



ATRIUMS & CURVED WALLS

---

Spiritual care at the end of life

Mattias Nilsson & Robin Bylund

## A building for the end of life

A building where you spend your last time in life needs to be calm and soothing. To be terminally ill can be stressful and agonizing, not only for the patient but also for the friends and families who will have to let go of a loved one.

A hospice should work as a safe haven for these people, not merely being a temporary home, but a place that lets you spend your last days with dignity on your own conditions, with access to assistance, therapy and a social life. It shouldn't merely be a place to draw back and pass away in, but somewhere where you can squeeze the joy out of the very end and *live*.

## Site

The site of the hospice is located in the north west part of Gårdsten, just by Gårdstenvägen that surrounds the area. The setting is a beautiful, hilly, birch wood forest that slopes down and opens up to a bright, swampy field. A walking path meanders through the site, leading to the housing area and bus stop.

The traffic routes located downhill from the site is producing a lot of noise, interfering with the quiet milieu of the forest.

Placing the building in the north west corner of the site admits nice, undisturbed views of the field from the ward rooms. This positioning also connects the hospice to the existing walking path and thereby to the Gårdsten context.

## Program

The hospice is a fairly new building type and started out as a post-modern reaction to the mega-hospitals that were criticized for not being able to respond humanely to death and the dying, which led to a new discourse on end-of-life-care. Oftentimes a hospice include amenities not found in most hospitals, such as grieving rooms, rooms for spiritual contemplation and informal transitional spaces. Therapeutic activity rooms for art, music and water are also common, as well as overnight accommodations for families.

Accepting and adjusting to being terminally ill can be a long and difficult process. Most people want to stay at home for as long as possible, getting treated in their own dwellings before seeking aid at a hospice. A day hospice can work as a transitional space for people who are still fit enough to live at home but need occasional aid or guidance from hospice staff. You could go to the day hospice for a few hours or a day to enjoy an art class or a lecture, to have a conversation with a psychiatrist or just to meet others in a similar situation.

The staff area is centrally positioned in the building overlooking the entry zone and the shared spaces. This part protrudes from the rest of the building, making it easy for the staff to withdraw if necessary.

The social, spontaneous meeting can be important even in the last stages of life, keeping a feeling of everyday life. A small scale and division of spaces can create safe environments to see other people. A vast variation of spaces and rooms makes the building more exciting and eventful, urging each person to find a favorite spot.

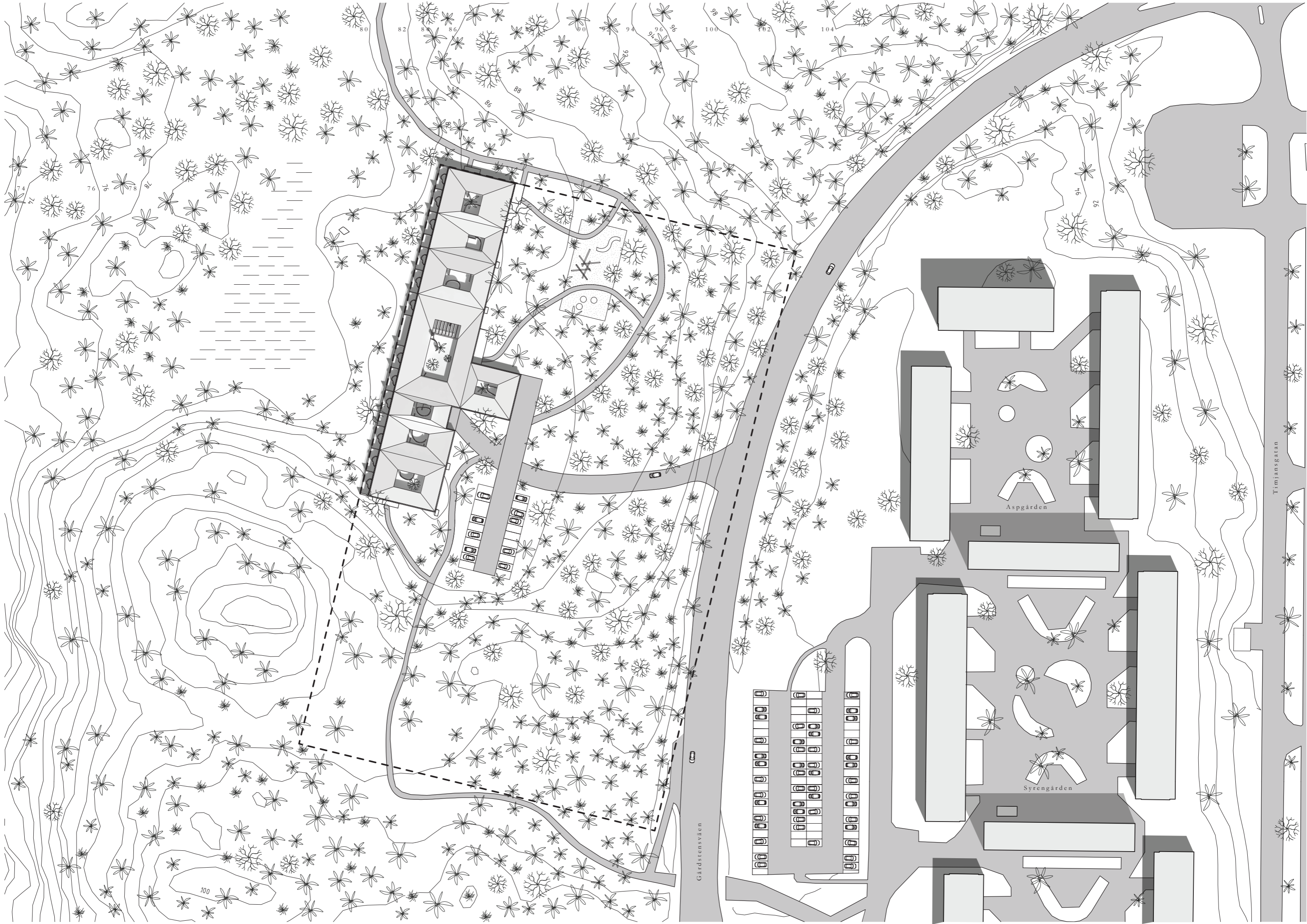
The patient ward - which will be the final home for many guests calls for a special atmosphere. It is a room that is "borrowed" for a short time and that should suit different personalities. Except for being a resting place for the dying, it is also a temporary home for some of their loved ones.

SITE PLAN  
1:1000



50m





Timjansgatan

Aspgården

Syrengården

Gårdstensvägen



## Atriums

A big part of this project has been about atriums. It started with an idea to create calm outdoor spaces where the patients could get away from the noise of the highway and turned into an exploration of the concept of atriums and their possibilities.

The importance of closeness to nature and use of daylight has been a major influence. In a hospice, a restorative garden can be a therapeutic complement to other forms of treatments and work as an informal space where you can get away from the ward and spend time alone or with family and friends. Feeling the sun on your body, smelling a flower or hearing the splashing sound of water or the song of a bird are simple but important treasures for many people in the last stages of life.

Atriums create quiet outdoor spaces, protected from noise, wind and insight while providing light to adjoining rooms. Except for a few storage spaces and toilets, all the rooms of the hospice gets natural daylight.

Placing the atriums in the core of the building makes them a central element that creates a boundary between functions that require different degrees in privacy and publicity. The atriums also give the communication spaces a division and a rhythm, creating a play between light and darkness.

## Curved walls

Can a curved, embracing wall make you feel more safe and calm than a straight one? We believe so, and at the same time a curved wall can be more interesting to look at for someone who spends a lot of time in bed.

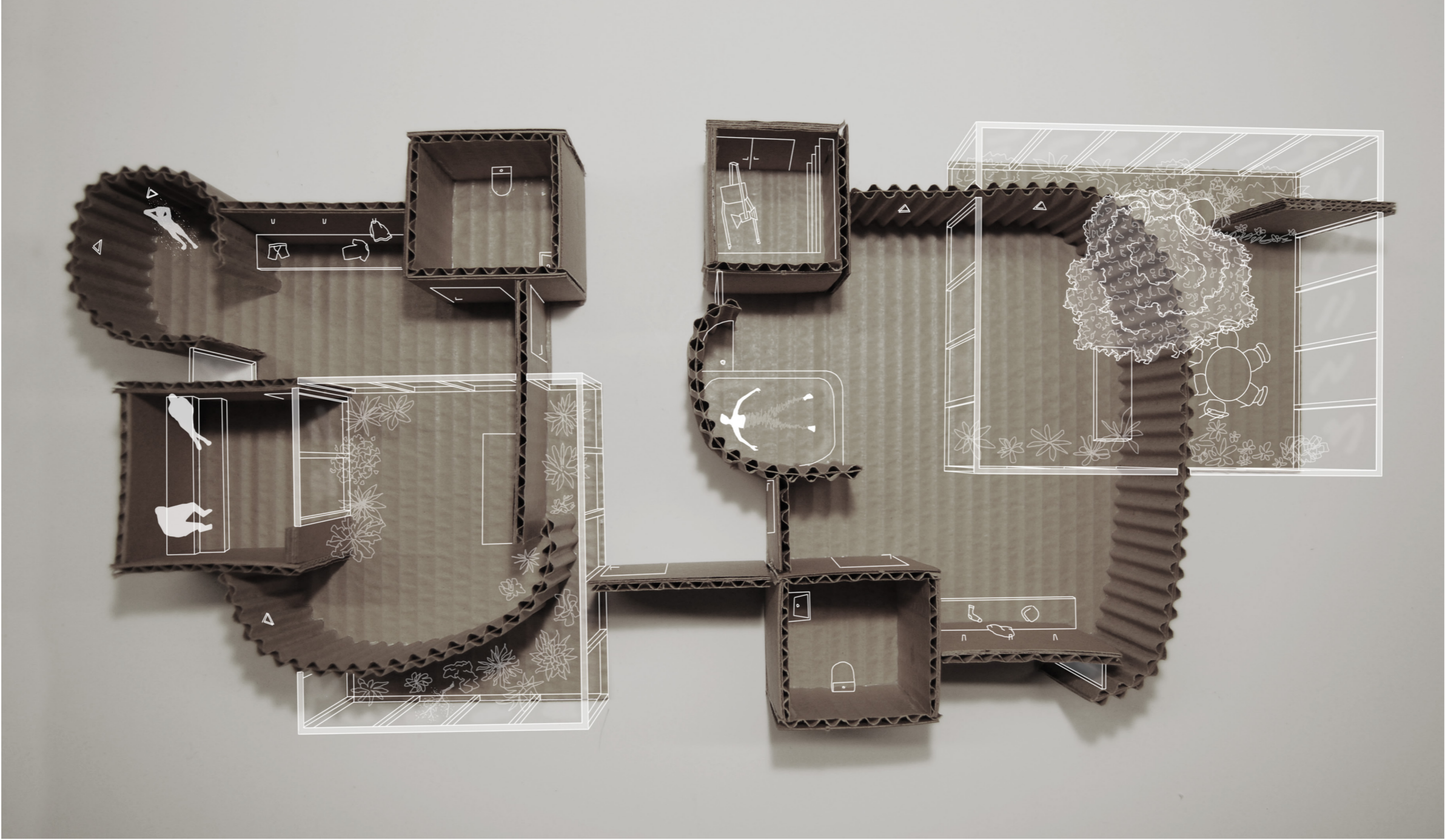
The definitive boundary of the atrium, created by the relationship between inside and outside and the sensuous impressions connected to this transition, is challenged by walls, not following the same logic. Using curved brick walls help create a softer transition between inside and outside. Shapewise, these walls stand out from the rest, creating a different, embracing feel and movement based on human needs.

The curved walls enables spaces that are enhanced by an outdoor environment but require an enclosed feel.



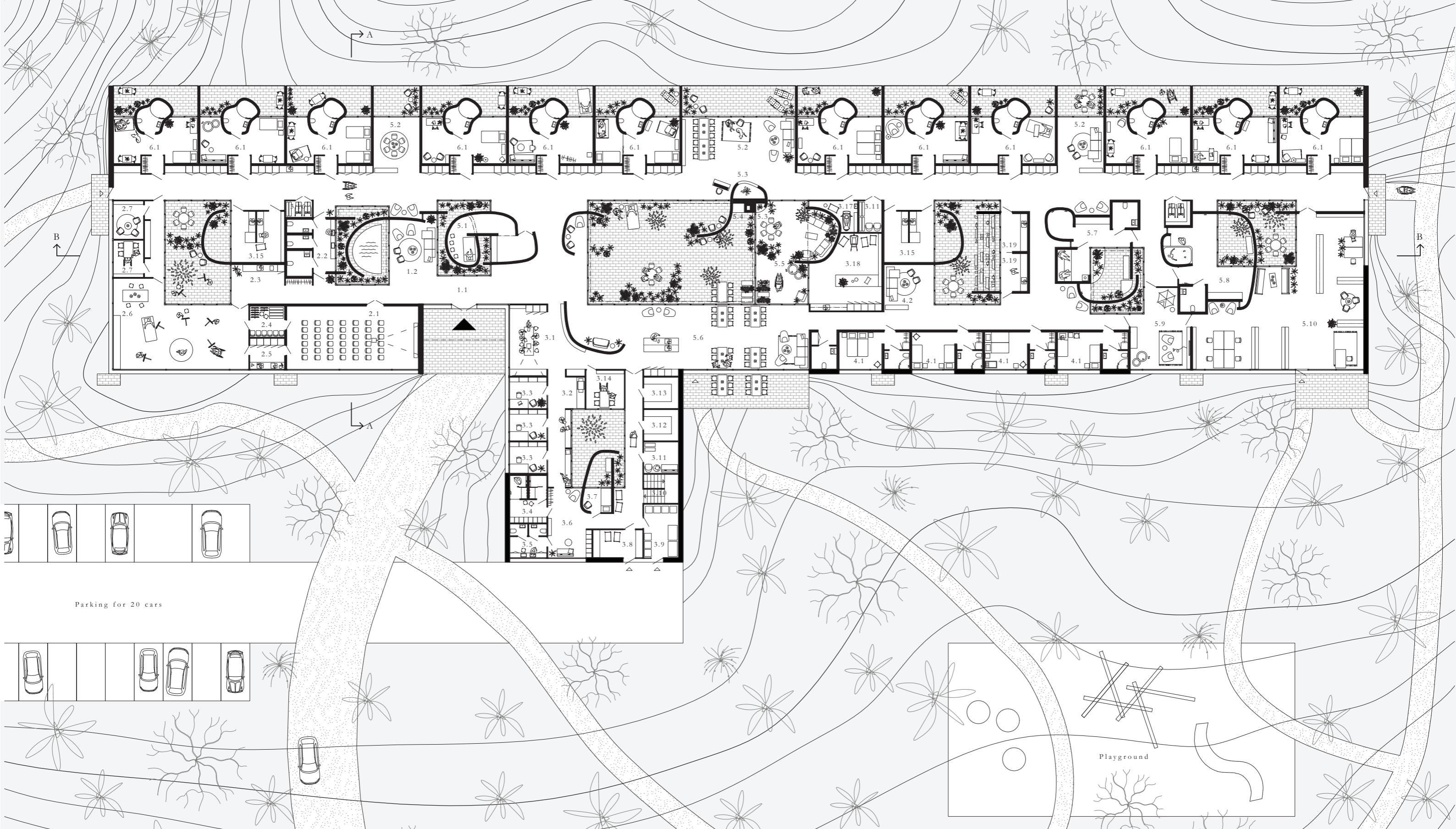
Studies of light and shadow





Sketch model of sauna and bath.





1.1 entry  
1.2 lobby

**DAY HOSPICE**

2.1 lecture/cinema  
2.2 wc  
2.3 coffee  
2.4 furniture storage  
2.5 rinsing room  
2.6 studio  
2.7 meeting room

**STAFF**

3.1 meeting space  
3.2 printer  
3.3 office  
3.4 changing room  
3.5 wc  
3.6 lounge  
3.7 resting room  
3.8 intake  
3.9 recycling  
3.10 stair to basement

**FAMILY & FRIENDS**

3.11 furniture storage  
3.12 medical storage  
3.13 larder  
3.14 meeting room  
3.15 sluice room  
3.16 aid storage  
3.17 cleaning room  
3.18 gardener's shed  
3.19 laundry room

4.1 family accommodation  
4.2 living room

**COMMON SPACE**

5.1 spiritual room  
5.2 living room  
5.3 fireplace  
5.4 barbeque grill  
5.5 winter garden  
5.6 kitchen/dining  
5.7 sauna  
5.8 bath/massage  
5.9 play area  
5.10 library

**WARD**

6.1 guest room

**TOTAL AREA**

2 190 m<sup>2</sup>

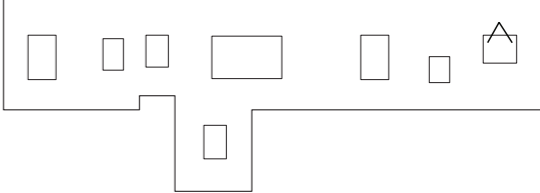
PLAN  
1:300



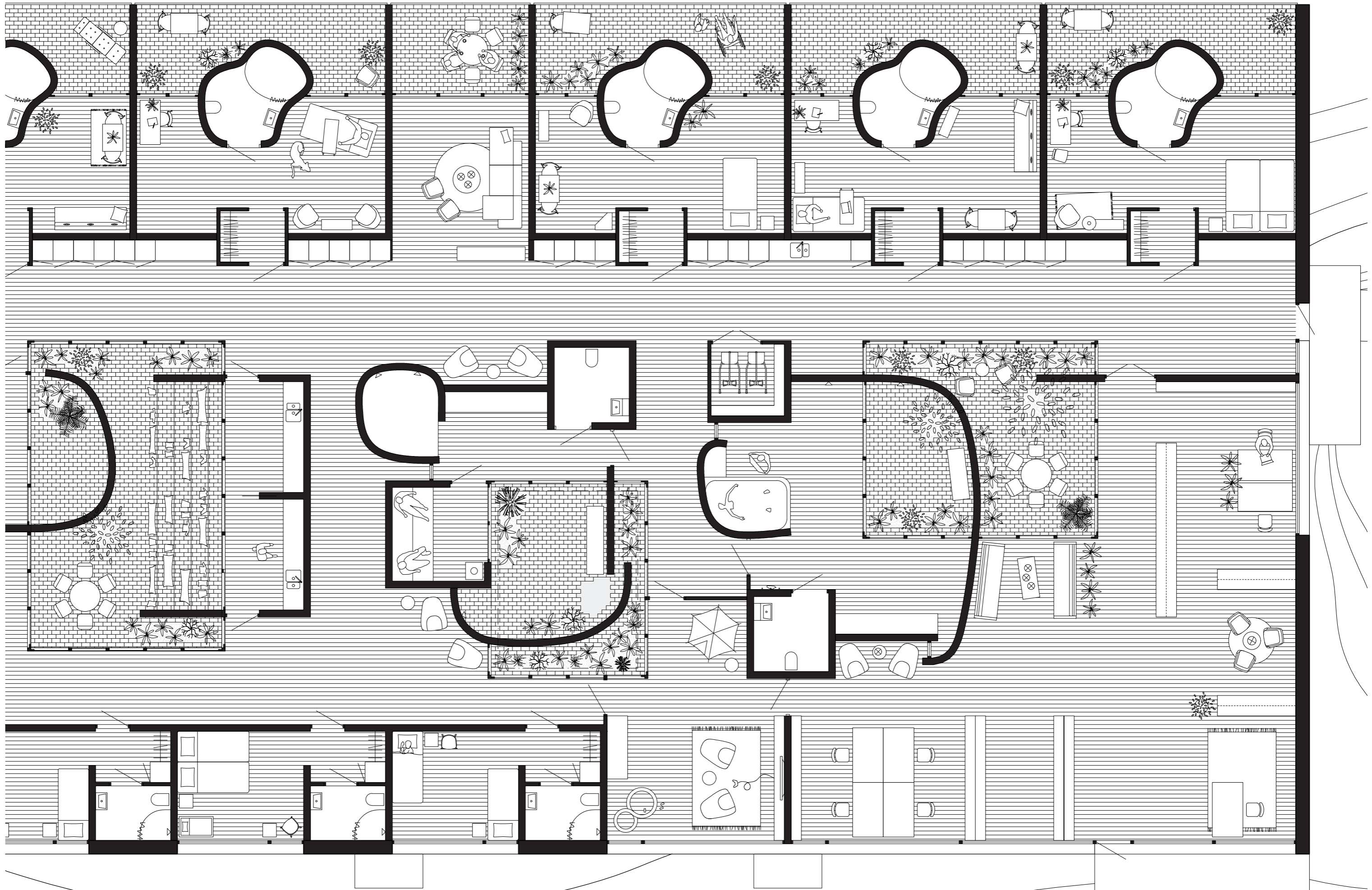
10m











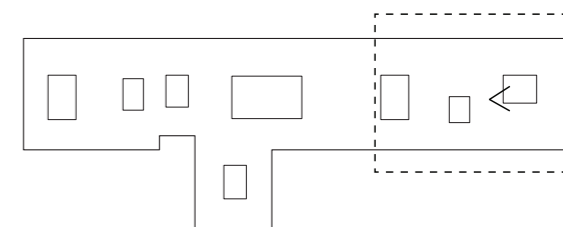
PLAN  
1:100



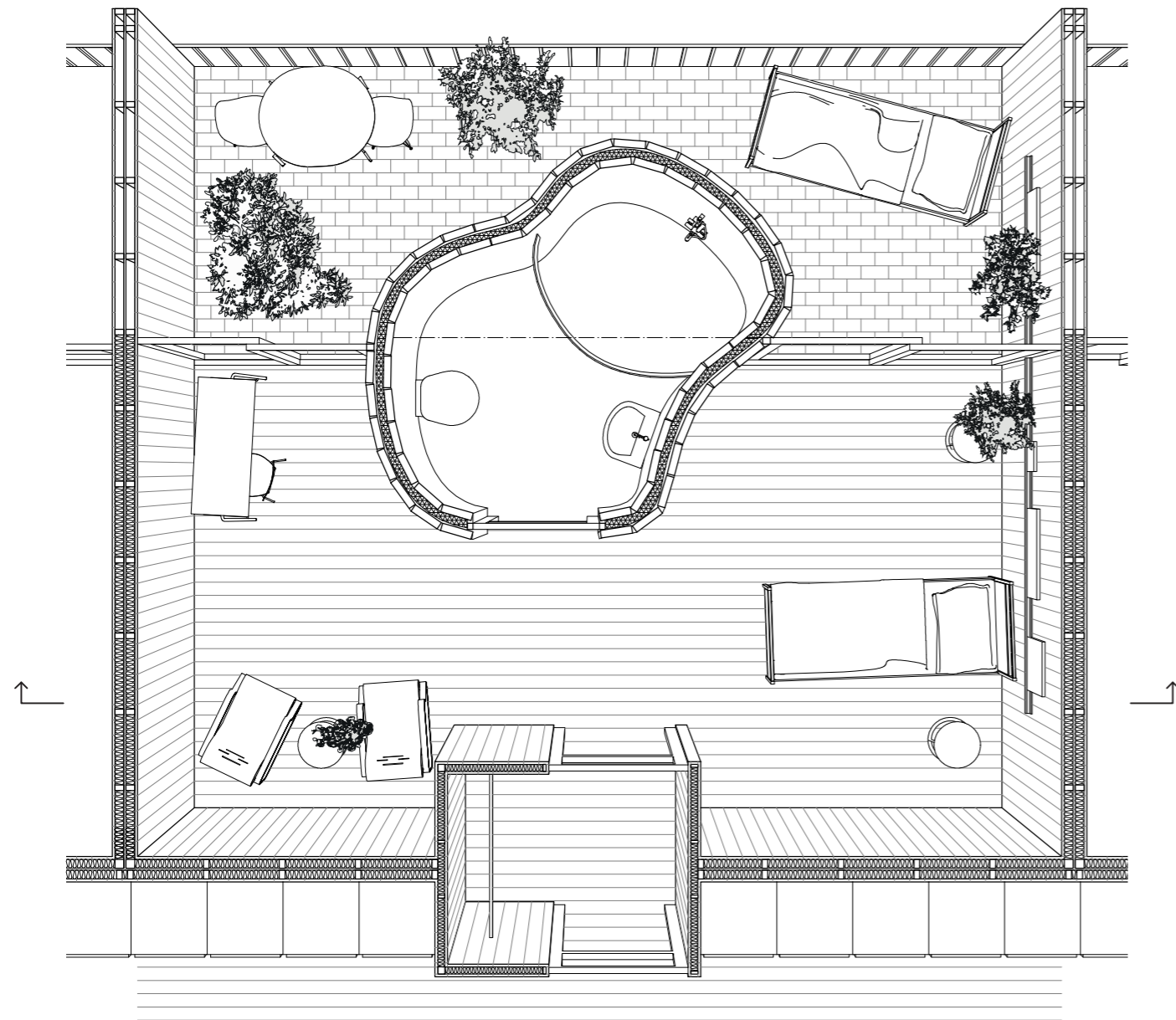




The bath has access to a small courtyard, making it possible to see the sky from the bath tub, and having a shower outside.







PLAN



SECTION

The patient room is dominated by the freely placed bathroom, dividing both the room and the patio into different spaces. The interior and exterior speaks the same language and the organic shapes creates a soft transition between inside and outside. For someone who spends a lot of time in bed, the curved brick wall can be nice and soothing to rest their eyes on. The inside of the bathroom embraces you and above the shower is a skylight.

The entry zone is freely placed between the room and the corridor in a similar fashion. It creates a space where you leave the public and go into the most private part of the building.

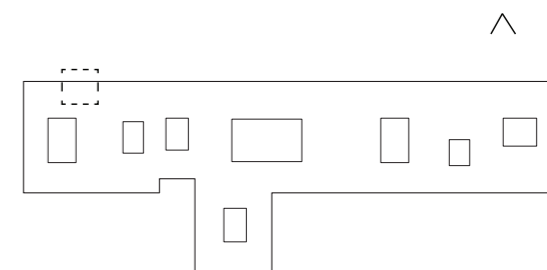
1:50



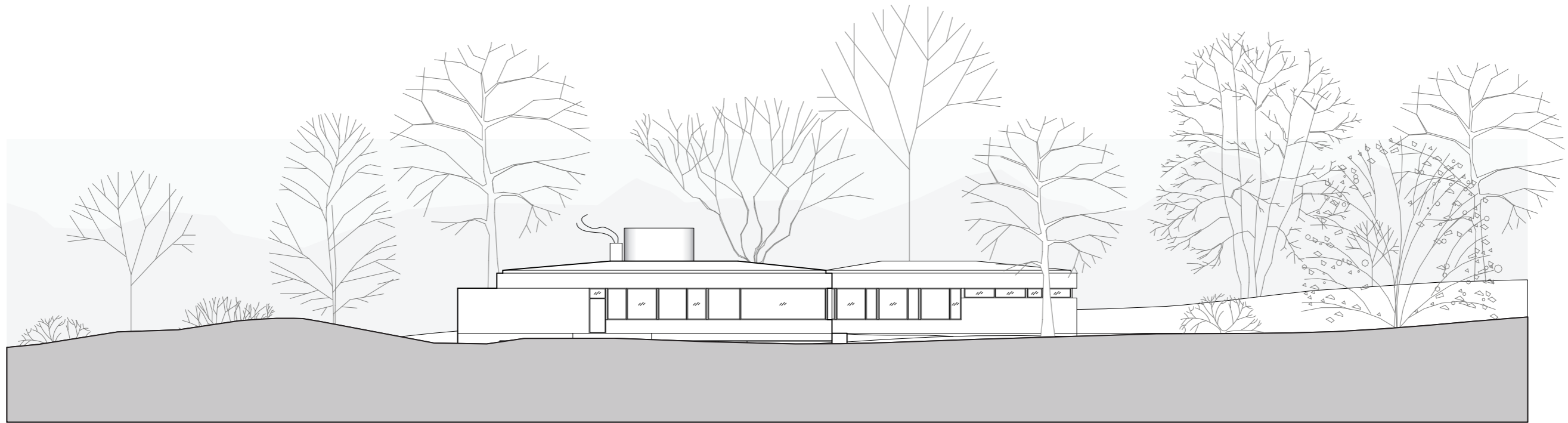




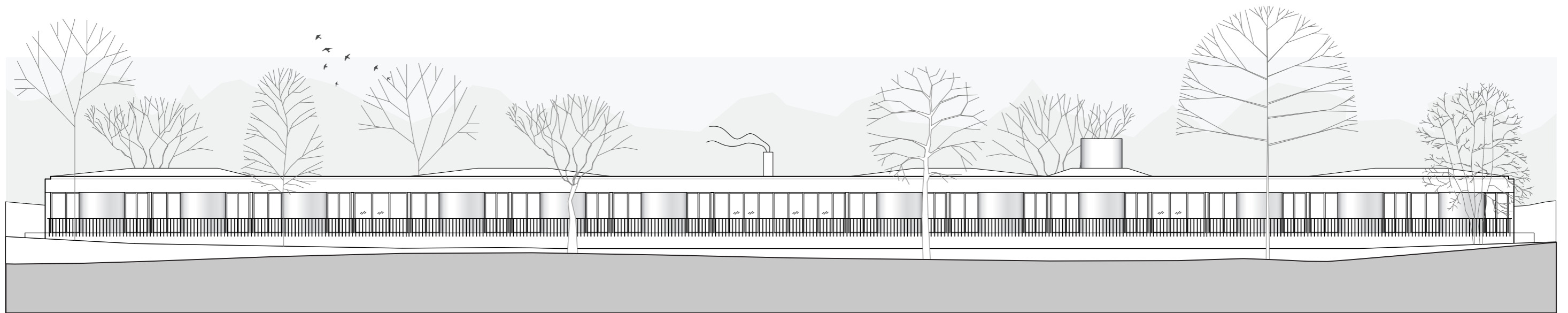
All wards face west, overlooking untouched nature.







FAÇADE FACING SOUTH



FAÇADE FACING WEST

The facade is divided in four different sill heights. Rooms that doesn't suffer from insight are fully glazed, whereas rooms that need more protection have a sill height at 900 mm. Rooms that are unsuitable for insight but in need of sunlight has a sill height at 2 350 mm. There are also a few closed walls.

1:300



10 m

The sloping terrain creates a protective height difference for the patient rooms.



SECTION A-A

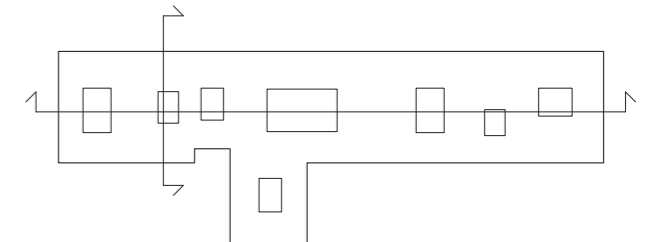


SECTION B-B

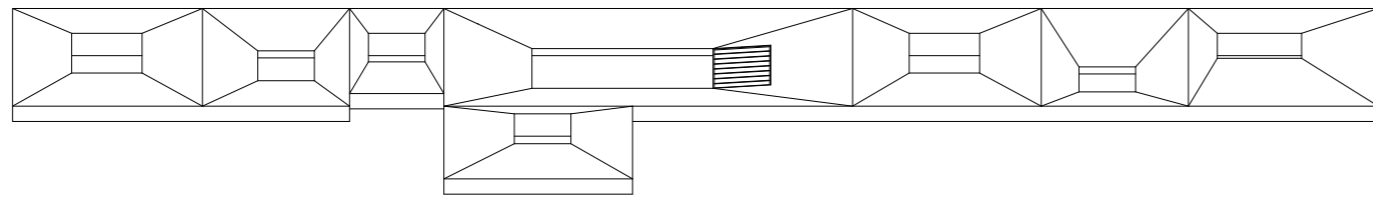
The building rest on concrete foundations placed by the façades and surrounding the atriums.

The spiritual rooms has a double room height, ending with a big skylight. It is also placed to enhance the entrance of the building.

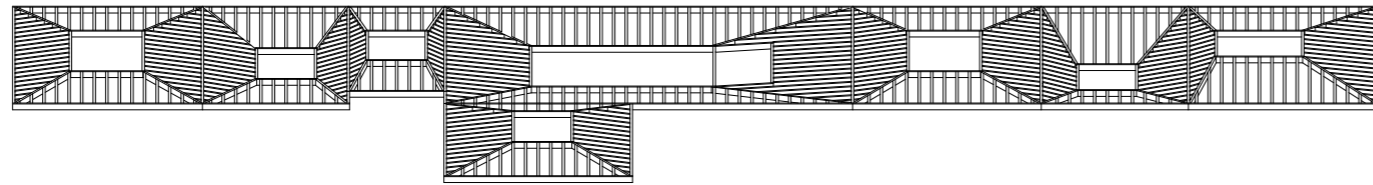
The roof is designed to collect rain and distribute it to three of the atriums where it is used as an art piece in the lobby, as a natural shower by the sauna and in the main atrium watering the therapeutic garden. The water is filtered and reused.



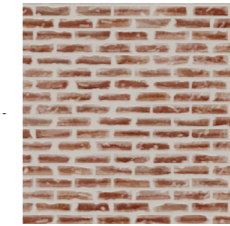
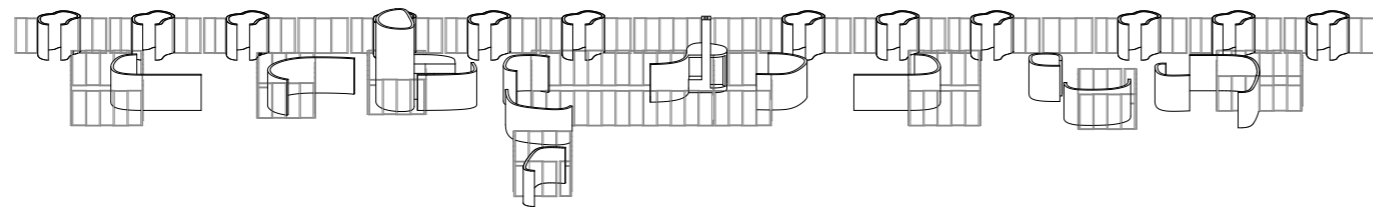




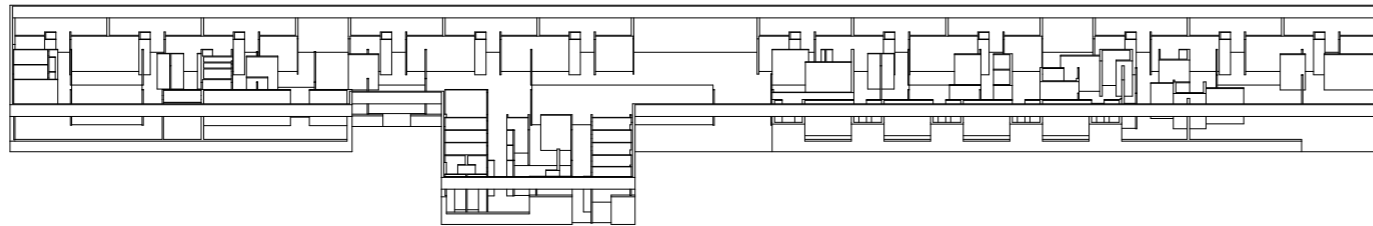
The roof is designed to lead rain to three of the atriums. The material is zinc



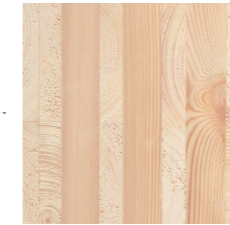
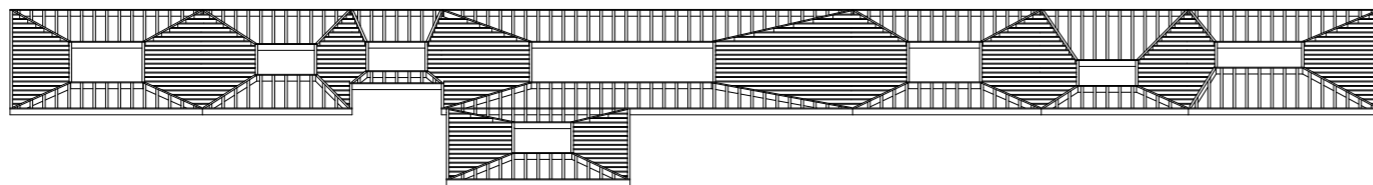
The roof construction is made out of glue-laminated timber.



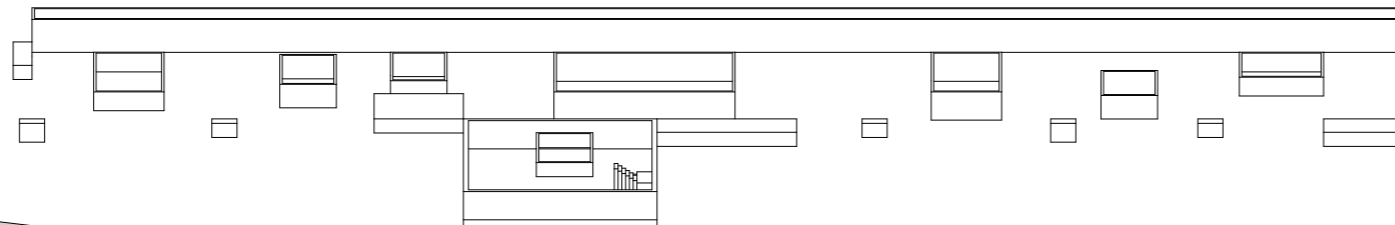
The curved walls are all made of hard-burned Helsingborg-brick.



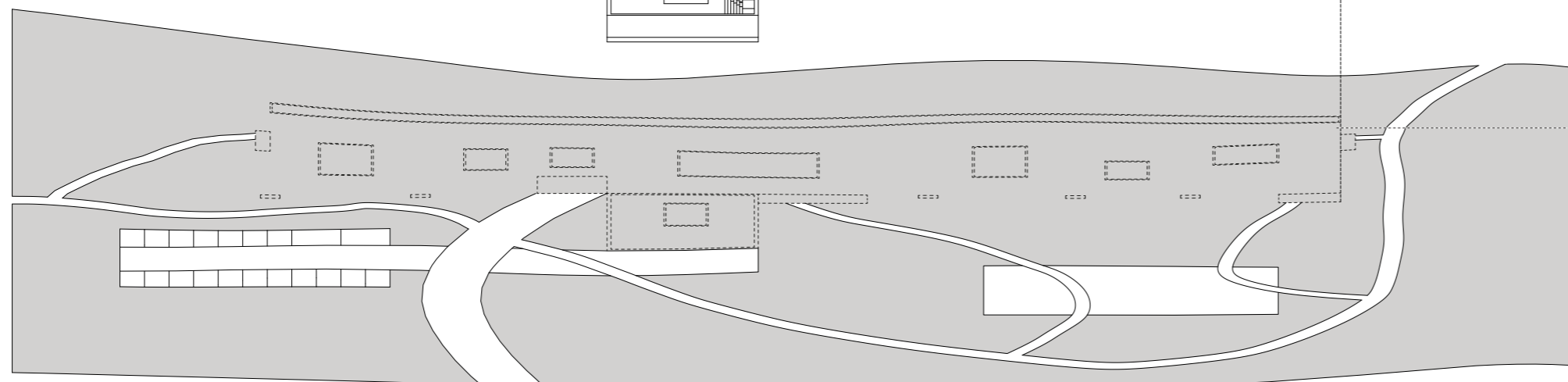
The interior walls and floors are clad with durable oak.



The floor construction is made out of glue-laminated timber.



The foundations are made of concrete and brick. They are filled to enable planting. A basement under the staff area contains technical rooms such as ventilation and heating.



The foundations of the building meets the sloping terrain.

