

CITY (E)SCAPE

A RETREAT IN AN URBAN CONTEXT



CHALMERS

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ABSTRACT

In the rush of modern society we tend to keep up the pace, until suddenly, without warning, we crash.

Exhaustion, burnouts, stress and stress-related diseases are words and subjects we too often hear about in today's society. In the field of healthcare it has become clear that the lifestyle we are living has a negative impact on our health and wellbeing. Consequently, promoting health and a healthy lifestyle, along with the importance of prevention work are of increasing importance when discussing healthcare today.

"City(e)scape" aims to discover how this prevention work could manifest itself in the city and asks if the city can encourage and support this change of lifestyle. Can architecture inspire a change?

According to experts we can handle a lot of stress but we need breaks to cope. This master thesis explores the break, the retreat, which could offer the busy public a place where they

can catch their breath. This retreat is located in the most urban and dense commercial part of the city and will be an exception to what already exist in the area. It will give the inhabitants the opportunity to escape to their own thoughts and regain perspective on things in their everyday lives.

In the first phase of the project research was carried out by going on study visits, finding relevant literature and meeting people who, in one way or another, work within this field. Design values were created after analysing the research and these design values were then the basis for further work. Sketching and model workshops were tools that were used in the design process. The outcome of "City(e)scape" is three concepts for a retreat on the site, Södra Hamngatan 47, in Gothenburg, Sweden.

INTRODUCTION

The hectic tempo and lifestyle we live today affects us, in one way or another. Exhaustion, burnouts, stress and stress related diseases have become words and subjects we too often hear about today and some even say that stress has become a national epidemic.

According to experts we can handle a lot of stress but we need breaks to cope. It is exactly the same principle as with exercise.¹

In the worst case an unhealthy amount of stress can lead to burnout which means that the person can't work anymore and that costs society money and of course also cost the affected a great deal of suffering.

According to Ingibjörg Jónsdóttir, Associate Professor at ISM (Institute for Stress Medicine), we are facing a paradigm shift where we must prevent; not only save them who are already affected.²

In the field of healthcare they have noticed that the increased pace, socially, economically

and technically in our society has affected our health negatively. The prevention work has become an important topic in discussions concerning healthcare and they are today striving to become more health promoting and can often encourage patients a change of lifestyle rather than giving them medication.

According to Peter Währborg, Professor of Behavioural Medicine, promoting a healthy lifestyle and preventing lifestyle-related diseases is one of the futures most urgent tasks.³

Christopher Murray and Alan Lopez are two American researchers who have mapped the world's health problems and also dared to predict the future. According to them the health problems will become more globalized which means that there will not be as clear differences in illnesses in different parts of the world as there is today. The health problems will more often be caused by our lifestyle and often be of psychological nature.⁴

This prevention work is something that I think needs to be emphasised and prioritized also when planning and discussing future cities.

**How can the city encourage and support this change of lifestyle?
Can architecture inspire a change?**

With expanding urban spaces in the near future, where the pace is cumulating, I wonder if we are planning for those breaks, those exceptions; for stillness and solitude; spaces in an urban context where we can escape to our own thoughts and get perspective on things - a retreat.

BACKGROUND

Due to this hectic life we are living I can also sense that there is an increased interest within the population to find a contrast to it. People find retreats in, among others, spa visits, holidays far away (maybe to a private island if you can afford it), yoga and meditation.

A retreat that many people in Sweden can relate to is the summer cottage. In Sweden, and also other Scandinavian countries, we have been escaping the city for decades. It is not unusual to have an apartment or house in the city where you spend your working days and then you spend your weekend on the country side in your cottage in the middle of the forest.

To save the people and the city I think this escape, a retreat, should come closer to the inhabitant's lives and be part of their everyday lives instead of being something they would need to save their money for and long for. Maybe then it is too late...

In the beginning of the thesis work I asked myself the question: "where is my retreat?", "what makes me calm?" and I also tried to reminisce places where I've been and experienced a sense of tranquillity. It made me think of the summer nights by the lake at my grandparents cottage when I was young, watching the sunset after a sauna. A more recent situation is a walk along the shore on the island where I lived last year, sitting on the rocks by the sea watching the sailing boats fade into the horizon, in Lauttasaari, Helsinki, Finland.

This master thesis is about exploring what a retreat in the city is and what it could be in the city of Gothenburg.



Picture taken from an evening walk around Lauttasaari, spring 2012

FOCUS AND DELIMITATION

I have for a longer period of time been thinking of and had a feeling that there is a need in the city that is not satisfied. A need for a place to go to when you just want a moment of peace and quiet, a place where you could sit down and relax without having to order something or pay an entrance to have access to it.

I can see a connection between this need I have felt in combination with a population that is feeling stressed and often rushing from one place to another during a day.

If we need a break, a place where we can catch our breath, in the centre of the city - where do we go?

Churches have had this function in our society for many years but as our society is becoming more secular, where people take distance from religion, this is not an ideal option.

When I have discussed this with people during my work many have said that a library could be

a place where you can go to experience this. It could be but it is not sure because a library is built for another purpose. When the discussion goes further we have noticed that we say library because it is often the only option in the city.

I see my master thesis as an opportunity to explore this subject further. I wanted to define my thoughts and understand what it was I was searching for and what shape it could take.

The aim was to find concepts that could work in different cities, but especially in the city centre of Gothenburg.

That there hasn't been a client or a ready-made task in my case has shaped the process significantly. It was important to me to explore and study the subject in the beginning – meeting people, going on study visits, finding relevant literature and sketching.

The exploration has been a big part of the process and my master thesis is because of that best seen as an attempt to find answers to my questions and a collection of my reasoning's along the way.

Main questions throughout my process have been: What can a retreat be? What makes us calm and peaceful? How can architecture support that? What shape does a retreat take in the city? How can we prevent the illusion of stress in cities?

METHOD

The first phase of the project was about the exploration of what a retreat actually is. During this phase I tried to broaden my perspective and accumulate more knowledge in the chosen subject. I searched for relevant literature and typologies that could be of interest. I contacted people who in one way or another touch on this subject I was drawn to. With this new knowledge I had collected I continued to the next phase which was the analyse and design phase.

I wanted to find a site where I could experiment and test my thoughts and ideas. It would be an opportunity to give my thoughts a shape. This I believe would give me a better understanding of how to work with this subject in this case and in the future as well.

When searching for a site for the retreat I started by exploring the city by foot, by strolling around and observing how people behave and move

in the centre of the city. I found three sites that had potential within the moats in Gothenburg. Through site analyses I collected a base for my choice of site.

I visited the chosen site several times and analysed it further to get an even better picture of its conditions and its context.

With the knowledge collected from the first phase and with the site in mind I continued to work with concepts that could be suitable in this case. Sketching and model workshops were tools that I used to come up with the design of the final concepts.

SEARCHING FOR A RETREAT

WHAT IS A RETREAT?

RETREAT Verb [intrans.]

(of an army) withdraw from enemy forces as a result of their superior power or after a defeat : *the French retreated in disarray.*

- move back or withdraw, esp. so as to remove oneself from a difficult or uncomfortable situation : *it becomes so hot that the lizards retreat into the shade* [as adj.] **(retreating)** the sound of retreating footsteps.
- withdraw to a quiet or secluded place : *after the funeral he retreated to the shore.*

Noun

a quiet or secluded place in which one can rest and relax : *their mountain retreat in New Hampshire.*

A retreat can for example be about the importance of being in and experiencing silence, about moving in a slower pace, about sitting in stillness or about the ritual of bathing.

A retreat can be many different things and it is very personal. It can be linked to religion but it can also be profane.

By asking people around me and searching online for what a retreat can be I got these answers: mindfulness, yoga, a cold bath, tai chi, sauna, a garden, a church, meditation, hamam, ashrama, an allotment, qigong, a monastery, the forest and an own island.

What retreats have in common, religious or not, is, according to me, **an aspiration for tranquillity.**

In today's society where we are always reachable and updated, surrounded by city noise and have adjusted to crowding, it can be difficult to feel calm in for example total silence or to be calm when doing nothing. Doing absolutely nothing or to have nothing to do is something we are unused to nowadays. In many cases our phones and gadgets "save us" from this happening. We are more or less used to always being entertained.

Our sensory system pass about 11 000 000 impressions every second and of those impressions our brain can "only" process and prioritize about 10-15 per second.⁵

This process is very demanding to us mentally and if it overloads we cannot cope with everyday life.

WHERE ARE THE RETREATS?



Always updated

When we need to clear our mind from all the impressions from the day and get perspective on our lives, people have different methods, on how to do that and some people have not even considered how to do that. Some clear their mind while running or at the gym and some while doing the dishes. Are there places in the city designed with the purpose to help us clear our mind?



Vallila Library, Helsinki, Finland

When searching for a retreat in the city it is difficult to find anything that is non-commercial. A retreat in the city often becomes places where you have to pay an entrance fee to have access to it. Examples are spa areas or yoga centres.

A library is one non-commercial option in the city but its purpose is to lend and share information and media. It is not built with the purpose to calm and relax people.



Kungsparken, Gothenburg, February 2013

A park in the city is another option. Here you can often find your own space, for example under a tree. Sadly in a climate like here in Sweden it is not that commonly used over half the time of the year.

It is difficult to find a noncommercial place to stay in in the city and even more difficult to find a noncommercial retreat.

STUDY VISITS

In order to understand how to prevent a stressful mind I believed that I needed to find out more about what happen when it has gone too far and a person has been diagnosed with exhaustion. How does a person recover and under what treatment?

If a person has been diagnosed with exhaustion in the Västra Götaland region the person might get help and treatment at ISM (Institute of Stress Medicine) or at Gröna Rehab (Green rehabilitation). Both of these facilities are located at the Botanical Garden in Gothenburg. I contacted both of them to get a better picture of how they work.

ISM (INSTITUTE FOR STRESS MEDICINE)

ISM was established in 2002 as a co-operation between the Region Västra Götaland and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. It was initially funded by the Government in the beginning but the Region Västra Götaland got the overall responsibility the year of 2008. ISM mainly carries the responsibility to conduct research and to spread information about stress and stress-related illnesses. ⁶

I met Agneta Lindegård Andersson, Ergonomist, PhD, Senior Developer Ergonomics/Physiotherapy, in the end of January this year and I had the opportunity to meet her colleague psychologist Susanne Ellbin as well, on a later occasion during this year.

Agneta Lindegård Andersson highlighted how our society can encourage an "all in"/"all or nothing"-attitude, that for example many people can often feel that they should see and experience everything these days. During our conversation I got the picture that the people who are affected are of all ages. Also the

younger generations are represented. Often it is the "good"-girls and boys who have high ambitions who come to them to get help. They have thought that they are in a flow and are very surprised when they suddenly had hit the wall.⁷

According to Agneta Lindegård Andersson movement is very important. They encourage their patients to exercise but of course in moderation. To be able to be out in the nature is positive for the patients as well. There they can discover and seduce their senses.

She tells me about Gröna Rehab that is also located in The Botanical Garden and how great facilities they have. They at ISM would also prefer to be working as close to nature as they do.

Susanne Ellbin also agrees that nature has a positive impact. From the conversation room where she meets her patients there is a view over the surrounding nature. She has been



A corridor inside ISM permits



A conversation room at ISM



A meeting room for both staff and patients at ISM

in charge of the layout of the room and she encourages the importance of as a patient to feel comfortable and safe. What kind of chair you sit in matters and you often want to sit so you can see the room and have an overview of it as a patient. The colours and the lightning should not be too bright because often if you are exhausted you are extra sensitive to that.⁸

MY REFLECTIONS AND WHAT I TAKE WITH ME

- Movement is important and it should be encouraged in everyday life. It is something we as architects can work with and have in mind when designing.
- Something that people of all ages can appreciate and enjoy is nature. Nature is highly valued and has positive impact on people.
- Anybody can be affected; young or old.
- Safety is also an important point. To be able as a patient to see the room is important. If you do not feel safe I believe that you can't relax and be fully yourself.

GRÖNA REHAB (GREEN REHABILITATION)

Gröna rehab was an initiative undertaken by Västra Götaland region in co-operation with the Botanical Garden. The evidence that an increasing number of people are getting burnt out and the evidence based knowledge that nature has healing powers was a starting point.⁹ It was a pilot project year 2006 and it has since then continued to show good results and is because of that now a permanent rehabilitation form.

If you have been working in Västra Götaland region and you have been long term sick and have not been able to work, you can get treatment at Gröna rehab. It is not open to anybody that means. They also have stress management courses for employees and bosses. They see that one of their main tasks is also to inform people about stress and how nature can have a positive impact on preventing stress.¹⁰

These who come to Gröna rehab are in the worst condition of stress-related diseases.

Some of the participants might even have forgotten how to write. At Gröna Rehab they get treatment in a natural setting by a crew with both “white” and “green” knowledge. By “green” knowledge they imply the gardener and the biologist and by “white” knowledge they imply the crew working with methods from healthcare, such as the physiotherapist, occupational therapist and therapist.

At Gröna Rehab they work with methods like body awareness, stress management and art work. Supportive discussions are also of importance. They take walks around the area and an important part of their rehabilitation is the sow and harvest work in the garden. It is not hard work for the participants but adapted to each individually.¹¹

Important for the participant is also to learn to take breaks. Those who come to Gröna Rehab have often been people who have for a long period of time had a high work load and have forgotten or don't really know how to take



Some of the crafts

breaks. The gardener can for example order them to take breaks in the hammock when they are working in the garden.

Some participants have mentioned that it is like coming to another world when they come to Gröna Rehab. A sense of calm arises within.¹²



Different levels in the garden



Sketch: A variety of heights of the plants and the planters



Grapes growing on the ceiling

MY REFLECTIONS AND WHAT I TAKE WITH ME

- I find it interesting with the combination of “white” and “green” knowledge. Cross-programming could be something to work further with in the city.
- The movement - walks in nature, is something that is emphasised here as well.
- The importance of learning to take breaks, to listen to our bodies, is urgent in our everyday lives. Could we imagine a gardener in the city that orders people to take a break in a hammock?
- To be able to experience a sense of “another world” when you arrive to a place sounds exciting. I believe that it is the contrast from what you are used to that could give this experience. Gröna Rehab is located in a natural setting that can offer the participants another tempo and a contrast to their hectic lives.

ALNARPS REHABTRÄDGÅRDAR (ALNARP REHABILITATION GARDENS)

Alnarp Rehabträdgårdar in Alnarp, Skåne was founded in year 2002 by Professor Patrik Grahn. It was the first facility specifically designed for green rehabilitation/horticultural therapy in Sweden.¹³

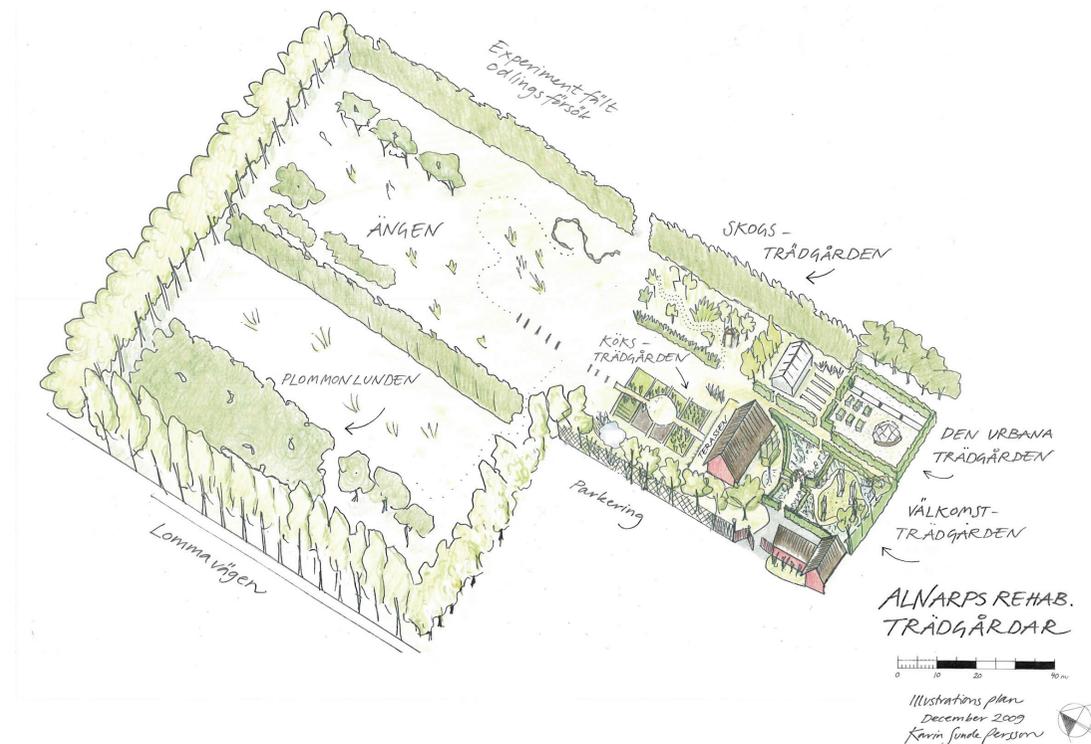
The area where the participants spend their time consist of a garden and an indoor space which includes a kitchen, a welcome space and a winter garden. The garden is arranged in different zones and the idea is that the environment itself should give the participants signals of what happens there and what to do there.¹⁴

There is for example a zone that is more untouched, wild nature and it is for the patients that are in the worst condition. When the participants are recovering and are in the end of their healing process they can enter The

Hardscape Room which is designed with the ambition to encourage the participant to feel secure and relaxed also when spending time in a more urban garden. It is more strict and efficient in its design in comparison to the other zones and the materials used in this space

signal that as well. The planters are of concrete for example.

The gardens boundaries to the surroundings are important. A fence is used to clearly communicate that this is a safe place for the participants.¹⁵





Pots in Alnarp



The Hard Scape Room



A pathway in Alnarp

MY REFLECTIONS AND WHAT I TAKE WITH ME

- It is fascinating how those at Alnarp have designed zones in the garden with different atmospheres and purposes to suit the different states of mind of the participant.
- The Hard Scape Room that is more urban works as well as a therapeutic space. The wilderness is for the ones in worst condition. Could we imagine a Hard Scape Room in the centre of Gothenburg?
- To feel safe is mentioned again. Here they have worked with a clear border to the surroundings to make the participants feel protected.

SANKTA MARIA MAGDALENAS CONVENTION

I met Björn Engdahl who is a monk and an architect. I met him at The Sankta Maria Magdalenas Convention located in the centre of Lund where he is in charge of the artistic activities, the Catholic student pastoral care in Lund and spiritual advice. We discussed the meaning of retreats in our society and in general and touched the subject of the sublime.

Churches and monasteries have functioned as hideaways in cities for many years and monasteries for example organize retreats that people can take part of.

You can often feel when you enter a church that you enter another world. The acoustics, the light, the smell is different. Churches have a

history and mysticism about them. According to Björn a religious building like a church can be a retreat because of that; that it has a history that lies in the walls.¹⁶

Sweden has become more secular and the church is not as powerful in our society today as it used to be. According to Björn a big issue in today's society is that many people sees themselves as the greatest, they can stand on top of a mountain and point at things they want and feel that they can do whatever they want.¹⁷

I understood that Björn felt it is necessary for people to feel that there is something greater then themselves in life to get a sense of perspective on their own lives. This has today been forgotten and that is why many can feel a bit lost in today's society.



Sankta Maria Magdalenas Convention, Lund, Sweden

I can understand Björn's need for something greater but I do believe that the mysticism, that we also can call the sublime, and that something greater doesn't have to be linked to religion. There are different ways to approach this subject.

The sublime is something we can experience but not fully understand. It at that point becomes something bigger and greater than us. The sublime can also be found in art, music and nature for example.



"Wanderer above the Sea of Fog", Caspar David Friedrich



St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, Italy

MY REFLECTIONS AND WHAT I TAKE WITH ME

- A retreat is also about getting perspective on your life. In order to get that we need something greater, bigger than us - the sublime.
- I feel that there are certain values in a church that people respect even if they are non-religious. Is it the history? The story on the walls? The scale? How do we create the collective values in a new type of building? I believe that the scale can play an important role here, in how we behave in a room, and what symbols and elements we work with.

IT'S GREEN

According to a study/survey made by Francis and Cooper Marcus people prefer to go to a natural setting when feeling stressed. Important elements and qualities for the preferred place were natural elements, sensory qualities, that it evokes safety and comfort, provides privacy/solitude, has viewpoints (expansive scale), set in an urban milieu and that there are opportunities for movement and exploration.¹⁸

EVIDENCE BASED DESIGN

The idea that people desire to be in nature when feeling stressed goes well together with research done in this field. Evidence based design implies for example that nature and daylight have a healing effect. Studies have been made at hospitals and one example is that patients have better recovery time if from their room they can see nature instead of a building façade.

Evidence based design emphasizes the importance of architecture in healing environments. Architecture itself can't heal but it plays an important role to the designed space where we spend our time. As architects we can for example influence how the light finds the room, the atmosphere of the space and the ability to feel safe.¹⁹

One theme within Evidence Based Design is positive distraction. It refers to environmental qualities or specific types of stimulation that can reduce stress and increase emotional wellbeing for example. This knowledge has also been developed through research.²⁰

Some of the most effective positive distractions are natural elements that have been beneficial to the human kind for millions of years. These elements are trees, flowers and water. Music and art also works as positive distractions.²¹

NATURE AND MAN

Our relationship to nature is ever changing. If looking from a biological point of view, the cultural development has moved fast forward in developing countries. We are now in an information society that looks very different from the past. This cultural development also affected our relationship with nature. Sverre Fehn writes about our relationship to nature:

“As culture evolved, man divided time from nature. With leisure, nature became subject to choice and judgment. The house became dissociated from the earth's activities, for the restlessness of man made the house geographically independent. The house became a foreign element set on the land without a practical purpose. Its life no longer tied to survival and support for the community; instead it was a way to escape boredom in the pursuit of privacy. At the same time nature became part of culture and separate from the agrarian way of life.”²²



Clock, The Woodland Cemetery, Stockholm



Cocoons, Fjärilshuset, Stockholm



Kew Gardens, London, England

MY REFLECTIONS AND WHAT I TAKE WITH ME

That we prefer a natural setting when feeling stressed sounds logical to me. That is where we have our roots. Man and nature was one. The scenarios I thought of in the beginning of my work process were also often linked to a natural setting and I think it has to do with, among other things, an experience of time. In nature there is a constant movement and change but it goes in a slow pace, in its own time. We can't hurry it.

In our lives where we are often used to keeping time tables, setting alarms, catching time, doing things faster to win time and where we often would hope that the day would consist of 25 hours or more to have time to do the things we did not have time to do; **nature can remind and relate to us another sense of time.**

Peter Zumthor touches this subject when he writes about the differences between the city and the landscape: "Time is big in the landscape while in the city it is condensed, just like the city's space."²³

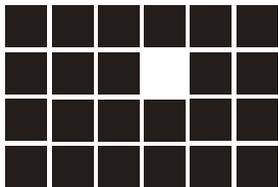
ANALYSIS

WHAT? WHO? HOW?

WHAT? A RETREAT IN AN URBAN CONTEXT

People can easily forget in the rush what really matters; what reality is. In the heart of the city, where most alternatives involves consumption, we need to stop for a while, catch our breath, and reflect. We need to listen to our bodies and consider our wellbeing.

The city can encourage a change by offering an alternative, an exception, to what already exists.



WHO? INHABITANTS OF ALL AGES

People of all ages are affected by stress in our society today. We need to find the inhabitants and prevent this negative pattern. We can sense that our lifestyle is harming our wellbeing.

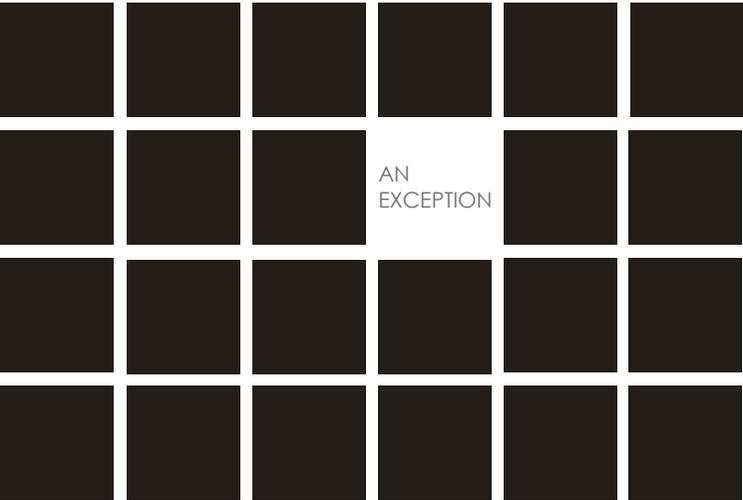


HOW? THE SUBLIME

The sublime can be found in art, nature and music for example. It is something we can experience but not fully understand. The sublime in nature will give the inhabitants a sense of tranquillity. It will be the positive distraction that will reduce stress.

That nature is good for us people is not a new phenomenon but its powers have been forgotten.





DESIGN VALUES

NATURE

WHY?

It has a stress
reducing effect

DAYLIGHT

WHY?

It has a positive
impact and it can
reduce depression

MOVEMENT

WHY?

To exercise keeps
us in shape and
it improves our
wellbeing

BREAKS

WHY?

To manage to keep
on moving forward
we need to learn to
take breaks

TEMPORARY VS. PERMANENT

First thing to decide on was if the retreat should be temporary or permanent. A temporary retreat could be quite flexible and mobile which is good because then it could be moved to where the need is. A permanent solution in the centre of the city is a bit harder to find space for. Where does it fit? **Is there space for it where the need for it is?**

To delve further into this question I had a model workshop where I made my own obstructions to work with. Questions I asked myself during this workshop were for example: Does it float? Is it something in the air? Is it on top of the built structure? Is it within the built structure? Is it in the trees?



Model from workshop. I found it interesting to work with a contrast of something more strict in combination with something that has a more organic form.



Model from workshop. How do we catch people's attention? In this model I have put different sized pieces of tape on a flat surface. The pieces of tape became benches, tunnels, hideaways, walls etc.

MY REFLECTIONS AND WHAT I TAKE WITH ME

- I take with me from this first workshop that the retreat should be "in the structure"; in the city grid if possible. Psychologically it would feel better with a permanent solution. It would really enlighten that this is important and not just something that can be taken away the next day.
- It could be a good thing to work with a mobile solution in the beginning of a project, in a "test-period" to find the right spot for the retreat; to see how people react to it and use it and then adapt the design to that.
- I found out that nature, in this case, is already the organic form and that the structure can be stricter. Let the structure be more urban so to say and play with the contrast to the nature.

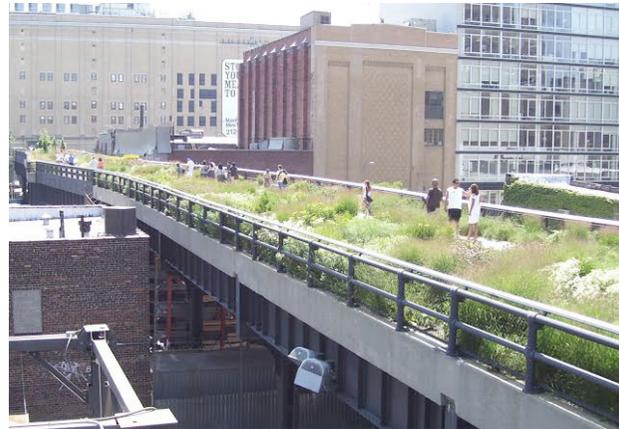
REFERENCES

These are some spaces that could be considered as retreats although none of them are designed primarily for that purpose.



THE CHAPEL OF SILENCE, K2S,Helsinki, Finland

In the beginning of June last year The Chapel of Silence opened its doors. It is located on the busiest square in Helsinki, Narinkkatori. I lived in Helsinki last year and passed the construction site often. On the placard it said: "Rakennamme rauhaa" which means "We are building peace". That was inspiring to me.



THE HIGH LINE, James Corner Field Operations, Diller Scofidio + Renfro and planting designer Piet Oudolf, New York, The United States

On an abandoned elevated railway a 1,5 miles long park has been built in New York. This once vital urban infrastructure has become a public park where nature has reclaimed its position.



THE MEDITATION SPACE (UNESCO), Tadao Ando, Paris, France

The Japanese architect Tadao Ando has designed a meditative space in UNESCO's headquarters in Paris. It is a cylindrical, one-story structure that is 33m² big. It is a space where people from all over the world, with different backgrounds and beliefs, can pray for peace.



POST INDUSTRIAL MEDITATION PARK,
Casagrande & Rintala, Kuramata village, Japan

The Finnish architects have designed the Post-Industrial Meditation Park that is located on an illegal garbage dump in Kuramata Village. It is a modern temple with the aim to re-think the connection between modern man and nature.



PALEY PARK, Zion & Breen, New York, The United States

A pocket park in New York, 390 m², offers the inhabitants a quiet urban oasis. A waterfall on the inner wall of the park masks the sounds of the city. It is often mentioned as one of the finest urban spaces in the United States.¹



GARDEN AND HOUSE, Ryue Nishizaw, Tokyo, Japan

This is a five-storey house located in a dense commercial district in Tokyo, Japan. It is a wall-less transparent structure to get as much sunlight as possible in this narrow, only 4 meter wide site.

REFERENCES



HOUSE N, Sou Fujimoto, Oita, Japan

House N is built with three shells/layers. These shells create different types of spaces. The outermost shell creates a semi-indoor garden. The greenery is brought into the built structure here.



TREE HOTEL, Tham & Videgård, Harads, Sweden

A camouflaged refuge is hung around a tree trunk in the north of Sweden. The 4x4x4 box interior is of plywood and the exterior reflects its surroundings.



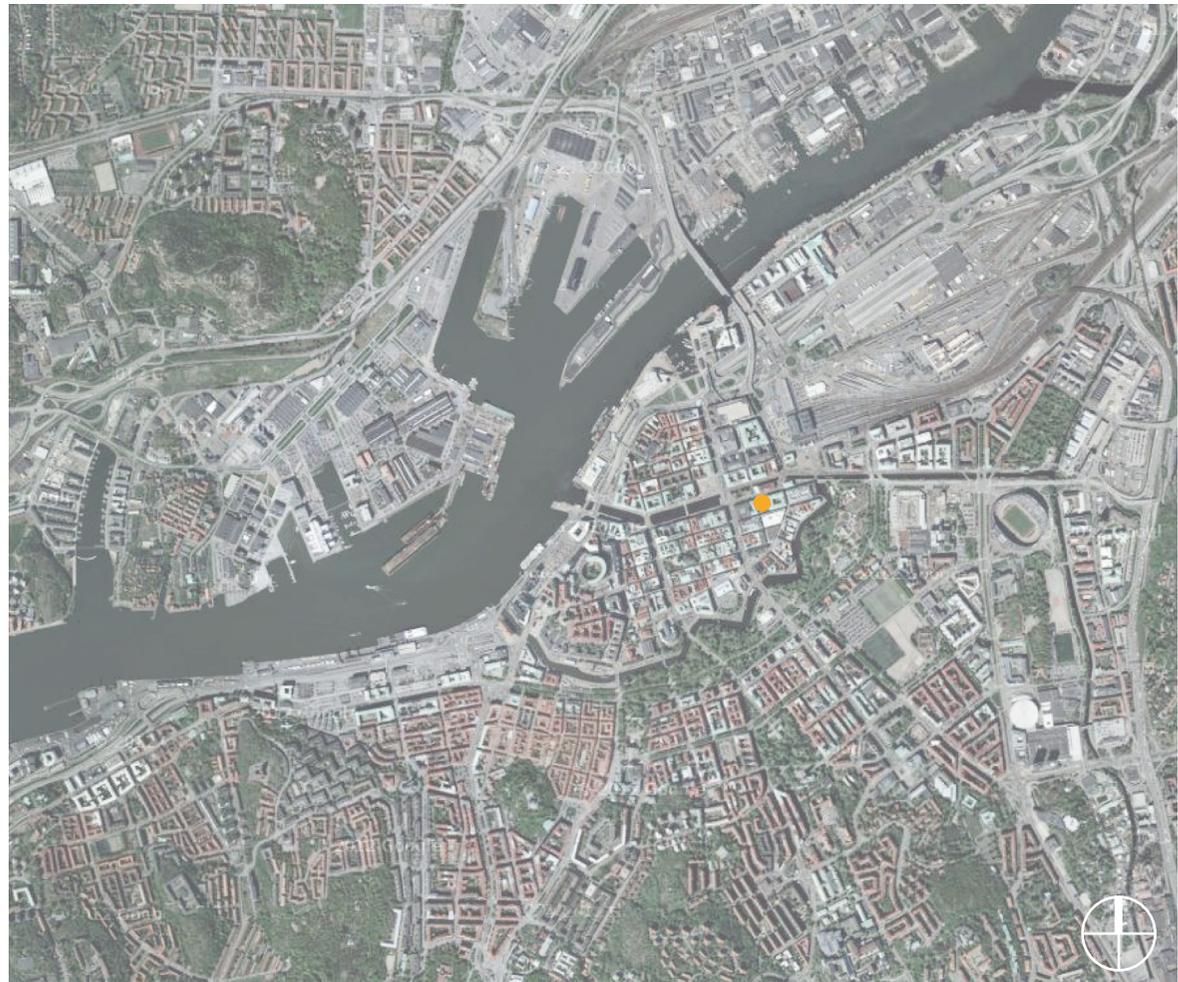
TREE HOTEL, Tham & Videgård, Harads, Sweden

CITY OF GOTHENBURG

LOCATION

I have experimented with my thoughts and ideas on a site. The retreat should be located so that as many people as possible can have access to it and pass it.

The site is located in Brunnsparken, in the heart of Gothenburg. It is the most urban place in Gothenburg.



● SITE

SITE LOCATION

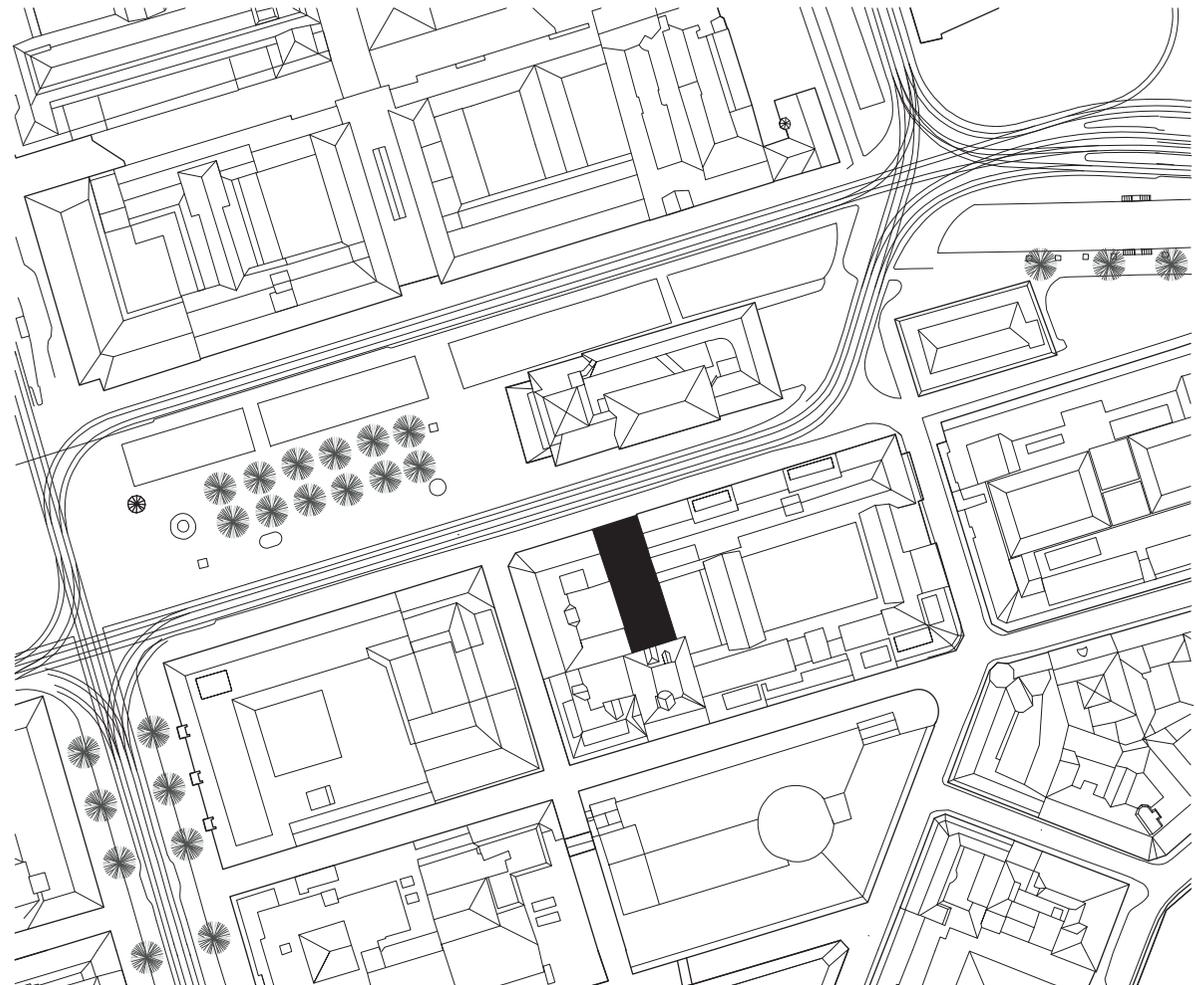
BRUNNSPARKEN
SÖDRA HAMNGATAN 47
AN INFILL SITE

+

- Centrally located
- Node - Good public transport
- Mixed functions
- One of Gothenburg's main walkways

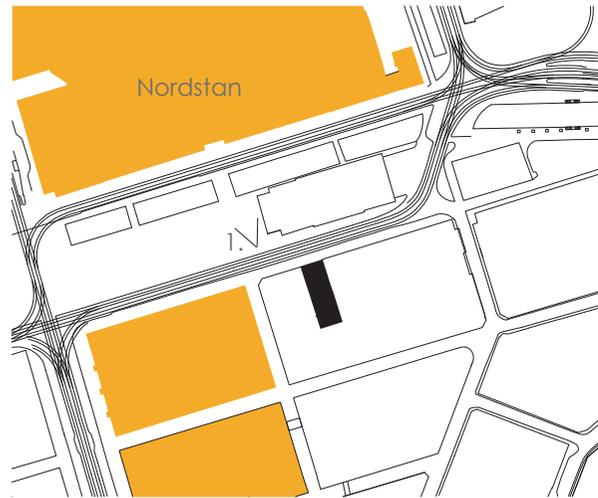
-

- Hectic tempo
- Busy traffic
- Noisy - traffic and people
- Can be perceived as messy

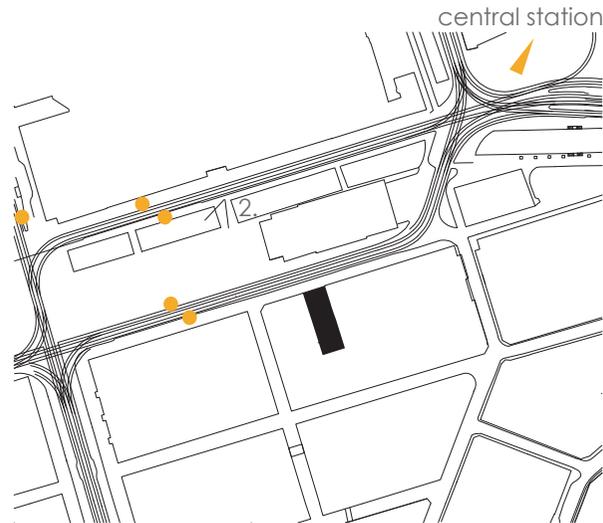


SCALE 1:2000 

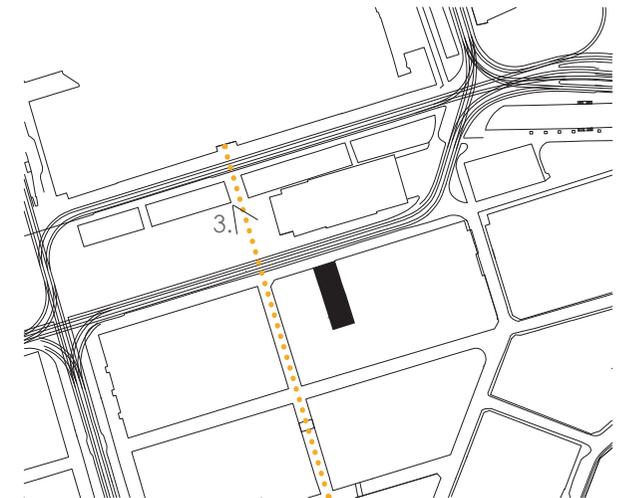
BRUNNSPARKEN



Shopping malls



Tram stops



One of Gothenburgs main shopping street



1. View towards the shopping mall Nordstan



2. The park and to the right a glimpse of the canal



3. The shopping street Fredsgatan ahead

BRUNNSPARKEN HISTORY



Brunnsparken, around 1900



"Säningskvinnan"



Säningskvinnan and Brunnsparken



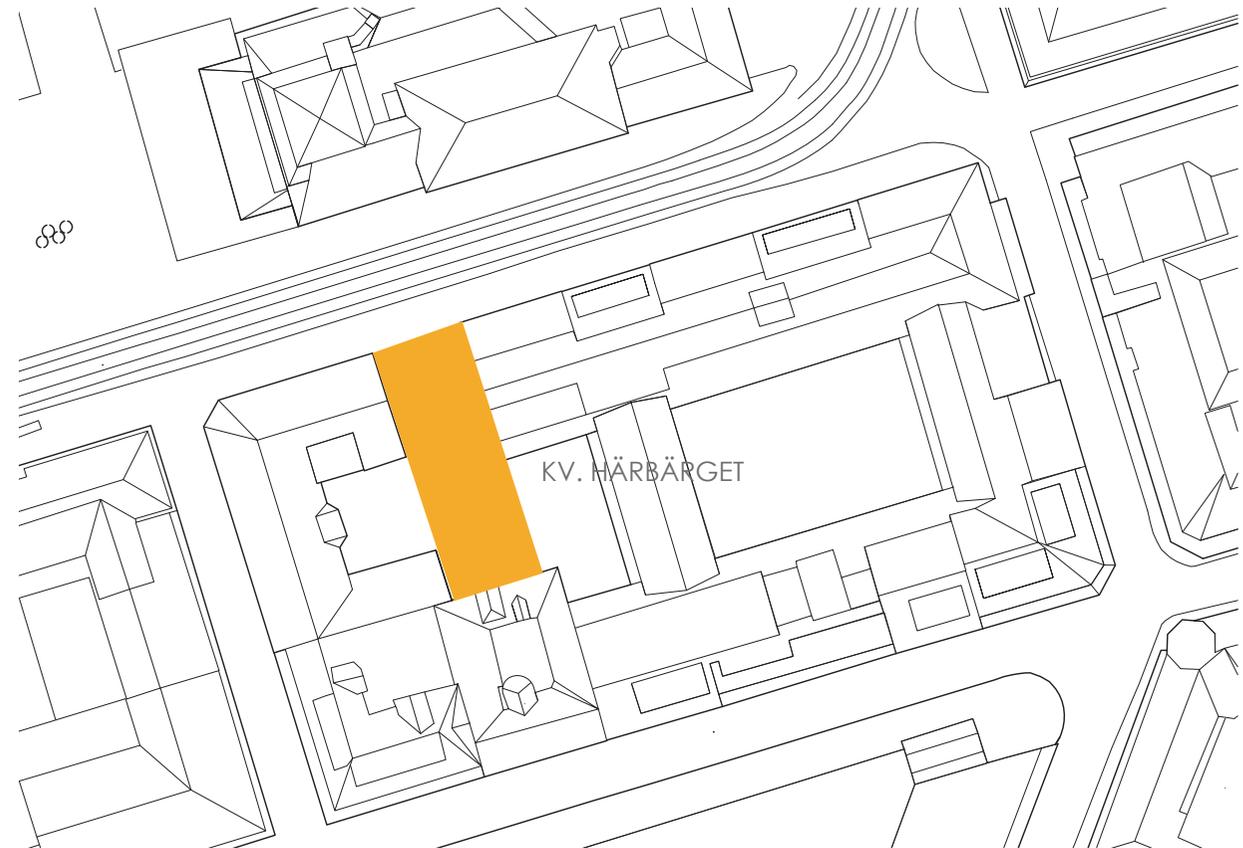
SITE, SÖDRA HAMNGATAN 47

The site is part of the block Härbärgen. To the east of the site there is an office block from the 1970s and to the west there are three properties that have been retained from the older buildings.

The property which is closest to the site on the west side was built 1887 and it has a special cultural heritage value. The whole site area is part of ancient remains that is protected as well.

There are ongoing discussions on what to do on the site Södra Hamngatan 47. In the detailed plan it says that there should be commerce and offices on this site. Earlier we saw the proposal from Wingårdh's but it has been appealed.

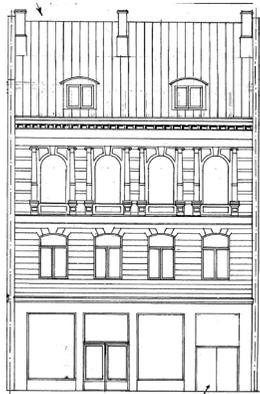
According to the City Planning office they are now looking at the whole block because they are considering making changes in several parts of it.



SCALE 1:1000



SITE HISTORY, SÖDRA HAMNGATAN 47



1887

Axel Fürstenberg

A three-storey building was built on the property 1887. The owner was Merchant Axel Fürstenberg and the building consisted of housing and commerce on the ground floor.



1962

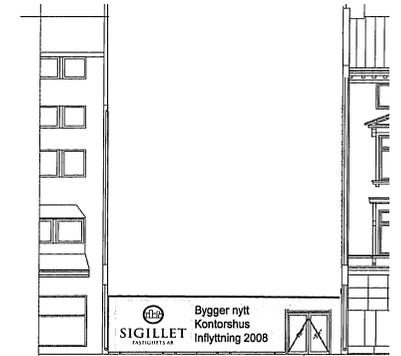
Change in the facade

The property has had minor changes in the facade. There has been a patisserie, a shoe shop and a restaurant on the ground floor throughout the years.

2005

Destroyed in a fire

Big parts of the building were destroyed in a fire in September 2005. The remaining parts could not be saved.



2008

Temporary placard

Since the fire the site has been empty. The placard has been changed occasionally.



2009

GP

Architect office Wingårdh's did a suggestion of an office building on the site. In the detailed plan it says that there should be offices and commerce on this site.



2012

Stadsjord

Stadsjord, an organization active in Gothenburg, reclaimed parts of the site during the summer 2012. They brought greenery and animals to the site for example.



2013

Speakers Corner

The site has been called by the locals "Brandtomten" which means "The fire site". Today it says on a poster that it is the Speakers Corner of Gothenburg.

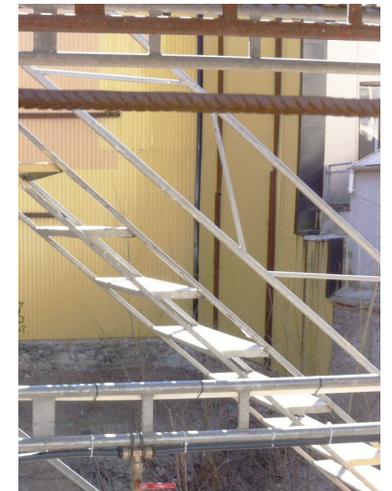
SITE CONDITIONS, SÖDRA HAMNGATAN 47

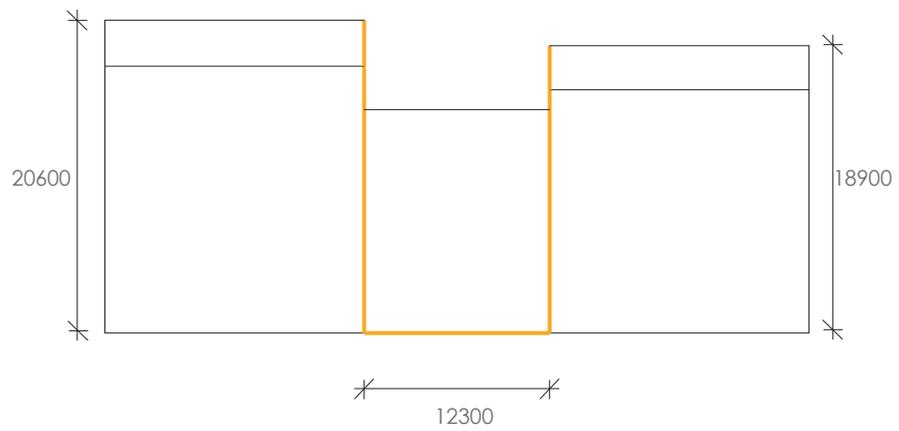
The site is about 4000 square meters big and facing north.

No vegetation exists on the site except the planters that Stadsjord has brought there.

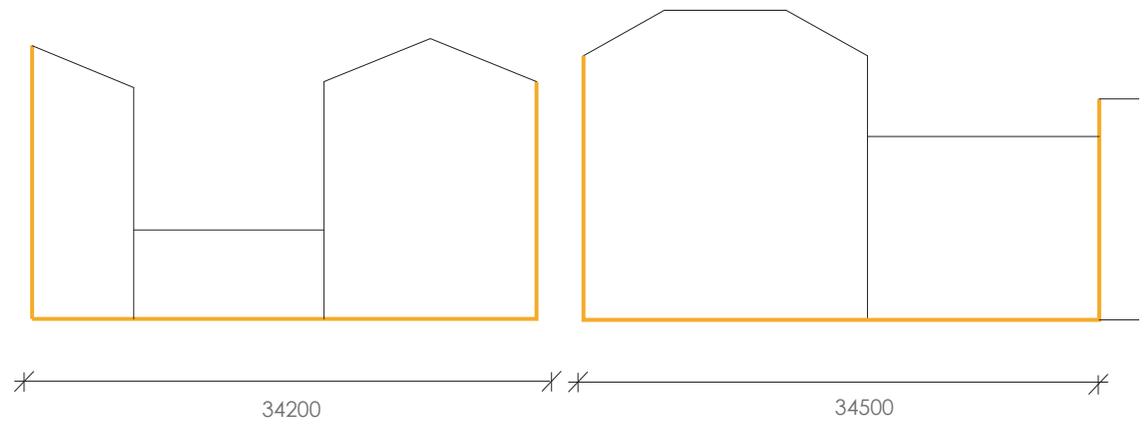
The structure that is there now is the one that Stadsjord brought there as well. A stair case follows up on one facade to the east.

The walls facing the site are windowless and covered with yellow metal sheets.





ELEVATION NORTH, SCALE 1:500



ELEVATION WEST, SCALE 1:500

ELEVATION EAST, SCALE 1:500

WORKSHOP 2

In this urban context you almost can't see the nature. Trees for example are placed as a few decorative objects along boulevards. They are also competing for attention in the same way as the companies are competing on the high street.

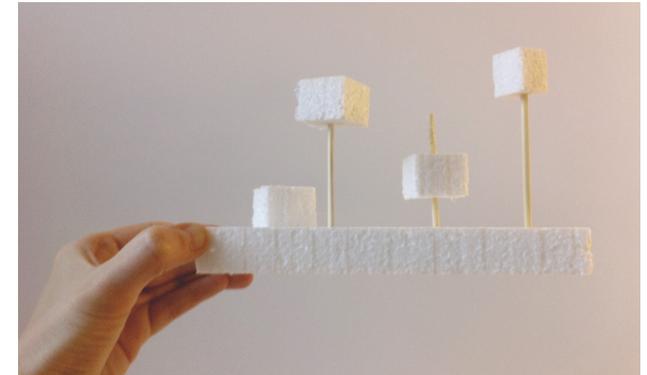
On this site, that is located in the middle of the most dense and busy commercial part of Gothenburg I wanted to find a way to find nature. How could I bring nature to the site? Bring back what used to be there once. How could nature and the urban environment meet here?

I also noticed that I had to consider how this space would get attention - what should it signal? How did I want to compete in this context? Did I want to compete at all?

Within my constraints I explored the two main directions that the site gave me - a vertical and a horizontal.



Model from workshop. Pillars are placed randomly in the space. They create a forest-like atmosphere. Slabs/platforms are placed on top, almost like tree canopies.



Model from workshop. Huts that are placed on pillars. They have different ambitions and aims. One wants to stay on the ground while another reaches for the sky.

MY REFLECTIONS AND WHAT I TAKE WITH ME

An escape further in and up is necessary. I will continue to work with the directions; vertical and horizontal. To move up in the site is important because of the horizon. The horizon is something we don't see in the city centre. The horizon is mysticism and the modern society is in need of that - to look further and beyond and rest our eyes from all the impressions we get during the day. That can give us distance and perspective as well.

I felt that it is important to get distance from the surroundings at this site. As they did in Alnarp; making the boundaries clear could be a way of working with it.

The site is quite narrow and facing north. Daylight is of great importance. I want to continue to work with lightness and darkness in this space.

Nature can appear in many different ways; material on surfaces, living plants and trees or sky views for example. I think that the nature elements can be both real and abstract. A combination of those could be positive in an urban environment.

To work with movement and stillness, both at the same time is something to look further into. I need to explore the intensity in tempo.

PROGRAM

A big part of the search for a retreat has been the exploration of what program it could include. A retreat could be many different things but from my study visits and research I found out that I wanted to develop three hypothetical programs and investigate how they could suit the site.

All three programs are based on the same design values when designing.

PROGRAM 1 AN URBAN PARK RETREAT - open public space

A park is the closest option to a non-commercial retreat in the city that I could find. This is an exploration of how a park could be shaped at this spot.

PROGRAM 2 REHABILITATION - therapy and conversation

I found out that In our society today many are affected by stress and they get treatment when they are already exhausted. Could the therapy and conversation space become more acceptable and important in a public room to prevent the negative stress and really encourage a change?

ROGRAM 3
HIDEAWAY
- space for solitude

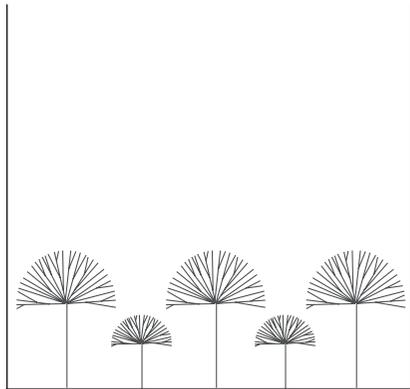
The hideaway is inspired by the tree houses we built when we were young. It is an exploration of the space for solitude.

CONCEPTS

CONCEPT ONE / PUBLIC URBAN PARK RETREAT

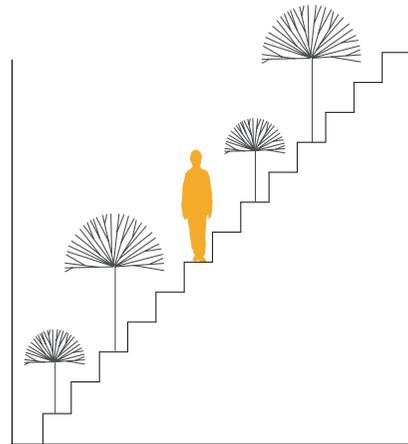
1. NATURE

BRING NATURE'S ELEMENTS TO THE SITE



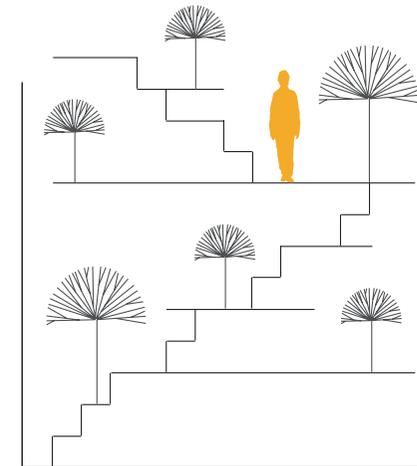
2. MOVEMENT

USE THE SPACE - VERTICALLY - STAIRCASE TO MOVE UP



3. RESTING

USE THE SPACE - HORIZONTALLY - EXPLORE THE RESTING



DESIGN VALUES / HOW?

NATURE

Nature will be present in different scales. Planted trees and vegetation, planters to bring the greenery to all levels, place stones to sit on and use wood as material when possible. It is important to feel the tree on your skin. A wooden trellis will be placed on the surrounding walls to frame the space and also to let ivy grow on it

DAYLIGHT

Let the structure be as open as possible. Here a distance is taken from the surrounding walls so that the daylight can find the inner corners as well.

MOVEMENT

The levels are not identical so there are new parts to discover further up you go.

A beautiful plant or a nice seating arrangement on the next level will for example awake curiosity and lead people up the stair case.

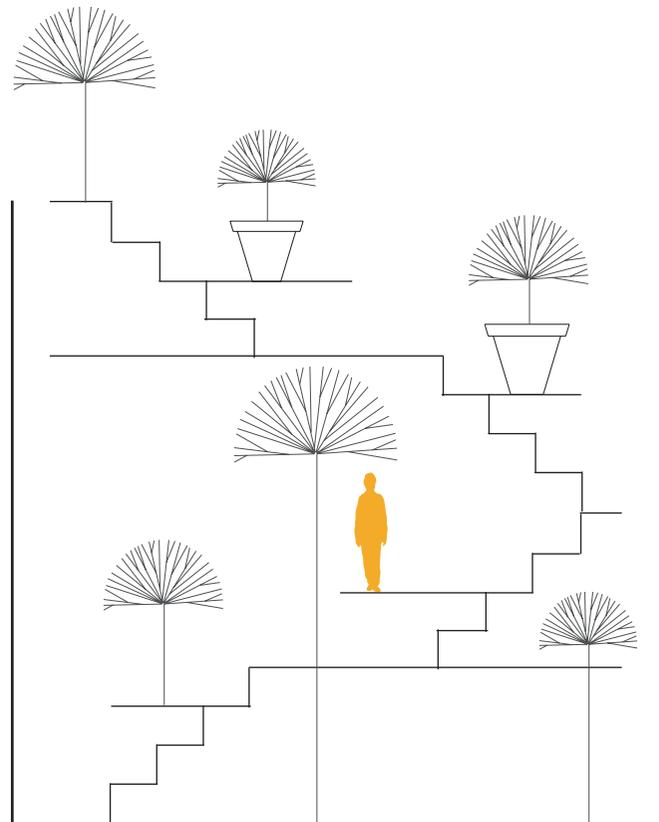
BREAKS

Let the structure support the breaks by extruding some parts of the platforms. The extruded part becomes places for rest with for example wooden seating arrangements.

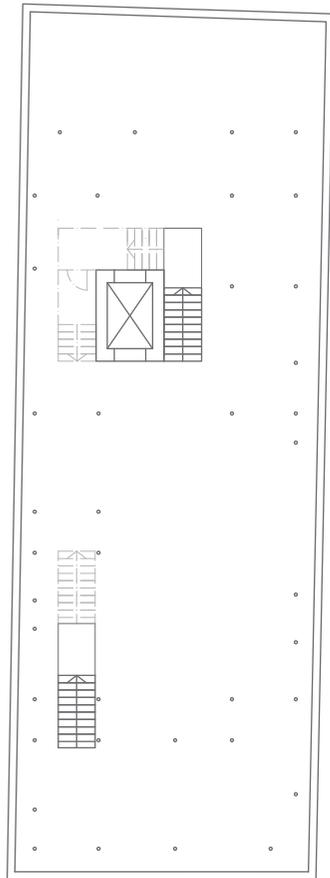
CONCEPT ONE / PUBLIC URBAN PARK RETREAT / PROGRAM

PUBLIC URBAN PARK RETREAT

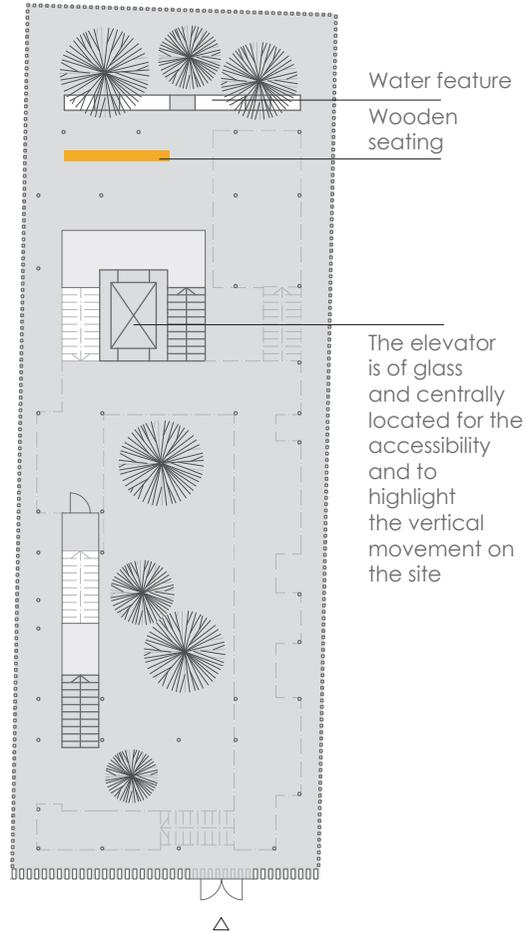
where you move on different levels. You can stroll around the tree trunks on the ground floor or feel the tree leaves and branches higher up in the structure



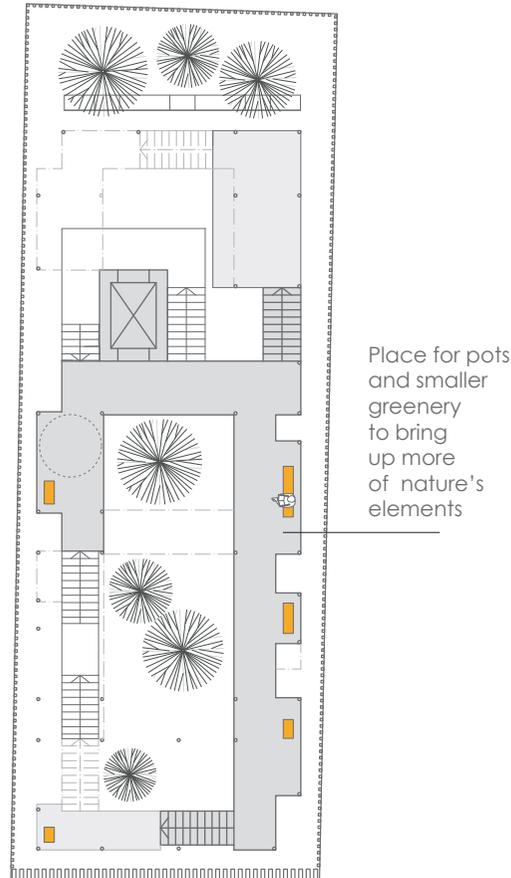
CONCEPT ONE / PUBLIC URBAN PARK RETREAT / CONCEPTUAL PLANS



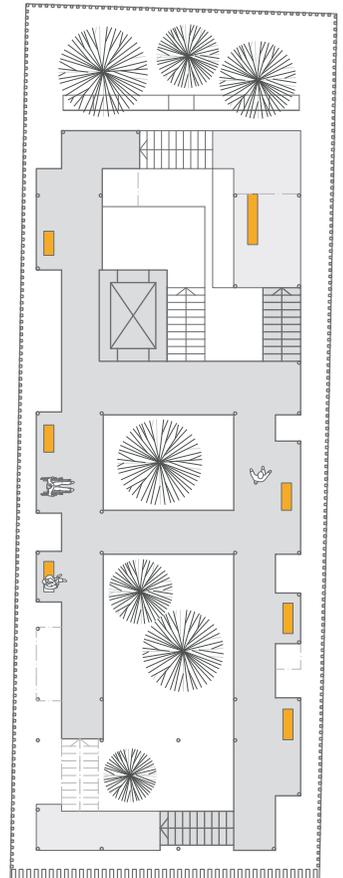
LEVEL -1



LEVEL 0

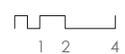


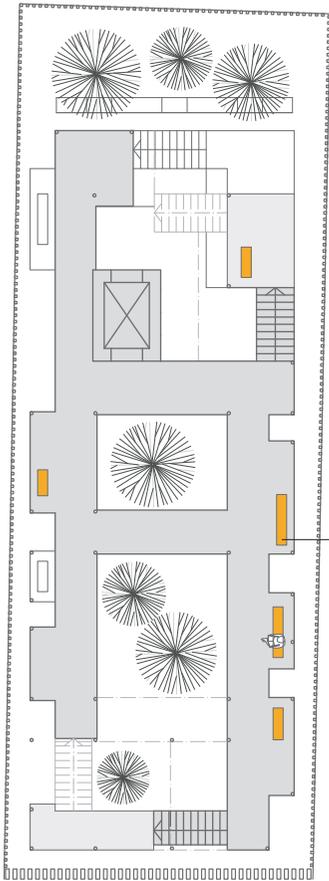
LEVEL 1



LEVEL 2

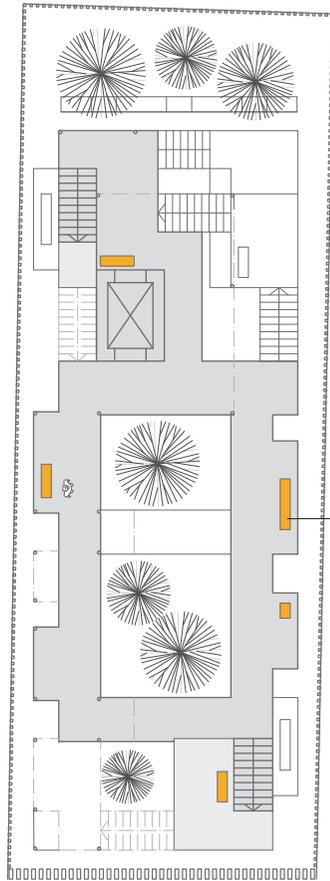
PLANS IN SCALE 1:300





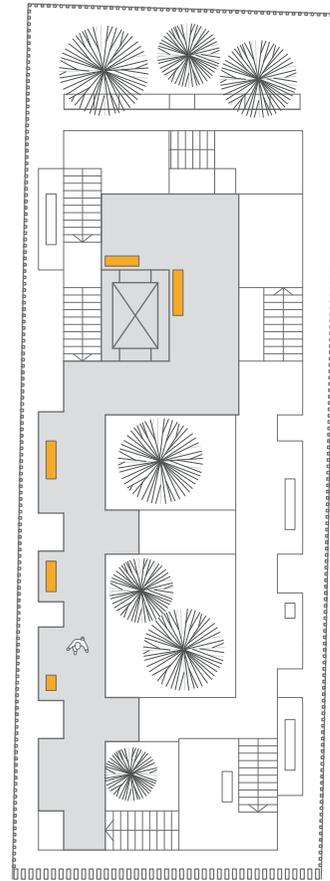
Different sizes and types of seatings creates a variety of resting experience

LEVEL 3



You are surrounded by nature's elements when resting and at the same time you are able to view the room

LEVEL 4



LEVEL 5

Nature's elements are the organic form and the built structure is inspired by the geometry of the city; the grid.

The space is enclosed with a wooden trellis where ivy grows.

The extruded parts with place for resting are significant on all levels.

The seating solutions are often placed close to the wall with the intension to make the person resting feel safe. The person resting has when sitting a view over the room.

This is an outdoor structure and because of that heated benches could be an alternative here.

When you have reached the top you are able to see the horizon and enjoy the view.

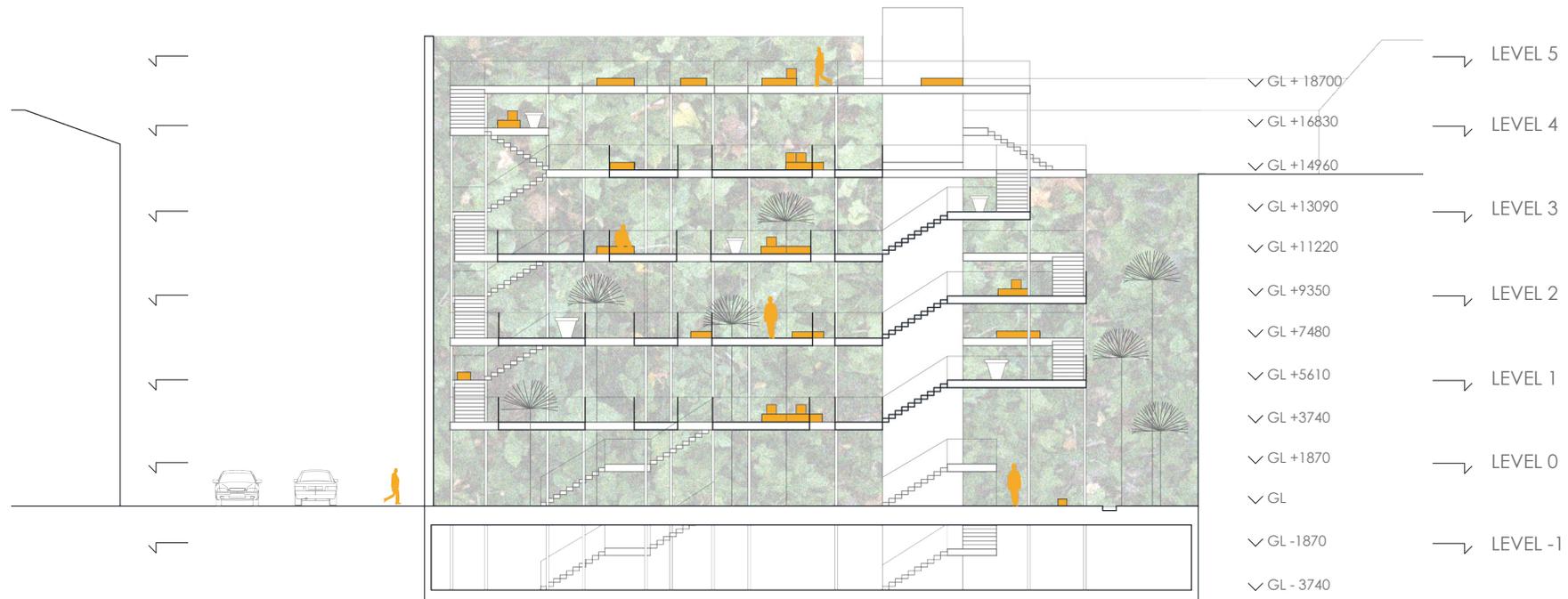
On level -1 is the storage space and staff rooms. They have not been planned.

PLANS IN SCALE 1:300

1 2 4



CONCEPT ONE / PUBLIC URBAN PARK RETREAT / CONCEPTUAL SECTION



SCALE 1:300

CONCEPT ONE / PUBLIC URBAN PARK RETREAT / PERSPECTIVE

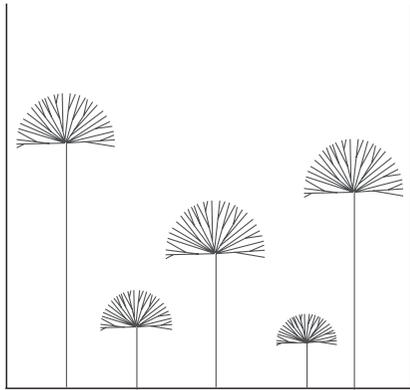


ENTRANCE LEVEL

CONCEPT TWO / REHABILITATION

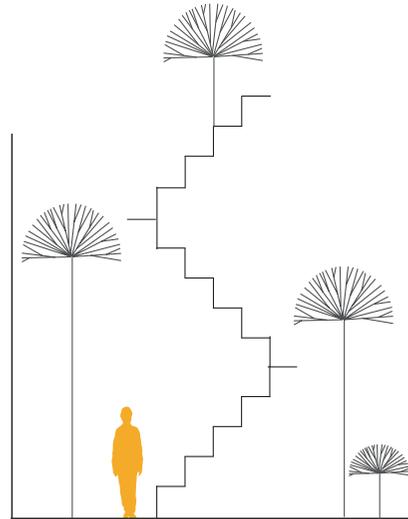
1. NATURE

BRING NATURE'S ELEMENTS TO THE SITE



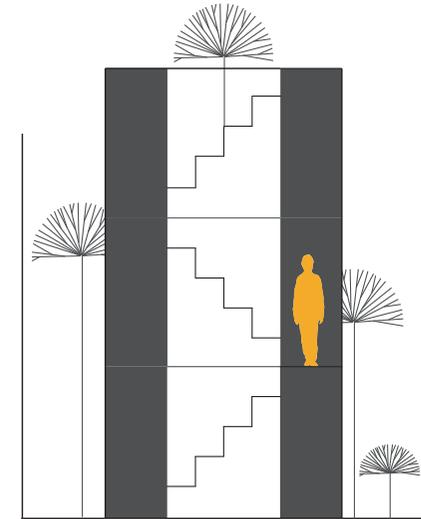
2. MOVEMENT

USE THE SPACE - VERTICALLY - STAIRCASE TO MOVE UP



3. ENCLOSURE

THE CLOSED SPACE CONNECTED TO THE STAIRCASE



DESIGN VALUES / HOW?

NATURE

Trees are planted in between the building and the surrounding walls. Nature's elements like stones and moss can be found. Important to use wood as material when possible. The wooden trellis is present in this concept as well. Ivy grows on it.

DAYLIGHT

Let the structure be as open as possible and take a distance from the surrounding walls so that the daylight can find all the rooms.

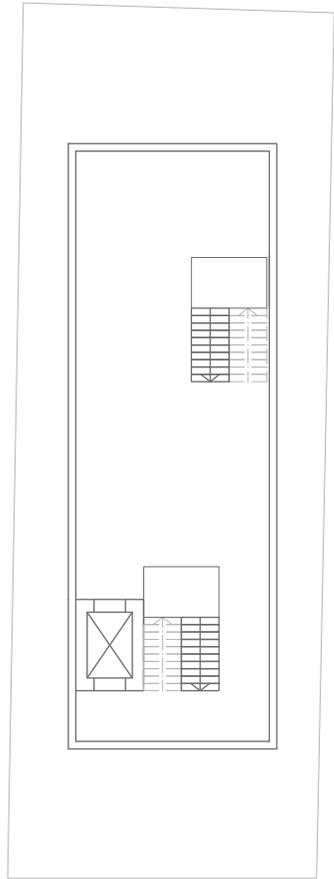
MOVEMENT

There is always the ability to walk around the structure while being outdoors. A beautiful plant or a nice seating arrangement on the next level will for example awake curiosity and lead people up the staircase.

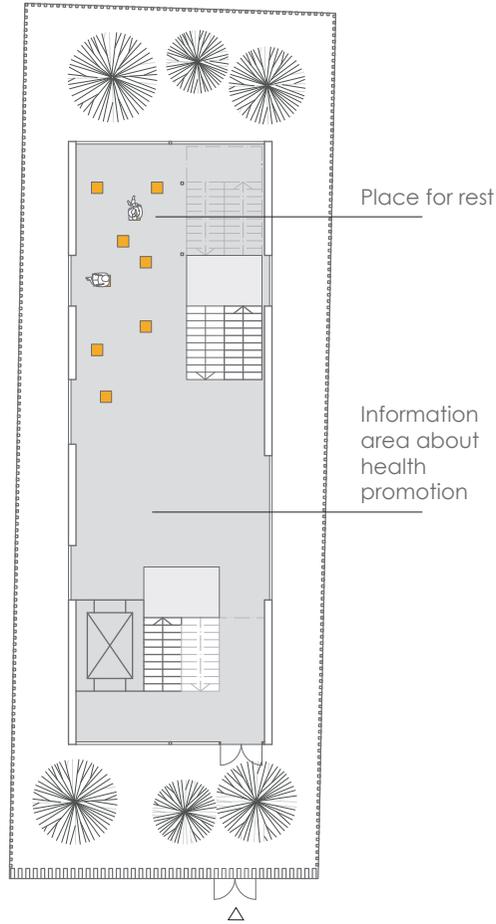
BREAKS

Here the resting is mainly indoors. The therapy and conversation rooms are enclosed with wooden walls. In the public space the extruded parts are present again and highlights the resting with a view to the outdoor space.

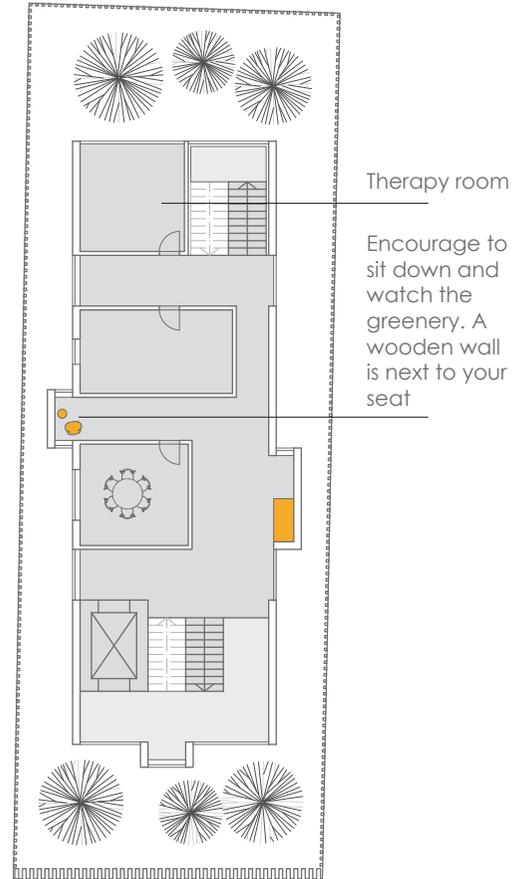
CONCEPT TWO / REHABILITATION / CONCEPTUAL PLANS



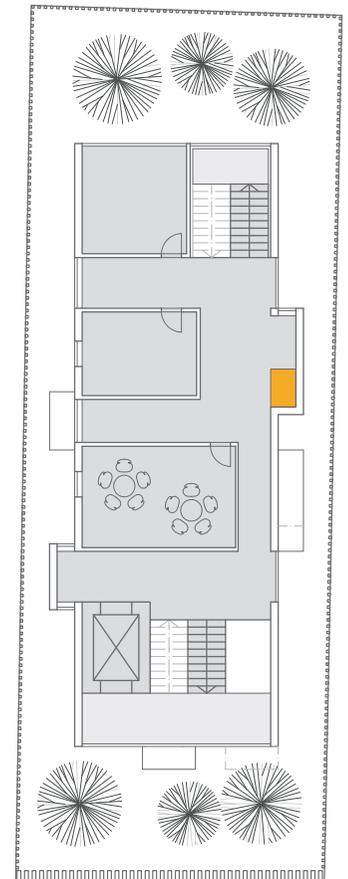
LEVEL -1



LEVEL 0

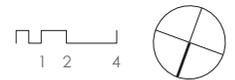


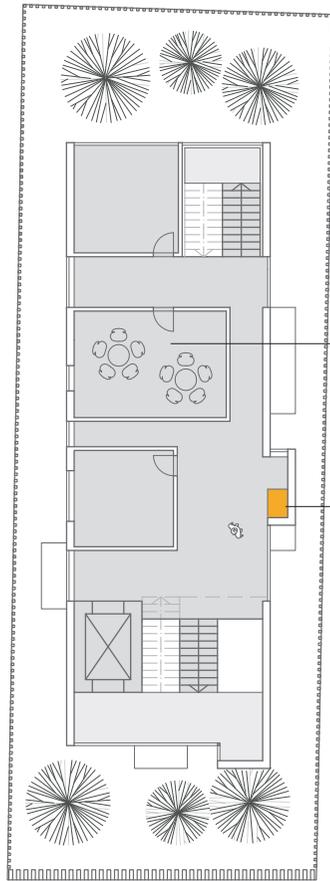
LEVEL 1



LEVEL 2

PLANS IN SCALE 1:300

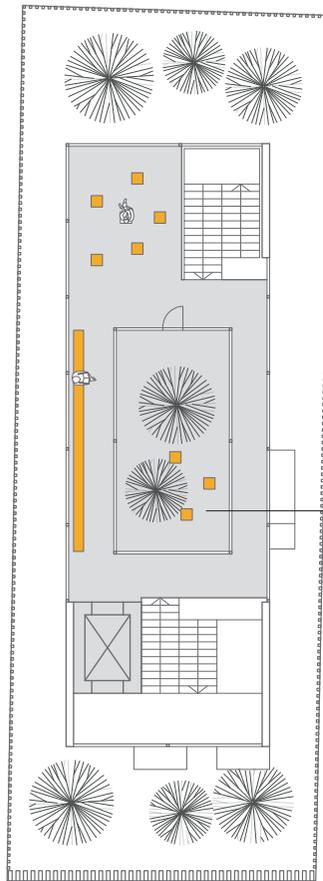




Conversation room where for example information about stress reduction can be held

Place for rest with wooden walls to lean on

LEVEL 3



A garden on top of the building. You can either sit outside under the three or inside looking at the garden

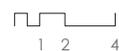
LEVEL 4

Conversation rooms and public space share the same envelope.

The main public spaces are on level 0 and level 4, but on your way to the top you are able to find places to rest. When you reach the top you can enjoy the roof top garden and the view.

On level -1 is the storage space, but it has not been planned.

PLANS IN SCALE 1:300

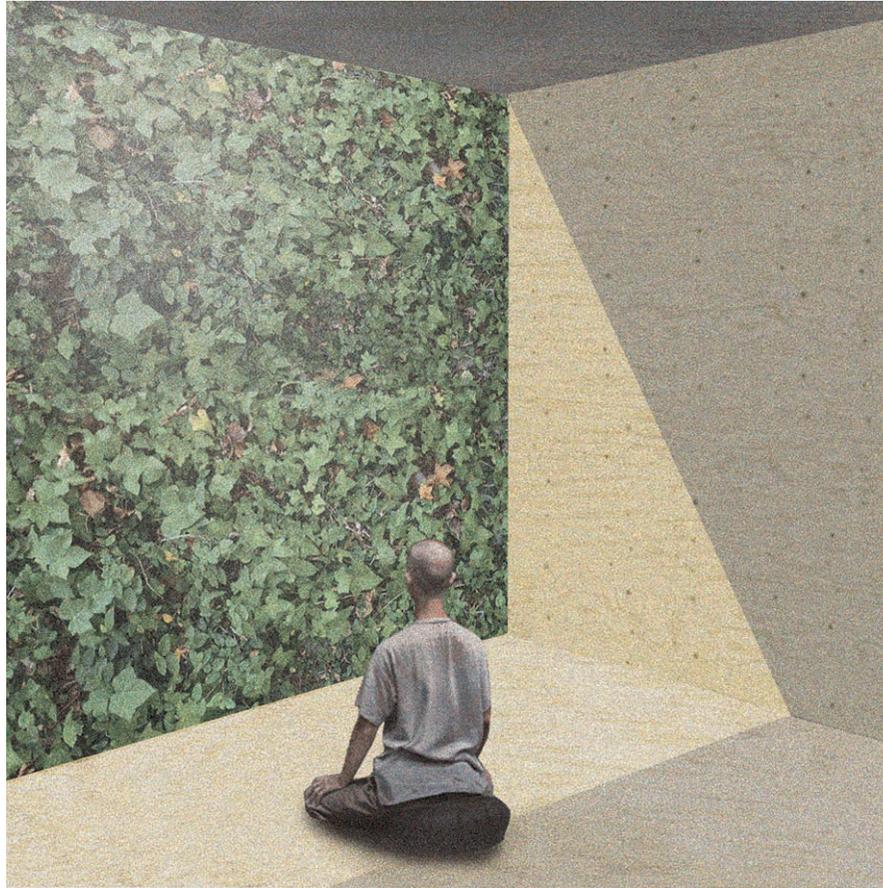


CONCEPT TWO / REHABILITATION / CONCEPTUAL SECTION



SCALE 1:300

CONCEPT TWO / REHABILITATION / PERSPECTIVE

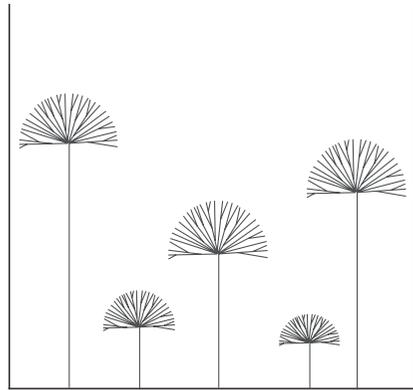


THERAPY ROOM

CONCEPT THREE / HIDEAWAY

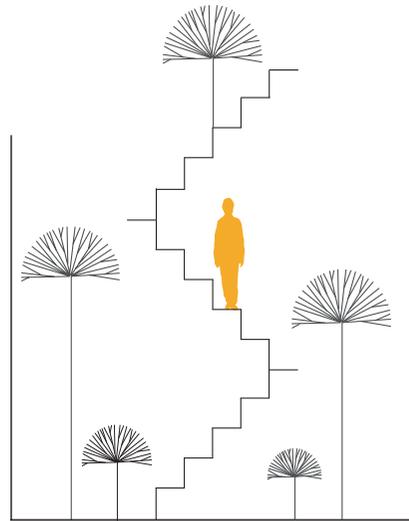
1. NATURE

BRING NATURE'S ELEMENTS TO THE SITE



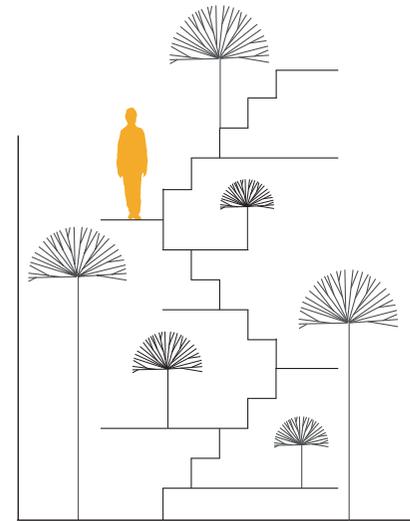
2. MOVEMENT

USE THE SPACE - VERTICALLY - STAIRCASE TO MOVE UP



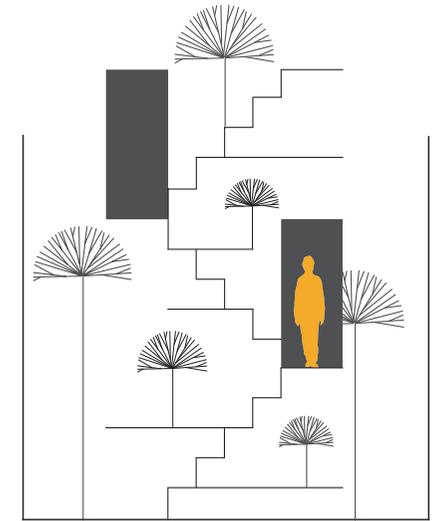
3. RESTING

USE THE SPACE - HORIZONTAL - EXPLORE THE RESTING



4. SHELTER

HIDEAWAYS IN THE STRUCTURE



DESIGN VALUES / HOW?

NATURE

Nature will be present in different scales. Planted trees, vegetation, planters to bring the greenery to all levels, place stones to sit on, use wood as material when possible. In the hideaways you are surrounded by wooden material and have a framed view towards the outdoor space - the wooden trellis where ivy grows

DAYLIGHT

Let the structure be as open as possible and take a distance from the surrounding walls so that the daylight can find the inner corners as well

MOVEMENT

There is always the ability to walk around the structure while being outdoors. A beautiful plant or a nice seating arrangement on the next level will for example awake curiosity and lead people up the staircase. The journey of the staircase will inspire people to discover the different levels.

BREAKS

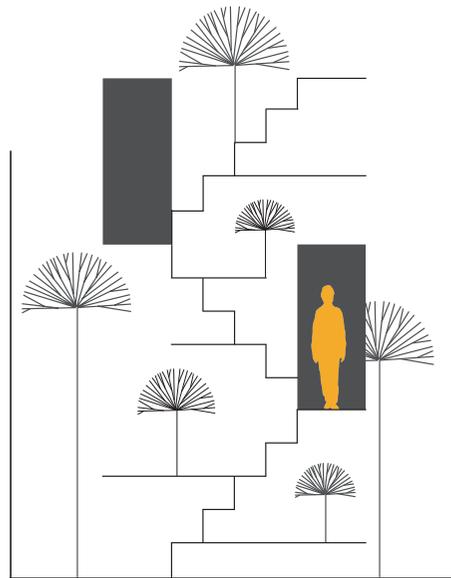
The wooden hideaways are spaces for solitude. They are placed on the extruded parts of the platforms. On the extruded part you can also find benches for resting

CONCEPT THREE / HIDEAWAY / PROGRAM

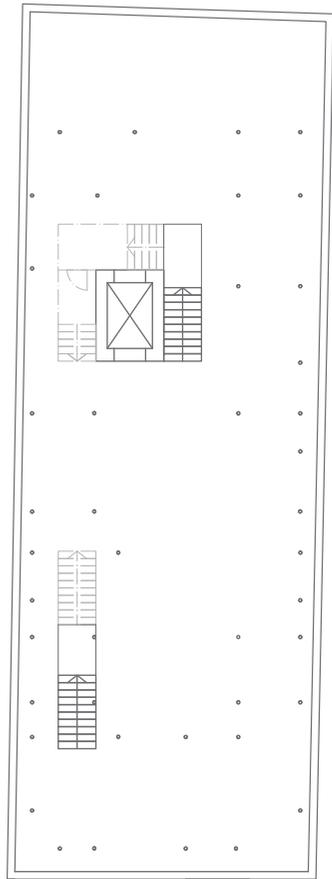
WOODEN HIDEAWAYS

WOODEN HIDEAWAYS PLACED IN THE STRUCTURE

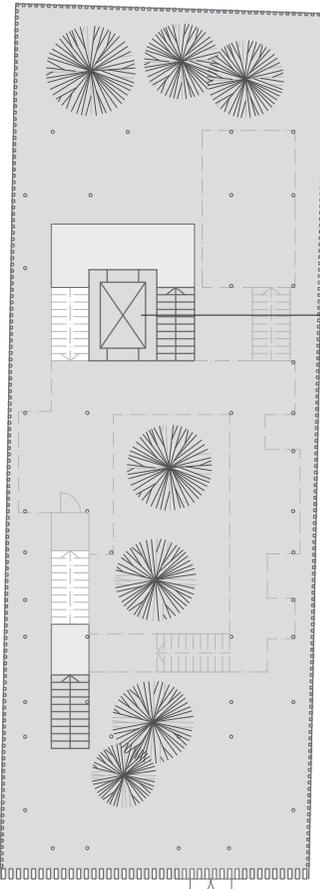
A mix from the first and second concept. Places for solitude, inspired by the treehouses we built and played in when we were young.



CONCEPT THREE / HIDEAWAY / CONCEPTUAL PLANS

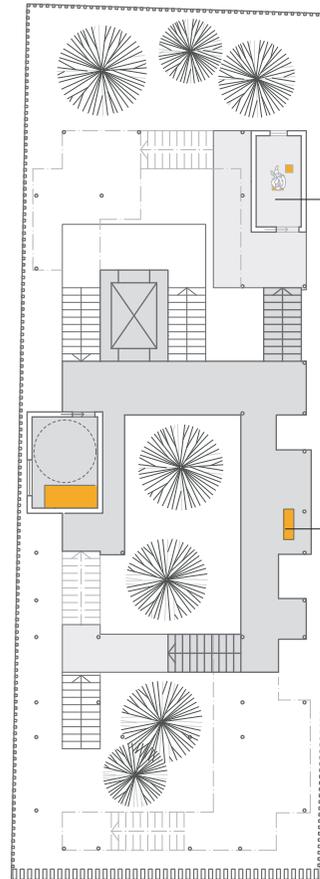


LEVEL -1



LEVEL 0

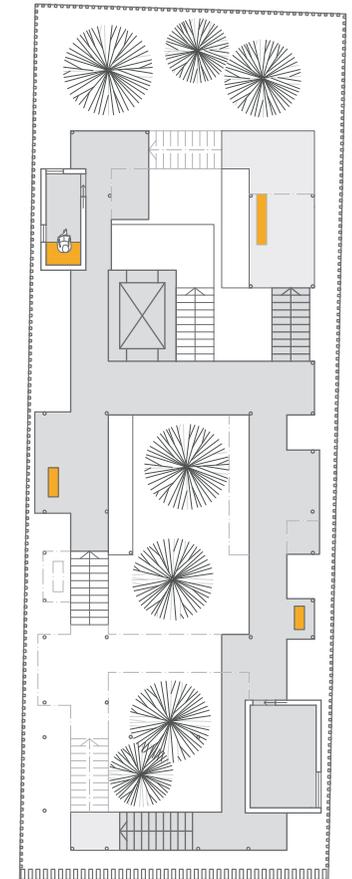
The elevator is of glass and centrally located for the accessibility and to highlight the vertical movement on the site



LEVEL 1

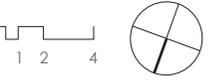
Hideaway on a resting

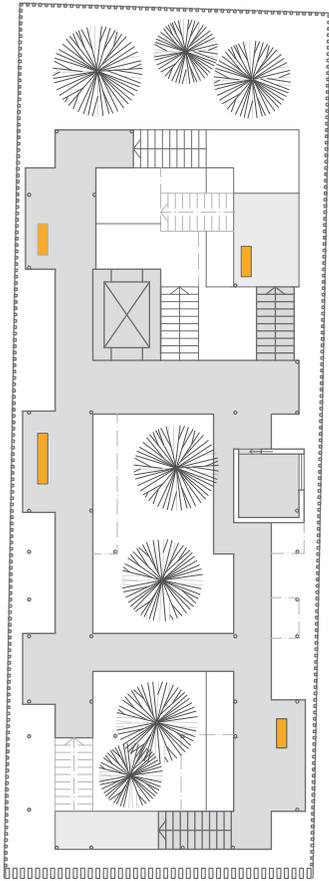
A place to sit and rest your eyes on a tree



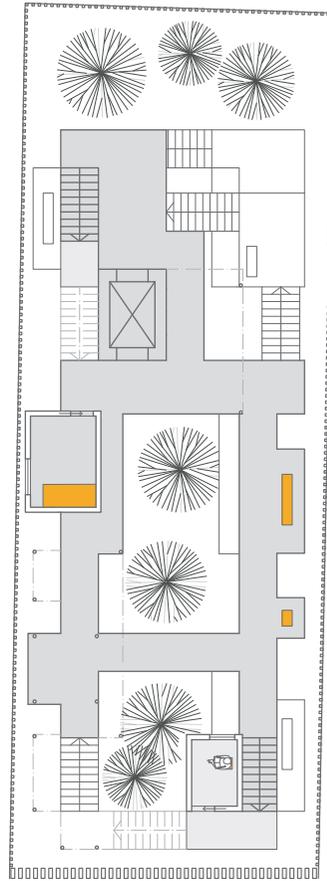
LEVEL 2

PLANS IN SCALE 1:300

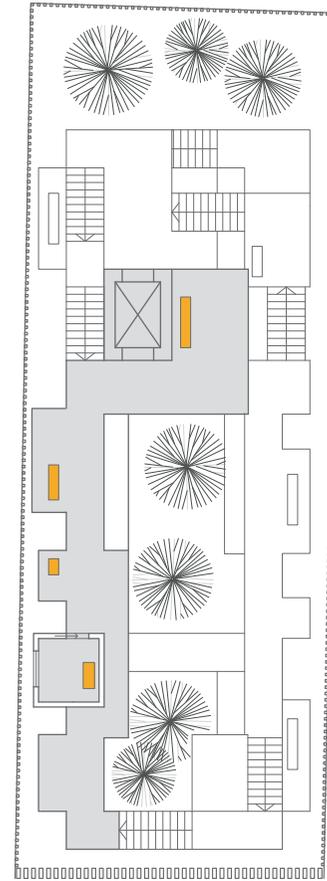




LEVEL 3



LEVEL 4



LEVEL 5

This is a similar structure to the one in the first concept.

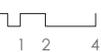
Nature's elements are the organic form and the built structure is inspired by the geometry of the city; the grid.

On the extruded parts, where the places for resting are, the wooden hideaways have been placed in this case.

Also here you have the opportunity to move up to the roof top and view the horizon.

Staff and storage space can be found on level -1. This level is not planned.

PLANS IN SCALE 1:300

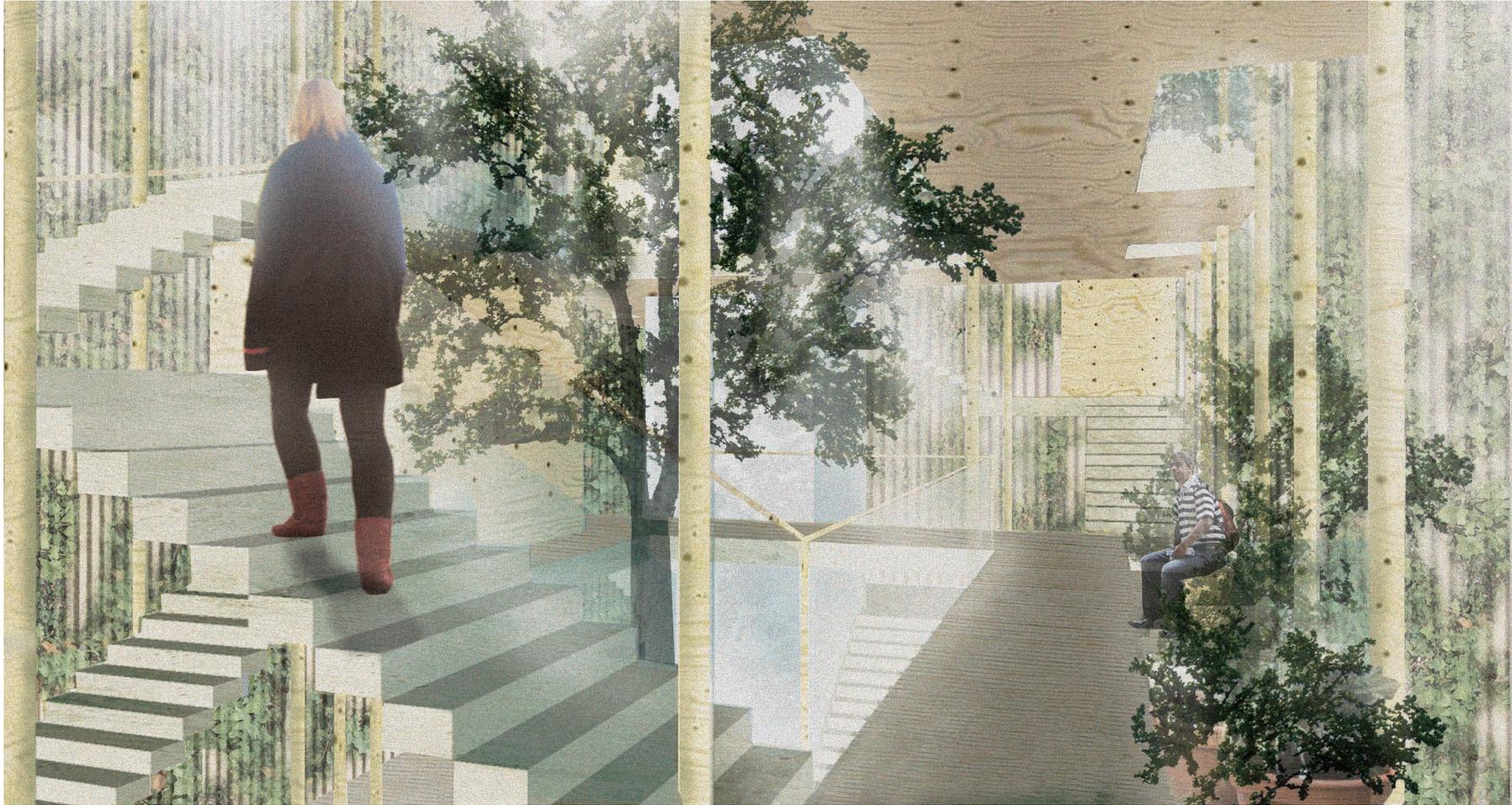


CONCEPT THREE / HIDEAWAY / CONCEPTUAL SECTION



SCALE 1:300

CONCEPT THREE / HIDEAWAY / PERSPECTIVE



LEVEL 1

REFLECTION

This term, my exploration gave me design values to work with and three alternative suggestions of concepts for a retreat in an urban context. I believe that all of these concepts are worth attention and if taken further, be built in the city, in different places and of course adapted to the site.

The three concepts I presented are some examples of what a retreat could be. There isn't just one answer to what a retreat is and I do believe that we need a variety. The city needs different types of public retreats and new types of public buildings to promote health. The health promoting and prevention work should be manifested in the city for a sustainable society, where the inhabitant's wellbeing is prioritized.

I feel that I have just scratched the surface of this interesting topic and there is so much more to learn and look further into. I hope that I in the future can continue to work within this topic and continue my exploration.

PROCESS

In the beginning of this year I knew that I wanted to work with a retreat in an urban context. My thesis title has been the same since the start. My first thought was that I wanted my final result to be a designed proposal, as it often is when we do projects in school. I wanted to go into a more detailed level.

I already had a site in mind in January when the thesis work began and my thought was that I was going to focus on that particular site. After my first tutoring session that changed. I was encouraged to explore - **explore what a retreat is!** My ideas about the site were put on hold and the search for a retreat began.

What I noticed quite fast was that the subject is enormous. A retreat can be a lot of things and it is different for everybody. I contacted some organizations and people to broaden my knowledge about this subject and in a hope to

get a better picture of what it actually was that I was searching for.

The exploration became a bigger part of my work than what I first expected and it affected the final result. Instead of one answer, one design proposal, I had to rethink and work with my thoughts and reasoning's along the way and it became concept thinking on the site.

That there has not been a ready-made task and program and client to work with has been a challenge. That I had felt that there was a new need in the city that I wanted to explore showed to be even more challenging.

I have researched a subject that I think is extremely interesting and fascinating and it has been fun to work with. I have learned alot about the subject but mostly I have learnt how I work and about my work process. I have been

forced to believe in my creative process and the unknown and to keep on moving forward though I haven't known the destination.

I believe that my final destination with this work reflects the whole process pretty well -the conceptual exploration of what a retreat could be.

NOTES

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2. <http://www.stressmedicin.com/sv/Institutet-for-stressmedicin/Aktuellt/Halsoorientering-pa-SUs-chefsdag-6-september/>, 2013-04-15
3. Grahn & Ottosson, p. 134
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5. Grahn & Ottosson, p. 60
6. <http://www.stressmedicin.com/sv/Institutet-for-stressmedicin/>, 2013-05-03
7. Interview with Agneta Lindegård Andersson, 2013-01-29
8. Interview with Susanne Ellbin, 2013-02-27
9. Larsson, p. 14
10. <http://epi.vgregion.se/sv/Grona-Rehab1/Grona-Rehab/Om-Grona-Rehab/Innehall-och-aktiviteter/>, 2013-05-03
11. Presentation by Lena Benjegård, 2013-02-22
12. Larsson, p. 125
13. <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=104&artikel=3934523>, 2013-05-03
14. Grahn & Ottosson, p. 16
15. Grahn & Ottosson, p. 17
16. Interview with Björn Engdahl, 2013-02-06
17. Interview with Björn Engdahl, 2013-02-06
18. Cooper Marcus & Barnes, p. 7
19. Ulrich, p. 1
20. Ulrich, p. 51
21. Ulrich, p. 49-50
22. Fehn, p. 108
23. Zumthor, p. 96

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Interview with Björn Engdahl, monk, architect
MSA, Lund, 2013-02-06

Information presentation at Gröna Rehab by
Lena Benjegård, Gothenburg, 2013-02-22

Interview with Susanne Ellbin, psychologist,
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Interview with Henric Benesch, architect MSA,
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Other pictures are personal photos.

