

Ecology and the Garden

TU Delft Urban Architecture – Last Green in
Town

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Throughout this project the themes of ecology and the garden have played a central role. The term ecology in the context of architectural design implies a new understanding of the complicated interrelation between elements, valuing the lives of not only the human, but also the non-human.¹ It proposes a different approach to design, where questions of technology, materiality, typology and nature all have to be addressed. The importance of the topic of a new ecology is also raised by Timothy Morton, who argues that the climate crisis takes away the supposed neutrality with which one looks at nature. We need to actually let go of the idea of nature, as we as humans are in such a way part of it and influencing it, that to allow our selves to become part of a solution we need an integrated new way of thinking.²

In this project the garden was a tangible space and a conceptual metaphor to address these topics. The garden is characterized by belonging to many worlds simultaneously. It is because of the inherent characteristic of the garden of belonging both to the world of man as to the world of nature that Foucault located it as the centre of the concept Heterotopia.³

1 Mandias, S. S., Ronner, E. I., Dimitrova, K., & De-croos, B. (2022). *Ecologie & Esthetiek . Oase: tijdschrift*

voor architectuur, (112), 2–9.

2 Being Ecological by Timothy Morton. (2019). *Journal of Ethics and Emerging Technologies*, 29(1), 19-20.

3 Michel Foucault. (1986). *Of Other Space: Utopias and Heterotopias*

4 Ana Kučan, Mateja Kurir (eds.): *Garden and Metaphor: Essays on the essence of the Garden*. Birkhäuser, 2023

5 Agamben, G. (2002). *The Open: Man and Animal*. Stanford University Press.

The garden is and is not nature, it is part of nature and as such not entirely human. It is both nature and culture. It is not pristine wild nature, but natural processes are allowed to flow, staying mostly invisible most of the time.⁴

The garden is a defined space, an enclosed space. Every living being has an environment, a space of living, but only man does not live in a closed environment. It's environment is composed of both nature and culture, which is unique to humanity. It is precisely mans retreat from nature that allows him to create the world, but also to destroy it. If we do not conserve nature as such, the quality of our living environment would radically decrease. The Anthropocene pushed us to shift from the current anthropocentric world view into bio centric ethics. The garden could perhaps become a model for future behavior as a space that is both nature and culture.⁵

The enclosed garden is a space where the paradox turns into tangible space. It can become the conceptual point of connection, as it is a special place, where elements of the landscape and elements of the city come together. It deals with enclosures, takes in positions on the open and closedness, and also deals with the garden, which in itself a paradox of man made nature. The heterotopian quality of the enclosed garden allows it to transcend to defined oppositions and to become a connection point where to worlds become interwoven.



URBAN

CITY

HUMAN

reflecting the hard,
formal, closed

enclosure:
barrier, fringe, border
open and closedness

'other space'
heterotopia

moment to
pause on a
journey

enclosed
garden

garden:
paradox of
man made nature

island of peace
and quiet

place for
reflection and
study

reflecting soft,
informal, open

RURAL

LANDSCAPE

NATURE



Hortus Ludi, 15th century



Beate Gütschow, Hortus Conclusus #4, 2018

Three cases of Enclosed Gardens
in Brussels

Parc du Viaduc

In between the railroad and back gardens of row housing lies the former garden of the Beauquesne-Legrand family. The family built a house in neoclassical style in the second part of the 19th century together with the garden, which was designed in the English Landscape style. After 1910 it became property of the municipality and the house was used by multiple ministries and institutions. In 2006 the house and the garden were renovated, after which the garden became a park and the house turned into a community building and a daycare center.

The garden is enclosed by brick walls and the backside of the house. It is lo-

cated on a higher level compared to its context, making you walk up a sloped path to enter. There are two ways to enter, one next to the house, the other along a path that is situated next to the railroad. The entrance next to the house leads you slowly into the park with parts revealing itself while you walk in, the other entrance is quite abrupt. The stretched triangle shape gives a certain sense of direction to the park, pointing towards the shared chicken coop and compost station at the shallow part. The atmosphere is calm, people only come here with the purpose of winding down it seems.



Parc d'Egmont

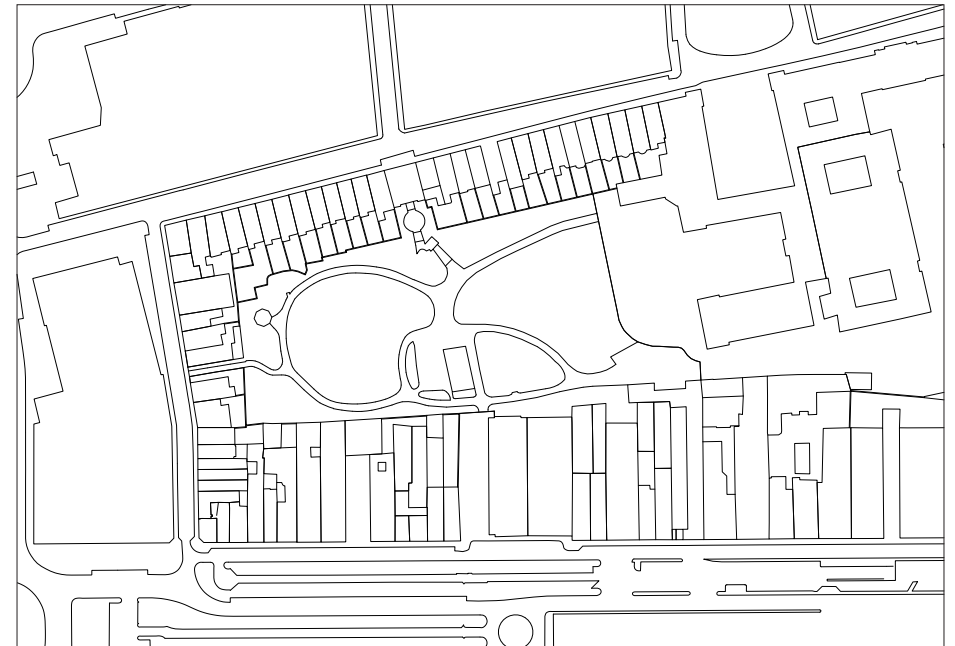
Hidden behind the facades of luxury shops and expensive housing lies the Parc d'Egmont. The park used to be the garden of the Egmont palace, that was built in the 16th century by Francisca van Luxemburg and her son Lamoraal van Egmont. Its design has seen multiple iteration, and turned into a public park after it became property of the Brussels municipality in 1918.

The garden is enclosed by the garden walls of the surrounding houses and by a fence, separating it from the palace that is used to be part of. It has four entrances, all with different characteristics. One feels like a small pathway squeezed between two buildings, the second is a sequence of spaces functioning as a memorial, the third a monumental passage, and

the last a fence next to an enormous hotel high rise.

The garden houses the old palace orangery that turned into a cafe and restaurant. Next to it one can find a grave hill and the remains of what used to be part of an important water reservoir in Brussels, which was dismantled and built up again in the garden. Some other ruins can be found in the garden, which are what is left of an earlier version of the palace that burned down.

The garden is in a busy part of Brussels, which makes it quite busy when the weather is good. Many people walk their dogs or cross it to go from place to place. Relative to its hectic context, it is still a peaceful and quite place.



Parc Jean-Felix Hap

When the beer brewery Albert-Joseph Hap became the mayor of Etterbeek in 1804, he bought a 16th century castle and the three hectares of land next to it, which featured a natural water spring. He moved into the castle and built a small brewery that used the water from the spring. When his son inherited the property, he built a new house at the edge of the garden, finding the castle too humid to live in. The ruins of the castle are still visible in the garden to this day. The fourth generation Hap, Jean-Felix, opened the garden in 1960 to the public, but only in the summertime. After he died without a heir, the garden was completely opened to the public in 1988. The garden is enclosed by the back garden walls of the surrounding houses, the orangery and by a series of terraced community gardens.

There are three entrances, the first an fence in the wall next to the Hap house, the second a large open side next to a street with a 4 meter height difference and the last a long stretched route next to two houses.

The route doubles as in function as a learning garden, which fosters the biodiversity and has the didactical goal of learning visitors about local plants and animal species. The spring next to the ruins of the castle has turned into a pond. Next to it there is a small pavilion, where visitors can rest from the rain or the sun.

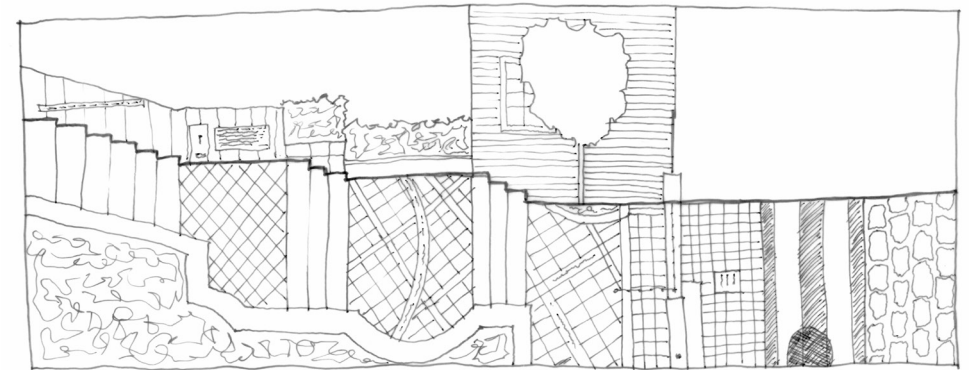
The garden is mainly enclosed, but the opening next to the terrain difference has a dramatic contrasting effect, giving you a feeling of being in a valley. The terraced community gardens on the opposing size further emphasize this feeling.



Sequence of Stories and Spaces

The Marguerite Yourcenar passage contains multiple quotes engraved in stone from Marguerite Yourcenar's novel *The Hermetic Black*. The total of 14 extracts lead the Wolstraat pedestrian through a square courtyard, and along several staircases leading to the roundabout, the fountain and then the Egmont Park.

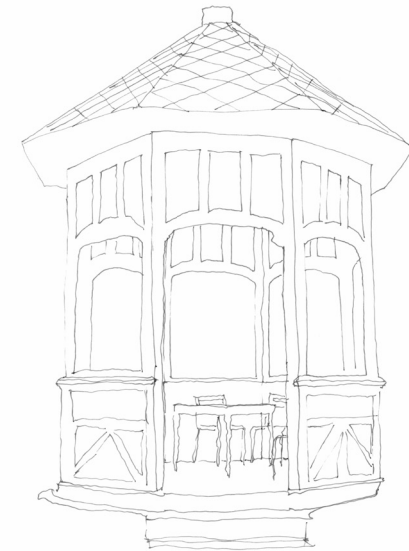
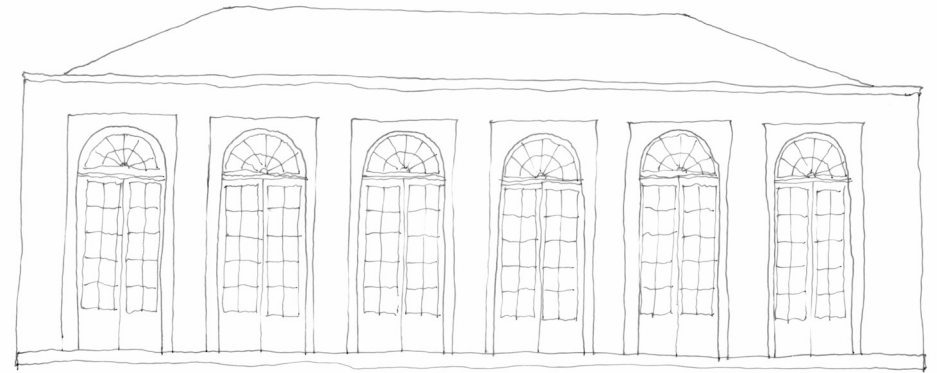
The passage uses multiple spatial elements in its transition from the city to the garden. It defines different spaces through stairs and height differences, introducing the element of topography which is used in the garden as well. The materials in the paving are used in different patterns to define different spaces. The spaces take on a range of shapes, bordered by hedges, which introduces green element in the urban public space.



Architectural Typologies
in the Garden

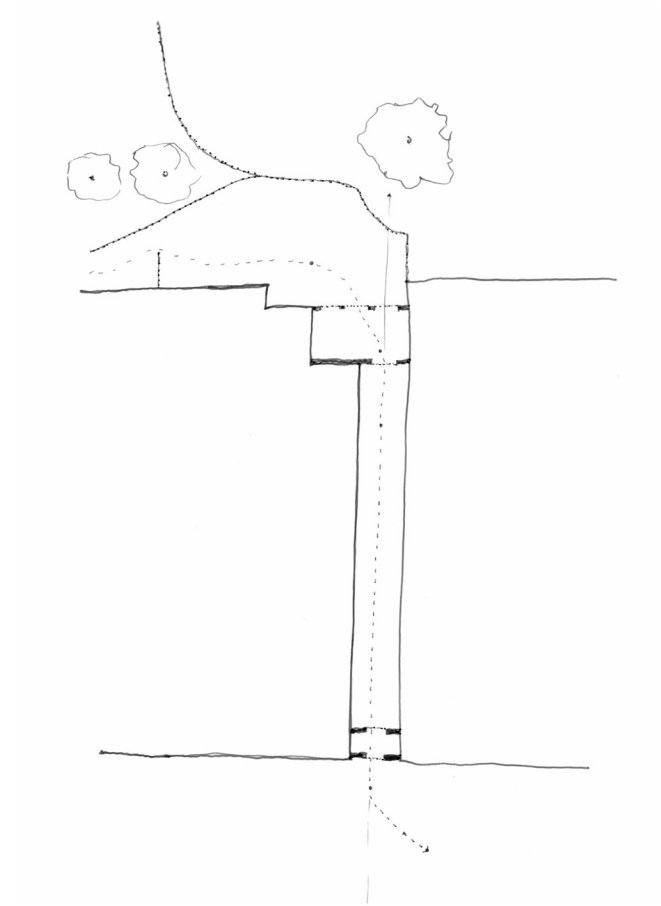
In multiple of the studied garden specific architectural typologies can be found, in this case the orangery and the kiosk. The orangery is an early predecessor of the green- or glass-house, where plants would be stored in winter in order for them to survive. It is oriented towards the south with big windows to let in sunlight. The kiosk or garden pavilion originated a space to serve coffee or tea in situated in a garden, a typology since transformed more often into a space for public performances or gatherings.

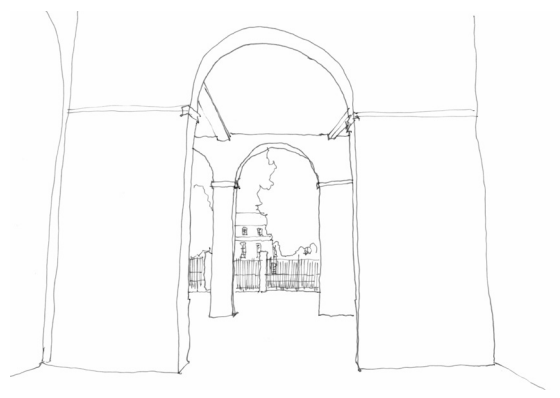
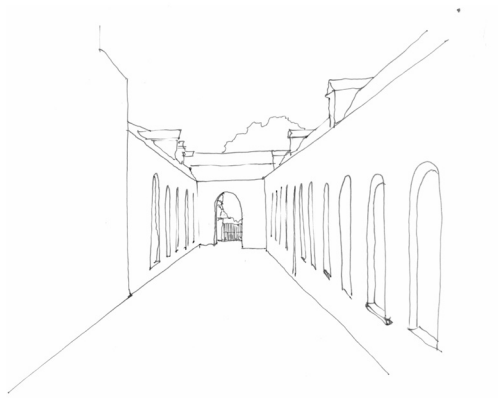
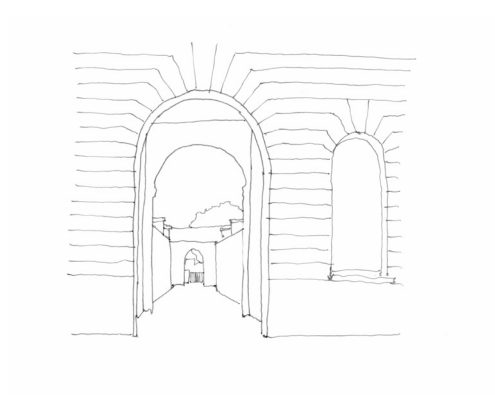
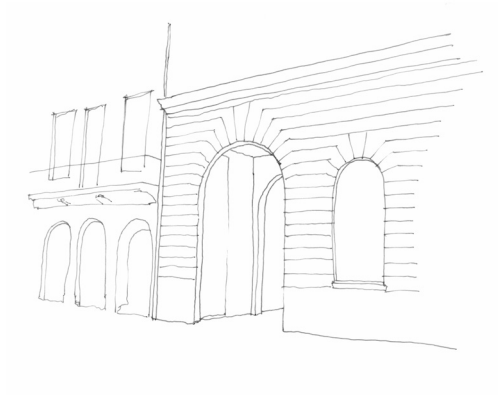
These buildings are both lone standing elements in the garden landscape, but relate to it in a different way. Where the kiosk is transparent to all sides, letting the landscape continue through it, the orangery is oriented with its openings to one side only, giving it a more heavy and perhaps monumental place in the garden.

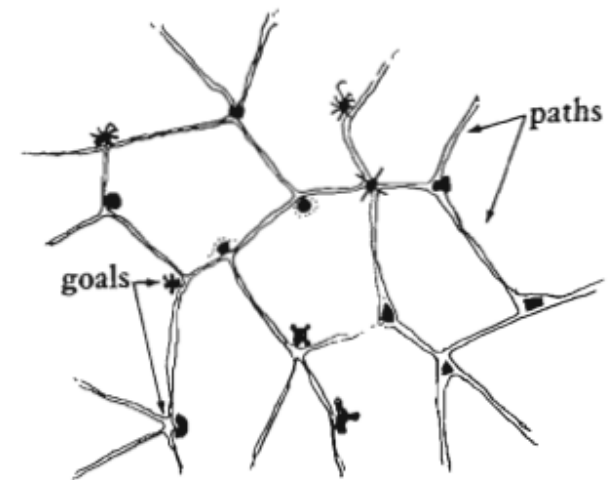
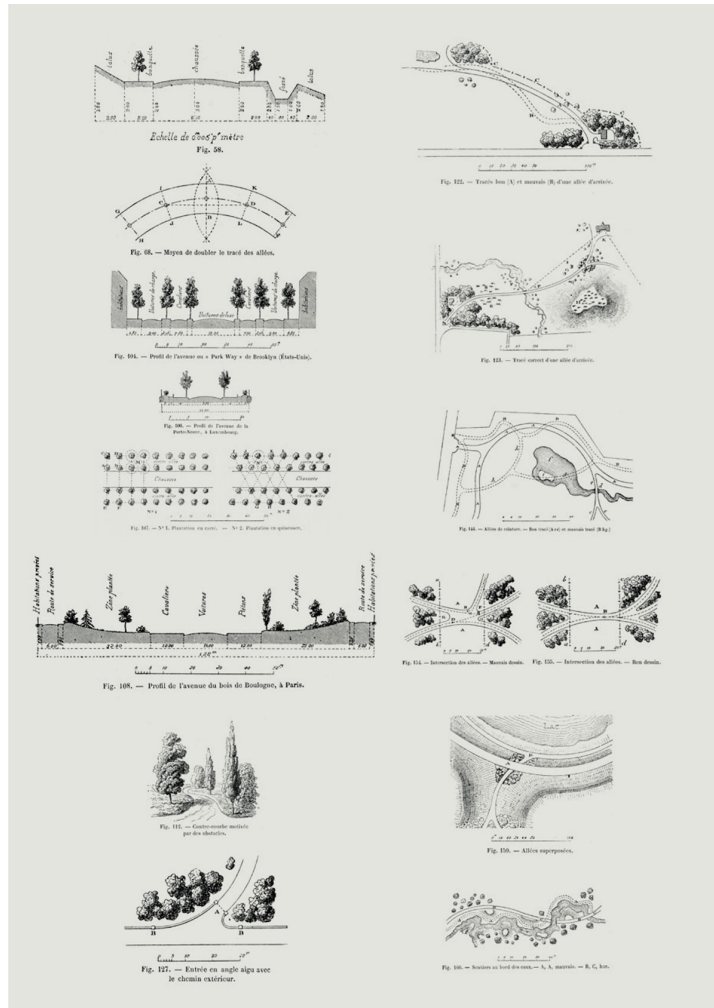


The Palace Passage

The passage forms an entrance to the enclosed garden. It is a sequence of spaces along a monumental axis. The pathway as seen from the street reveals a 'goal', as Alexander describes in Pattern language, in the shape of the palace, but does not reveal the garden yet. The gates form thresholds and give a certain rhythm to the pathway. Once you turn the corner, the garden comes as a surprise, the last point of destination. The passage gives weight to the garden through its monumentality, giving it a feeling of importance.





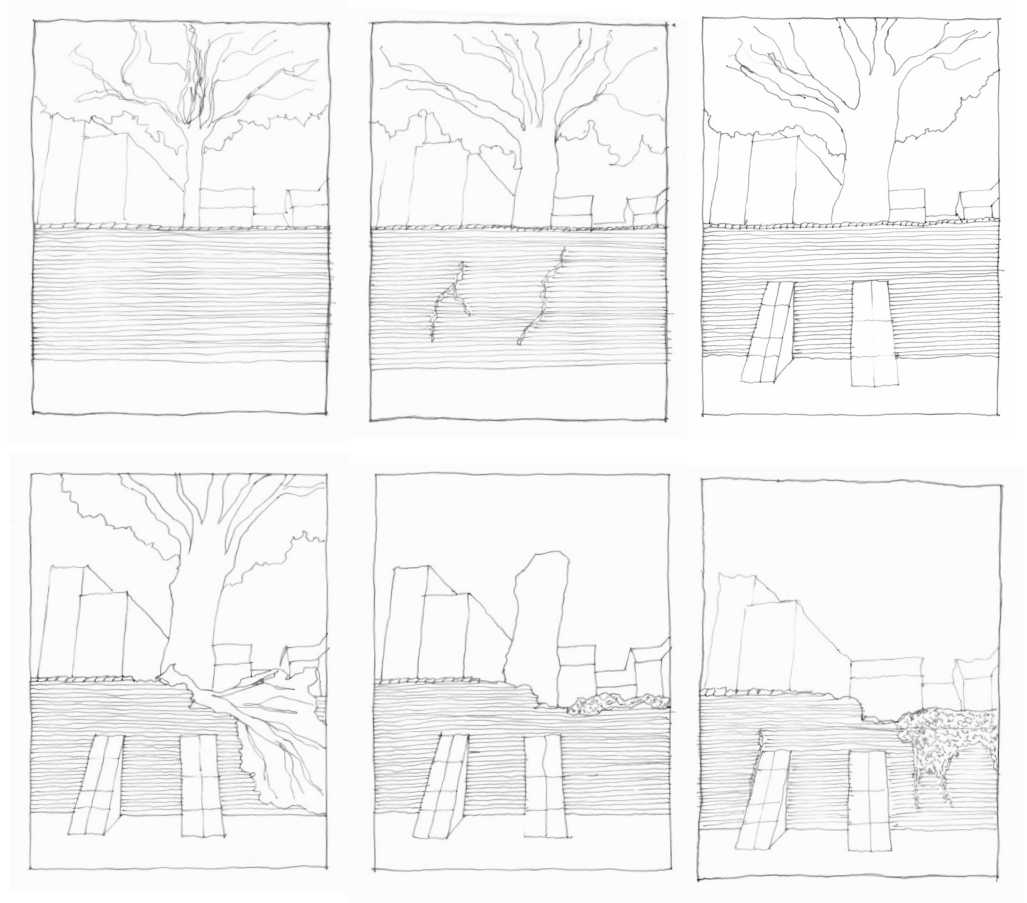


Paths and Goals, Christopher Alexander, Pattern Language, 1977.

Treaty of Garden Art or road manual? É. André, L'Art des jardins , 1879

The Enclosure and Traces of Time

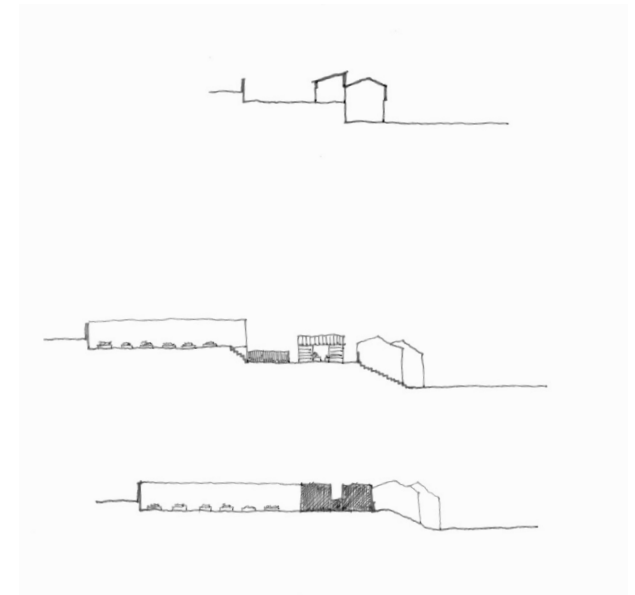
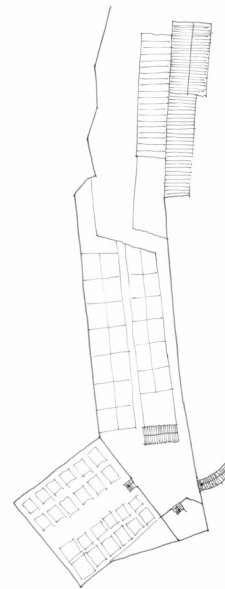
The enclosure is a key element of the enclosed garden. In this case it became a stage for a dialogue between man and nature. The tree growing behind it slowly grew and expended, reaching the thresholds of the wall. The wall started showing cracks, which was later repaired. A branch has fallen off, which is still visible in the damaged top part of the wall. In the end, the tree died, was cut down and removed. The current state shows the result of a long battle, the traces of time. It advocates perhaps for a different approach, where the elements of nature and man made structures don't fight each other, but instead try to give each other space.

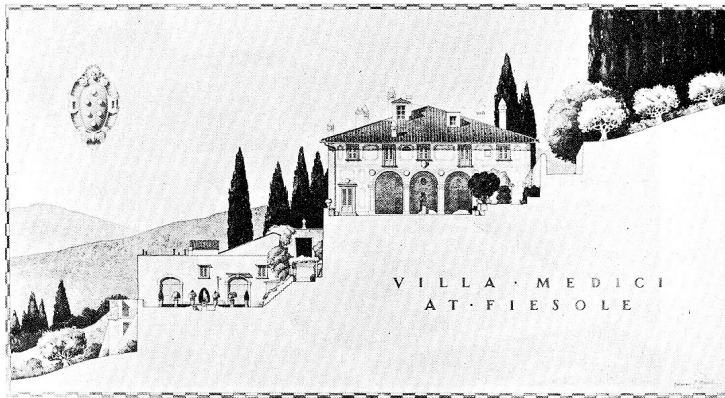


The Terraced Gardens

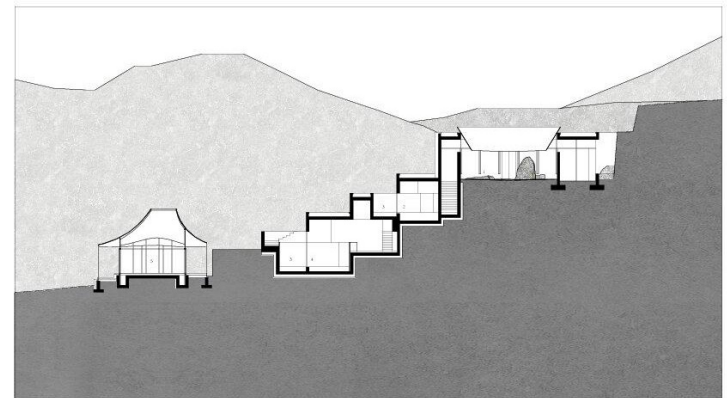
This moment is found on the boundary of an enclosed garden. It is a terracing of multiple levels on which a community garden is located. From this space, there are views on the entire garden, and the difference in levels creates a threshold from the public space of the garden park to the more private space of the community garden.

'On all land that slopes make a system of terraces and burms which follow the contour lines' says Alexander in Pattern Language. It creates more usable land, but also beautiful spaces which offer views to the space laying below. In the Fürstenwald Cemetery in Chur Kienast Vogt used this tool to create a belvedere over the landscape, accentuated by the pergola. Max Bill created a similar space in Hochschule für Gestaltung, a deck which is used as a common space on top of a parking.





Terraced Gardens of Villa Medici



Atelier Deshaus - Upper Cloister



Fürstenwald Cemetery, Chur. Kienast, Vogt



Hochschule für Gestaltung. Max Bill

Architecture as the Garden-City
Threshold

The architecture of this beautiful art nouveau house has become the threshold between the city and the garden. Its front facade is more formal and has less depth, whereas the back facade has an abundance of spaces blending the inside and outside. Differences in height are also used as a tool to define these threshold spaces, in multiple cases combined with a roof or volume above it.



