The current graduation thesis aspires to offer a new way of experiencing our cities and it suggests to conceive them as more open and flexible assemblages than striated and fixed totalities. The homogeneity and the extreme fixation of spaces that characterize many urban complexes may have a negative effect on the freedom of thought and action of the different subjectivities. The repetition of similar actions and practices in every day routine may be extremely tiring or even dull and it can become a restrictive factor for regenerative and creative thoughts. Even though the mechanisms of entertainment and consumption may pretend that satisfy the citizens’ needs, they seem to leave no space for the random and the blurry and as a result people may even forget that there is also this side of theirs, a side that needs the unsure and the indeterminant to act as a counterpoint to the fixed and the programmed.

The current project uses as a key to oppose homogeneity and striation the creation of ‘leakages’ in the expectedness of current experiences in the urban realm: creation of places that will trigger peoples’ mind and stir emotions. Urbanites will have the chance to feel intensified emotions, to diverge from expected behaviors and through such experiences to reboot their mind. If the experiences that the city offers could allow many different behaviors and if the same environments that create such experiences evoke each time a new feeling and trigger different actions, then there will be room for constantly becoming someone else.

A society that allows the indeterminant and the random to take place, is more open to changes and new thoughts. The new gardens aspire to alleviate people from stressful and repetitive thoughts, even if it is for few minutes. A break from the ordinary thoughts, an instant “shock” in between the scheduled actions can be revitalizing not only for individuals but also for the way the city emerges. The city, that way, will have the potential to always be a surprise, an infinite source of emotions and relations. This thesis deals with finding these virtualities of the city and trigger their becoming actual.

**process, method and tools**

The process of researching the ways in which ‘deviant’ places could be created was quite indeterminate and blurry at the beginning. I was searching for out-of-the-ordinary experiences and what could make them happen. I had the idea of analyzing fictional settings as they are an infinite source for non-normative or paradoxical experiences. On the other hand, I was influenced by the theory of Affects. This theory excited me because it can directly get to the point of things: all that exists around us may be described by the relations that people and other creatures have with their environment. These relations are triggered because of the affects that the environment has on them. Although these two tools, affects and fictional settings, worked separately at the first stages of the thesis, they gradually coincided: Affects was the filter through which I analyzed the fictional settings. This procedure triggered the formulation of Affective Gradients that I desire for the new gardens and of the principles concerning their interrelations.

Parallel to this theoretical research, I analyzed the testing area. My criteria for this analysis were the affective relations that emerge in the area but also the determination of its singularities. There was a need for a various-scaled analysis as the intervention would take place in more than one sites and that was a big difficulty. One cannot talk and make conclusions generally for a whole city but at some points that is necessary for the procedure to move on. These conclusions came from my personal experience and perceiving of the city and that was another thing that made me hesitant: how much should someone avoid expressing personal views and feelings?

After analyzing the city and picking three potential sites of intervention I used the formulated Affective Gradients to test the specific sites. This testing was based on the singularities that each site carries: the intermingling of the spatial characteristics and of their expressing qualities. This testing helped me to find the virtualities for the creation of new affective relations on each site and design with them. The designing procedure considered the three sites in parallel and that was very helpful.
in comparing design decisions and testing the appropriateness of their application: this relates not only to the interior of the sites but also to the character of the neighborhood around them as well as their wider area of influence. The design emerged gradually and was linked on the one hand in the application of the principles of affective interrelations and, on the other hand, to the specificity of the sites.

**ethical issues**

An intervention as such can bring up moral issues due to conflicting interests: the new design will have benefits for some against others. For the current project these issues may originate from people that are already using the sites that will be designed or from those that live close to them. Especially because it is a part of an acupuncture intervention and thus, more gardens will gradually pop up in the city, there is a necessity for thinking of ways that would deal with potential moral issues.

For instance, people may complain that with the new design some of the available parking seats will be reduced and the circulation of cars will be restricted. As I am intervening inside and in-between blocks there are always circulation issues that may occur. However, such an issue can be smoothened if the designer tries to preserve as much as possible from the current uses and abolish them only when it is necessary. That is also the most sincere way to deal with reality: being careful with the effects that a design may have on practical issues, no matter how ‘exciting’ it is.

In two of my sites that there are cars involved I am preserving some of the parking seats, especially those who are needed for the supply of the stores and whenever I impede the circulation is due to the restricted available size of the site. Both sites have large garages located around them or really close to them so, that could be a solution for convincing people.

Another issue that may occur is that of the disturbance of the residents, especially on the site with the path in-between the private gardens. Again, I am trying to restrict the design as much as possible in order not to intrude in the private gardens. Furthermore, by enclosing the path from both sites with a ‘membrane’, I try to minimize any visual or acoustic contact with the houses. This ‘membrane’ also can make them feel safe as it impedes any intrusion in their gardens.

In any case, the intervention on sites with such fragile balances should always include the involvement with the residents. There need to be discussions that do not aim only to the persuasion of them but also to the exchange of opinions about the project. Although that procedure may delay the project, the residents will see it as a common initiative and they will feel part of it. In this way also, there are more possibilities that they collaborate and give away some parts of their properties for the project.

**generalization of results and thoughts**

The area of intervention worked only as a testing case that would give insights for the application of the method in other situations and conditions. I am not referring only to other areas of the same city but also for sites in other urban complexes. The design was based partially on the specific sites but also on the insights from the theory. These insights could be tools for testing other cases. Filtering a site of intervention through the Affects and their relations can be a useful start for similar researches that deal with the experience of people and their relation-reaction to the environment. Such researches do not necessarily originate from the realm of Landscape Architecture or Architecture but also, for instance, from Medicine, Psychology and Sociology.

As far as the design outcome is concerned, we could extract the successions of experiences that create specific affects and use it as a test on other areas. Furthermore, it is also useful to see which design decisions created these successions and if possible generalize them in relation to their spatial conditions. For instance, the connection of enclosure and darkness with the affect of fear can be used as a tool that even if applied in other situations and constructed by other materials, it would have the same impact on people. Also, the designing of the borders and the membranes of the testing-sites could give many general insights about the manipulations of the moments of entering in a place.

Looking back at the whole procedure I could say that one of the things I found difficult was the combination of all the insights from the theoretical research with the filtering of the analysis and with the design. It was a bet to have always in mind the principles that have been formulated during the designing procedure because for me, sometimes, designing can be spontaneous and intuitive and it can be based only to the analysis and recording of the existing situation (sites, neighborhoods, city). Combining theory and design was a new and difficult process for me but it gave me more tools to use and these tools acted as basis that consolidated the design.
Another thing that I noticed is that I could have used much earlier the insights from theory as tools for the analysis: at the first stages my visitings of the city of intervention was more random and with less concrete purposes. I wanted to feel the atmospheres that emerge and to observe how people move in it. Although that gave me many impressions about the city and its neighborhoods, it could be even richer and ‘safe’ to have imbued this analysis with features from theory from the early stages.

Finally, if I had more time, I would like to test the design principles on more categories (sub-groups) of the existing voids because that would give the research more variations and different insights that would enrich it. Furthermore, another thing that would be really interesting for me and that could act as support to the thesis would be a detailed study, based even on statistical facts, of how could indeed different gardens pop-up and even pop-out through the course of time at the city of Rotterdam.

gains

Throughout the whole procedure I became richer in knowledge and thoughts. My mind was intrigued by all the philosophical texts that I came across as they offered me many new perspectives not only for the city but for all the relations and emotions that trigger life’s continuation. That was unexpected for me. One of the most important things I learnt was the need for a constant consideration of things and situations on all scales and in parallel: nothing works on its own but it is the interdependence of the living and the non-living that makes a place. Finally, I realized that staying grounded in relation to your project and your aspirations is the only way to be sincere with your intentions, the design, the result and the effect that it would have on a bigger scale.