

The Urban Private Garden as an Amplification of the House: Leisure According to Regulation

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The garden as an amplification of the house is an idea which may be found as an explicitly outspoken approach in books and articles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A first step in our research was to look for a fairly clear statement of this idea. Ultimately the design approach of the Berlin architect Hermann Muthesius (1861–1927) turned out to be of exemplary value. Muthesius' concept is heavily influenced by his experience in England. Consequently the second step of our research was a systematic search for contributions in contemporary English and German garden, architecture and art journals and magazines, such as 'The Portfolio', 'Country Life', 'Architectural Review', 'Die Gartenkunst' and other sources which related to

It is the goal of this paper to present a special design approach for urban private gardens.

This is the idea of the garden as an amplification of the house, a design concept being widespread in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This design approach caused some conflict between landscape architects, architects and, last but not least, the users of urban private gardens. What is of special interest is a contradiction between a user-orientation claimed by the architect and his interest to check virtually all aspects of design.

this issue. In a third step we tried to incorporate our findings in a theoretical framework because it is our interest to go beyond the presentation of the historical dimension.

The design approach we present here seems to have been of far-reaching importance in garden-design of the 20th century. Although we are focusing on the elaborate gardens of a wealthy clientele with suburban country houses, this design approach is also found in smaller gardens of suburban garden-cities, small-house settlements and in allotments.¹ For that reason its significance goes beyond the concerns of a small privileged stratum of society², where the user of the garden is usually also the owner of a one-family house.³ The individual appropriation of the earlier mentioned private urban spaces

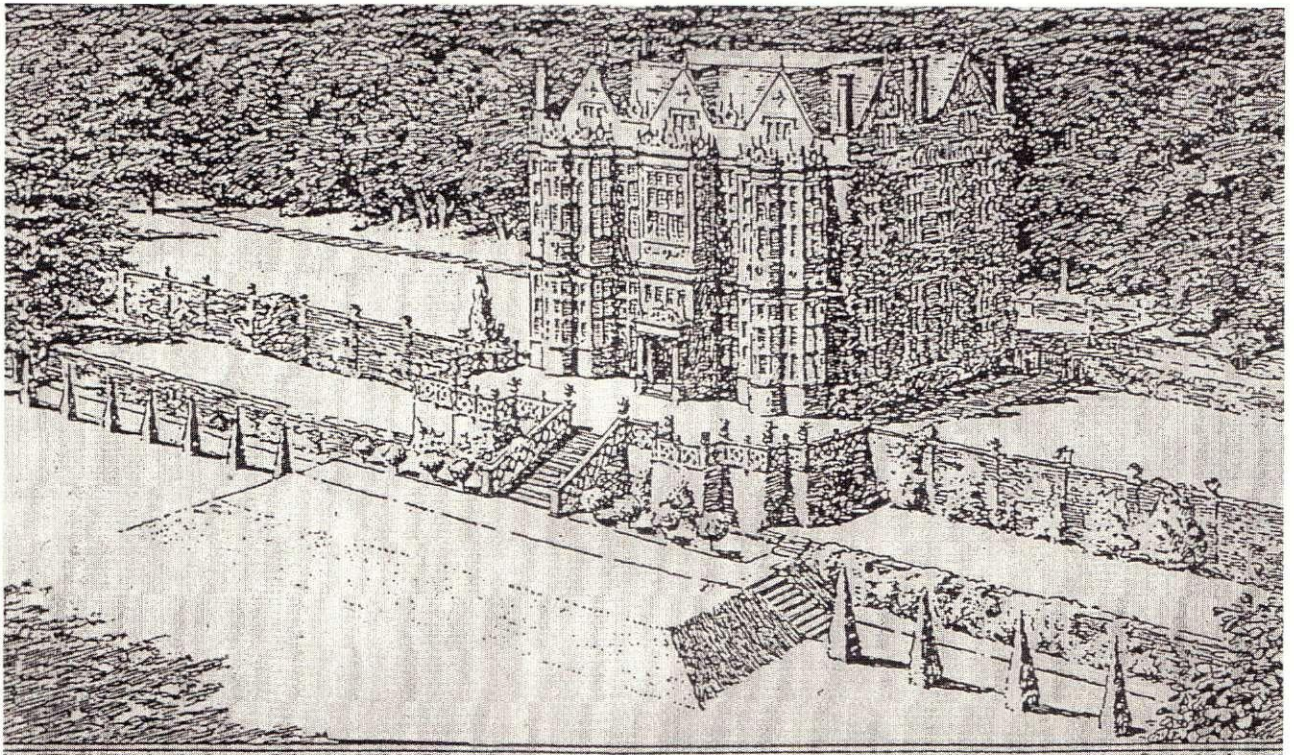


Plate 1. Example of a terraced garden. Blomfield 1892: 105.

may be even more hindered by generally accepted instructions and the design approach of an architect or landscape architect who is officially charged by the town planning-office or the housing-office to check all aspects of the design.⁴

The main purpose of this study was to define the social meaning of the design approach the garden as an amplification of the house and its implications for the user of private urban gardens. Recent social-science based literature of open space planning applies this term within the meaning of an ideal-typical living room for a home which comprises home and garden. Proceeding from the ideal case this allows the definition of the deviations and finally of the restrictions for people who are

interested in the use of private open-spaces, but can not fulfil their wishes because these spaces are separated from their dwelling. Formal or aesthetic criteria which concern the artistic lay-out of these private open spaces are not touched by this instrumental approach.⁵ In garden literature the term has found wide-spread response, covering different formal and functional aspects. The architects and landscape-architects of the first two decades after the turn of the twentieth century clearly had in mind a formal and architectonic design in close relationship to the design of the house. Later as a concomitant of the emerging criticism of formal design practices the term was also used for gardens with

more informal design. Consequently it loosened its ties with the original meaning.⁶ Therefore we will especially refer to the term as it was used in the decades around the turn of this century. By referring to contemporary statements we want to show that this design approach with its orderly, spatial layout obstructed other dimensions of garden culture and therefore provided only a very restricted concept of gardens and gardening. Recent research on this subject elicited some fundamental motives of gardening which help to support this assumption. Therefore we hope this paper about the significance of the urban private garden contributes to a theory of gardening from a historical perspective.

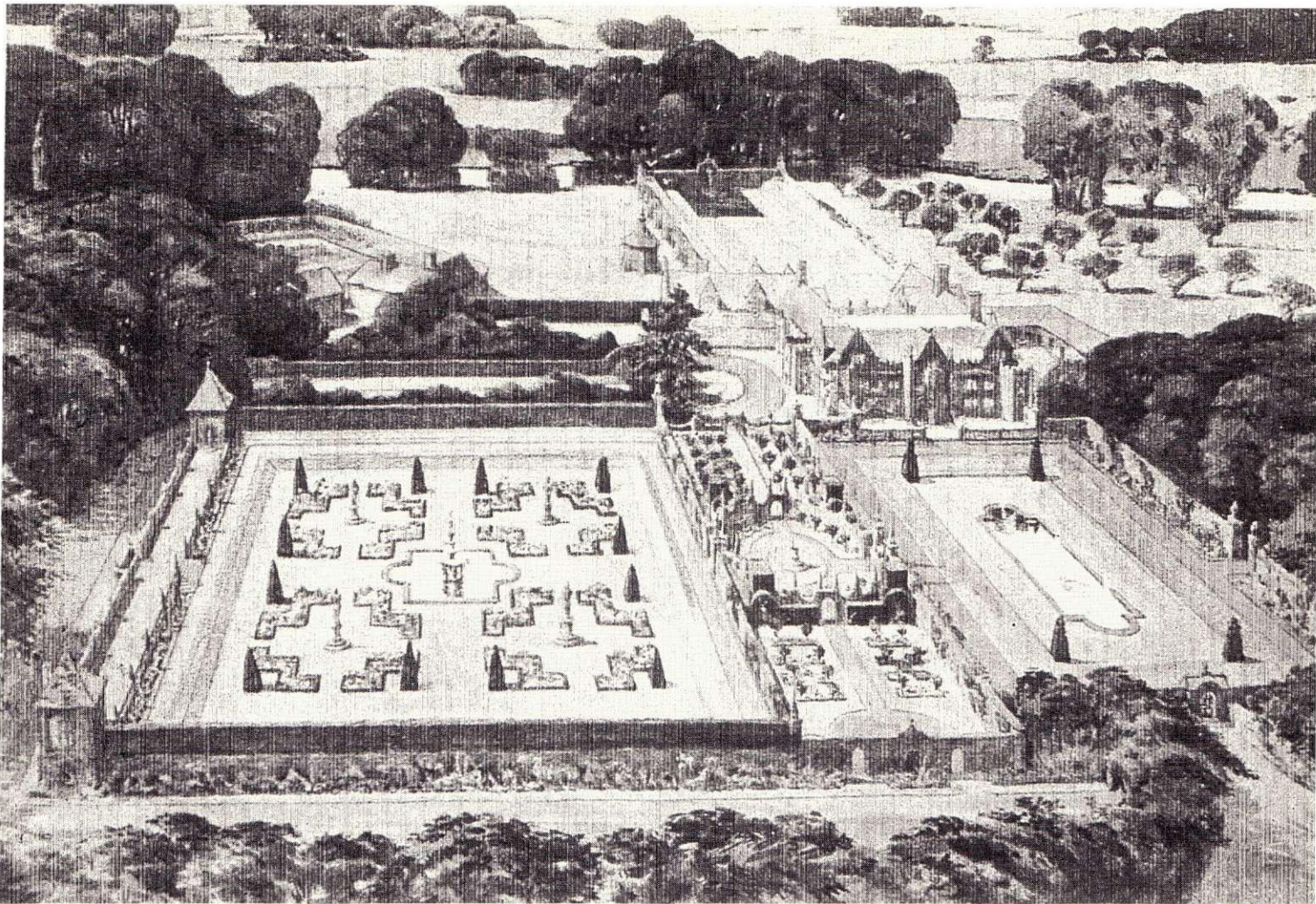


Plate 2. Aerial view of Aethelhampton, a country house garden by Francis Inigo Thomas, 1891–93. Ottewill 1989: 15.

The idea of garden as an amplification of the house

The idea of a garden as an amplified space of the house is an expression of the immediate spatial connection between house and garden. In the second half of the 19th century this concept was revived by several architects of the English arts and crafts movement.⁷ Among the architects who took a renewed interest in garden art, the English architect Reginald

Blomfield was prominent. In 1892 he published his book “The Formal Garden in England” (Pl. 1). In it he referred to historic examples and advocated a close design relationship between house and garden.⁸ Other architects, such as Francis Inigo Thomas were of a similar opinion (Pl. 2).⁹ During 1900 Thomas wrote a series of articles in the journal ‘Country Life’ where he explained the design analogies between house and garden.

Every complete lay-out used to be divided into a number of parts, each of which had its proper use and aspect. Just as indoors there were the dining-room, library, and gallery, so out of doors there was one court for guests to alight in, another for flowers, and a third for the lawn game of the period ... the basecourt where the housework aired itself, the coronary garden for herbs, the fruit garden – as we should say, kitchen – and the apple orchard.¹⁰

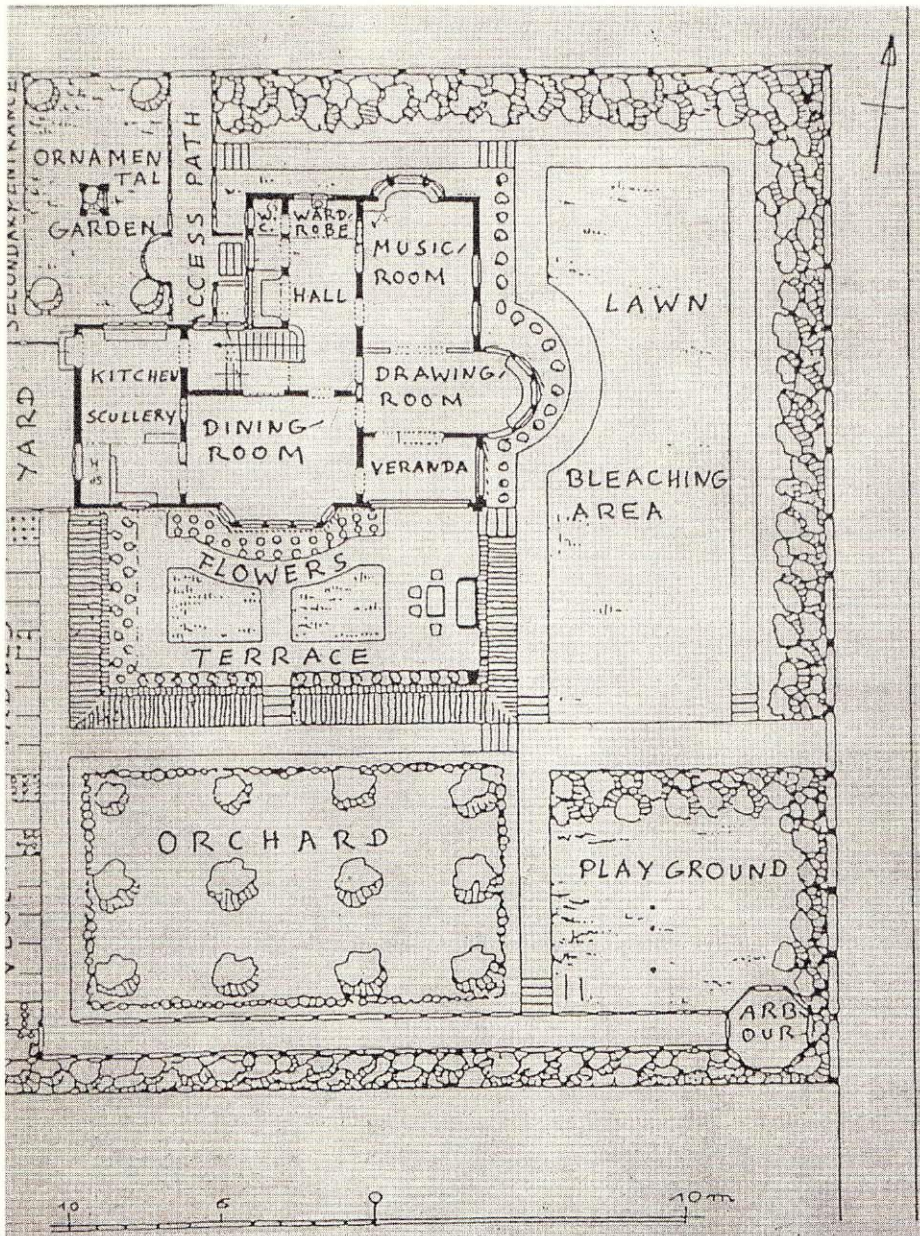


Plate 3. Layout and ground floor of the country house Heinrich von Seefeld, Berlin, 1904-5. Haenel, Erich, and Heinrich Tscharmann. *Das Einzelwohnhaus der Neuzeit*. Vol. I: Leipzig: J. J. Weber, 1909: 87; 89; written indication of places by authors, G. G. and U. S.

Thomas started with the idea that a garden may be laid out according to principles of order and function similar to those which were applied for a house.¹¹ This line of thinking was introduced to Germany by the Berlin architect Hermann Muthesius.

Hermann Muthesius' concept of the garden as an amplification of the house

Muthesius lived in England for seven years.¹² There he had studied the architecture of English country houses. Returned to Germany he published a book in 1904/05 on the history of the English country house.¹³ What was new in Muthesius' approach was that he considered house and garden as a unit in formal and in functional terms as well.

In all times of human culture house and garden belonged to each other undividedly ... Each part of the garden corresponds to the part of the house to which it belongs.¹⁴

His first country house followed this principle (Pl. 3). Designed in 1904 the garden displayed a number of different functional areas next to the house on a comparatively small lot. The entrance area with a porch, a wardrobe, and a hall corresponded to the access path and a small ornamental garden in front of the house. Hedges and walls separated this garden from the road. A garden for vegetables and fruit, a kitchen yard and a lawn for bleaching were attached to the part of the house designated for house keeping. Several garden terraces with plants were placed next to the dining room, the room for the lady and the room for the gentleman. The

terraces offered places to sit and thus served as outdoor living rooms. Flower gardens and other areas of the garden with parterres corresponded to representative indoor spaces. Additionally an area for lawn-tennis and for cricket, a sand box, a childrens playground and an outdoor athletic ground for children were provided. Thus the floor plan for the garden reflected the floor plan for the house. The advantage of such a design procedure seems to be to serve the interests of the users of house and garden in an optimal way. At least, this was what Muthesius claimed.

It is the job of the architect to study all the special wishes of the client and to fulfil them as far as possible.¹⁵

This claim seems to have a participatory ring. However, the preconditions for this claim and also its practical implementations make it highly questionable. To consider a garden as an amplification of the house meant to assume an immediate relationship between the functions of a garden and a house. Gardens designed by Muthesius showed relatively homogeneous programmes. The programme included such functions as living, representation, sports, play, food and house keeping. As for the house Muthesius wanted the design for the garden to follow purely functional aspects.¹⁶ Muthesius' goal was to create a new bourgeois aesthetic. His elitist position made him believe that individuals needed to be enlightened about the true culture of living and of gardening. He associated with the average citizen a general lack of culture which needed to be improved.

Muthesius' claim to create contemporary bourgeois art aimed at a unified

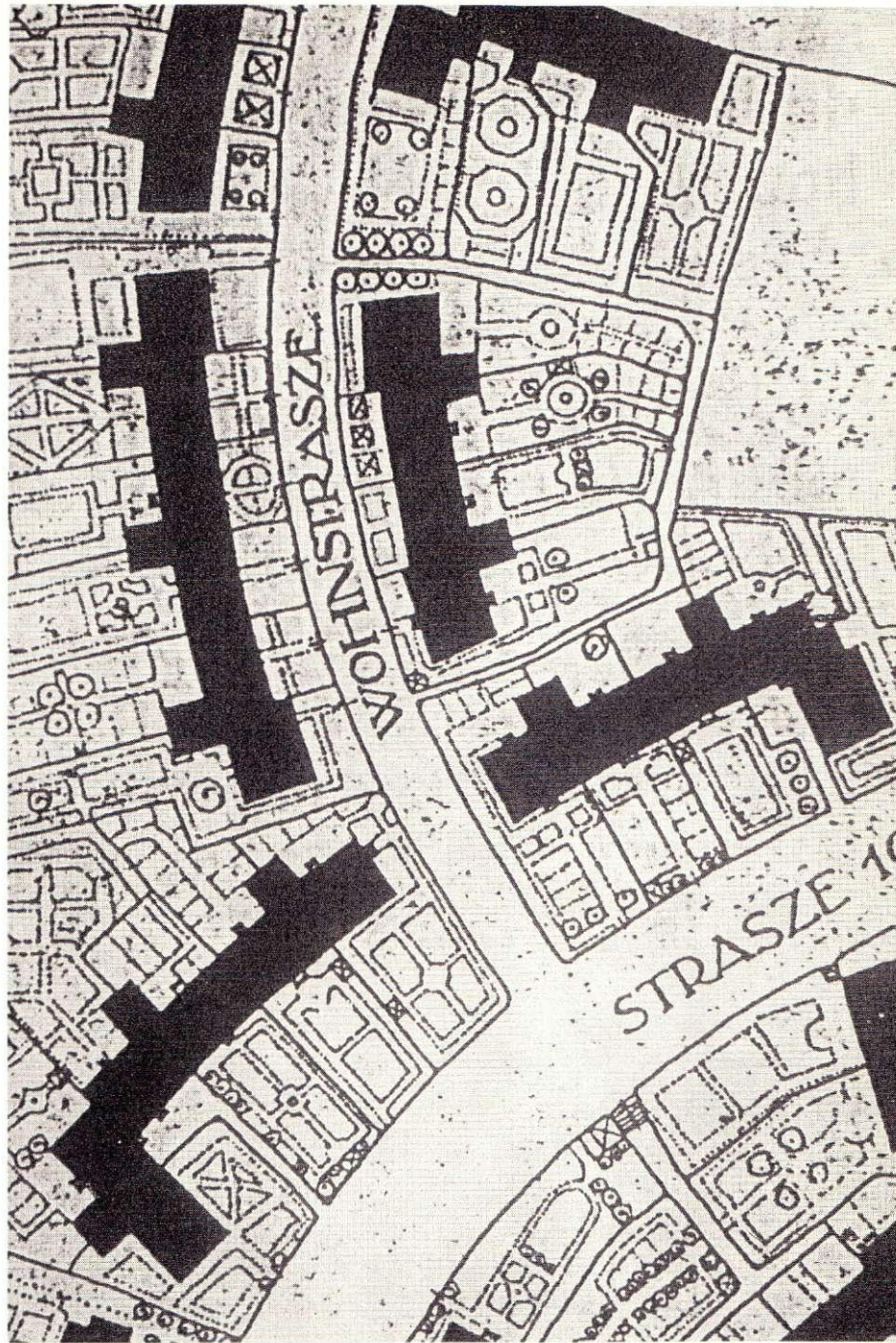


Plate 4. Garden-city Hellerau, design-proposal by Hermann Muthesius, 1911. Muthesius, Hermann. *Landhaeuser: Abbildungen und Plaene ausgefuehrter Bauten mit Erlaeuterungen des Architekten*. Muenchen: Bruckmann, 1912: 153.

style to which all life should become subjected, as he believed was the case in earlier periods of art.¹⁷ A consequence of such aesthetification was a far-reaching control of design (Pl. 4).

Aesthetification and Design Control

In 1979 the art historian Werner Hofmann named an interest in aesthetification, as represented by Muthesius as a "Geschmacksdiktatur", a dictatorship in taste.¹⁸ In 1900 the Austrian architect Adolf Loos had already satirized such tendencies in architecture in a story about the poor rich man. The situation for a garden was judged to be similar in England. In 1899 a contribution to the journal 'Country Life' criticized it in such a way:

The ambition of the architect of to-day – in many ways a noble ambition – knows no limits. He will sometimes prescribe for you the furniture which must be placed in the rooms of his designing, the plan and outline of the garden on to which his windows look, and the very plants and shrubs which must be grown in the various parts of the garden.¹⁹

In England architects Reginald Blomfield and Francis Inigo Thomas tried to determine a best garden style. In those days this was already inappropriate with respect to the many different needs of the clients:

For the rest we would lay down no hard-and-fast rules. Every garden should be the expression of an individual idea, should realise the owner's individual dream, and represent his own little bit of paradise. Whatever is beautiful, whatever delights the eye and gives

pleasure to the senses, should find a place there, according to the individual taste.²⁰

The professional superiority of the architect or gardener tended to restrict the implementation of the garden owner's own personal ideas. In memory to the garden of his parents the architect Charles Paget Wade (1883–1956) documented such a case:

But he [the gardener] became such an autocrat, it ceased to be our garden any more, it became his garden in which we were allowed to walk. If asked to move a plant, we were always told it was the wrong time of year, or the plant was too old or too young, or the moon not old enough, in any case it would die if moved. He ordered all the seeds and plants and put them where he wished, our only part was to pay.²¹

These quotations from around 1900 clearly show how garden users felt confined by architectural design and professional dominance. Although Muthesius knew such criticism existed, he preferred to ignore it. Is there an alternative for those who want to use a garden?

Alternative concepts for the functionalization and aesthetification of gardens: "Suspensive Work" and the self-determined spatial arrangement of a garden

Urban private gardens seem to elude a precise definition with respect to form and function. "Every garden ... should realise the owner's individual dream, and represent his own little bit of paradise". These words address the subjective meaning of private open space. How

then can the garden become a representation of paradise? "It ceased to be our garden any more" was the complaint in the second quotation. It barely concealed the disappointment of a garden owner who was declared a spectator, who could not realize and pursue his personal interest in garden design and gardening. Voluntary work in a garden and an ever changing design obviously seem to be an important aspect for many who want to enjoy a garden.

In sociological terms this kind of work was labelled "suspensive work". This describes an activity which is work-like but is felt to be self-determined as compared with professional activity. Recent sociological research points to the elementary meaning gardening has for a vast majority of garden owners.²² Apart from the physical activity it is the organization and the spatial arrangement of a garden which follow the ideas of the garden owner. One example is the garden at Great Tangley Manor in England. Here the interests of the owner were represented in a garden with hedges and architectonic elements as well as a naturalistic rock and swamp garden (Pl. 5). The important thing is to understand how such heterogeneous garden programmes developed:

Additions have been made from time to time ... but no formal plan has been laid down, and no written direction given. Great Tangley gardens have thus a delightfully spontaneous character.²³

It appears the design of such gardens was a succession of unplanned events in the course of time. Such self-determined activity in a garden, which does not follow a pre-determined plan, seems

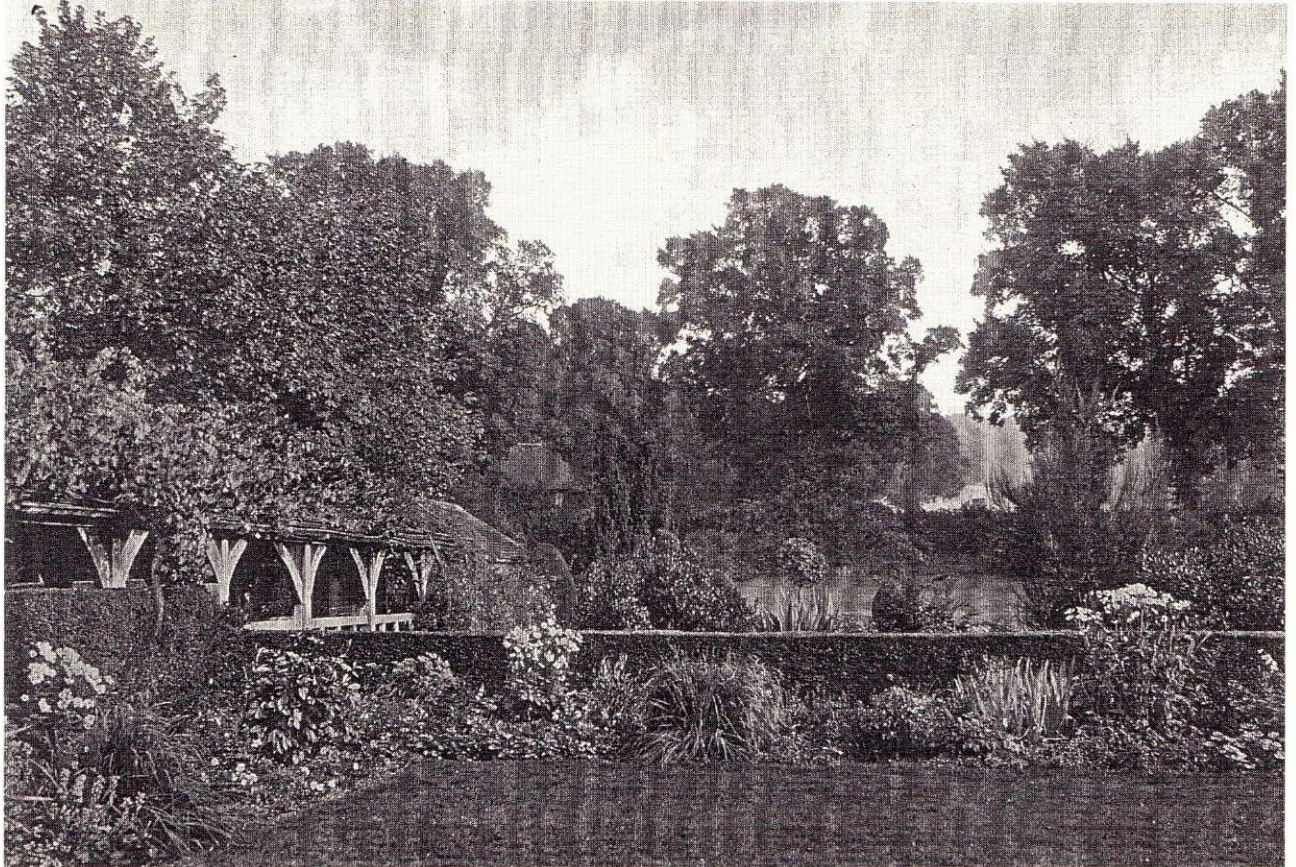


Plate 5. View of the garden of Great Tangle Manor; country house restoration by Ph. Webb 1886–1897; garden design by the owner, Mr. Flower, from 1884 onwards. Anonymous 1898: 109–112; 144–147.

to be valued as a special quality in a garden and of gardening over time. It is the most important motive for having a garden. A recent survey in Germany indicated that forty percent of garden owners found the meaning of a garden reflected the idea of being one's own master in an area where no one else could interfere and where one can follow one's own ideas.²⁴

It seems to be the self-determined participation both in the physical and the disposing activities which is decisive. Only this participation allows for appropriation of the object.²⁵ The

individual appropriation of a garden by design has produced its own literary genre. In the England and the United States of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it even became fairly widespread. These books were written by lay gardeners, who dealt with the creation of a garden or described their own garden in the course of the four seasons.²⁶ Eleanor Vere Boyle²⁷ and Gertrude Jekyll are well known authors.²⁸ Jekyll's garden at Munstead Wood occupied her for almost two decades.

Conclusion

The designer and the urban private garden

In many European countries house construction requirements are such that professional consulting seems inevitable for legal, technical and constructive reasons only. For a garden the number of requirements is much lower. This widens the range for lay activities in a garden. In view of the different aesthetic interests of lay persons and professionals one could conclude that these opposing views are hard to combine. This opposition is real only when the designer

approaches the client with a deficient understanding of planning procedures.

Planning and design of open spaces still require fundamental technical, botanical and historical garden knowledge.³¹ Additionally, architects, designers and planners should understand the requirements of their clients. They should consider the interests and wishes of their clients and should integrate them into the development of their programs. Such procedure has been called 'participation'. For the architect it means the presentation of his proposals as a consultant. It also means not longer departing from a determined design program. Rather, a program

for the design and alternative proposals is needed. Social science based research about user needs and user interests can support such pragmatic procedures.

Social science based planning and design of open spaces is needed in order to develop design approaches which avoid formal and social determinism, as represented by Muthesius and other architects. Elitist design perfection then becomes replaced by a mutual exchange between client and architect resp. planner. There are consequences for the objects which result from such a design process. A tendency towards aesthetification becomes replaced by a differen-

tiated model of implementation steps and variability. To dismiss comprehensive design control allows for improvisation, for changes, and for procedures which reflect these changes.

A precondition for such individual garden culture is a sceptical attitude towards the superiority of the architect and designer in matters of taste and culture. The functional quality of a design approach similar to the one advocated by Muthesius tends to restrict the potential value of the garden as a leisurely space. Additionally, the user-orientation tends to contradict the architect's interest to develop a comprehensive design.

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Notes

1. We are indebted to Andrew Searle, Berlin, who helped to improve our English text.

The exemplary aesthetics of the country house garden for minor types of urban private gardens, e.g. for gardens in suburban small-house settlements and for allotment gardens, was expressed in 1918 and 1919 in a series of programmatic articles in the journal 'Die Gartenkunst' by its editor Karl Heicke. For this aspect and especially for the discussion of "the allotment garden as an amplification of the house" in German Garden Culture before World War I cf. Groening/Schneider 1994: 447-454.

2. Until the end of the 19th century only a small percentage of the German city dwellers lived in one-family houses with private gardens. The best documented city in this respect is Leipzig, where in 1890 only 0.8% of the inhabitants (Alt-Leipzig), resp. 2.3% (Neu-Leipzig) of about 180 000 inhabitants lived in one or two-family houses with

private gardens (More than two thirds of them were at the same time the house-owner). See Hasse 1891: 182. To live in such a villa-like house was at that time a class-privilege. This situation did not change afterwards, but it has improved since that time on account of the broader distribution of wealth. Nowadays between 13% (W-Berlin 1987), 17% (Hamburg 1993), 19% (Hannover 1992) of the citizens of cities of more than 100 000 inhabitants are owners of one-family houses with private urban gardens. Cf. Tessin 1994: 29-34.

3. In 1972 77% of the private homeowners in West-Germany were provided with gardens (77% of them lived in a one- or two-family-house), compared to only 20% of the tenants. The ownership of a home can be clearly connected with the ownership of a private garden. Cf. Herlyn/Herlyn 1976: 82-83; passim.

4. A discussion of such instructions and their

ideological background concerning German allotment gardens for the period after World War II is presented in Poblitzki 1992: 249-262. For the attitudes of allotment holders towards the present state of their built and open environment cf. Groening 1974: 58-62; for a broad discussion of instructions and the problem of design control from the end of the 19th century onwards cf. Groening/Wolschke-Bulmahn 1995: 177-200; 249-251; instructions for suburban settlements' gardens at the end of the Weimar Republic are discussed in Harlander/Hater/Meiers 1988: 85-86; 121-124; 213; 233-235; 237-238; passim. Cf. also Crouch/Ward 1994: 8-11. In allotment garden contracts even nowadays the size and type of the allotment shed, the proportion of the land use as well as the location and species of the plants can be prescribed. Cf. the form of an allotment garden contract in Kleingartenbedarf 1986: 62-65.

5. Cf. Groening 1972: 11-15; Groening

- 1975: 7; Spitthoever 1982: 174; 177.
6. cf. Bacher 1995: 282–290; cf. e.g. Harbers 1933¹, 1937², 1952³; Hahn 1952: 13–17; Valentien 1953: 1–2; 14–15; Hunziker 1957: 24–33.
 7. Ottewill 1989; Elliott 1986; cf. Repton 1806: 13; M'Intosh 1838: 20; Hibberd 1857: 330–331; Kemp 1858: 183.
 8. Blomfield 1892: 1.
 9. Ottewill 1989: 13–21.
 10. Thomas 1900: 293–294 (235–237; 293–294; 295; 364–366; 424–426; 489–491).
 11. Cf. also the definition by Robert Stodart Lorimer: "A garden is a sort of sanctuary 'a chamber roofed by heaven'". Lorimer 1899: 195 (195–205).
 12. Kat. Berlin 1977.
 13. Muthesius 1904–5.
 14. Muthesius 1904–5, part II: 82; 85; passim.
 15. Muthesius 1907: XIV.
 16. Muthesius 1907: XXVI.
 17. Muthesius 1903: 80–81.
 18. Hofmann 1979: 55.
 19. Anonymous 1899: 272 (272–278).
 20. Cartwright 1892: 218 (211–218).
 21. Ottewill 1989: 136–137.
 22. According to a compilation of results from various studies in Germany about two thirds of the garden users prefer to do so; cf. Tessin 1994: 132; 131–133; cf. also Groening 1974: 51–55; Spitthoever 1982: 177–182. The results presented by Groening and Spitthoever confirm these results. Additionally they discovered distinct differences according to the age and the social and professional position of the plot-holders.
 23. Anonymous 1898: III (109–112; 144–147).
 24. Tessin 1994: 134; 133–136.
 25. Cf. the definition of home territory by Lyman and Scott in 1967: "Home territories are areas where the regular participants have a relative freedom of behavior and a sense of intimacy and control over the area". Further references are given in Groening 1972: 11–13.
 26. Seaton 1984: 386–398; cf. in addition the huge collection of such books of American writers of the 19th and 20th centuries in Hill 1995: passim; cf. also Penn 1993: passim.
 27. Boyle 1884; Boyle 1900.
 28. Jekyll 1899.
 29. Jekyll bought the lot in the early 1880s and designed it in the following years. At first there was no house. The house was erected in close cooperation with the architect Edwin Lutyens from 1895 onwards. Cf. Brown 1994: 25–28; 33–53; 50–53; cf. also Ottewill 1989: 61–64.
 30. Cf. especially for the gardening work of lay persons Hill 1995: 21–25; 27–30; 34–40; 71; 102–107; 113–119; 122–123; 133–134; 138–139.
 31. Groening 1980: 784 (782–787).

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