

## **skanstorget - meeting, keeping & activating public space**

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My master thesis started in a rather broad and general interest in, and questions about places that somehow do not live out their full potential, and how we can make use of these spaces. Places that are unused, or –quite often– used as parking spaces. Meanwhile, there are other needs and wishes that are pressing, such as the huge housing shortage, or more and qualitative public spaces. It

became a study of how much you can build on a square, and still let it be a square. Of how, or if, you can add housing and commercial functions in order to activate a square, but without privatising it? The investigation concerned density, scale and dimensions of spaces and buildings, but also a certain kind of urban spaces: intensive, programmed and that encourage people to use them actively.



**Skanstorget** is a square in central Gothenburg, which since some decades ago only serves as a parking space. There is a widespread desire for the square to become a place of activity and public life again. However, the hubs of activity that once made Skanstorget an active public space have moved elsewhere, and the reasons to come here have disappeared.

**This project explores how housing and commercial functions can be added in order to activate the square, without privatising it.**

When building on public ground, there

is a risk that the consumed ground is turned into something very private, especially when building housing or commercial spaces. As the layer of contact between private and public, the envelope assumes a political aspect. How can the design of the envelope, or the building perimeter – the place where the building meets the open, public air, and the immediate surrounding spaces enhance the chances of an active use of the adjacent public space? **How can it be used as a tool to develop the unfulfilled potential of a neglected place in an urban context?**

# background



Skanstorget is located centrally in Gothenburg. Beautiful surroundings, and an interesting historical and cultural heritage serving as a market garden, market hall and political meeting point. Since some decades ago it serves as a parking space, with the extra unpleasantness of noise and pollution from the passing road, and is hardly used by anyone, in spite of its central location. It is stretched across a fairly large area which at the moment makes it feel almost dissolved, and the noise from the road makes it an unrestful space to be. **The hubs of activity have also been demolished or moved elsewhere.**

# Skanstorget :

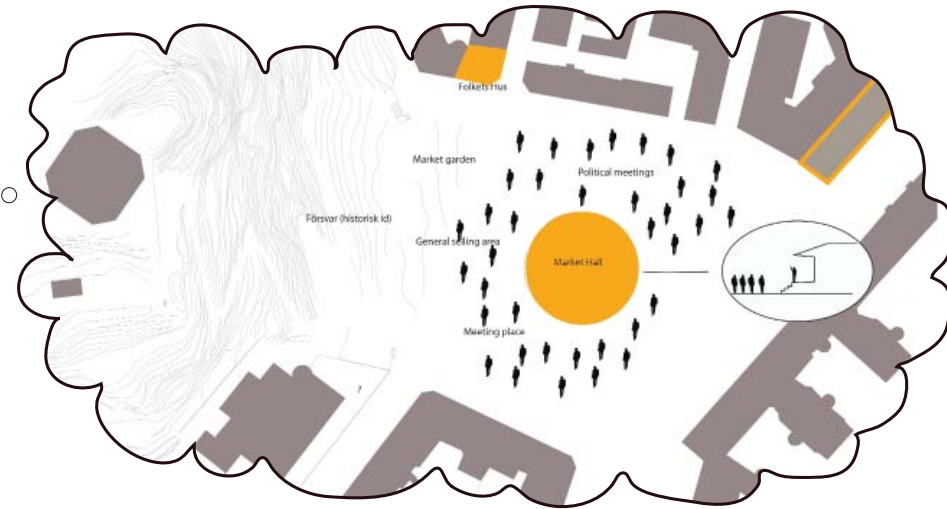
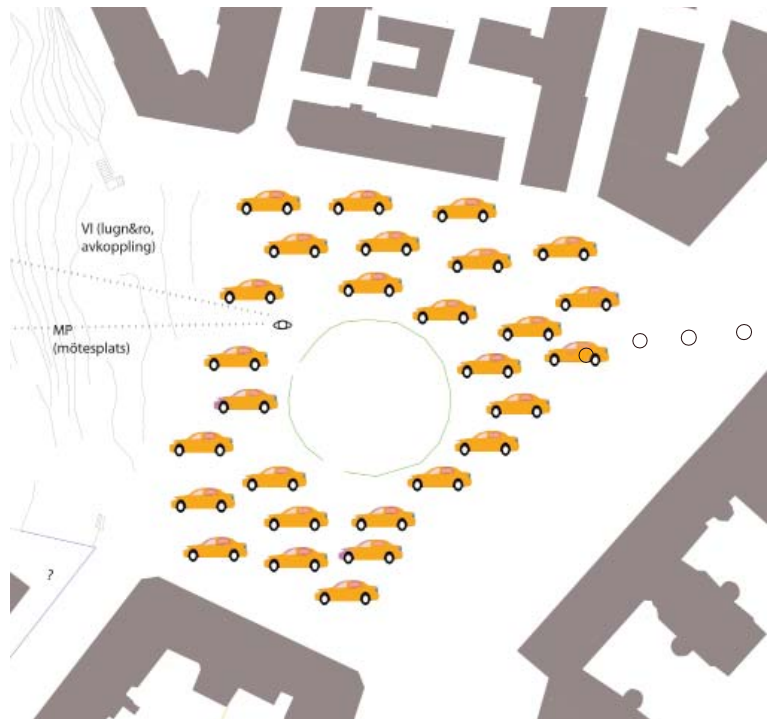


Skanstorget opens up to Övre Husargatan, which is a **heavily trafficked road**, later turning into Dag Hammarsköldsleden. However, this has been **identified as a potential route for urban development** of the city of Gothenburg.



It is located between some of the most popular and central areas of Gothenburg. **Great location potential, but also greatly under-used.**

## now & then - different conditions



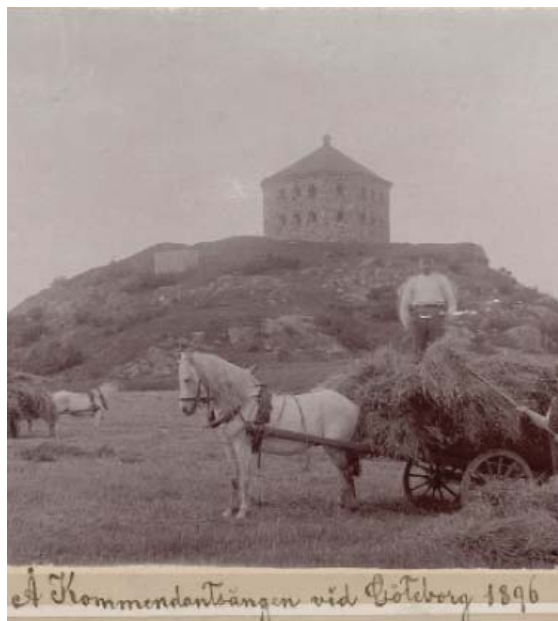
Apart from the parking space-situation, several other conditions were different when Skanstorget was widely used. These were crucial for it becoming an active public space.

Folkets hus and the market hall were located on the square, which gave lots of people a reason to go to the square.

The square was open, but also more defined towards the street and less noisy.

The entrance stairs to the market hall turned out to be excellent speakers' platforms.

market garden



market hall



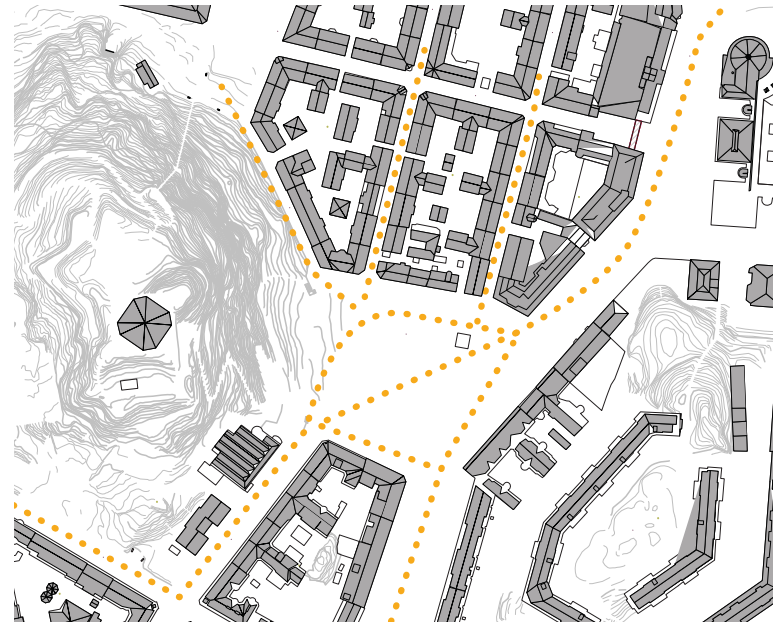
political gathering



## conditions for tomorrow



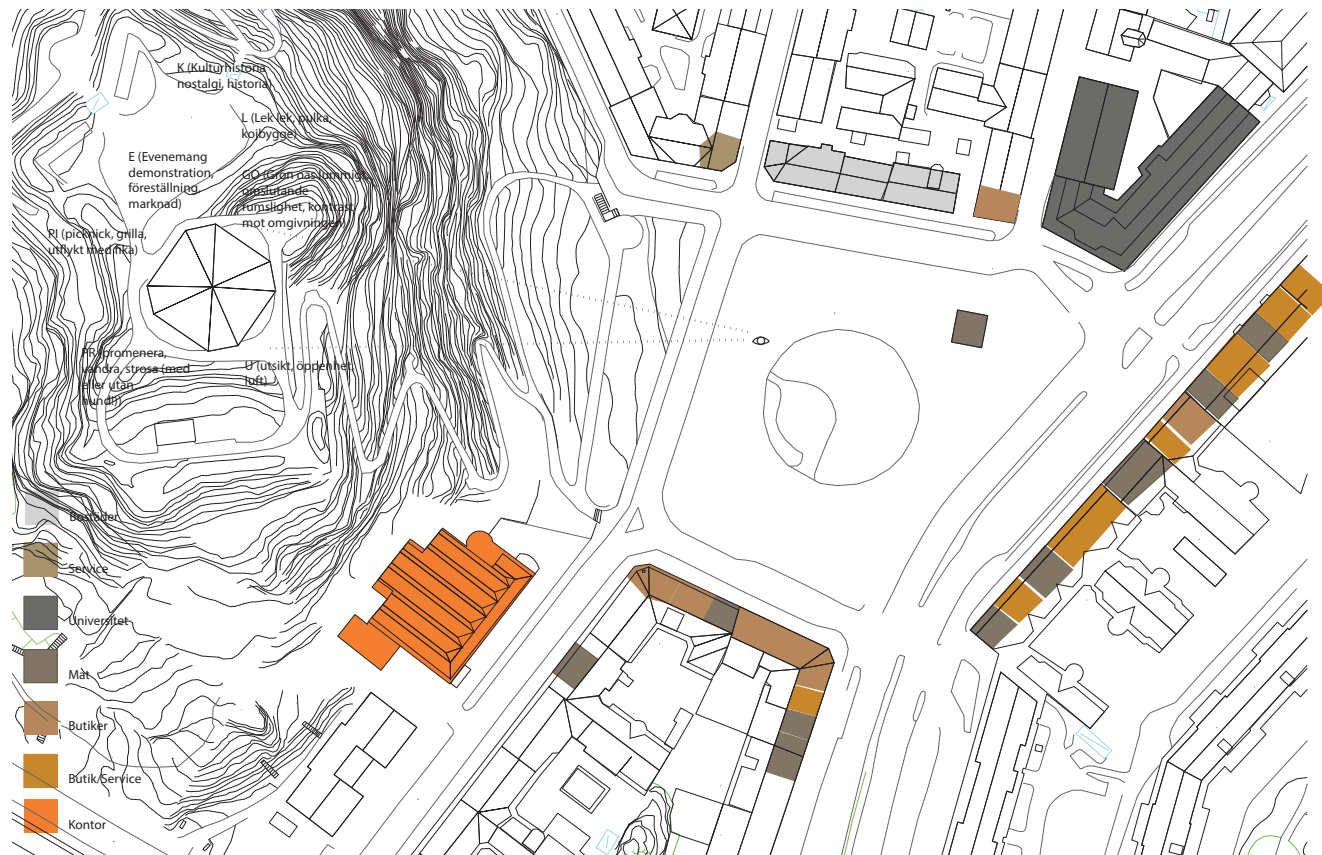
The noisy street is a great barrier. The hill, being an existing presence, also functions as a barrier.



There are lots of ways to cross the square. This will probably increase with the opening of the Västlänken -station by Vasagatan.

Övre Husargatan is now being developed to decrease car traffic and allow for buses. There are also plans to develop the square itself.

There are still some businesses and activities by the square. However, the fact that it is spread over a fairly large area, and the noisy street makes it feel almost dissolved and an unrestful place to be.



# key questions & issues

**There is a widespread desire for the square to become a place of activity and public life again.**

When building on public ground, there is a risk that the consumed ground becomes privatised, especially when building housing or commercial spaces. More and more people want to live in cities, and there is an ambition from the city council to densify the city. There is a huge housing shortage, especially for young people and students.

Empty, open, space do not make any guarantees for it being used. The primary hubs of activity have disappeared from Skanstorget.

**How can Skanstorget**

**be activated and intensified, recovering its publicness, without privatising it?**

**How can the the layer of contact between the private and public (and the immediate adjacent spaces) be designed in order to maximize the chances of an active public life?**

In order to create informal, public spaces, that can be used on a daily day-basis, as well as for more organised events, that are accessible and open, and that has an as 'threshold-less' character as possible.

**As the meeting point between the private and public, there is a political aspect of the envelope.**



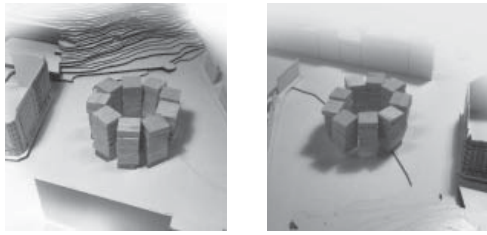
# identifying ambitions & strategies

As a way of getting an understanding of the site, and what consequences a proposal with certain qualities would have, a large number of site model studies were made, of which a small number were selected for their potential qualities. This was a way of identifying desirable outcomes and appropriate strategies, but also a way to

discover and evaluate approaches that would not initially come to mind.

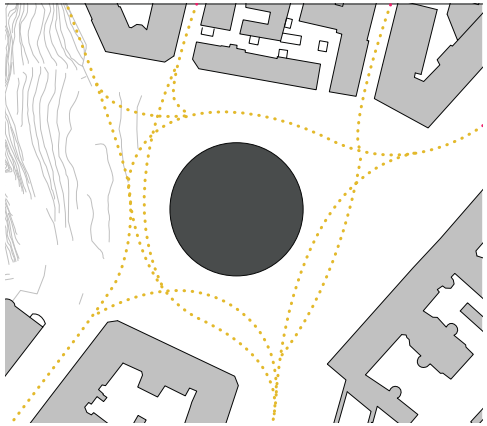
Parallely, model studies of a different scale were made, of how the building relates to the public space and what it is like to be close to it. These were then combined with the site study models, and a new set was developed.

# spatial site studies & evaluations



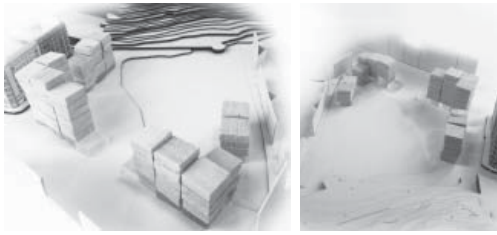
## Focal point

Free flows around and all surrounding space feels public.  
 – undefined spatial qualities  
 – focal point is a building: not square



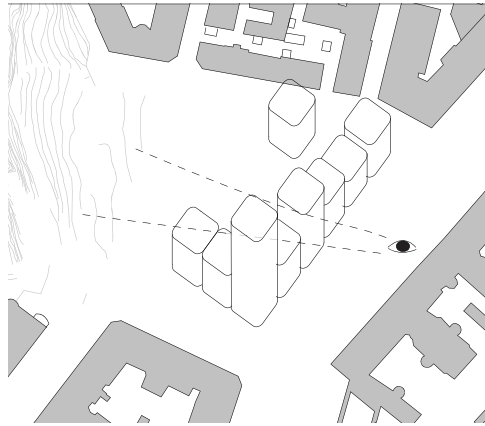
+

## Amongst



## Breaking up & framing views

Enables free positioning of volumes to frame the square & views, and shelter against noise.



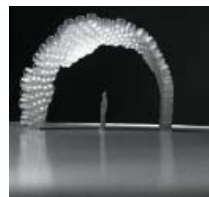
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## Surrounded by

### Under



### Inside



### Beside

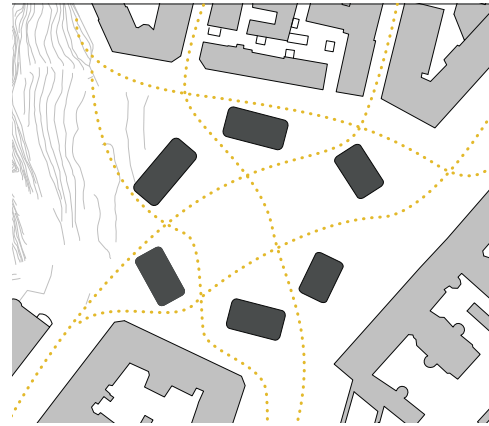


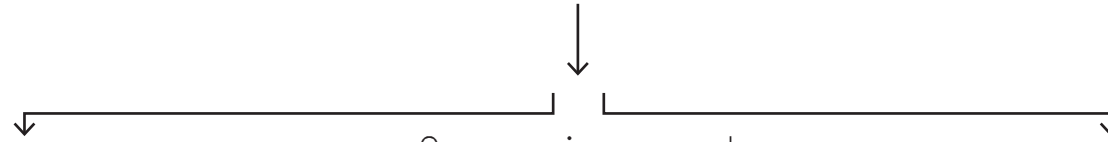
### On



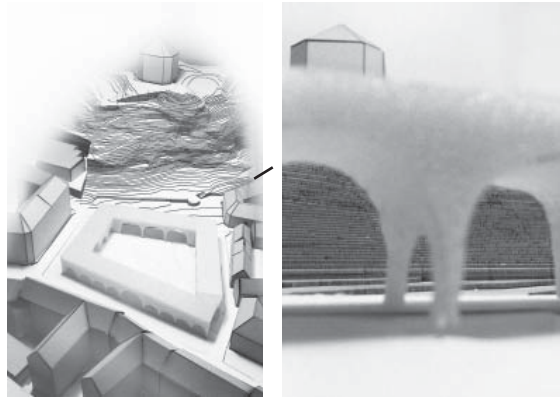
## Lifting & framing

Creates 'cornershop' situations, with no backsides. Lets people flow freely. Frames the square surface



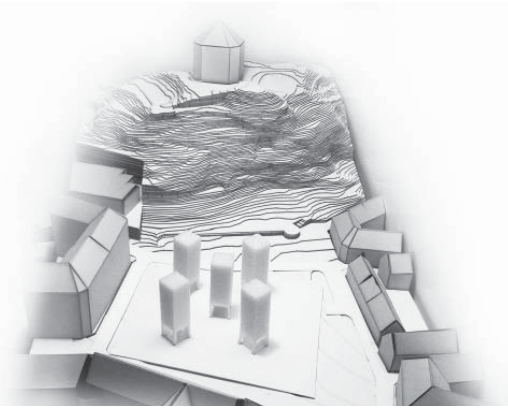


One main aspect was to explore how varying balances between factors like flowability, framing and dynamic affected the spaces between the buildings.



**Framing the square, and framing views**

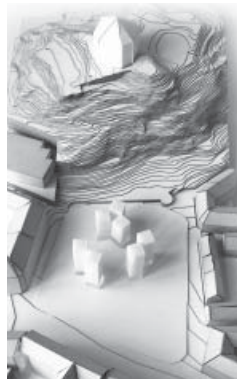
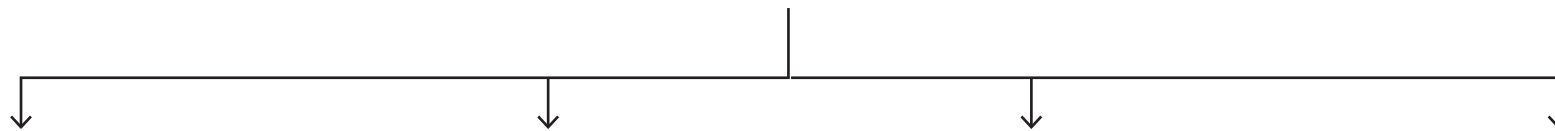
Creating a concentrating square area by framing the square, while still allowing for free flows to the square,



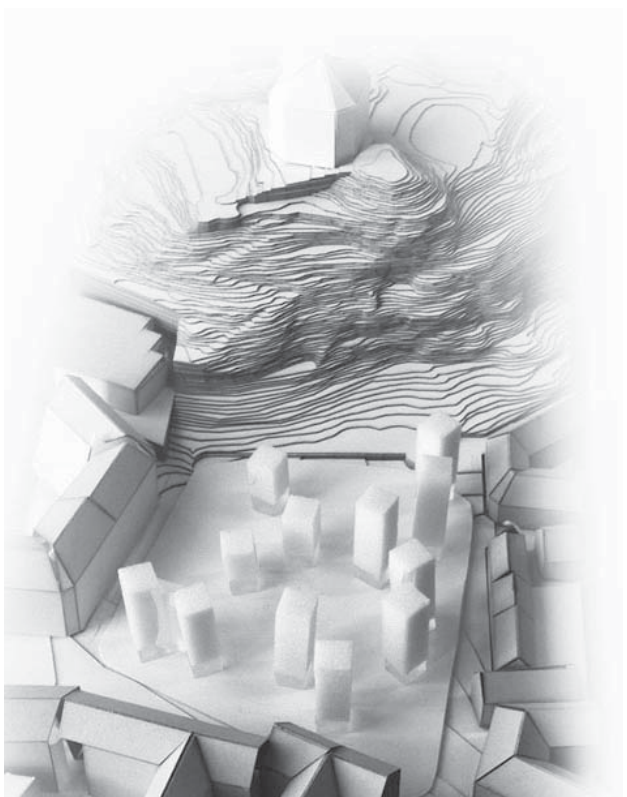
**Focal point, as well as flowing between**

Leaving the majority of the square open, while creating dynamic spaces in the center

After analysing these, another set of models were made, investigating heights, distribution on site and groupings.



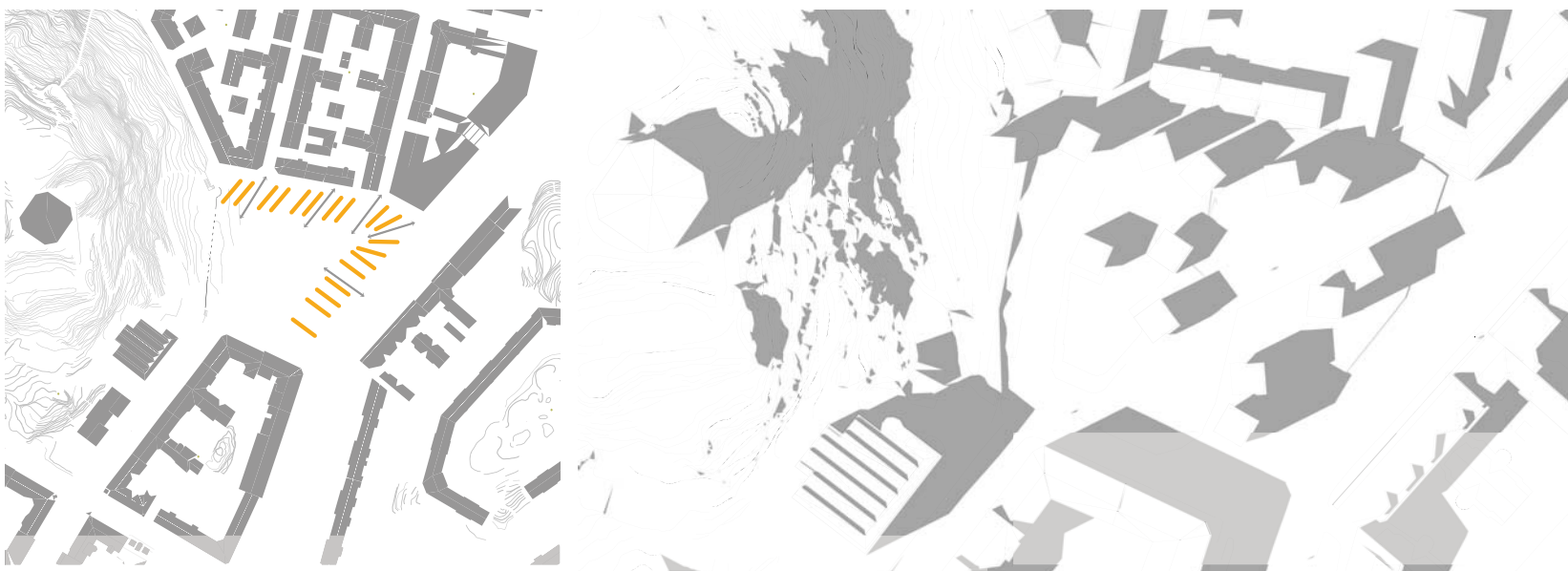
**consequences** **Framing & defining, filter, active edge**



This iteration created a defining, yet open frame, as well as 'points' to relate to,

which together creates smaller but open sub-spaces.

The buildings were then oriented and scaled in order to maximize sunny walls & spaces.





# urban typologies solid boundaries & boundary-less



perimeter  
block

◀ clear physical  
boundaries,  
solid edges,  
fit into a  
defined fabric.



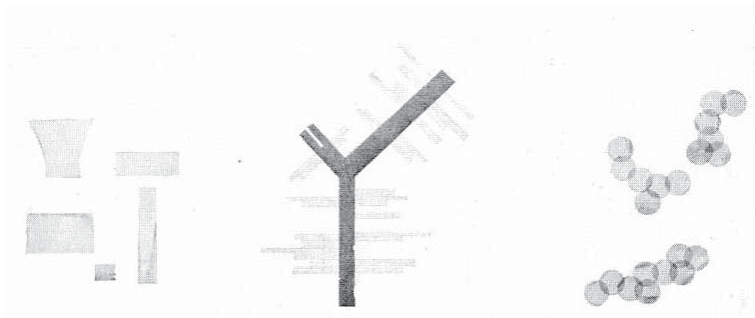
towerblock

▶ independent  
point in  
undefined  
surroundings.

## neither

being neither  
of the above  
typologies, the  
free but inter-  
related volumes  
are used to create  
a permeable edge  
and to define  
space.

Rather, the  
proposal is a nod  
to group form.



compositional form, mega form & group form Fumihiko Maki - Investigations in Collective Form

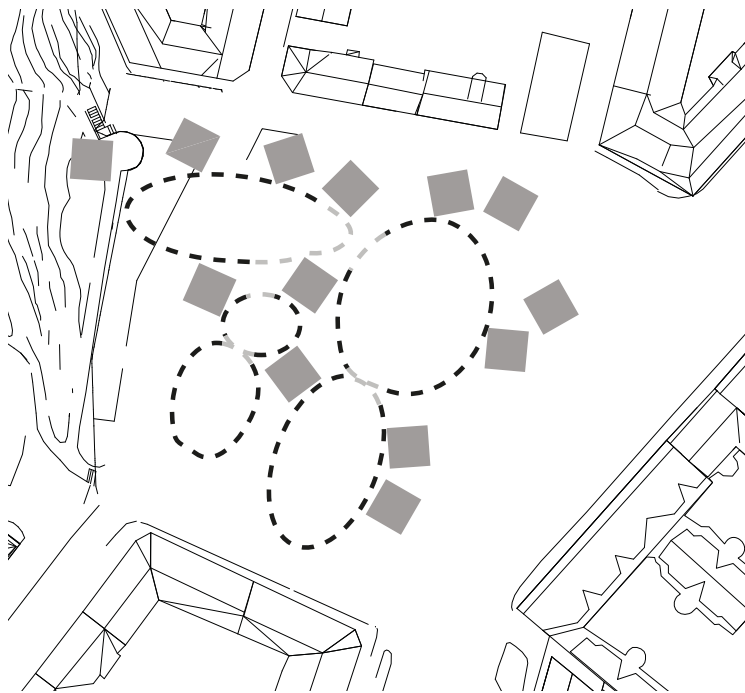
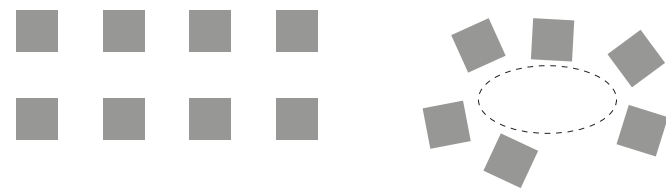
## group form

”Collective form is, however, not  
a collection of unrelated, separate  
buildings, but of buildings that have  
reasons to be together.”

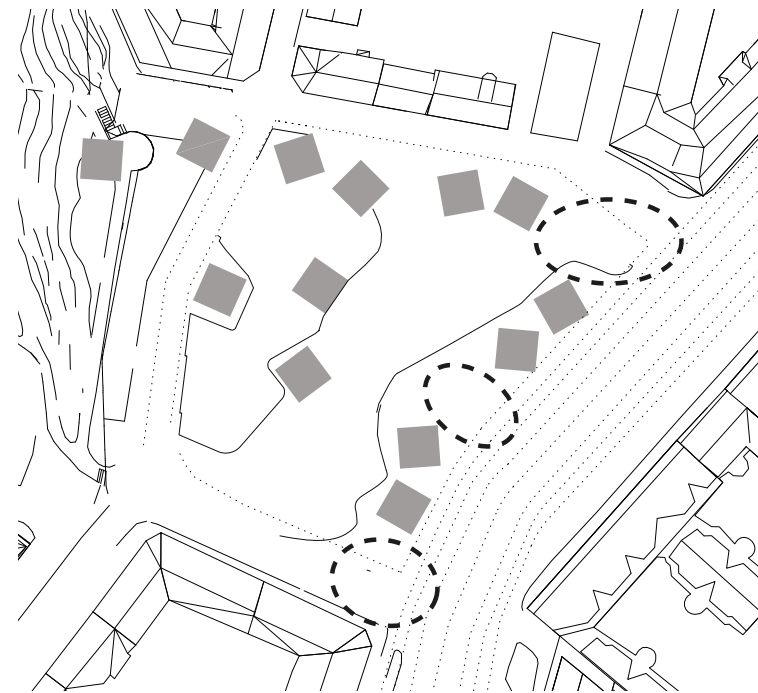
**permeable edge & space-definition**

**grid vs organised unorderedness.**

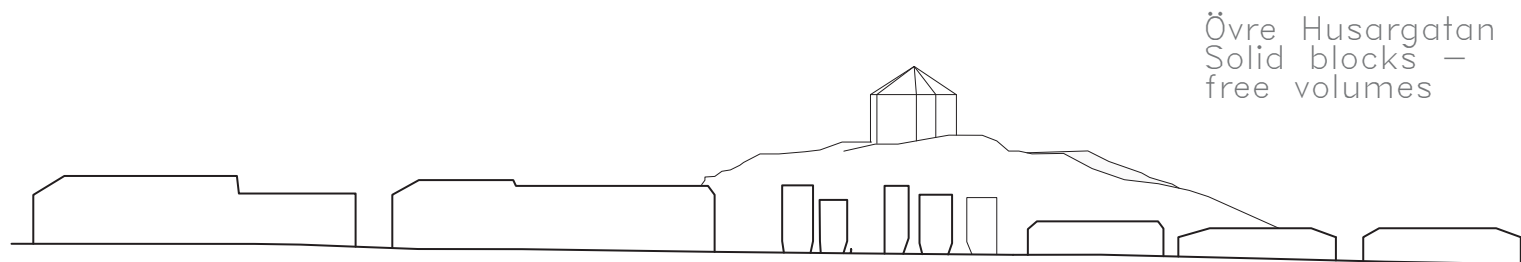
creates spaces inbetween



Creating a number of smaller or larger inter-connected spaces, of a more intimate scale but still open enough to feel accessible.



The buildings act as a filter which can be crossed at a large number of places. However, some main openings are extra clearly articulated: at the corners, and at the middle by the new bus stop, in order to signal publicness



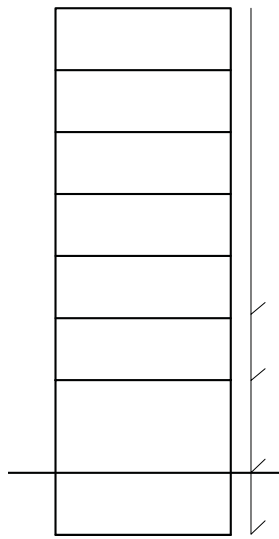
Övre Husargatan  
Solid blocks -  
free volumes





# private & commercial

## student housing, (live-work units) & incubation boxes



dwelling

bokal

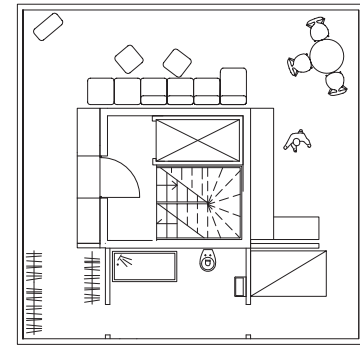
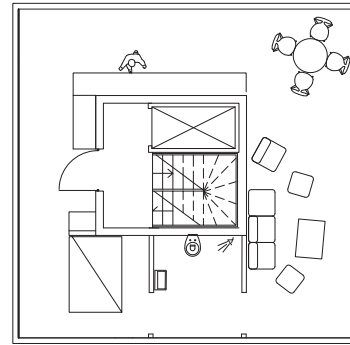
incubation  
box  
commercial  
/ public

basement

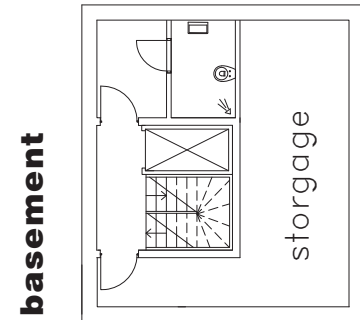
There is a huge housing shortage for students in Gothenburg.

Bokaler, and the incubation boxes, facilitate for students (or others) who want to start or establish small businesses in the area. Shorter leases become a more achievable commitment.

Non-private ground floors are essential to draw people to the square and to announce the square as a public space.



A central core, light from four directions and direct, visual transparency in three directions.



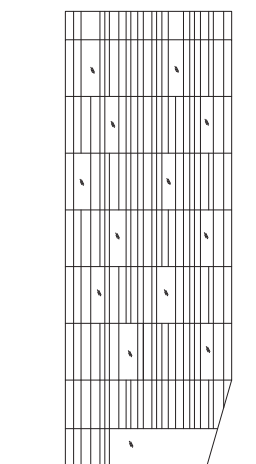
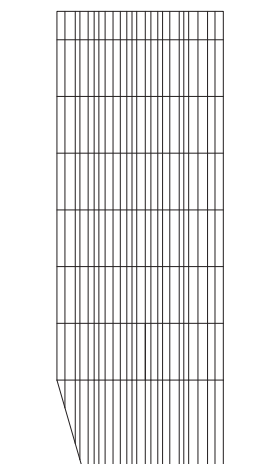
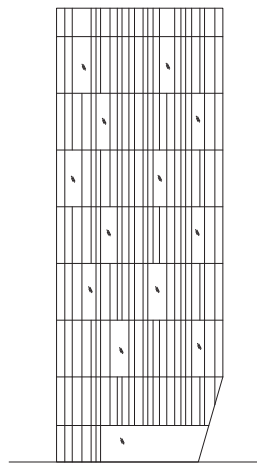
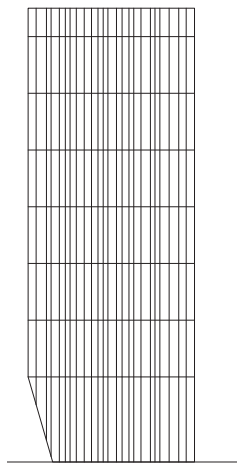
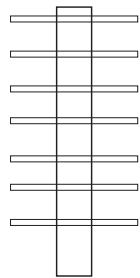
basement

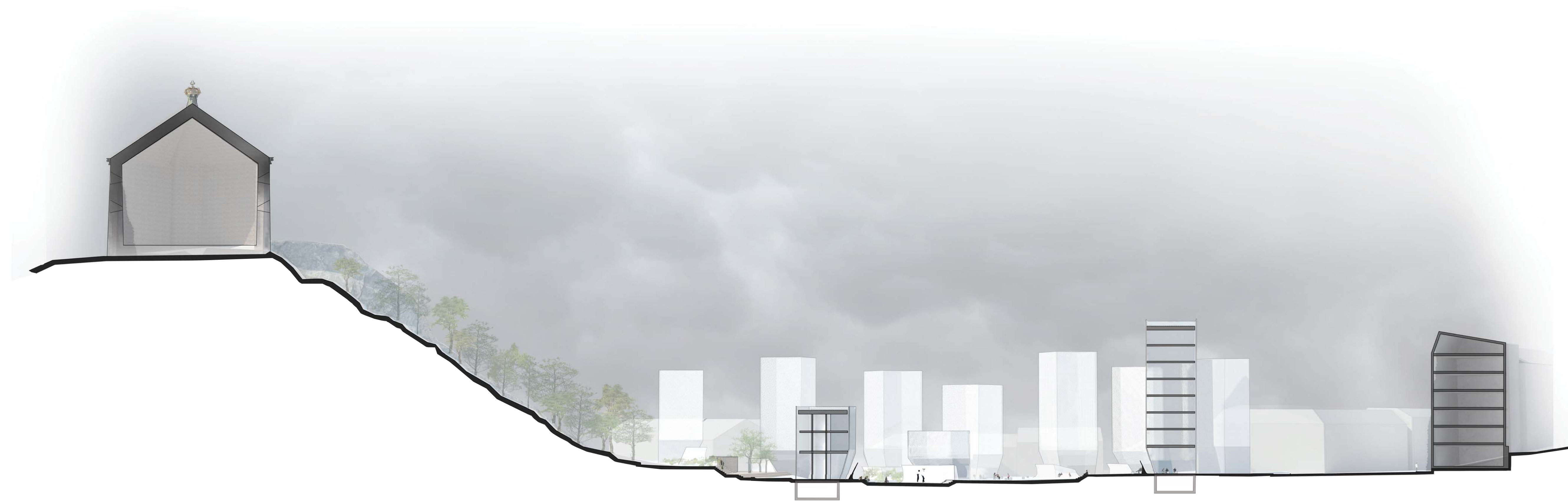
# buildings

## structural digram

## facades

central load bearing core, cantilevering floors

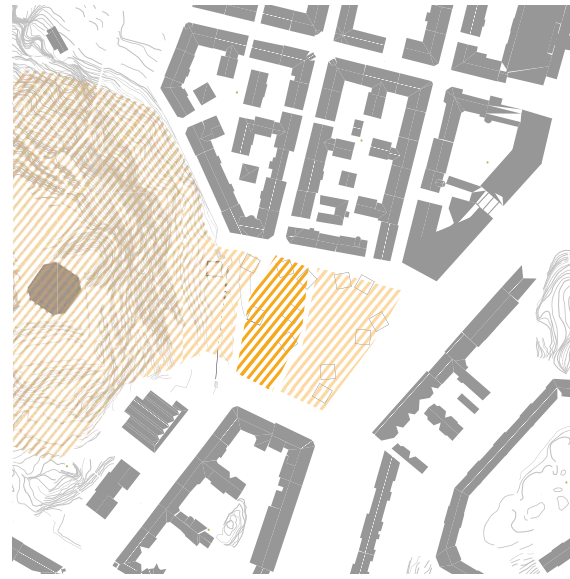






**The topography and buildings are used to define various areas of the square**

park; green, growing, realxing, picnic



play; sports and games for varying ages

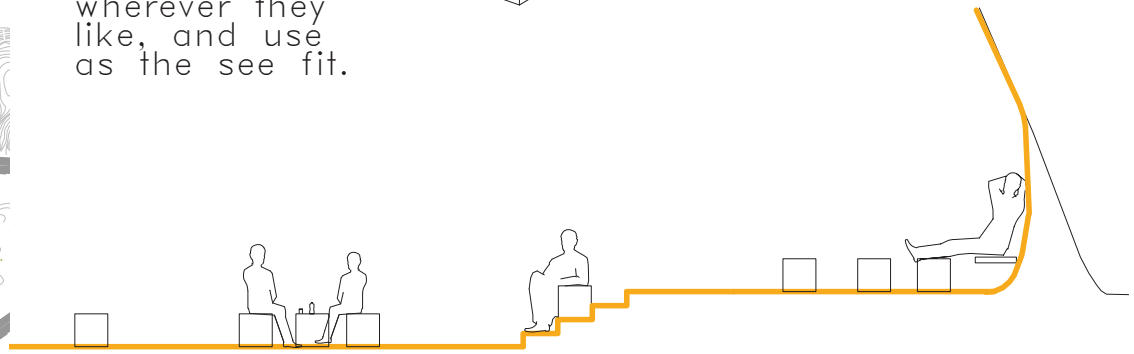
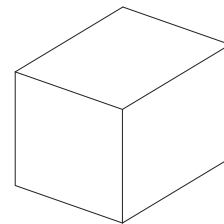


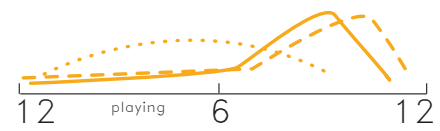
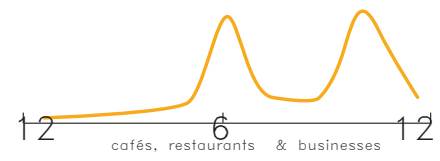
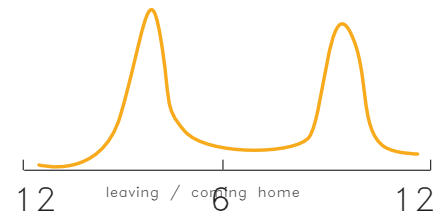
eating, sitting, buying / selling

**public space - stratgies**

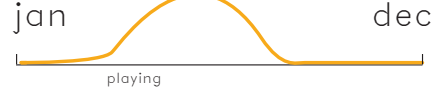
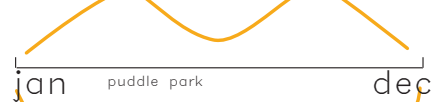
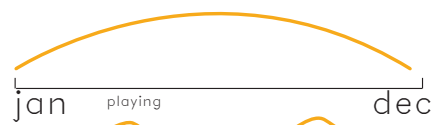
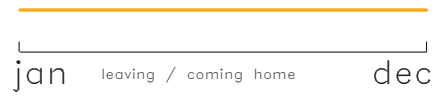


**The entire square is public. Movable furniture** allow people to sit wherever they like, and use as the see fit.





**There should always be a reason to pass or come to the square.**





kiosk

studio

leave-your-kid-while-you-shop

pet-a-cat-café

smoothie shop

café

stjär och ställ renåle bites

growing boxes

barbeques

bicycle repair shop

sport shop

mini climbing wall

basket hoop

ice skating in winter

bakerly

mini-office

food trucks

tourist bus stop

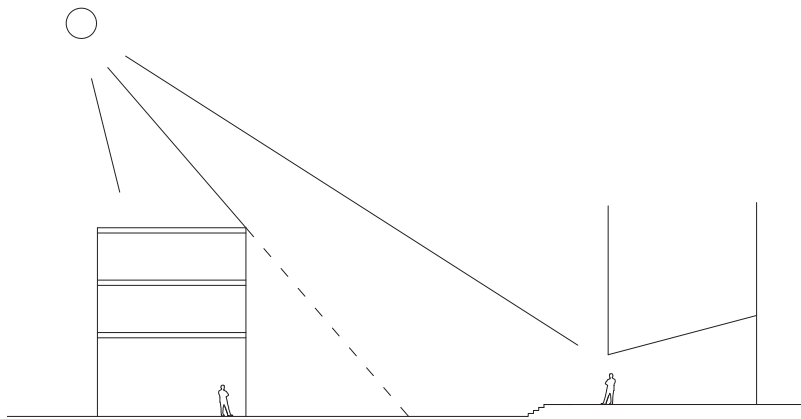
sparty zone

café

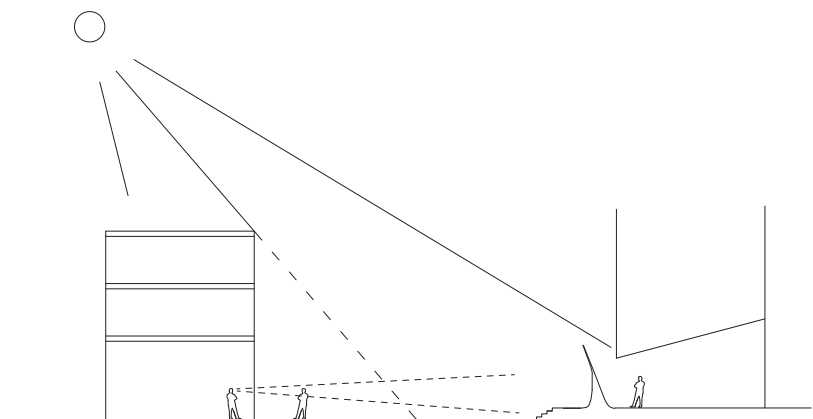
hair dresser

new bus stop



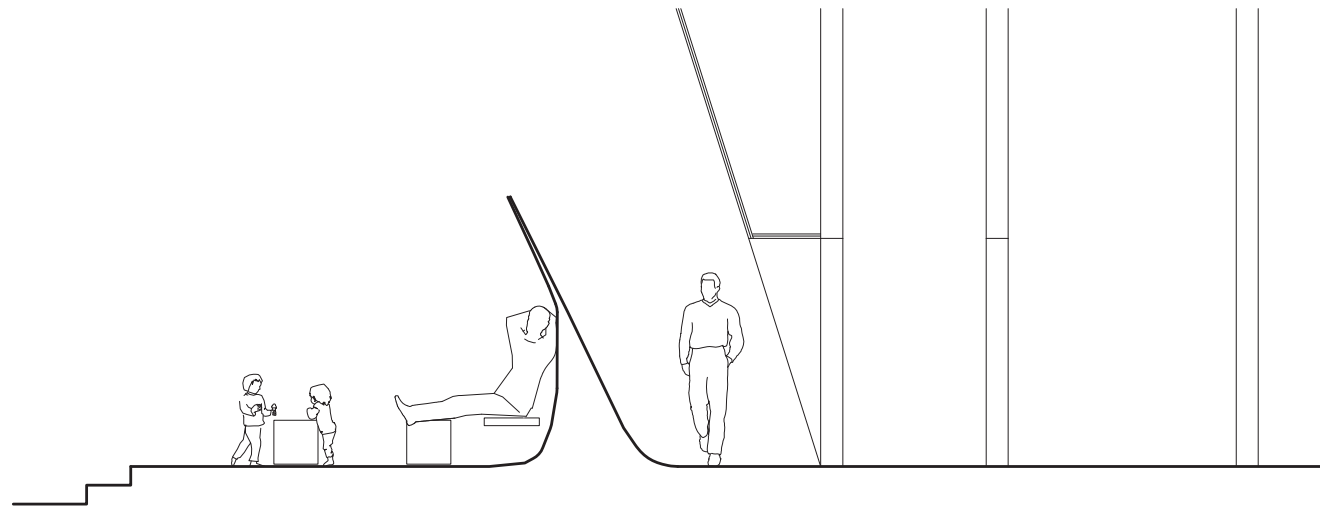


Dedicating a wall to an entrance, or glazing the wall, would make it feel as if it belongs to the adjacent venue, and thus privatizing the nice & sunny wall (besides, glass is not a pleasant material to rest your back against).

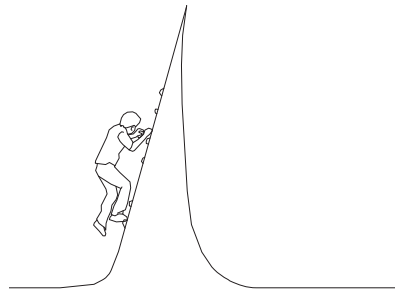


Closing it, makes it free to sit by, to anyone. Making sure opposing buildings have views towards the space now created between them, makes them safer.

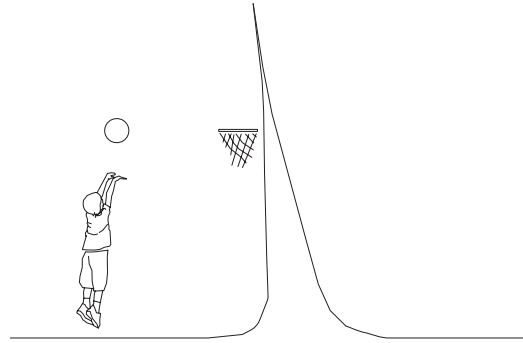
## private - public confluence



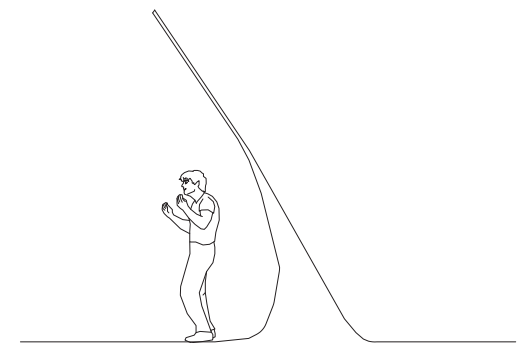
An extruded 'collar' of the ground separates the public space from the private entrances. The ground has a public character, and enhances the impression of publicness. **A nice wall to sit by in the sun, free to sit by, to anyone.**



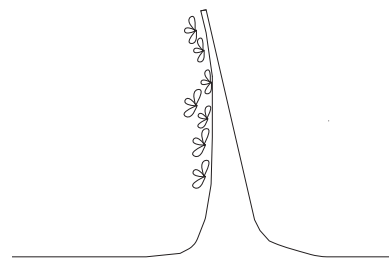
climb on



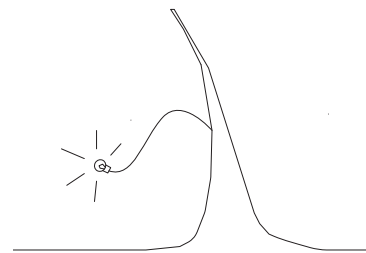
play ball against



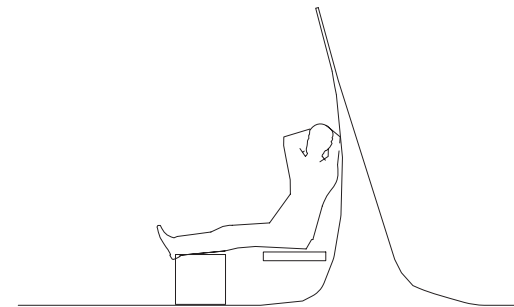
to perform against



be a green wall

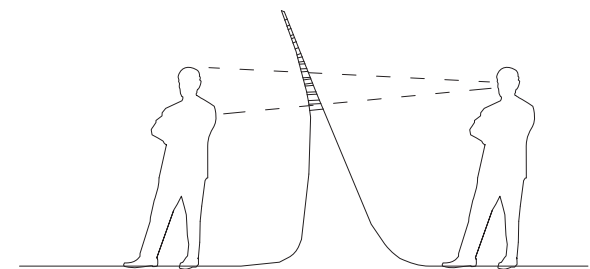


house plug-in stations for electricity and water



sit against

**Variations in shape and angle make the collars unique, and adapted, for example, to...**



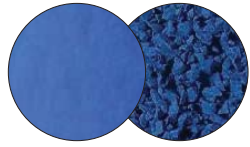
being seen

**section 1:800**

**materiality - indicating publicness**



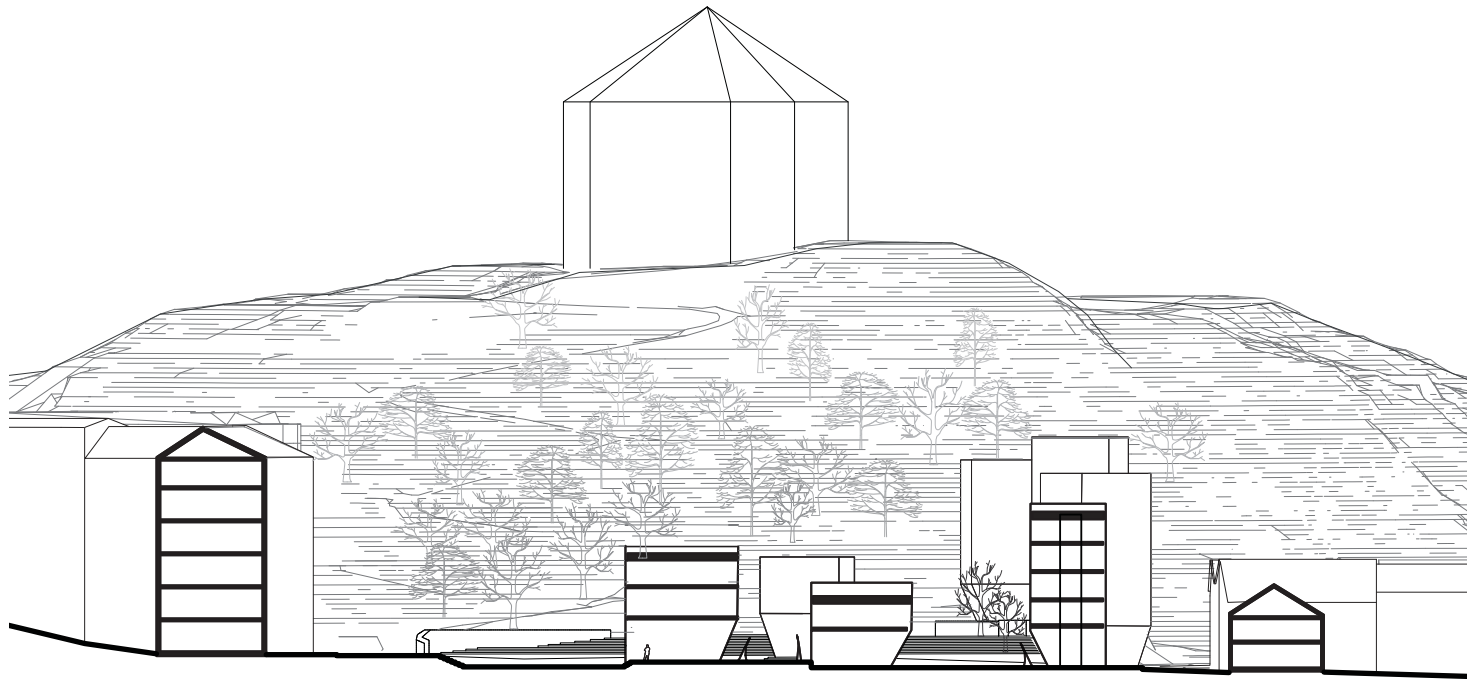
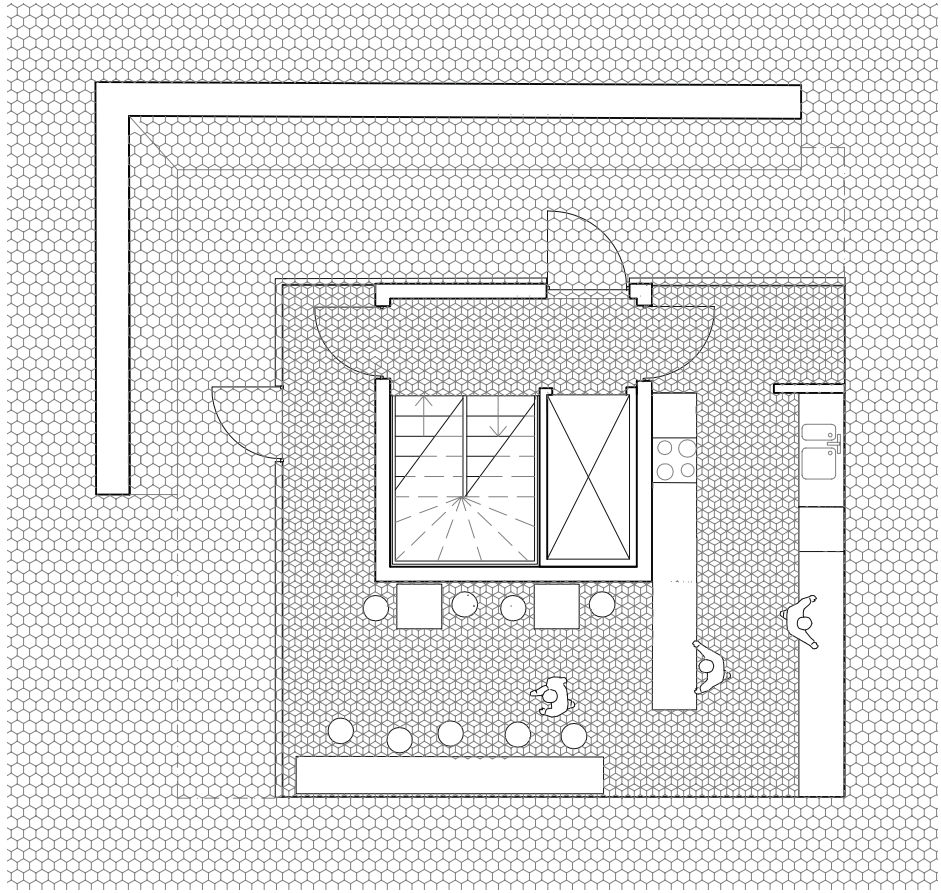
wooden deck



epdm rubber granuels

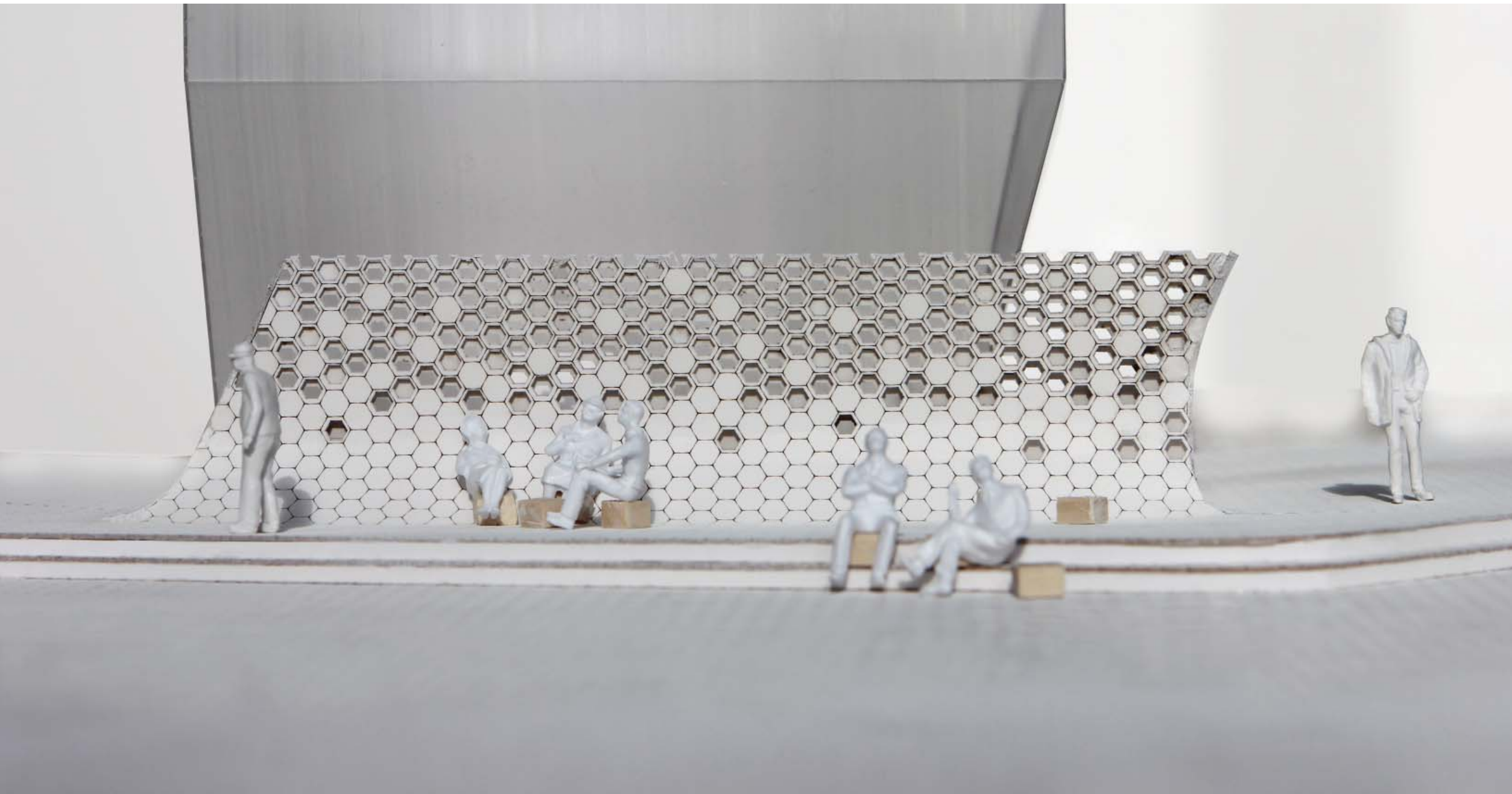


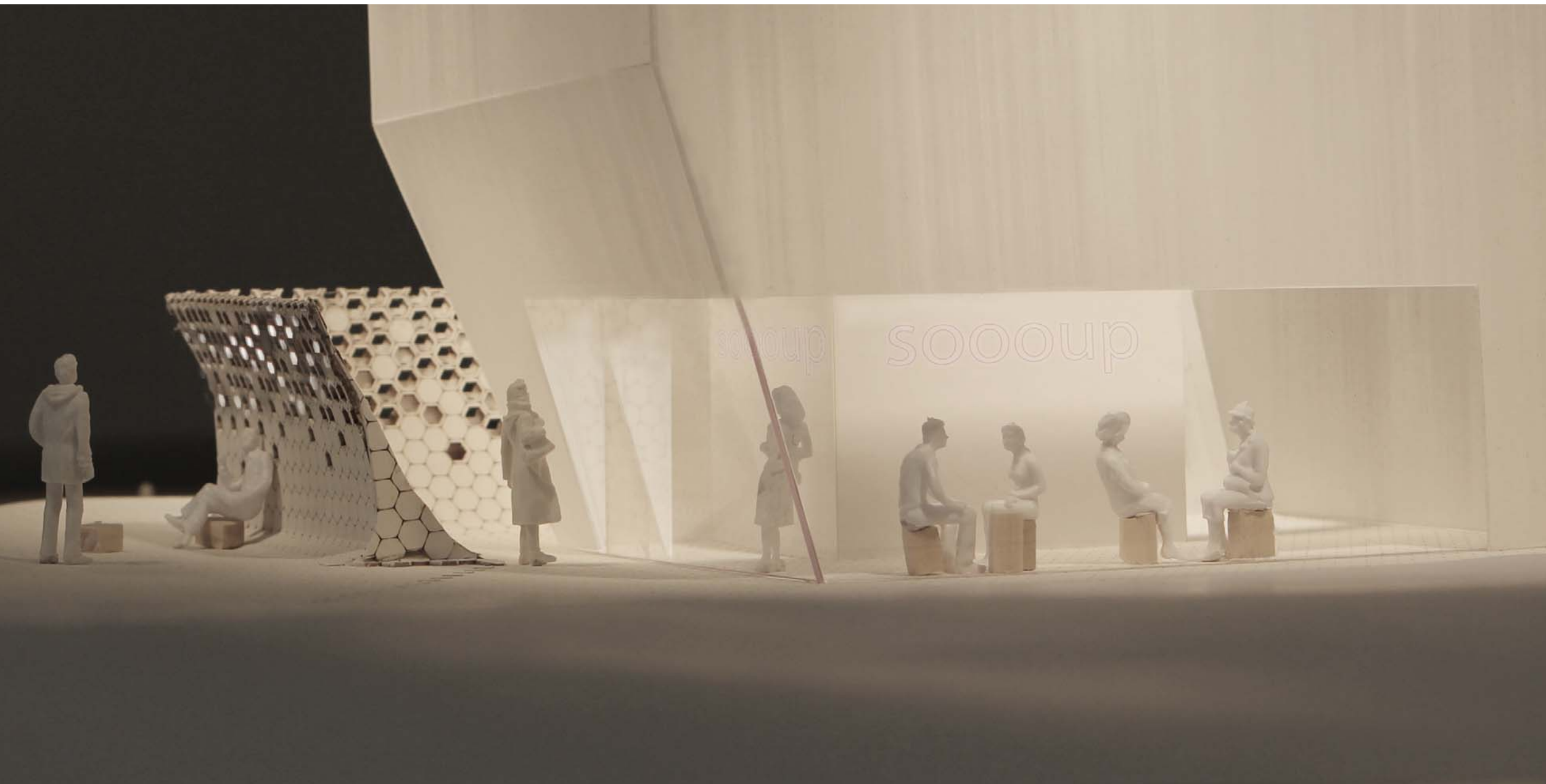
hexagonal ground brick

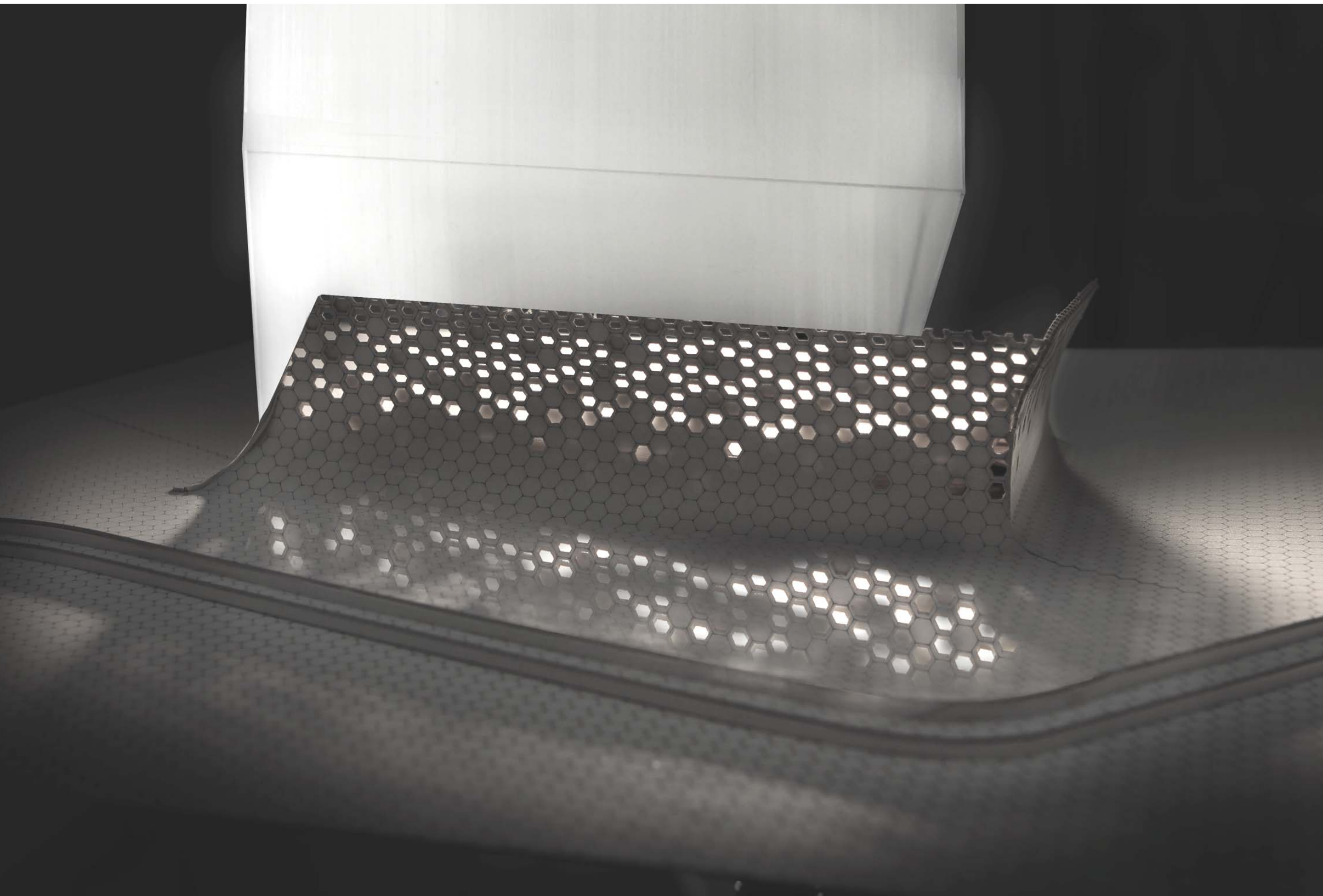












At night, the buildings and ground, by the means of lighting, function to tie the space together, -to avoid letting the square feel like a void in the city fabric-, and to avoid dark corners.

