Gardens of Earthly Delights: a comparative analysis of historic and contemporary parks' realisation of design intentions

Master's thesis of Oscar Vaessen

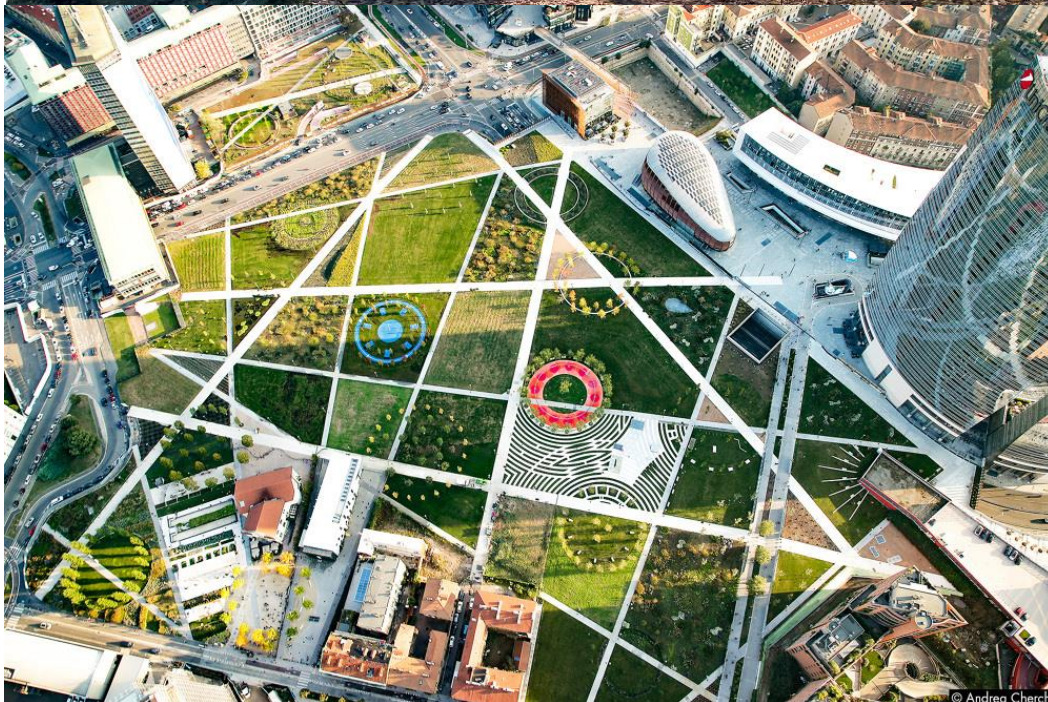*Rijksuniversiteit Groningen – MSc Society, Sustainability and Planning – 24-3-2022*

Figure 1 & 2: Giardini Indro Montanelli & Biblioteca degli Alberi. Images by author &Andrea Cherchi (Inside Outside, 2018).

Abstract

This thesis compares two parks in Milan: the Giardini (*Gardens*) Indro Montanelli, constructed back in 1784, and the BibliotecadegliAlberi (*Library of Trees*), opened in 2018. The research is comprised of an in-depth qualitative review of both parks along a variety of factors, wherein the parks form the comparative material for each other's respective analyses. For the theoretical framework, theory about the production of space and the relationship between design intentions, realised design and user experience is outlined, and a historic overview of park design paradigms' development is developed, from the earliest urban parks in formal and picturesque fashion to today's post-industrial parks. Guided by these theories, the parks are analysed regarding designers' intentions for use and perception, these intentions' translation into design, and the resulting use and perception by users. Hereby, manifestations of the stylistic, ideological and aesthetic ideals of the respective historic schools of park design are uncovered, and the coherence between the parks' stated design intentions and the realised design and user experience is assessed, serving planners' and designers' creation of better future urban parks. A mix of methods is used, ranging from discourse analysis of historic texts to interviews with designers and surveys among park visitors. The conclusion discusses the degree of 'success' achieved by the two parks studied, based on the analysis' results; the discussion, finally, places these results and conclusions in the context of the wider themes relevant to this thesis, and offers a critical reflection on their implication for the future of urban parks. Both parks studied are concluded to realise their design intentions to a large degree, although the contemporary park's fulfilment of its intentions is hindered by a discrepancy between planners' and designers' intentions. In the discussion, this discrepancy is argued to represent the co-optation of contemporary design ideals regarding sustainability and inclusivity for planners' mobilisation of capital for neoliberal urban development, creating a new park paradigm centred around the values of ecomodernism.

(…) the English garden does not reflect an imitation of the countryside. If we must find its sources, they are more likely to be located in French paintings of the 17th century or those of Venice from a hundred years earlier, as some have maintained. In any case it resulted from a manipulation and an assembly in space of a certain number of selected natural products for the purpose of stirring up a variety of effects of a philosophical nature in the cultured person who entered it. In reality, it was the garden itself which broke down the barriers in the following century and which spread its landscapery to the whole British countryside. In England, the aestheticisation of nature covered over and legitimized a radical transformation of production relations as a result of a new distribution of landed property. The shape of the land began to express more precisely the socio-economic realities of nascent liberalism.
  - André Corboz, *The Land as Palimsest (1983, p. 21-22)*

What we need to do is put back into our thinking a proper attention to where each individual instance of private or public landscape architecture locates itself in the discourse of culture vis-à-vis nature. In this context city gardens are a particularly vexed question. The needs of urban inhabitants have changed over the last two hundred years, as have the views of the authorities who decide what public parks and gardens are appropriate. These have been working-class escapes from urban oppression, or elegant promenades for the bourgeoisie. And they become different experiences, even within cities, when density of population forces apartment blocks skyward and shrinks garden space to roof terrace or window box. They were different, too, and therefore occupied another point on the nature-culture scale, when more and more of urban populations had access, by road or television, to (let us call it) the wilderness. Man-made settings then seemed negligible or displayed, in a new structural tension with nature, either more artifice or more ambiguity. Perhaps where the modernists went wrong is that they tricked themselves, like all would-be modernists, into thinking it was a battle of past/art versus present/nature; in fact, it was another replay of nature (not versus but) vis-à-vis culture.
  - John Dixon Hunt, *The Dialogue of Modern Landscape Architecture with its Past (1993, p. 140)*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Urban parks, since their inception, have provided urban dwellers with a form of public space to relax, recreate and assemble. The first public green spaces, often formerly private royal gardens, offered a space for the bourgeoisie to rub shoulders, show off their wealth and enjoy man's domination of nature; later, with the advance of industrialisation and urbanisation, dedicated urban parks imitating pastoral nature were created, providing the working class with the countryside's greenery, space and fresh air. In the 20th century, function overtook form as the prime consideration for parks, which were by then considered essential facilities with an important public health function. Today, in the post-industrial era, historic and contemporary urban parks exist in all shapes and sizes, at times including repurposed remnants of the past in their design. Their importance for cities is undeniable, and thus, logically, their design is generally outsourced to prestigious and capable landscape architecture studios. Not always clear, however, are the considerations and intentions inform these designs of today's urban green spaces; and, subsequently, how successful designers and the cities implementing their designs really are in achieving these intentions. These questions are central to this thesis, so that their answers may inform the future creation of better, more successful parks – for cities, their nature, and their people.

1.1 Problem statement

As this thesis will demonstrate, park designs are subject to extensive ideological and aesthetic considerations. Moreover, parks have historically represented social ideals like democracy, beauty and public health, and still today remain sites where these values are promoted (Gandy, 2002; Taylor, 1999).Then, these sites are simultaneously produced by the at times conflicting interests of capital, state and citizen, all of which have a stake in the design, regulation and use of parks (Loughran, 2016). As a result, parks are key sites to understand the production of space in cities – both historically and today.

As Lefebvre (1991) poses, this production of (urban) space can be divided into three dimensions. Firstly, conceived space represents planners and designers' planning of a space, ahead of its actual creation. Secondly, perceived space relates to humans' perception of the physical space in practice, and constitutes its 'objective', material dimension. Finally, lived space relates to the imaginaries people attach to a space, and is thus entirely subjective. As will be further explored in this thesis, other authors have created similar theories on space, also using tripartite divisions; although these theories do not completely overlap, in the context of urban design processes, they can all be understood to correspond to a division between *design intention*, *realised design*, and *user experience*. To understand the production of urban space – with the aim of creating (or, rather, *producing*) better spaces – understanding these three dimensions is key. ;

Given the importance of parks, and with urban land increasingly scarcely available for green space, planners and designers want to make them work and achieve their goals as well as possible. For this reason, measuring this effectivity is important; how can planners and park designers effectively achieve their intentions, and reliably achieve an envisioned user experience? Asking these questions, this thesis will approach these indicators for two different parks by means of the three-link chain of design intentions, realised design and user experience, using a comparative, qualitative study. By studying this chain, the research will establish to what extent the intentions parks are designed and created with are actually realised – i.e., to what extent they are successful. Hereby, the creation of better future parks is served.

1.2 Research aim and questions

This research aims to assess the coherence between the design intentions, realised design and user experience of a historic and a contemporary park, from a historical, academically critical point of view. This aim can be dissected into a practical dimension, directly relevant to planning and park design, and a more abstract, theoretical dimension, seeking mostly to contribute to the available theory. The first dimension comprises an assessment of the 'successfulness' of the design of the parks studied. This success is approached by establishing the degree to which design intentions are realised, and how park design influences user experience, providing valuable insights for planners and park designers with similar intentions regarding design and/or experience of parks. The second dimension, then, entails placing the three dimensions of design assessed (intention, realisation, experience) into historical and theoretical context. This perspective facilitates gaining a more elevated, nuanced understanding of modern parks relative to other parks from different eras, and theorising how contemporary parks can build on the history of parks in light of the challenges of our time.

The main research question this research answers is:

- How do the *design intentions*, *realised design* and *user perception* of *historic and contemporary urban parks* correspond to each other, and relate to different *ideals and trends in park theory*, both *historic and modern*?

The sub-questions are:

- What different ideological paradigms have existed throughout landscape architecture and planning history regarding the purpose, style and experience of parks?
- What were the design intentions for the two parks studied upon their creation?
- How do the two parks' designs incorporate the designers' intentions?
- Does users' experience of the parks correspond with the design intentions and realised design?
- How do the two parks' design intentions, realised design and user experience correspond with the different paradigms' prescriptions regarding these phenomena?

1.3 Academic and societal relevance

Why study park design? Firstly, as stated before, parks are of utmost importance to urban dwellers and their surroundings. As facilitators of an active lifestyle, access to greenery and clean air, they have physical and mental health benefits; moreover, they serve the strengthening and creation of urban ecosystems, improving biodiversity and thereby resilience. What's more, they provide relief from urban heat island effects, reduction of air and noise pollution, and absorption of water. Then, they are places for social contact, building community and social cohesion at the neighbourhood scale, and are linked to lower levels of violence and crime (Sadeghian & Vardanyan, 2013). While parks have been extensively studied in academic literature, this research contributes to three gaps present in this literature: a) the lack of studies of parks in historical context; b) the lack of critical literature considering specifically the *visual* role of park design in neoliberal urbanisation; and c) the lack of studies (and, generally, landscape designs) focusing specifically on user experience of contemporary parks, especially aesthetic experience. These gaps, and the wider themes they relate to, will now be explored.

1.3.1 Parks in historical context

Firstly, despite parks being so valuable for cities and their residents – as they have been for at least a century-and-a-half – few research exists in planning, geography, urban studies and related disciplines

that places contemporary parks in an explicitly historical perspective; this perspective is highly useful, however, as many discourses and trends have persisted throughout time, or reappear(ed) in different forms. For example, Loughran (2018) demonstrates that parks have since their inception been used as 'cultural fixes' to alleviate (perceived) social problems, and still are today through e.g. the interweaving of built and natural environments and the repurposing of old infrastructures. In this way, parks now play an example role in the fight against climate change, and new landscape ideologies emerge in relation to this role. Moreover, the historical development of parks has provided the initial paradigms that later generations of park designers responded to (e.g. modernist vs. postmodernist), and the values and norms surrounding parks and their use have mostly been institutionalised and produced throughout their long existence (Loughran, 2018).

The value of a historical perspective, then, is further illuminated considering the role of design paradigms. Indeed, although in some cases the design of parks may seem arbitrary, extensive aesthetical and ideological considerations inform any park's design; for example, the *picturesque* style seeks to mask any signs of human design or intervention, and rather present its parks as designed by nature itself, in line with its ideology of romanticisation of nature (Herrington, 2006). While the picturesque paradigm constitutes arguably the most iconic and prevalent style of park design, and – as we will see – some of its aesthetic ideals remain relevant today, through the centuries it has been complemented by a variety of other emerging design styles, each with their own aesthetic and ideological considerations. Today, there is no guiding contemporary paradigm of park (or garden) design, making a historical perspective especially interesting; whereas, for example, in the 15th century the Italian Renaissance garden was the dominant model, and in the 19th century the picturesque English landscape garden was hegemonic, today we observe a more fragmented landscape of park designs (Herrington, 2006). While there are certain trends, one of which will be discussed at length in this thesis, none have achieved a dominance comparable to those in the historic 'hall of fame' of park paradigms. Rather, since the rise of modernism, parks are often designed using a blend of design elements from existing styles, paying little attention to the ideological considerations regarding purpose and user experience that inform these styles(Hunt, 1993). Dissecting such designs with knowledge of these considerations in mind, then, can shed light on the relationship between design intentions, realised design and user experience of these parks.

1.3.2 Parks, nature and neoliberalism

Then, urban parks also constitute one of the primary types of urban space with the potential to guide us to a lifestyle more in tune with the natural world. As "the pre-eminent site of nature-making within cities" (Loughran, 2016, p. 314), urban parks and their historical development offer an invaluable reflection of humankind's view of nature, in relation to itself and to the city; moreover, as representation of nature in the city, they relate directly to the increasing calls within planning for urban greening, 'living with nature', climate change adaptation and other themes related to urbanisation, sustainability and climate change (Loughran, 2018). Nonetheless, (urban) nature and sustainability remain elusive concepts, difficult to define or measure; meanwhile, they are widely accepted as a sort of universal 'good'. Therefore, these concepts, in relation to urban parks, are easily co-opted and potentially misused to legitimise other agendas, include those of private parties; as Marcuse (1998) argues, the so-called 'sustainability slogan' is deliberately vague, and used by 'growth coalitions' to distract from issues of power and wealth distribution. Rather than acknowledging environmental limits to growth, this discourse uses an optimistic, pro-growth narrative combining economic, ecological and

social sustainability, constituting a win-win-win situation incorporating universal values. This idea, corresponding with the values of ecomodernism, serves the entrepreneurial ambitions of modern cities, enhancing their status and symbolic capital (Lang & Rothenberg, 2016).

Indeed, as several authors have demonstrated, parks are increasingly caught up in the wheels of neoliberal urbanisation and capital accumulation, and, following neoliberal modes of governance, are no longer produced merely by state actors (Lang & Rothenberg, 2016; Loughran, 2016, 2018).Parks, as urban spaces, were always already directly linked to the urban realm, their realisation influenced by and in turn influencing land values. With the rise of the city as 'growth machine' (Molotch, 1976), the re-gentrification of city centres, and the emergence of neoliberal governance, this connection has been amplified; newly created parks are now often managed through public-private partnerships, and at times completely ran by private parties (Lang & Rothenberg, 2016). As such contemporary parks are generally expected to pay for themselves, in order to fund maintenance, property developers often commercialise or privatise parts of public space.

These 'parks for profit' (Loughran, 2022), then, often use 'greenwashing' discourses that stress their ecological value, obscuring and/or legitimising their more politically charged dimensions; Lang & Rothenberg (2016) refer to this strategy as the 'greening of the growth machine'. The resultant luxury public spaces, while presented as sustainable, 'green' places, for Loughran (2014) represent what Lefebvre calls 'abstract spaces' (see also section 2.1), centred around consumption and global citizenship, and responsible for the gentrification of surrounding areas – benefiting property developers that exploit the nearby commercial establishments and capture the rent gap. Municipalities, in turn, enjoy higher tax revenues, and a flagship project servicing their city branding efforts. This research incorporates the themes of greenwashing and 'green growth'through a critical assessment of the way nature, commerce and the city are presented and perceived in the case of the parks studied. Filling a gap in the existing literature, then, which focuses on governance aspects such as growth coalitions and discourse formations legitimising 'green growth', it also includes the visual dimension; to what extent can park design communicate an ideology of ecomodernism, visually combining ecology and economic growth – or an aesthetic that promotes the city it is located in?

1.3.3 Parks and human experience

Thirdly, then, there is the relevance of dissecting specifically users' perception and experience of parks (and more broadly landscapes); the value hereof is highlighted by several prolific landscape academics of the past decades. As Herrington (2006) argues, firstly, contemporary discussions of landscape often occlude the dimension of aesthetic experience, overlooking the wide variety of experiences a landscape can offer; rather, the discourse overtly focuses on ideological and stylistic features. Thus, she calls upon planners and designers to ask ourselves, "How are people moved by landscapes and how might landscapes activate a rich range of human experiences?" (p. 23). Given the historical importance of user perception of parks and gardens, considering aesthetic experience can add an extra dimension to our understanding of contemporary parks and their design.

Corner (1991) provides further musings on the decline of aesthetics' valuation in park and landscape design. As he argues, modernity has introduced the prioritisation of reason, positivism and techno-economic thinking over faith, art and humanity. As a result, landscape architecture "has become increasingly estranged from a sense of traditional and poetic value"; more particularly, it is unable to engage at once "the recurrent and thematic workings of history" and "the circumstances peculiar to our own time"(Ibid., pp. 115-116). Traditionally, artistic expressions (including landscapes) interpret and embody in infinite ways the reconciliation of the past and present, the eternal with the momentary, and

the universal with the specific; in the modern era, this relationship is found increasingly difficult to manage, Corner poses. He, much like Herrington, argues that the cultural, symbolic role of landscape is today forgotten, particularly regarding collective memory, cultural orientation, and continuity. As a result, designers create prosaic, technical and pragmatic landscapes. Cornerproposes 'hermeneutics' as a way of navigating history and creating meaningful sites; his framework (see section 2.3.5) provides a basis for the critical interpretation of the studied parks' designs in this thesis' discussion.

Hunt (1993), finally, states that "landscape architecture needs to recover a desire and a capability of addressing experience" (p. 140), returning to the "careful blend of mental associations with visual stimuli" (p. 140). More specifically, he calls for a recovery of gardens' expression or representation of cultures' position regarding nature. He states he dislikes the language of fundamentalist ecology, invoking the reincarnation of nature, although he foresees its expression in garden art as era-defining. Indeed, this research will closely examine this ecologist discourse in landscape and park design, and examine to what extent it heeds these authors' calls for a new sense of meaning in landscape design. More concretely, through its scrutiny of parks' user experience, it fills the gap in literature on landscape pointed out by these authors (although Corner and Hunt focus more on design); indeed, this research asks the question posed by Herrington mentioned earlier, and brings it in direct relation to design intentions and realised design.

In sum, besides the general public importance of parks, this thesis is societally and academically relevant through its use of a historical perspective, its critical position towards the (visual) role of market mechanisms in the production of green space, and its focus on user experience of parks. While some of the themes discussed in this research pertain perhaps most directly to landscape architecture, they are directly relevant to planning too; urban parks, after all, while designed as landscapes, are urban public spaces with high significance for city residents' and visitors' experience of city and neighbourhood. Many concepts in planning are closely linked to park design, such as place attachment, (green) gentrification and the privatisation of public space. Moreover, modern parks cannot be seen as standalone units in the urban fabric. Indeed, the contemporary park studied in this thesis functions as node for the surrounding areas, and was created and designed in the context of a large urban renewal project for the district it is located in. Finally, the respective roles and agencies of planners and designers in the creation of the parks studied are explicitly considered.

1.4 Outline

This introductory chapter has provided the reasons, aims and relevance of this research. Chapter 2 will outline theory about the production of space and the relationship between design intentions, realised design and user experience, as well as the respective roles of planners and designers in the production of spaces. Finally, a historic overview of park design paradigms' development is developed, from the earliest urban parks in formal and picturesque fashion to today's post-industrial parks. Chapter 3, subsequently, introduces the case studies and explains the methods of analysis used. Chapter 4, then, presents the results of the analysis, contrasting the two parks along the established three dimensions of design. Finally, Chapter 5 provides the conclusion and discussion; the conclusion discusses the degree of 'success' achieved by the two parks studied, answering the research question, after which the discussion places these results and conclusions in the context of the wider themes relevant to this thesis, and offers a critical reflection on their implication for the future of urban parks.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework will cover, in that order, theory on the production of space, the role of planners and designers in the realisation of design intentions, and the history of park design.

2.1 Three dimensions of space

Three interlinked concepts are central to this thesis, and have been conceptualised under different names and in different forms by different authors. This research formulates them as **design intentions**, **realised design**, and **user experience**. The table below lists these concepts and the concepts from Herrington (2006), Jacobs (2004) and Lefebvre (1991) they relate most closely to; this section will review each author's explanation of the concepts.

Author \ Concept	*Design intentions*	*Realised design*	*User experience*
Herrington (2006)	Ideology	Style	Aesthetics
Jacobs (2004)	Powerscape	Matterscape	Mindscape
Lefebvre (1991)	Conceived space	Perceived space	Lived space

Table 1: conceptualisations of the production of space

Firstly, Herrington (2006)distinguishes between landscape ideology, landscape style and landscape aesthetics. Herein, ideology refers to the power relations embedded in the landscape and its design process; style refers to the occurrence and form of physical elements of the landscape, such as paths and bushes; and finally, aesthetics refers to the aesthetic experiences that designers intend for users to have, such as reflection on certain themes invoked by the landscape. The latter was central especially to picturesque aesthetic ideals, centre-staging human experience, intuition and imagination, through the "repositioning of the viewer from passive receiver to active participant" (Herrington, 2016, p. 26). These three concepts – ideology, style and aesthetics – form the basis for section 2.3 of this theoretical framework, as the historic paradigms of garden and park design will be dissected according to this division.

Then, Jacobs (2004) distinguishes between matterscape, powerscape and mindscape in analysing places and spaces; these three dimensions represent, respectively, the physical world (i.e. the material reality), the socio-cultural conditions, norms and power structures structuring its functioning (i.e. implicit and explicit rules for behaviour), and the subjective experiences had by individual users of a place. Matterscape, thus, is the 'objective' dimension of space, that can be observed with the senses, and is unaffected by cognitive or emotional processes. Powerscape, then, is the sociological, political dimension, determined by planners and designers ahead of its creation, and maintained through a place's regulation. Finally, mindscape is the subjective dimension, defined by feelings, stories and experiences.

Lefebvre (1991), then, as discussed in section 1.1, conceptualises 'the production of space' according to three dimensions in his book of the same name. Conceived space,
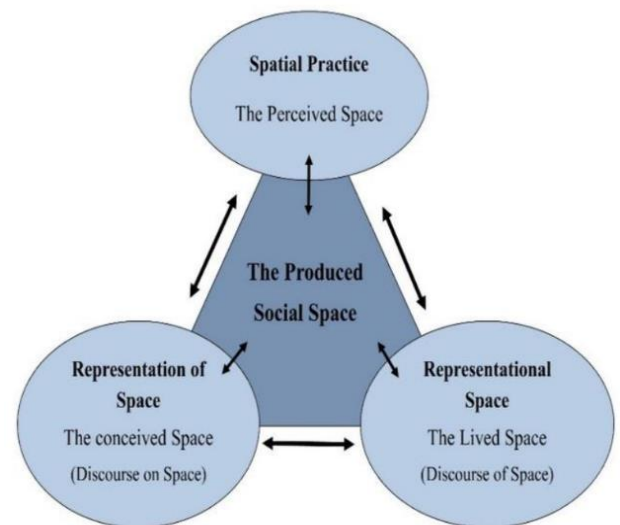

Figure 3: Lefebvre's production of space (Shtaya, 2019)

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firstly, is the construction of space by planners and designers, through maps, plans and designs. Perceived space, then, consists of everything that can be detected through human senses, relating thereby directly to the physical, material dimension of space. Lived space, finally, is the product of the imaginations of the people using a space, and thus is linked strongly to subjective perception. This perception is influenced by both the material, perceived space, and the socially constructed, conceived space, the latter expressed through representations of the space on e.g. park signs.

As a Marxist philosopher, Lefebvre (1991) adds a critique of capitalist production to this tripartite division. Shifting Marx' focus on the production of goods to the production of space, he distinguishes between spaces for domination and spaces for appropriation. Spaces for domination, or 'abstract spaces', facilitate state power or the reproduction of capital, through e.g. the display of state power through large statues, or the demarcation of spaces into parcels for market exchange, resulting in space as product. Spaces for appropriation, or 'absolute space', contrarily, harmonise with the human body "and its scale of reach and perceptual field" (Molotch, 1993, p. 889). The result, rather than a product, is a 'work'. According to Lefebvre, apparatuses of city planning mostly serve the creation of abstract space; an example are Le Corbusier and other modernists, whom he condemns for using the pretext of exposure to open air and sunshine as cover for "design arrogance in the service of capital" (Ibid.).

We can conclude that these three authors' tripartite divisions of space's dimensions overlap largely, each conceptualising power, physical matter and perception as the constituting factors of a space. Nonetheless, differences can be observed; Figure 2 represents these, showing how some authors focus more on the 'objective', technical aspects of some dimensions, or rather on the normative, relative or subjective side. With regards to design intentions, especially Herrington focuses specifically on the power structures behind design in her corresponding concept (ideology); Jacobs and Lefebvre include this dimension, too, but focus more on the technical instruments such as maps, plans and regulations used to express design intention – while, at the same time, they show awareness that such instruments, although often presented as rational and objective, can be used to enforce normative intentions. Regarding realised design, then, Herrington, again, conceives of 'style' as artistic expression that should be seen in relation to existing artistic paradigms (e.g. the picturesque). Lefebvre's concept 'perceived space', again, balances objective factors – in this case, the physical, quantifiable properties of a space – and subjectivity – here corresponding to humans' perception of these properties. Jacobs, then, defines 'matterscape' exclusively as those measurable properties of space, focusing on the objective here. The authors all agree, finally, that user experience is something entirely personal and subjective; Herrington, here, focuses on aesthetic experience and reflection, Jacobs discusses feelings and stories, and Lefebvre speaks of users' imagination. On the contrary, none discuss the ways people physically use a space.

This comparison shows how elusive a concept such as 'realised design' can be, and highlights the need to formulate a working definition of design intentions, realised design and user experience for this research. *Design intentions*, firstly, considering the definitions covered, can be conceptualised as 'planners' and designers' normative intentions for a space's appearance and functioning and visitors' experience of the space, as expressed through formal instruments such as policy documents, maps and designs. This definition covers the authors' emphasis on values and power dimensions in the planning and design of spaces, while also including how these are communicated through 'objective' instruments. *Realised design*, then, in this research refers to 'the appearance of a space, in terms of objectively observable physical elements, but also in relation to historical, artistic and local contexts (through e.g.

citations)'. Here, again, a balance is kept between the different authors' focus on the objective and relative dimensions of physical space. Finally, *user experience* can be defined as 'users' emotional, aesthetic and imaginative experience of a space and its specific qualities'. This definition reflects the authors' focus on subjective experience, but remains operationalisable through the inclusion of users' experience of specific qualities.
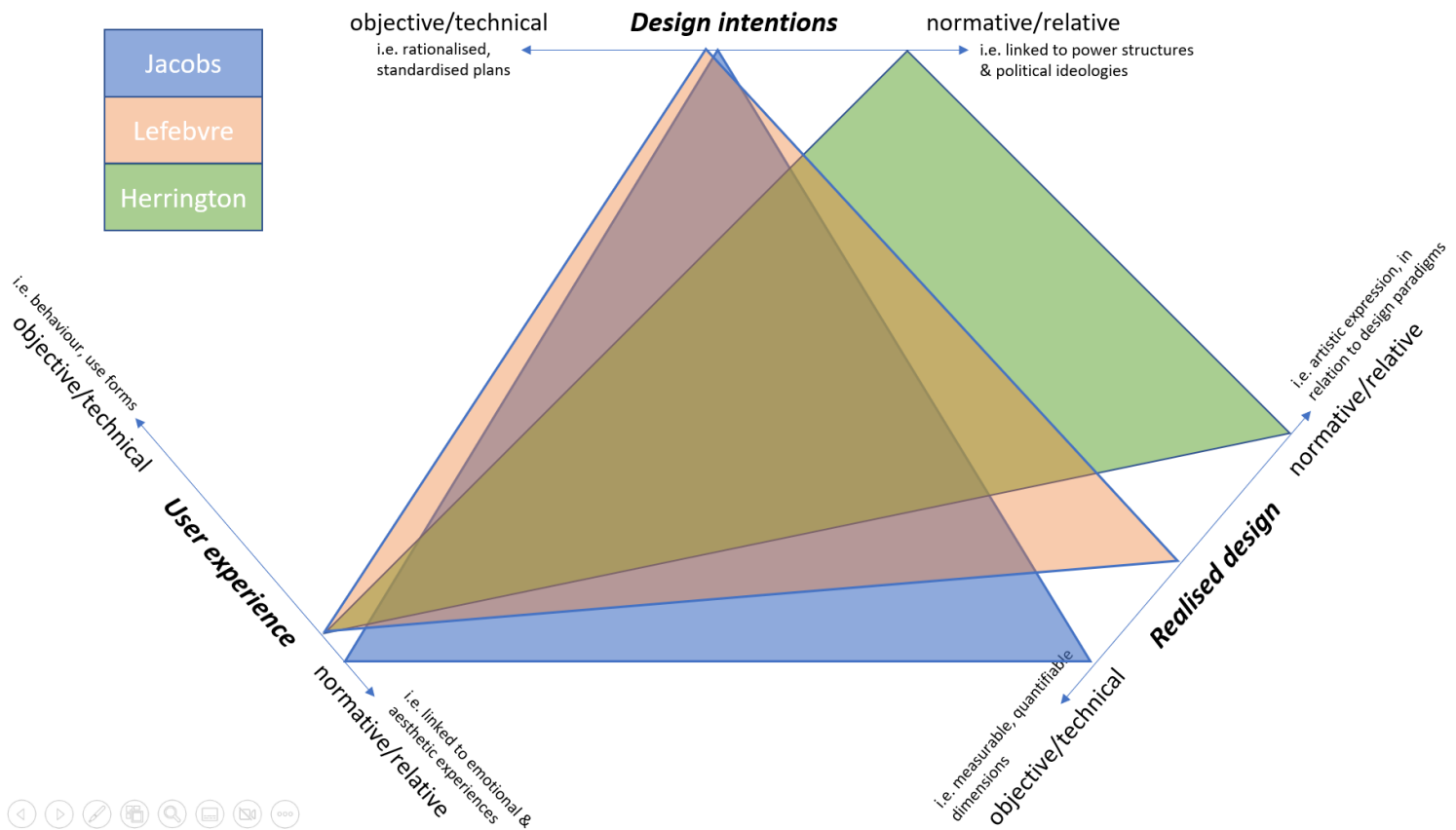

Figure 4: conceptual representation of overlap and differences between Jacobs', Lefebvre's andHerrington's respective theories

2.2 Urban design, planning, and the need to assess intentions' realisation

Several authors have argued for a more rigorous assessment of urban design processes and their degree of success. Hjort et al. (2018) argue that urban design is too often centred around "intuitive concepts and aesthetic considerations rather than scientific evidence that establishes clear relationships between the intent of the physical environment, and physical and behavioural outcomes" (p. 817). Indeed, urban design (and landscape architecture) should move towards a practice more rooted in empirical evidence, argue Brown & Corry (2011). Both groups of authors call for a more systematic, critical method, for design as well as research, as a means to bridge the gap between intent, i.e. initial objectives for a project, and reality, i.e. a space's everyday use. Here, interdisciplinary knowledge would be integrated into the design process, enhancing designers' and planners' success in translating ideas into practice.

Separating designers from planners, then, Madanipour (2006) argues that urban design and the formulation of the built environment are constituted by three key stakeholders: producers, regulators and users. Here, producers are the designers of a space, usually an urban design studio, while regulators

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are planning authorities and private parties that actively maintain and regulate a space and its surroundings. Discrepancies can exist between designers', planners' and other parties' interests and ambitions for a space; for example, economic and political considerations might be privileged over citizens' needs, pose Elrahman& Asaad (2021). The 'dilemma' of the relationship between urban design and planning is a reason projects often do not fulfil their intentions; therefore, the power held by regulators in shaping an urban design process and its outcome should form part of evaluations of these' success and failure (Ibid.; Moor, 2006). This includes the physical aspect of the built environment as well as the planning process; "[t]he indirect impact of such stakeholders leads to a real need for examining the motivations, goals, power, the organisational and institutional framework affecting the urban development process as a whole, and (...) urban design in specific" (Ibid., p. 1166).

Operationalising these observations for this research, the methodology used heeds the call for a systematic way of analysing urban design projects, rooted in empirical evidence; Chapter 3's outline of the methods used will refer back to this need. Moreover, a keen reader will have already observed how the threefold division elaborately discussed in section 2.1 returns in Madanipour's theory; indeed, the respective roles of producers, regulators and users in producing the spaces studied will be assessed by the exploration of design intentions, realised design and user experience. Herein, design intentions comprises the planners' and designers' intentions, which will be differentiated between; realised design, meanwhile, incorporates signs of planners' and other parties' influence on the parks, through e.g. park signs and instances of commercial activity. Hereby, thus, producers and regulators' roles are studied separately, operationalising Elrahman& Asaad's (2021) call for an evaluation that considers the different powers and roles held by these parties, regarding both physical properties of the spaces and in the planning process. Users, then, the third stakeholder Madanipour discusses, are more detached from the other two, and covered by the assessment of user experience.

2.3 Urban parks, intentions, design and experience: a brief history
What follows is a history of the prevailing paradigms in garden- and especially urban park design, starting from the 17th century. These categories have been selected based on their relevance to both general urban park history and this research' cases of study. For each paradigm, the intentions underlying design, typical physical expressions of these intentions, and intended user experience are described, corresponding to the three-fold distinction outlined in section 2.1. Each category is illustrated with one or more emblematic case(s).

2.3.1 French formal gardens and the beautiful during 17th and 18th century Enlightenment
Albeit originally a style mostly applied to private gardens, the *Jardin á la française* is a concept applied to many landscapes later made public – most notably the Gardens of Versailles – as well as to some of the earliest public urban parks. Although by no means the first paradigm of gardening, having been preceded by e.g. the French and Italian Renaissance garden, it is used as departure point for this history due to this relation to urban parks.

At the time of the Enlightenment, the prevailing view of human's relationship to nature was one of domination; as a result, vegetation in French formal gardens "can only be constrained and directed, to display man's mastery over nature" (Wenzler, 2003, p. 22). This relationship between human creations (or art) and nature was linked to emerging ideas of nationalism and absolutism; for example, famous poet Charles Baudelaire described France as "a singular country, superior to all the others, as Art is to Nature, where the latter is reformed by the dream, where it is corrected, embellished, recast" (Baudelaire, 1987 [1857], p. 110). The resulting use of the garden as a social, political and theatrical

setting only strengthened the anti-naturalist sentiment in design (Weiss, 1991). Rather than representing 'real' nature, gardens were used to represent the power of the owner, and of human reason generally. The ultimate example hereof is Versailles, ordered by the Sun King Louis XIV, invoking infinity, God, and the divine right to power.

Stylistically, then, the French formal garden was guided by the time's aesthetic ideal of the (classically) beautiful, incorporating values of harmony and symmetry. It translated the idea of central, absolute power into a linear, central-point perspective that formed the ideal way of looking out over the garden; this perspective aligned with the centre of the adjacent building (usually a chateau), where the window or terrace of the owner (e.g. Louis XIV) was located (Weiss, 1991). Thus, a top-down, god's-eye view over the garden was created. Symmetrically ordered around the central axis, then, was a harmonic, geometric pattern of strictly maintained shrubs, trees, flower beds, fountains and statues. This ideal point of view, overlooking the entire garden, informed its entire design; ideally, the vanishing point at the horizon from this viewpoint would coincide with the end of the garden, symbolizing harmony and infinity. Beyond the static point of view, the experience of this view also served the creation of surprises when navigating the central alley afterwards, from the central view point to the other side of the garden (Weiss, 1991). Through perspectival tricks and optical illusions, a garden would be made to look much smaller or larger than it actually was, for example.

Thus, the full appreciation of a *Jardin á la française* requires both static and in-motion observation. The aesthetic experience gained from such perspectival tricks, and visiting such a garden in general, is described by A.S. Weiss (1991, p. 41) in his book *Mirrors of Infinity* on the French formal garden:

"all of a sudden the truth and trickery of this construction is revealed; (…) the extreme surprise and pleasure of this discovery is the thrill of a physical entry into a mathematical doctrine, established by the aesthetic discrepancies between the static view of the garden seen from the chateau and the dynamic view as experienced by traversing the terrain. This garden is simultaneously a lyrical apparition and a mathematical demonstration."

At the end of the walk here described, then, the user turns around to see the garden from the other side, from the vanishing point as seen from the original view point. From here, the point of view from the chateau is reversed, and the chateau itself can be observed in the context of the garden, completing the dialectical relationship between the chateau and the garden.[1] The perfect formal closure achieved by this view, perfectly attuned to human vision, leads to a sense of spatial closure, harmony and rational perfection (Weiss, 1991).

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[1] Saliently, Versailles does not apply this principle; the garden is too big for this. As a result, the palace is not or barely visible from the end of the garden (and vice versa), creating a sense of disharmony that for Weiss (1991) symbolizes the vanity of Louis XIV.
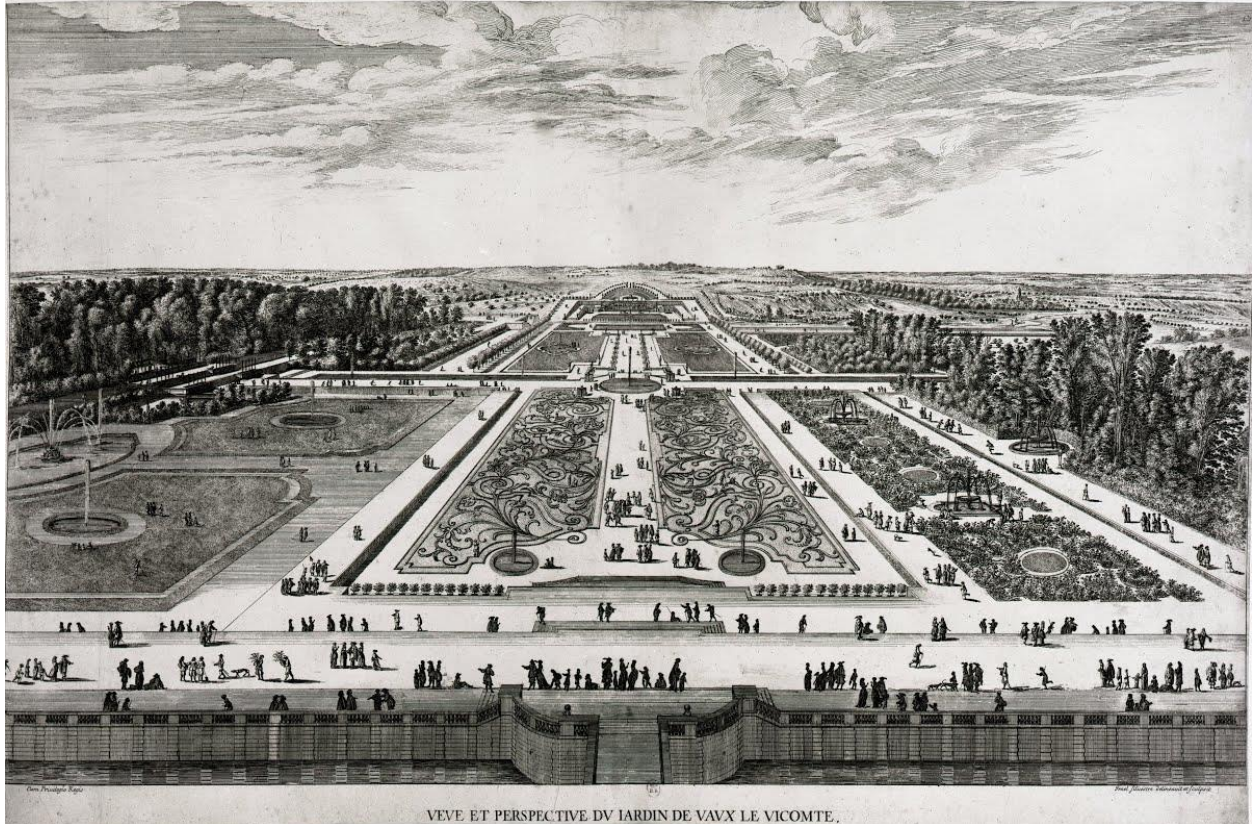
Figure 5: View of the garden of Vaux-le-Vicomte(Silvestre, 1660).

2.3.2 English landscape gardens and the picturesque during 18th and 19th century Romanticism

Complementing the idea of the beautiful, two new aesthetic ideals developed in the 18th and 19th centuries, the resulting three categories forming the cornerstones of this period's aesthetic theory and landscape architecture. The first new category was the sublime: an extreme, overwhelming type of aesthetics, triggering "a supernova of sensations" (Roncken, 2018, p. 9). A sublime experience can be negative or positive and is inextricably linked to the grandeur and complexity of nature, inducing awe, fear or humility (Roncken, 2018). The other category, then was the picturesque, emerging at the end of the 18th century and mediating between the beautiful and the sublime, showcasing the possibilities that existed in between the two extremes; these included pastoral landscapes, representing managed, domesticated nature, with *vernacular* man-made features, i.e. using natural materials such as wood to blend in with the landscapes' natural elements.

The picturesque aesthetic category found its prime cultural expression in the English landscape garden of the 18th and 19th century, constituting "the reaction from the absurdities and excess of formal gardening and the awakening to the beauty and value of a natural rural landscape" (Nolen, 1907, p. xv). Here, thus, the idea of human domination over nature was abandoned, in favour of a passionate romanticisation of nature. Picturesque landscapes have been argued to 'naturalise' the power and wealth of their owners and designers; the natural, quasi-accidental appearance of the landscapes, as well as the apparent state of neglect might lead one to think that not a designer, but nature itself designed them (Bermingham, 1986; Herrington, 2006; Mitchell, 1994).

In terms of style, the English garden presented an idealised image of nature through elements such as serpentine-shaped paths, meant to resemble the meandering of a river, and groves of trees

strategically placed to frame idyllic views over gently rolling pastures. The style was strongly influenced by the emerging genre of landscape painting at the time, and some of its designers worked from the position that like such paintings, designed landscapes should contain a fore-, a middle- and a background. Here, the foreground should express the beautiful, through e.g. geometric, ornamental planting, and the background should cater to the sublime, with a more wild, 'natural' outlook (Curl, 2006). 'Coulisses', mostly in the form of trees, were used to frame these layered views. Moreover, much like Romantic landscape paintings, picturesque landscapes borrowed heavily from Greek and Roman imagery as well as local history, often including reconstructions (follies) of classical temples or mills, or ruins thereof; these were supposed to invoke an experience of nostalgia and melancholy in the viewer (Herrington, 2016).

Figure 6: Pastoral landscape (Lorrain, 1644).

Indeed, the picturesque had well-defined intentions in terms of users' aesthetic experiences; as exemplified by the presence of (supposedly) historical elements intended to incite nostalgia, picturesque designers sought to invoke sensations, ideas and memories through the associations brought to mind by the sublime, quaint, rugged and vivid dimensions of the landscape (Herrington, 2016). Human experience, emotion, imagination and association were central. One of the most prominent picturesque park designers, Frederick Law Olmsted, provided extensive writings on his aesthetic ideals. In his parks, he posed that 'the city should not exist' (Czerniak, 2007); he wanted users to experience his parks as sanctuaries, oases of green "amid the purportedly deleterious conditions of the industrial city" (Loughran, 2016, p. 316). For this reason, Olmsted lined the perimeters of his parks with trees, and opposed the placement of architectural works in parks: "they are not adapted to contribute to any concerted effect, but are likely to demand attention to themselves in particular, distracting the mind from the contemplation of the landscape as such, and disturbing its suggestions to

the imagination" (Olmsted, [1876] 2010, p. 141). The framed vistas of more rough spaces such as waterfalls, lakes and large rocks found in Olmsted's and other picturesque parks, then, served to incite viewers to connect urban nature to sublime imagery, and again make them contemplate nature and urban life. Herrington (2016) understands this central role of the spectator and their imagination as central and defining for picturesque aesthetics. Then, finally, she also argues that a certain distance from the subject matter is required to appreciate picturesque aesthetics; indeed, she poses, the location of picturesque parks in city centres added to their value, as urban dwellers were less likely to be familiar with the views of nature typical of the countryside.

Figure 7: Central Park(Olmsted, 1863).

2.3.3 Modernist gardens, Reform Parks and the decline of aesthetics during 20th century modernism
Modernist landscape architecture, then, is more difficult to grasp than the relatively cohesive paradigms of the French formal garden and the English landscape garden. Understanding modernist aesthetics and conceptions of public space, as well as their translation into gardens and specifically public parks, first requires a review of what modernism is, and how it relates to landscape architecture.

As Hunt (1993) argues, modernist art revolved around a dialogue with the past, seeking to 'make it new', as Ezra Pound's slogan called for. Landscape architecture in the West, for a long time, lacked the historical consciousness required for this, poses Hunt; for this reason, a distinctly modernist articulation of landscape took long to develop. Tracing the origins of modernism back to the period

around 1800, he argues that through the wider availability and relevance of landscape architecture (e.g. in suburban villas, public parks and cemeteries), as well as the decreasing need for the arts to service "some general, collective will" (p. 136), landscape design fragmented into varioustypes of personal expression, based on publicly available visual styles that could be selected from according to preference. Hereby, the ideological and aesthetic considerations of previous generations of landscape architects (e.g.the picturesque), determined by a small social elite, faded. Style simply became "a formal choice" (Ibid.). Eclectic mixes of styles, tastes, and visual values emerged, and even, saliently, widely varying values regarding nature, rooted in personal experience of nature; this trend of diversified, personal preferences continues to this day.

Despite the lack of development of a clearly distinguishable modernist paradigm within landscape architecture specifically, attempts were made to translate the principles of other art forms' interpretation of modernism, such as painting and sculpture, into landscape (Treib, 1993B). An example of a modernist garden that exemplifies these developments is Guevrekian's Garden of Water and Light (1925), which formed part of a series of projects by a group of French architects centred around the Art Deco exposition of 1925 (Treib, 1993A). The garden's design is based on the properties of two-dimensional cubist painting, and it is meant to be perceived as an autonomous art object. Thus, the materials of the landscape – plants, water, walls, etc. – are used as materials for art making, like paint in a painting, rather than as things with inherent meaning; they are used as devices to create visual effects (Treib, 1993B). Herein, the garden incorporates elements of optical illusion, and prioritizes compositional and pictorial effects, not unlike French formal gardens.Hunt argues that through this painter-like approach to landscaping, Guevrekian and related designers failed to address the potential of gardens as a (three-dimensional) art form in themselves, while simultaneously losing the aesthetic experience of analytical cubism. Thus, for him, while using modernist aesthetics, the garden fails to create modernist content.TheGarden of Water and Light is exemplary of modernist style; modernists commit to abstract shapes and geometry, although, in their desire to create 'new' forms, they reject symmetry and axes as found in the French formal garden (Hunt, 1993).

Through its failure to create message and meaning through its medium, Hunt continues, modernist landscape architecture in the style of Guevrekian failed to construct an aesthetic experience beyond "sensual pleasure from colours and forms", that was translatable into discourses relevant to other forms of culture (Hunt, 1993**,** p. 138). Thus, the garden experience "in its fullest emotional-imaginative-intellectual range" (Ibid., p. 140) was not reached. As a partial result of this aesthetic lack of direction, modernist designs for public spaces often insisted upon design as problem solving, guided by the specific needs and demands of the target group or community. This direction of development in landscaping was strengthened by architects such as Le Corbusier, who completely disregarded the value of urban greenery and viewed it as a mere utility as buffer between buildings (Treib, 1993A). Thus, by the end of the 1930s, experimentation in applying modern art (particularly cubism) to gardens and other landscapes had lost interest. Instead, the idea that "the right style for the twentieth century is no style at all" (Tunnard, 1942, p. 60) became dominant.

Figure 8: Garden of Water and Light(Guevrekian, 1925).

Rather than on aesthetics, focus was placed on landscapes as instruments of democratic social reform; the most obvious example hereof is the Reform Park in the US. For Reform Parks, the main objective was to 'organise activity' (Tate, 2018); activities such as athletics, swimming, vegetable gardening and music were facilitated and programmed. Utility, rather than beauty formed the goal, guided by the idea that active recreation should be prioritised over passive aesthetic pleasure (like that of picturesque, pastoral scenery) (Tate, 2018). In a similar vein, the parks created in Great Britain in the early 20th century sought to get young men to play sports, to thereby become fit to go to war, forming a particularly clear example of the way modernist city planners sought to structure citizens' behaviour and development using public parks (Tate, 2018). In Germany as well, modernist parks such as the Stadtpark in Hamburg were created, where "the identification of physical and sporting activities with the spiritual rebirth of the German Volk led to a heightening of the cathartic function of park amenities" (De Michelis, 1981, p. 105). Many European countries and the US even introduced standards for the amount of green space that should be available per urban dweller; for example, in Great Britain, a minimum of twenty square metres of green space was set, with four-fifths reserved for sports and playgrounds (Tate, 2018). All these examples show how throughout the west, modernist park designers used instrumental, positivist approaches; they omitted aesthetics from their considerations, instead working from the ethos that form follows function.
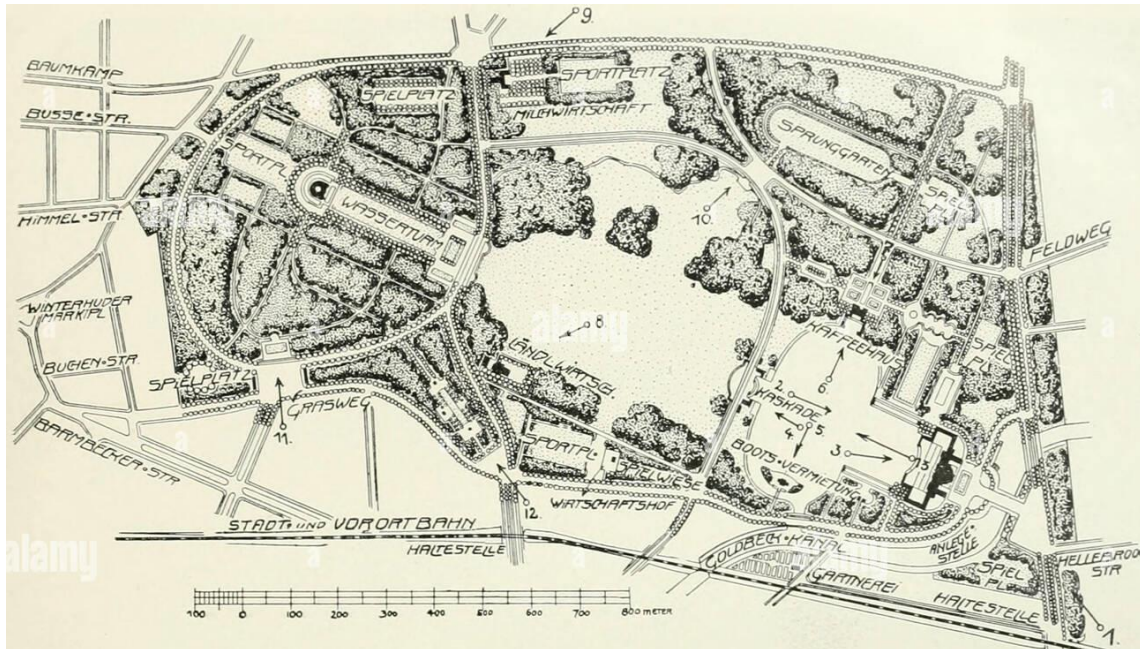
Figure 9: Stadtpark Hamburg (Sperber & Schumacher, 1914).

2.3.4 Post-industrial parks and the industrial picturesque during 21st century postmodernism

After public parks' establishment and celebration in cities around the world in the 19th century, their decline in many places throughout the 20th century posed challenges for park designers; the decline of inner cities, suburbanisation, crime, neglect of maintenance, and privatisation of space, for example, contributed to parks' declining reputation, and in turn use (Tate, 2018). Thus, the new park ideal was not a green haven offering refuge from the city – and thereby lacking the safety provided by the city – but rather, in Pae's (2016, para. 3) words, "a blood vessel that moves through the city and takes the initiative in the transformation (…) of the city, while continuously conversing with the city".The resulting new paradigm of park design can be conceptualised as postmodern; this section will review the ideological, stylistic and aesthetic considerations of this current era of landscape and park design. Although it does not encompass the entire variety of postmodern expression in this field, post-industrial parks will be used as an example of a quintessentially postmodern type of parks.

In the second half of the 20th century, increasing opposition to modernism's all-encompassing embrace of positivism, determinism,rationality and efficiency led to the emergence of a new mode of thinking, seeing and creating: postmodernism.In environmental and landscape design, the ideas that 'good' environments could be designed according to objective, scientific parameters, separating man-made structures and nature, and users' well-being and behaviour structured independently from subjective perceptions and experiences, were abandoned; they were replaced with a holistic, evolutionary, open-ended view of the human-environment system, including physical, biological, cultural and psychological considerations (Koh, 1982). Value and meaning, rather than being intrinsic, are here derived from the relationship between the environment and user, and environment and site; moreover, timeless design does not exist, as environments evolve continuously (Koh, 1982). This resulted most clearly in an increased awareness of ecology, strengthened by developing awareness of humans' impact on their environment, both directly, through pollution, and indirectly, through climate change.

In light of nature and ecosystems' newfound importance in landscape architecture, perceptions

of ecosystems have shifted from those of "closed, deterministic structures to ones that recognize living systems as open, self-organizing, and unpredictable" (Czerniak, 2007, p. 30).Lister (2007), discussing the design of park ecologies, distinguishes between 'designer ecology', meaning symbolic, educational representations of nature, and 'ecological design', indicating design that allows the emergence of sustainable, self-organizing ecosystems. Designer ecology requires intensive management to be maintained, andis often applied in small parks which lack the size to develop fully functioning ecosystems.While such representations of nature are important for educational, aesthetic, spiritual and other reasons, they are not operational ecologies, and do not produce sustainable ecosystems (Lister, 2007).

Possibly the biggest trend in park design of the past two decades is the repurposing of former industrial sites as parks, retaining some of the original elements of the site. Such post-industrial parks fit perfectly into the postmodernist ideology of site interpretation, design placed in time (i.e. not timeless), and a new conception of nature and its agency in producing space.This last element is expressed through the 'imbrication' of natural and human structures; here, for example, through the overgrowing of an abandoned railway track, the agency of nature in producing space is layered with the pre-existing man-made structure (Loughran, 2016). This is exactly what happens in New York City's famous High Line park, a formerly decaying, post-industrial railway where nature 'reclaims' the degrading built environment, turned into popular urban park. Loughran (2016) argues that the popularity of such 'imbricated spaces' reflects a growing recognition of nonhuman agency in the production of contemporary urban space, particularly through climate change and industrial decline. Indeed, the celebration of harmony and balance between natural and man-made factors in the urban environment shows how the socio-spatial relationship between city and nature has developed; city and nature are no longer seen as polar opposites.

Although imbricated space cannot really be designed, as it requires time for nature to grow (and thereby reclaim space), it can be preserved when found, or mimicked; both happened at the High Line. For example, some sections of the original railway, including weeds overgrowing it, were preserved. At the same time, pieces of the rails were re-used, a rail-inspired wooden walkway was created, and 'wild'-looking plants were planted mimicking the site's previously existing nature, creating an imbricated aesthetic in line with the site history (Loughran, 2016). With regards to the other, more general stylistic qualities of postmodernist landscapes (including post-industrial parks), the designs often use straight or zigzag lines and orderly planted vegetation (Herrington, 2006). Through this abstract and utilitarian design style, which could be seen as a continuation of modernist design, Czerniak (1998) argues that designers announce to visitors that a place is, indeed, designed, challenging the picturesque ideal of obscuring the designer's hand.

Although post-industrial parks thus constitute a break in terms of style and ideology from traditionally picturesque landscapes and parks, Herrington (2006) argues that the intended aesthetic experiences are not so different – in fact, she goes as far as to dub this postmodern aesthetic paradigm the 'industrial picturesque'. As she argues, the elements of industrial heritage and their sublime qualities, as well as their communication of the passing of time, engage viewers' "imaginations, emotions, and memories" (Herrington, 2006, p. 22), much like the follies mimicking Roman ruins or pastoral cottages placed in traditionally picturesque landscapes. This aesthetic experience is evoked in the High Line park through vistas of city life and old industrial structures combined with wild-looking plants (Loughran, 2016). Herein, otherwise uninteresting objects of industrialization are transformed into culturally valuable artefacts. The High Line's designers intended for users to walk around, linger in

certain places, and look out onto the city and its skyscrapers as well as the park's greenery and users; in other words, to understand and appreciate the space's imbrication of urban and natural elements (Loughran, 2016). In one way, this conception of urban park use and perception is radically different from those of the past, as park users are now expected to enjoy the merging of city and park rather than seek refuge from the former in the latter; on the other hand, the idea of passive leisure and promenading remains well alive.

Figure 10: 'Industry and greenery at the High Line' (Loughran, 2016).

Figure 11: Gas Works Park (1975), Seattle, one of the first post-industrial parks (Hattie, 2016).

2.3.5 Conclusion

To conclude this section, Table 2 below synthesises the ideological, stylistic and aesthetic foundations of the design paradigms discussed. Looking at the history of landscape design like this, neatly structured (although obviously simplified) according to historic era, an interesting pattern can be observed. Modernist style represents a return to the geometric forms, straight lines, optical illusions and tricks of perspective of the French formal garden, forcing nature according to the ideal of rationalism prevalent during both historic periods. At the same time, the romanticised view of nature of the Romantic English landscape garden, including the aesthetic aims of achieving melancholy and a sense of the passing of time in the viewer, returns under postmodernism. That is, with a focus on nature due to its ecological functions, and as something humans live alongside with, rather than as something pristine that exists outside the city, to be imported into the city for its spiritual importance for humans.

How, however, should today's landscape designers navigate this history, and why is it important to know it? Corner's *Discourse on theory* (1991), as covered in section 1.3.3, discusses how the ideals of rationality, positivism and technological advance have led to contemporary landscape architecture's failure to engage with sites', and more generally landscape's history. Historic design paradigms, rather than as entire schools of thought with ideological foundations, are still often looked at as stylistic models to be copied from freely, as discussed in section 2.2.3 on modernism. The resulting historicist and eclecticist designs that imitate the past, however, ignore artistic and social developments that happened since, reducing history to what can be seen. On the other hand, avant-garde attempts at radical innovation turn away from history altogether; while these can be interesting and productive, they run the risk of turning subversive and nihilist, provoking without aim of finding an alternative.

Lamenting these 'tyrannies' of contemporary landscape architecture, Corner (1991, p. 116) proposes a return to "a topography of critical continuity, of memory and invention, orientation and direction", to be achieved through a critical, i.e. non-dogmatic, and interpretative attitude towards history, culture, tradition, nature and art.

The dialogue between past and future envisioned by Corner, "recalling the past while also disclosing new possibilities for a future that transcends the given present" (p. 130), is perhaps best expressed in today's post-industrial parks. Indeed, Corner's landscape architecture firm played an instrumental part in the design of the High Line park, the quintessential post-industrial park. How, however, does this postmodern approach translate into sites with a less easily interpretable past? Biblioteca degli Alberi, subject of this thesis, is part of a large urban renewal project, re-constructing an entire urban area, and thus writing a new narrative for a part of the city. One of the aims of this thesis, and of the abacus of historic paradigms of landscape design here presented, is to place the design of this park into the context of the district's, the site's, and landscape's history, and find out to what extent it achieves the dialogue between past and future that Corner advocates for – or, rather, falls into the trap of one of the 'tyrannies' he describes.

Historic period	Type of landscape	Ideology	Style	Aesthetics
Enlightenment	*French formal garden*	Human dominates nature, absolutism	Classically beautiful: geometric, symmetrical	Harmony, thrill of mathematised optical illusions, perfection of linear perspective
Romanticism	*English landscape garden*	Present nature at its most beautiful, without signs of human interference	Picturesque: serpentine lines, pastoral fields, sublime natural features, vernacular man-made features	Melancholy, nostalgia, sense of passing of time, contemplation of nature's value
Modernism	*Modernist garden*	Break with previous art forms (including gardens): 'make it new'	Modern: geometry, straight lines, abstract shapes and forms	Optical illusion, effect of perspective; for some, no real 'meaning' however
	Modernist park	Parks are a utility, nature irrational and irrelevant; positivism, rationalism	No style: form follows function	No aesthetics: experience should serve a function, e.g. health and fitness
Postmodernism	*Post-industrial park*	Nature and ecology as valuable and agentic; harmony of built and natural forms; holism/contextualism	Industrial picturesque: use of industrial heritage, nature-city imbrication	Melancholy, nostalgia, sense of passing of time, contemplation of city-nature relationship; 'imaginative spectator' is central

Table 2: Synthesis of the historic development of park design paradigms.

2.4 Conceptual model

Figure 12 displays the conceptual model of this thesis, consisting of an upper box constituting the history of park design, and a lower box constituting the three dimensions of the production of parks (and, more generally, space). Section 2.3 informs the upper box, outlining the existing park design paradigms. These paradigms, then, each with their own distinct ideology, style, and aesthetics (Herrington, 2006), inform, pertaining to the two parks studied, the three dimensions of park design: design intentions, realised design, and user experience. The relationship between these two sets of elements informs the theoretical dimension of this research, while the individual relationships between the latter three (intention-design, design-experience and intention-experience) determine the practical dimension. This research hypothesises, then, that for both parks, all paradigms that existed at the respective times of their creation influenced the design intentions, realised design or user experience in some ways; moreover, the historic park is hypothesised to achieve a better realisation of its design intentions, as this park's intentions are more homogeneous, and less caught up in divergent parties' interests.
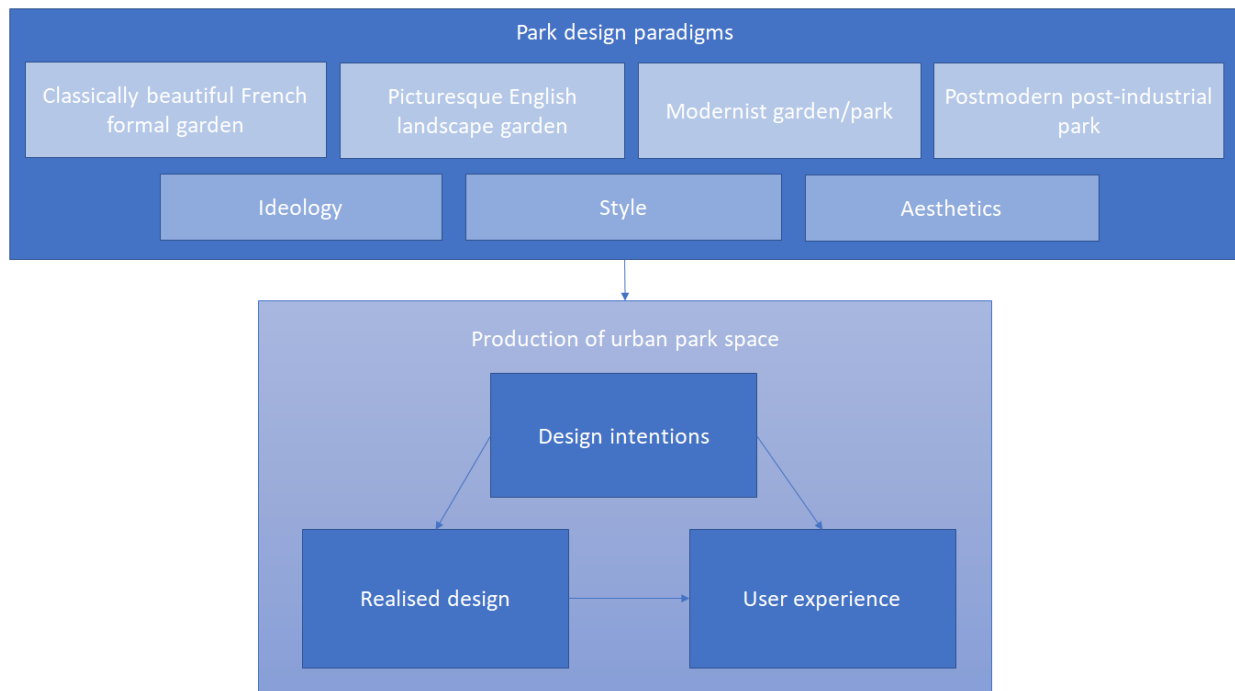

Figure 12: Conceptual model

Chapter 3: Methods

This chapter will discuss the case selection and introduce the cases, describe the research methods in terms of research design, data collection and data analysis, and finally discuss the research' limitations and ethics. At the end of the chapter, a table is provided overviewing the different research methods used, the corresponding data, and method of analysis.

3.1 Research design

This research is based on a multi-method approach. As discussed previously, three dimensions of park design are assessed: design intentions, realised design, and user experience. These three dimensions are approached using different methods, tailored to the nature of each dimension. On the whole, the research design can be compared to that of Auyeung et al. (2016); it aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the use, value and meaning of urban parks through triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods, including discourse analysis, observations, questionnaires and formal and informal interviews with park designers and users. Hereby, as established in section 2.2, the need for a systematic method of assessment of public spaces, rooted in empirical evidence, is responded to. Given the nature of the topic, and the resulting need to develop in-depth, qualitative, empirical evidence, a comparative research structure based on two case studies was selected; hereby, the collection of meaningful, detailed results was made possible, which could be placed into context through comparison. Other 'roads not taken', such as a comparative research based only on user experience and using just one research method, would not have allowed the analysis of the entire design cycle from intentions to experience, which is what gives this research its unique perspective; on the other hand, a research focusing on all these different dimensions but only focused on one park (instead of two) would have had no relative value, as its findings would be very hard to interpret given the subjective, abstract nature of many of the themes explored.

For the first of the three dimensions assessed, design intentions, a discourse analysis is used, applied to communication of the design intentions from the parties responsible for the respective parks' designs. Discourse analysis investigates the functioning of discourses, defined as ways of constituting knowledge, and the power relations embedded therein (Foucault, 1971). For example, a discourse analysis may show how right-wing media constructs narratives framing immigrants as disruptive and dangerous. Loughran (2018) provides an excellent example of the value of dissecting policy plans relating to green spaces; he showcases how Frederick Law Olmsted's 1871 plan for Chicago's South Park presents the park as a spatial 'fix' (i.e. solution) for the key issues of 1) disappearance of urban nature, 2) structuring racial segregation, and 3) structuring economic growth. Although these issues represent wider social themes relevant at the time, the way they influence design is expertly demonstrated through a discourse analysis. As shown by this example, discourse analysis is a highly appropriate method to establish what are a space's design intentions; it allows a dissection of arguments made, values asserted, and expectations implied, thereby painting a vivid image of a designer's thought process and desired results.

While discourse analysis is usually applied to 'static' texts issued by the party whose viewpoint one seeks to investigate, it can also be applied to conversations. This is what I did regarding the interviews carried out with the Inside Outside studio partners, who both worked prominently on the BAM design. I asked them questions designed to fill the gaps and ambiguities that arose from the analysis of the written sources, and to provide some extra background on the intentions behind some design features. The answers provided by the designers were critically assessed using the same method

of discourse analysis (to be elaborated upon in section 3.4 on data analysis), and placed in the context of the rest of the analysis. It should be noted that while discourse analysis is sometimes used as an extremely thorough, systematic method of analysis, my intentions were more modest, and my application simpler. Rather than using a more quantitative method (e.g. coding), my approach to discourse analysis was merely interpretative, constituting a critical reading of the sources in light of the established context.

Pertaining to both design intentions and realised design, the research looked particularly closely at the way park signage constructed certain narratives about the parks and their (ideal) use. Here, it should be noted that park signage was interpreted to represent the perspective of the planners responsible for managing the parks, and thus not necessarily that of the designers (see section 2.2 for more on this distinction). Campbell et al. (2019) offer some useful reflections on the theme of park signage; they argue, following Hermer & Hunt (1996), that the writing and posting of rules, as well as educational, environmental and cautionary signs – 'official graffiti' – shapes park users' behaviour and perception of space. Through such "technologies of governmentality" (Foucault, 1979), an "ideal urban park subject" is constructed (Campbell et al., 2019, p. 2). Analysing the "linguistic landscape" (Ibid.) created by civic, private, commercial and government signage in parks, as well as the meanings communicated by signs' material qualities, can inform understanding of the desired behaviour and experiences in parks, as well as the underlying values. Which actions are encouraged, and which are prohibited or marginalised? As opposed to Campbell et al.'s equal consideration of mostly value-free communication about e.g. safety regulations, this research focused more on the clearly normative narratives constructed by park signs about e.g. the importance of nature in the city. Signs formed such an adequate object of analysis for this research, then, not only because they clearly represent the designer's and municipality's intentions in presenting the park, but also because they are the primary vessel of communication between the design and the use end of the chain linking these two, and thereby also form users' primary source for context regarding the space they are in. The vessel itself (the sign), then, forms part of the link in between: the realised design, and is subject to formulative and graphic considerations, making signs relevant to all three dimensions central to this thesis.

Then, to research the realised design as well as the user experience, extensive (participant) observations were made on location in the two parks. This method of research was inspired by the likes of Jane Jacobs (1961) and Jan Gehl (1987); these and other writers on urban design, planning and architecture believed (and I agree) that the city is best understood by walking around, looking at and experiencing its spaces, and how these structure people's use of them. Of course, observations cannot be divorced from their observer; indeed, I noticed how my perception of the two parks changed as I progressed through my work, learning more about parks and how they function. Therefore, to put these observations into context and gain another perspective, I had some informal talks about them with the teacher of my course *Landscape Culture and History*, a renowned expert on park design and its history. I showed him pictures I took of the parks, linking them to the stated design intentions and to the theoretical park design paradigms, and exchanged views with him. Of course, however, these observations remain subjective. Photography further guided my research process, as it forced me to frame my observations and think of what I wanted to show – indeed, I used the photos taken extensively to demonstrate my observations in Chapter 4. Photography is particularly relevant to this research, then, due to its link to aesthetics; think of the framing of views in French formal and English landscape gardens, for example.

Finally, to assess user perception of the parks, firstly, a questionnaire was used asking park

visitors about their experience of the park. Obviously, measuring user experience is not easy; it involves translating an entirely subjective experience to quantitative indicators. A survey using statements was decided to be the most appropriate method for this, given the possibility to select certain themes to collect data on (e.g. experience of nature), and the possibility to easily compare data. Based on the methodology of Graves et al. (2020), which measures aesthetic experience of nature during a training course in wilderness, a questionnaire was formulated with statements relating to experience of nature, city, and feelings of relaxation and leisure. These statements, based on both the aims regarding aesthetic experience of the different historic paradigms and the parks' own design intentions that emerged from the analysis, required a response indicating the respondent's level of (dis)agreement. For example, referring to the picturesque's intended invoking of sublime aesthetic experience, one statement posed 'In this park I feel impressed by nature's magnificence'; at the same time, referring to BAM's stated design intention of connecting the surrounding urban areas, a statement posed 'This park connects the surrounding neighbourhoods'. Section 7.1in the Appendix outlines all statements, with a brief explanation of their relevance for the research. At the end of the survey, respondents were asked to briefly describe in their own words what they liked and disliked about the park they were in. Although the parks' design intentions obviously differed, the same survey was used for both parks, in order to improve the data's reliability through the possibility to compare results across parks.

To supplement the survey's findings with more data, based on users' own expression of their experience – that is, not framed by statements formulated by me – Google reviews of the two parks were analysed, and photos of the parks posted onGoogle reviews were subjected to a visual analysis. Here, for the former, discourse analysis was used as a method again; this time, however, due to the larger set of data and the relatively lower relevance of the individual 'speakers' for the research (i.e., a designer vs. a singular visitor), a more quantitative method was used, using two rounds of coding for the written reviews and one round for the photographs. Through this method of analysis, the large set of heterogeneous data could be organised and interpreted relatively easily and reliably. Indeed, this second method of research pertaining to user experience (in addition to the survey) greatly helped illuminate this dimension, as this data produced at park users' own initiative gave a more complete, 'genuine' idea of their experience than the survey results, which had been produced under light social pressure and framed by specific questions.

3.2 Case selection and introduction

As mentioned in the introduction, the cases of study of this research are *Giardini Indro Montanelli* (from here on referred to as GIM) and *BibliotecadegliAlberiMilano* (from here on referred to as BAM). In order to arrive to this selection of cases, a number of criteria were formulated. The cases, ideally, would be:

- public urban parks (obviously);
- comparable in size;
- located in the same city;
- from different periods, i.e. historic and modern;
- accessible for frequent visits to carry out research;
- emblematic for their city and/or parks generally, or otherwise of specific interest for research on (contemporary) parks.

Given my residence in Milan for an Erasmus-semester during the conduct of this research, an obvious first place to look for suitable cases within this city. Indeed, I quickly found this highly appropriate duo of

cases, which fit all requirements. These two parks, located near the centre of Milan, are in extremely close geographical proximity, allowing a fair comparison in terms of neighbourhood context – although this is not directly relevant to the research – and even surrounding urban scenery – which, as we will see, is relevant indeed. Secondly, they are of similar size and represent the second and third largest parks of the city, after the significantly larger Parco Sempione. For this reason, they play similar roles in the park system of the city, and attract similar numbers of visitors. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the two cases were selected for their extreme contrast; they are the oldest and youngest parks of the city, symbolizing two completely different eras of park design and ideas about the value, meaning and purpose of parks. GIM was initially a private garden, and converted into the city's first public green space along with a design intervention adapting it to the trendy picturesque style of the early 19th century. BAM, on the other hand, was designed, constructed and is managed using private funds, through an innovative public-private partnership.

Although GIM is an interesting case, certainly, it was mostly selected to put BAM into context; that is, by applying the same methods of research to GIM as to BAM, the results for BAM would become more meaningful. This is true especially for the user surveys; the response to a statement such as 'In this park, I feel more connected to nature' achieves much more validity when the statement has been proposed to users of two different parks, than when the results are presented in isolation. For other areas of the research, too, the comparison allows for a better understanding of BAM; for example, to show the radical departure from 'traditional' park design ideologies and styles that BAM represents. BAM is such an interesting case, then, because it is a highly celebrated modern park, but it does not conform to any of the models for contemporary parks (e.g. the post-industrial park); rather, it forms a mix of styles. It is this blend of styles and ideas that makes BAM so interesting, as will be elaborated upon in Chapter 5.

Figure 13: 3D-rendering of GIM and BAM in the context of Milan, with the city centre on the top left and the city's largest park (Parco Sempione) in the top middle. Created using Google Earth.

3.3 Data collection

Data collection occurred from November 2022 until February 2023, with preliminary research being carried out in September and October of 2022.

Data collection regarding written sources occurred through internet searching. Here, official communication from the parks' designers was prioritised; for example, Inside Outside's web page for their design of BAM served as a source of analysis. At the same time, given the distinction between planners' and designers' respective agencies in shaping contemporary urban spaces (see section 2.2), an essay describing the intentions of the wider urban renewal project that BAM formed a part of, written by a prominent alderman, was used to provide context to the design intentions, and thus offer a different perspective than that of the designers themselves (Marinoni, 2015). Then, given the age of GIM, which was (re-)designed in the 18th century, tools to establish this park's design intentions were limited; obviously, its designer is not alive anymore, and thus cannot be consulted to explain his design, nor did he leave behind any writings on his designs. The best source available, rather, was a primary source from a contemporary writer on gardens and parks: a booklet from the period of the gardens' re-design (mid-19th century), defending and explaining the design that today remains almost entirely intact (Zanetti: *Il nuovo giardino di Milano*, 1869).

Then, to supplement the data regarding design intentions for BAM, interviews were carried out with the two partners of the Inside Outside landscape architecture studio. The entire design team that worked on the project was approached individually through LinkedIn, initially, and resulted in an appointment for a conversation through telephone with these two head designers in January 2023. As explained above, the questions aimed to fill gaps in and supplement my findings at that point; due to

the late stage the research was in at that time, I was able to ask good and critical questions, finetuning my observations and analysis.In order to supplement the designers' perspective with that of the planners responsible for the urban renewal project BAM was a part of, responsible municipal workers were approached; unfortunately, none responded, meaning the planners' perspective is only represented by the text by Marinoni (2015).

Figure 14: section of the survey conducted among park users (English version, page 1/2, top half)

Observations on location in the two parks formed perhaps the most important part of the analysis, yielding the data regarding design expressions, including park signage. These observations were carried out during roughly fifteen visits to both parks between September 2022 and January 2023, at different times of day and on both week and weekend days. In each session, I spent some time in one of the parks, and immediately after went to the other park for roughly the same amount of time; moreover, I visited them in alternating order in subsequent sessions, ensuring the maximum possible validity of the observation and survey results with regards to the influence of the time of day and type of day (preventing e.g. a bias towards weekend days in one of the parks' results). Photos were takenfollowing observations made; then, during these visits, the surveys investigating user experience were also carried out. For these surveys, random park visitors were approached, disregarding age, gender, or other characteristics – indeed, such personal characteristics did not form part of the survey, either, as they were not deemed relevant for the research, and were almost entirely absent from the

historical paradigms' and found design intentions' expressions of user experience.[2]Upon approach, I excused myself, explained briefly (in Italian) that I was a student conducting a research on the park, and asked them if they were willing to fill in a short survey on their experience of the park. To improve the chance of success, I only approached people already seated on a bench – if they were indeed willing to partake, then, I sat next to them while they filled in the survey and read in my book, so as to be available for any questions without giving the impression that they should hurry through the questions. Individual park visitors were approached more often than groups, and those that seemed to be taking their time to visit the park (e.g. those reading a book) were prioritised over those seemingly in a hurry (e.g. eating lunch while on the phone); these visitors proved more likely to be willing to take the survey, and also logically would be likely to have a more developed perception of the park. Of course, the fact that the data for the two parks was produced by entirely different people has implications for comparability; given the intention to survey people physically present in the park, however, this was an unavoidable limitation. Some of the visitors showed interest in my research, leading to some informal conversations; I took advantage hereof to ask some further questions about these people's perceptions of the parks, although my limited command of the Italian language proved a barrier. Nonetheless, I spoke to some interesting people, such as a 'BAM-friend' (i.e. paying supporter of the park), originally from New York City, that visited the park almost every day, and a man from a tiny island in Pacific Canada that was visiting Milan for three months and frequented GIM. Although not formally part of my results, these people's observations and viewpoints supplemented my own, further enriching my understanding of the parks.

Finally, for the Google reviews data, the 100 most recently posted reviews for both parks were considered for analysis, skipping over those that consisted only of a few basically value-free words (e.g., 'nice park') or those otherwise deemed irrelevant to the research; for example, quite some reviews for GIM spoke exclusively of the yearly Christmas fair at the park. Because this is a temporary event with little relation to the actual park, let alone its design, these comments were not considered. Similarly, comments on programming at BAM, unrelated to its design, were not taken into account. Otherwise, all text was included in the analysis. For the photos, as well, the most recent 100 photos posted to either park's Google reviews pagewere considered. The number of 100 was chosen because it represents a feasible amount of work to encode and interpret, while adequately providing a valid result. Indeed, after around 25 reviews and 25 photos, I started noticing clear patterns with a few outliers in the reviews and photos for each park, which continued throughout my reading and analysis of the data.

3.4 Data analysis

The first method of data analysis used, applied to the different expressions of design intentions collected, is discourse analysis. Fairclough (1992) proposes a methodology for discourse analysis based on three dimensions of discourse. 'Social practice', firstly, analyses the influence of large discourse streams, in relation to wider power structures and ideology; in this research, these large discourses are constituted by the ideologies relating to the historical eras (e.g. romanticism, modernism) that inform the different paradigms of landscape architecture discussed. Then, 'discursive practice' investigates the processes in which policy texts are framed, such as the context in which statements are made and how

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[2] The only mention of personal characteristics' influence on user experience, arguably, is in picturesque theory's centring of the intellectual, imaginative, informed spectator; this idea, however, was considered too outdated, too abstract, and too indirectly relevant to this research to justify the incorporation of characteristics such as education level into the survey.

pieces of text link into other debates; this, for this research, translates into the linking of arguments in e.g. interviews to the ideals pertaining specifically to the park design of different eras. Thus, to clarify the difference between social and discursive practice, a (hypothetical) phrase stating that 'BAM is based on rational design principles' relates to the social practice of modernism, while 'GIM offers an experience of nostalgia' relates to the discursive practice of the English landscape garden. Finally, the third dimension, text analysis, scrutinises the vocabulary, grammar and argument structures used in the object of analysis. Text analysis assesses the 'ideological work' (Fairclough, 1992) performed by a text, i.e. the way a reader is nudged to interpret a text, and thereby form a mental image of social reality. Through vocabulary and grammar, different techniques can be used – and, in analysis, 'uncovered' – to perform ideological work; for example, an 'equivalence' is the use of a list or sum-up to make different phenomena appear similar and/or related.

For the other areas of data analysis, such as the analysis of observations and survey results, a similar approach was used. Although the data output is obviously different, the philosophy of discourse analysis was still deemed valid; e.g. design elements can be placed into their design context just as well as textual arguments can be linked to greater discourses. For the surveys, a basic statistical analysis was carried out through Qualtrics, the program also used to collect the responses; the results for either park were interpreted, again, relative to the respective other park's, and in the context of the historic paradigms.

Finally, with regards to the Google reviews data, a method of data analysis using coding was applied. For the reviews, a first round of coding applied In Vivo Coding, i.e. deciphering a text's core meanings (decoding) and subsequently labelling these (encoding) using a word or phrase used in the original text (Saldana, 2013). For example, one BAM review was encoded like this:

Original text:
A gem in the centre of Milano. A short walk from Centrale, and otherwise easily accessible by metro. Great views of some of Milano's modern high rises & a diverse range of flora

In Vivo codes:
"gem", "in the centre of Milano", "easily accessible", "great views of Milano's high rises", "diverse range of flora"

During the second round of coding, the 282 In Vivo codes gained from the 100 reviews were categorised according to patterns observed during both rounds of coding. The resultant categories, or 'families' (Saldana, 2013), for BAM constituted 'descriptive terms', 'architecture, views & contrast', 'greenery, flora & fauna', 'time-related observations', 'activities', 'urban renewal & Milan', and 'facilities'. Finally, some of these categories were once again divided into sub-categories, such as one for descriptive words or phrases relating to accessibility specifically. For GIM, as different themes were discussed, different categories were established; in practice, this resulted in a similar set of families, omitting the category relating to architecture, and changing the 'urban renewal & Milan' category to simply 'Milan'. For the Google reviews photos, a similar method was used, first encoding the visual elements present in the photos, and then categorising these.

3.5 Limitations and ethics

As argued before, this research seeks to establish reliable and valid results through, on the one hand, the use of a comparative structure, and on the other hand, triangulation through qualitative and

quantitative measures. Nonetheless, there are various factors that somewhat limited the potential for meaningful results.

An obvious first factor is the language barrier that arose in some parts of the research. Due to my limited command of the Italian language – and Italians' of English, generally – I was unable to have more than basic conversations with most of the park visitors I asked to fill out my survey. Thus, I was only able to really understand the perception of the Anglophone visitors I encountered. Moreover, for analysis of the Italian-language texts I read, I had to use computer translations; nonetheless, in these cases, I did not experience this as obstructive for my comprehension of the texts, and in case of doubt regarding a translation's accuracy, I could ask an Italian-speaking friend. This friend also helped me translate my survey.

Relating to my observations of the realised designs of the two parks, obviously, I could not observe the parks in their original state, which would have represented most exactly the translation of the design intentions into realised design; especially the two centuries-old GIM had already undergone several renovations, and new signs had been added adding historical context, trees had died, etcetera. For BAM, too, the park's appearance at the time of observation did not necessarily represent its original or rather final state; some of its elements were still developing – most notably its young trees – and construction as underway in the surrounding urban fabric. Rather than seeing this as a limitation hindering my perception of the realisation of the designers' vision, I saw this as an opportunity to see how public (and at times private) actors influenced the appearance of the two parks, whether temporarily altering it or adding a new layer to its history, and thereby influencing the design's execution and contemporary functioning. Thus, rather than ignoring elements such as newly added or temporary signs and dead trees, I included these in my analysis, interpreting them as the result of design decisions taken after the final sketch-table design for the parks had already been completed and executed. Through this interpretation, although such elements did not form part of the original design intentions, they did, in my research' analysis, influence of how these intentions translated into design – as they do in real life.

Then, relating to the survey: for the abstract and, in a way, personal questions about aesthetic experience, I had the feeling that many respondents did not take the time to think about their response, and whether they really felt, for example, 'more connected to nature'. Rather, they seemed to want to go through the questions rather quickly. Therefore, I suspect, they based their answers on what they felt they were supposed to be feeling and experiencing in a park, based on generally accepted preconceptions about parks. To speak with Lefebvre, their responses reflect their experience of the *conceived* space, rather than the *perceived* space. Thus, many people answered with 'agree' or 'strongly agree' to almost all statements regarding experience of nature, without stopping to consider whether the individual statements really resonated with them. Indeed, this exemplifies the difficulty of researching aesthetic experience through quantitative methods; a qualitative approach, on the other hand, likely would have yielded more accurate results per case, but less generalisable due to the longer time required. This limitation of the survey's quantitative approach is, however, in my view compensated for by the rich amount of qualitative data on user experience offered by Google Maps reviews. Moreover, for the less abstract statements (e.g. 'this park connects the surrounding neighbourhoods'), the results can be assumed to be representative of people's perception.

Finally, a common criticism of discourse analysis is the presence of bias; researchers can 'cherry-pick' phrases that represent the point of view or line of argument that they want to show is present in a text, and (often) criticise. To ensure a valid and reliable research, I tried to maintain an objective outlook

in my analysis, and support my findings through triangulation of different sources. I found that most texts (e.g. those on the park signs in BAM) were not exactly ambivalent in their standings, quite clearly representing specific viewpoints, which helped me to avoid readings all too coloured by my own views. Then, I also would like to argue that any good research is unavoidably subjective to an extent, and in fact should be, at least in its discussion; for, if not to critically review the status quo, what is the purpose of academic research? Thus, in my discussion, I will represent clearly my own views – supported by my, albeit subjective, interpretation of the texts analysed.

3.6 Overview

The table below offers an overview of the research methods and data sources discussed in this chapter, showing how the research is structured and how the different methods correspond to the three dimensions of park design studied.

Dimension	Park	Data source	Perspective	Method of analysis
Design intentions	Giardini Indro Montanelli	*Il nuovo giardino di Milano* (Zanetti, 1869) – primary source describing GIM's design and its intentions	Planners & designers	Qualitative discourse analysis
	Biblioteca degli Alberi	*Towers in the forma ubris* (Marinoni, 2015) – essay by alderman overseeing 2000s-'10s urban renewal project that centred BAM	Planners	
		Inside Outside studio website, page covering BAM (Inside Outside, 2018)	Designers	
		Telephone interview with Inside Outside partners, conducted January 2023	Designers	
Realised design	Both	Park signs	Planners	Qualitative discourse analysis
		Observations & photography	Planners, designers & users	Visual analysis
User experience	Both	Questionnaire among park users (n=34 for GIM, n=40 for BAM)	Users	Statistical analysis
		Google reviews text reviews of parks	Users	Quantitative discourse analysis using coding
		Google reviews photos of parks	Users	Quantitative visual analysis using coding

Table 3: Methodology overview

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter will cover the results of the analysis, following the general structure of this thesis; design intentions (section 4.1), realised design (4.2) and user experience (4.3) will be covered, for both Giardini Indro Montanelli (GIM) and Biblioteca degli Alberi (BAM), following the structure of the table concluding Chapter 3.

4.1 Design intentions

4.1.1 Design intentions of Giardini Indro Montanelli: passegiare e contemplare

As discussed in chapter 3, the design intentions of Giardini Indro Montanelli, by lack of an available text by the original architect, are assessed using the booklet *Il nuovo giardini di Milano* (Milan's new garden – Zanetti, 1869), which discusses at length the design of the park. The park is presented as a great achievement for the city of Milan, with elements resembling wild nature, attractive landscape effects, and peaceful water features, to be enjoyed by observant users for relaxation, recreation and meditation.

In terms of the power-related, ideological dimension of the design, firstly, the text provides some interesting viewpoints. Firstly, the architect that designed the expansion, Balzaretto, is repeatedly praised for his "distinguished ingenuity" (p. i) and "rare artistic and economic diligence" (p. i), and is dubbed a "distinguished man" (p. ii). Besides the designer, the "courageous administration" is praised for its "broad-mindedness" (p. i) that led it to order the park's creation. Although the designer, thus, is explicitly named and praised, an allusion to the idea of nature as designer, discussed in chapter 2, can be discerned in the text: "one can ascend (…) by two paths that are sufficiently rough in their comfort, and simulated so well as a creation of nature as to deceive those who often saw those left by the precipitous rush of the waters, or by the steep slopes, which sometimes occur in mountainous regions" (p. 53).Of course, this passage also caters to the sublime, to be further discussed below. Then, the value of the park for the city of Milan is asserted repeatedly throughout the text; the park is argued to "attest to the splendour of the Milanese municipality" (p. i), and to represent "the good taste of the city" (p. iii). Indeed, the expenses made by the municipality to realise the project are detailed, which were so large that they caused much time-consuming discussion within the municipal council. Before the gardens' construction, "Milan, although large, rich and full of what the first city of a state deserves, was deprived" (p. 13) of the glorious gardens other cities enjoyed; in these gardens, citizens could recreate and show family wealth, benefiting the city's commercial, artistic and industrial development. It is also argued to enrich the neighbourhood of Porta Venezia, specifically, in which few pleasant sights could be enjoyed before the gardens' arrival. Finally, the park is asserted to be highly modern, "informed by the spirit of the age" (p. i).

Regarding the intended design result, the end result of the gardens' development is described to have been intended as "a comfortable, pleasant and healthy garden" (p. 14), completing "the transformation of the rural flowerbeds into a true Eden" (p. 36). One of the most important qualities of the space, at the time, was unity, to such an extent that the park was (re-)opened before completion: "although not completed in its individual parts, it was already ordered and distributed in order to present the concept of its perfect unity" (p. 37). Indeed, the necessity of harmony between the gardens' direct surroundings and the interior is pointed out, which led to a decoration with plants of the streets around the park. Moreover, the park entrances are described to be "adorned with beautiful gates in which grandeur and solidity compete with that vagueness of shapes and regularity of lines" (p. 43). With regard to the park interior, the original territory is described to have left unfulfilled "desires of space,

water, rugged terrain, and attractive views"; these aesthetic shortcomings were compensated, however, through "well-imitated rocks and cliffs, the running of the waters, which from time to time resemble a wide river, the small lake and its islet, and the plateau with its coffee, horticulture and various plants" (p. 48). The artificially created bastion provides some views from above, too, Zanetti poses, "obtaining landscape effects" (p. 49). Finally, with the objective of inviting users to rest and let their thoughts roam free, a mix of vegetation types and colours is described to have been used.

       With regards to user experience, finally, the general purpose of gardens as described by the booklet was already mentioned earlier: "the meeting of citizens to enjoy the joy of free life after work, [and] to show off family wealth" (p. 13). The 19th century Gardens, specifically, were of a very public character, as the texts asserts multiple times: e.g., they offered "completed freedom for the public to access, walk and stop in the gardens" (p. 14). Indeed, they could "satisfy every citizen, and also the foreign visitor" (p. 48). Other descriptions of use of the space include the smaller paths "seducing the people to those shaded points, which invite to rest and to the cessation of any troubled thought" (p. 50), and "rural" (vernacular) benches as "a place of invitation to rest or to meditate" (p. 53). And finally, at various points, design elements (e.g. the islet and its statue, and the iron bridge) are described to be of such interest that they "make the passenger stop to look at it" (p. 57). With regards to aesthetic experiences, then, the designer is said to have "obtained such a harmony of parts that as a whole it arouses a sweet sensation" (p. 48). At times, a requirement of attention to detail or education is implied as necessary to appreciate the park fully. For example, the booklet itself is presented as written "so that the visitor can find a reference to the most remarkable things that could escape unnoticed by many" (p. iii), and "to prevent the younger part of the population from getting used to looking with indifference at the beauties that embellish its hometown" (p. iii). Similarly, the conflict between aesthetic qualities in nature and in the 'beautiful gates' described before "makes an attentive observer involuntarily say: beautiful, I like it" (p. 43). Finally, and using in the next example, again, this centring of the observant spectator, the text alludes several times to experiences of the sublime. Relating to the effect created by the rock formations and water course: "whoever observes this arrangement will certainly not escape (…) the image of what nature creates in the mountain regions" (p. 48). Similarly to the passage cited earlier, this sentence draws a parallel between the park's design elements and wild nature, and implies that this likeness is a great design achievement.

       In conclusion, the text representing GIM's design intentions focuses on several main themes. Firstly, the park is asserted as a great enrichment for the city of Milan, demonstrating its good taste and benefiting the city's and Porta Venezia neighbourhood's commercial, artistic and industrial development. Its design, then, is meant to imitate wild nature, while also incorporating elements of unity and symmetry, which create an interesting conflict. Regarding use, finally, the park is meant to be enjoyed by observant spectators, taking their time to walk around, sit, rest, contemplate, observe and enjoy the park.

4.1.2 Design intentions of Biblioteca degli Alberi: culture, nature and connection
To comprehend the design context of BAM, it should be viewed within the larger urban renewal project it is a part of; a useful text for this purpose is provided by Marinoni (2015), who supervised this project. In this essay, he muses on the Puerta Nova area's unruly planning history, finally resolved by the urban renewal project that centred the creation of a connecting urban park. Porta Nuova was a "vast terrain vague" in the late '90s, he poses, leading to a new urban renewal proposal in 1999 that re-thought the area's morphology. A new park, central to the area, would be the "founding act": "a type of settlement capable of placing itself at an intermediate level between the scale of the city – to create a central space

that could compare with the neighboring Giardini Porta Venezia and Parco Sempione – and the scale of the planned buildings and infrastructures". This park, "in the great tradition of the metropolitan park", would allow easy integration of the surrounding urban fabric, and underlying mobility infrastructures. The international architectural competition for its design, announced in 2003, was won by Amsterdam-based landscape architecture studio Inside Outside, whose design was finally carried out from 2010 onwards.

To uncover the intentions of BAM's designers (thus not necessarily those of the municipality), a good start is the project description on the website of Inside Outside. Here, the park is described to work as "urban connector, cultural campus and botanical garden" (Inside Outside, 2018), thus asserting a role for the green space as bridge between the surrounding neighbourhoods, and as a place for education about culture and nature. These separate functions, narratives if you will, are subsequently fleshed out. Firstly, the paths' role in connecting and bridging the surrounding areas and roads is described; then, the careful selection of a diverse set of species for the fields formed by the crossing paths is covered. The diversity of programming is mentioned, and the rings of trees ('circular forests') that are scattered around the park are projected to "grow into roofs of foliage of different colour and structure that float above the park" (Inside Outside, 2018);here, again diversity is asserted, this time in aesthetics. It is mentioned that "a series of cultural, educational, social and commercial buildings are placed in the park and along its edges" (Ibid.), providing interest and income for the area; here, once more, diversity is implied through a sum-up, and valorised through its importance for place-branding. Another sum-up is used to assert the diversity of the surrounding areas, and the importance of the park as connector: a "beating heart". Finally, the ideas are listed behind the 2003 design for the competition, to be revived in 2010:

- to provide a new type of park to Milan's landscape, exhibiting different trees, forming a modern Botanical Garden;
- to provide a varied cultural program;
- to provide a place for people to meet, have fun, and learn;
- to provide a place for leisure, sports, beauty, and – again – learning;
- and, again, to provide a place that connects the surrounding areas and inhabitants.

Figure 15: Main image depicting BAM on the Inside Outside website (Inside Outside, 2018).

The interview conducted with the two partners of Inside Outside, who led the design team, further illuminated the intentions for the design. As they explained, the original 'assignment' for the competition already included the demand for connecting the surrounding neighbourhoods; indeed, this remained the core value guiding the design throughout all phases. To satisfy this requirement, the design started from completely straight paths cutting through the park, allowing efficient navigation from one side to the other. From this "web of paths" emerged irregular fields, which were used to accommodate different garden typologies, including areas for dogs, fields with flowers, and grass patches for people to relax.The connecting identity was further strengthened by the fact that there was no fence around the park in the design, allowing it to be open 24/7; this is really quite unique, and BAM is the first park in Milan that achieved this, as the interviewees asserted. "We wanted people to be able to use it at night, as well."

Regarding the idea of a 'cultural campus', the designers came up with this idea through a re-interpretation of the competition's demand for some large buildings in the park that would house a fashion academy and fashion museum. "There were a few small buildings, because we decided not to follow the program of the competition entirely. As usual we are quite critical and said, you might want very large buildings, but we prefer four or maybe even five very small buildings, because then you create a 'cultural campus' that takes the entire park with it. That way, you can walk from one building to another, creating an interesting interplay between park and building." The presence of the skyscrapers and tall buildings around the park, notably, did not form part of the designers' considerations, as these were all planned and constructed only after the competition for the park design had already taken place.

Then, the designers already had the idea early on in the design process to create a botanical garden, because a visit to Milan and tours by locals had shown them that the existing botanical garden in Brera left much to desire. To fill this gap present at the city level, as well as to have a strong concept

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for the park, and with the added benefit of introducing an educative purpose, the idea for a modern botanical garden was born. Besides the use of different typologies for the fields, this concept was carried out by "sprinkling the confetti of what we call 'circular forests', creating densely grown mini-forests, (…) which you can also use as shade-rich spaces. Some of these would be more open, some more closed, but in any case they would have the function of being applied as a livable, usable space." These forests, consciously separated into different species but uniform for each circle - rather than having circles with different trees – thus had the function of creating 'rooms', "with distinct atmospheres, full of colours and smells, contrasting with the open spaces outside the circles". This experience of nature would then be enhanced by the experience of time throughout the seasons, posed the designers.

Regarding the relatively 'forced' placement of the trees in the park design – in perfect circles – the designers argued that while the park is indeed geometrically designed, nature is allowed to grow freely. "To be fair, a tree does not care how it is planted. The more important question is: how do you let it grow? (...) we actually see it as very dynamic. The trees were planted as small sticks, and they are going to develop naturally, the trees are going to grow, the crowns are going to attach to each other." Moreover, for the park's flower fields, the idea is that they can bloom freely, and the pond in the park also carries a lot of biodiversity, as the interviewees posed;"our approach starts graphically, and then nature takes over gradually".
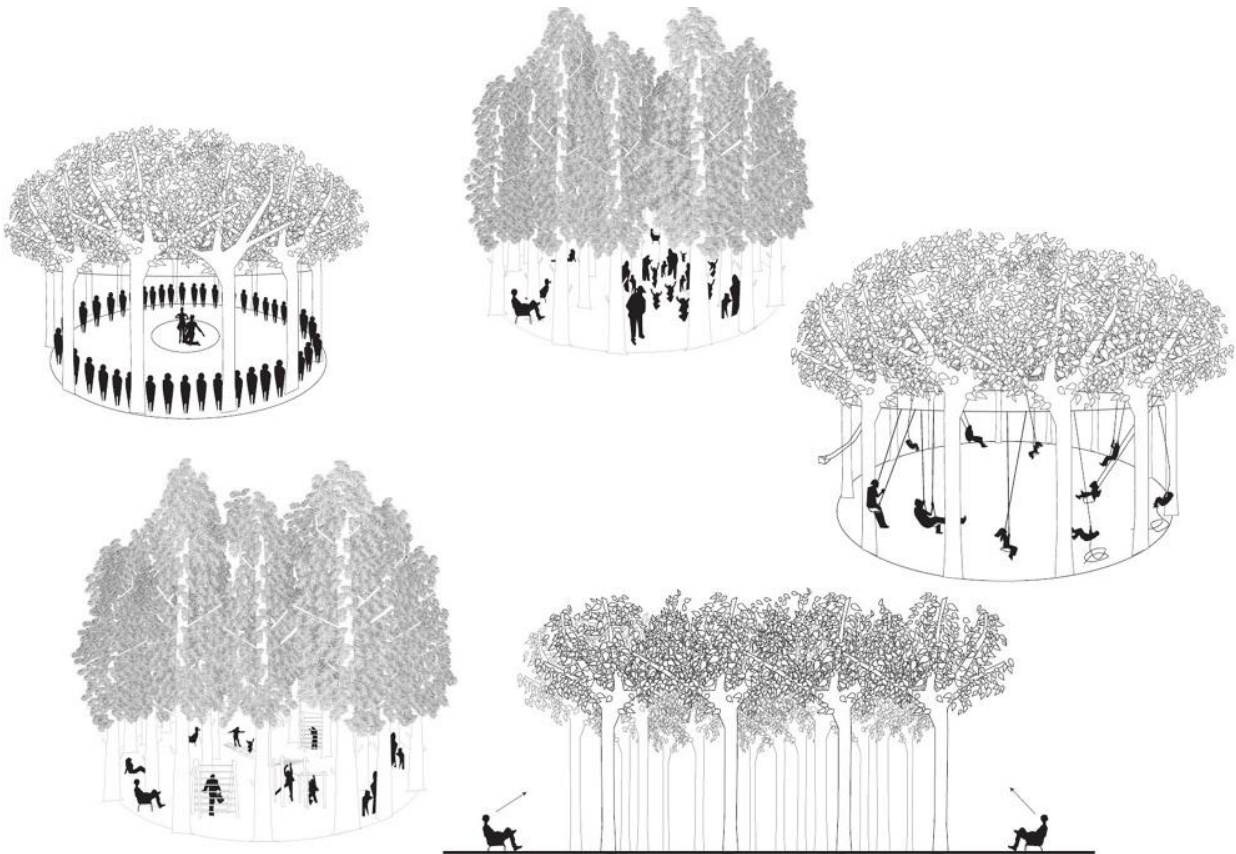
Figure 16: Drawing from original BAM design, showing trees grouped closely together, creating a 'room' (Inside Outside, 2018).

Unfortunately, in the translation of the design for the competition into a more concrete design that could be fully realized, several restricting factors arose, as the interviewees explained. Firstly, there was a very limited budget, half of which had to be spent on preparing the site for its conversion into a park. Secondly, strict safety regulations prevented the implementation of many of the original design ideas. Thus, for example, trees had to be placed at a minimum distance of nine meters away from one another, severely restricting the effect of creating densely surrounded 'rooms' with the circles of trees. Moreover, the original idea was to put trees of different ages and sizes in the circles, but this was too expensive in the end. Such limitations were made even stricter by the municipality because of the always open-character of the park; to safeguard safety at all times, and facilitate supervision, the municipality wanted the park to be easy to overview. Then, the simultaneous development of the surrounding Porta Nuova district generated the construction of a series of high-rise buildings directly bordering the park; as mentioned, this did not form part of the original design intentions, and severely altered the park's look – reinforced by its easy-to-overview, open character. Nonetheless, the designers pronounced that they were very happy with what they did achieve, and reflected that they had to carry some costs for wanting the park to be completely open. On the other hand, had they made the design now (rather than back in 2004), they would have probably incorporated more measures to "let it grow more naturally".

In conclusion, the design team of BAM intended to create a contemporary park, first and foremost connecting the surrounding neighbourhoods at all times of day – and night. Then, it works as a botanical garden with a "balance between nature and city", "visualising time and seasons", thus providing users with sensory and educational experiences of nature while at the same time offering an 'urban' experience through the buildings in the park.

4.2 Realised design

4.2.1 Realised design of Giardini Indro Montanelli: rocks, trees, statues and open fields
A helpful first step in reviewing GIM's realised design is offered by the park signs located at the park's six entrances (shown in Figure 17), representing today's planners' interpretation of the design. The accompanying text, firstly, asserts the park's historical value as first public Milanese park, and traces its history. It started out as "project (...) inspired by the Enlightenment principles of rationalisation of space, evident here in the geometric design of the flower beds and the vistas formed by the tree-lined avenues", realised between 1782 and 1789. A large intervention was then made between 1857 and 1862, the sign reads, "following the new fashion of the English landscape garden", including the introduction of artificial rocks and water features. In the late 19th century, the pond was enlarged, several statues were placed, and the park's "western and eastern boundaries were modified" to include the existing Museum of Natural History and Civic Planetarium in the park. Services and facilities indicated on the map include 'leisure areas', 'cultural places', dog areas, 'trees of particular interest', a café, fountains, monuments and a running track. Considered worthy of more detailed lists under a header reading 'worth visiting' are the 'trees of particular interest' and the monuments; for these, separate lists are provided informing park visitors of the names of the tree species and of the statues and their creators, including QR-codes providing further information. All in all, the signs communicate a wealth of information to park users, on the park's general history, its amenities, and its specific features considered worthy of closer examination; interestingly, these include both natural (trees) and architectural elements (monuments).

In terms of representation of nature, indeed, GIM for the most part presents an idealised

version of nature. The most obvious example of this are the artificial rock formations mentioned earlier, which create an artificial height difference on the park's north side (see Figures 18-20). These rocks, as shown by the design intentions' analysis, are intended to simulate wild nature, i.e. inducing sublime aesthetic experience. In some places, intricate systems of tree roots reveal themselves, and an idyllic (though artificial) pond with overhanging trees separates the more 'wild' northern part and the more pastoral southern section of the park.

As described by the main sign, the eastern part of the park remains in the original, pre-Romantic style, featuring wide tree-lined paths and geometrically positioned greenery. On the west side, too, there is a large, classically beautiful, oval-shaped fountain, circled by symmetrically positioned benches and flanked by a large villa. The south-western part of the park, finally, covering the largest stretch of the total land, is covered by open, pastoral fields of grass, dotted by singular or small groups of trees, and divided into different plots by large, wide paths. While some of these paths are straight and flanked by straight lines of trees, others are serpentine, e.g. those flowing along the sides of the pond.

The furniture and some of the other buildings in the park (e.g. the 'train station' housing a children's railway line), then, are in a vernacular, bucolic style, painted in green and brown to blend in with the greenery (see figures 24-29). Achieving a similar effect, the fence around the pond is made of rustic wood, and overgrown with hedera leaves. A Japanese-style pergola is featured too, made mostly of wood, and used at times for musical performances.

Moreover, in the middle of the park, an enormous, toppled tree trunk is protected by a – again, vernacular – fence; a sign informs visitors that the centuries-old tree fell over suddenly in 2019, and that its remains will remain in the park for their ecological function. The tree has a name: the Oak of Montale, after the 1975 Poetry Nobel prize winner, and "owes its name to an urban legend which contains elements of truth". The sign elaborates on this poet's work (specifically a poem about an oak), as well as the Italian Risorgimento history that took place at the time of the tree's 'birth' (1820-1840, "fervent revolutionary years"), the scientific method for establishing a tree's age, and finally the reasons for keeping a dead tree (ecological value). The mystification of this tree here communicated can be argued to romanticise nature, and the link to the historical period it was planted in is an interesting (Romantic) bridge between nationalism and nature. At the same time, the sign provides educational information on trees' aging process and their value for the ecosystem. The assertion of this value of ecology in the park is reinforced by a sign elsewhere in the park, indicating the rules regarding use of green space that relate to the wellbeing of the park's birds and other species.

Finally, the park also features architectural elements, in the form mostly of monuments and buildings. Some of the buildings are museums, serving educational and recreational purposes; these are built in neoclassical style. Some of the monuments, as well, represent renaissance ideals and style; a good example hereof is the statue of Ruggiero Giuseppe Boscovich (Figure 32), who as a physician, mathematician, astronomer, philosopher, diplomat and poet embodies the homo universalis ideal. This and other statues, too, use a neoclassical style. The monuments, moreover, pay tribute to the actors that realised the park, or are linked to its later development; for example, the architect that led the mid-19th century redesign and Indro Montanelli, the journalist whom the park was named after 2002, are both honoured with statues.[3] The park is enclosed by an intricately ornamented fence, which is closed at night.

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[3] The statue of Montanelli and the park being named after him are controversial in Italy, as the late Montanelli married a 12-year old girl from Eritrea, and has expressed racist and colonialist ideas in his articles.

Figure 17: GIM park sign

Figures 18-23: Picturesque aesthetics at GIM. Clockwise: artificial rock formations invoking sublime wild nature; staircase to elevated section, again using rock features (twice); open pasture (twice); pond with overhanging plants and trees.

Figures 24-29: vernacular (i.e. resembling nature) architecture at GIM. Clockwise: monumental (dead) tree's trunk with wooden information sign and fence; green-painted sign communicating rules regarding non-disturbance of nature; imbricated (overgrown) wooden fence between pond and serpentine path; wooden Japanese pergola (and surroundings); green- and brown-painted train 'station' for children's railway; green-painted benches.
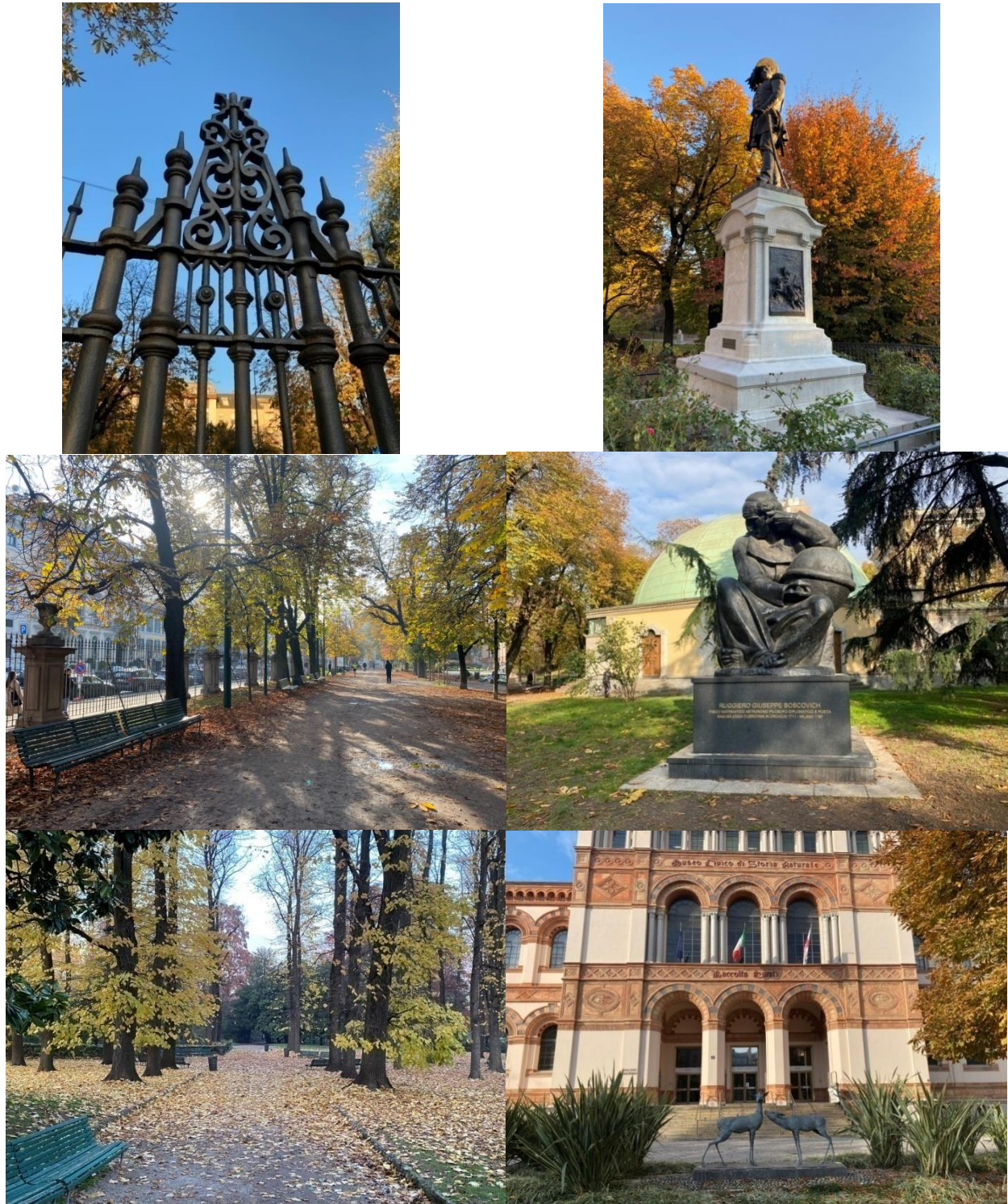
Figures 30-35: Formal and (neo-)classical (landscape-)architectural features at GIM. Clockwise: ornamented fence; statues of Luciano Manara (19th century Milanese soldier & politician) and Ruggero Giuseppe Boscovich (homo universalis who lived and died in Milan); Civic Museum of Natural History with ornamental plants and deer statues; straight path leading to circular clearing; tree-lined, straight path (again).
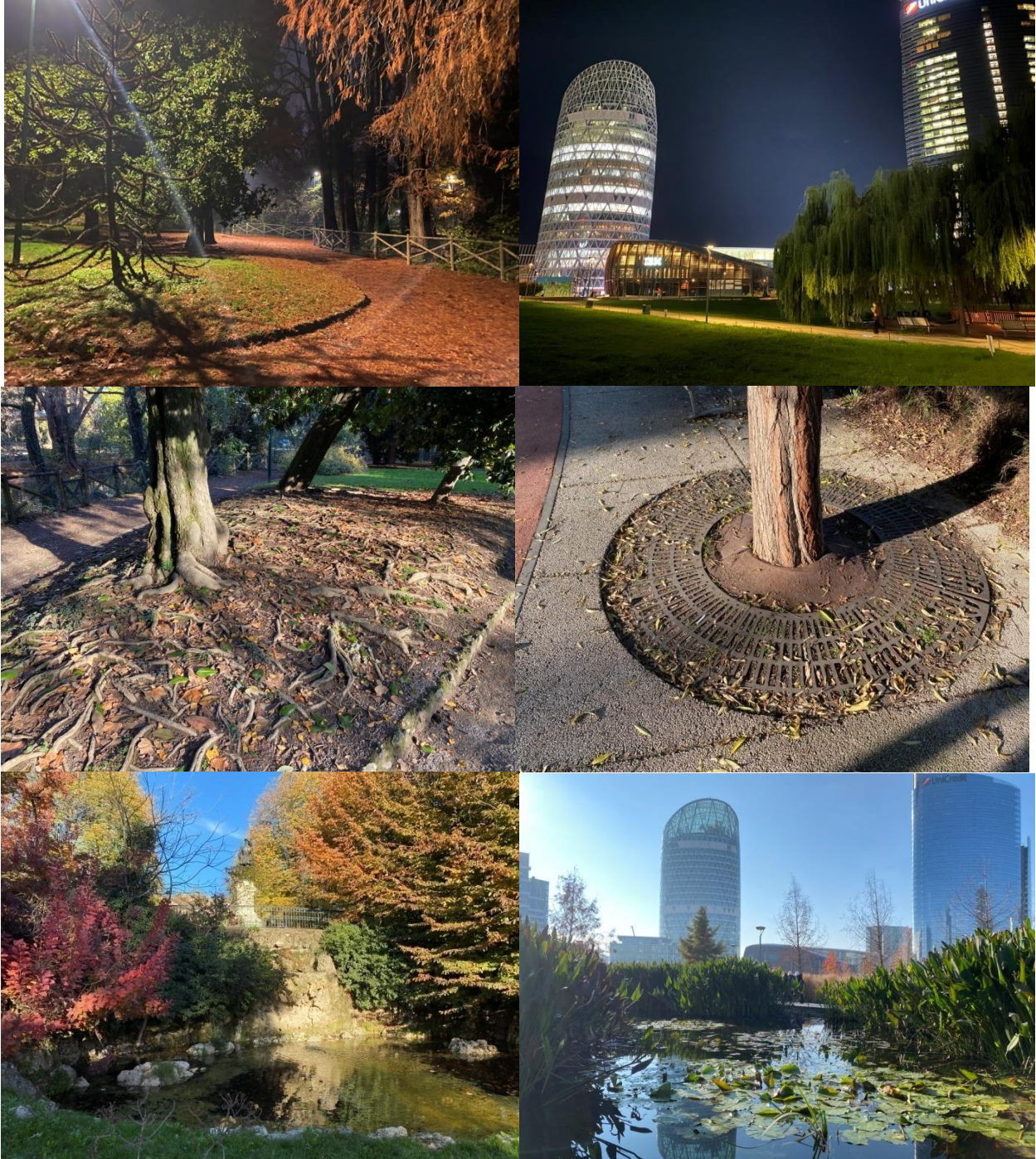
Figures 36-41: Comparison of GIM (left) and BAM (right). From top to bottom: at night, tree roots, water features.

Figure 42: BAM main park sign, repeated throughout the park.
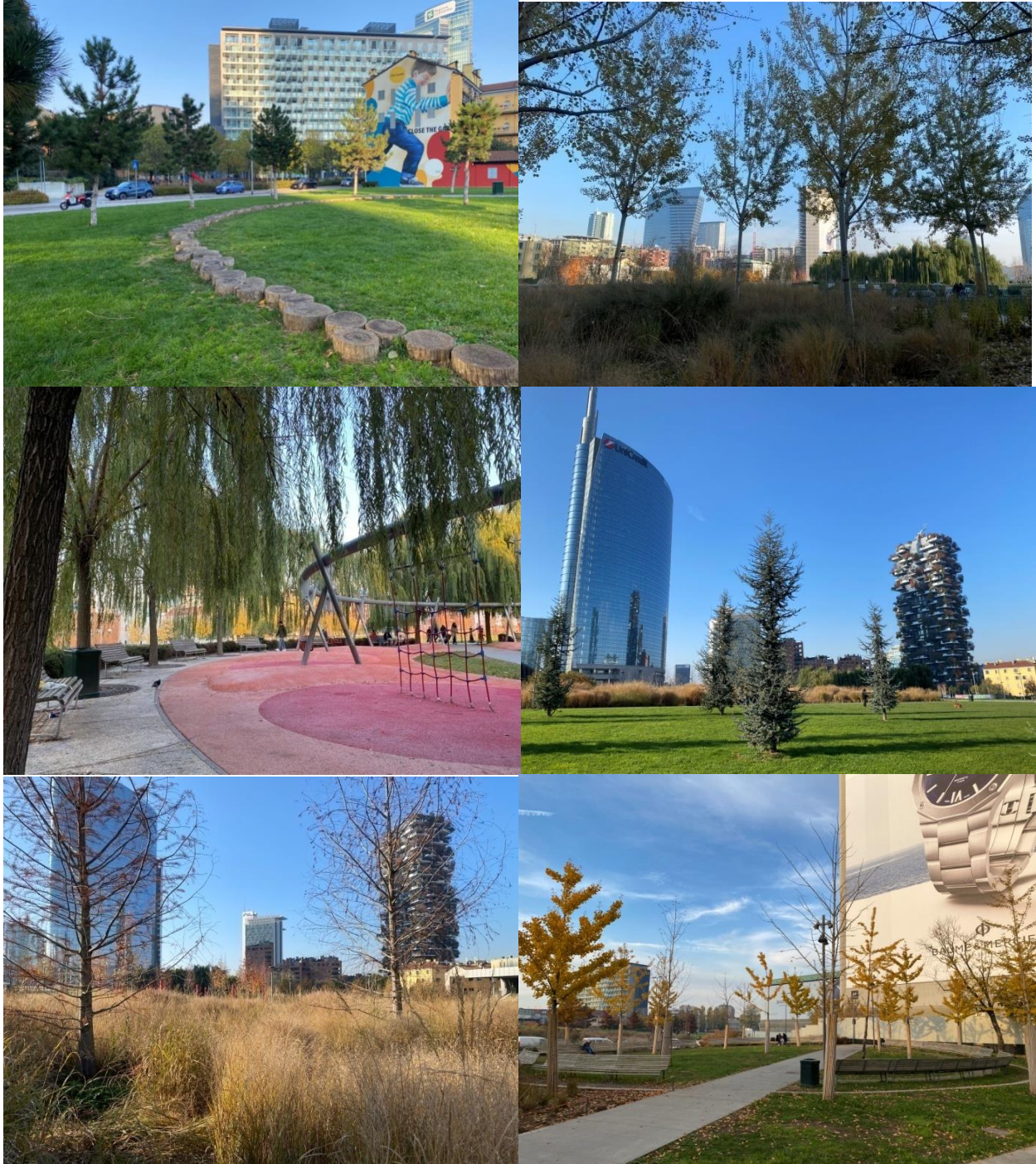
Figures 43-48: Circular forests at BAM, (mostly) seen from the inside. Clockwise: pinus nigra, populus alba, acer griseum, ginkgo biloba, malus, salixbabylonica.
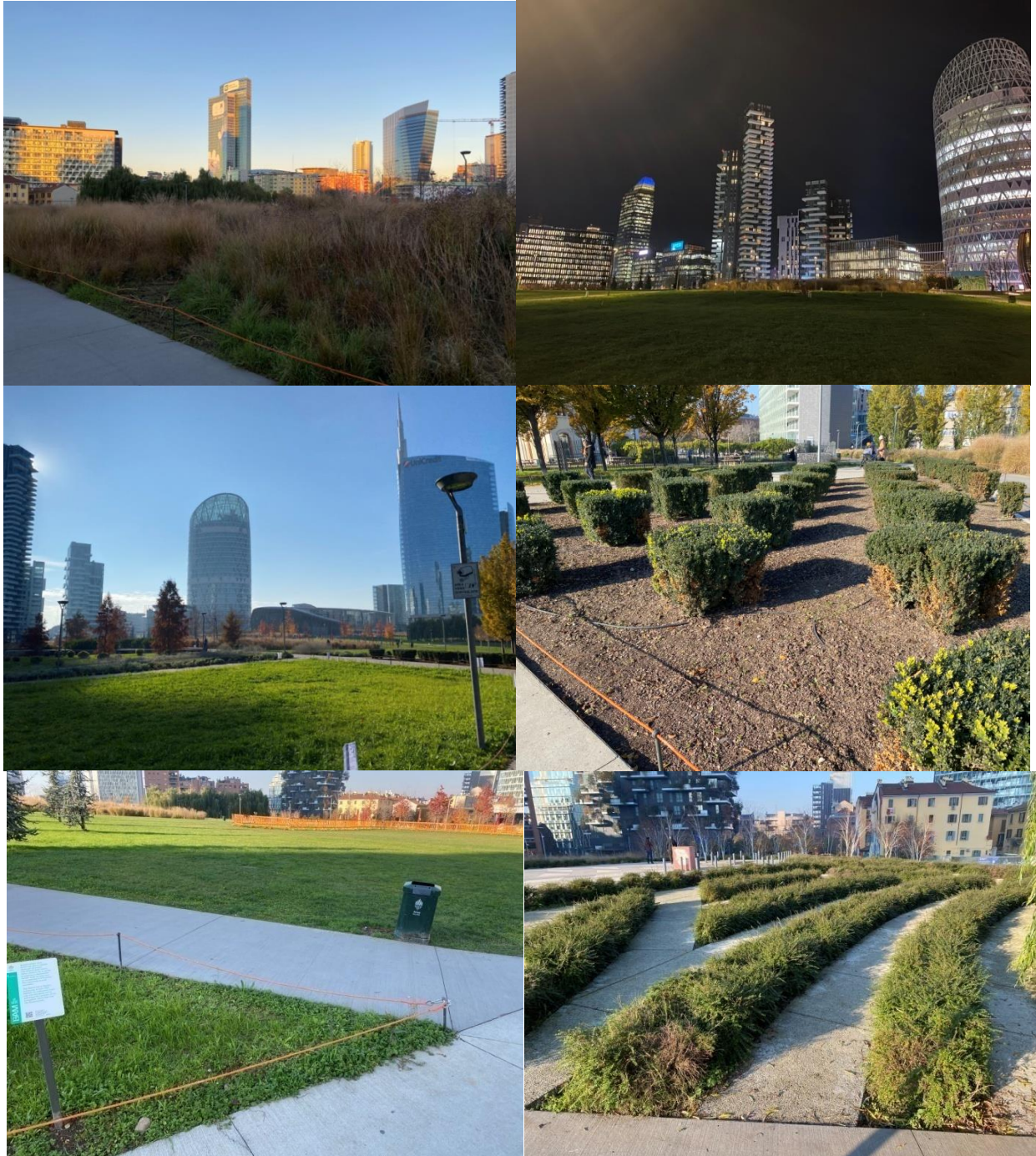
Figures 49-54: Field typologies at BAM. Clockwise: switchgrass shrub garden; lawn; geometric shrub garden (twice); freely growing meadow and mown lawn; meadow.
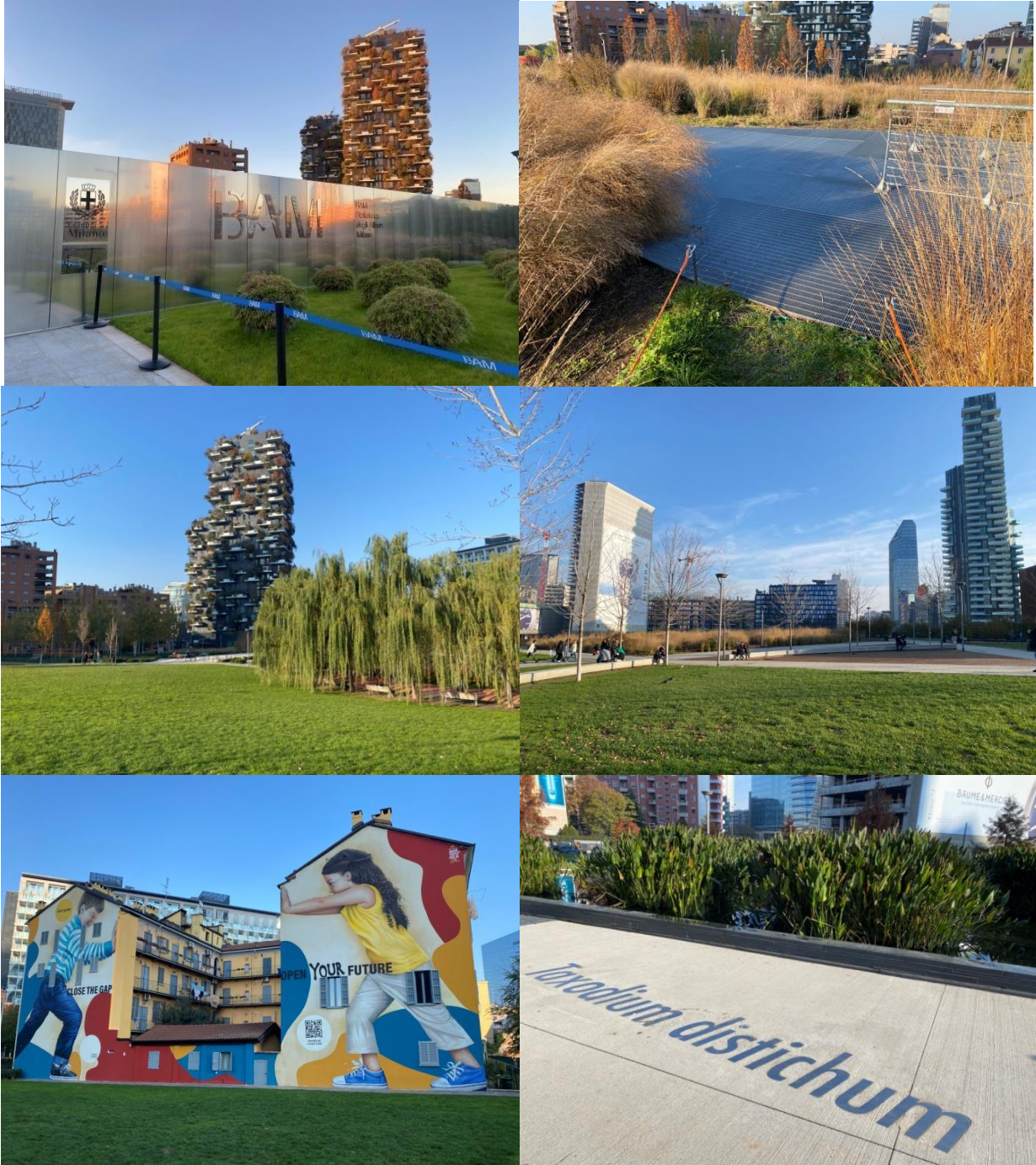
Figures 55-60: Architectural elements in and around BAM. Clockwise: 'BAMbox' (functioning as air shaft for metro underneath), regular metro air shaft, seating area, path lettering communicating name of plant species, housing with mural, Bosco Verticale.

Figures 61-66: Signs at BAM. Top left: sign signalling video surveillance. Top right: poetic path inscription. Others: signs asserting ecological and aesthetic value of (clockwise) perennial plants gardens, meadows, shrub gardens and the aquatic plants garden.
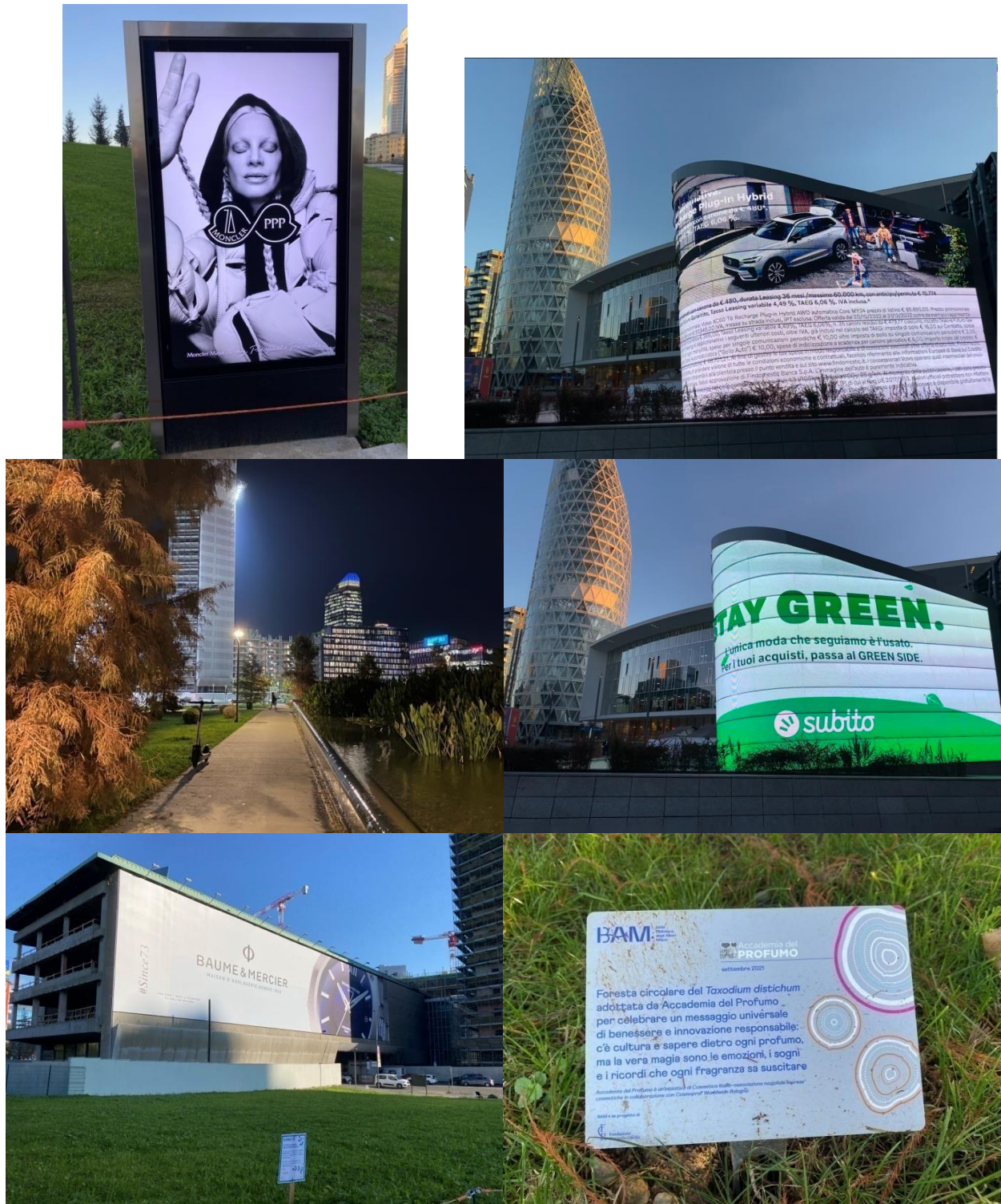
Figures 67-72: Presence of the private sphere at BAM. Clockwise: electronic signs displaying ads for luxury fashion brand, car brand (promoting a 'plug-in hybrid') and second-hand website; sign communicating circular forest has been 'adopted' by the Italian national association of cosmetic businesses; large ad for luxury watch brand; shared electronic scooter.

Figures 73-76: Direct surroundings of BAM.Clockwise: Via MelchiorreGioia, separating the eastern section of the park from the main area; Piazza GaeAulenti, directly linked to the park; promotional signs for the Porta Nuova area, asserting values of sustainability and inclusivity and the aesthetic and cultural value of skyscrapers.

4.2.2 Realised design of BibliotecadegliAlberi: circular forests, open fields and skyscrapers

Although BAM is located at a ten minutes' walk from GIM, the contrast between the two reveals a contrast like that of day and night; BAM, as opposed to the forest-like atmosphere of GIM, is at first sight mostly defined by its open space. Upon closer inspection, the different typologies ascribed to the fields created by the crossing pedestrian paths reveal themselves, as well as the 'circular forests' scattered across the park.

Dissecting BAM's design, let us start again with the general park sign, which is once again placed at all 'entrances' to the park; it reads that BAM "is more than a park"; it's "your open breather in the city, the green heart of Porta Nuova where to live cultural experiences close to nature". The design studio is mentioned, as well as the "innovative public-private partnership" managing the park; then, the fact that the park is always open is mentioned, and due to its large size and "amazing botanical collection", "it's a unique example of a contemporary garden". Then, in green text, the value of urban nature is stressed: "Nature in the city is a valuable asset, so it needs to be treated and protected: help us to take care of it, join the green community of BAMFRIENDs." In the park rules, again, this value is asserted: "Respect nature around you." Other rules mostly coincide with GIM's and generally common park rules, with specific mention of the prohibition of itinerant commercial activities. The map shows the park amenities, the field typologies and the different types of fields, as explained by the legend. Notable amenities include vegetable gardens (located in a small fenced-off area) and a 'chaise lounge area', while the fields feature a labyrinth, 'aromatic plants gardens', an 'aquatic plants garden' (the pond), and 'perennial plants gardens by Piet Oudolf'. The 22 'Circular Forests' are indicated simply by the Latin names of the species they are constituted by, some featuring a nickname (e.g. 'Doorenbos' or 'October Glory').

Looking at the circular forests (figure 43-48), the designers' concerns discussed earlier are easily confirmed; rather than forming the densely grown 'rooms' they had imagined, the trees are relatively small (for now) and located at significant distance from each other. An exception is the circle of willows (*salix babylonica*), which does actually create a closed-off area with a distinct atmosphere. The circular forests are offered a more distinct identity by their interplay with the field typologies; some are located on lawns or have benches inside, meaning visitors can sit there, while others are inaccessible because shrub gardens fill the 'room'. Indeed, the field typologies (see figures 49-54) vary across the park's surface, creating a diverse mosaic of small-scale land uses. Some of these are more 'wild', such as the more-or-less free-growing shrub gardens and fenced-off meadows, while in others nature is more forced, such as in the geometric shrub gardens and the regularly mown lawns.

Beyond its natural elements, BAM also contains myriad architectural features (see figures X-XX). Firstly, there are infrastructural features at various places in the park, such as metro air shafts; interestingly, one of these is concealed by a decorative reflective box dubbed BAMbox (@bam.milano, 2022). Then, there are the paths and benches, which, as opposed to GIM's vernacular style in green and brown, have been created in a functional grey concrete, with lettering in the same reflective chrome style as the 'BAMbox'. More colour is provided by some of the small buildings located in the park, which respectively host the foundation managing the park and several cafés, restaurants, a B&B, and other enterprises; one of the buildings hosts a large mural reading 'Close the gap, open your future'. Finally, although strictly not a part of the park, the iconic Bosco Verticale towers with their similar aesthetic centred around trees form a defining architectural feature for the park.

Returning to BAM's signs, those signs accompanying the circular forests and different fields provide interesting insights regarding the conception of nature that the park's regulators– i.e. the

responsible planners, not necessarily the park's designers – wish to present. The signs assert two dimensions of urban nature's value: ecological and aesthetic. For example: "The garden of aquatic plants represents a small area of biodiversity. Please help us in ensuring this ecosystem is respected; (...) so as not to disturb its delicate balance." Or, regarding the freely growing meadows: "This field is rich in flowers and plants. It is an ideal habitat for pollinators in our city. Let the plants thrive and enjoy the evolution of an ecosystem." In the former, nature is presented as ecologically valuable, but vulnerable; the latter includes a mention of humans' enjoyment of ecological processes. Further stressing the human perception of nature, then, the signs for the carefully maintained shrub gardens refer to these as "geometrical and optical gardens" in different shapes, including "the winding labyrinth, the irregular chessboard of shrubs, the dot-like distribution of sphere-shaped flowerbeds." Here, nature serves aesthetic experience: "colour is the main feature, creating a kaleidoscope of natural beauty." Similarly, the signs accompanying Piet Oudolf's perennial plants gardens speak of a "spectacular balance between colour and movement" in these "dynamic gardens that change according to the season, giving life to breath-taking impressionistic views". They include a diagram representing the change of the plants' appearance throughout the year, and like the signs for the shrub gardens, they indicate which plants bloom in which months, thus explicitly including the dimension of time. The signs' focus on nature's ecological and aesthetic value is further supported by inscriptions on the park's paths; some of these simply indicate the names of plant and tree species, while others spell out poetic quotes. The latter were suggested by users of the 'Porta Nuova Smart Community' Facebook and Instagram pages, and inspired by 'trees, nature and the importance of the ecosystem' (Libreriamo.it, 2018). The best suggestions were picked for use in the park, such as one by a 7-year old girl named Viola: "Trees in the city are beautiful and resemble castles; their shadows make me invent and together we continue to play".

Then, another element of BAM's appearance that stands out at close inspection, distinguishing it from GIM – although, again, not necessarily a part of Inside Outside's original design, but more a result of the design's execution and the park's surroundings – is the visual presence of the private sphere in the park. On the main sign, saliently, 'Volvo Studio Milano', located adjacent to the park, is indicated on the sign's map, the only toponym indicated apart from streets, squares and transit stations. Indeed, Volvo is a park ambassador, as indicated on the bottom of the sign, where its logo features next to those of the other managing and supporting corporations and organisations. Relatedly, the sign seems to assert BAM as a brand; as opposed to the GIM sign, which links to a website overviewing Milan's green spaces, the main BAM sign (and all others) links to BAM's dedicated website, and implores visitors to follow the park's social media channels. Indeed, even the sign's use of the catchy name 'BAM' can be seen in this light. Apart from the corporations mentioned on the sign, other forms of presence of the private sphere can be detected in the park's design, as well; there are electronic signs showing advertisements for e.g. luxury fashion and car brands (Volvo) on two sides of the park. One sign indicates how the *Taxodium distichum* circular forest has been adopted by the Accademia del Profumo (*Perfume Academy*), a collaboration between the Italian national association of cosmetic enterprises and Cosmoprof Worldwide Bologna, a recurring cosmetics industry event, 'to celebrate a universal message of wellbeing and responsible innovation: there is culture and knowledge behind every perfume, but the real magic is the emotions, dreams and memories that every fragrance can evoke'**.** Here, a discursive link is created between corporate innovation, culture, nature and aesthetic experience. Finally, walking through the park, the view is strongly defined by the high-rise buildings that surround it; some of these read the names of the companies house there, such as IBM and UniCredit, while others show enormous

advertisements for luxury products.

Linked to the presence of the private sphere, and more generally 'the city' – as opposed to nature – in the park, are some elements present in its direct surroundings (see Figures73-76). Given the park's porous borders, linked to its identity as a fence-less connector of its surroundings, these elements deserve consideration. Firstly, and perhaps mostly clearly showing to what extent the park is integrated in the surrounding urban fabric, is the road Via Melchiorre Gioia, which cuts through the park and separates its eastern section from the main part. It is clearly audible and visible from the park, ensuring that the city and, in this case, its traffic is never far away and can be heard, seen and even smelled at all times. Then, directly adjacent to the park is Piazza Gae Aulenti, a sleek, futuristic circular plaza filled with skyscrapers, shops, offices and co-working spaces, which formed one of the pillars of the Porta Nuova urban renewal project. The square transitions into the park smoothly, and no real border between the two can be identified. Then, at the time of observation, construction work was underway on one of the skyscrapers bordering both BAM and Piazza Gae Aulenti; the works were shielded using billboards (see Figures 75 and 76) promoting Porta Nuova, using slogans including 'Parkour under skyscrapers', 'You are in the first sustainable quarter in the world', 'Where spaces are for everyone', 'Discover Porta Nuova', and 'In Porta Nuova and BAM we promote a sustainable lifestyle, everyday'. Clearly, Porta Nuova is asserted to be an inclusive and sustainable cultural hub, with both its skyscrapers and BAM playing an important role in establishing the district's identity.

In conclusion, BAM's realised design – including elements that did not form a part of the original design vision – creates a wide, open space dotted with a mosaic of circles of trees and different types of fields, the latter separated by a web of paths. Upon closer inspection, the park's signs stress the value of nature in terms of both ecology and aesthetics; indeed, these values are translated into the field typologies, which consist of both more 'wild' types such as meadows, serving biodiversity, and more controlled elements such as geometric shrubs, serving an aesthetic function. The park's architectural features are executed in a modern, minimalist style, with lettering on the paths providing an interesting touch. Finally, as opposed to in GIM, the city is never far away in BAM; apart from the skyscrapers looming over the park, there is a busy road passing through it and it borders a busy corporate square, and on its signs the park is presented as a brand, integrated into the upcoming Porta Nuova area.

4.3 User experience

4.3.1 User experience of GIM and BAM - survey results

The third and final dimension of analysis, complementing design intentions and realised design, was user experience, approached using a survey among park users and an analysis of Google Reviews data. For the former, the data have most value comparatively, contrasted with the respective results for the same question for the other park; therefore, this section will deal with the survey results for both parks, after which section 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 will deal with the other results for GIM and BAM separately. As discussed in the methods section, the survey was conducted among random park users, with the questions based on both the design intentions belonging to the theoretical paradigms (outlined in section 2.2) and the parks' stated design intentions (as discussed in section 4.1). A full explanation of the questions and their relevance to the research can be found in the Appendix, and a further interpretation of the survey results in the context of the research' further results will be offered in Chapter 5. The results are based on 34 respondents for GIM, and 40 for BAM.

The first category of questions related to experience of nature and related themes. As shown in Tables 4 and 5, GIM users generally experienced more connection to nature, felt more impressed by nature (i.e. sublime aesthetic experience), and noticed more small details in nature, corresponding with

GIM's goal of simulating wild nature. At the same time, more BAM users felt like they learn about nature in the park, corresponding to its objective of educating citizens about nature. Practically equal scores were given by both park's users regarding the feeling of being 'in nature', then; and finally, more than GIM's, although still relatively few of BAM's users felt concerned with climate change while in the park, and similarly, relatively more but absolutely even fewer of BAM's users felt optimistic about overcoming it.

#	Field	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
1	In this park I feel more connected to nature	4.06	0.80	0.64
2	In this park I feel impressed by nature's greatness	3.82	0.86	0.73
3	In this park I notice small details in nature	3.65	1.13	1.29
4	In this park I learn about nature	3.31	1.04	1.09
5	In this park I feel like I'm in nature	3.59	1.19	1.42
6	In this park I feel worried about climate change	3.06	0.80	0.64
7	In this park I feel optimistic about humanity overcoming or adapting to climate change	2.94	0.90	0.81

Table 4: GIM survey results for questions on 'nature'

#	Field	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
1	In this park I feel more connected to nature	3.85	0.65	0.43
2	In this park I feel impressed by nature's greatness	3.10	0.77	0.59
3	In this park I notice small details in nature	3.50	0.74	0.55
4	In this park I learn about nature	3.40	0.86	0.74
5	In this park I feel like I'm in nature	3.60	0.80	0.64
6	In this park I feel worried about climate change	3.20	0.75	0.56
7	In this park I feel optimistic about humanity overcoming or adapting to climate change	3.05	0.74	0.55

Table 5: BAM survey results for questions on 'nature'

With regards to experience of the city and related themes, then, as opposed to the higher score for GIM regarding feeling impressed by 'nature's greatness', BAM's users responded significantly more positively regarding feeling impressed by 'the city's greatness', i.e. experiencing a sense of the architectural sublime. Moreover, BAM achieved higher scores for making its users appreciate the city of Milan and the surrounding urban area more, corresponding to the park's goal of making the city and Portanova area more attractive. Nonetheless, GIM, too, achieved high scores for these two questions, showcasing how much urban parks' users appreciate them. Saliently, despite BAM's priority of serving as 'urban connector', a mean of 'only' 3.65 out of 5 was achieved regarding users' sense of the park

connecting the surrounding areas, as opposed to 3.81 for GIM. Similarly, although BAM's slogan advertises it as a place to 'live cultural experiences (close to nature)', fewer of its respondents felt like they 'experience culture' at BAM than those at GIM (3.47 vs. 3.71). Finally, for both parks, only a small majority felt like the city is too present at the respective parks (2.76 and 2.70), representing relatively low results compared to the other questions.

#	Field	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
1	In this park I feel impressed by the city's greatness	3.12	0.76	0.57
2	This park makes me appreciate the city of Milan more	3.94	1.00	1.00
3	This park makes me appreciate the neighbourhood it's in more	4.18	0.78	0.62
4	This park connects the surrounding neighbourhoods	3.81	0.81	0.65
5	I think the city is too strongly present in this park	2.76	1.11	1.24
6	In this park I experience culture	3.71	0.82	0.68

Table 6: GIM survey results for questions on 'the city'

#	Field	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
1	In this park I feel impressed by the city's greatness	3.70	0.84	0.71
2	This park makes me appreciate the city of Milan more	4.30	0.56	0.31
3	This park makes me appreciate the neighbourhood it's in more	4.26	0.55	0.30
4	This park connects the surrounding neighbourhoods	3.65	0.85	0.73
5	I think the city is too strongly present in this park	2.70	0.64	0.41
6	In this park I experience culture	3.47	0.75	0.57

Table 7: BAM survey results for questions on 'the city'

The third and final category of statements dealt with the themes of 'relaxing and reflecting'. Interestingly, GIM achieved higher scores for all but one question, most of them in line with the park's goals of offering visitors a chance "to rest or to meditate" (Zanetti, 1869, p. 53), inducing "the cessation of any troubled thought" (p. 50); respondents largely agreed, for example, that they could take a break from the city, feel more relaxed, and let their thoughts run free, and that they felt welcome at GIM. Much fewer of respondents at GIM, although still more than at BAM, indicated that the park made them

feel 'melancholic and nostalgic', or 'inspired to be a better person', a logical result given these questions' more abstract nature. Saliently, more of GIM's visitors, too, felt like the park has 'rooms with different atmospheres', a stated design intention for BAM; nonetheless, BAM still achieved a score of 3.80 here. Finally, the only question that BAM scored higher in for this category concerned feeling 'more ambitious'; 3.25 out of each 5 respondents agreed with this statement, as opposed to 2.71 for GIM.

#	Field	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
1	In this park I can take a break from the city	4.18	0.62	0.38
2	In this park I feel more relaxed	4.35	0.48	0.23
3	In this park I find it easy to let my thoughts run free	4.00	0.71	0.50
4	This park makes me feel melancholic and nostalgic	2.41	1.14	1.30
5	In this park I feel inspired to be a good person	3.41	0.91	0.83
6	In this park I feel more ambitious	2.71	1.07	1.15
7	I feel welcome in this park	4.29	0.67	0.44
8	This park has different areas with different atmospheres	4.09	0.79	0.63

Table 8: GIM survey results for questions on 'relaxing and reflecting'

#	Field	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
1	In this park I can take a break from the city	4.15	0.65	0.43
2	In this park I feel more relaxed	4.10	0.62	0.39
3	In this park I find it easy to let my thoughts run free	3.70	0.71	0.51
4	This park makes me feel melancholic and nostalgic	2.15	0.91	0.83
5	In this park I feel inspired to be a good person	3.11	0.72	0.52
6	In this park I feel more ambitious	3.25	0.70	0.49
7	I feel welcome in this park	3.95	0.51	0.26
8	This park has different areas with different atmospheres	3.80	0.60	0.36

Table 9: BAM survey results for questions on 'relaxing and reflecting'

Finally, an open question at the end of the survey asked respondents to describe in as many or as few words as they wanted to describe what they like and/or disliked about the park they were in, yielding some interesting results. For GIM, many responses mentioned experiences of 'serenity', 'peace', 'oxygen', 'freedom' and 'relaxation', and the possibility to take a break from the city. The variety of trees present in the park was also often mentioned, or simply the 'greenery'. One respondent wrote that they liked 'the combination of trees, water and animals, and being able to find a place to sit in the sun without smelling pollution from cars', thus highlighting the park's 'natural' features, the removal from

the city, and the experience of calm (taking a seat) provided thereby.

For BAM, then, responses were slightly different, and more varied, focusing on more different aspects of the park design and experience. One respondent mentioned specifically that they liked the open character of the green space, and another that they liked that there are ample free spaces. One response mentioned the ample presence of 'harmonious and different spaces, done very well even if with few trees'. Another, too, mentioned the limited presence of tree, in terms of size: 'I dislike that it will take time to grow; it should have been started earlier!'. Mention was made, too, of the influence of seasons; according to one visitor, the park is 'even more beautiful in spring, with all the flowers'. Another described the park as 'fragrant'. Yet another really liked the particularity of the plants' shapes, most likely referring to the geometric gardens: 'I find them very clean and orderly'. One respondent, then, mentioned how the park made them appreciate the area of the city more; another highly appreciated 'the integration of the park with the rest of the city and the surrounding neighbourhoods', and another really liked 'the landscapes'. At the same time, another respondent wished for 'more harmony with the landscape', possibly alluding to the contrast between the highly modern urban surroundings of the park (including the skyscrapers) and the green space. Regarding use, respondents mentioned 'strolling around' and 'chitchatting'; and, in terms of aesthetic experience, one respondent wrote of 'contact with nature', another said that the park 'takes me back home' (to a countryside place, presumably), and similarly, someone wrote that the park made them 'feel more close to my home in the mountains and nature'. Finally, some responses, like at GIM, said the park 'creates a break from chaotic daily life', or offers 'a space of quiet in the city'.

4.3.2 User experience of GIM – Google Reviews analysis results
The analysis of 100 Google reviews of the two parks, as outlined in Chapter 3, further illuminated how users experience the spaces. As described, the reviews were first coded In Vivo according to their core message(s), after which the resulting codes were categorised and, where relevant, sub-categorised. The following section will present the results of this analysis.

For GIM, the most used term to describe the park was *bello* ('beautiful'); 25 reviewers used this word in their review. Other descriptive terms referring to the park in general or the user experience it offers often referred to the park's size, perceived as large (17 mentions), degree of maintenance (13 mentions; 9 positive, 4 critical), peace and calm (7 mentions: e.g., 'a serene and peaceful place', 'where calm reigns'), or the park's surprising character (3 mentions, e.g. ' a discovery every time'). Specifically interesting observations by reviewers included the park's 'characteristic ascents and descents', and the fact that the park 'seems much less artificial than others'.

Of course, reviewers often mentioned the park's green character; 20 reviewers specifically used the word *verde* ('green' or 'greenery'). 4 people mentioned the fish and birds that can be spotted in the pond, plus one person that discussed the general 'possibility of seeing many animals'; at the same time, 6 people mentioned specifically their appreciation of the trees and/or plants (or simply 'vegetation') present. Interestingly, 2 people referred to sublime aesthetic experience, speaking of 'the immensity of nature' and admiring 'the gigantic century-old tree which gives an idea of the power of nature'. Finally, 6 people added a temporal dimension to their observation, stating the park is especially beautiful in spring (2), autumn (2), or simply in every season (2).Users' appreciation of the park's natural elements was supported by the photos analysed; the analysis yielded 57 counts of natural elements featured, like the birds in the pond (6 times), monumental trees (5 times), or blossoming flowers or trees (6 times) – although, to be fair, with the density of trees at GIM, it is difficult to take a picture of e.g. a building

without including trees, meaning the total number of 57 might be slightly distorted. Moreover, 21 pictures featured the park's pond, and 11 pictures featured the rock features.

Figure 76: images posted to Google reviews by GIM visitors

With regards to uses, the most mentioned use form in the text reviews was walking or strolling (19 mentions). In second place, the simple practice of 'relaxing', 'finding some calm' or 'resting' was mentioned by 14 people. 8 people, then, mentioned more active uses, such as running, a 'Sunday bike ride', or simply 'outdoor sports'. Other uses mentioned included reading a book (3 times), taking one's dogs, 'chatting with friends on a bench', taking photos, and 'escaping the summer heat'. Invoking GIM's stated intention of offering a place of meditation and contemplation of nature, then, one reviewer rather poetically described being able to 'stop and admire what nature offers to us, to open our souls to a little beauty'; similarly, others mentioned taking 'a meditative walk', how the park's spaces 'invite you to linger', and being able to 'enjoy nature' and 'admire the greenery'. Finally, the theme of taking a break from the city to 'breathe' was often touched upon. 9 people referred to the park specifically as a 'green lung' or 'green oasis', and 11 people remarked on the contrast between the greenery and the 'city where concrete and asphalt predominate', the opportunity to 'escape for a moment from the frenzy of the city', or similar comments about being surrounded by nature and taking a pause from the city.

Then, many of the reviewers appreciated GIM's diversity, and thereby its inclusive nature; 9 people mentioned how the park is 'frequented by people of all ages', or comments along those lines, and the park's dog- and child-friendly nature were widely applauded. Regarding the park's facilities and features, similar comments were made, and no less than 20 reviewers provided a (short) list of everything the park has to offer: 'nothing is missing'. Apart from the (semi-)natural elements (e.g. the trees and the pond) discussed earlier, a notably highly appreciated element was the presence of the Museum of Natural History and the Planetarium on the park's east-side; 20 people made mention of these, some lauding their educational function. Otherwise, a few people mentioned the 'architectural beauty' present in the park, including 2 mentions of the 'spectacular fountain', and one of the formerly mentioned museums' beauty. The images, too, heavily featured the park's architectural elements; 20 of the images focused on a statue, and 11 featured one of the monumental buildings in the park (such as the museums). Other elements featured included the wooden and iron fences in and around the park (7 times) – although never as focal point of the pictures – the pergola (once), the railway (once), and the benches (4 times).
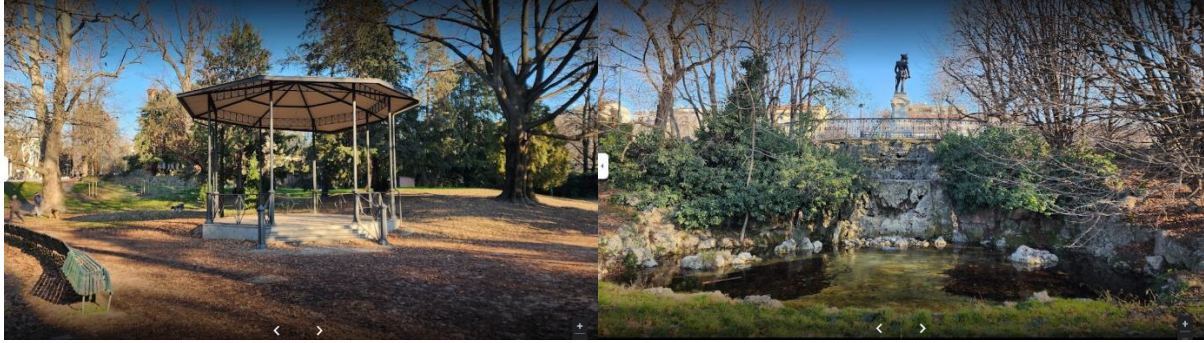
Figure77: images posted to Google reviews by GIM visitors

Finally, many of the reviewers link the park to its position in the city of Milan; no less than 37 of the 100 reviewers mention the word *Milano,* albeit mostly in a factual manner (e.g. "nice place in Milan"). 22 out of these refer to the park's central position "in the heart of Milan", "in one of the busiest areas of the city"; at the same time, the park is not necessarily linked to the specific neighbourhood it is located in, with only one reviewer mentioning the Porta Venezia area. At the same time, 8 of the images analysed focused on the streets surrounding the park, indicating the connection made by reviewers between the park and its surroundings. Then, two people compared the park specifically to New York City's Central Park, implying a similar role for GIM vis-à-vis Milan; "living in Milan, one step away from the Milanese Central Park is priceless". Indeed, 8 people call the park (one of) the most beautiful in the city, and others say it makes it "worth living in Milan", or establish it as "loved by all Milanese".

4.3.3 User experience of BAM – Google reviews analysis results

Much like the survey results, the text analysis of BAM's Google reviews show a more varied user experience than GIM's. Let us kick off again with the descriptive terms used to describe the park's general atmosphere or look; whereas GIM was overwhelmingly described as 'beautiful' and at times as 'large' or 'peaceful', BAM's users refer to it as 'particular', 'enchanting', 'one of a kind' and 'inspiring' – although also 'weird'. 9 people called BAM 'beautiful' or a synonym (against 25 for GIM), 3 called it large (17 for GIM), one 'not very large' and another even a 'micro-park' – GIM is roughly one-and-a-half times BAM's size[4] – and 6 referred to it as peaceful, calm, or something similar (7 for GIM). Other descriptions varied widely, although they were mostly positive; besides those mentioned earlier, notable ones included 'scenographic', 'welcoming', 'charming', 'designer', and even 'breathtaking' and 'a little paradise', but also 'boring', 'too gentrified', and 'empty'. Finally, 6 reviewers noted the modern character of the park, and one person mentioned how it's 'an open park without gates'. In the images analysed, the visually open character of the park was clearly reflected, with 19 images featuring a wide, open view of the park (rather than focusing on any specific element).

The park's highly modern surroundings were a highly popular topic of discussion among the reviewers; 38 reviewers commented on the architecture around the park and/or its contrast with the greenery. 15 of these mentioned specifically the visual impact of the skyscrapers, speaking e.g. of 'great views of Milan's modern high-rises', the 'beautiful skyscrapers of Italian modernity', or stating that 'you can see the whole skyline of Milan'. Several others described specifically that they liked the contrast present; 'I like this idea of the future, where modernity, nature and large spaces coexist', and 'I love the contrast of mirrored buildings and nature'. Of course, the famous Bosco Verticale towers were singled

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[4] GIM is 160.000 m^2 and BAM is 95.000 m^2.

out by some reviewers (6); 5 hereof discussed it in a positive sense, one calling it 'really amazing'. Another reviewer more critically argued that 'given the health consequences of global warming, it is really a great solution to place plants around residential buildings, unfortunately right now this solution is available only to the richest citizens'. Nonetheless, most reviewers thus applauded the presence of high-rise architecture surrounding the park, calling it 'beautiful', ' immersive', 'suggestive', 'evocative' and 'inspiring', and declaring the park 'perfect for contemplating these constructions'. Indeed, these observations could be interpreted as signalling experiences of what has been theorised as the 'architectural sublime' (more on this in section 5.2). Again, the analysis of the images provided by reviewers reflected the text reviews; no less than 80 of the pictures featured high-rise buildings, although perhaps this statistics mostly reflects the omnipresence of these buildings in the park's appearance. Nonetheless, 15 out of these centred on skyscrapers as the central subject of the photo. Moreover, 38 out of the images featuring skyscrapers featured Bosco Verticale, including 4 with people posing with the towers, showing their popularity among BAM visitors.

Figures 78-79: images posted to Google reviews by BAM visitors

Strongly linked to this theme of architecture and modernity is the Porta Nuova urban renewal project, and its value for the city of Milan. 11 people discussed the project, all positively; e.g., some called it 'one of the best urban interventions in Europe' and 'a profound urban transformation'. Indeed, it is clear that BAM makes its users appreciate the city of Milan as well as the surrounding neighbourhoods more; reviewers called it 'a symbol of the new Milan' or 'a beautiful corner of my city', and argued that 'it makes Milan more like those evolved foreign metropolises that also have important green spaces in the heart of the city'. In total, 33 people referred to the park in the context of the city of Milan (37 for GIM), and 5 in the context of the surrounding areas (e.g., 'next to the characteristic Isola district'). Indeed, 4 of the images analysed focused on the park's urban surroundings.

Of course, the green elements of the park formed a topic of discussion, too. 20 people mentioned specifically 'green' or 'nature' (same for GIM); moreover, 2 reviewers mentioned spotting aquatic animals in the pond ('the pool full of red fish made my day'), and 11 people mentioned the flowers, plants and trees, present for one in 'infinite variety'. 3 of these mentioned appreciating the signs indicating the plant species, although 5 others mentioned that there are (too) few trees and that they need time to grow: 'trees are very spread out (...). Interesting idea, but they project basically no shade'. More critically, another argued that BAM was 'made in the name of the green concept, but in fact is a strip of earth isolated in the middle of the concrete', and another remarked the 'sterile' park 'doesn't feel like a garden at all'. The 100 images analysed, to, highlighted the park's greenery, with 50 images featuring elements of greenery in different degrees of prominence. Out of these, 15 showed a circular forest (with the circular shape clearly recognisable), 8 showed geometrical gardens, 2 showed

shrub gardens, 3 showed meadows, and 4 specifically highlighted certain flowers, plants or (blossoming) trees. Moreover, 11 of the pictures featured the pond (or 'garden of aquatic plants') and its water plants, and 6 of these highlighted fish or duck swimming in it, showing this park features' popularity among users.

With regards to the passing of time, 3 people made mention of the park being especially nice in spring (for the flowers) or, rather, in all seasons, and 2 others remarked it is beautiful during sunset. At the same time, 15 people remarked that the park is dangerous at night – 'gangs roam freely' – and thus should be avoided then, seriously undermining the designers' intention of providing a round-the-clock public space. Nonetheless, out of the 100 images analysed, 7 were taken at nighttime (i.e. in the dark), as opposed to 2 for GIM, showing the park is, indeed, used more round-the-clock.

Figures 80-81: images posted to Google reviews by BAM visitors

Regarding use forms and facilities, finally, whereas walking formed by far the most popular activity at GIM (19 mention), only 4 people discussed walking around BAM. 16 people, contrarily, mentioned sitting or lying down or simply 'relaxing' (14 for GIM). Then, 5 reviewers mentioned eating, in the form of a picnic, a snack, or at a catering facility nearby; 2 people spoke of taking pictures, and 3 mentioned exercise. Generally, however, the focus was on relaxing, looking at the scenery and simply 'enjoying a peaceful day outside'. Indeed, 9 people called the park a 'green oasis' (same number for GIM) or otherwise referred to BAM as a place to retreat from the city and 'pretend to be somewhere else entirely'. As for the parks features and facilities, 6 reviewers mentioned the commercial facilities located in and next to the park ('lots of shops and restaurants!'), 9 people provided a list of the facilities present in the park (e.g. the playground), and 3 people specifically praised the 'magnificent' mural (shown in Figure 59).

4.4 Synthesis

The table below synthesises the results described in this chapter.

	Giardini Indro Montanelli	*Biblioteca degli Alberi*
Design intentions	To create a space: - resembling wild nature - that reflects positively on the neighbourhood, the city and its commercial, artistic and industrial development - for recreation and socialising - of unity, comfort and health - with 'landscape effects' - with a mix types of vegetation and colours - that invites users to relax, reflect, meditate and contemplate - that is welcoming and inclusive - that induces an aesthetic experience of harmony - that provides food for thought and aesthetic pleasure for the observant spectator	To create a space: - mediating between the city's ground level and the high-rise buildings [municipality] - connecting the surrounding areas with each other - that is completely open and accessible 24/7 - that, as a modern botanical garden, exhibits a diverse group of plant and tree species - that presents a large variety of colours and other sensations - that provides interest and income for the area of the city it is in - where nature, in some places, can grow freely, and carry much biodiversity - that balances nature and city - that facilitates 'leisure, sports and beauty' - consisting of different 'rooms' with distinct atmospheres, contrasting with the open spaces - allowing an experience of time through the passing of the seasons - that facilitates people meeting, having fun, and learning

Realised design	A space:
	- with artificial, wild-looking rocks and water features
	- with formal, geometric flowerbeds and wide, tree-lined paths
	- with open fields
	- with two museums with educative and leisurely functions
	- with architectural features (e.g. benches) in vernacular style
	- with myriad monumental trees, indicated on signs with (links to) further information
	- with myriad monuments and statues honouring Milanese intellectuals, politicians and other notable figures, again indicated on signs providing users with further
		A space:
		- with an open character, that is easy to overview and offers views of the surrounding high-rise buildings, including the famous Bosco Verticale
		- that exhibits a variety of tree species, placed in circles, although at too much distance to create separate 'rooms'
		- that through its signs strongly asserts both the ecological and aesthetic value of nature
		- composed of a mosaic of garden and field typologies, including:
		  - geometric shrub gardens
		  - free-growing meadows
		  - lawns
		  - a pond, or 'garden of aquatic plants'
		- with modern architectural features, including paths with inscriptions, and a

	information sources - with a wide variety of facilities and amenities for sports and recreation - surrounded by a (ornamented) fence	large mural - with a relatively strong visual presence of private-sphere and commercial activity, and of 'the city' generally - with no fence, open 24/7
User experience	Users: - feel connected to and impressed by nature - appreciate more the city of Milan, and the park's central position in it - feel they can take a break from the city - feel at peace, more relaxed and able to think and meditate - feel welcome and appreciate the park's diversity - appreciate the greenery, flora and fauna - appreciate the park's appearance in specific seasons - perceive the park as beautiful and large - besides relaxing, use the park for sports	Users: - perceive the park as modern, interesting and particular - learn about nature - feel impressed by the presence of the city, in the form of high-rise buildings - appreciate more the city of Milan and the 'new Milan', and the park's central position in it - feel they can take a break from the city - feel more relaxed - appreciate the park's appearance in specific seasons - besides relaxing, use the park for walking - appreciate the commercial facilities at and near the park

Table 10: synthesis of research results.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and discussion

This chapter will conclude this research, answering the research question and providing a discussion on the conclusions' implications and connection with the background themes.

The main research question this research has sought to answer, once again, is:

- How do the *design intentions*, *realised design* and *user perception* of *historic and contemporary urban parks* correspond to each other, and relate to different *ideals and trends in park theory*, both *historic and modern*?

The sub-questions:

- What different ideological paradigms have existed throughout landscape architecture and planning history regarding the purpose, style and experience of parks?
- What were the design intentions for the two parks studied upon their creation?
- How do the two parks' designs incorporate the designers' intentions?
- Does users' experience of the parks correspond with the design intentions and realised design?
- How do the two parks' design intentions, realised design and user experience correspond with the different paradigms' prescriptions regarding these phenomena?

Section 2.3 has provided an elaborate overview of the ideological paradigms regarding park design that have existed throughout history. Section 4.1, then, reviewed the design intentions of the two parks studied (Giardini Indro Montanelli (GIM) and Biblioteca degli Alberi (BAM)). In section 4.2, the park's realised designs were examined, and finally, users experiences were scrutinised in section 4.3. With the answers to these questions, we have the tools to answer the final sub-question and the main research question.

5.1 Conclusion

The design for GIM sought to create a space resembling wild nature, mixing different types of vegetation and colours, and with a positive effect on the neighbourhood and city; moreover, it aimed to be welcoming and inclusive, offering unity, comfort and health. Users were intended to be able to use the park for recreation, socialising, relaxing, and reflecting, with those users receptive to such more elevated experiences gaining food for thought and aesthetic pleasure from the presence of at times wild-looking, at times harmoniously presented nature. These ideals can be understood to align very well with those of the picturesque paradigm of park design, with some dimensions present of the preceding aesthetic ideal of the (classically) beautiful, valuing harmony and unity, linked to the French formal garden paradigm. Besides the intention to include these values, the discourse used in the source representing GIM's design intentions reflects the Romantic era's aesthetic ideals of the sublime and picturesque, seeking to balance wild-looking (sublime) nature and more formal green and architectural elements. This is expressed, for example, through the description of the contrast between the rugged rock features and the adorned, ornamental fence. Moreover, the park had explicit intentions for the aesthetic experiences to be had by its users, aligning perfectly with the picturesque paradigm's ideals of meditation and contemplation of nature – specifically centring the more observant, educated spectator.

GIM's realised design, to this day, can be concluded to achieve its intentions successfully. The park is divided into a more formal section with tree-lined paths, an open, pastoral section dotted with

trees, and a wild-looking, elevated section with rock features, perfectly translating the intentions into a tripartite design. The park's features reflect the intention of balancing natural and design elements that both invoke nature-related experiences and reflect positively on the city and its 'good taste'; they vary from large rock formations, monumental trees with impressive root systems and a quaint pond overgrown with vegetation to monumental buildings, a large fountain and statues of local and national heroes. Vernacular architectural features and serpentine paths represent the objective of blending design with nature, while the more neoclassical architectural features (including statues) can be interpreted as playing the role of 'follies' (see section 2.3.2) that invoke the grandeur of the past. Indeed, all these design elements are often-used in picturesque parks, and – with the exception of the formal section, which, again, relates more closely to the French formal garden's style – align very well with that paradigm's stylistic prescriptions (although Olmsted's ideal of a park where the city is not present is not realised). The park signs show how today's planners have interpreted the park's design and choose to represent it to today's visitors; indeed, they translate the design intentions well, highlighting the park's monuments and 'trees of particular interest'. The sign accompanying the trunk of the 'Oak of Montale' is especially salient; it mythicises and romanticises the tree, its history and its namegiver with a hint of nationalism, while simultaneously providing scientific, educative information on trees and their value for the ecosystem. Hereby, nature is romanticised, in the original design spirit, and simultaneously, today's postmodern view of (urban) nature is represented, adding today's planners' touch – the discussion will further touch upon this distinction between designer and planner.

Finally, GIM's user experience, once again, can be concluded to align very well with the intentions of its designer back in the 19th century. Users were found to have significant experiences related to nature around them, feeling more connected to and impressed by nature around them – i.e., the (aesthetic) experiences envisioned. Moreover, the park's positive reflection on the city of Milan and the surrounding neighbourhood was widely asserted, reflecting another design intention. Then, users felt welcome in the park and able to exercise a variety of use forms, including those of recreation, socialising, relaxing and reflecting stated as intended uses. Directly reflecting Olmsted's picturesque ideal of an 'oasis in the city', many users expressed how they experience the park as a place to take a break from the urban chaos, and reconnect with nature; indeed, as discussed, the aesthetic experiences of nature that were also intended for this park – and achieved – form a central dimension of the picturesque paradigm, and thus relate closely to GIM's intentions and experience.

In conclusion, practically all of GIM's design intentions were found to be realised in both realised design and user experience, making the park an example of a successful, valuable park. As shown, some of its intentions and design elements reflect the French formal garden paradigm, and a contemporary, postmodern view of nature as ecologically valuable is represented on the park signs; generally, however, the park's intentions, realised design and user experience align almost perfectly with those of the picturesque paradigm.

BAM, then, was found to have design intentions that diverged slightly between planners and designers. The plan for the urban renewal project that BAM formed part of, redesigning and –branding Porta Nuova, sought to establish a central park as 'founding act' of the project, mediating between the human scale at the ground level and the larger-than-life monoliths that would arise around the park. The designers, rather, focused much more on the park itself than on its surroundings, although, as requested by the design competition's commission, they made connectivity between the surrounding areas a central goal of the design. Moreover, they sought to create a modern botanical garden, exhibiting different species, and highlighting nature in its aesthetic, educational and ecological values. The

aesthetic dimension, here, would include an experience of colours and other sensations, variable throughout the different seasons; the ecological dimension would involve carrying biodiversity with benefits for the city. They aimed to do so, partly, through circular forests creating rooms with distinct atmospheres, providing contrast with the open spaces; partly hereby, nature and the city would be present in a balanced manner. Regarding use, they sought to facilitate people meeting, enjoying themselves, learning (about nature) and working out. These intentions, in the context of the historic park paradigms, can be linked mostly to the ideals of postmodern parks; especially the idea of the park as mediator between humans and city and nature and city links to the postmodern conception of parks, as well as the explicit valuing of nature as ecologically valuable. At the same time, the idea of a park as place to appreciate the grandeur of the city can be linked to the idea of the architectural sublime (see section 2.3.3) – the implications hereof will be explored in the discussion.

BAM's realised design, then, can be argued to realise its design intentions to a large extent. The planners' dream of establishing a space that links the ground level to the high-rise architecture is certainly realised, as the skyscrapers form a central part of the park experience. Moreover, through the web of straight paths crossing the park and the lack of fence, the objective of connectivity is clearly translated into design. The park's vegetation reflects the mix of intended functions; different types of 'gardens' (geometric, aquatic, meadows, circular forests) fulfil educational, ecological and aesthetic purposes. Unfortunately, the idea of 'rooms' created by the circular forests is largely lost in the design's realisation; as discussed at the end of section 4.1.2, planning restrictions regarding budget and safety prevented some of the designers' ideas from being carried out, including trees placed closely together. As a result, the space is of a very open character, even within the circular forests, placing extra emphasis on the park's urban surroundings; nonetheless, the design can be said to realise the intended balance between city and nature. The park's architectural features have been realised in a modern style, using metal and concrete, which can be argued to reflect the intention of using a contemporary style. The strong visual presence of commerce, moreover, through e.g. advertisement signs, is a notable design feature, although it did not form part of planners' or designers' stated design intentions (more on this in the discussion). Then, paths are inscripted with species' names, serving an educative function, and poetry, which, like the parks' signs, communicates a romanticisation of nature reminiscent of picturesque discourse. Generally, the design mostly corresponds with the postmodern conception of parks, blending park and city, nature and architecture; indeed, the park is explicitly placed in its site context, with the skyscrapers around it and the surrounding urban fabric forming an instrumental part of its (realised) design. Nonetheless, it is not necessarily placed in a conversation with the past, and rather with the future, as a space of hypermodernity; no remnants of the past are present, and rather, buildings have risen up around the park. Nature and city are not 'imbricated' in Loughran's (2016) definition; rather, they exist separately, contrasting sharply, thus, again, not complying with the postmodern paradigm. Similarly, nature is not really provided with agency; rather, a forced image of nature is presented especially in the perfectly circular forests and geometric gardens, stylistically perhaps most reminiscent of the French formal garden or of modernist gardens. At the same time, however, the wild-growing meadows and other elements of free-growing nature reflect the postmodern ideal of agentic nature. Then, the modernist ethos of functionality is reflected by the use of 'straight, efficient' (designer's words) paths, and the use of concrete and metal in simple, non-ornamental designs.

The experience BAM offers its users can be concluded to align mostly with its intentions, although the planners' ambitions of incorporating the surrounding high-rise architecture into the park

experience are certainly, arguably disproportionally privileged over the designers' intentions for the park itself. Indeed, in the results, most emphasis was found to be placed by users on the overwhelming visual force of the skyscrapers, creating a unique park experience. Nonetheless, users mostly experienced the park as a connector between the surrounding areas, although some pointed out that it is dangerous and therefore not recommended to enter at night, limiting the realisation of the ambition of being open and accessible 24/7. Then, users expressed that they learn about nature through e.g. the signs and path inscriptions, and gain aesthetic pleasure from it through e.g. the changing colours throughout the seasons, fulfilling the designers' intentions. Corresponding with the failure to translate this intention into design, relatively few users experienced the park as consisting of different 'rooms' through the circular forest; nonetheless, they experienced a good balance between city and nature. Finally, the use forms discussed by users correspond with the intended use forms. Placing BAM's user experience in the context of the historical paradigms, it aligns most closely with the postmodern conception of how users should experience parks; through the contrast between city and nature, users are invited to reflect on this relationship, learning about and contemplating the role of nature in urban settings and in relation to contemporary crises like climate change. Nonetheless, there is no invoking of a sense of melancholy or nostalgia (nor do users experience this); rather, users experience the park as a space of modernity, of the 'new Milan', symbolising the high-rise future of the city.

In conclusion, BAM mostly realises its design intentions, although a discrepancy between planners' and designers' intentions cause the former to be emphasised over the latter, and budgetary and safety restrictions limited the realisation of some of the designers' ideas. Elements of virtually all of the historic paradigms can be detected, although instances of the French formal garden style only (arguably) occur through the 'forcing' of nature in geometric shapes – and this practice coincides with modernist gardening. The picturesque spirit can be detected in the romanticisation and aestheticisation of nature, and with some imagination BAM's lawns and meadows resemble picturesque pastoral fields. Modernism, then, finds it way into BAM through the use of efficient, rationalist, modern architectural features, as well as the use of geometric shapes in the planting of vegetation. Finally, however, the park is mostly postmodern, through its contrasting of city and nature, and its focus on the ecological importance of urban nature.

The comparison of GIM and BAM shows us how design intentions for urban parks have developed through parks' history, and how many values have remained universal through the centuries; to this day, park designers seek to provide aesthetic experiences of nature, make neighbourhoods and cities more attractive, welcome all types of users, improve health, and facilitate uses like recreation, socialising, relaxing, and retreating from the city. At the same time, new purposes have arisen; ecological values have become important, and incorporated into new parks' design and old parks' management. Moreover, as opposed to traditional parks' limitation of the city's presence in parks, modern parks purposefully blend urban and natural elements in their design, leading to crazy contrasts such as at BAM. Stylistically, a radical transformation has occurred; the picturesque style has made place for a rigid, geometric design style that has remained similar between modernism and postmodernism. No more attempts are made to imitate wild nature; rather, a top-down, graphic design approach is favoured, and nature is allowed to grow 'freely' only after implementation of the design. Nonetheless, users experience historic and contemporary parks relatively similarly, with experiences of nature, calm and gentle recreation as main themes discussed by users still. A salient difference, nonetheless, is the replacement of sublime experiences of nature being (partially) replaced by experiences of the overwhelming force of the modern city. All in all, this thesis' assessment of historic and modern parks'

relatively similar degree of success in establishing their relatively similar design intentions, although through very different means (i.e. designs), shows us that there is no one right way to design a park; both traditional and modern design styles can achieve great success.

5.2 Discussion

Having answered the main research question, comparing GIM and BAM's degree of success in realising their design intentions and placing their designs in historical context, in this discussion I argue that BAM's realised design and user experience is fundamentally different from those of the historic paradigms discussed, including postmodernism. Rather, it can be seen to form part of a new paradigm, constituted by an aesthetic of ecomodernism, or 'green (economic) growth'. This aesthetic, coupling neoliberal ideals and sustainability discourse, is established through:

- visual clues promoting a green, consumerist, liberal lifestyle, and the active facilitation of such a lifestyle;
- architecture symbolising the possibilities of 'green growth';
- the deification of nature and its ecological value;
- the structuring of users' behaviour, in line with neoliberal conceptions of appropriate use of (green) space.

These dimensions of the ecomodernist paradigm, as I see it, will now be discussed, followed by a brief interpretation of BAM's design in the context of Corner's concept of hermeneutics, and the implications of this thesis' conclusions for planning.

5.2.1 BAM and the ecomodernist paradigm

The ecomodernist ideology is perhaps most obviously communicated through the display of ads promoting a luxury, consumerist, yet 'green' lifestyle (see Figures 67-69, 71), and other visual signals. These include the mural (see Figure 59) reading 'close the gap, open your future', subtly communicating the neoliberal idea of self-enhancement, as well as signs mobilising the sustainability discourse to promote the Porta Nuova district (Figure 75-76), and signs signalling the 'adoption' of certain plants by enterprises (Figures 70). All these signals promote the idea of nature, BAM and Porta Nuova as products, ready to be consumed in the name of green, sustainable development. More literally, a consumerist lifestyle is actively facilitated by the park through its location next to a large mall, and the presence of numerous commercial establishments alongside and in the park. At the same time, the park itself is filled with signs and poetic path inscriptions stressing the importance of nature and ecosystems. In its combination of commercial facilities and aesthetics and its 'green' discourse and, again, aesthetics, the park can be seen as what Loughran (2018) calls a 'cultural fix', bridging the entrepreneurial city's needs to continue capital accumulation and to (appear to) adapt to climate change, legitimising the neoliberal urban project. The resultant 'abstract space' (Lefebvre, 1991) combines consumerism with a façade of sustainability, benefiting property developers and exploiters of commercial establishments while improving the city's green image.

      Then, at BAM, architecture also works to invoke an aesthetic experience, much like in the French formal garden and in post-industrial parks; however, rather than serving a purely aesthetic function relating to geometry and infinity (French formal garden), or invoking an experience of the passing of time and communicating the power of repurposing disused structures (post-industrial park), architecture at BAM communicates the potential of neoliberal urban development, visually coupled with

an aesthetic of (literally) green, 'sustainable' architecture. Crucial to this are the skyscrapers surrounding the park, as these can be seen to symbolise capitalist development in the spectacularised city; they represent modernisation, economic growth, progress, and the power of man to defy gravity, and, as the Google reviews analysis has shown, are perceived as such ('symbols of the new Milan') by BAM users. The Bosco Verticale, then, the most iconic and of these buildings, can be seen to represent, on the hand, the blend of ecological and aesthetic value of nature that BAM seeks to represent, through its concept centred around sustainability and visual appeal(although it has yielded significant criticism for using large quantities of carbon-intensive concrete); and, on the other hand, it represents the visual presence of private sector urban development, city branding and consumerism in the park, as the building originates from private initiatives, is exuberantly expensive to live in, and due to its popularity has become an icon for Milan's city marketing. Indeed, as we have seen (Figure 75), the skyscrapers also form part of the Porta Nuova district promotion. Section 5.2.2 will dive slightly deeper into the historical significance of the skyscrapers around BAM.

Then, although nature only plays a symbolic role at BAM, the discourse promoting it is entirely centred around nature as a vulnerable, yet oh so valuable asset for cities. The presentation of nature at BAM can be contrasted with Loughran's concept of imbricated spaces (see section 2.3.4); whereas imbricated spaces communicate a growing agency of nature in producing space, which is especially important to recognise in times of climate change, BAM's design communicates that nature can still be constrained entirely, and either be forced or left to grow according to humans' will. At the same time, the importance of the park's ecosystems is stressed time and time again by the park's signs, even if, corresponding to designer ecology (see section 2.3.4), these only really serve symbolic and educational functions.

Finally, Loughran (2018) and Brand (2007) discuss the theme of parks creating 'subjects', structuring their behavior, in order to "create ideal urban subjects, craft a dominant vision of nature, and smooth social conflicts"(Loughran, 2018, p. 2335). I argue that at BAM, such structuring of behaviour occurs, too, through both the physical appearance (i.e. realised design) and management of the park. This construction of subjects, then, is particularly evident through signage, which explicitly directs people's behaviour in, interactions with, and perceptions of parkland (Campbell et al., 2019). Nonetheless, it can also be practiced through design; Loughran (2014) offers the example of the High Line, where the narrow, linear nature of the space as well as the relatively scarce availability of places to sit or linger, especially for larger groups, structures the typical use of the park: a linear walk from one end to the other. Undesirable spatial practices, such as loitering and panhandling, or otherwise divergent uses are marginalised. At BAM, this can be seen to occur, too, with the relatively scarce presence of benches, and the open character of the park. Behaviour is structured through rules, too, which somewhat ironically prohibit *ambulant* commercial activity at the park. And, of course, as discussed earlier, the visual clues stimulating green consumerism, too, work to structure behaviour, actively facilitated by the presence of myriad commercial facilities. The idea of visitors internalising neoliberal ideals – although not directly linked to sustainability or consumerism – is supported by my findings; significantly more of BAM's visitors indicated in the survey that they 'felt more ambitious' at the park. At the same time, attempts to test to what degree users internalised the 'green growth' ideology yielded no significant results; BAM users were found to feel slightly more worried about climate change than GIM's, and slightly more optimistic about overcoming or adapting to it. Although no questions about consumerism were asked in the survey, a significant number of the Google reviews analysed mentioned the commercial facilities near the park.

5.2.2 Digressions: BAM, the bird's eye view, borrowed scenery and the architectural sublime

Before moving on to the undoubtedly much-anticipated end of this very long thesis, kindly allow me to share two final observations on BAM in historical context, especially the first underlining BAM's design and promotion's centring of the green, liberal citizen. In any photo representation of BAM – think of the Inside Outside website's project page, the park's own website, or press coverage (see Figure 15 for an example – or Google the park) – the park is seen from above, highlighting the abstract, geometric design, and favouring the bird's eye view over the perspective from the ground. Coincidentally, this bird's eye view aligns with the view from the skyscrapers, looking down onto the park. This observation, placed in the context of garden and park history, brings to mind the ideological foundations of the French formal garden; here, the chateau and the garden are in a dialectical relationship with each other, with the central window of the chateau, belonging to its owner, offering the ideal view of the garden. In Weiss' words, "the architecture of the chateau (...) offers, as in a Renaissance painting, a window upon the world (...); it establishes a precise perspectival viewpoint upon the garden (transforming it into a sort of picture); and it determines the architectonic structure of which the garden is a prolongation (hence the geometrisation of the garden)" (2020, para. 8). The parallel with BAM is striking; much like the chateau, the skyscrapers offer a window upon the garden, which turns out to be the favoured perspective in the park's promotion; through this perspective, the park is turned into an abstract, geometrised picture, consisting of circles, lines and polygons; and finally, the modern architectural style using concrete, iron and glass is consistent between the park and the buildings. This last parallel, then, extends to the central role of trees in both BAM and Bosco Verticale. What implications, then, do these observations have for the power relations embedded in the centring of the skyscrapers' perspective of the park? The only logical conclusion is that those people residing in the skyscrapers – particularly the upper floors – represent the new bourgeoisie centred by contemporary landscape architecture: office workers and Bosco Verticale (penthouse) residents, model citizens in a late stage-capitalist, ecomodernist society. Of course, this is all only an abstract digression; nonetheless, it shows what interesting parallels, even if only symbolic, a historical perspective can offer. The favouring of the skyscrapers' perspective over the perspective from the ground can also be linked to Lefebvre's distinction between 'abstract' and 'absolute' space, covered in section 2.1; abstract space facilitates state power or reproduction of capital through displays of power or the commodification of space, turning space into a product, whereas absolute space focuses on the human body and its 'scale of reach and perceptual field'. Rather than choosing the user's perspective, representations of BAM present it as a product, best consumed from a distance, from the comfort of capital's impressive machines: skyscrapers.

Secondly, another salient parallel between historic practices of garden design and BAM's appearance (although, as we have seen, not necessarily the designers' vision) is the use of 'borrowed scenery'. This technique, originating in Japanese gardening and adopted by Western modernist landscape designers in the 1960s in following of their Japanese colleagues, is that of borrowed scenery: the technique of including exterior landscapes in the design of a garden (or park), designing the interior to frame vistas of the exterior (Kuitert, 2015; Jones, 2018). Hereby, the line between interior and exterior was blurred, representing a move away from the enclosed spaces with vistas of the interior only in picturesque landscapes.[5] Western adoption of this technique represented a new way of incorporating sublime scenery into gardens; returning to Weiss (2020, para. 12), "the sublimity of nature, its

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[5]It should be noted that this description of 'borrowed scenery' by no means covers the complexity of the original corresponding Japanese (and Chinese) concept(s).

transcendent qualities, became part of the wordly beauty of gardens". At BAM, rather than sublime nature, high-rise architecture is the scenery that is borrowed, framed by the similarly slender, tall trees (interestingly, in this sense, their being placed quite far apart enhances the framing effect). The overwhelming, impressive power of (modernist) architecture – as opposed to (wild) nature – has been theorised as the 'architectural sublime' (Nesbitt, 1995). The framing of skyscraper views at BAM thus can be seen to constitute a combination of borrowed scenery and the architectural sublime, and thereby a crossover between gardening and architectural aesthetic techniques. The overwhelming qualities of the architecture, evidenced to be experienced by users in the survey and Google reviews analysis, can be argued to serve the park's ecomodernist aesthetic; the skyscrapers symbolise the power of man and the city, and the possibility, communicated through the design of especially Bosco Verticale, to reconcile economic growth and sustainability.

Figure 82: Borrowed scenery: the Sakurajima volcano is 'borrowed' in Senganen Garden, Japan (Berlin, 2009).

5.2.3 BAM: a successful application of hermeneutics?

As the attentive reader might remember, section 2.3.5 promised to return in the discussion to Corner's (1991) concept of hermeneutics, a promise that will now be fulfilled. As described, Corner laments contemporary landscape architecture's failure to engage with site context and history, and more generally landscape history; he hates the practice, originating in modernism, of citing from different historical styles, without ideological foundations. Reversely, he also dislikes avant-gardism, seeking to radically reject history and create something entirely new, and thereby provoking for the sake of provoking. He implores landscape architects to combine history and past, memory and imagination, orientation and direction, recalling the past while imagining the future – this practice he calls

hermeneutics. Having come this far, outlining the entire history of park design and placing a contemporary park's design in this context, it would be a waste not to offer some reflection on the design in question's application of Corner's prescriptions – or lack thereof.

In my view, BAM fails to appeal to 'collective memory, cultural orientation, and continuity'; rather, it cites from different styles, using Romantic discourse on nature and its poetic value, modernist aesthetics in its geometrised, rationalist design, and postmodern appeals to nature's ecological value in its use of sections of 'wild' nature. Rather than a critical reinterpretation of past styles such as geometric gardens, pioneered in the 1920s, the design offers merely a recycling hereof, continuing the meaningless application of forced, geometrised nature with no purpose other than aesthetic pleasure. Hereby, as I see it, it fails to create a 'meaningful' landscape. In a critical divergence from postmodern parks, the design is not placed in any local historical context; it was started from zero, ignoring the site's historical context, and could have been placed anywhere. Rather than engaging the past, it enters a dialogue with the future, invoking a futuristic image of a modern, high-rise city.

From a more optimistic point of view, it could be argued that BAM does establish a conversation between past and future, *engaging* with the Romantic conception of nature, *reconciling* it with the postmodern ecologist conception of nature, and *imagining* the future. Returning to the issue of human experience of contemporary landscape (see section 1.3.3), we can conclude that BAM is certainly successful in activating "a rich range of human experiences" (Herrington, 2006, p. 23); moreover, in a sense, it engages with the "circumstances peculiar to our own time" (Corner, 1991, p. 116) through its centre-staging of hypermodern skyscrapers, although failing to reconcile these with the visual language of the path. The concept of a modern botanical garden is certainly original, and the attempt to mobilise landscape's poetic potential cannot be denied. Finally, Hunt's (1993) call for a return to mental associations invoked by visual stimuli can be argued to be heeded, with the architecture's sublime qualities speaking to the imagination. Whether this is true, and whether BAM therefore successfully applies hermeneutics, is not up to me to decide. It is the nature of the associations made, especially when placed in the context of the park's (arguably) ecomodernist agenda, however, that form my main objection; if it is the future of parks, and more generally public space, that we are looking at at BAM, I am worried about what kind of future this will be: one of ecomodernism and 'green growth', eternally denying what, to me, seems clear – that neoliberal urbanism is not sustainable for our planet, no matter how many trees you put on balconies, and that a truly ecological space builds on what is already there. BAM may establish a conversation with *a* view of the future, but it is, in my view, a bleak one.

5.2.4 Implications
In sum, this thesis' results show that parks, much like two centuries ago, are still used as a 'cultural fix' (Loughran, 2018), with values linked to relaxation, refuge from the city and contact with nature passed down through generations and mixed with ideals that emerged later surrounding ecosystems, the balance between city and nature, and education on nature. The resulting spaces seek to influence visitors through messages informing them on nature and its value and structuring their behaviour regarding nature, while at the same time it looks to entertain them and, ideally, mobilise them as consumer of the park, the iconic architecture, the city district, or the city, all of which are granted a brand identity and discursively connected to the park's green, sustainable image.

One theme is left to discuss, then: this conclusions' implications for planning. As we have seen, the planners and designers driving BAM's development had diverging aims; while the designers focused on the creation of a genuinely inclusive, sustainable and attractive space, planners mostly sought to co-opt the associations with these values to drive an agenda of neoliberal urbanism, facilitating private

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parties' exploiting of the rent gap through high-value project development around the new, popular park. The resultant skyscrapers, in turn, strongly altered the designers' intended appearance of the park. At the same time, many of the designers' intentions could not be realized due to both budgetary and safety-related limitations, both imposed by planners. Arguing from a critical point of view, this discrepancy in intentions, and its results, show that city governments should not rely entirely on PPPs or private investments to fund public parks, because the resulting spaces are not entirely public, and not as good as they could be. And, as long as the sustainability discourse remains merely an instrument for planners to promote 'green' growth, we're on a road to nowhere –would it not be a shame to return, after four centuries of development, to park and garden designs centred around the interests of the (new) elite?

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Appendix

7.1 Survey questions/statements, briefly explained

Nature

1. In this park I feel more connected to nature

2. In this park I feel impressed by nature's greatness

3. In this park I notice small details in nature

4. In this park I feel like I'm in nature

5. In this park I learn about nature

> Q1-5 were intended to assess to what extent users had nature-related experiences, originating from both theory (e.g. the sublime in picturesque parks (q2)) and from stated design intentions (BAM aimed to connect users to nature and educate them about nature (q1 & q5)

6. In this park I feel worried about climate change

7. In this park I feel optimistic about humanity overcoming or adapting to climate change

> Q6&7 aimed to assess respondents' feelings about climate change and its solution, relating to ecomodernist ideology (as discussed in section 5.2.1)

City

8. In this park I feel impressed by the city's greatness

> Q8 sought to assess users' experience of the architectural sublime, contrasting with q2

9. This park makes me appreciate the city of Milan more

10. This park makes me appreciate the neighbourhood it's in more

> Q9&10 assessed the effect of the parks on users' experience of the neighbourhood and city, corresponding with both parks' stated design intentions to reflect positively on these

11. This park connects the surrounding neighbourhoods

> Q11 corresponds with BAM's stated design intention of connecting the surrounding districts, as an 'urban connector'

12. I think the city is too strongly present in this park

> Q12, inspired by Olmsted's position that in parks, 'the city should not exist,' sought to assess how visitors experience BAM's much more urban atmosphere relative to GIM

13. In this park I experience culture

> Q13 literally interprets BAM's slogan: 'where to experience cultural experiences close to nature'

Relaxing and reflecting

14. In this park I can take a break from the city

> Q14 relates to GIM's and picturesque parks' intention of providing refuge from the city, and highlights the contrast with BAM's more urban atmosphere

15. In this park I feel more relaxed

> Q15 links to virtually all parks' intentions: to facilitate relaxation

16. In this park I find it easy to let my thoughts run free

17. This park makes me feel melancholic and nostalgic

> Q16-17 correspond to picturesque parks' intention of providing a place for meditation and contemplation, and inducing an aesthetic experience relating to the passing of time

18. In this park I feel inspired to be a good person

> Q18 links to modernism's aim to create 'good' citizens through design

19. In this park I feel more ambitious

> Q19 sought to assess whether the parks' design could be linked to users' internalisation of (neo)liberal ideals of self-enhancement

20. I feel welcome in this park

> Q20 links to virtually all parks' (including GIM & BAM) intention of providing an inclusive, welcoming space for all

21. This park has different areas with different atmospheres

> Q21 links to BAM's design intention of creating 'rooms' with distinct atmospheres