

masterthesis topic A

triemlifussweg as adaptive infrastructure

THE MODERNIST NEIGHBOURHOOD AS PERFORMATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

micro-history

fences

Triemlifussweg, the pedestrian path leading from Gutstrasse to the busy Triemli intersection, is a little-known walkway with a nevertheless unique atmosphere. Originally, the construction of a road, Luzernerstrasse, was planned to extend one of the city's main arteries from Zürichberg through Albisriederplatz until the Uetliberg. However, the urban development plan changed drastically after the completion of the Uetlibergtunnel, leading to the abandonment of this project, and a green corridor developed instead over the years. Indeed, since the surrounding residential buildings were built in anticipation of a high-traffic road, the general design of the area did not include a central promenade. Consequently, this not anticipated open space is nowadays limited to a path, lawn and a few trees without any particular development. The "corridor" effect generated by the high buildings contributes to directing fresh air from the Uetliberg into the city and to creating a favorable microclimate for the development of flora and insects. This kind of particularity makes the Triemlifussweg on the one hand a charming place to walk, and on the other hand a green area that must be preserved for the proper development of biodiversity in the urban environment.

As one walks along this peaceful and singular path today, one element still reveals the unrealized past of the place: the fences. Almost all along the length of the path, barriers, mainly in metal, border it, preventing direct access from the residential buildings that surround it. Nearly every plot is clearly marked and defined, making the intense division of the land visible and repressing communication between the different units around it. The presence of different owners who only care for their own land is palpable; there is no global vision for the neighbourhood, even though it is already provided with a common connector. The

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Georg Simmel

access to the path is blocked, as if the road had actually been built and the inhabitants had to be kept away from it.

The very first use for fences was to enclose livestock, to prevent animals from escaping or entering, or to protect farmland or gardens. The etymology of the word “jardin” (garden in French) is closely related to that of “clôture” (fence in French). Together they form the Latin terms “hortus conclusus” or “hortus gardinus” both meaning “enclosed garden”. These expressions gave rise to the vocabulary of gardening as we know it today in different languages, such as horticulturist in English or Garten in German. However, the idea of the garden as a closed, protected place dates back to before the Roman era and extends beyond Europe. The earliest drawing of an enclosed garden is attributed to the Egyptians, whereas the Persians developed terraced arrangements with sophisticated irrigation systems over the centuries. These are just a few of the many existing examples.

Moreover, a strong symbolism is associated with the enclosed garden. It embodies nature, peace and harmony in virtually all mythologies. A well-known example comes from the Bible, where it is said that humanity itself was born in the Garden of Eden, a paradise protected by an enclosure, and that it was after biting into the apple that Adam and Eve lost their innocence and were banished without return.

The enclosed garden is also seen as a place dedicated to knowledge. Wise men or scholars planted their medicinal and spiritual herbs there. During the Middle Ages, monks used the courtyards of their monasteries as plantations, leading to the first botanical gardens, created in the 14th century. Here, the fence becomes architecture: it is now a building that contains the garden and the garden itself becomes part of the architecture.

In Europe, from the 16th century onwards, during the Baroque period, monarchs completely integrated the planning of their gardens with that of their palaces. They commissioned architects to plan the layout of these immense properties, which increasingly resembled parks. The landscaping was symmetrical and perfectly geometrical, namely with fountains and pavilions. Enclosures of course delimited and protected all of this, since only the sovereign and his nobility had the privilege of strolling around; common people were excluded. The king shows his power through the grandeur and beauty of his garden, a metaphor for his domination and control over the territory.

For building enclosures, constructing walls or erecting barriers means dividing space and appropriating it. Over time, the fence, as a physical manifestation of a border, has increasingly turned into a political tool. The invention of barbed wire by the American farmer Joseph Farwell Glidden in 1874 marked a turning point in the general connotation of the fence: it is no longer a simple separation, it becomes a dangerous object. “It is the best

fence in the world. As light as air. Stronger than whiskey. Cheaper than dust. All steel and miles long. The beast is not born that can get through it. Gentlemen, take up the challenge and bring your oxen.” said John Warne Gates, a barbed wire salesman from Texas. The tone was threatening, as the main function soon became. Over the centuries, barbed wire has served many dark purposes: for example, it was used in the colonization of North America and thus in the ethnocide of the Amerindians; but also to fortify the walls of Nazi concentration camps; and to line the trenches of several wars. Its use has not diminished to this day. One may still see it at border crossings, on factory and prison walls, or around wealthy properties.

On top of its purpose as a simple barrier, the fence also serves as a physically mark a border and thus communicates different kinds of concerns. It is a socio-cultural phenomenon: “The border is not a spatial fact with sociological effects but a sociological fact with spatial effects” says the German sociologist Georg Simmel. Indeed, the shape chosen for an enclosure reflects the degree of trust towards one’s neighbour, the owner’s need for privacy as well as his or her general relationship to the environment or, as explained above, an expression of authority and power.

However, we often forget that the same line that separates two or more parties also corresponds to the point where they have the opportunity to meet. The border therefore has a double nature: it is the wall that separates but also the opening that allows passage; it is the line that divides and the one that brings together; it is an obstacle and a passage. It is the transition from one to the other.

Park - Cemetery



Cemetery - Neighborhood



Cemetery - Promenade - Gardens



Promenade - Gardens



Promenade - BiG



Park - Cemetery



Cemetery - Gardens



Cemetery - Promenade - Gardens



Gardens - Promenade - BiG



Kafi Guet - Gutstrasse



Cemetery - Neighborhood



Cemetery - Gardens



Promenade - Cemetery



Promenade - Gardens - BiG



BiG - Gardens



Within the cemetery



Within the cemetery



Gardens - Promenade - Cemetery



Promenade - Gardens - Tower



Gutstrasse - Märkli's Housing



understanding

definitions

What exactly is a border? As a French-speaking person living in a German-speaking environment and studying in English, I have found that there are some subtleties in how the terms fence, boundary and transition are understood from one language to another. Here is a brief analysis of the definitions in these three languages.

fence

a barrier, railing, or other upright structure, typically of wood or wire, enclosing an area of ground to prevent or control access or escape

clôture

- 1. ce qui sert à fermer un passage, à enclore un espace*
- 2. enceinte d'un monastère, où des religieux vivent cloîtrés*

Zaun

aus Metall- oder Holzstäben oder aus Drahtgeflecht bestehende Begrenzung eines Grundstücks

In English, the notion of control is emphasized, as well as details about materiality. In French, the first definition remains vague, while the second refers to a very specific example linked to religion.

In German, it is precisely a parcel, and details about materiality are also mentioned.

“Good fences make good neighbors.”

Robert Foster

border

1. *a line separating two countries, administrative divisions, or other areas*
2. *the edge or boundary of something, or the part near it*

frontière

1. *limite d'un territoire, ou séparant deux États*
2. *limite, séparation*

Grenze

1. (durch entsprechende Markierungen gekennzeichneten) Geländestreifen, der politische Gebilde (Länder, Staaten) voneinander trennt
2. Trennungslinie zwischen Gebieten, die im Besitz verschiedener Eigentümer sind oder sich durch natürliche Eigenschaften voneinander abgrenzen

In English, the first definition is limited to a line between two authorities; the second is more vague.

In French, the first definition restricts to a boundary without precise form between two authorities; the second remains more vague.

In German, the first definition speaks of a strip of land between authorities; the second defines a line between owners.

transition

The process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another

intersection

rencontre, lieu de rencontre (de deux lignes, de deux surfaces, ou de deux volumes qui se coupent)

Übergang

1. *das Überqueren, Überschreiten, Hinübergehen*
2. *Stelle, Einrichtung zum Überqueren, Passieren*

In English, it is a change of state.

In French, it is an encounter.

In German, the first definition speaks of a crossing; the second of a passage.

In each case the definitions vary slightly. Each culture is influenced by its history, its geographical position or its political situation, and this is reflected in the language over time.

Britain is a country surrounded by water. Its inhabitants have never had to fight to defend their borders (except for the colonies), because they have no direct neighbor. The border is natural.

For France or Germany, however, it is quite different. The defense (or extension) of their territory is an essential part of their history. They have been rivals on several occasions in different regions, notably in Alsace and Lorraine, territories that have passed several times from one nation to the other.

In conclusion, a border is much more than a line on a map. It also transmits sociological, political, geographical or historical phenomena and reflects the need for belonging, and also for domination by Man. Through the border, we protect ourselves from the stranger and take refuge in the known.

School - Markli's Housing



Gardens - Triemlifussweg



Triemlifussweg - Langgrüt



Plots



Triemlifussweg - Altersheim



Containers - Gutstrasse



Triemlifussweg - Housing Nord



Plots



Triemlifussweg - Langgrüt



Triemlifussweg - Wydäckerring



Triemlifussweg - Coop Building



Housing South - Triemlifussweg



Spielplatz Stadt ZH



Triemlifussweg - Plots



Triemlifussweg - Housing South



Triemlifussweg - Parking lots



Triemlifussw-Schauelbergerstr



Triemlifussweg - Housing South



Triemlifussweg - Langgrüt



Triemlifussweg - Triemli Square



drawing

site

During the first week of work on Triemlifussweg, I was fascinated by the number of fences within the perimeter. It soon became clear to me that I had to document them in as much detail as possible. I first created a photo directory of all the different fences seen in the field and then classified them into three categories: surfaces, lines and spaces.

Surfaces are all vertical barriers, visible on the x and y axes. They are the most numerous. Most of them are made of metal, some of them are made of wood and some of them are made of a line of bushes.

Lines are all ground barriers, visible only on the x-axis. These are usually visible by a change of surface, a more or less mown lawn, or different paving stones which indicate the passage from one plot to another.

Spaces refers to all spatial barriers, visible on the x, y and z axes. These barriers are more diffuse and present only on a limited part of the land. They can be a large separation space or a difference in topography.

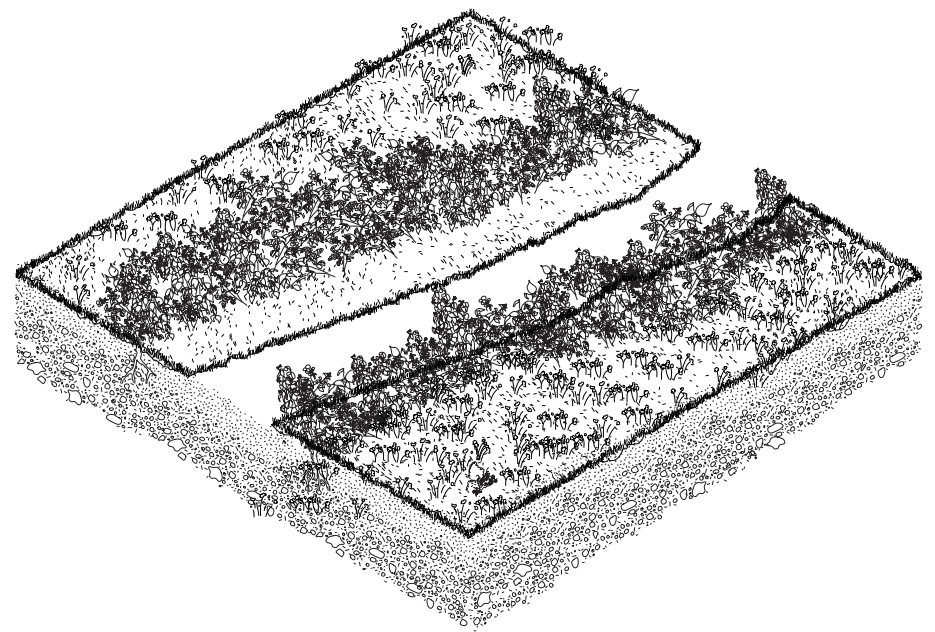
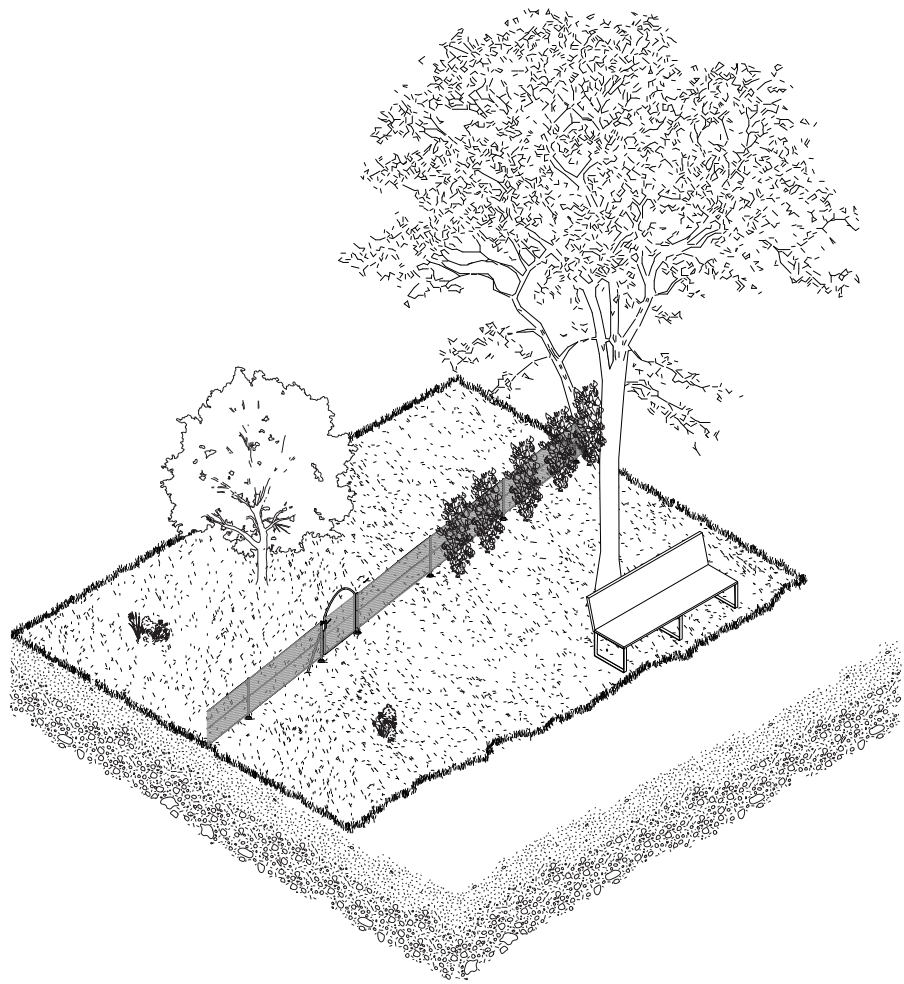
surfaces | lines | spaces



- surfaces
- lines
- spaces

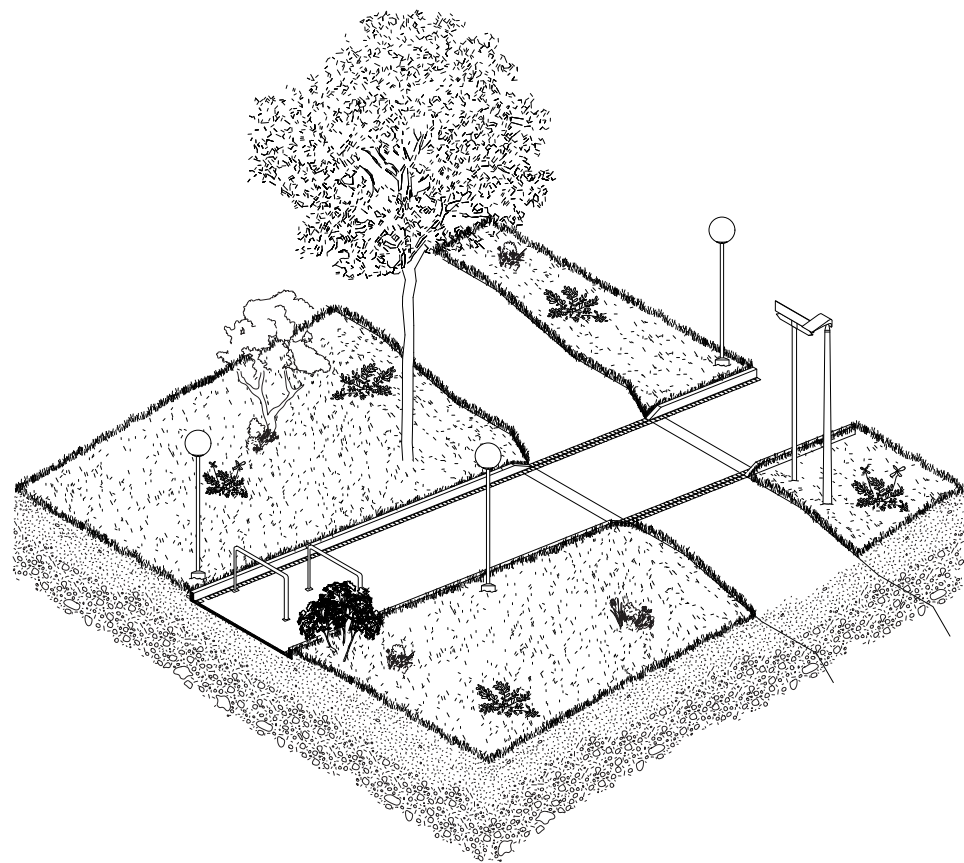
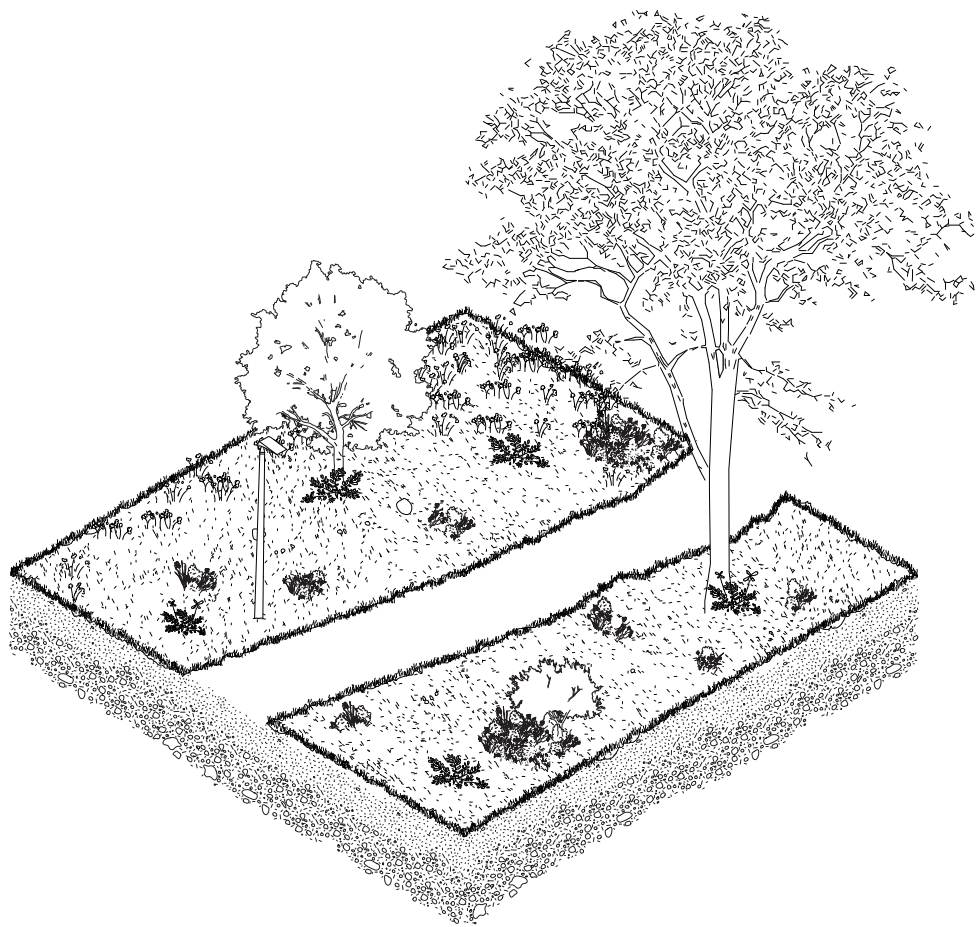
surfaces





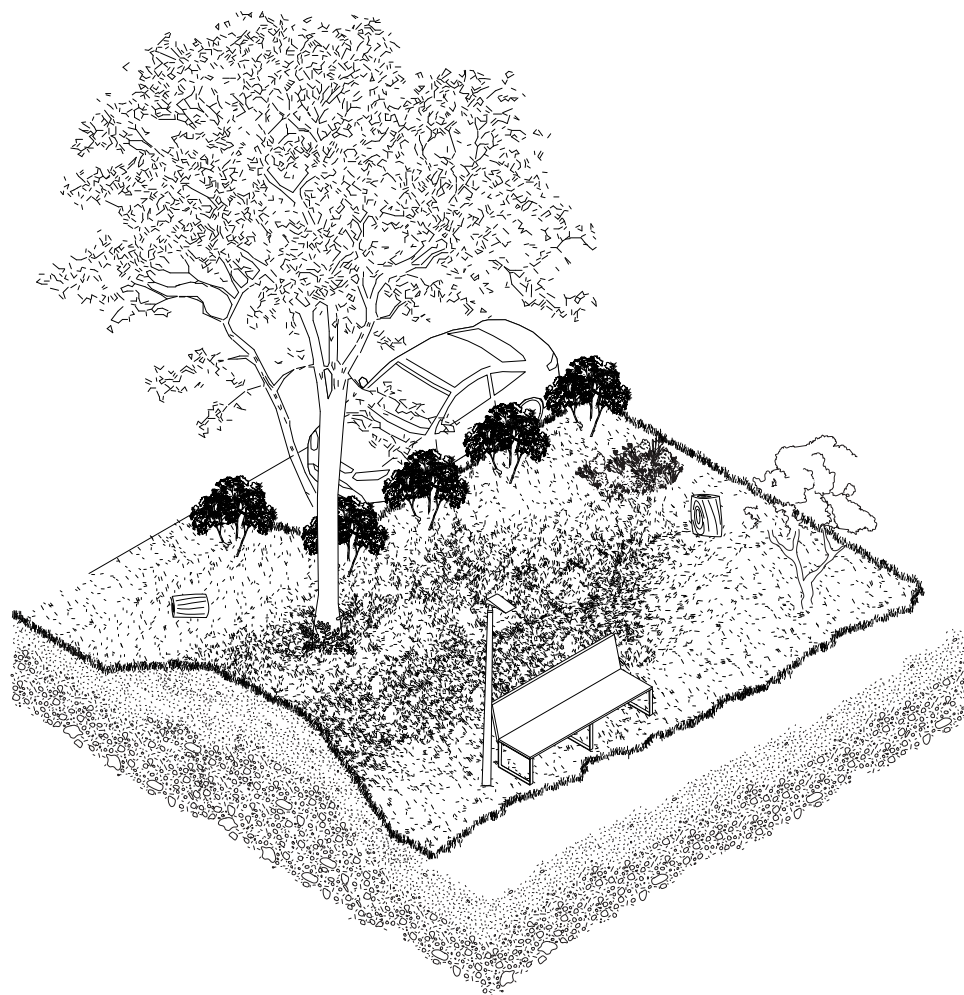
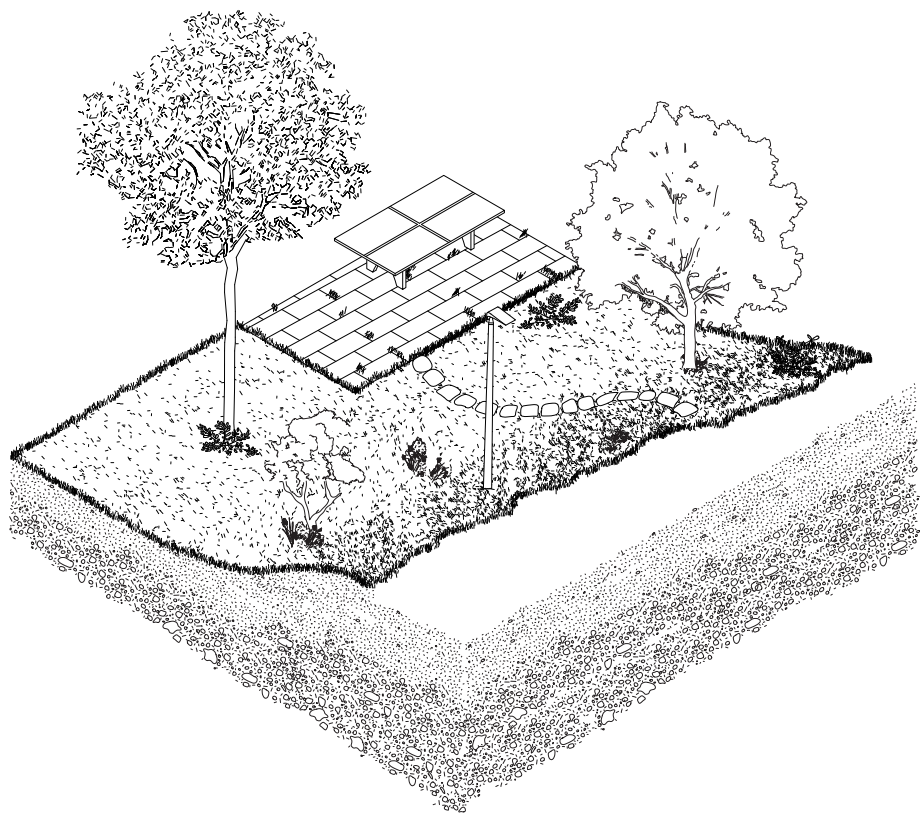
lines





spaces





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