experts, as well as the everyday activities--and agency--of residents as they move through, analyze, and recreate the city.

For Newman, a deep reading of how ordinary people and experts "design" space is best conducted in the neighborhoods of northeast Paris. The city's eighteenth and nineteenth arrondissements have long been associated with working class and impoverished residents, and include a sizeable population of people from France's former colonies. Northeast Paris is particularly important for Newman because the area is not quite the *banlieue*--i.e., the rundown suburbs that ring Paris--and it is not quite Paris, or at least it seems distant from the chic avenues and grand architecture that characterize the city center. Newman

describes northeast Paris as a hinterland, a liminal space. It is precisely the paradoxical quality of this site, Newman argues, as “between more known places,” that makes northeast Paris a particularly important site of study (p. 5). Significantly, Newman problematizes the Paris/*banlieue* binary that has featured prominently in other studies of urban space in France. He argues that such a “dichotomy conceals as much as it reveals,” and that the imagined and material boundaries between Paris and its *banlieue* obscures the messiness and fluidity of these spaces (p. xxviii). Newman stresses that the *banlieue* is not “uniformly poor [and] immigrant,” and that Paris is not uniformly rich and white (p. xxviii).

Newman’s efforts to problematize the Paris/*banlieue* binary is part of his broader aim to offer a new, more nuanced take on republicanism in France. Rather than discuss republicanism as unyielding to notions of difference, Newman instead shows how “republicanism has many natures” and is part of the rhythms of everyday life (p. xxxii). Specifically, Newman is interested in how republicanism is reworked in northeast Paris, how it is invoked in a diversity of ways and how “grassroots politics—and even municipal-level initiatives—quietly embrace a pluralism that is at times inconsistent with the nation-level rhetoric of any of the major political parties” (p. xxxii). In other words, he pushes against what he sees as a knee-jerk tendency to label any expression of difference as Anglo-Saxon multiculturalism and instead hopes to demonstrate how residents and local authorities in northeast Paris accept subtle expressions of pluralism as not contrary to, but fundamentally a part of, the republican project.

Chapter one provides a deep reading of the eighteenth and nineteenth arrondissements of Paris. Newman explores the historical role of the railroads in shaping the area, and, more recently, how local activists, residents and urban planners have reimagined, re-appropriated and contested this space. Continuing a thread from the introduction, Newman elaborates on his discussion of northeast Paris as a hinterland and a site that is not “well-defined” (pp. 5–6).

Chapter two explores the mobilization and social movement behind the creation of the Jardins d’Éole. Newman shows how the grassroots effort to create the park “used the politics of green space as a spatial strategy to confront a wide range of urban inequalities” (p. 35). Éole activists associated “broader issues of class and housing” with the need to revitalize the built environment through the creation of a shared park (p. 45). They also rejected efforts to privatize the site and instead argued the need to transform the “wasteland” into a public space, or as Newman argues, a commons. He builds on the work of Mustafa Dikeç to show how activists avoided explicitly talking about racial or cultural identities by instead emphasizing the spatial identity and needs of the neighborhood.^[2] Newman also provides a close reading of the style and aesthetics of protest that activists utilized in order to galvanize broader support for their cause. He describes how Éole activists appealed to a certain middle-class generation of would-be sympathizers, namely *les soixante-huitards*. Éole activists harnessed a style of demonstration they believed would appeal to this dominant political force by staging “*manif-festives*” or folk-inspired, carnivalesque protests. In this way, Newman argues, activists worked to make their agenda visible and legible to key members of the Socialist Party and to other potential supporters of their cause.

Chapter three explores the theme of republicanism and discusses how public gardens such as the Jardins d’Éole become important sites for “spatializing—and naturalizing—republican forms of citizenship and the nation itself” (p. 74). Newman discusses the diverse ways in which people associate the park with broader understandings of republicanism. Some conceive of the Jardins d’Éole as a kind of civilizing space, where people learn to share, inhabit, and thus assimilate into the larger space of the nation. Others reject such an assimilationist notion of republicanism and instead embrace various forms of sociability such as gardening which, Newman stresses, is a practice that helps to cultivate multiple networks of cultural exchange. The park, therefore, is not simply an imposition of a state-designed vision of integration, it is a place where residents themselves define “how the space should be used” (p. 85). Newman argues, therefore, that northeast Paris reveals the potential for a more pluralistic notion of republicanism, “one that has a vocabulary of difference and sameness that is all its own” (p. 98).

Chapter four examines the green turn in urbanism and asks “For what (and for whom) are sustainable cities ultimately being built” (p. 105)? Newman explores how a new emphasis on sustainability also creates new modes of inclusion and exclusion. He focuses on the so-called scooter battles in and around the Jardins d’Éole and how (mostly middle class) residents defined the vehicular activities of other residents (namely young men), as not only disruptive to everyday life, but also as a threat to the sustainability and overarching ecology of the park itself. Newman points out that scooters, not just in northeast Paris, but globally, are a form of cheap transportation utilized mostly by the poor and working classes. He also underscores how these vehicles are stigmatized for their emissions and are “recast as a global environmental menace” (p. 108). In the context of northeast Paris, the condemnation of scooters as air polluters is conflated with the perception that the young people who ride them are likely delinquents and *jeunes issus de l’immigration*. Newman contrasts the supposed problem with scooter culture in northeast Paris with the installation of the Vélib infrastructure around Paris, i.e., the system of shared, rentable bicycles. In contrast to scooters, Vélibs are cast as examples of environmentally responsible forms of transportation. Furthermore, Newman claims that Paris’s Vélib system showcases the marriage of neoliberalism with principles of sustainability. He argues that the green turn in Paris and in other cities is also about the cultivation of certain kinds of capital, capital that has been branded sustainable, ecological, and even natural.

Chapter five explores questions of surveillance. It discusses how modes of policing were built into the very design of the park, and also considers how residents themselves watch and are watched. Newman argues that the “winning design for the park was chosen in no small measure because of its surveillance-friendly nature” (p. 143). While many residents initially envisioned a lush green space with bountiful shade-trees, the park that was actually built consists of a series of wide and open planes, with few trees, permitting park attendants and residents to engage in multiple and varied acts of observing. An important element of this “surveillance city” is that the state is not the only entity engaged in acts of policing. Residents themselves become “regulators of public space” (p. 147). Newman is particularly interested in the “watching [of] everyday life” (p. 156). He not only describes residents’ concern about the threat of delinquency and drugs, he also discusses how those residents who are marked by others as delinquents themselves observe, survey, and thus define a spatiality for their bodies and practices in the park.

The final substantive chapter examines how diverse kinds of social movements, activists, and residents “play with the boundaries of public and private” as a means to “claim the right to the city” (p. xliii). Newman questions the tendency, as he sees it, to take public space as a “clearly bounded static ‘thing’” (p. 169). Instead, he points to ways that various movements, for example the *Droit au logement* (DAL) group in Paris, lay claim to both private and public spaces as a way to assert their right to public services and to housing.

In addition to his arguments about republicanism, nature, and the production of space, Newman also states that the legacies of empire feature importantly in the politics and practices of ecological urbanism. He notes, for example, how discussions of urban renewal in the media and by state authorities often describes these efforts as a *renconquête*, or a reconquering of urban space. The implication is that urban revitalization is also understood as a re-colonization, a taking back of space that has been “lost” to a population of residents from former French colonies. Throughout the book Newman makes frequent use of the terms “immigrant,” “immigrant origin,” and “French origin” to distinguish between (presumably) non-white and white inhabitants. Since one of the great strengths of the study is its attention to the voices and experiences of ordinary people, I wondered if these terms were utilized by residents to describe themselves? Do they say they are of “immigrant origin” and that they live in “immigrant Paris?” In short, how would a more sustained and careful discussion of terms—particularly the categories residents attribute to themselves and to their neighbors—support Newman’s larger claim that empire is an important part of the story? Moreover, how might such a discussion buttress his arguments

about republicanism? I raise these questions not as criticism, but to spur discussion about what is a very compelling study.

Newman's book is an important contribution to a small, but growing body of Anglophone literature on housing and the built environment in late twentieth-century France. His exploration of the politics of urban ecology, particularly the diverse constructions of "nature" provides a fresh take on questions of urban decline and the so-called trouble with France's *banlieues*. Coming from the discipline of anthropology, Newman's emphasis on contemporary discourse and the voices and actions of ordinary people complement recent historical studies of housing and urbanism in France.[3] This monograph will appeal to scholars of modern France, urban history, and environmental studies, as well as historians, anthropologists, and sociologists interested in such sub-fields as everyday life, modernization and migration.

NOTES

[1] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1991).

[2] Mustafa Dikeç, *Badlands of the Republic: Space, Politics and Urban Policy* (Malden, Mass., and Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

[3] Kenny Cupers, *The Social Project: Housing Postwar France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Nicole Rudolph, *At Home in Postwar France: Modern Mass Housing and the Right to Comfort* (New York: Berghahn, 2015).

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