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Urban Parks as Everyday Heterotopic Spaces

Foucault's six-fold characterisation of heterotopias provides an abstract and elastic schema that needs to be defined more clearly by application and illustration in material space. This paper will argue that urban public parks are complex multifunctional spaces that can be understood not only through the diversity of discourses (political, medical, moral, ideological, cultural, gender, etc) applied in and over them but also by considering their 'special' status as everyday urban heterotopias.

This paper will illustrate the concept of heterotopic park space with illustration and evidence from a variety of empirical examples. This will include a brief overview of the origins of urban public parks through the arguments and analyses provided by the 19th century Public Parks Movement as justification for the social construction of humane green spaces in an urbanising world.