

C. Th. Sørensen
39 Gartenpläne

Ungewöhnliche Gärten
für ein gewöhnliches Haus

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English translation of the texts by Jonathan Stimpfle
and Günther Vogt

Modernity in landscape architecture

Jonathan Stimpfle

→ Publication, p. 6–11

The house and the garden form the archetype of anthropogenic settlement development. Originating from the principle of land enclosure, these typologies are spatially, culturally, functionally, and aesthetically diverse. Nevertheless, they were and are key determinants of the appearance and function of our urbanized landscape: as private pleasure gardens, communal utility gardens or public city gardens.

The scale of the garden is omnipresent, although today it is largely based on the European modernistic conception of the single-family home. Unlike in design and architecture – where landscape typologies were virtually negated and undeveloped space was understood (merely) as an intermediate green space and stage for buildings – there was no broad Modernist movement in landscape design. Nevertheless, individual protagonists became style-defining icons of garden and landscape architecture. Alongside Leberecht Migge in Germany and Ernst Cramer in Switzerland, this was especially true of C. Th. Sørensen in Scandinavia. The work of these landscape designers is developed within the context of profound socio-political and economic-technological upheavals of the early 20th century and in response to an urgent need to design new working and living environments. Parallels to the ideas of modern architecture – precise languages of form and the ability to unit seemingly contradictory métiers such as craftsmanship and fine art – are obvious. The main achievement, however, was the creation of design programs and user concepts for increasingly sprawling settlement and landscape areas, which provided answers to the social questions of the time through the notion of “social landscape”¹. Sørensen made a fundamental contribution here, dealing with rapid industrialization and urbanization processes as well as subsequent post-war modernism by developing the Central and Northern European urban landscape at large through the medium of the small garden, and its aesthetic, social and atmospheric aspects.

Context

The garden is the nucleus of landscape architecture – once known as “garden design” but renamed in the second half of the 20th century in view of massive socio-spatial upheavals and a changing focus of the discipline. It can hardly be denied that in recent decades, in the course of design digitization and thematic architectonization – from garden planning to urban planning and architectural issues – there has been a gradual loss of knowledge of basic design principles and horticultural expertise. Yet it is precisely these key aspects of the profession that are more in demand than ever before in current urban landscape discourses. The challenges associated with climate change and its effects – from extreme weather events and heat island effects to biodiversity loss – have been described in detail. In many places, attempts are being made to respond to this by transforming public open spaces and streets. However, small-scale garden structures make up a significant proportion of early industrialized and Modernist urban landscapes – both in urban areas and even more so in areas of urban sprawl. Contrary to social and economic trends towards individualization, in many places these private gardens are dominated by a uniformity of design mirroring limited DIY store product ranges and accompanied by spatial and ecological desolation. It is precisely in this context that C. Th. Sørensen's observations and ideas are more relevant than ever.

Nonetheless, some of Sørensen's design views from nearly six decades ago might be questioned from today's perspective. For example, the extensive use of gravel as ground cover – strongly encouraged at the time – appears questionable today in view of current excesses. This supposedly permeable and low-maintenance design solution, often in combination with plastic textiles, ultimately creates an almost hostile space, which might be interpreted as a sign of alienation from the (bio)diversity of the landscape.² Furthermore, the ideal settlement structure underlying the garden concept of Sørensen must be critically examined. Since the mid 20th century at the latest, life in a (single-family) house has become socially, politically and economically normalized. To this day, images of this supposed place of longing are cultivated in glossy magazines and are aspired to by large sections of society in German-

speaking countries. However, the obvious effects of this development – from the consumption of land and resources to traffic problems and the erosion of social structures – are in fact leading to an increasing loss of landscape, both in a spatial and a social sense. This is not to question the importance of enclosures. They serve as space-creating structures and emphasize the separation and juxtaposition of the private and public spheres³ as a core element of the European city. However, the unsustainable consumption of land, implied privatization processes and social segregation tendencies as apparent consequences of this settlement development must not be ignored. Since undeveloped space today must do more than just be climate-adapted and ecological, the micro-utopia⁴ of paradise in the form of a private garden no longer seems appropriate. It is precisely in this context that Sørensen's work has lost none of its relevance. Even during his lifetime, he illustrated the transferability of his fundamental spatial design approaches and their aesthetic and social qualities at various scales. Their relevance extends from postmodernism to the present day.

Contents

The 39 Garden Plans, which Sørensen himself saw as an “aid to imagination”, serve as a stimulus for exploring this type of open space and beyond. The focus on independent design creates a wide range of concepts for visual pleasures and socio-ecological diversity. At the same time the contextual view, the playful engagement with the site and the simplicity of the core elements of the garden – the perimeter, the ground and the content – are preserved despite all the reductions in the presented design concepts. This makes it all the more important to bring this impressive foundational work into the contemporary discourse of the 21st century and to make it accessible to a wider audience. Despite his extensive oeuvre of built projects and writing, Sørensen is surprisingly little known outside Denmark. Apart from the 39 Garden Plans first published in German in 1979 and individual articles – mainly by people close to him – there are no publications about Sørensen in German-speaking countries. One of the reasons for this might be that none of his projects outside of Denmark were ever realized. However – and Anne W. Spirn already pointed this out in 2001⁵ – the limited acclaim

of his work is most likely to an obvious lack of understanding of the role of landscape (architecture) and a lack of knowledge about its history, especially within the architectural-historical discourse on classical modernism. This extended new edition of the 39 Garden Plans therefore serves as a small step towards remedying this shortcoming and offers the German-speaking public an introduction to the outstanding work of C. Th. Sørensen.

The book is aimed not only at those intrigued by the notion of the garden, interested gardeners and professionals, but above all at future generations of specialists at universities and vocational colleges. For they continue to be confronted time and again with different garden images and spaces in the contemporary development of our urban landscape within the geographical and cultural context of Northern and Central Europe. This goes hand in hand with the need to develop solutions for open space design in the context of re-urbanization and suburbanization processes as well as spatial distribution issues. Using the simple and effective tool of a study of variants, the book provides a basic design methodology and at the same time serves as a source of inspiration for dealing with the garden as a type of open space. It sharpens the eye for how a spatial arrangement that is positively unusual can be created in an often generic landscape structure.⁶ It is clear that this cannot solve the major problems of our time – global climatic changes cannot be reversed – but it does offer design solutions that enable us to live with this change in a better and more socially acceptable way.

Günther Vogt himself was given a copy of 39 Garden Plans by Sørensen at the beginning of his studies in Rapperswil, Switzerland. To this day, he engages with the contents of this slim booklet in his design approach and practical work. This new edition is enriched with inserts by Günther Vogt on landscape architectural design strategies, which are also inherent to Sørensen's ideas worthy of renewed attention. The two important European landscape architects are linked not only by biographical parallels – from practicing gardener to professor at a school of architecture – but also by their understanding of landscape and the garden as a man-made construct to be maintained, their ability to interpret across scales and a clear design language

- 1 Girot, Christoph: «Gestaltungskonzepte des 20. Jahrhunderts – von der Moderne zur Dekonstruktion». online lecture, ETH Zurich, 27.11.2020.
- 2 Soltau, Ulf: *Gärten des Grauens*. Cologne 2019.
- 3 Schäfers, Bernhard: *Stadtsoziologie – Stadtentwicklung und Theorien*. Wiesbaden 2006.
- 4 Keller, Felix: «Vergesst das Einfamilienhaus». Speech on the occasion of the Bundesamts für Kultur (BAK) survey on building culture at the 16th Venice Architecture Biennale. 2018.
- 5 Spirn, Anne W.: «Introduction». In: Andersson, Sven-Ingvar; Høyer, Steen: *C. Th. Sørensen – Landscape Modernist*. Copenhagen 2001, p. 9–12.
- 6 See introduction by Sven-Ingvar Andersson in this book.
- 7 Personal communication with Sonja Poll, 2024.
- 8 Schneider, Martina: «Vorbemerkung des Herausgebers». In: Sørensen, C. Th.: *39 Gartenpläne für ein Stück Land*. Berlin 1979.

committed to simplicity in dealing with contemporary issues of urban life.

Structure and genesis

In addition to this introduction to the work of C. Th. Sørensen first published almost 60 years ago and his own introductory thoughts, Sven-Ingvar Andersson – Swedish landscape architect and student of Sørensen – reflects on the fundamental ideas of the publication and contextualizes them in the 20th century. The design method annotations by Günther Vogt expand the – in the words of Sørensen's daughter Sonja Poll⁷ – characteristic collection of verbal design ideas and sketched design concepts. This new edition is further supplemented by an overview chapter on the Danish landscape architect's oeuvre as a whole, illustrating the breadth of his work and the significance of the 39 Garden Plans beyond the scale of the individual garden plot.

In terms of language, the individual building blocks may appear heterogeneous and in some cases somewhat archaic. The original texts by Sørensen from 1966 were translated into German in 1979 by Gunnar Martinsson, Professor of Landscape and Garden at the University of Kassel, and Helle Borup, a long-time collaborator of Sørensen. The editor at the time described the translation aptly: “Neither translator speaks German as a native language; both translators, however, are completely familiar with the work of C. Th. Sørensen. [...] the translations are factually and atmospherically accurate, even if they sometimes use an unusual mixture of written and colloquial language. The reader enters into a conversation with the author, and the author is Danish – sometimes the German translation still retains the foreign sound.”⁸ Andersson's introduction was added to the Danish versions of 1984 and 1997 and has now been translated into German for the first time. The annotations by Günther Vogt (2024) further enrich the work and contextualize it in a contemporary way.

The republication is thus an opportunity to imagine, materialize and develop gardens as needs-based open spaces, which at the same time become an artistic expression of perceptible atmospheric places in our future urban landscapes.

Garden menagerie

Typology

39 gardens on the same plot of land in relation to the same house. Unusual gardens for an ordinary house. At the same time, the greatest possible difference between the gardens. The variance is based on the notion of privacy. Individuality as an expression requires the reflection of the residents' imagination in the exterior – the garden – and not in the interior of the house. The gardens are characterized less by programs than by ideas.

In search for a paradise believed to be lost, new models emerge. The origin is pulverized. Like a palimpsest, we now find them in unexpected places. Where is paradise to be found today? Heterotopia. In the endlessly sprawling gardens on the outskirts of the city? Even in the small refuges of the dense inner city, on the roof terraces? The density of the city is lost on the outskirts. The houses get smaller, the gardens bigger. Further: front gardens, family gardens. Orchards. The difference between public and private is dissolving. The deer made of woven willows in the front garden replaces the missing forest. The topiary box ball borrows from aristocratic garden culture. Large-scale industrial agricultural production mixes with the remains of small-scale agriculture, fruit and vegetables, forest groves, meadows and pastures, a river completes the picture of the cultural landscape. A dramatic change of in the frame of reference. The spectacle of the suburbs. A menagerie by varying circus directors.

Menageries were originally part of large courtly parks. Exotic animals placed like exhibits in the scenery of the designed landscape, the park. The foreign in the familiar. One of the most famous menageries is appropriately located in the Jardin des Plantes, the botanical garden in Paris. The designer of the 39 gardens set narrow limits in terms of content. Within the given small-scale perimeter of the garden, this is a liberation. The individual elements nevertheless obey the same invisible order. Long before religious concepts of paradise, a type of garden was developed, that would later form the basis of these paradisaical conceptions. Here the notion of 'type' refers not so much to an image of something to be copied or completely imitated as to an idea.

In contrast to the model, which anticipates the idea of a reality, the type lays down certain fundamental conditions that cannot be further reduced in their specificity. This creates the greatest possible scope for further development in the process. In every country, architecture generally goes back to such an existing root. For everything there is something that precedes it, because nothing can arise from nothing. The type represents such an origin, to which all subsequent developments and variations in form that are within the capacity of the object sequentially connect to. The static persistence in an archetype becomes a counterpoint, not a representation or a mirage. Space-time continuum. The type of garden can therefore be easily outlined in a typology. A narrative can be formulated by describing the individual structural elements, and at the same time the quality of the garden designs is easier to control. The 39 gardens are always given a succinct working title. This simple and direct access to the content of the respective gardens also feeds their poetry. A description of what one sees, a statement about oneself – poetry. The meaning of the garden is the work in and on the garden. The autobiographical aspect becomes more and more prominent over time. An ongoing individual cartography of life.

Günther Vogt

Perimeter	A garden fence is common to all designs, not spatially separating like a wall, but, due to its transparency, integrating the surrounding landscape as part of the configuration. The local horizon of the gardens' boundaries versus the horizon of the landscape.
Threshold	The entrance to the garden is always a similar simple threshold space between the street and the house. An intermediate space that mediates: between public space, the street, private space, house and garden. A space between two spaces.
Vegetation	Garden history, agricultural production or the cultural landscape feed the repertoire of plant usage. Usually exaggerated in terms of design, the references are still recognizable.
Water	An element without characteristics. Like air, we share it with all other living beings. What water and air have in common is that they are formless, colorless, soundless, odorless and endless. It is precisely the lack of specific characteristics that is an invitation to create.
Choreography	When walking the relationship between the individual garden elements becomes more important than their symbolism. Syntax replaces semiotics. Movement. Staging of relationships.
Topography	The landscape is hardly modulated, like large parts of the surroundings. This is precisely why the spaces in between are so obvious. Vivid walking.
Metaphor	The outer world, the inside and outside of the gardens, are not only negotiated at the boundary, the perimeter. Elements of garden design culture, hedge sculptures, refer to European garden history from a bygone era.

Hunters and gatherers

Model

Those who hunt after pictures in the cultural landscape become collectors of trophies in the garden. Whether hops or water lilies, everything finds its scale within the defined framework of the garden. Whether from systematic botany or the landscape, whether arranged or even composed according to scientific or aesthetic criteria, the individual parts are torn from their context and assembled into a new whole. Nevertheless, the gardens are well-ordered and proportioned. The fisherman casts his net in the hope of a plentiful catch from the invisible underwater world. In the heyday of still life painting, fishermen were unable to perceive this world. Pulled ashore, the fruits of the sea are brought into relationship with the flora and fauna of the land world. A foreign and a familiar world enter into a dialog. Snails and insects show imminent decay in the new environment. In contrast to *nature morte*, the 39 gardens do not lead a quiet life. Sun, rain and wind constantly animate the picture. The miniature of the model creates tension. The reduction in size allows a quick overview of the whole. As in a fairy tale, the miniaturization results in a counter-world. The autobiographical structure creates additional poetry.

When we think of a “model” in the context of landscape architecture, we primarily think of a piece of craftsmanship: something created by hand, belonging to the analogue world – something that is manageable, a miniaturization of reality. But a model is much more: it is visible spatial thinking, a working tool with problem-solving qualities. It can be used to search for and find answers to design questions, but it can also raise new questions. The model is an experiment, a test and also an experience: the real experience when building these model landscapes, but also the sensual experience that their perception offers. Through its often inherent vagueness and partial abstraction, the model is itself an expression of a “more”: it suggests things, promises them, without becoming completely explicit. The analogue model retains an openness in its reception and thus an individual interpretability: people like to read more into a model than it directly represents. Maintaining this openness is a central concern. A working model is not a representation in the usual sense, rather it is explicitly constructed to

anticipate the seemingly concrete reality. In the end, the working model is itself the representational model – it retains a scope for interpretation, the promise of “more”, until the very end.

Calling the built project a model sounds confusing at first, as a model is generally associated with a miniaturized version of an existing or imagined reality, a representation of something on a scale other than that of reality. It is therefore not surprising that the origin of the word “model” is the Latin word *modulus* for scale. These two terms are equally central to perception, thought and action: Everything is a question of scale. However, scale is a relational concept – it always requires a comparative value. The perception of something as a model is therefore always linked to the scale, to a comparative value. As soon as a model is built on a scale of 1:1, its character as a model seems to fall away or at least be called into question. This is not only the case if the model is only a part of a whole or if the context, materiality or functionality follow their own logic. Gardens in their built state – on a scale of 1:1 – can be read as models in the sense that they are also only parts, parts of the landscape, in the “alien” context, if you like, of the city. However, the 39 gardens are not fragments of a whole in the sense of a Wunderkammer collection, but independent and complete entities that sometimes carry the image or promise of a larger whole.

Wandering in a suburban garden landscape, there is always the possibility of recognizing the horizon by climbing a hill or a tree and looking through the thicket. Sørensen relies on the immeasurably wide horizon in Northern Europe. The view of the immediate surroundings then gives way to a view of the big picture. The alternation between these two extremes plays a central role in the perception of the gardens. In miniaturization, however, no reference to the surroundings can be established due to scale. Panorama and miniature create a double horizon. Knowledge-based versus image-based.

Günther Vogt

A walk in the garden

Walking as a design tool

Even if prior knowledge forms an important basis for walking in the landscape and thus also for the 39 garden projects, a particular focus lies on the immediacy of the perceived phenomena of the urban landscape. Discovering and investigating these phenomena is the actual aim of the walks. Importantly, the moment at which the roaming gaze is directed from cursory interest to the observation of a specific theme is not arbitrary. This is because our prior knowledge of the place and our attitude to the landscape cause us to become aware of certain aspects at a certain point in time. Only this personal and at the same time specific background enables us to recognize the relevance and connections of individual themes within a certain framework.

The break from the immediate surroundings, which in the best case makes us pay attention, is surprising, and this experience of difference is often what makes a sensual experience of the landscape possible in the first place. The landscape within is sufficient in itself and at the same time opens up space for personal imagination. Both the contrasts that can be perceived during the walk and the changes in the landscape over time are part of the staging. The different states of development allow visitors to participate in natural processes that only become comprehensible after several visits. The strange in the everyday. Sørensen was very aware of this and illustrated it in numerous of his projects – above all in the Kongenshus memorial park.

What does a walk show us? First of all, that a landscape is closely linked to the personal perception of it. The context is more important than the landscape itself. The background is just as important as the foreground. The slowness of walking opens up a buried form of perception. No aids, no wheels or energy, walking is focused only on the body.

Günther Vogt

Wild thinking

Bricoleur and engineer

→ Publication, p. 100–101

Claude Lévi-Strauss, ethnologist and founder of ethnological structuralism, describes two completely different ways of human thinking in his book *La pensée sauvage*: the bricoleur and the engineer. The bricoleur uses the materials available on site and adapts his technologies to the material. Although his resources are limited, this opens up a multitude of possibilities. The engineer uses materials that are not necessarily available locally. Accordingly, the techniques he uses to process the material are also not localized, requiring planning and procurement.

The junk playgrounds that Sørensen has introduced into open space planning demonstrate this understanding of the bricoleur. Wooden beams, car tires, boards and much more are an invitation to instil what is found with a new, individual meaning. The arrangement is in a constant state of flux. New constellations are created every day from the playfulness and imagination of the children and the spontaneously appearing vegetation.

Günther Vogt

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C. Th. Sørensen – Biography and work¹

Jonathan Stimpfle

→ Publication, p. 113–115

Carl Theodor Sørensen (born July 24, 1893 in Altona, Germany, died September 12, 1979 in Copenhagen, Denmark) is one of the most important personalities in 20th century landscape architecture. His oeuvre of more than two thousand projects is enormous and covers a remarkable range: from small gardens to communal housing estates and children's playgrounds to large parks and landscapes. Some have become monuments to modern landscape architecture, undiminished to this day and with an impact far beyond the profession.

Born in Altona near Hamburg as the eldest son of a Danish coach builder, Sørensen grew up on a small farm in the north of Jutland. These experiences of the countryside also influenced his later work, as his daughter Sonja Poll emphasizes in retrospect. His apprenticeship as a gardener laid the foundation for all further observation and experimentation, particularly in the use and selection of plants. In his early twenties, Sørensen joined the Copenhagen office of Erik Erstad-Jørgensen, one of Denmark's leading garden architects at the time. Although there was no formal training then, he learned the tools of the trade in garden and landscape design. From the 1920s onwards, Sørensen worked as an independent landscape architect, designing gardens for detached houses, outdoor areas for housing estates, parks for large residential buildings in the new Copenhagen and carefully restoring the feudal gardens of Egeskov and Clausholm castles. From 1940 he taught at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen and was a professor there from 1954 to 1963 as well as the head of Gentofle's horticultural department from 1956 to 1963. Sørensen's career ran parallel to the development of modernism in the 20th century, and he worked with almost all leading architects of Danish functionalism. In the eyes of his former students Sven-Ingvar Andersson and Steen Høyer, modernism appears as a trinity in Sørensen's work: as designed form, as social commitment and as a belief in the future.²

The spirit of his work is characterized by the recurring elements of the Northern European cultural landscape. At the same time, Sørensen saw an art form in the design of gardens and landscapes as dynamic constructs, taking inspiration above all from the vocabulary of futurist and constructivist movements. Contrary to the design zeitgeist, however, he also explored garden history, interpreted motifs from garden art, transferred them into new relationships and thus made them an integral part of his work.³ Sørensen always placed people and their needs at the center of his considerations. The creation of artistically powerful structures served as a flexible framework for usable and changeable spaces. His work documents a high degree of empathy for the possibilities of a landscape, a place, an architecture and the ideas of the people who should own, use and care for the open spaces designed for them. Sørensen's designs bear no formal signature – and yet they are recognizable: in the careful selection of elements that belong together, in the pictorial idea that characterizes the ensemble and in their simplicity. Perhaps this explains the seemingly contradictory character of his projects, which are simultaneously monumental and modest, artistic and human, rigid and changeable.

As a theorist and author of many books, Sørensen was highly regarded both at home and abroad. If more than just individual texts had been translated from Danish, this regard might be higher still today. With two anthologies, eight books and hundreds of specialist articles, there are few landscape architects that have written and published so extensively in parallel to their landscape architecture practice. In addition to the present work on the principles of garden design, Sørensen dealt with a wide range of topics: from horticultural-botanical and garden-historical content to the socio-spatial role of open space and urban planning issues to issues of education and teaching. As early as the 1930s, Sørensen became known as the inventor of junk playgrounds in Denmark [→ p. 112]. These playgrounds form the inspiration for adventure playgrounds introduced in England in the 1950s as well as for exemplarily executed Robinson playgrounds in Switzerland. They also fueled heated discussions about playground design in Germany during the 1960s. This “invention” of playgrounds relating entirely to the needs of children is not something

- 1 Sørensen, C. Th.:
*39 Gartenpläne für ein Stück
Land*. Berlin 1979.
- 2 Andersson, Sven-Ingvar;
Høyer, Steen: *C. Th. Sørensen –
Landscape Modernist*.
Copenhagen 2001.
- 3 Spirn, Anne W.: «Introduction».
Op. cit. In 2, p. 9–12.

that is relegated to the sidelines of Sørensen's work, but belongs right in the middle of it: it arose from the special sensitivity with which C. Th. Sørensen interpreted people, places and his time through his work.

What can we learn from Sørensen?

Jonathan Stimpfle, Günther Vogt

→ Publication, p. 135–140

“Every garden is guided by order; over the centuries and as a result of the respective tastes and even more so the goals pursued, this order is either openly presented or denied [...] and the stimulus that every garden represents for those who walk through it on foot or even just with their eyes depends on the type of order and not on nature.”¹

The garden as a type of open space has accompanied our species since we settled down around 12,000 years ago. It is a reflection of many layers of human settlement development, a constant part of the urban conglomerate and at the same time the materialization of the respective human understanding of the scale of the (urban) landscape.

“The appropriation of landscape by humans can best be understood through the concept of the garden. As an enclosed area, it separates and protects, divides and connects.”² With the (sub)urbanization processes of the 20th century, however, the socially unifying significance of open spaces close to human settlements has increasingly been lost. Whether in modernist housing settlements, satellite-like large housing complexes or in sprawling single-family home neighbourhoods – whose basic typology particularly fascinated Sørensen³ – the side effects of the promise of “light, air and sun” in form of the detached home are obvious to all. These zones are generally lacking not in private space, but above all in social public space due to the lack of unqualified greenery and small-scale privacy.⁴ Meanwhile, the garden has been pushed to the edges of the city as a seemingly repetitive and anonymous type of landscape.⁵

The garden as a model

The fact that a landscape architect designed and realized alternative garden forms at the very height of this development is a major achievement of C. Th. Sørensen [→ p. 134]. At the same time this should be seen as an added value for our current urban and landscape discourse. With his 39 garden plans for an ordinary house, Sørensen created a kind of urban laboratory. This work serves as an exemplary series of experiments, a roughly drawn investigation of

the most diverse design approaches, in which vegetation, architecture, program, production and atmosphere vary in many ways. For “the garden is a model of thought in which scientific and mythical knowledge meet. Seen in this light, the garden can become an instrument for discovering our surroundings, our environment.”⁶

Sørensen knew how to use this characteristic in two ways: On the one hand, the conceptual examination of a manageable plot served him as a design basis across spatial and typological boundaries [→ p. 137]. He applied themes of open space design originally discussed and tested in the enclosed garden to the scale of the settlement, the neighbourhood or the landscape. On the other hand, Sørensen dealt with the characteristics of and the boundaries between private and public space in many of his projects. With the notion of the garden, he was able to transfer the qualities of the private into the sphere of the public. Of course, even before the retreat into the suburbs, socio-economic developments have led to the establishment of other, communal forms of the urban garden. Examples include the workers’ and railroad gardens that emerged in early industrialized cities across Northern and Central Europe at the end of the 19th century, or the community gardens and solidarity-based urban agriculture that appeared in the USA from the 1970s onwards, and which are still being developed in some places until this day. As different as the appearance of these open spaces may be, they are united by a striving for individual and collective images of paradise in urban space; the longing for the ancient Persian pairi (around) daēza (wall), an etymologically understood walled piece of land, as a (tree) park or garden (Eden). Sørensen took up the basic motifs of the garden, but increasingly removed them from the modernist private sphere and opened them up to the public in the sense of a social open space. In an autobiographical postmodernist understanding of the garden, both the 39 Garden Plans and Sørensen’s realized projects can be seen as predecessors of a new type of open space: the urban garden.

The urban garden as a type of open space

There are places where the existing structures of fragmentary or even homogeneous settlement areas with characteristic types of urban open space such as square, street,

park or promenade can hardly be grasped anymore. Here, the core elements of the garden precisely described by Sørensen – the perimeter, the ground and the content – offer great potential for the qualitative development of our built environment [→ p.138]. Similar to a puzzle picture, the concept of the urban garden is based on the horticultural motif of a clearly structured enclosed space that is surprisingly open to a wide variety of uses and functions within the respective context, be it as a community garden, production area or children's playground. "It offers what is often missing in today's settlements and cities: a defined place and a recognizable content."⁷

In current urban development, however, the concept of the urban garden is often viewed critically. Since the formal and atmospheric design of the urban garden draws on the images and elements of the private garden, it is widely associated with the realities of suburban single-family living – drawn into question in the introduction of this edition – which are fundamentally at odds with the contemporary desire for wild, biodiverse and dynamic open spaces. The characteristic design elements of the garden are also often seen as irritating interventions in the supposedly random and 'natural' of the landscape. In reality, however, garden elements such as enclosures, open spaces and structured vegetation can simultaneously strengthen visual and social relationships, offer a sense of security and create important habitats for flora, fauna and people. Enclosures are often mentally perceived as disruptive, but in the industrialized (agricultural) landscape as well as in urban open spaces, they can offer unexpected qualities. C. Th. Sørensen demonstrates the feasibility of this apparent contradiction on the one hand with the geometric forms of the memorial park in the cultural landscape of Jutland, and on the other with the wilderness zones in his daughter's precisely designed garden.

However, the core idea of the urban garden remains the transformation of an atmosphere of the private into a communal structure. In this way, individual-egoistic spatial constructs are avoided in the interests of resource-conserving, compact and climate-adapted landscape development. The urban garden celebrates the feeling of privacy as well as the images of the paradise garden, but locates

- 1 Gette, Paul-Armand: «Das verlorene Paradies», 1980. In: Kissling, Thomas (Hg.): *Lucius Burckhardt – Anthologie Landschaft*. Zürich 2023, S. 618.
- 2 Vogt, Günther; Burckhardt, Violeta: *Paradise Now – Die neuen Grenzen des Gartens*. Berlin 2021, S. 8.
- 3 Vgl. Andersson, Sven-Ingar; Høyer, Steen: *C. Th. Sørensen – Landscape Modernist*. Kopenhagen 2001, S. 76.
- 4 Vgl. Meili, Marcel; Vogt, Günther: *Fünf Orte in der Schweiz*. Zürich 2012, S. 29.
- 5 Vgl. Vogt, Günther: *Miniatur und Panorama*. Baden 2006, S. 224.
- 6 Vgl. wie Anm. 3.
- 7 Ruge, Lars: «Stadtgarten – Urbane Kostbarkeiten». In: Vogt, Günther, Kissling, Thomas (Hg.): *Mutation und Morphose – Landschaft als Aggregat*. Zürich 2020, S. 489.
- 8 Vgl. Graham, Dan: «Garden as Theater as Museum», 1989. In: Simpson Bennett; Iles, Chrissie: *Dan Graham – Beyond*. Los Angeles/Cambridge, Mass. 2009, S. 238f.

them in the public space of the city. Thus, as the American artist Dan Graham once described it, the same concept (of the garden) serves the desires of very different people – from the theatre garden of the elites to the allotment garden of the working class.⁸ Sørensen wonderfully illustrates the substantial qualities of this socio-spatial symbiosis in his work, be it the Klokkegård courtyard, the playground in Emdrup, the squares in Vitus Berning Park or the allotment gardens in Nærum [→ p.141]. Importantly, the focus is not on the formal language or the garden's features, such as little houses, trees, sculptures or play elements. Instead, the focus is primarily on enclosed public interior and intermediate spaces in direct opposition to adjoining private sphere of a city that is becoming denser, but often also aesthetically and socially more desolate. The result is not a seemingly individual open space, but a multifaceted public "park". Unlike a park in the classical sense, however, the urban garden does not claim to fulfil overriding urban meanings or demands a site that imbued with vibrant urbanity. It primarily serves to satisfy local needs on the scale of the neighbourhood. Since these very needs are becoming increasingly diversified in a pluralistic democratic society parallel to the increasing temporal and constructive complexity of contemporary urban development processes, the concept of the urban garden is becoming a valuable landscape architectural design tool. This applies to dense inner-city locations and urban transformation processes as well as, above all, to dispersed or rural settlement areas. The urban garden creates legible and connecting spaces and thus provides structure for the definition of the urban layout without the comprehensive demands of large-scale master planning. At the same time, it offers a flexible range of opportunities for individual retreat and appropriation within the public space – a space characterized by seating, drinking water and unsupervised accessibility for all. The design and user options are manifold. In this context, C. Th. Sørensen's 39 Garden Plans prove to be exactly what he once intended: model-like guides on how to represent and imagine the type of the (urban) garden as a valuable element of our urban landscape.