

Using GIS to Analyze the Development of Public Urban Green Spaces in Hamburg and Marseille (1945 - 1973)

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Public urban green spaces are mirrors of societal relations: they reflect the relationship between government officials and urban citizens, labor and recreation, private and public life. Set in the aftermath of WWII and continuing until the First Oil Shock in 1973, this study captures a time of urban restructuring and rebuilding in Western Europe. The focus lies specifically on public parks and playgrounds around the port areas of Hamburg and Marseille.

Key information

There is a specific labor/lifestyle related to port cities. People are in flux. Workers, traders, fishers, tourists, and migrants, to name but a few actors, dock and ship off at a fast pace (cf. Hein, 2021; Harteveld, 2021). What spaces this ethnic and socially diverse group have at their disposition for leisure time, that is free of charge, is crucial to people’s well-being. What kind of spaces the city makes available to people, is telling for what image the city wants to convey and who it wants to welcome.

Why port cities?

Port cities are “often long-standing examples of reliance, bringing opportunities, wealth, and innovation to their nations and their citizens” (Hinman, 2020). But ports are also heavily polluted areas (water, land, air, noise) in need of a positive balance, which is why the relation to public urban green spaces needs to be studied also in connection to what this means for the users.

Approach

Via the study of Hamburg and Marseille’s port areas and the public urban green spaces surrounding them, connections between the green and the blue city (cf. Roe, and McCay, 2021) can be drawn. Theory from history of space, urban and body history, and human geography will be consulted.

Takeaway points

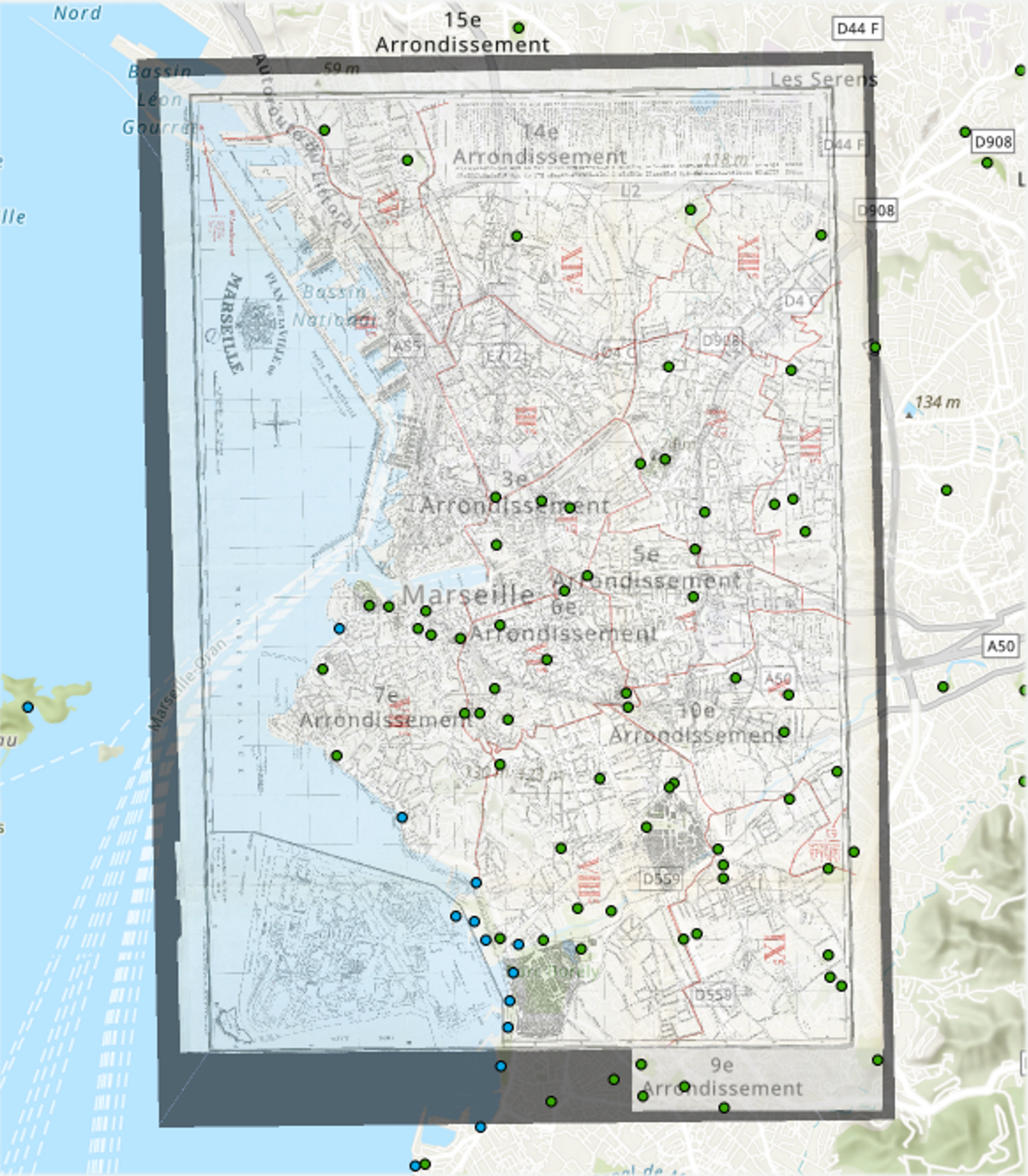
Port cities are understudied. They need to be brought in relation with the development of the cities they are connected to instead of looking at them as standalone phenomena (Hein, 2021: 3). Bringing the blue and the green city together will serve as a new lens to study heavily industrialized, polluted and marginalized (socially and geographically) port areas with prestige-laden and “healthy” green areas.

→Public urban green spaces in port areas provide insight into social dynamics and public policies.

Keywords

Public urban green spaces | port areas | social demography | Marseille | Hamburg | urban planning | GIS | spatial structures | social relations | urban planning schemes

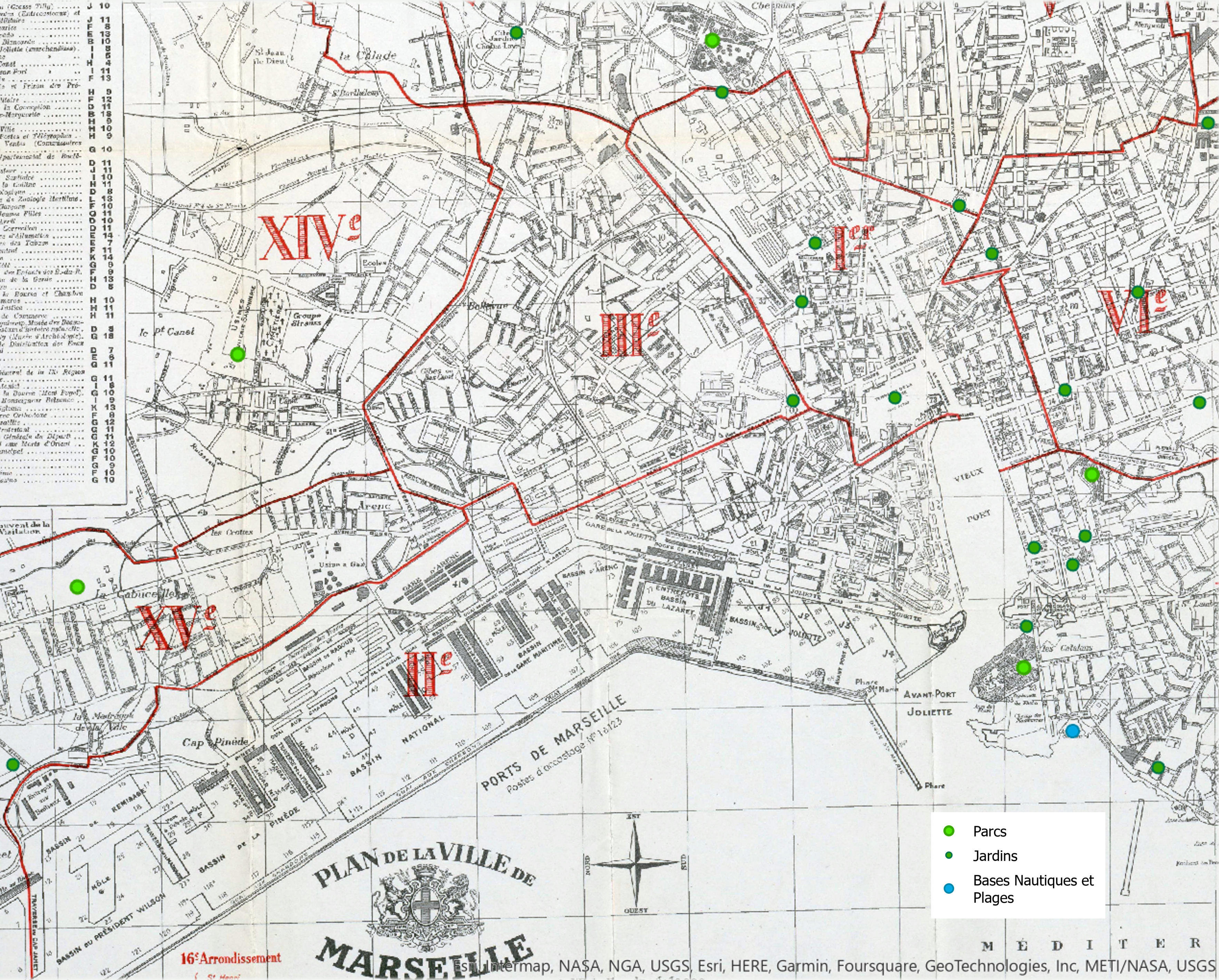
1955 map of Marseille georeferenced | 2018 data of parks/ gardens



Why GIS?

The use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to map the development of public urban green spaces allows this PhD project to visualize when a park came into being, where it was located, and how this is connected to the social status of the users and their vicinity to the port area. In a second step these maps and the queries applied to them will be used as tools of analysis to find out what influence these choices and developments had on the users of the parks and playgrounds. The visualizations will at a later stage also help communicate the project to wider public as the images show the development and the spatial connections in an interactive way. Also, an audience focused more on the results of the research rather than in the methodology behind it shall also be reached (Gregory, and Geddes, eds. 2014, xii). Mapping will enhance the spatial understanding of this project.

1955 map of Marseille with 2018 parks/ gardens: zoom-in on harbor area



What do I want to find out via GIS analysis?

- Distance from port to park
- Accessibility
- Number of parks
- Social demography

Challenges

- Finding, collecting, creating data
- Accuracy of historical maps
- Transferring data from sources to GIS – creating geodatasets
- “creating meaningful visualization“ that “actually contributes to historical research” (Gregory, and Geddes, eds. 2014, xii-xiii).

Questions

- How do you recommend creating informative maps for historical analysis?
- What parameters should be considered?
- What programs/ tools could help with this GIS analysis?

Primary Sources:

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