European Journal of Geography

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Received: 11/09/2024

Revised: 03/11/2024

Accepted: 21/11/2024

Online: 22/11/2024

Special Issue:
Spatial Humanities & Contemporary Geographical Approaches

Guest Editors:
Dr. Seraphim Alvanides
Dr. Joana Catarina Vieira Paulino
Dr. Alexandros Bartzokas-Tsiompras

DOI: 10.48088/ejg.si.spat.hum.l.bra.30.44

ISSN: 1792-1341

Research Article

Layering Public Park Histories: Uncovering the Effects of Restoration Idea[l]s in Post-War Urban Spaces in Germany and the U.S.

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Abstract: This paper proposes a lens of analysis for studying how public urban park creation, often presented as inherently beneficial for the public by planners, government officials, and stakeholders, served to enforce prevailing social and political norms by excluding unwanted visitors and fostering specific codes of conduct. The two case studies of post-war park development in Richmond, Virginia, U.S., and Hamburg, DE, exemplify the social and political effects of restoration ideas and ideals on beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. In Richmond, the construction of Chimborazo Park displaced and excluded an African American (Black) community during the aftermath of the Civil War, while Hamburg's Alsterpark was created within the city's general post-World War II greening initiatives that included forced expropriation and behavior regulation. The joint spatial humanities based approach, which includes GIS modeling and archival source analysis, furthers historical investigation to more deeply understand patterns of displacement, exclusion, and social control. The paper offers an approach for critically examining the planning histories of parks that were created under the justification of restoration but operated as sites of contestation and ideology during moments of societal, political, and social reform.

Keywords: public parks, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), urban history, spatial humanities, post-World War II, post-American Civil War

Highlights:

- Historical inquiry into the study of public urban park planning and development.
- Use of GIS tools to analyze historical sources, especially atlases and maps, to reveal people's perceptions, uses, and regulations of space as well as highlights experiences of place.
- Challenges the assumption that parks are automatically beneficial to the public.

1. Introduction

It is a common understanding that accessing nature physically benefits one's health, rendering the perception of public urban parks as inherently good spaces for a community (Tisma et al. 2022). Yet, at the same time, many public parks also carry stigmas associated with nighttime violence and social misconduct (cf. New York City's Central Park in the mid- to late twentieth century (Zimmer et al. 2016, p. 4)). This is not a novel revelation: in 1961, urban theorist Jacobs challenged prevailing views and described this contradiction, arguing that parks, like many other public places, are socially and politically produced and continuously influenced by people (1992, pp. 89, 92).

This paper draws on theories of space and place and applies a historical lens to the contemporary idea that parks intrinsically benefit the public. City planners often used positive connotations of parks to socially engineer displacement, expropriation, exclusion, and regulation thus applying "normative considerations" to the built environment (Noll & Bhar, 2023, p. 85). We argue that the characterization of parks as revitalizing was significantly used in post-war societies to foster specific codes of conduct and enforce barriers of access over who could and could not use certain parks. This restorative angle is worthy of deeper thought and discussion. In both case studies presented here of Richmond, U.S., (ca. 1865 – 1880s), and Hamburg, DE, (ca. 1945 – 1970s), local planners and stakeholders used restorative ideas of public parks to physically rebuild their cities, bolster their tourism economies, manage certain populations, and contend with prevailing social and political issues. In Richmond, the creation of Chimborazo Park displaced and excluded an African American (Black) community during the aftermath of the Civil War, while Hamburg's Alsterpark was created within the city's general post-World War II greening initiatives which included forced expropriation of wealthy landowners and regulated the social behavior of park visitors. Constructed in two different time periods and countries, both parks were similarly created under the justification of parks as restorative spaces yet operated as sites of contestation and ideology during moments of political and social reform.

Parks' social meanings and political uses have changed over time. Architect and sociologist Cranz argues there were five types of parks created in the U.S. at different times with each based on a specific "social goal" defined by "promoters" who had certain "beneficiaries" in mind, such as reform parks between 1900 – 1930 for working class Americans, and "recreation facilities" spanning 1930 – 1965, whose description overlap with the case of Hamburg's post-World War II parks (2004, p. 103). This park typology is a useful framework to study parks beyond the U.S. and can be applied to study the development of park politicization as a global phenomenon. Urban park construction in Australia, India, and Turkey, for example, witnessed and, at times, reproduced social and political contestation such as displacement and exclusion based on race and class – similar to the case studies of the U.S. and Germany presented here (cf. Waitt and Knobel, 2018; Zimmer et. al. 2016; Erensü and Karaman, 2017). Today, park creation and governance remain steeped in power relations, where issues of access and inclusion are constantly negotiated.

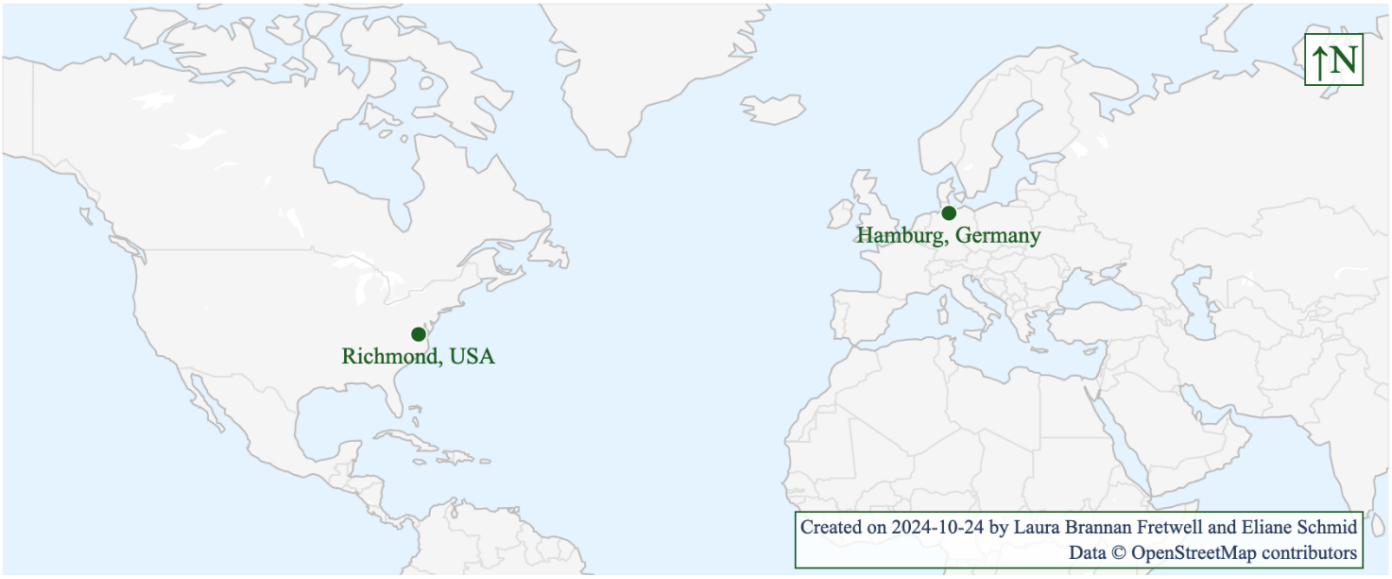

Figure 1. Overview map of the two case studies in Richmond, Virginia, U.S. and Hamburg, DE.

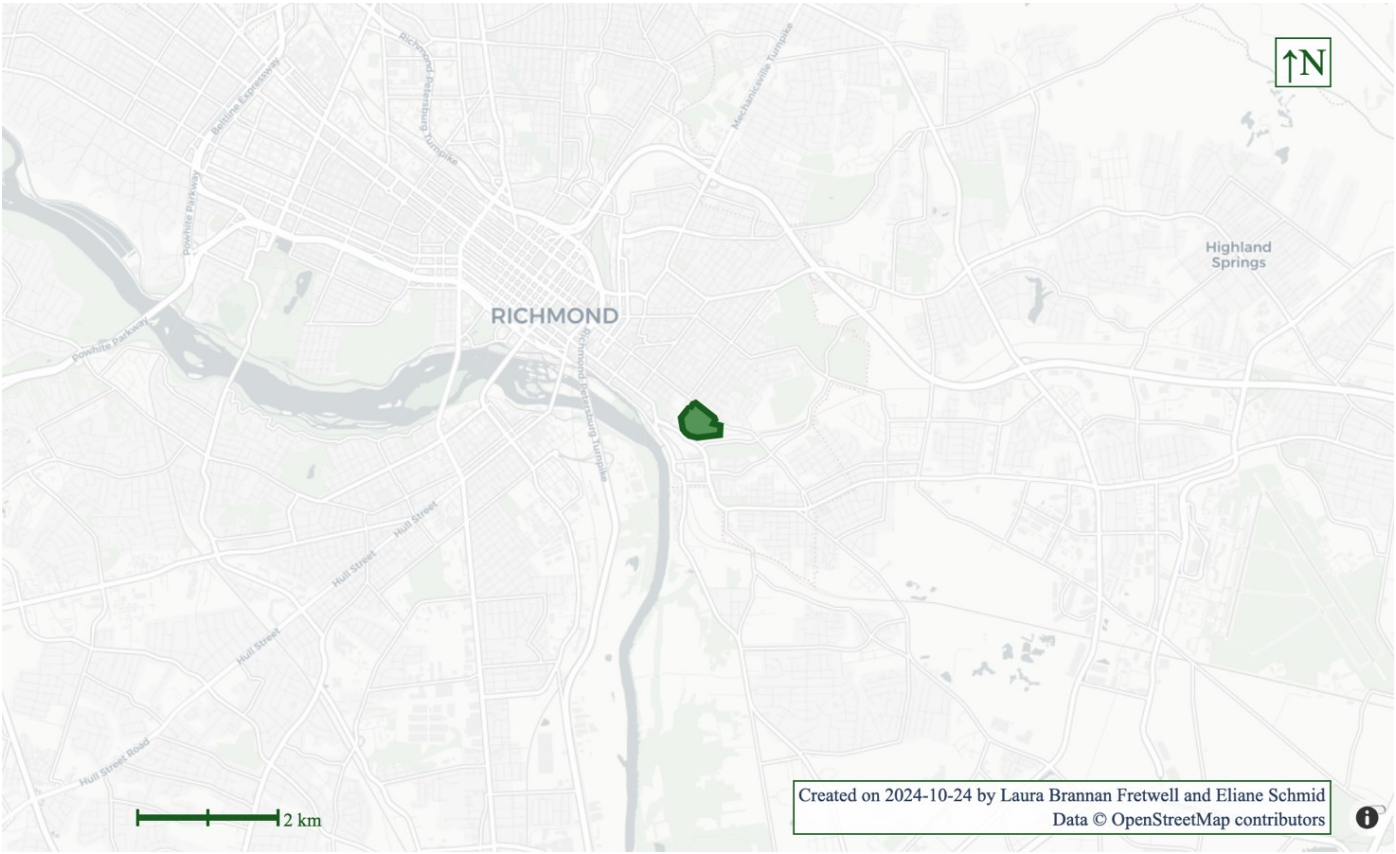

Figure 2. Overview map of Richmond with Chimborazo Park's area marked in green.

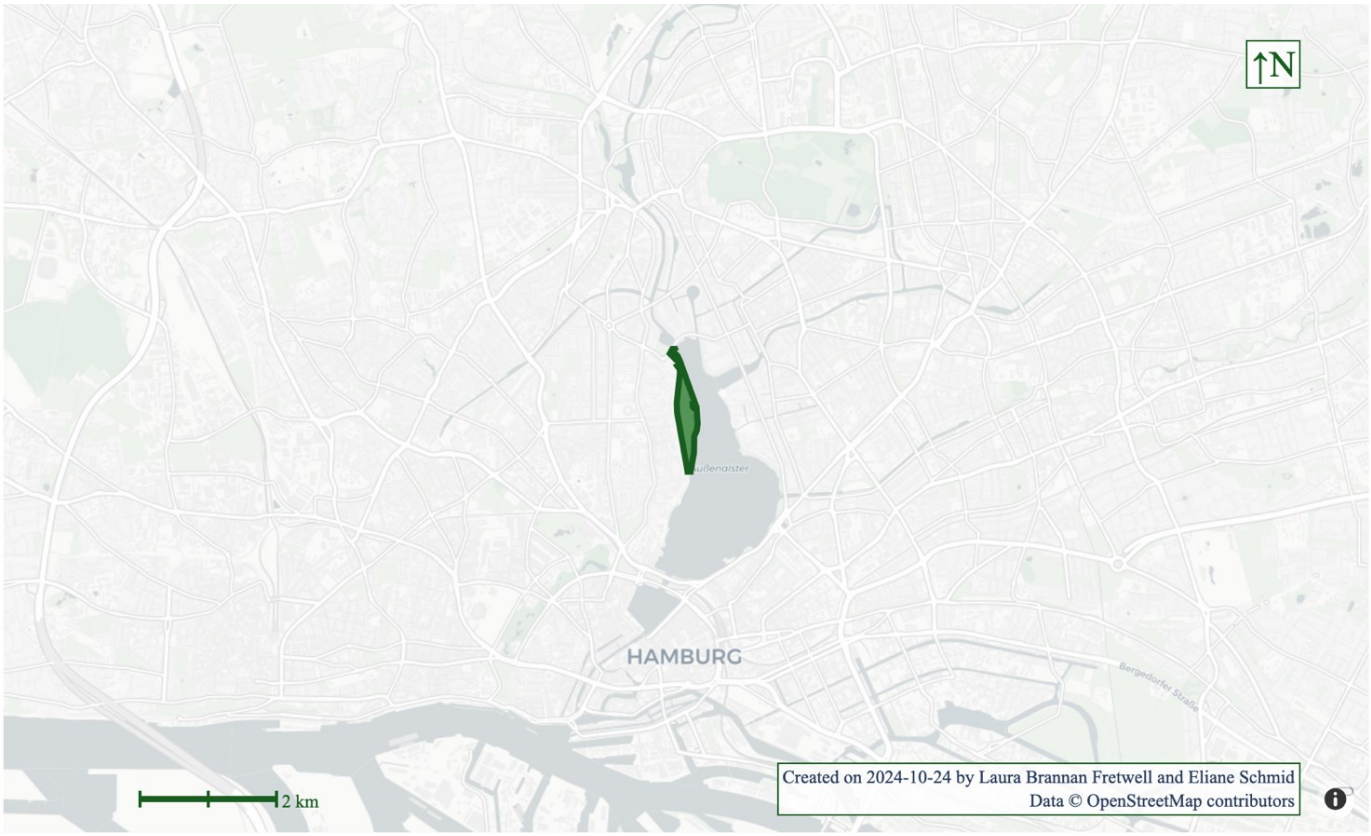

Figure 3. Overview map of Hamburg with Alsterpark's area marked in green.

To understand the historical design and use of the physical sites of Chimborazo Park and Alsterpark, we apply spatial humanities methods by synthesizing discourse and spatially situating our research via GIS modeling. Drawing on spatial theories, GIS methods, and historiographies around park building and post-war societies, this paper provides an approach for studying and analyzing complex layers of urban park histories. It also contributes to urban planning studies in providing examples of how to understand historical discourse around public spaces.

This study is limited in its geographic reach and scope by the primary source material collected mainly in the municipal archives of Richmond and Hamburg. Nonetheless, the authors aim to balance these local foci by providing a model for comparative research to uncover long-lasting trends across continents and rethink contemporary spatial concepts such as the public benefit of parks. To this end, the paper uncovers the social and political experiences of two public parks promoted as restorative.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Historical Overview of Public Urban Park Development

Public urban parks developed in the U.S. and Europe specifically in response to changes in living conditions, including mass urbanization and public health issues. In seventeenth century Europe, prior to the Age of Enlightenment, parks, as enclosed green spaces, were reserved mainly for the wealthy and connected to their estates. A few exceptions included Jardin du Luxembourg and Jardin des Tuileries in Paris, FR, that were open to upper class visitors during this time (Picon, 2024, pp. 44–86; Clark, 2006, p. 1; Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992, p. 4). Green spaces became public in the eighteenth century when the dismal living conditions in Western European cities deteriorated to the point where the higher echelons of society could no longer ignore the outbreaks of diseases and contaminated water supply. This period was marked by Enlightenment thinkers who conceptualized urban nature as both hygienic and civic (Picon, 2024, pp. 48-50, 68). Concurrently, in the British North American colonies, public squares and spaces often served as a "commons" which were "held by the community for shared utilitarian purposes" such as grazing cattle and militia drills (Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992, p. 4).

With rapid industrialization in the nineteenth century, leaders urgently advocated for implementing green spaces throughout cities. Paris' bourgeoisie in the early and mid-nineteenth century significantly sought to "reform the health of the urban subject" and maintain the moral and social order via parks and other planning measures (Park, 2018, p. 6). In the mid-nineteenth century U.S., Central Park in New York City and Golden Gate Park in San Francisco were built akin to Europe's developments (Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992; Cranz, 1982, p. 4). Over the course of the century, parks became associated as an antidote to increasing urbanization. By the 1880s, reformers in the U.S. were concerned about "psychological stress and the commercialization of culture of the new industrialized city" and thus parks more widely served as vehicles to reform the middle class and later the working class throughout the country (Cranz, 1980, p. S80). The twentieth century saw urban greening in direct response to industrialization, rapid urban growth, destructions after the two World Wars in the case of Europe, and "urban decay" in the U.S., due to "White flight" and the social political revolutions of the 1960s, as well as a general environmental consciousness awakening by the 1960s on both continents. According to Cranz, the twentieth century was the era of "reform parks" in the first three decades followed by the idea of parks as "recreation facilities" until the mid-1960s (1982).

2.2. Post-War Contextualization

In the U.S., historians characterize the post-war period after the American Civil War as the Reconstruction era, when Americans attempted to reconstruct and socially and politically rebuild a unified nation, mostly through federal intervention across the American South from 1865 – 1877. Parks that were created during or just after this period were products of their broader socio-political post-war contexts. Local White leaders faced the arduous task of rebuilding their economies, as slavery's demise meant the end of free Black labor. Leaders also contended with unwanted social and political changes brought on by the Union's victory: African Americans were newly emancipated from slavery and granted full citizenship. Scholarship has mostly centered on social, military, or political history, but only recently have cultural historians emphasized the important role of the built environment in facilitating power relations during this time (Gallo, 2021, p. 9; Cardon, 2018; Hillyer, 2014). Shortly after Reconstruction, urban segregation became more widespread throughout the North and the South, known as the Jim Crow era after the U.S. Supreme Court *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896. This law codified segregation by race; African Americans were legally excluded from public spaces, including parks designated as White, and prohibited from living in neighborhoods designated as White through covert discriminatory housing ordinances (Rothstein, 2019; Silver, 1984).

The post-World War II era marked a significant shift in urban development and social policy, particularly in Europe. While many European towns and cities were struggling to combat the housing crisis post-1945, they also wanted to restore a sense of normalcy and order as quickly as possible (Yates, 2019, p. 1085; Voldman, 2023, pp. 87-90). This is where parks played a valuable role. The roots of this transformation can be traced back to the late nineteenth century when Ebenezer Howard proposed the Garden City plan as a means of organizing neighborhoods, especially for factory workers and their families, where nature was the starting point to an urban development (Irani, 2022, pp. 76, 78, 82; Jacobs, 1992, p. 17). Howard's vision influenced city planners for decades, including modern architects in the early to mid-twentieth century such as Le Corbusier's 'Ville Radieuse' (Noll & Bhar, 2023, p.85; Jacobs, 1992, p. 22). Le Corbusier's ideas, outlined in his 1940s "Charte d'Athènes", emphasized hygiene, comfort, and access to outdoor spaces and nature. Both Howard and Le Corbusier claimed to create better social living conditions, advocating for dense housing with shared green or open spaces nearby, embracing ideals of sun, air, and light as elements of a pragmatic and architecturally modern standard of living – idea(l)s which also permeated North American, Japanese, French, and German i.a. urban planning (cf. Le Corbusier ,1973; Irani, 2022, pp. 82-84). However, these theories received considerable criticism from urban theorists like Jane Jacobs, who argued that they did not fully consider the complexity, diversity, and needs of urban citizens (Jacobs, 1992, pp. 18-19, 23, 289).

The early to mid-twentieth century in Europe and the U.S. was shaped by the welfare state (de Swan, 1988, pp. 203-204, 217). The welfare state was a top-down approach to reshaping cities and addressing social challenges. Urban planners and policymakers sought to combat housing crises while restoring order, often implementing functional zoning (Harvey, 1990, p. 68; Brouwer, & Verlaan, 2013, p. 52). The provision of green spaces was part of this thinking, simultaneously linked to an awareness of climate change particularly pronounced from the 1960s onwards (Irani, 2022, p. 88; Galvani et al., 2020, pp. 24, 26). This background remains informative for the role of public parks and social control imposed by regional and national policies today.

2.3. Space and Place

Space, place, and geography are socially constructed, politically imagined, and historically contingent concepts (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 26; Massey, 1994; Anderson, 1991; Winichakul, 1994; McKittrick, 2006). Distinguishing between space and place, Tuan writes:

> What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value. […] The ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. (2002, p. 6)

Applying this notion to the study of public parks, this paper's research shows how restorative discourse around parks influenced social and political construction of those places and physical constructions on those sites, which prompted discussions and anxieties over the use of subsequently open green spaces within the parks. In both case studies, planning documents, petitions, and local press coverage about park construction plans helped stakeholders imagine the possibilities of Chimborazo Park and Alsterpark (Anderson, 1991). Linking this to Tuan, the sites thus became ideologically "secure" and "stable" and endowed with "value", which influenced both the physical (re-)constructions of these "spaces" and the ensuing political debates of use and "misuse". In addition, Massey argues that society dictates the use and perception of spaces and vice versa and thus, "the social relations of space are experienced differently, and variously interpreted, by those holding different positions" (1994, pp. 3, 24). Power relations deeply influenced spatial experiences of both parks in this study, especially in terms of race and class. For instance, influenced by post-war politics, city leaders created Chimborazo Park, which displaced poor African Americans, and Alsterpark, which expropriated the rich.

3. Methods

This paper draws on conceptual spatial humanities frameworks and GIS software QGIS and ArcGIS Online to aid historical research of public parks' political power structures and to track their developments over time. This method, combined with primary source criticism, helped the authors formulate an argument about how discourse around public urban parks as restorative locations were products of their political contexts. Since the spatial turn of the 1980s, GIS methods gained popularity in the humanities, adopted specifically in historical research in the 1990s (Kemp, 2009, p. 16; Gregory & Ell, 2007, p. 1). The layering and transformation of spatial information, typically used for digital mapping, georeferencing, and data analysis, offers ways to evaluate historical data and construct new arguments (Wheatley & Gillings, 2005, pp. 1, 8). The authors here used GIS tools to study historic maps in conversation with archival textual sources about park construction and planning; mainly, GIS facilitated the overlaying, annotating, and re-drawing of new layers, which provided new insights for investigating historical questions about park creation and land use.

For our cases of Chimborazo Park and Alsterpark, which were created under restorative ideals, we asked how park planning was politicized, what was on site before the park was constructed, and how nearby residents were affected by park construction and ideals of revitalization. We first researched documents created during park construction authored by planners and local stakeholders such as newspaper articles, petitions, park designs, historic maps, and atlases at local archives and state libraries (Library of Virginia and Staatsarchiv Hamburg) and accessed geographic and demographic information from online databases (Ancestry.com and Geoportal Hamburg). Then we engaged in a cyclical process of reading and analyzing textual sources and historic maps by overlaying them in GIS software, and annotating and re-drawing new layers accordingly. We

answered our hypothesis about park planning based on the source evidence gathered and analyzed through these processes, and formulated arguments accordingly (cf. figure 4).

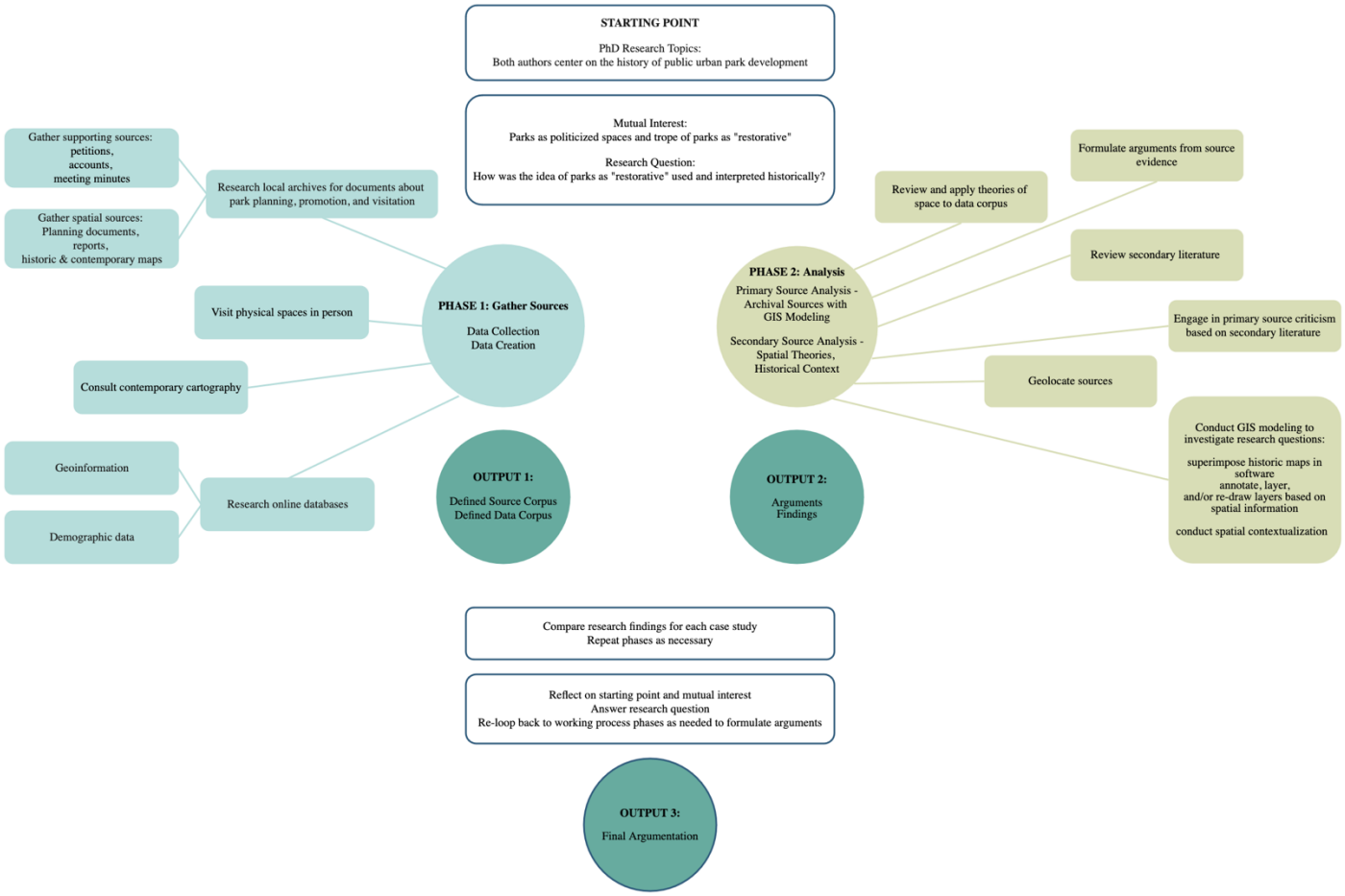

Figure 4. Flowchart explaining the work process of the authors.

4. Case Studies

4.1. Post-Civil War Park Construction at Chimborazo Hill, Richmond, Virginia (U.S.)

At the end of the American Civil War in the spring of 1865, Richmond, Virginia, was war-torn due to civilian loss, increased refugees, and most of the downtown district destroyed by fire. Richmond served as the former capital of the Confederate States of America (South) that fought to preserve the system of slavery against the United States of America (North), which sought to emancipate enslaved African Americans. After the War in Richmond, local Black citizens participated in the new political Republican Party, much to the chagrin of the White leaders who were attempting to adapt to political changes and military occupation while rebuilding the city economically (Gallo, 2021, p. 27; Randolph, 2003, pp. 83-88). The Union Army occupied Richmond from 1865 – 1870 to carry out Reconstruction directives, but in 1869, the same year petitions for Chimborazo Park circulated, White conservatives regained control of the city and state government. Politically, White "home rule" or "redemption" prevailed, which facilitated White control over public spaces and systemic curbing of Black political power (Chesson, 1981, pp. 87-88). Though Virginia rejoined the Union in 1870 and federal military intervention left the state, Reconstruction goals of providing political rights and safety to African Americans and People of Color did not go as far as they ought to have in this period (Foner, 1989; Blight, 2002; Downs, 2015).

Chimborazo Hill was one site in Richmond that was a microcosm for these social and political tensions in the post-Civil War era. As early as 1869, local Whites, motivated by racial and class-based issues, argued Chimborazo Hill was an ideal site for a public park. The hill was initially called "Chimborazo" in the 1830s after what was believed the tallest volcano in the world at the time in central Ecuador (Green, 2004, p. 8).[1] The hill area was east of the city limits, ca. 14.16 ha and formerly hosted a Confederate hospital for hundreds of patients and medical staff (Green, 2004, pp. 10, 46-48, 153). By the end of the War, Union troops occupied Richmond and took possession of the hospital. Initially, the Union Army's Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands set up a depot and school to educate hundreds of newly freed African Americans of all ages. Within a few months, almost two thousand newly freed people lived and took refuge in the abandoned hospital buildings (Green, 2004, p. 147). For over a decade, many Black residents worked, played, and formed schools, families, and churches on Chimborazo Hill.

[1] During the antebellum era, Chimborazo Hill was allegedly used for local cattle grazing close to a "dueling ground" ("Chimborazo – What It Is", 1871; Morgan, 1849).

The Black neighborhood thrived despite moments of inter- and intra-racial violence of the tumultuous Reconstruction era – much to the annoyance of their poor White neighbors. Mary A. Lorton, a White Confederate soldier's widow and neighbor, strongly vocalized her grievances. In 1869, she petitioned unsuccessfully to the local city council with three other neighbors for tax abatement. She stated:

> We are cut off from the city by a deep ravine […] We have a negro camp in front of us […] there is no protection for the honest white or black population. Consequently our property is almost valueless. (Lorton, 1869)

Two years later, over 300 White property holders joined Lorton in a petition to the city council that requested the construction of a park at Chimborazo Hill. They also wanted to fill in the nearby Bloody Run ravine to access Broad Street, which Lorton had complained about previously (Citizens of Richmond, ca. 1871). Two years later, two more petitions were presented to the city council, and the last one included over 1,000 signatures, arguing a park would increase nearby property values ("Public Parks", 1872; "Chimborazo as a Public Park", 1874). Most petitions equated the neighborhood of freed people with decreased property values and implied it needed to be cleaned up. The increase of petitioners over time indicates a growing White cross-class coalition justifying a park under class- and race-based motivations, as the last petition included notably more "prominent property holders" according to the local newspaper ("Chimborazo Park", 1871).

Figure 5 showcases the proximity of some park petitioners' property holdings (yellow parcels) to the Black neighborhood on Chimborazo Hill (green polygon). The author geolocated petitioners in ArcGIS Online after overlaying Beers' 1877 atlas, provided by the Library of Virginia, then annotated and re-drew new layers matching names transcribed from petitions at the Library of Virginia. The petitioners' locations suggest the significance of local White motivations, investment, and influence over the idea of converting Chimborazo Hill into a city park. Some petitioners lived very close to the freed community, especially Mary A. Lorton (grey polygon) and Martha Ellington (blue polygon). Bloody Run (blue line) location was geolocated by overlaying Morgan's 1849 topographical map, digitized by the Library of Virginia, in ArcGIS Online and tracing the ravine. Some petitioners held property very close to the ravine, hence why they hoped a park project could help fill it in. These residents were certainly some of the most influential people in establishing the park, as the city council initially approved the park plan shortly after residents presented the petition of over 1,000 signatures (Gallo, 2021, p. 52; "…Motions, Resolutions, and Orders", 1874).

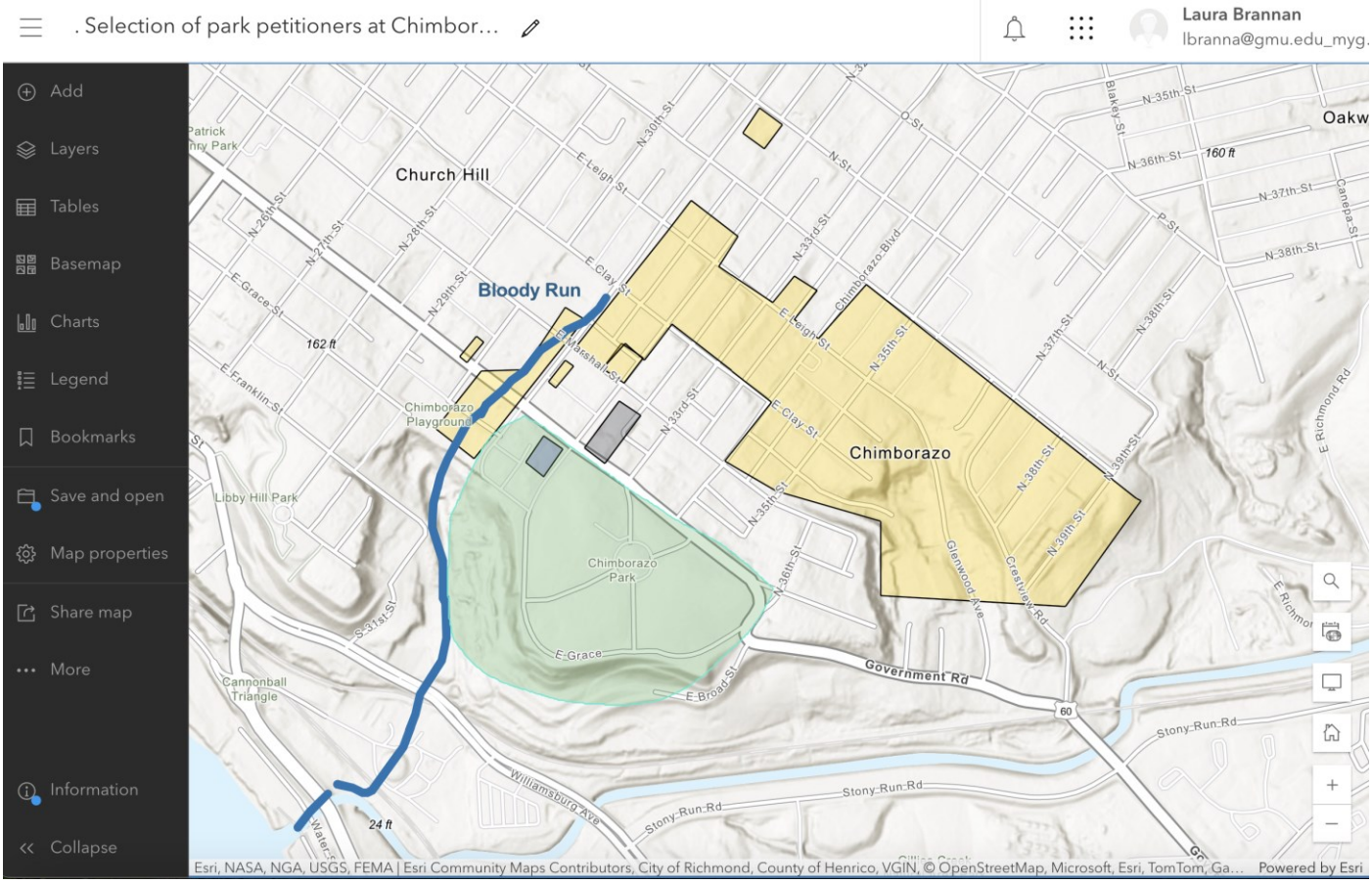

Figure 5. Selection of park petitioners at Chimborazo Hill, 1874 – 1877. Courtesy of Library of Virginia. Geodata is open access on ArcGIS Online https://arcg.is/1qLPiW1. Note: Park petitioners' places of residences are represented by the yellow parcels, with Mary A. Lorton's property marked in grey and Martha Ellington's property is the blue polygon. Bloody Run is annotated in blue, and Chimborazo Hill is marked in green (Morgan, 1849; Beers, 1877).

Given widespread anti-Black sentiment in the post-war South, it is not surprising Whites wanted to rid the area of Black neighbors – but what was surprising is that they succeeded through calling for a park during this period (Rosen, 2009). Rabinowitz claims in major cities across the post-war South, White citizens petitioned their local governments to raze Black "shanties", but nearly all were redeveloped as sites for new housing or economic production (1980, pp. 101, 124). Chimborazo Hill was an abnormal case during this time where residents specifically requested a public park to replace an all-Black area. This was also a rare example where local citizens collectively and proactively advocated for a park deeply tied within their post-war context.

Residents and city leaders used common park rationales about revitalization to support their cause, including arguments about increased tourism and economic improvement. One supporter hoped that Chimborazo Park may be so popular "[of] which Central Park itself might envy" ("Chimborazo Park", 1871). The success of New York City's Central Park helped establish the national idea that park building increased property values; this became a typical mindset for city boosters and residents in the late nineteenth century U.S. (Gallo, 2021, p. 10).[2] Proponents also argued that a park could draw tourists and investors, fitting rhetoric of the "New South" movement where city leaders promoted urban industrialization (Hillyer, 2014). These economic motivations, combined with local anti-Black sentiment, helped justify the proposal.

Newspapers reveal arguments that a park would specifically improve the physical appearance of the Chimborazo Hill area, which was a direct response to the racial politics of the time. Many lamented the "current" physical condition of the Black community as "unattractive", a "blight upon the city", and part of "a ragged and desolate hill" ("Chimborazo Park", 1874a; "Chimborazo as a Public Park", 1874; "Chimborazo Park – What It Is and What It Might Be Made", 1871). The association of parks as open, green spaces "were intended to mimic or improve nature, to present idealized nature so arranged as to disguise human intervention" (Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992, p. 4). Petitioners claimed Black residences obscured scenic views and diminished access to the site's natural resources, thus, the hill was in an unnatural state that needed improvement. The solution, then, was to restore the space and clear the land to disguise proof of any habitations to make it appear what one thought was its natural or uninhabited state. This raised the moral stakes of Chimborazo Park as a project to restore the site to its seemingly original self of uninhabited open space – reflecting the larger racial politics of what Chesson determined as the "spirit of [White] restoration" (1981, pp. 87-88). White citizens called for a restoration of White "natural" order at Chimborazo by 1871, much like the White return of political power in the city and state governments in 1869 (Tarter, 2020, p. 284; Rabinowitz, 1980, p. 259).

Like other nineteenth century urbanist thinkers, proponents of Chimborazo Park articulated parks as intrinsically virtuous projects with "democratic" and "restorative" effects (Gallo, 2021, pp. 3, 9; Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992, p. 9). This idea was so common that one petition stated, "the purposes of a Public Park are apparent to all" (Citizens of Richmond, ca. 1871). By the early 1870s, there were only several public green spaces throughout the city, which were either near downtown or included lager beer gardens, neither of which "fill[ed] the void" that was expressed in the first public call for Chimborazo Park. The anonymous author argued, "There is a longing in the public mind for fresh air, blue sky, grass, trees, and flowers […] where the wives and children of hard-working mechanics can find relief from their monotonous life […]" ("Chimborazo Park", 1871). Later in council debates over the park proposition, a city alderman agreed, "The opening [of parks is a] question of great public benefit – a real health measure, conferring a blessing on the humblest and poorest citizens […]" ("Board of Aldermen", 1874). Using phrases like refinement, relief, and progress, advocates projected their desires to use Chimborazo Park as a tool of social reform, but under the pretenses that it would serve the "public" and "common good" by providing leisure and restoration to benefit working class families (Gallo, 2021, p. 9). However, the language of parks as a "common" site of leisure and relief, when read with a critical eye, helped create an alibi for local Whites to benefit financially, socially, and geographically from a park by demolishing the current Black neighborhood on site.

Even though Chimborazo Hill was cleared, the Black community protested displacement and did not completely disappear from the area as their White neighbors might have desired (Richmond Common Council, 1877). Examining city directories by address and race and tracing them on Beer's 1877 georeferenced historic atlas of the same year reveals that several linear blocks of 90% or over of Black residents developed about 0.8 kilometers north of Chimborazo Hill, which drew more Black residents later in the twentieth century (cf. figure 6) (Virginia business directory, 1877; Virginia business directory, 1879; Rabinowitz, 1980, p. 107). For instance, Reverend Scott Gwathmey, former Chimborazo Hill resident and Reverend of Fourth Baptist Church that worshiped on the hill in the late 1860s, owned multiple properties north of the park (represented as pink parcels) and rented some properties out to other Black residents in the 1880s (Virginia business directory, 1877; Virginia business directory, 1879).

The city opened Chimborazo Park by the 1880s and the park was mostly used by White residents, as an 1859 city law that barred African Americans from using public squares continued until the Civil Rights Act of 1964. But African Americans visited the park at times despite legal segregation, as some visited for work as groundskeepers or nannies accompanying White children (Potterfield, 2009, p. 71). In 1896, a local Black newspaper *The Richmond Planet* advertised a show in the park, stating, "the new [street]cars…ha[ve] made [Chimborazo Park] a pleasant place of recreation" ("On the Chimborazo", 1896). Though this does not reveal the full extent of visitation, it evidences that Black locals used the park for recreation and increasingly so with greater access via streetcar lines. If Black residents traveled across town to use the park, those who lived nearby within walking distance undoubtedly also visited it. This suggests Black visitors perceived and desired to access green spaces despite official regulatory measures of exclusion.

Overall, the creation of Chimborazo Park embodies the different complexities inherent to the Reconstruction era of the American South, especially the struggles over access to private and public space and political debates over democracy, citizenship, and power. While White power was "redeemed" and regained politically in the city and the state of Virginia by 1870, it was physically "redeemed" through the legal establishment and built environment of Chimborazo Park. Though they protested, Black residents were displaced and legally excluded from the park once it opened in the 1880s. Yet they persisted and maintained a community north of the park and visited the park despite exclusionary laws. This historical evidence of displacement throws the idea of the "restorative" qualities of the landscape into relief and de-mystifies the assumption that the park was automatically free for all to use. Chimborazo Park was not inherently good for all neighbors but rather reproduced prevailing social and political tensions in displacing and excluding a Black neighborhood for the socioeconomic and racial benefit of local Whites. These complex histories, however obscured they are on today's landscape, should be studied to provide a more inclusive history of all members of the public related to the park.

4.2. Post-World War II Park (Re-)Development in Hamburg (DE)

In the aftermath of World War II, Hamburg faced the challenging task of rebuilding its urban landscape after ca. 54% of the city and its housing had been destroyed (Enss & Knauer, 2022, p. 119). In a massive 10-year building boom (1945 – 1955), Hamburg joined the call for modern and efficient building. The planning schemes of the non-profit construction company, Neue Heimat (new home, with the connotation of "homeland"), supported by the German Trade Union Confederation, were driving forces (Kramper, 2008; Lepik & Strobl, 2020). City planners saw apartments as the "key for the future" since they addressed problems of a "technical, economic, socio-political, financial, cultural and ethical" nature

[2] Central Park also set the precedent of using eminent domain for public park construction (Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992, p. 59).

(Steinhäuser, 2019, p. 10). Albert Vietor, businessman and longstanding CEO of Neue Heimat, went as far as calling urban development "spatially located applied social policy" (Steinhäuser, 2019, p. 20). This stance illustrates just how significant it is for scholars to analyze the urban scape to understand how past political and financial stakeholders wished to shape society. The nuclear family was the ideal: a stay-at-home mother, a hard-working, car-driving father, preferably of German descent or well-adapted.

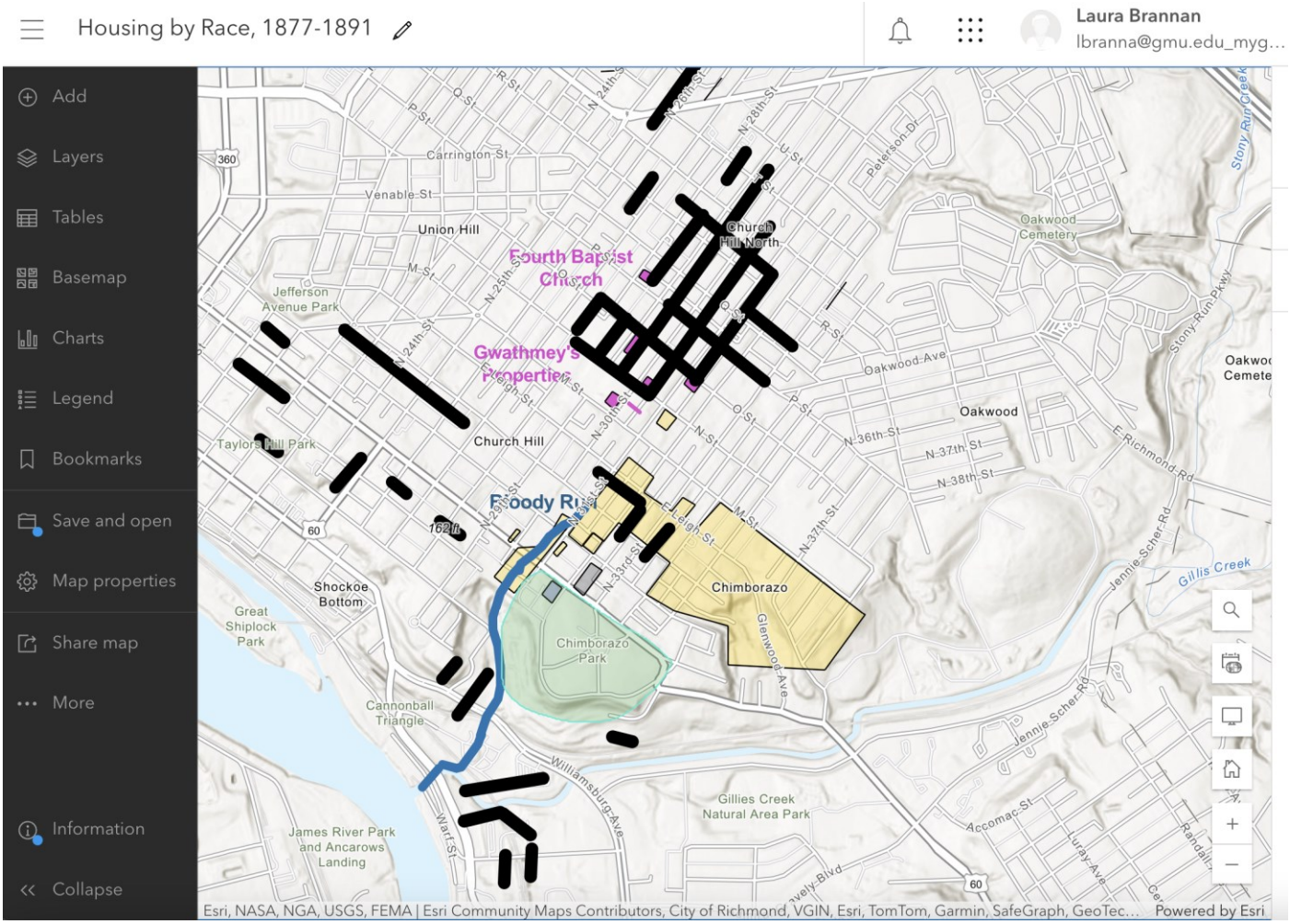

Figure 6. Housing by race, 1877 – 1891. Courtesy of Library of Virginia and Rabinowitz. Geodata is open access on ArcGIS Online: https://arcg.is/1qLPiW1. Note: Former resident Rev. Gwathmey's properties are pink parcels, and Chimborazo Hill marked in green, while thick black lines represent "Linear blocks of 90% or over [of] Black" residents in 1891 (Beers, 1877; Rabinowitz, 1990, p. 107).

Linked to the rebuilding of entire neighborhoods was the reconstruction of so-called "Erholungsgebiete", or restoration areas. City planners and officials regarded green spaces not only as part of the larger restoration scheme of the built environment but also as crucial to the psychological and social well-being of its citizens. At least this is what was promoted in newspaper articles and noted in meeting minutes of the municipal government. Thus, this second case study examines Hamburg during its post-World War II park (re-)development. It highlights the restorative trope that was used time and again by planners, how public parks were a way to impose behaviors and social control on users, as well as how the focus on urban green spaces in Hamburg continues to shape the city's identity as a "green metropolis by the water" (Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg, 2014, p. 7).

Hamburg's public park tradition dates back to the nineteenth century, with the city long priding itself on its abundant greenery – allegedly already in the eighteenth century, foreign visitors noted the city's abundant trees (Hamburger Garten- und Friedhofsamt, ca. 1972, p. 2). However, World War II took a devastating toll on Hamburg's urban landscape, including its green spaces. By 1946, only 30,000 of the 100,000 trees that had lined the streets in 1939 remained standing (Baeumer, 1947; Lüth, ca. 1949, p. 115). In the spring of 1946, the Garden and Cemetery Administration felled an additional 50,000 rm (or stere) of wood from public green spaces for firewood. This was the last large-scale repurposing of space in connection to the War in Hamburg. The same administration subsequently began reforestation efforts and planted approximately one million deciduous and coniferous trees. Children's playgrounds, most of which had also been destroyed, were repaired to keep children away from dangerous rubble (Baeumer, 1947). As early as June 4, 1946, the preservation of public parks, green spaces, and open areas was on the agenda in Senate meetings. Senator Dr. Bucerius emphasized this priority when he stated that there were hardly any other "facilities that are more charitable and social than public parks, green spaces and open spaces" (Bucerius, 1946).

In addition to the great value of green areas for the city of Hamburg from an aesthetic point of view, planning officials constantly reiterated that it was crucial to have access to green spaces for the sake of citizens' health. A presentation to the Senate on March 24, 1947 articulated this perspective: green areas were no longer luxury nor splendor, "but a factor recognized as vital for the health and recreation of the population in

all urban planning and policy in general". "Ornamental green" was to become "utility green," and isolated "green spots" integrated into the entire "urban organism" to create a continuous "green network" serving as the lungs of the city (Lodders, 1947). The metaphor of caring for the city's lungs was dominant and recurring through the late 1940s to late 1960s.

The 1950s saw significant investments in park restoration and expansion. In 1950, Hamburg's budget allocated DM 3,424,900, today ca. €11 million (cf. Deutsche Bundesbank, 2024), for green spaces totaling 1,600 ha (Baeumer, 1951). Between April 1952 and August 1953, the city acquired more than 50 parks and green spaces (Struve, 1953), equaling an additional 148 ha by autumn 1953 (Büch, 1953a). Notable projects included the Elbufergestaltung, the Alsterpark and promenade (city officials lovingly called it "one of Europe's most beautiful waterfronts" (Lüth, ca. 1949, p. 116)) as well as the restoration of existing parks such as Hirschpark, Hesse Park, Goßlers Park, and Baurs Park (Hamburg - Blankenese, 1953). The Elbufergestaltung (re-design of the riverbanks of the Elbe) began in July 1949 and was completed in spring 1953. The result was the vast recreational area called Elbuferpromenade. This walkway connected many large parks, among them Hirschpark (25 ha), Baurs Park (7 ha), the expansive forest parks Bismarckstein, and Polterberg, the Elbhöhenweg with Römischer Garten, and the nature reserve Wittenbergener Heide (Hamburg - Blankenese, 1953).

The Alsterpark (ca. 4.8 ha) was completed in 1953 and had transformed the banks of the Aussenalster, Hamburg's inner-city lake-like river, into a public park. The plan for this park was inspired by a 1951 public competition "Mayor for a day", launched by the newspaper *Alsterblatt*. The design included the installation of about 50 German and European sculptures. These sculptures intended to symbolize Hamburg's renewed "openness to the world". Just eight years after the Nazi dictatorship, the Alsterpark was a pet-project of mayor Max Brauer to prove to the people of Hamburg and beyond that the city was successfully rebooting. Brauer wanted to expose citizens to modern, international art, free of charge and in an accessible outdoor setting (Jung, 2013).

The history of Alsterpark is a compelling example of park planning and creation as it shows multiple layers of historical park development and displacement. The area where the Alsterpark was built used to belong to high society members of Hamburg. Since the nineteenth century, bankers, merchants, and people generally considered to be 'old money' had owned summer homes by the riverbank, which was considered a prime location. During the large-scale and devastating air raids (the last and largest one was 'Operation Gomorrah' in July 1943), the eastern part of the city and large harbor areas were almost completely destroyed, while the center area surrounding the Alster, where primarily villas and summerhouses were located, remained unscathed. The damage map (or Schadenskarte) below (figure 7), was commissioned by the city of Hamburg and created under the supervision of chief city planner and NSDAP party member Konstanty Gutschow in 1944, who was in charge of the general redevelopment planning already during the War (Enss & Knauer, 2022, p. 119).

Figure 7. "Hamburg. Zerstörungen des Luftkrieges bis Ende 1943" ["Hamburg. Air raid destructions until the end of 1943"], Konstanty Gutschow. Staatsarchiv Hamburg, 720-1/388-74_413.

The property owners at Harvestehuder Weg 39-41 (part of the area that was to become Alsterpark) did not want to concede their precious land and no consensus was reached between them and the city. This led to the Senate dispossessing several properties for the park. For a prolongation of the promenade along the Alsterpark, an additional three properties were expropriated by the Senate in 1956 after a three-year squabble with the owners (ra., 1956; Amtsleiter, 1956). This act was supported by ”the citizens“ (or Bürgerschaft) (the preparation and information document by the Senate for the building authorities does not state who was part of this group): The Senate should “take all appropriate steps to enable the preparation of the northern part of the Alstervorland for the recreation-seeking population”(Amtsleiter, 1956).

Figure 8 shows a 1940 – 1950 map assemblage of Hamburg. Zooming in (cf. figure 9), the area of privately owned plots of land along the Aussenalster are marked on the map in orange.

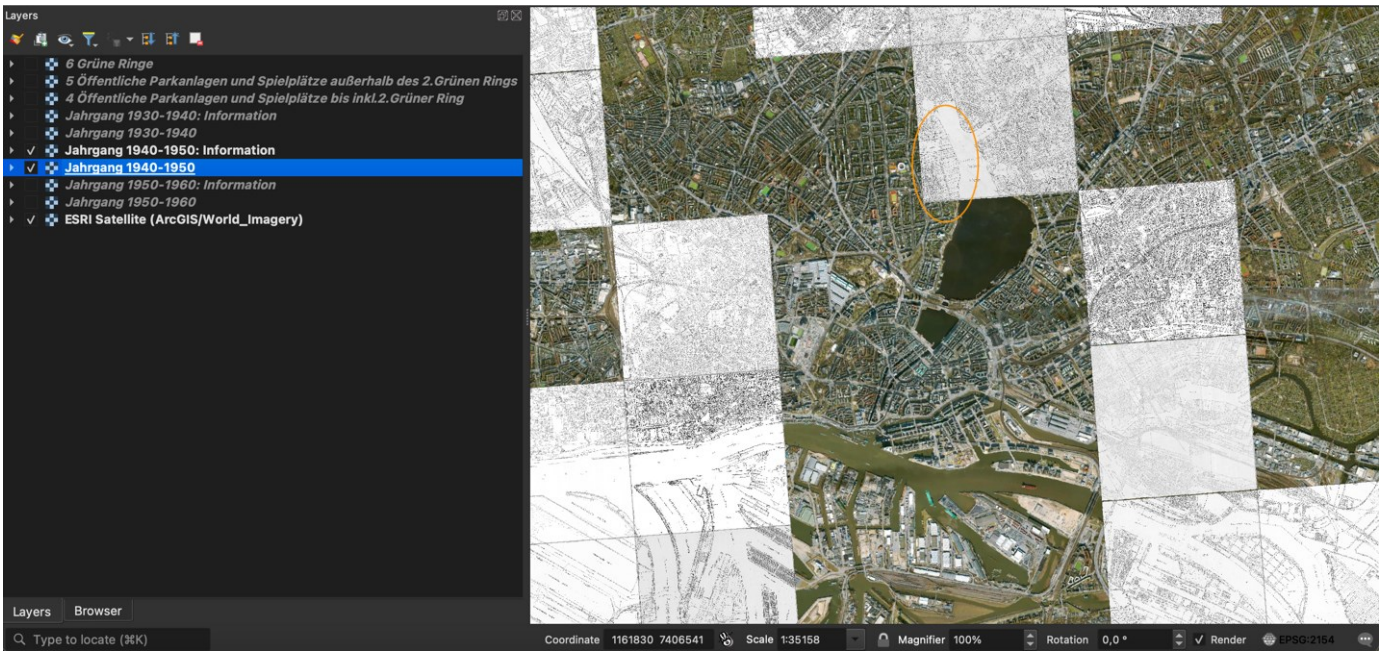

Figure 8. Screenshot of Eliane Schmid’s QGIS workspace, showing map tiles of Hamburg from 1940 – 1950. Courtesy of Landesbetrieb Geoinformation und Vermessung (LGV) Hamburg. Open access on Geoportal Hamburg.

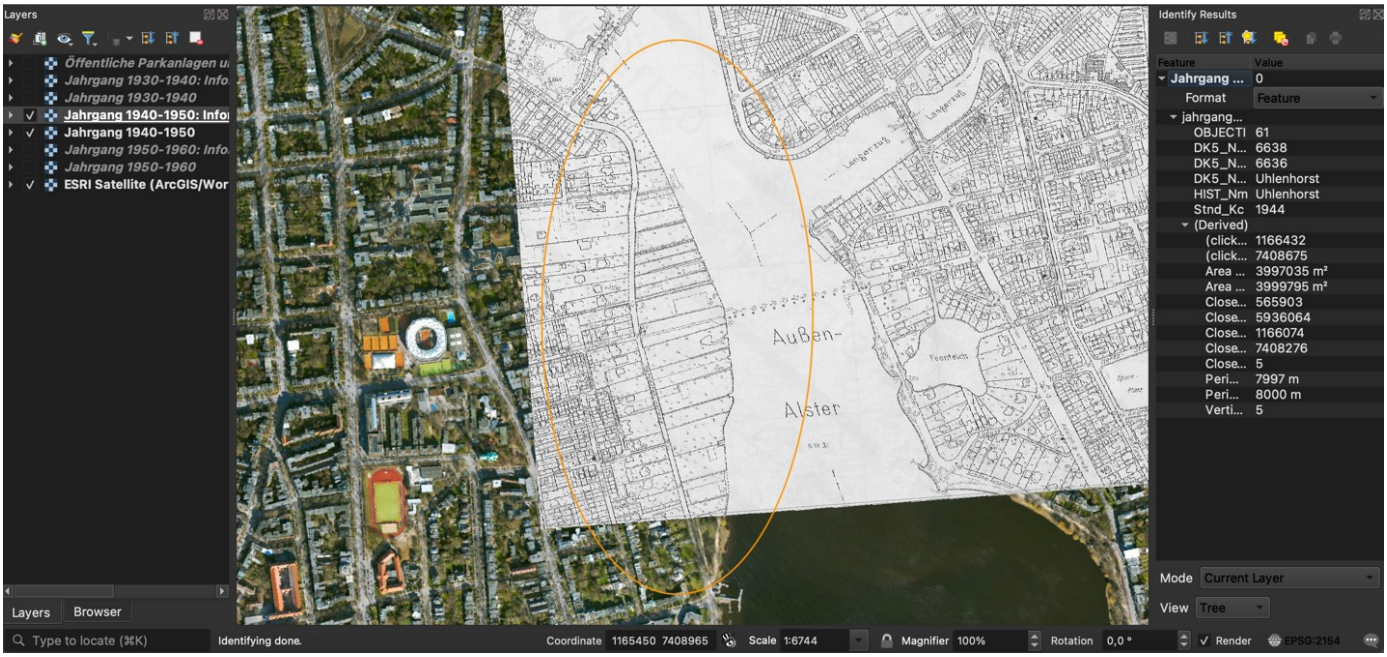

Figure 9. Zooming in on a map tile representing Alsterpark, 1944. Courtesy of LGV Hamburg. Open access on Geoportal Hamburg.

Below, figure 10 is based on map tiles from 1954 and 1956. They show the same area but now without parcels and designated as an urban park area.

Figure 10. Map tiles representing Alsterpark, 1954 and 1956. Courtesy of LGV Hamburg. Open access on Geoportal Hamburg.

Today, the Alsterpark is part of an expansive green network. Following the development over the decades helps us understand how the Alsterpark fits in a larger scheme to support Hamburg's self-identification as an exceptionally green city. The Alsterpark, as figure 11 shows, is embedded in the so-called "green rings" (or Grüne Ringe).

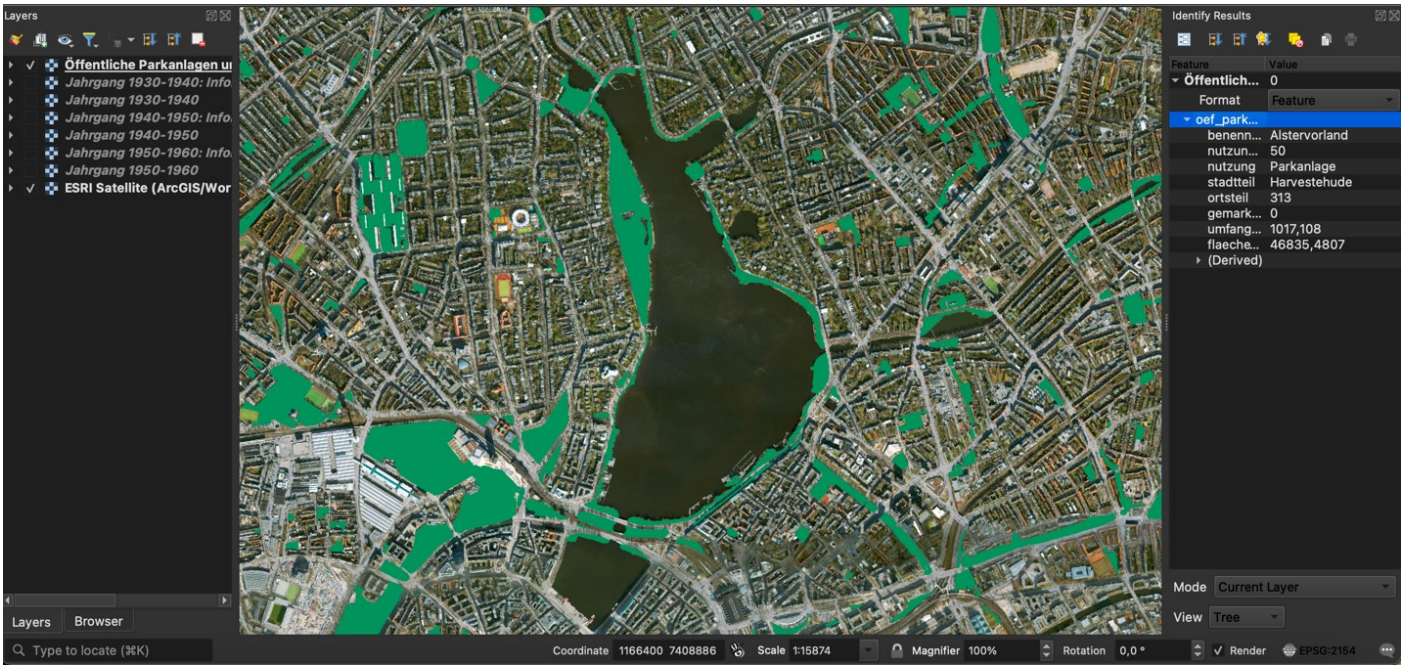

Figure 11. The Alsterpark (or Alstervorland) shown in the context of Hamburg's "green rings". Data for the tiles assembled around 2021. Courtesy of LGV Hamburg. Open access on Geoportal Hamburg.

The substantial efforts in park (re-)creation after the War were developed with some time pressure because Hamburg hosted the International Garden Exhibition (IGA) in 1953. This event represented a moment for the city to showcase both its commitment to green spaces and horticultural excellence, as well as its general, successful urban reconstruction efforts (Jung, 2013). The 1953 IGA was indeed a success. Dr. h.c. Karl Foerster, for example, wrote to the High Senate of Hamburg after the show: "Hamburg is the most visited and world-renowned city in Germany and possesses the best German garden climate!" [sic.] (Foerster, 1953).

Hamburg's park development strategy served multiple purposes beyond urban and environmental restoration. The creation and maintenance of parks provided employment opportunities, particularly for those who had lost their jobs after the War. The Elbufergestaltung, for example, required the city to employ an average of 42 workers during 36 months. The creation of the Elbhöhenweg gave 22 workers jobs for 9 months (Hamburg - Blankenese, 1953). Yet, these numbers should be taken with a grain of salt. They do not effectively add up to a substantial number of jobs, even if all 50 parks built in the immediate post-war reconstruction are considered. Rather, this points to the positive post-war narrative in which the city government strongly engaged. In this sense, the parks were also marketed as spaces for image restoration and served to make Hamburg attractive for tourists and foreign investors thus boosting the economy (Büch, 1953b; Lüth, ca. 1949, p. 116).

Still, the hastily built but well-maintained green areas provided the people of Hamburg with valuable areas for recreation, relaxation, and community gathering, crucial for a population recovering from the traumas of war. Despite the overall positive reception, the park development efforts faced challenges. Instances of vandalism and misuse, particularly in the immediate post-war years, were a constant source of complaint in meetings among regional administrators. Officials noted that citizens had lost their "feeling for care and protection" of these public spaces (Jess, 1952). To address this issue, the city launched initiatives to educate the public via signposts in the parks and encouraged schools to teach children appropriate park conduct (Jess, 1952). They also introduced "pensioner guardians" (or Rentnerwächter) and increased police presence to hand out fines in parks, stop youths playing soccer, deter adults letting their dogs run around without a leash, and prohibit cycling across the grass (Auszug aus der Niederschrift, 1959; Auszug aus der Niederschrift, 1961).

By the mid- to late 1950s and early 1960s, public criticism in newspapers emerged with concerns raised about overcrowded parks on public holidays and the need for more accessible green spaces in densely populated areas. A 1959 newspaper article, published by the right-wing conservative newspaper *Die Welt*, highlighted the importance of nearby green spaces for the "physical and mental health of the population," which emphasized their air-purifying effect (Rücke, 1959). Over a decade later, the metaphor of the lung was repeated, this time by citizens who demanded more green spaces. While government officials previously promoted extensive and rapid park construction, it was now the population that felt a need for an increase in green space access. Yet, since the immediate post-war times, the municipal government was bothered by the perceived misuse (mainly destruction of grass and plants through mindless use) of the public parks (Lüth, ca. 1949, p. 116) and concentrated their efforts on handling this issue now that they had solved the most pressing reconstruction work and the IGA was over. A compromise, at least from the municipal side, was found regarding park use during the summer months. To meet the restorative needs of the population, especially the children, during the summer vacation period, all lawns under the management of the horticultural departments of the district authorities – unless they were newly sown or unsuitable for this purpose due to their size, structure or economic use – were made available as sunbathing and play areas until mid-September (Fisenne, 1955; cl. 1956). This example of park usage and regulation shows the underlying control of the city government. The sources illustrate urban planners' desires to manage how parks were to be used and by whom.

Specifically, in this early reconstruction period (1945 - ca. early 1960s), men planned, created and built Hamburg's city and parks. The plans and narratives presented here stem predominantly from a homogeneous group of primarily male, White, well-educated and/or upper-class actors. Descriptive language, such as in the *Abendblatt* in 1966, leaves no doubt about the identity of park creators and their intended users: "The women of Altona have every reason to rejoice. Men have built them a paradise." The article described a newly built neighborhood in the borough of Altona, complete with a park where mothers could accompany their children (Steinhäuser, 2019, p. 17). Further, in the Hamburg State Archives sources (newspaper articles, meeting minutes, planning documents) consulted for this case study, the term 'green areas' was often collocated with the German word "Erholungsraum". "Erholung" can be translated as rest, recovery, or restoration and has a norm-giving undertone. One of the state archives' folders also carries the caption: "Public green spaces - preservation, expansion and maintenance […]: 'List of public green spaces and recreational facilities (draft by the Building Law Office ca. 1958) 1946-1963'." 'Recreational facilities' comes close to capturing the tone of the German original "Erholungsanlagen" as it conveys the rather rigid tone of institutionalized relaxation. This attention to the terminology used and the wording applied in the sources gives a glimpse into the underlying structures of the large-scale greening projects of the immediate post-war period.

In brief, post-war park development efforts played a crucial role in strengthening Hamburg's identity as a green city whose legacies continue today. The slogan "The Green Metropolis by the Water – Yesterday and Today" proposed by the city in 2014, neatly sums up this ideal, which continues to be used for marketing and political purposes (Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg, 2014, p. 7). In 2022, approximately 3,242 ha of Hamburg's urban area consisted of public green spaces, equaling in ca. 17 m² per resident, making it the greenest city in Germany (hamburg.de, 2024; Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg, 2014, p. 9). For example, the green area per capita (calculated as green area per million people and city population) in 2014 was ca. 2,750 m² per capita in Hamburg and ca. 906 m² per capita in Berlin (OECD, 2018).

Despite the strong narrative of green areas as vital components of public health and the commendable efforts by the city government to invest both labor and money, the case of Hamburg shows that park creation often came with an element of social control and was always embedded in its political context. Hamburg was and still is a politically left city – the fact that the rich were expropriated for the sake of a public park is a salient example of this leaning. Still, the parks were designed for specific activities that were controlled to a certain degree by the layout of the space. When this was not sufficient, measures were taken by the local administrators to introduce guardians that would ensure park visitors followed the rules. This, coupled with the above-mentioned attempts to educate people on park etiquette, the signposts with rules and prohibition remarks, as well as the tone of the leading newspapers that focused solely on the male planners and creators, demonstrate the multiple layers of power plays detectable in public green space planning.

5. Conclusion

Jacobs concluded in her urban study of New York City, "[t]oo much is expected of city parks. Far from transforming any essential quality in their surroundings, far from automatically uplifting their neighborhoods, […]parks themselves are directly and drastically affected by the way the neighborhood acts upon them"; she believed that parks are "not automatically anything" nor can they automatically fix social and ecological problems through their sheer existence (1992, pp. 92, 95). This paper's two case studies exemplify how public parks were not built in direct response to the needs of all urban citizens but often answered to specific political agendas of their commissioners, creators and most powerful stakeholders. Restorative discourse shaped park creation and regulated park use in two diverse post-war urban contexts, and this can be considered in other public park histories and future planning projects. GIS modeling combined with discourse analysis helped uncover the effects of restoration idea(l)s on park beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. By layering historic maps and atlases, we more comprehensively understood and analyzed historical social aspects related to space such as proximity, distance, and land use.

By examining the paths that led to the parks' creations and how this affected visitation and regulation, we shed light on the importance of studying public urban green spaces from the historical perspective of planners and stakeholders. We should interrogate who is implicitly included and excluded in past, present, and future planning projects and strive to create parks that cater to the needs of all citizens and not just a select few. Roe and McCay's "model of 'restorative urbanism'" is inspiring here: "In an increasingly polarized society, urban parks and squares may also contribute to a sense of civic pride and serve as places where anyone, regardless of income, can meet, debate and publicize their causes" (2021, p. 29). Park history encourages us to respect diversity of use when planning for the future (de Miguel Gonzalez, 2019, p. 165). Though many of us think of parks fondly, we are reminded that parks are only "good" for a community if we instill inclusive practices in our daily use, maintenance, and perceptions (Chapman, et al., 2024).

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Acknowledgment: 1. We acknowledge support and feedback from Cassandra Farrell, Dr. Jason Heppler, Janine Hubai, Dr. Alison Landsberg, Caitlin McGeever, and Dr. Sun-Young Park. 2. This research article was submitted to and reviewed by the European Journal of Geography (EJG) and is based on previous work presented (as a talk or poster) at the Spatial Humanities 2024 Conference, held at Otto-Friedrich University of Bamberg, Germany, in September 2024. The conference explored the contributions of geospatial technologies, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), to humanities research, showcasing how these technologies, approaches, and methods expand knowledge within and beyond the digital humanities. We are grateful to the conference organizers and participants for their valuable discussions, and to the journal's anonymous reviewers for their insightful feedback during the assessment of the full article.

Data Availability Statement: The research data used for this article are subject to the respective archives' distribution policies (cf. bibliography). Data used for the overview maps, figures 1-3, is provided by OpenStreetMap contributors. The geodata used in both sections are available open source at https://geoportal-hamburg.de/geo-online/ and https://arcg.is/1qLPiW1.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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