

Sustainable, architectural, future scenarios for GGZe De Grote Beek

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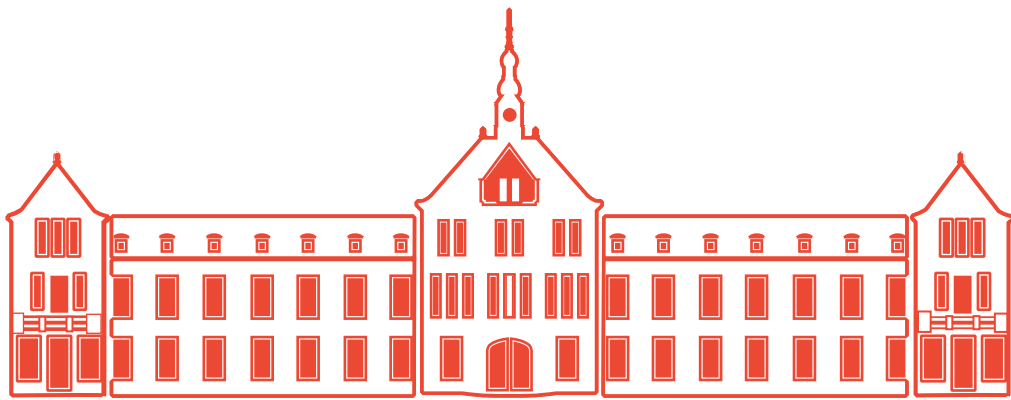
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RESEARCH

for healing environments

A look at De Grote Beek through the lenses of
sustainability, healing and architecture.

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SUSTAINABLE, ARCHITECTURAL, FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR GGzE De
Grote Beek
By

Kornelia Dimitrova

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of

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The design described in this thesis has been carried out in accordance with
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Preface

Thinking of mental health and environmental health at the same time opens up new ways to empathise with the challenges we face as societies as individuals. This project has brought together two topics which at first glance do not seem to have much in common - sustainability and mental health. But at a closer look, especially when focusing on the language one notices that many of the concepts overlap - resilience, crisis intervention, support systems, to name a few.

At a second glance, one can notice that often the same forces that drive environmental exhaustion are driving psychological exhaustion. At the scale of society, pre-existing tragedies such as economic, geographic or racial inequalities only amplify further the negative effects of this system on both mental and environmental health.

If this assumption is correct, I wonder if a similar logic can be applied to their remedy. An idea which has guided my work is that the division of nature and culture is invented, and this is nowhere more visible than in landscapes devoted to mental health. So with this in mind, it is hardly surprising that GGz Eindhoven wants to see De Grote Beek as a sustainable healing environment which hosts a community for mental resilience (kracht), while also acting as an urban green enclave, away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

But the only question is how, and that I hope to show* on these pages, no more and no less.

*Flip the book over, if you want to see the Design first.

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Summary

The outcome of this project is a future scenario of four phases, which explore how Landgoed De Grote Beek can transform as a sustainable, healing environment. This is, of course, also the question, which the client - GGz Eindhoven - posed. Landgoed De Grote Beek is the location of the headquarters of GGz Eindhoven. It is a park of 125 hA, location in the north of Eindhoven. The site has been devoted to mental health since 1918, and this long history and development are visible in both the architecture and landscape. In 1993, the vast majority of fences around the site were removed, marking a new era of mental health based on social integration, but also opening new vulnerabilities.

Sustainability has been on public agendas for decades, and certainly with more vigour than mental health. Yet, it must be clear that there is a shared urgency to them, as delaying action in both only exacerbates the systemic consequences. In this sense GGz Eindhoven, as one of the largest mental health institutions in the Netherlands recognises its responsibility in both areas. In 2014, GGz Eindhoven was awarded a Gold Planetree Certificate, which celebrates and validates people-centred health organisations. In 2020, GGz Eindhoven was awarded a bronze certificate by the Mileu Platform Zorgsector, an association of health sector organisations with the ambition to implement the public sustainability agenda in the healthcare in the Netherlands.

It is in this context that this project operates and responds to the ambition to develop Landgoed De Grote Beek as a sustainable, healing environment, which accommodates a community of mental resilience (kracht), and acts as the Central Park (the one of New York) of Eindhoven. This project is a design research, based on three parts: understanding, framing and speculating.

Understanding has focused on two dimensions - the local and the conceptual. The local

focuses on the place, its landscape, community and the institution and their interrelations have been mapped - resulting in the Atlas of De Grote Beek. These three were selected as a way of accessing the site and understanding the important systems and actors with regard to the four ambitions. The maps are produced by a variety of means, ranging from simply retracing existing maps in a selective way, to mapping out data from spreadsheets provided by the staff of GGz Eindhoven, to interviewing staff and clients about their knowledge and experiences of the place. In this way, the maps gave equal importance to a wide range of narratives that live in De Grote Beek. Some of these narratives appear occasionally and in the dark, while others are loudly manifested. But all of them were equally important in creating an independent and diverse understanding of what the place is like at the moment.

Next to this, it was necessary to build an understanding of the potential contents of the ambition of GGz Eindhoven. This included studying the Planetree criteria and selecting a set of them that can be addressed at the scale of the landscape. It also included studying the sustainability requirements of medical facilities in the Netherlands, and of course understanding which of these are already in process of being achieved, and more importantly which of these are really to be addressed by means of the knowledge available to an architect, and not an economist or a physicist.

Framing, has focused on translating this information into avenues of action towards the ambition. The ambition as such has four aspects, each of them operates at a different level: the (technical) system, the organisation, the sense of community, and the ecology of the place. Potentially each sub ambition can and is being realised with a separate plan of action. Yet one of the findings of the analysis is that the site is strongly fragmented in its operations and in its physical

experience. So it was evident that the scenarios should not further enforce the fragmentation, by layering topics and creating separate plans of action. Instead the question was how would the site look like if each of these sub-ambitions became the structuring element and was defining the approach towards the spatial transformation. To ensure the comparability of the scenarios, a grid scheme was created, the axis defined type of interventions (infrastructural or organisational) and the abscissa defined the degree of control the institution would have over the process. This resulted in 4 alternative scenarios, but comparable scenarios that showed a range of ways that the ambitions can be translated to spatial development principles.

The scenario, which gives highest priority to the ambition of the healing environment was selected to be developed in further detail. In that scenario the backbone of the site was to be developed as a path which loops through the terrain and connects the fragments. Further on, the existing qualities and conditions would be strengthened and developed along a range of themes which are part of the healing process - such as meaningful work, care, access to nature, self-expression, socialisation and self-care. The concept of healing took central stage, not only in the path, which resembles the journey of healing and not only in the thematic areas. In specific, healing is a process, so it was important to think of time as a key ingredient in the project. Naturally, the criteria of Planetree are rather open to interpretation, as they should be because every site has its peculiarities which need to be nurtured. But this openness in the case of this project creates a second opportunity - that of time. The elaborated design of the chosen scenario shows by what means could these criteria be fulfilled in a matter of weeks, months, years and decades.

The last thing left is to do here is to explain the structure and format of this book. The chapter called *Future Scenarios for De Grote Beek*, explains the process and choices made along the way in order to create this project. The other chapters contain that actual results of the project. The chapter called *Atlas* contains all the maps, the reflection on their meaning and the scenario case studies. The chapter called *Four pathways* describes the alternative strategies to achieving the ambitions of GGz Eindhoven. And finally, the chapter on the other side of the book, which is called *Playbook for healing environments* elaborates in practical terms how De Grote Beek can transform as a sustainable healing environment.