

Metropolitan Gardens – gardens in the interstices of the metropolitan tissue

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Abstract

The heterogeneity of the contemporary metropolitan landscape has led to a multiplicity of intermediate spaces, in between and within the different tissues of the metropolitan landscape. These interstices can provide favourable conditions to be transformed into gardens. What design instruments can be discovered for these gardens to address the characteristics of the interstice? And what is the value of doing so? In this essay three contemporary examples are compared, which explicitly address the different metropolitan landscapes in which they are located. Paley Park (New York, USA) is a transformation of an interstice within a dense urban tissue; the Crazannes Garden (Crazannes, FR) creates a point of contact between motorway and rural landscape, and the Reflection Garden (Seattle, USA) addresses the inclusion of what used to be the hinterland into the metropolitan realm, which has so little physical impact that the interstitial space between the urban fragments constitutes practically the entire surface. The gardens are compared focusing on the landscape, the metropolitan condition of their situation, and the formal, spatial and visual transformation of the context in the composition of the garden. From the case studies one can conclude that gardens can define specific places in a generic metropolitan landscape, employing several design tools: centring, enclosing and highlighting a specific selection of existing landscape qualities.

Key words

interstice; interstitial garden; landscape architecture; garden; metropolitan landscape; place

1. Introduction

In the course of history the garden evolved into many forms, opening up to the outside world, more and more following the growing awareness of landscape, but remaining defined spaces as expressions of a specific location in the landscape. From the perspective of landscape architecture, gardens are expressions of landscape, territorial representations that, in the words of Monique Mosser and Georges Teyssot, are constructed in situ 'on the interface of architecture and topography.' They can be defined as the most condensed unities in which the historical, functional and spatial complexity of the landscape manifests itself (Mosser and Teyssot, 1991, p. 8; Marot, 2003, p. 10-11; Hunt, 1996) (Figure 1). Two apparently diverging reflections on the expression of landscape could converge in the contemporary garden: the notion of place and the transformation of the landscape into a metropolitan landscape.



Figure 1
Garden as an expression of cultural and natural landscape: Villa Medici (Michelozzo di Bartolomeo, 1458-1462; photograph Peter Bolhuis).

Contemporary discourse on 'place' is informed strongly by philosophical and sociological theories. It tends to refer to personal knowledge and sensitivities, past experiences – in other words, to relational concepts on the personal history of the individual with the place (e.g. Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977; Norberg-Schulz, 1980) – or to cultural and social relationships (e.g. De Certeau, 1984; Hayden, 1995). In these theories the user is central, not the physical place. Without rejecting these views, in order to move from theory towards the discovery of design instruments, this article has a more physical geographical lens, with a focus on the physical, spatial component of the place, referring to a set of characteristics inherent to a geographical location, which can be perceived as a whole (e.g. Sauer, 1925; May, 1970). Central is not the experience, the user, but that which is experienced, that which can be created, the physical component of the equation. To be able to distinguish a place, as the geographer Joseph May pointed out, place has a 'perceptual unity', that is, its characteristics make it perceivable as a coherent unit, different from its surroundings (1970). Place is specific.

The second reflection of significance here is its defining quality as a dynamic system in continuous transformation. Parallel to the way place is addressed in this article, and complementary to many contemporary theories on landscape, I will focus on the geographical component of landscape, the changing spatial conditions. Over the past century a symbiotic relationship between city and landscape has grown, leading to what has been defined as the metropolitan landscape. As Steenbergen and Reh phrased it:

Seen from the perspective of landscape architecture, the term refers to the spatial relationship between two different systems, namely on one hand that of nature and the agricultural landscape each with its own topography, spatial form and visual structure, over against the spatial system of the city, which in turn has its own structure and morphology. Their interaction, and points where they penetrate each other, lead to various intermediate spatial forms. (Steenbergen and Reh, 2011, pp. 15-17)

Gardens are representations of this landscape in all its complexity, suggesting that also the metropolitan landscape needs to be recognised and addressed in the garden. What new landscape architectural conditions for making gardens arise from the metropolitan landscape and how can they be expressed in their design?

Depending on how the metropolis is defined, multiple views are possible, ranging from the social, economic and environmental aspects of large urban regions (Rowe, 1992; Sieverts, 1997) or network urbanism (Dupuy, 2008), to landscape ecological conditions (Forman, 2008) to the spatial aspects of the urban landscape (Steenbergen and Reh, 2011) and landscape infrastructures as armatures for urban development (Waldheim et al., 2006; Czerniak and Hargreaves, 2007). To what extent landscape, in the sense of a permanent underlying substructure, visual, physical and conceptual open space, and as a conceptual and instrumental 'vehicle' of nature, has a bearing on the resolution of metropolitan problems is the broader aim of these inquiries. In many of these theories a specific notion crops up, which seems to hold keys for the design of gardens: the interstice, a spatial consequence of metropolitan developments, which many different metropolitan landscapes, conditions or concepts have in common.

This paper explores how new centralities (places) are generated in the placeless interstice, focusing on the small scale of the everyday landscape, and addressing the interstices within and between the different tissues and fragments that constitute the metropolitan landscape.

2. The garden in the evolving metropolis

Garden and metropolis have a long history of symbiosis. The spatial coherence between city and landscape determines the nature of the metropolis, which may be considered as a city that has gradually opened up to the landscape, on all scales and in different forms over a long period of time. With every step in the development a new repertoire of landscape architectonic typologies forges the relationship of city and landscape. In the contemporary metropolis as a carpet of urban and landscape fragments we see the interstice as the intermediate emerge.

As Steenbergen has analysed in his essay “Metropolitan Footprints”, metropolitan development took place in different stages (Steenbergen, 2008, pp. 114-115). The nuclear medieval city can be viewed as an artefact placed against the background of the non-city, determined by the way it is distinguished, separated from its environs. Enclosed gardens formed the stepping-stones in the functional relationship of the city with the open landscape and with nature. From the Renaissance onwards, the landscape territory of the city was opened up architecturally. In the course of the 19th century the city perimeter gradually dissolved, opening up the city to the surrounding landscape. The modern city expanded into the landscape, opening up the urban perimeter with the urban park as a colonisation model. Each step came about using a new repertoire of landscape-architectonic typologies. In the early 20th-century garden city, public green appeared as ‘interim space’ and remedy for the increasingly inaccessible landscape. The green belt was a last effort at keeping the city organised and the landscape accessible.

When, as a result of the continuous process of urban expansion and transformation, the entire territory ultimately disintegrates and the city becomes poly-nuclear, the difference between city and landscape vanishes. The last stage of the metropolitan process until now can therefore be described as the disappearance of the distinction between city and landscape. City and landscape are united in an unlimited urban field of hybrid intermediate forms. Explosive population growth, changes in economic activities, and the growth of transport and communication in the last half century has made the change from a city in the landscape to the city as a landscape of fragments primarily a contemporary development.

The current ‘metropolis’ is not a spatially defined artefact, in contrast to the territorially limited city of the middle ages. Where the traditional city is based on a commitment to continuity and composition, to order as an unbroken continuity consisting of distinguishable, yet inseparable parts, in metropolitan territories one can rather speak of a spatial and temporal continuity, undefined and unbounded, characterised by flexible and dynamic relationships (Van der Velde and De Wit, 2009, p. 56).

This hybrid landscape provides favourable conditions for the re-emergence of the garden. The size of the garden finds an easy fit in the many interstices that are left between the different programmatic entities, following the loosening up of the compositional logic of the traditional city. The concept of the interstice as a property of the metropolis was described 16 years ago in the book *Zwischenstadt*, in which Thomas Sieverts coined the notion of the ‘in-between city’ (Sieverts, 1997). This notion highlights the interstice as the new urban realm, extended green areas, which tend to form the (unplanned) core of new urban developments, a new urban pattern. If addressed and cultivated these interstices can yield valuable tools for addressing the metropolis.

The link between the marginal space and the garden was made by the French philosopher Louis Marin, in his essay on the *Jardin de Julie*, the fictional garden in Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). Marin compared the garden to what in French is called the *Rue Traversière* – the road that runs across. In other words, the garden is viewed as a disjointed place, a spatial configuration that eludes normative expectations as far as function and direction are concerned. The garden can be viewed as a traverse, cutting across the theories and practices of contemporary urbanism involving ‘green spaces’ and ‘natural’ leisure resorts in the post-industrial city: “You who construct gardens, no longer make parks, or green spaces; make margins. Do not make leisure and game terrains; make places of *jouissance*” (Marin, 1992, p. 87).

3. Interstices in metropolitan landscapes

The following analysis is based on Buyck et al. 2008 (PDF), 2009 (PDF (2010)), Bauer 2009, Sinn et al. The aforementioned concept of the interstice as a property of the metropolis is related to the view of the metropolitan landscape as a carpet of fragments, as for example Neutelings put forward in his analysis of the transformation of the urban fringe of The Hague. Here he likened the metropolitan territory to a carpet of urban fragments, devoid of compositional form (Neutelings, 1989). The continuity and compositional logic of the city seems to have been replaced by a contiguity of elements and networks that are not necessarily matching, resulting in a spatial structure full of holes and fringes. These interstices are undefined residual spaces, spaces we see but hardly register, with no apparent meaning or function.

The relation of different metropolitan conditions to the underlying landscape has led to different types of metropolitan fabric, each with their own distinct physical determinants. Three types of interstice can be discovered. First there is the interstice within the metropolitan tissue. The derelict sites of torn-down buildings, traffic islands, medians, widening of the pavement, and unkempt plantations can be gathered under this type of interstitial space. A second type of interstice appears when one metropolitan landscape intersects the other, most clearly visible where the large, sweeping course of motorways or railways, informed by the physical laws of speed, cuts through the fine urban or rural tissue. A third type is when the metropolitan developments are projected on an existing landscape, but hardly leave a visible trace, leading to a transparent 'carpet,' with the interstitial space not as a residual fragment, but as all-encompassing surface (Figure 2).

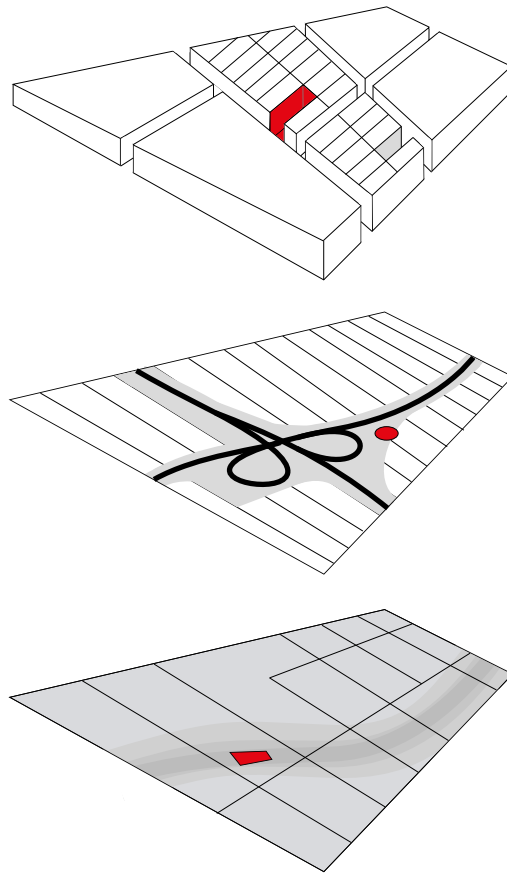


Figure 2
Interstitial gardens reacting on three types of interstitial space (The grey areas mark the interstitial space; the gardens are indicated in red).

4. Three interstitial gardens

In order to research design means and components with which 'interstitial gardens' might address the metropolitan landscape, three examples of gardens in highly different (spatial) metropolitan contexts are compared. The case studies focus on the specific type of metropolitan landscape and the position of the interstice in this, and on the formal, spatial and visual transformation of the context in the composition of the garden.

The first example, Paley Park, was designed in the dense tissue of the skyscraper metropolis of Manhattan. The design is basically a transformation of an interstice within the urban tissue. The second example, the Crazannes Garden, is connected to the territory generated by the flows of infrastructure. The design addresses the relation of the motorway and the existing landscape. Urban sprawl is a well-known phenomenon, leading in many cases to a suburbanisation, but in more extreme examples, as in the third case study, the Reflection Garden near Seattle, to a metropolitan landscape, which is virtually invisible. The garden exposes the incorporation of the underlying landscape within the metropolitan landscape.

A comparison between the gardens is made possible by describing each one, using the same components: the type of metropolitan landscape and their position herein, the design history, their composition and the relationship between the garden and interstice.

4.1 Paley Park, an urban void in the skyscraper metropolis

4.1.1 Metropolitan landscape: skyscraper metropolis

Of the many notions of metropolis, still the most iconic one is the 'great city': a central city with the power to attract people, great in size, and accumulating key economic activities. In that sense New York, or more precisely Manhattan, is the archetypal metropolitan landscape: "Manhattanism is the one urbanistic ideology that has fed, from its conception, on the splendors and miseries of the metropolitan condition – hyper-density – without once losing its faith in it as the basis for a desirable modern culture. Manhattan's architecture is a paradigm for the exploitation of congestion", as Rem Koolhaas wrote in his seminal eulogy for Manhattan, *Delirious New York* (Koolhaas, 1994, p. 10).

In the second half of the 19th century America transformed rapidly from an agrarian into an urban society. New York started to grow fast, channelled by the extension plan of 1811, a grid of building blocks of 50 by 200 metres, extending over the island of Manhattan. The narrow blocks gave developers no choice but to build upward, unleashing the grid's unlimited potential for growth. The invention of the skyscraper is the core of the success of New York as a metropolis. In his analysis of the metropolis, in the sense of 'great cities' or super-cities, the geographer Emrys Jones commented on the enormous impact of the office block as the focus of activity (Jones, 1990, p. 91). The Manhattan skyline proclaims its complete commitment to the technology, which has produced the greatest massing of buildings ever seen, and to the economic system that enabled it (Figure 3).



Figure 3
Skyscraper metropolis

4.1.2 Urban interstice

The Manhattan plan does not provide for public open space; to remove land from the market was clearly seen as a waste of a profit-producing resource. With exceptions like Central park and Bryant Park, the only open space outside the streets can be found within the blocks. A shifting constellation of unbuilt spaces – basically nothing more than empty building sites – emerged as an unplanned consequence of the lay out. Even in Midtown, the most densely built part of Manhattan, these open spaces are myriad.

In a condition of density, the landscape horizon, the reference to nature, and the connection to the underlying landscape are hard to find. The remaining open spaces are the interstices in the urban tissue, obtaining their definition from the buildings that surround it (Figure 4).

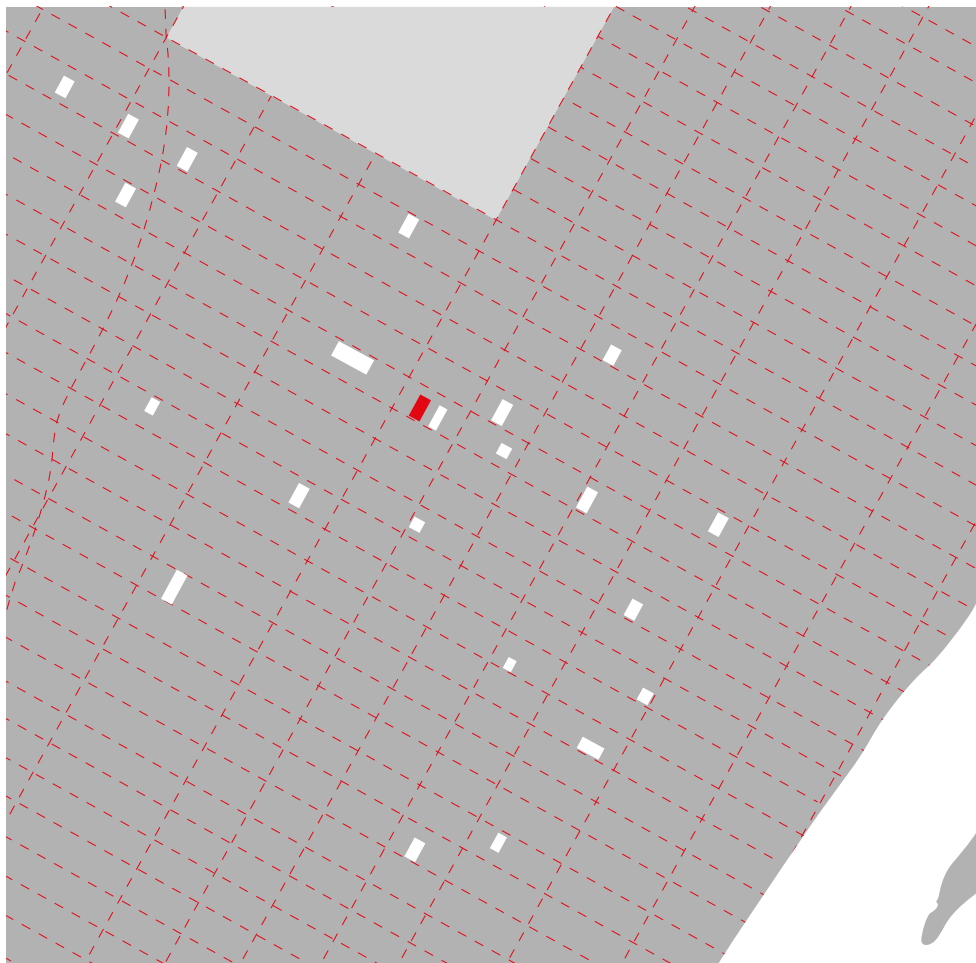


Figure 4

The dense tissue of Manhattan has many interstices, the size of a building lot. In Paley Park one of these interstices has been transformed into a public garden.

4.1.3 Design history of Paley Park

In 1967 landscape architect Robert Zion made a design for a public garden on an empty lot at 56th Street. It was a speculative design, meant as the prototype for a new kind of public space, as a critique against the then officially determined minimum size for urban parks of 12,000 square metres. Zion argued for a system of 'parklets', running throughout commercial areas, one for every midtown block. They would be public gardens for the inner city, the size of a building lot. He described the location as "a part of space removed from the flow of traffic (including pedestrian traffic), enclosed, protected and sheltered from noise. Preferably it is a space between buildings, benefiting from the shelter of neighboring structures; the type of space which is now most commonly used as parking lot" (Zion and Breen, 1963, unpaginated). The proposal was picked up by William Paley, who decided to build a public garden on the vacant site he had just bought, to commemorate his father, and asked Zion to design it.

4.1.4 Composition

Zion added several composition elements, emphasising form, size and position of the interstice: a double flight of stairs, ivy clad walls – formalising the outer walls of the neighbouring buildings – a tree canopy – blocking the view and negotiating the absence of sky – and a water wall at the far end of the space. Thus the interstice was transformed from a residual space into an independent, architectural space. A linear spatial sequence, elaborated in a widening and narrowing of space, changes in height levels, and vertical objects as attractor of the view – the water wall – or as disperser of movement – the field of trees – makes the transition between the continuous movement of the streets and the enclosure of the interior space within the building block. Interlaced with the axial sequence is an organisation around the open central space (Figure 5).

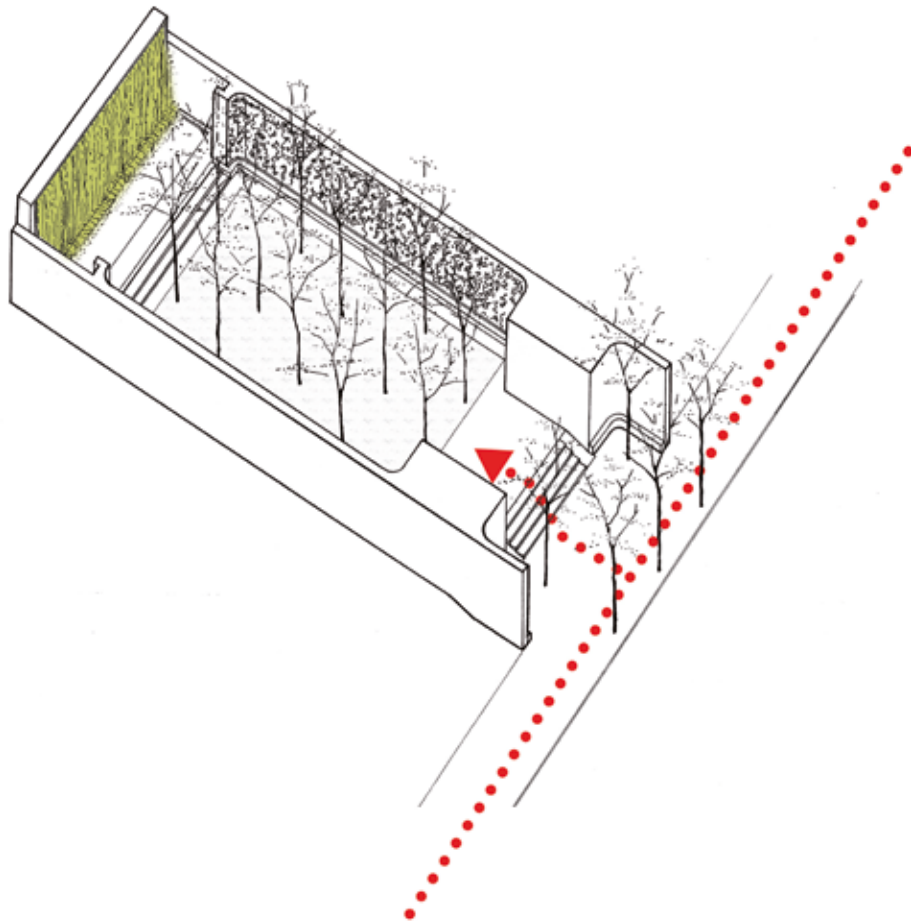


Figure 5

The composition of Paley Park is a concentric organisation around the open central space, combined with a spatial sequence from street to water wall.

4.1.5 Garden and interstice

While exposing the urban interstice as an autonomous space, at the same time the garden refers to the underlying landscape, defining a specific place within Manhattan. The island of Manhattan was originally a landscape of forests, streams and rocks. Its rugged, glacially formed topography was planed flat in the course of the city's development. In the garden the water wall, the field of trees and ivy-clad walls create the image of a mountain canyon, in a narrative reference to the disappeared landscape, feeding the topographical memory of the city. Where the falling water hits the pool, a shimmering horizontal line forms an internal, urban horizon, replacing the landscape horizon (Figure 6). The interstitial space, here defined as a counterform of the building mass, is transformed into a landscape architectonic space: the urban void, where the nature reference adds meaning to the space.



Figure 6

The spatial qualities of the interstice are elaborated, and in the resulting space a narrative reference to the vanished landscape has been created.

4.2. The Crazannes Garden, counterpoint of the flowscape metropolis

4.2.1 Metropolitan landscape: flowscape

Originally an integral part of the urban fabric, over time the landscape of infrastructure has become a self-sufficient entity, spreading out beyond the urban fabric, as well as taking up ever more physical space and becoming visually dominant. The movements of car, tram, train or airplane determine the basic landscape form and three-dimensionality of metropolitan infrastructure – a space of flows. Whereas the urban and the cultural landscape have always closely followed the natural morphology, resulting in a close-knitted unity, the technical demands of the motorway create a geometry of its own, informed by the physical laws of speed.

The flowscape was introduced to the rural region at the mouth of the Charente River in western France when a new motorway, the A837 was built in 1992, forming a new link in the already dense European motorway network. The region has had an urban imprint for a long time. Two towns, Saintes and Rochefort, owe their origins to the river, but they remained isolated towns until the building of the railway in the 19th century. Only in the early 20th century the towns were connected by a national road, which soon became heavily burdened with traffic. The A837 was built to relieve the national road (Figure 7). Intersecting the morphology of the natural landscape and skimming the edges of the towns, the new motorway generated a territory of fly-overs and exits, road reservations, parallel back roads, planting, low wide embankments and generic commercial developments.



Figure 7
Flowscape metropolis: the A837 intersects the natural landscape.

4.2.2 Flowscape interstice

Where the infrastructural landscape cuts through the morphology of the existing landscape, large gaps appear, residual areas, which are geometrically and spatially undefined. Partly these areas are determined by the demands and the reservations of the motorway, partly because the patterns of the existing landscape are cut off unfavourably (Figure 8).



Figure 8

The Aire de Crazannes fills the interstice between the motorway and the quarry landscape; the Crazannes Garden connects the interstice to the quarry.

4.2.3 Design history of the Aire de Crazannes

During the first surveys for the passage of the A837, the ASF (Société des Autoroutes du Sud de la France) noticed a rocky outcropping, revealing a vast zone of old quarries filled with rubble and earth. Only the last one exploited, the Crazannes Quarry, was left when still open. It was decided to avoid the old quarries and exploit the limestone outcropping to extract aggregates for the construction of the road. The artist Bernard Lassus, advisor on a national landscape policy for motorways, was asked to design two aires (rest areas) for the motorway, one in each direction. One of them is the Aire de Crazannes. It was positioned in the interstice between the motorway and the Crazannes Quarry, which would be opened up to visitors who would stop at the aire. The interstice was densely planted with trees, with two gardens pushed away as far as possible from the motorway, touching the edge of the quarry.

4.2.4 Composition

The road is curved into two loops, with a turning radius designed for slow-driving cars looking for a parking space. The perimeter defines the form of the gardens: the road, followed by a range of seams, and a circular arcade around a central lawn. The arcade is a transition space between exterior (both the motorway and the quarry landscape) and the interior space of the lawn. At the edge of the forest a second, crescent-shaped arcade connects the garden to the forest and to the quarry, giving direction to a walking route (Figure 9).

The invitation to take a walk discloses the landscape, with the neutral space of the circular garden functioning as an 'airlock' between the linear visual space of motorway and the meandering spatial sequence of the quarry, where the earthy smell, the stark contrasts of light and shadow, the rocks and the abundant plants give a distinctive sense of place.

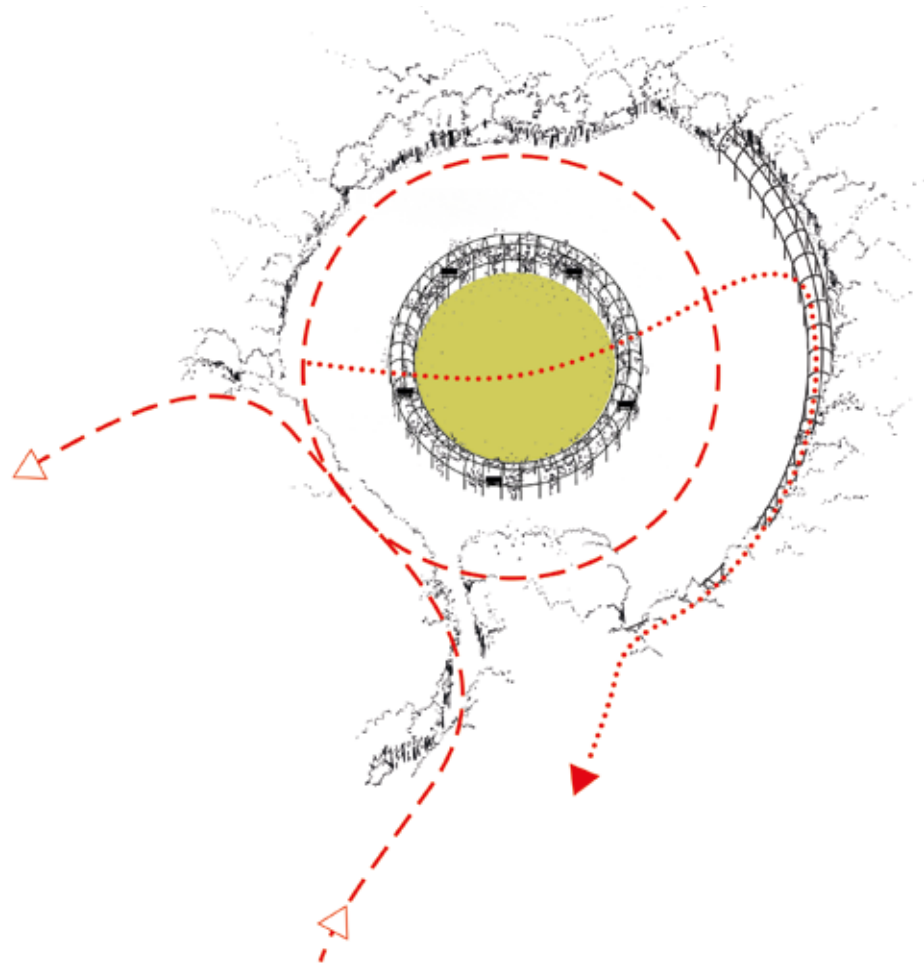


Figure 9

The circular form of the Crazannes Garden is derived from the geometry of the road. The resulting space functions as an interface between the movement on the road and the landscape walk.

4.2.5 Garden and interstice

While the air as a whole fills the triangular interstice between road and quarry, the gardens are precisely positioned at the edge, connecting the interstice – which was informed by the motorway – to the quarry. Connecting the world of speed and the world of 'standstill', the garden also connects the different realms of perception: the visual of the motorway and the multisensory in the quarry. In contrast to Paley Park, the Crazannes Garden is no destination, no point of standstill, but a momentary intermission in an otherwise continuous movement, remaining aside. It can be considered to be 'crossways' to the linear dynamic of the flowscape: disjointed from the fluent motorway system, from conventional and utilitarian constraints, but at the same time integral to the spatial and visual structure. In its introvert spatial form, in its quietness and its nature image, it is the opposite from the motorway system, but at the same time it is derived from its very form, like the eye of a hurricane.



Figure 10

The Crazannes Garden is a neutral space, with its surrounding arcade inviting the traveller to make the transition from motorway to the local landscape.

4.3. The Reflection Garden, sublimating nature in the invisible metropolis

4.3.1 Metropolitan landscape: invisible metropolis

The American sociologist Melvin Webber argues that technology, allowing for freedom of movement and free access to information, has enabled us to live in a world, where an urban way of life can be enjoyed without living in the confines of the city. Urbanity is no longer the exclusive trait of the city dweller; those living in what used to be the hinterland can be the most urbane of men (Webber, 1964, p. 89). Greater freedom of movement has loosened the urban fabric, and activities have become more scattered. In this

'urban realm' the notion of hinterland has disappeared. The hinterland has been, by definition, a place demarcated by interaction with a centre. "Today, when highly specialised communicators are to be found in what is called the hinterland, the basis for the definition dissipates" (Webber, 1964, p. 143). What is hinterland and what is centre becomes, at best, but a difference in magnitudes of information flow and of volumes of activity.

The Seattle metropolitan area, rather than a centralised metropolis dominated by Seattle's downtown core, is a dispersed metropolis with several cores of urbanity. The urban pattern is informed by several major river systems. High mountain ranges make extensive expansion to the east and to the west impossible, but the many islands in the Puget Sound in between the mountains have developed into a nebulous suburban area. A net of bridges and ferries interconnects the islands. Bainbridge Island, being the closest to Seattle, has become an increasingly affluent bedroom community of Seattle. The densely forested and thinly populated community on Bainbridge Island owes its existence, not to farmers or lumberjacks, as it used to, but to people commuting to Seattle on a daily basis.

None of the Puget Sound islands can be called Seattle's hinterland. Rather, all of them are integral with the entire metropolitan realm. The participants in the different networks, who live in the central business district of Seattle and those in the forests of Bainbridge Island, are the same. The level of prosperity is high, and technical innovation is so advanced that agglomeration has become less important; there is no necessary correlation between where people live and where they work. Location, not agglomeration, becomes the inducement for settlement, and location, in the case of Puget Sound, is defined by pristine lakes and forests. Arcadia, the original antithesis of the city, has become the metropolis (Figure 11).



Figure 11
Invisible metropolis: Bainbridge Island still has the spatial structure of the original natural forest.

4.3.2 Interstice

Thus it is that, within this metropolitan area, not the urban programme, but the natural landscape determines the physical and spatial structure. The urban programme takes up hardly any physical space, and the residual space between the almost negligible urban fragments constitutes all but the entire surface.

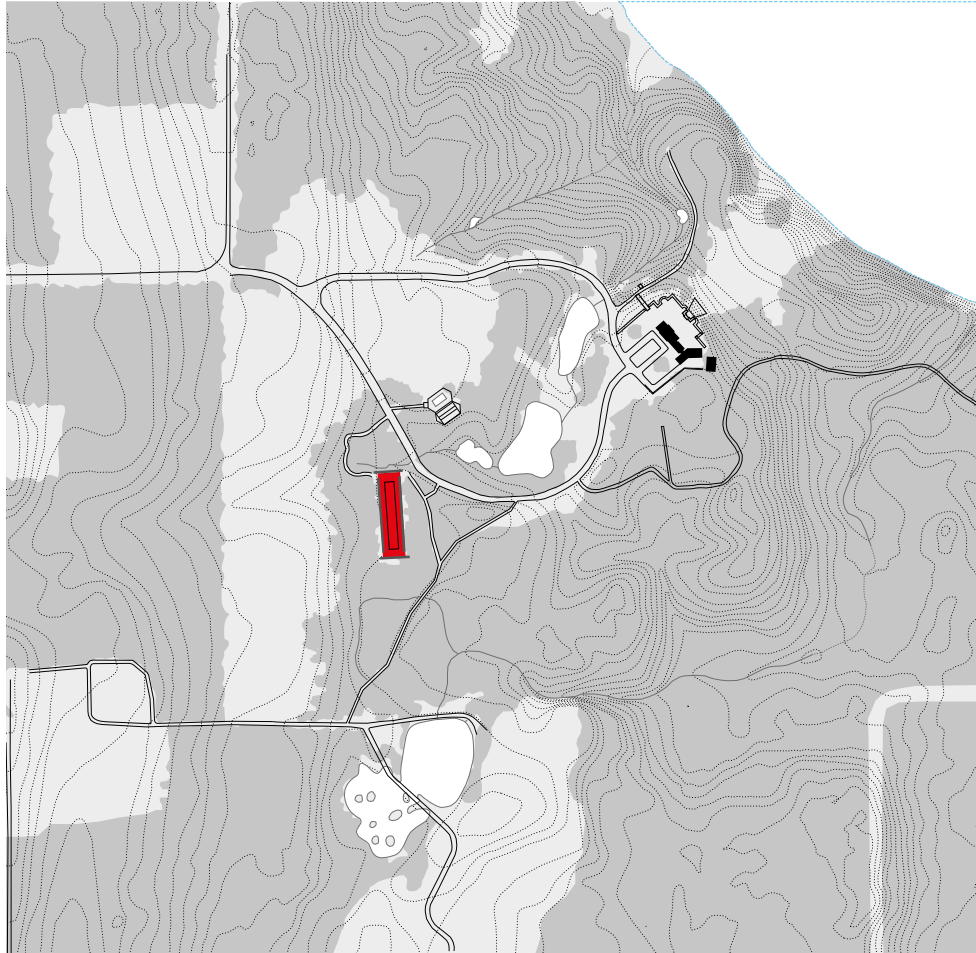


Figure 12

The Reflection Garden landscape layer is positioned at a strategic location in the landscape.

4.3.3 Design history of the Reflection Garden

In 1951 Prentice Bloedel, a wealthy Seattle-based timber baron, purchased a property on Bainbridge Island, where he created a country house, the Bloedel Reserve. After his death it was transformed into a public arboretum and nature reserve. The Bloedels, members of the elite, representing an extension of urban values in its fine architecture, artificial landscape, and sophisticated society, can be viewed as the forerunners of the metropolitan developments on the island. It took the Bloedels some decades to transform the original hunting lodge into the estate it now is. The Reflection Garden, created between 1969 and 1971 by the landscape architect Richard Haag, completed the composition. The garden ignores the classical composition of the estate – arranged around a central axis perpendicular to the shore of Puget Sound – and instead follows the basic form of the natural landscape.

4.3.4 Composition

The Reflection Garden is positioned at a strategic location, making the underlying landscape layer visible. Within its boundaries the hidden quality of the site – the groundwater – is displayed, specified and magnified. A site was chosen where the groundwater almost touches the surface, and then excavated to water-bearing sandy soil for maximum flow of ground water. The site reflects the fold left by the last glacier to retreat from the land about 15.000 years ago, leaving a pattern of ridges and folds, hardly visible at the surface. But it does reflect in the ground water table, made visible by the garden. A high hedge frames the garden, clipped into a fixed plane on the inside, turning the garden into an architectural room, but free growing on the outside, blending in with the forest. Lawn, hedge and forest form a sharply defined sequence of layers, organised around the open central space of the pool. From the open space of the garden the spatial qualities and the scale of the landscape become visible. The integration of garden space – enclosure – and landscape space determines the layout of the garden.

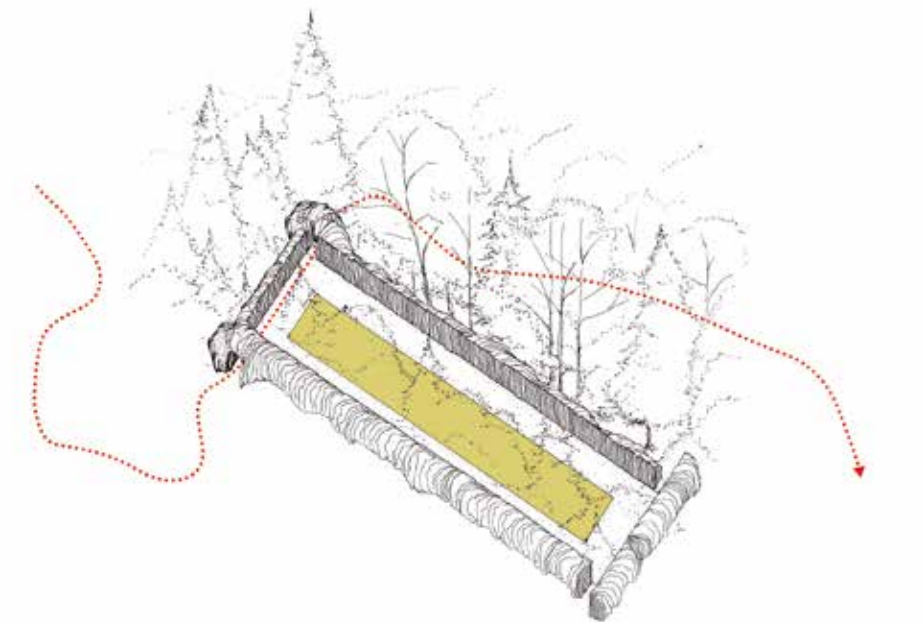


Figure 13

The Reflection Garden exposes the underground water system and the landscape space of the forest.

4.3.5 Garden and interstice

In the invisible metropolis, the interstice – the residual space between metropolitan developments – is omnipresent, which makes its relation to the metropolitan developments hard to read. The garden condenses the qualities of the landscape in a single space. The restrained image contrasts with the image of dramatic indigenous wilderness. Thus the garden is bound to the landscape (derived from it), and at the same time it is essentially an 'other space', contrary to its surroundings, "in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invent the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect", as Michel Foucault wrote (1967, p. 352). With this garden a perceivable, but disjointed space is created within the forest landscape. The garden exposes – by reconciling the urbane garden and the wilderness within one space – the incorporation of the natural landscape within the metropolitan landscape. Marking a place and illuminating its landscape qualities, unlocks the non-urban landscape and includes it into the urban realm.



Figure 14
Creating a place in the ubiquitous forest landscape.

4.4 Emerging strategies and tools

The interstices that appear in the instable and dynamic metropolitan landscape, with its continuously changing spatial conditions, are plausible habitats for new gardens. Whereas different metropolitan conditions ask for different landscape architectural transformations, these specific situations can provide possible reasons to be transformed into gardens. Expressing what is local and particular, interstitial gardens can provide reference points in a landscape that becomes ever more undefined and globalised.

The landscape image in the garden gives meaning to the leftover space: as a representation of the original landscape, disappeared under metropolitan developments, as a portal to the surrounding landscape, or as a 'looking glass' to what is hidden underground. The marginal space is exploited: what is a margin in the urban tissue becomes a centralised space once inside; what is closed off from the public gaze, becomes an opening onto the landscape. The quality of 'outside' – outside the real space of society, outside daily life, outside the generic reality of the metropolis, outside the physical surroundings – can be discovered in the cracks of the metropolitan tissue. This quality can become a garden when it is transformed into perceivable space, when – to refer once more to the image of the carpet – the hole in the carpet of fragments is transformed into a looking glass to the landscape layer underneath.

The examples give different elaborations of the transformation of residual spaces into defined places. An interstice, which already has an inherent spatial frame, can be architecturally elaborated, spatially organising the internal space around an open centre. The geometry of the motorway can be exploited to frame a centre, a moment of standstill, functioning as a portal inviting to investigate the surrounding landscape. A specific place in the landscape can be spatially framed.

Three design tools or strategies to define place, can be discovered in all three case studies: magnifying, enclosing, and centring. A specific selection of existing landscape qualities is taken in and magnified, highlighted. This selection is set apart by the enclosure, the most basic action of defining space, creating

an inside as opposed to an outside, or a specific place as opposed to a generic context. In interplay with the enclosure, the organisation around an open centre is the spatial representation of locational awareness and is elaborated as a concentric spatial layering. Whereas the metropolitan landscape can be described as a layering and contiguity of different spatial conditions next to and on top of each other, centring in contrast, demarcates a specific place. The centre creates a focus on the landscape, and, as Bernard Lassus wrote, “where a landscape appears, we are already in a place” (1998, p. 77).

The opportunity interstitial gardens offers for the metropolis, is not that they create a core for emerging urban fabrics, structuring the metropolitan landscape or that they give a solution for large-scale metropolitan issues, but that they can function as places outside, juxtaposing their metropolitan context by emphasising specific locations, and reflecting the landscape from the margins of the metropolitan tissue.

5. Conclusion: metropolitan landscape and place

Over the past century a symbiotic relationship between city and landscape has grown, leading to what can be called the metropolitan landscape, a non-geographical complex system, replacing the city tied to the idea of place. A 'placeless geography', lacking both diverse landscapes and significant places, seems to have replaced the localism and variety of places. However, the metropolis is not as placeless as it might seem to be. The experience of place can be found in specific locations.

Interstices, marginal spaces, which have no apparent function in the metropolis, give the opportunity to open up to hidden qualities 'underneath' the metropolitan tissue, qualities that can be defined as place, if they can be perceived as such. Place is an expression of the inherent qualities of the landscape itself, of a particular and specific part of space, and of that what may occupy that space. But the qualities of place only become meaningful if they can be experienced, if the location is perceivable as an articulate ensemble. An architectonic transformation of leftover spaces into gardens can make the qualities of place perceivable, as a physical, visual form, giving the place its own order and expressing geographical experience.

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