

# Borders and Thresholds



**THRESHOLD**, Entrance, passing space, space preceding another, limit, beginning, ending, principle. Multiple are the connotations of threshold. Just as multiple are the areas in which it is used as a technical term: in geography, geology, physics, in construction, in hydraulic and naval engineering, in physiology and psychology. A noun that is both precise and confusing (hazy/blurry) at the same time.

Depending on the approach with which we observe the world, different zones can be defined as more or less visible. Climate zones, public and private space, different zones of a master plan, building spaces, green and gray zones.

The categories are endless and overlap with one another. Following this logical thread, it can be said that when we move we are subject to a continuous crossing of thresholds.

For this reason, I went to Erkingen paying attention to these passing moments and assessing their relevance in the area. Located at the base of the hills that separate the canton of Solothurn from the canton of Basel-Landschaft, the municipality of Erkingen lies on the threshold between the Plateau and the Jura slope. Infrastructure elements running from east to west such as the Dünner River, the cantonal road, and the highway divide the area into functional belts: from south to north we find agricultural fields, followed by an industrial zone, then a residential area, and finally the forest.

If one decreases the scale of analysis further and walks through the residential area immediately the well-defined boundaries of the different plots are revealed. Hedges, ramine, fences and building walls divide the different plots from each other.

Elements that fragment the land into zones where everyone acts as they please. From extremely cared-for gardens to expanses of gravel to minimize maintenance, the variety is great.

It is precisely the area from the perimeter of the house to the edge of the land that caught my interest during the visit. This is often residual space resulting from building distances from the legal boundaries of the parcel. For some it becomes a burden as it is an extra area to be cared for. For others it represents an opportunity to aggregate the space and present themselves toward the public realm and make a first impression.

In other cases it is simply a transitory space for accessing the interior of the home, and in others it is an opportunity to create a green oasis that veils the view of neighbors.

Fascinated by this place and its variations, I decided to investigate its function as a threshold. Indeed, it acts as a passageway between different categories: between inside and outside, between private and private, and between public and private.





The threshold between inside and outside is defined as the perimeter of the house, and the transition occurs through the front door. This can be more or less gradual depending on the articulation of the architecture. Or again a wall is a well-defined boundary while a glass is less clear as it lets the outside world into the interior space. Architecture can thus define a more or less strong visual and climatic separation between outside and inside.

The threshold between two private individuals is often, but not always, a matter of quarrels and jealousies. The famous saying “The neighbor’s lawn is always greener” is the perfect example. Various laws try to limit arguments by regulating this boundary. If it were to be absent would the grass be greener next door?

The threshold between public and private space is not normally a space in which time is spent. Its width is often defined by the distance you have to maintain from the parcel boundary. It is characterized by a path that takes you from the street to your front door.

In many cases it features a residual space where you can park your car. It is the one that perhaps leaks out the most about that people who live in the house. In fact, some use it as an opportunity to introduce themselves and tell their stories while others make sure that they have to deal with it as little as possible.

These thresholds are represented in the Atlas images and drawing. In the images, an obscuring wooden fence is contrasted with a rich and colorful entry area set up with various floral vases. In the second, a house with a very natural garden is contrasted with a more stony, representative one. The articulation of this space tells us a few things about the people living in the home and has a correlation and similarity with the articulation and even the furnishing of the interior spaces.

To conclude during this analysis, I realized that the term threshold has multiple facets that make it impossible to reduce it to a single definition: it can be at the same time a strong separation but also an image of what is behind it, it can play both the function of a filter and a business card, it can be material or immaterial.











































































