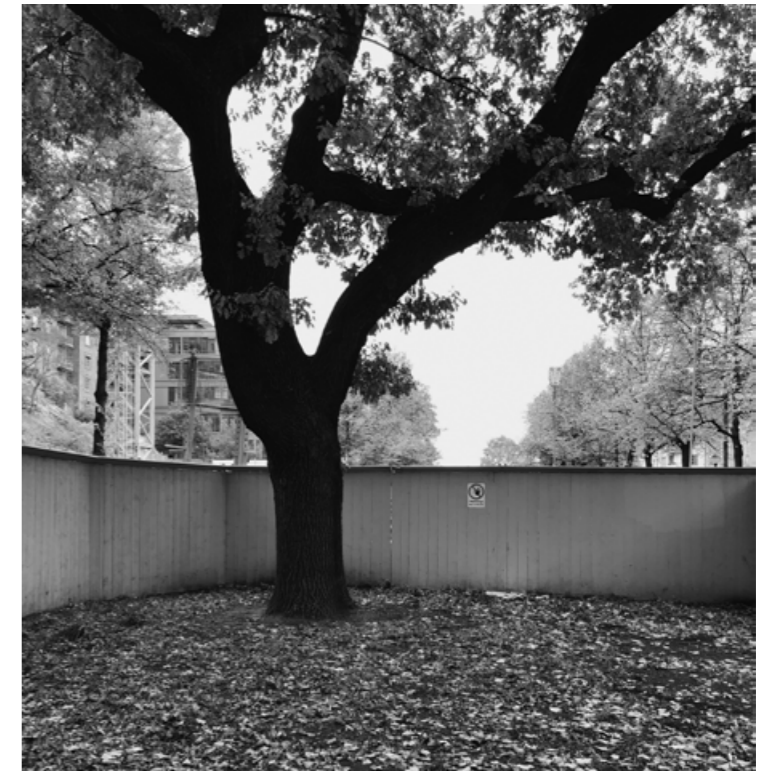




Unbuilt

Tobias Thiel

Within the urban fabric, there are places that often remain invisible and undefined: in-between spaces. These spaces emerge as a natural consequence of the city's constant transformation, where buildings and infrastructure change over time. Despite being an integral part of the city, they are often overlooked, undervalued, and underused.



In-between spaces take many forms. Narrow passages between buildings, vacant lots under bridges, residual areas shaped by infrastructure, or abandoned green pockets. Though often undefined and informal, they hold untapped potential. More than by-products of urban development, they can be seen as spatial reserves that are open to reinterpretation and new use. Often dismissed as unusable remnants, they can instead accommodate temporary activities, micro-businesses, or public spaces that complement formal urban planning.

In Stockholm, as in many other major cities, land is scarce and highly valued. At the same time, the city contains numerous in-between spaces embedded within its dense urban structure. These spaces offer an opportunity to rethink how urban land is used. Rather than relying on large-scale development, change can occur through small and precise interventions. Here, the concept of urban acupuncture becomes a useful tool. Urban acupuncture can be understood as a method of working with the city through carefully placed, site-specific interventions that respond to existing conditions and have the potential to generate wider spatial and social effects. By identifying places where limited actions can create broader impact, the city can be activated incrementally instead of being transformed all at once.

This approach is particularly well suited to in-between spaces. Instead of imposing a new order, urban acupuncture works with what already exists and activates latent qualities and connections. A neglected underpass might become a small marketplace or a

cultural venue through minimal additions. A vacant lot could be temporarily transformed into a community garden, a workshop, or an outdoor performance space. The emphasis is on strategic and low-impact interventions that allow spaces to evolve over time.

In-between spaces challenge conventional planning by resisting fixed programs and formal aesthetics. Their unpolished and improvised character contrasts with the surrounding city and offers alternative ways of experiencing urban space. Rather than being fully designed and predetermined, these spaces can remain open-ended and shaped gradually through use. This flexibility allows them to respond to changing social needs and local initiatives.

Design plays an important role in making these spaces accessible and inviting. Simple structures, temporary installations, or lightweight constructions can be enough to shift how a place is perceived and used. The intention is not to erase existing conditions, but to enhance them. By working with material, spatial, and social qualities already present, each intervention becomes rooted in its specific context and reflects the character of its surroundings.

One of the main strengths of in-between spaces is their adaptability. Unlike formal public spaces with fixed functions, they can host different activities throughout the year. This ability to change helps ensure long-term relevance without permanent transformation.

Beyond their social and spatial value, in-between spaces also contribute to more sustainable urban development. By reusing existing sites and structures, the need for new construction is reduced. This limits environmental impact and helps preserve surrounding landscapes. In a time marked by climate change and growing social challenges, making better use of existing resources becomes increasingly important.

This pre-study explores how in-between spaces in Stockholm can be activated through small-scale and site-specific interventions. It includes an atlas of selected in-between spaces in one part of Stockholm, based on mapping and site documentation, as well as a more detailed study of two selected sites and their potential development through site-specific design proposals. Together, these parts examine how overlooked areas can be understood and developed through urban acupuncture, and how such spaces can become meaningful parts of the city that support social interaction and everyday use. Rather than filling gaps, the project aims to reveal the potential already embedded in the urban fabric and demonstrate how modest actions can contribute to a more inclusive and resilient city.







1



2



3



10



11



12



4



5



6



13



14



15



7



8



9



16



17



18



19



20



21



28



29



30



22



23



24



31



32



33



25



26



27



34



35



36



37



38



39



46



47



48



40



41



42



49



50



51



43



44



45



52



53



54



55



56



57



64



65



66



58



59



60



67



68



69



61



62



63



70



71



72



73



74



75



82



83



84



76



77



78



85



86



87



79



80



81



88



89



90



91



92



93



94



95



96



97



98



99





#	LOCATION	FUNCTION	SQM
37	FATBURSPARKEN	KIOSK	185



#	LOCATION	FUNCTION	SQM
52	FATBURSPARKEN	MICRO LIBRARY	55

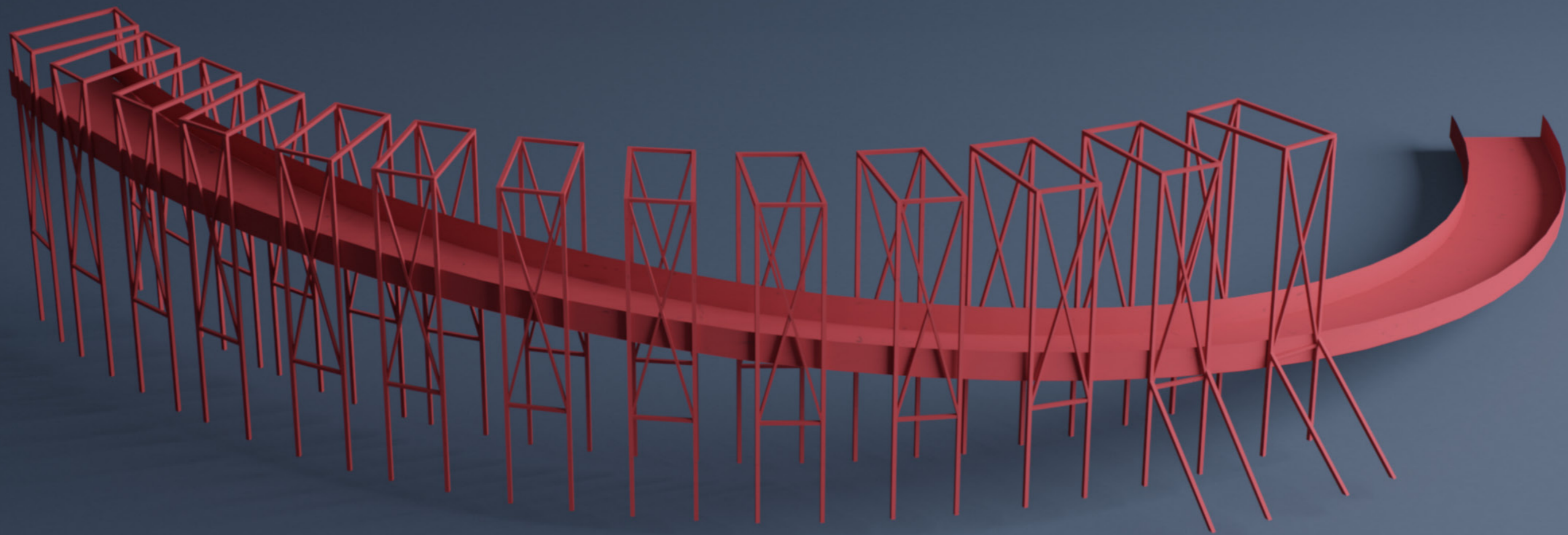


The sites beneath the bike bridge in Fatbursparken, known as Site 37 and Site 52, are examples of in-between spaces with significant potential. Historically, this area has seen limited use and has lacked defined public functions. It once hosted an outdoor restaurant in the adjacent brick building, but its back-facing position and limited foot traffic resulted in low activity and gradual decline.

Fatbursparken, located in Södermalm, Stockholm, is a park that many people pass through daily, while parts

of it are currently undergoing transformation. Site 37 and Site 52 are situated in the park's northern section, beneath a robust concrete bike bridge that curves through the landscape and connects Medborgarplatsen with Fatbursparken. Despite its proximity to greenery and the strong spatial character created by the bridge, the area has functioned as a hidden backside. Its raw and industrial atmosphere offers clear spatial potential, but the lack of defined activity and space has limited its use.

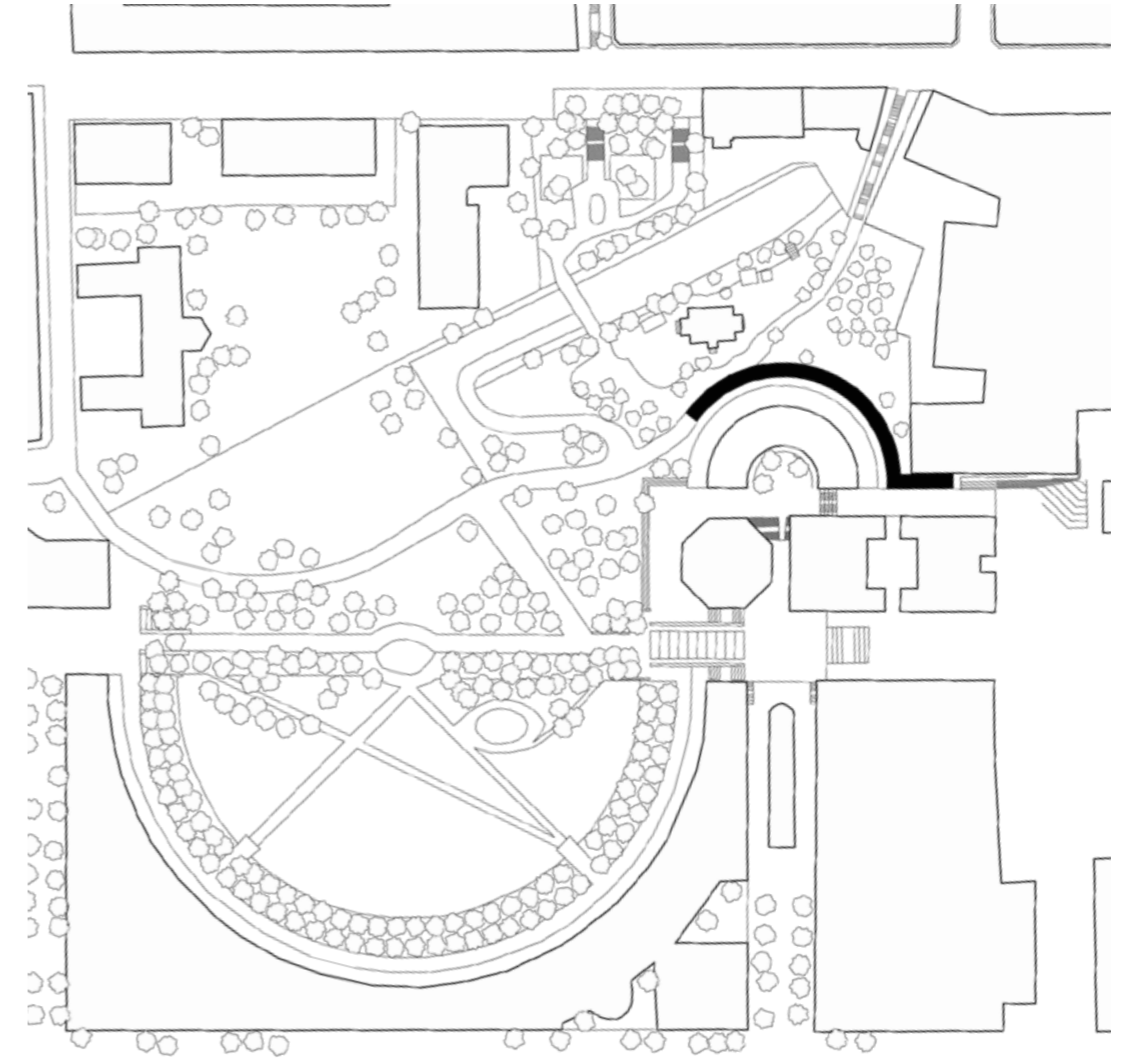


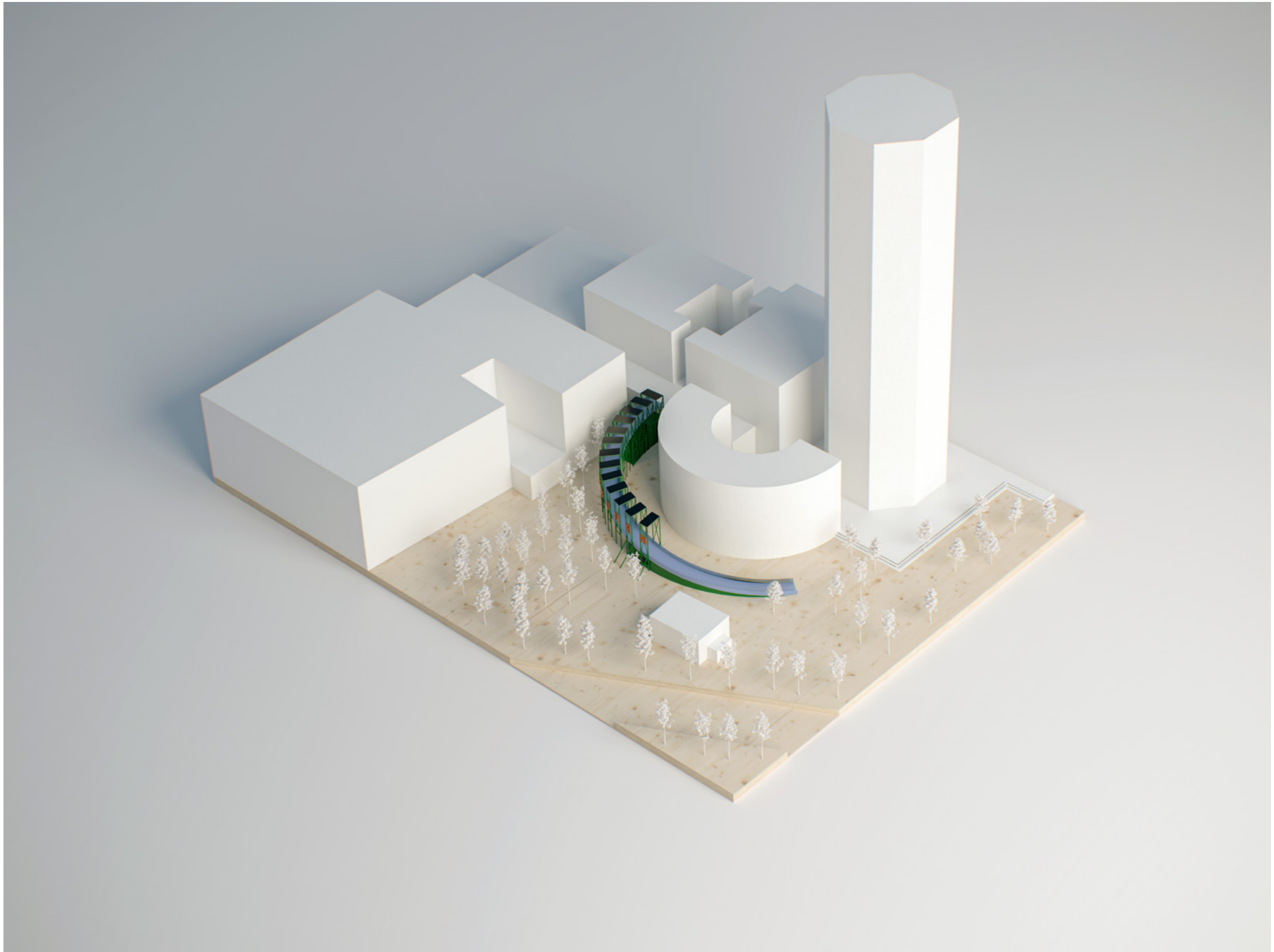


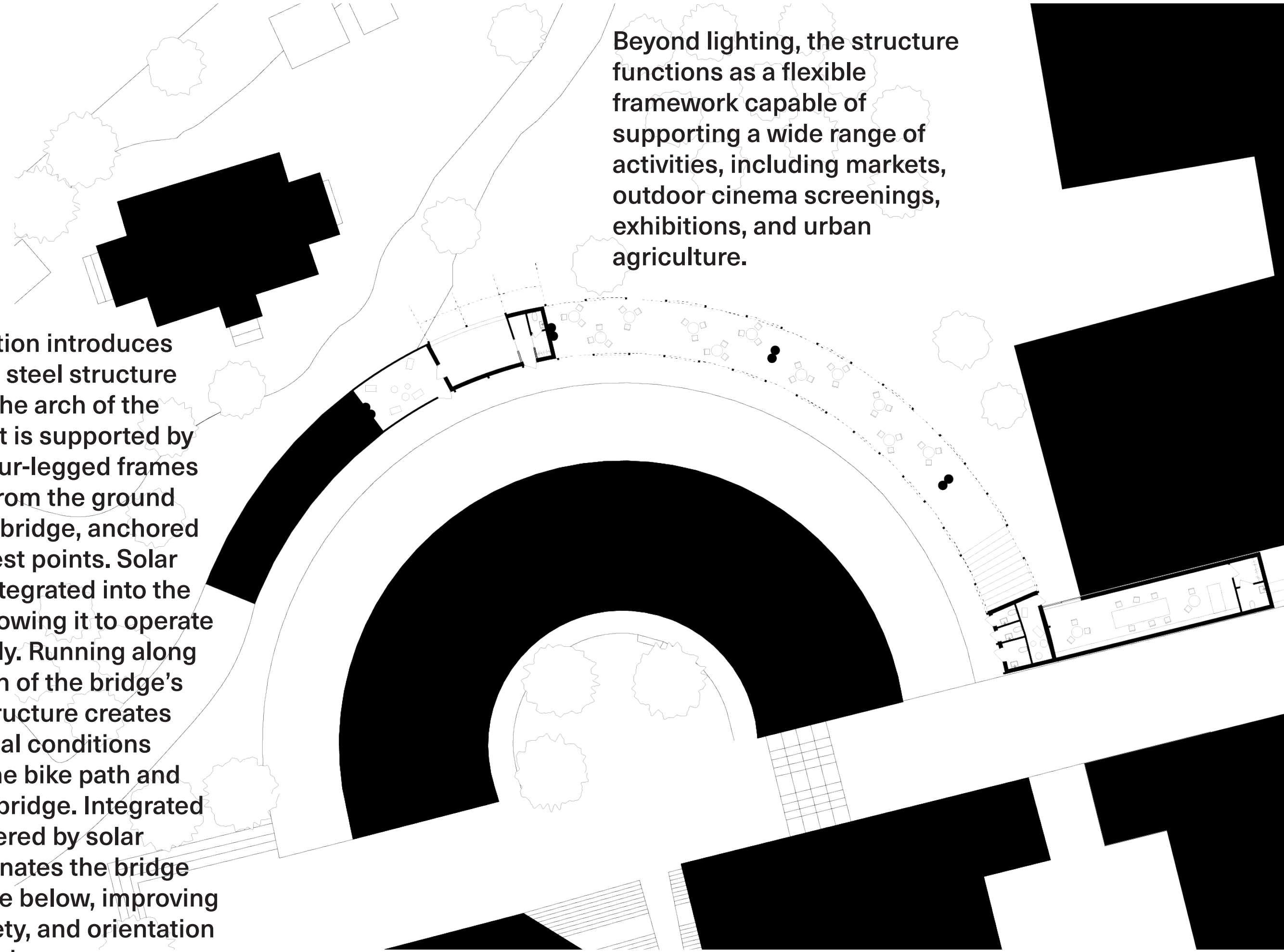
The intervention aims to transform this neglected area into an active and inviting public space. The proposal consists of two main elements: a lightweight structure that follows the curvature of the bridge and two programmatic volumes strategically placed beneath it.

Site 37 is located directly under the bridge and covers approximately 185 square meters. At the point where the bridge structure meets the ground, a new enclosed volume is introduced. This volume houses a small kiosk, generating everyday activity and increasing presence in the space.

Site 52 is a narrower in-between space of approximately 55 square meters, located between an office building and the bridge's foundation at its highest point. Here, stepped seating is introduced to form an informal gathering area together with a smaller enclosed volume. This space functions as a reading nook, a micro-library, and a flexible social space, offering a quieter public program that complements the more active uses beneath the bridge. The area between the two volumes is left open and undefined, allowing the space under the bridge to remain adaptable. Together, these interventions strengthen the relationship between the bridge, the park, and the surrounding buildings.





An architectural plan showing a curved bike bridge. A thick black arc represents the bridge's structure, supported by a series of four-legged frames extending from the ground and over the bridge. The bridge is surrounded by a park area with trees and buildings. The text on the left describes the structure's function and features.

The intervention introduces a lightweight steel structure that follows the arch of the bike bridge. It is supported by a series of four-legged frames that extend from the ground and over the bridge, anchored at their highest points. Solar panels are integrated into the structure, allowing it to operate independently. Running along the full length of the bridge's curve, the structure creates defined spatial conditions both along the bike path and beneath the bridge. Integrated lighting powered by solar energy illuminates the bridge and the space below, improving visibility, safety, and orientation within the park.

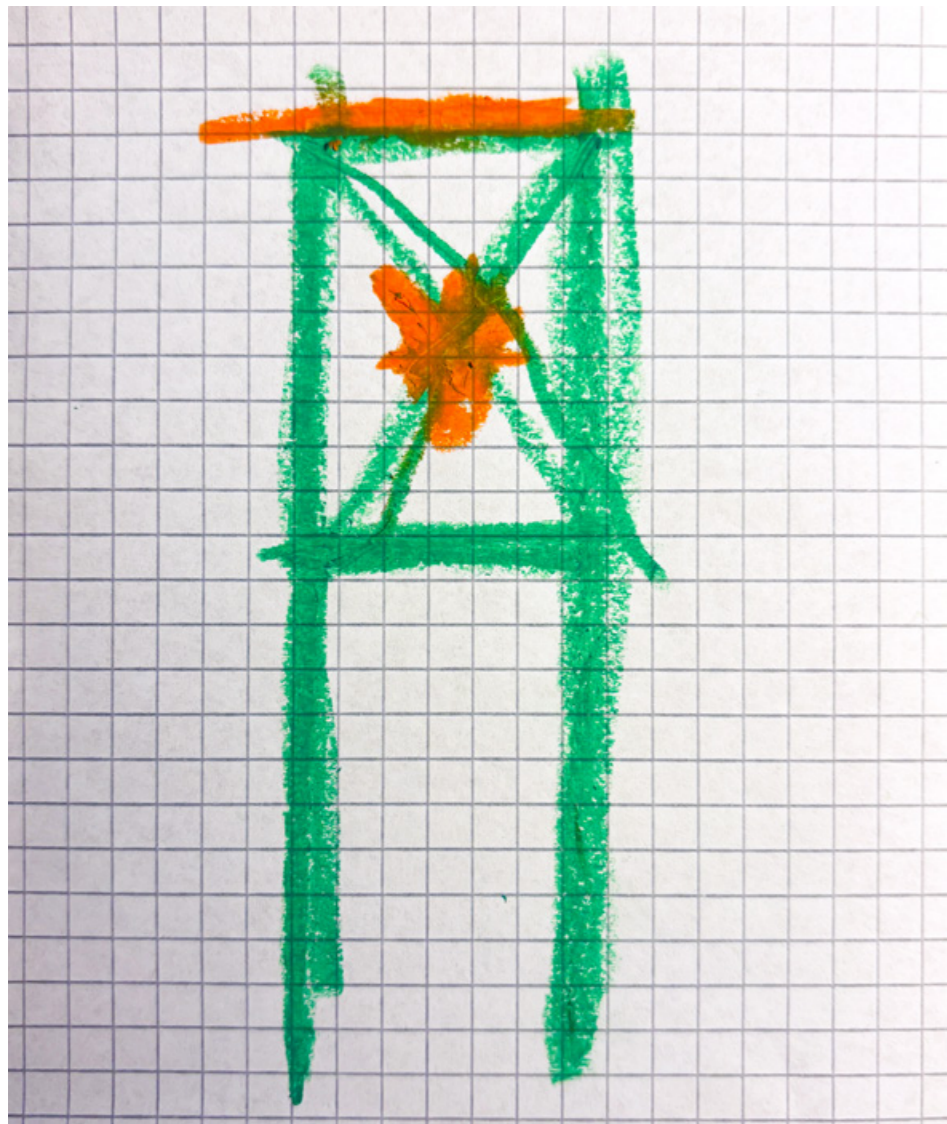
Beyond lighting, the structure functions as a flexible framework capable of supporting a wide range of activities, including markets, outdoor cinema screenings, exhibitions, and urban agriculture.



By carefully positioning the new elements, the intervention divides the space beneath the bridge into two distinct spatial conditions. One side, with a higher ceiling, creates a sense of openness and is well suited for public events and larger gatherings. The other side, with a lower ceiling, offers a more intimate and enclosed atmosphere, supporting quieter activities such as reading or small group interaction.

The steel structure reinforces this spatial differentiation while remaining adaptable over time. Rather than erasing the site's existing character, the intervention builds upon its industrial qualities by introducing new layers of use and meaning.





A diverse range of activities is introduced to activate the space beneath the bridge. Markets with small-scale vendor stalls can be accommodated, while art exhibitions can make use of both the structure and the bridge itself as display surfaces. The stepped seating supports outdoor cinema screenings and performances such as music or theater. The illuminated space also enables evening activities, including exercise sessions and yoga classes. In addition, the site allows for informal use, offering places to sit, read, meet, or pause for a coffee. Together, these activities create a dynamic and adaptable public space that encourages interaction and engagement.



In-between spaces are often regarded as residual by-products of urban development and are frequently ignored. This project demonstrates that such spaces hold significant potential when approached with care and attention. By working with existing conditions rather than replacing them, hidden spatial qualities can be revealed and strengthened.

Site 37 and Site 52 in Fatbursparken illustrate how thoughtful design and small-scale interventions can transform overlooked areas into active public spaces. The project highlights how modest actions can generate meaningful social and spatial impact. It proposes an approach to urban development that is sustainable, inclusive, and grounded in the value of what already exists.

Through this perspective, in-between spaces are no longer seen as gaps in the city, but as opportunities to rethink and reshape the urban environment, creating places that support everyday life, social interaction, and long-term adaptability.

All images in the report are the author's own and may be published by ARQ.



