

Master Thesis Moana Arnosti

HS 2020, Studio A. Fonteyne
Theme C, „The bridge as a place“, Ilanz

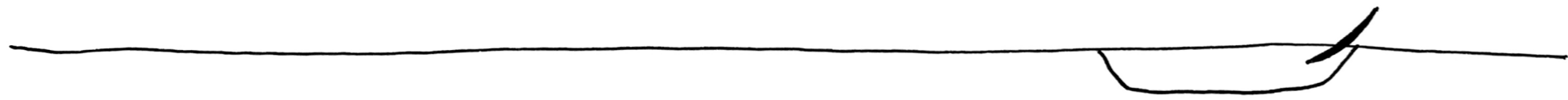
BALANZ



ILANZ

The most prominent street in Ilanz is the Via Centrala. Together with the bridge over the Rhine, it forms an axis connecting the two parts of the city. The southern side of the axis is closed off by the town hall square, which is currently the only public space to pause. On the northern side it is closed off by a traffic junction and a parking lot. In order to balance this axis, a public space, a place to pause, is also to be created on the northern side. A place which covers the other needs, that can't be covered on the southern side.

Young people, who often hang out at the train station in front of the shopping mall, at the gas station or behind these places, would be a target group for visiting such a place. Young people are not mobile and bound to the place where they live, which for many means, that the longing for the city is not satisfied and they are bored. They are often looking for closeness, exchange and to be part of a group or the whole world. It does not exclude other user groups from visiting this place. It should be usable for everyone. These different user groups have different needs, interests or time rhythms and mostly do not get in each other's way.

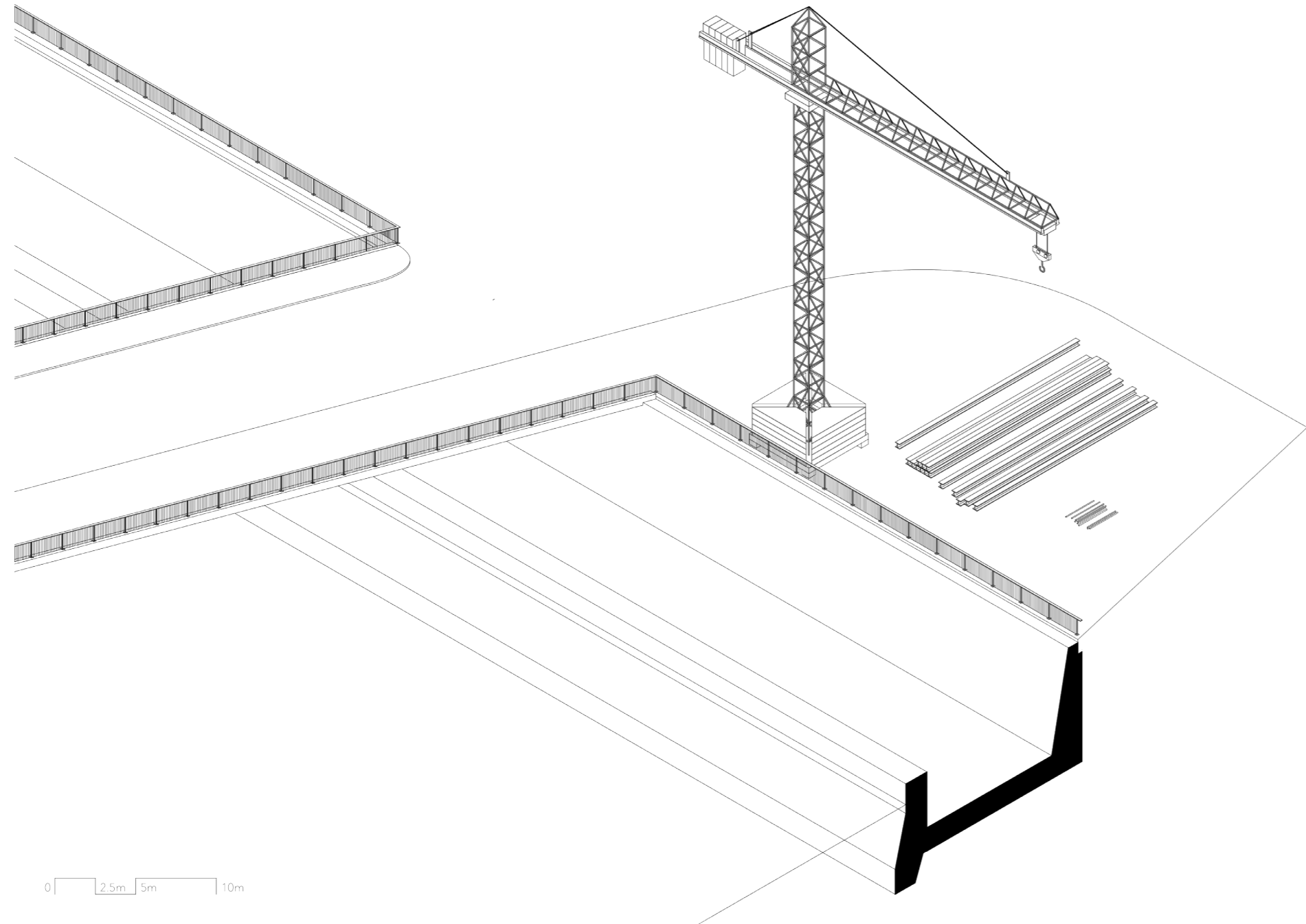


BALANZ

In contrast to the unpleasant townhall square, which is historically charged, regulated and where there is not much freedom, an open attractive space is to be created on the opposite side of the axis. The new place is also a tribune, which is oriented towards the river, to observe the everchanging spectacle of the city and the landscape. It works on one side like a strong roof structure, that creates different spaces to stay above, underneath and beside and on the other side like an accessible sculpture which can be observed from far or near.

This sculpture and its shape should evoke different analogies or associations and leave the inhabitants/visitors the possibility of appropriating and experiencing this place in their own way.

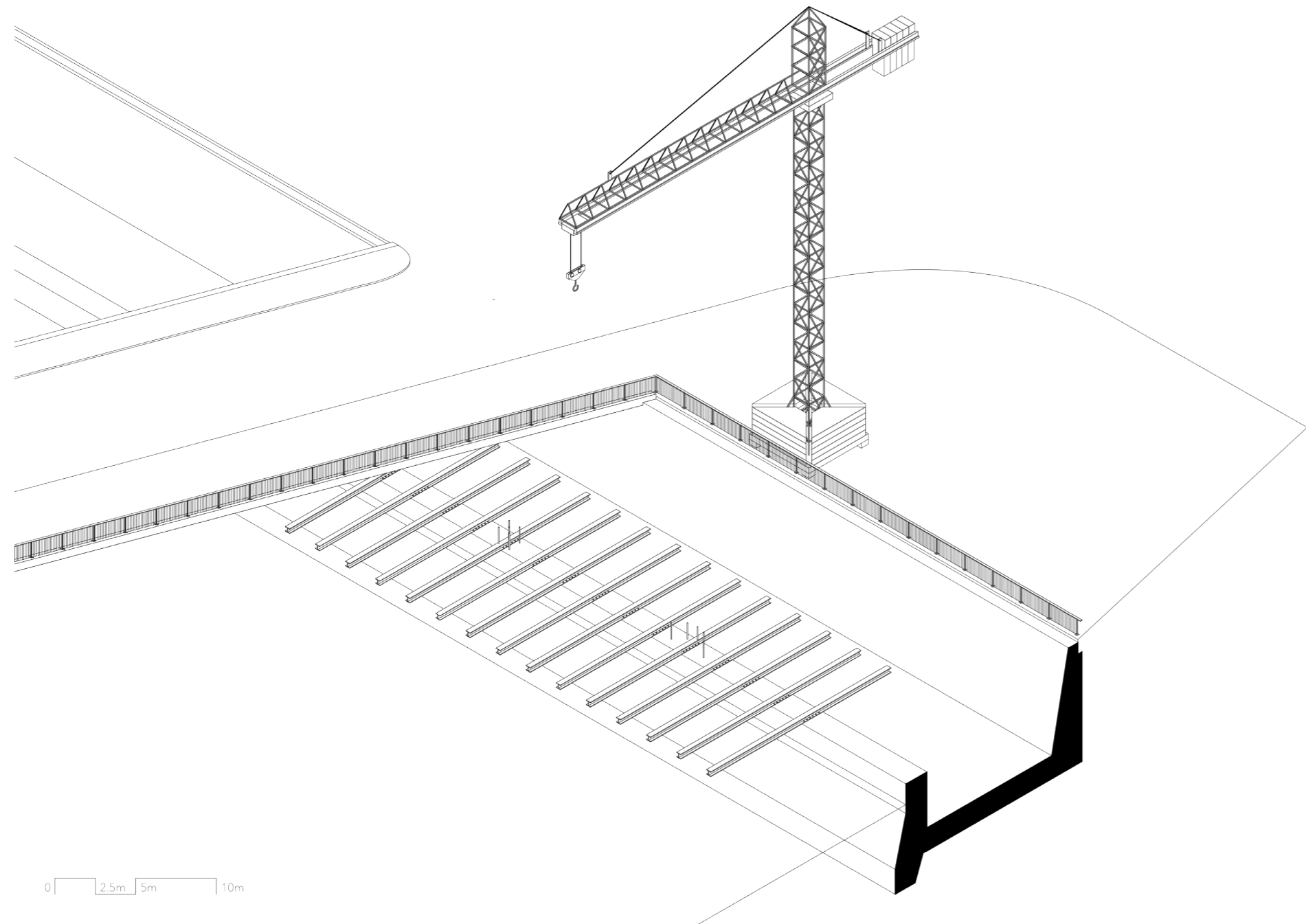
This building is accessible from the existing square behind it or the Rhine-bridge, which provides direct access to the tribune. The bridge between the townhall square and the new place is not only the physical bridge over the Rhine, rather the whole axis together with the Via Centrala; everything in between. This space in between is charged by the end points of the axis. In addition to its connecting quality, it becomes a place of introspection and perception. An intimate moment in which one is vulnerable, but ready to open up and to arrive.



BUILDING PROCESS

Step 1

Initial situation in Ilanz at the northern riverside of the Rhine-bridge.

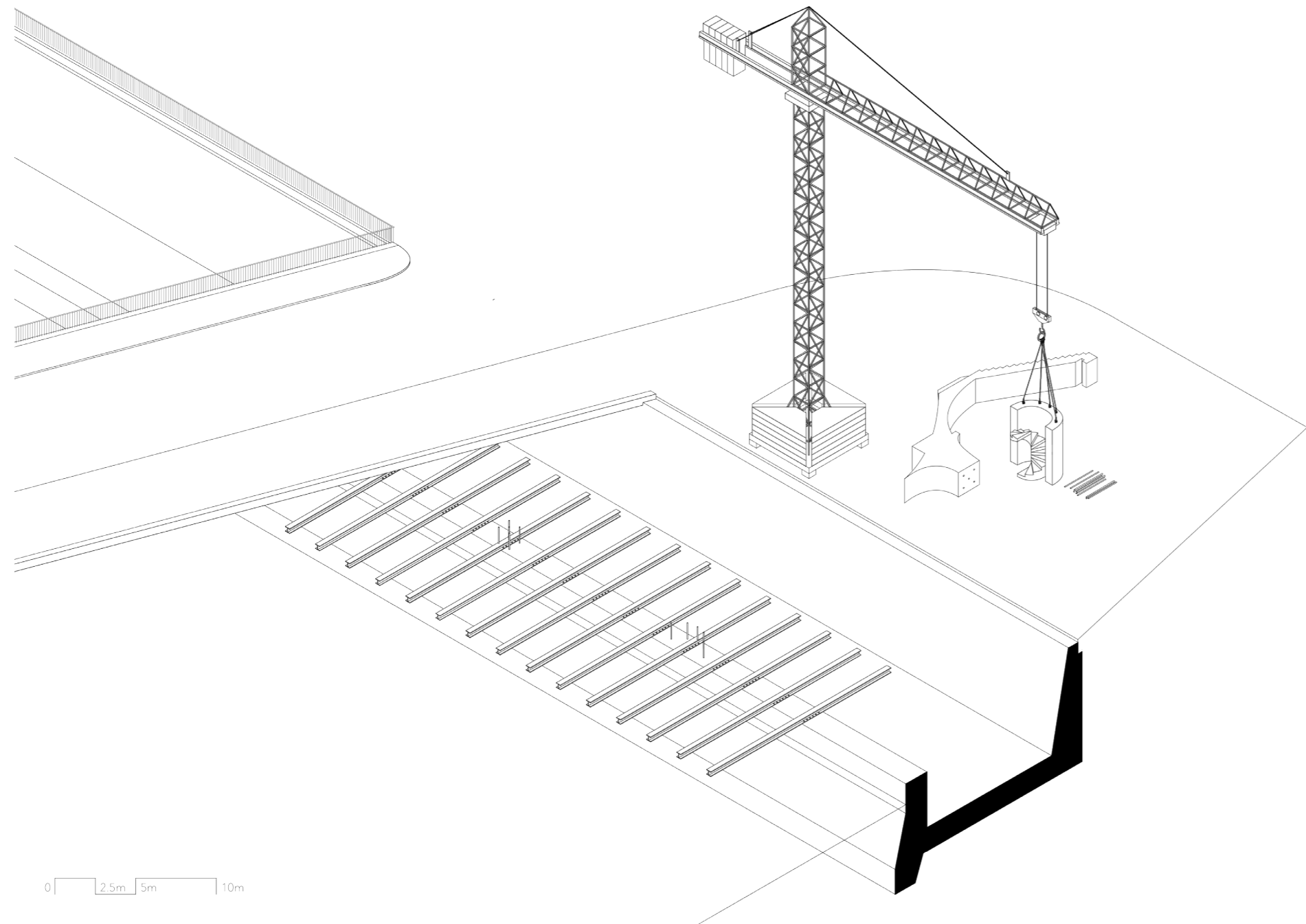


Step 2

Steel beams are fixed with screws on top of the existing motorway wall.

Reinforcements are inserted into the existing motorway wall.

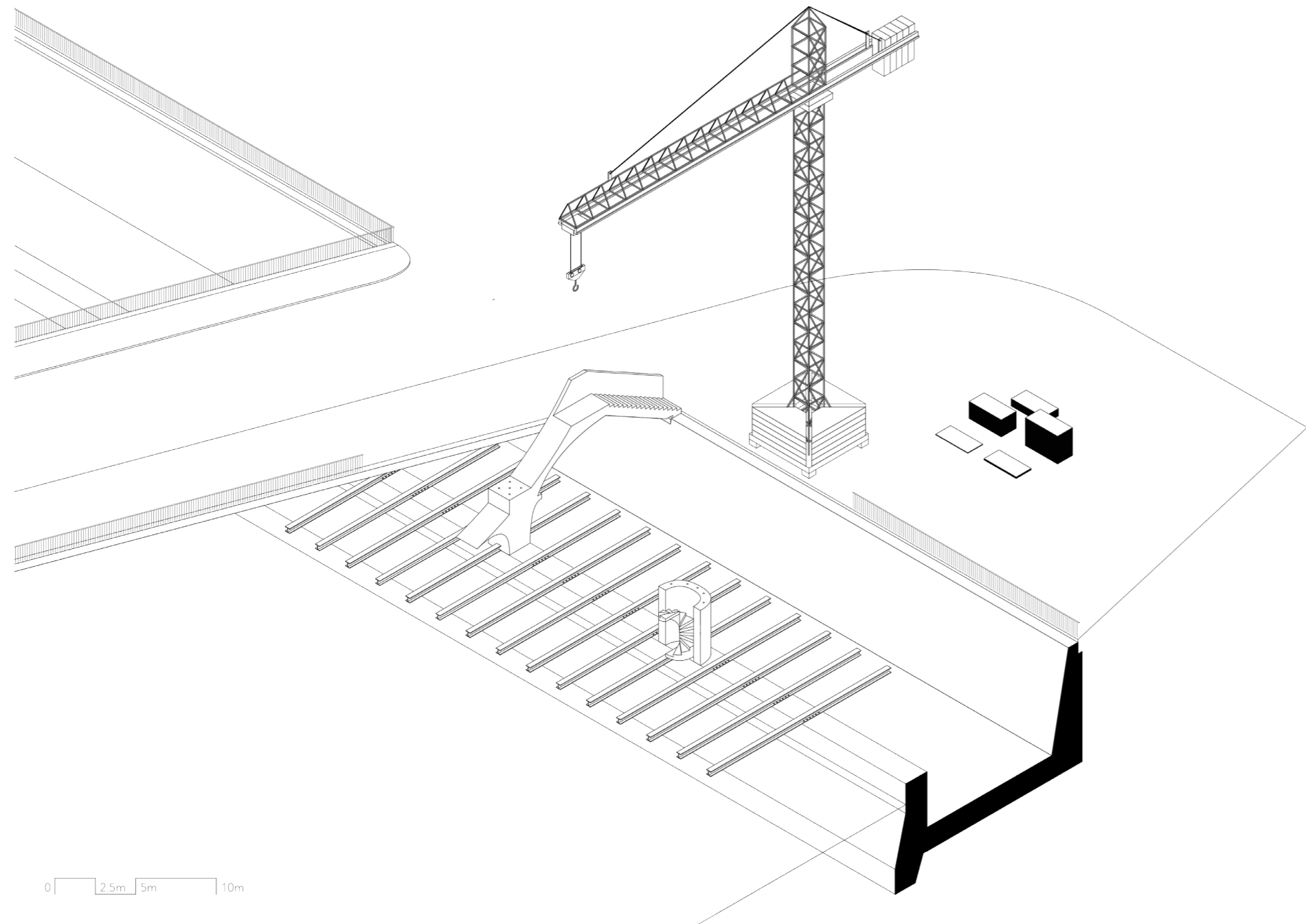
The railings on the western side of the bridge are removed.



Step 3

The first two prefabricated concrete pieces are delivered.

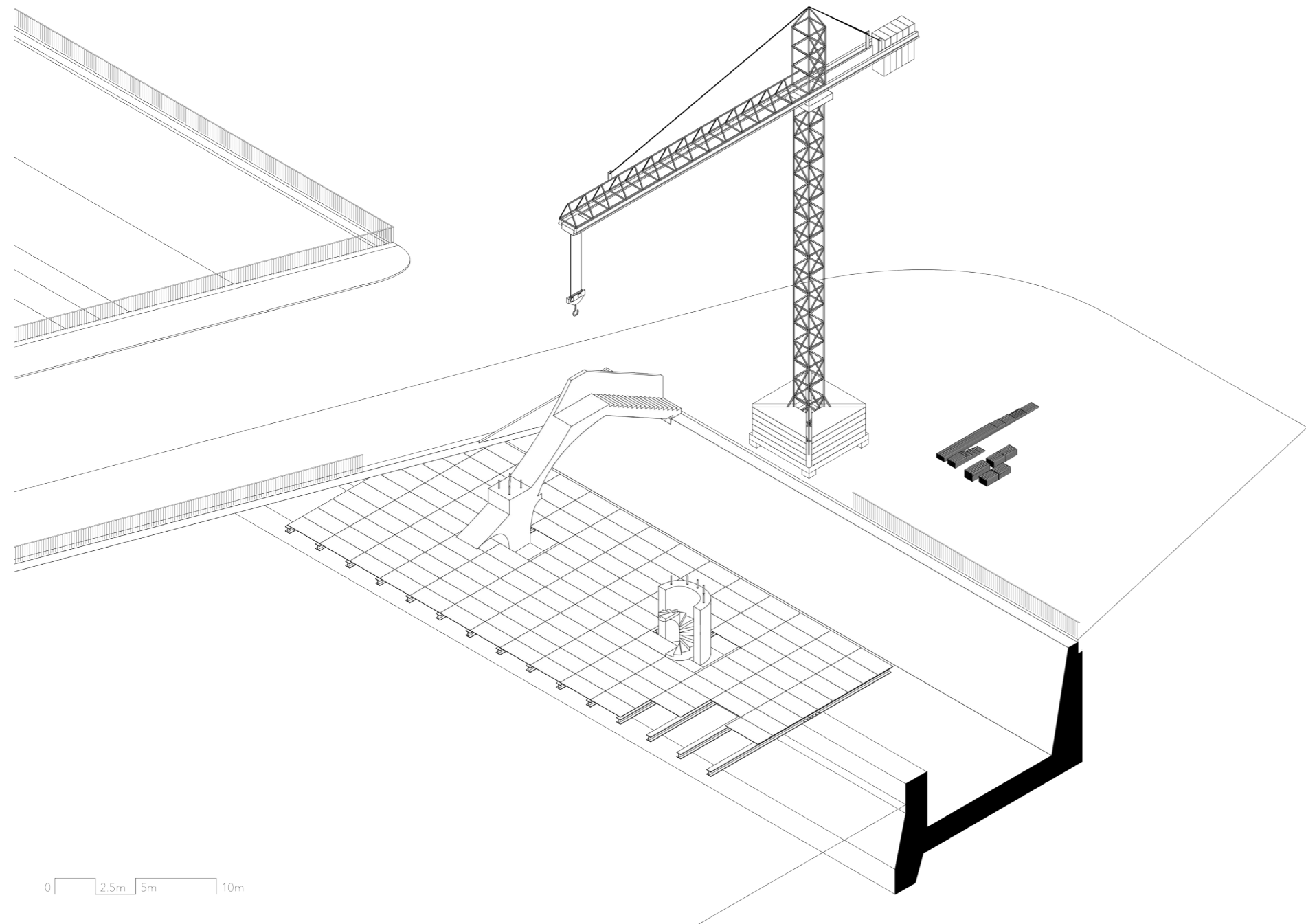
The railings on the western bridge side are replaced already with the new, more delicate ones. Also the railings on the eastern bridge side are removed.



Step 4

The prefabricated columns are placed by the crane on top of the reinforcement and the motorway wall.

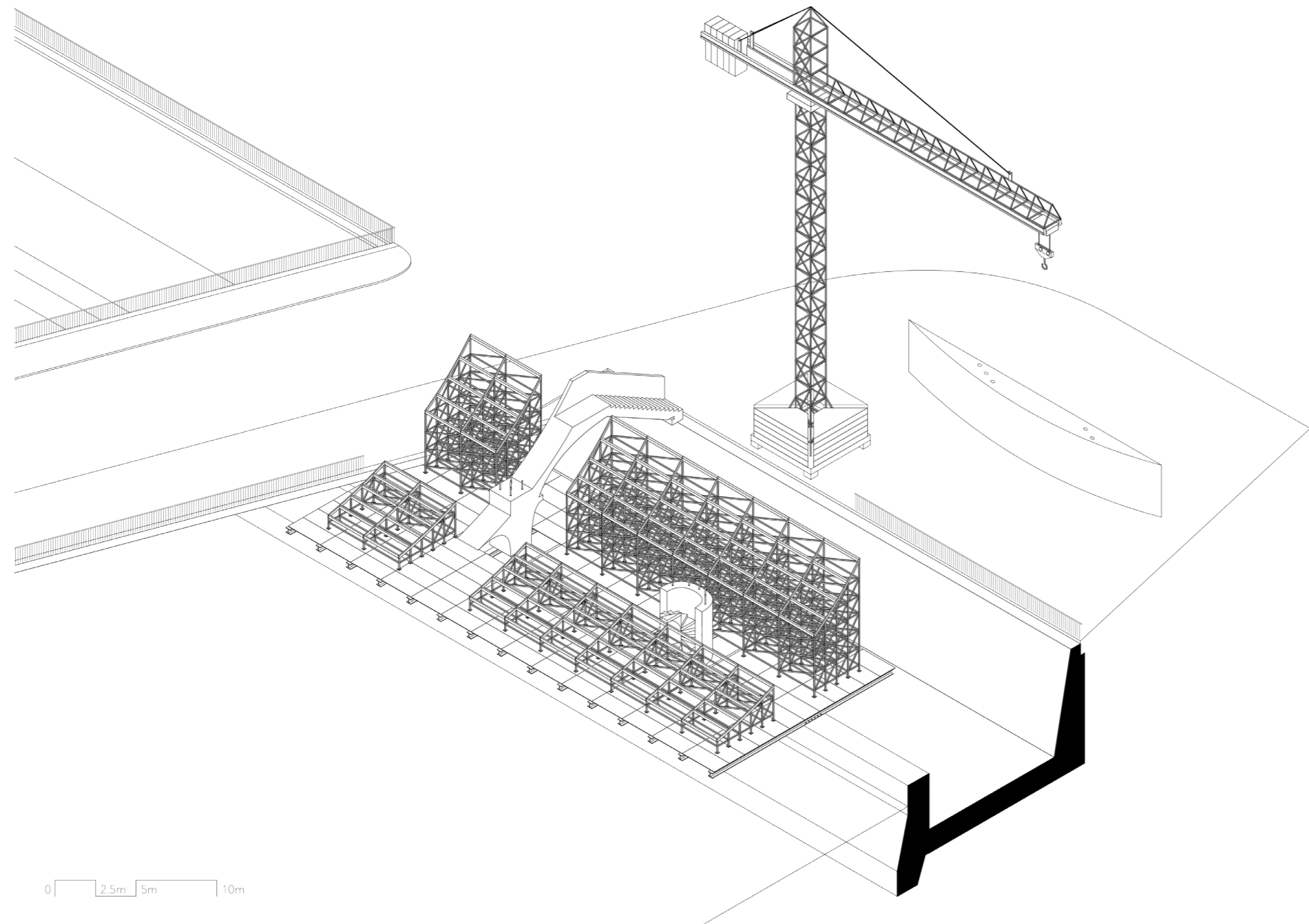
Also the railings on the eastern side are replaced.



Step 5

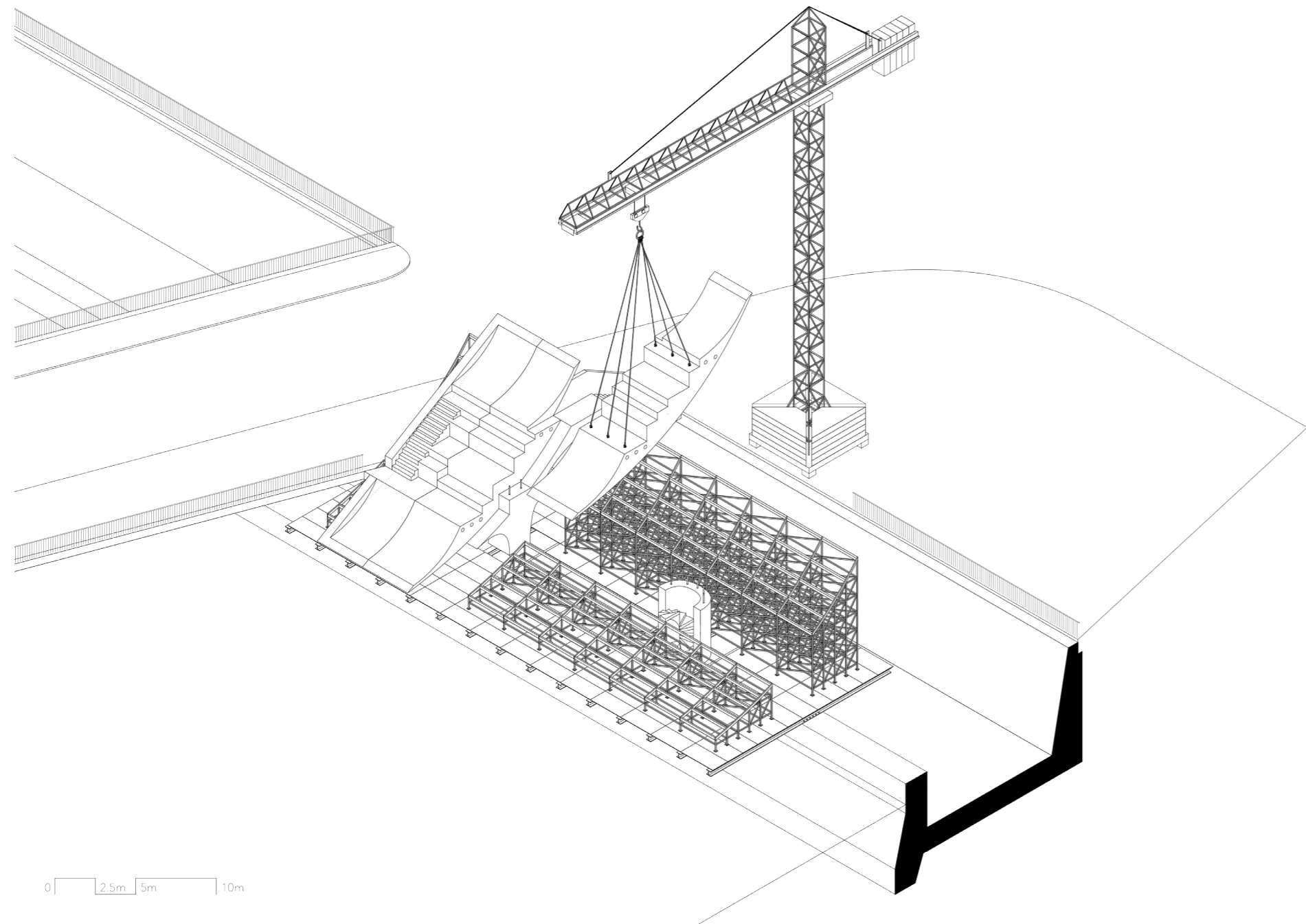
On top of the steel beams are laid metal sheets to create a base/platform to build a scaffold on top of it.

Reinforcements are placed into the columns, to connect the roof structure.



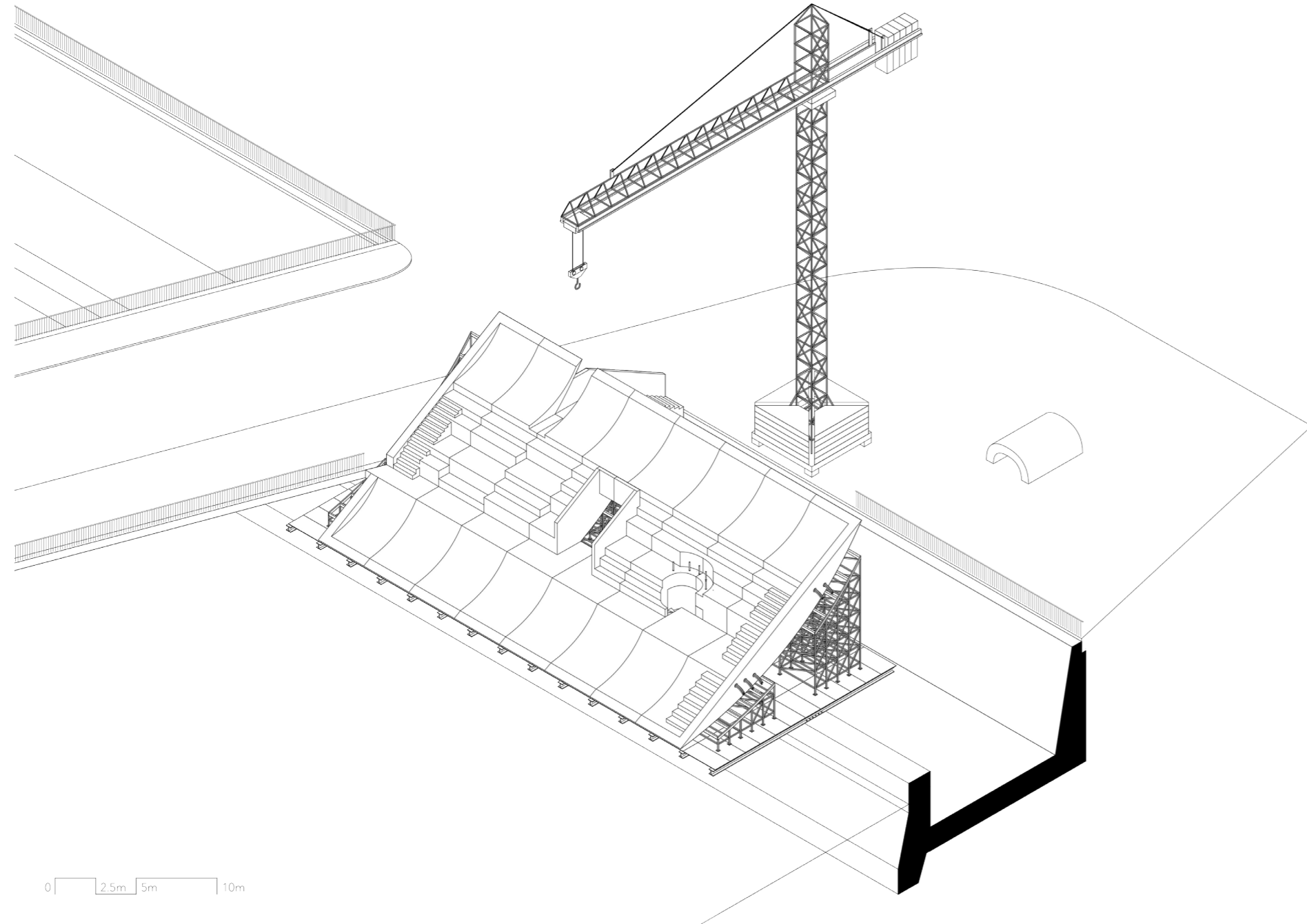
Step 6

On top of the platform is built up a scaffold, to support the prefabricated roof elements, before they get bonded.



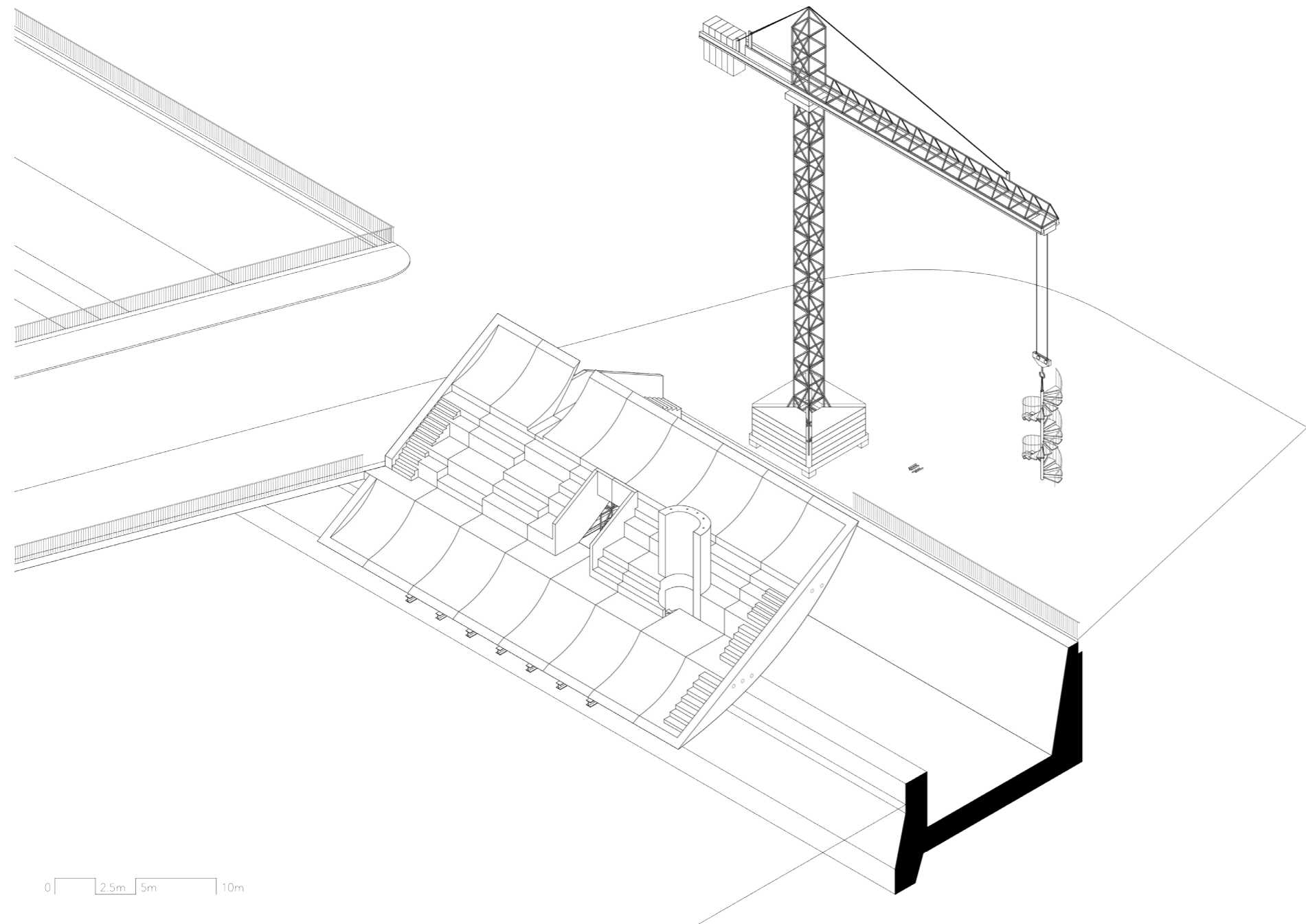
Step 7

One after the other prefabricated roof elements are placed on top of the scaffolding.



Step 8

All parts of the roof are on top of the scaffold now. Steel cables are inserted into the leftout holes to prestress the eight pieces. After spanning the steelcables, the canal where the cables are integrated is cast out with concrete.

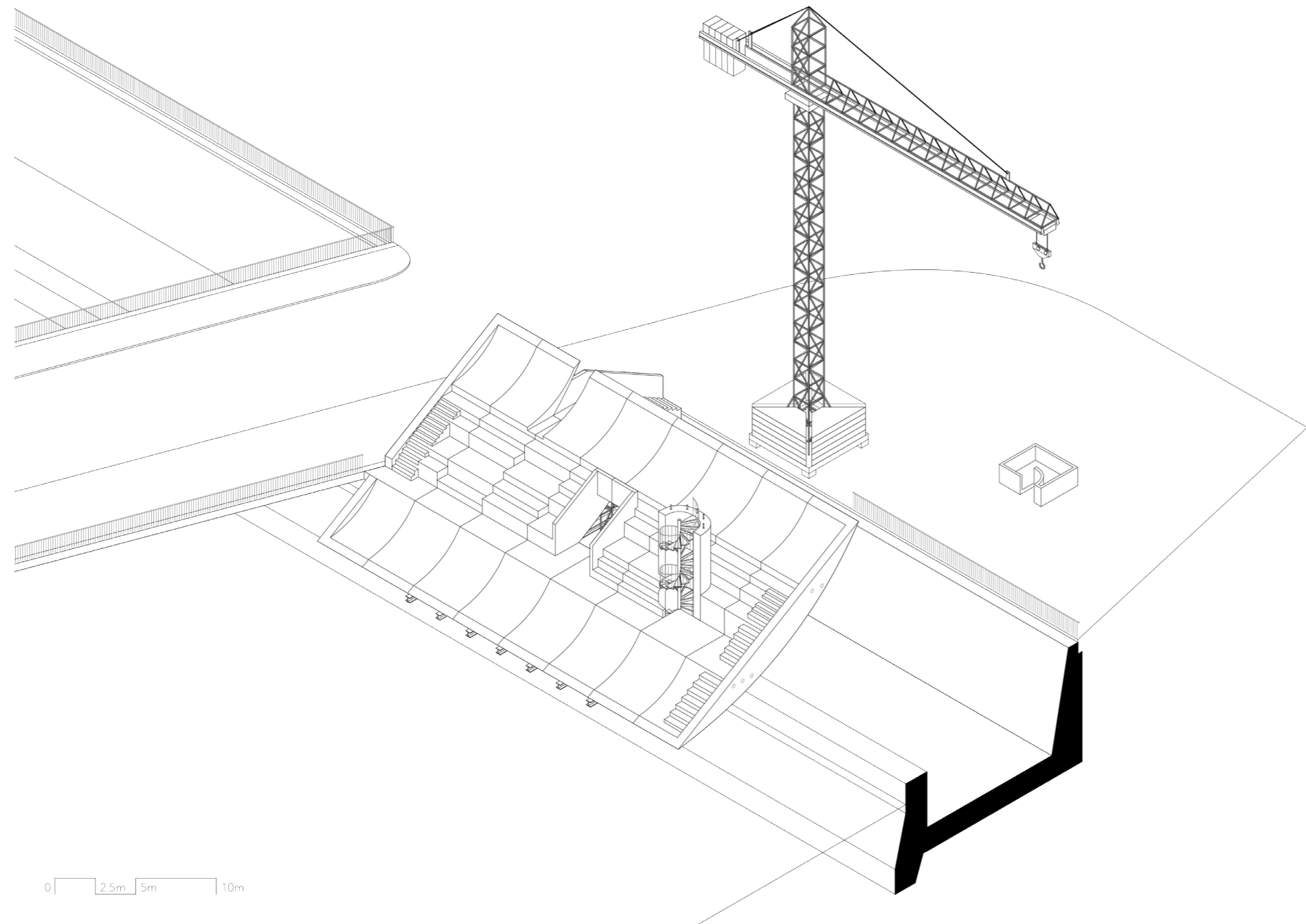


Step 9

The roof now works like one big element and can be released on top of the columns.

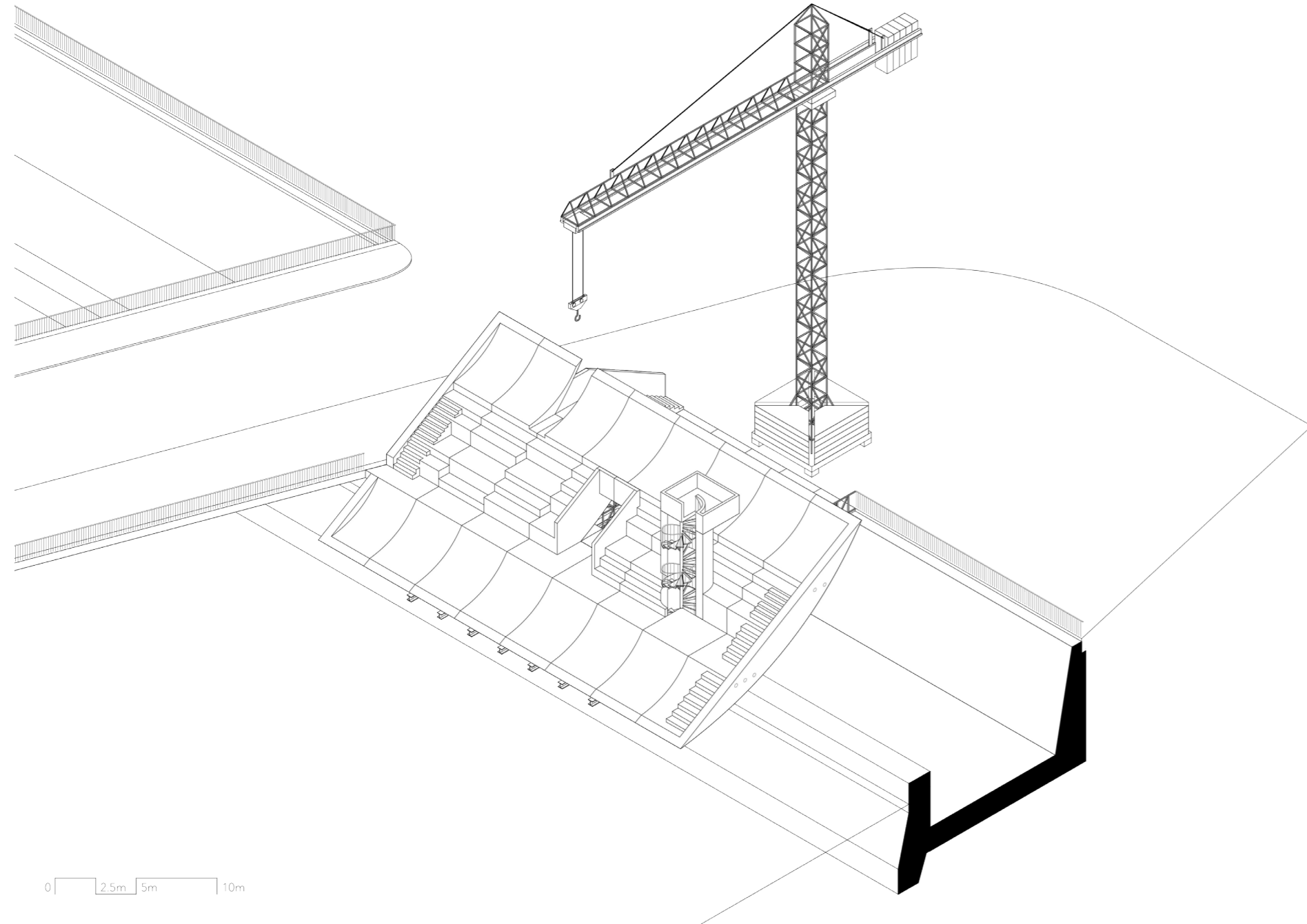
A part of the scaffold and steel beams has to be removed, to avoid blocking the motorway underneath.

A prefabricated concrete wall in shape of the half round column underneath is placed on top of the roof.



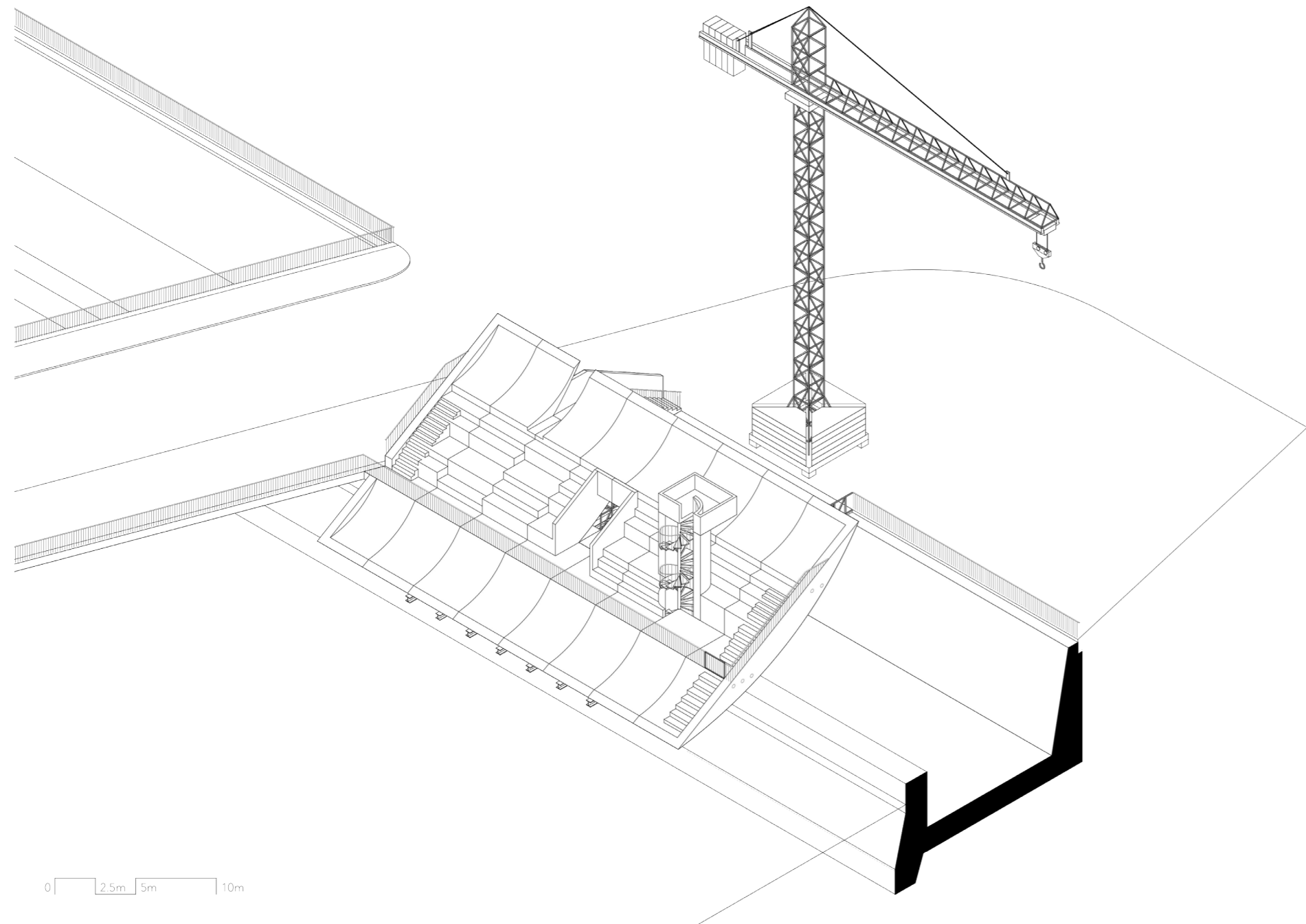
Step 10

The metal spiral staircase is lift with the crane into the concrete shell.



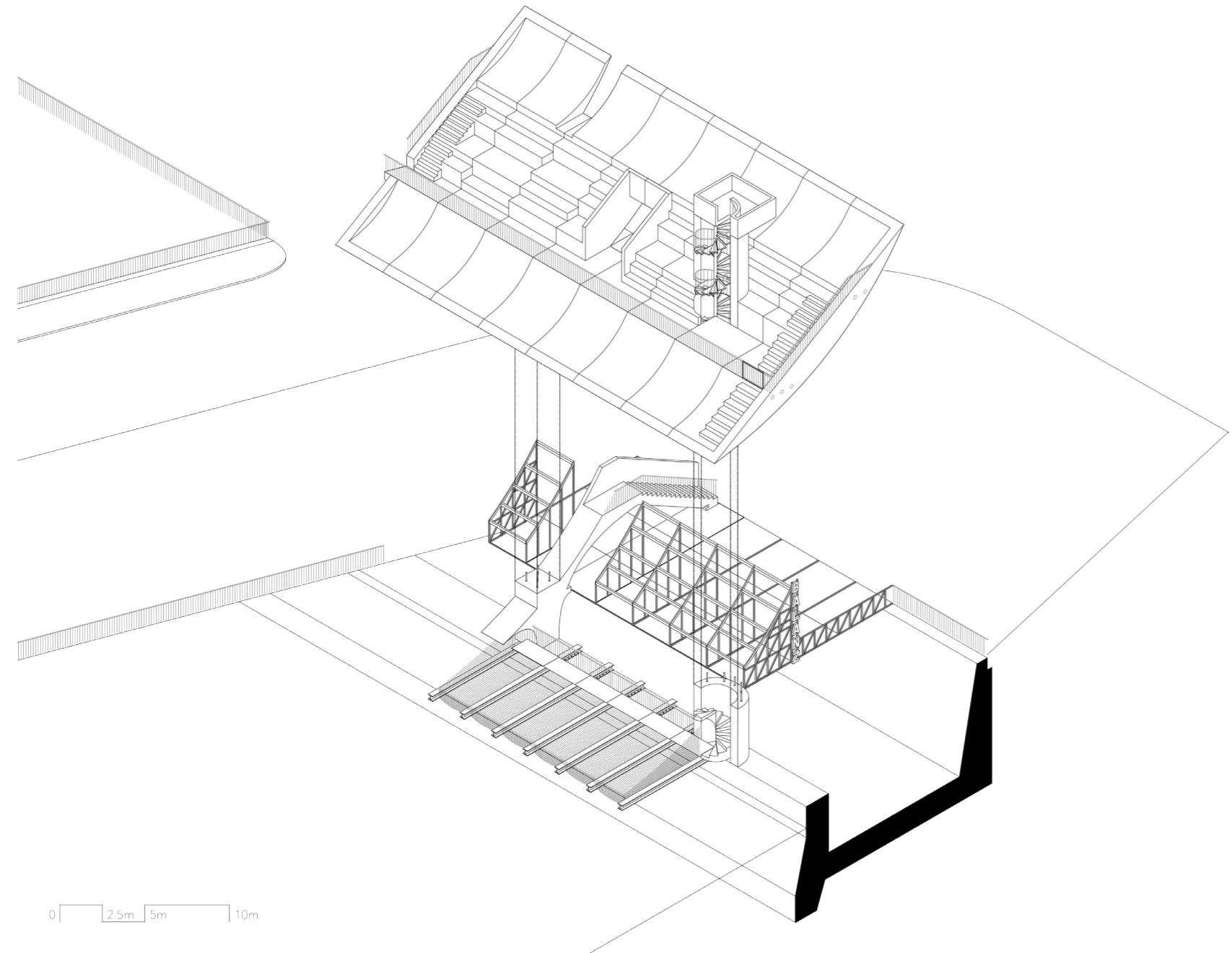
Step 11

The prefabricated view platform of the tower is placed on top of the half round wall.



Step 12

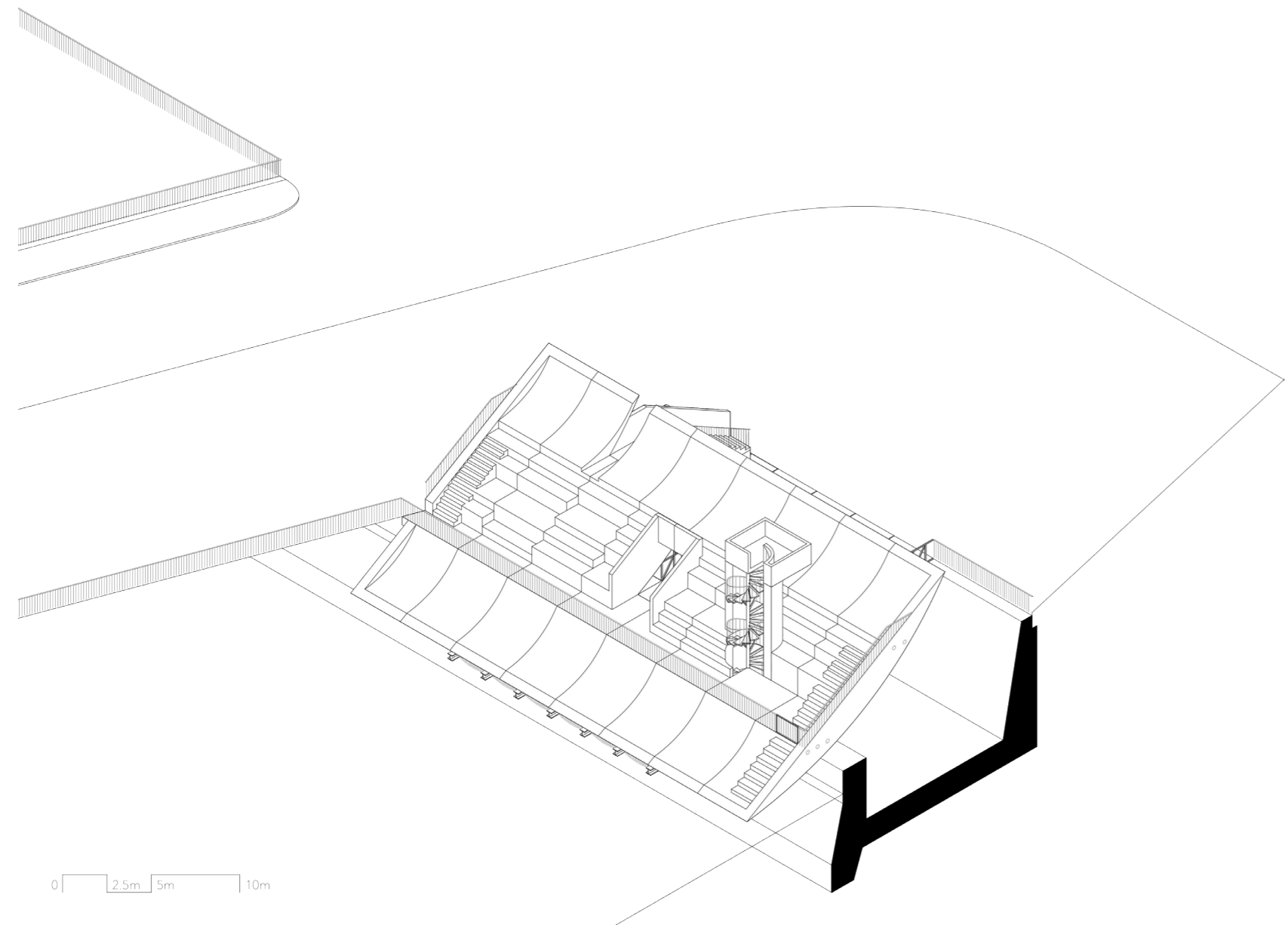
The handrails are fixed on top of the structure, to guarantee safety.



Step 13

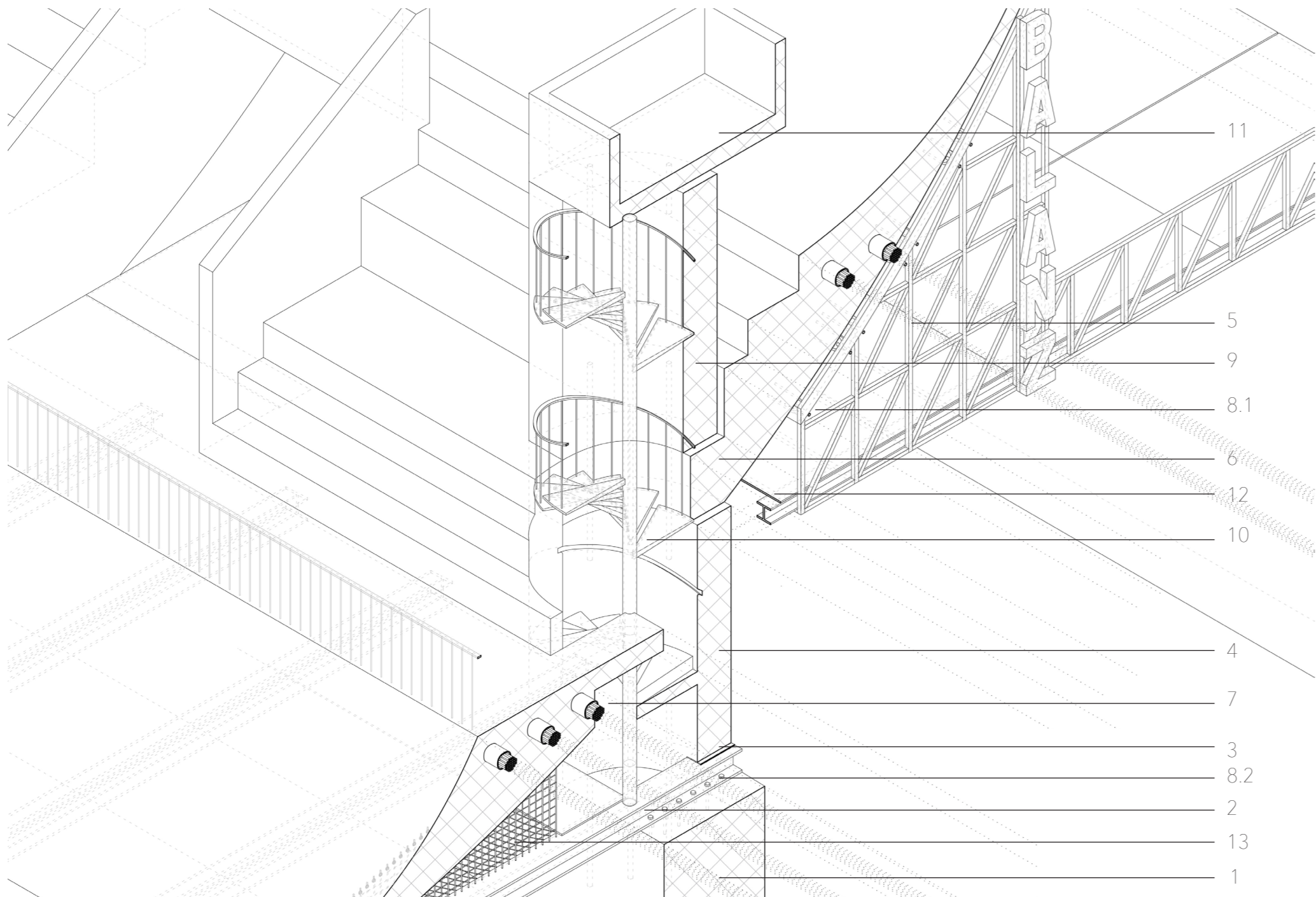
To complete the structure, nets are hanged on the roof and spanned in between the steel beams.

Also beams covered with metal sheets are hanged into the scaffold to extend the existing square.



Step 14

The accessible structure is ready to be used and be appropriate by its visitors.



MATERIALS

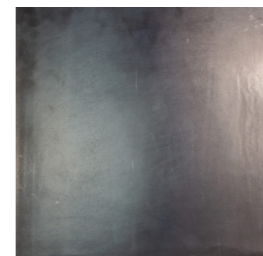
The concrete of all prefabricated concrete elements is the same one. It is made out of a mixture of cement and aggregates and is quarried by the gravel plant Beton val Mulin AG in Schnaus (a few minutes away from Illanz). A black colour pigment is added to the concrete mixture (approx. 30g/m³), which gives the concrete a dark expression to stand out from its surrounding.



black color pigment for the dark concrete look



prefabricated concrete polished, smooth columns, roof elements, wall, platform



dark steel spiral staircase



structural steel beams, scaffold, cables



aluminium balustrade

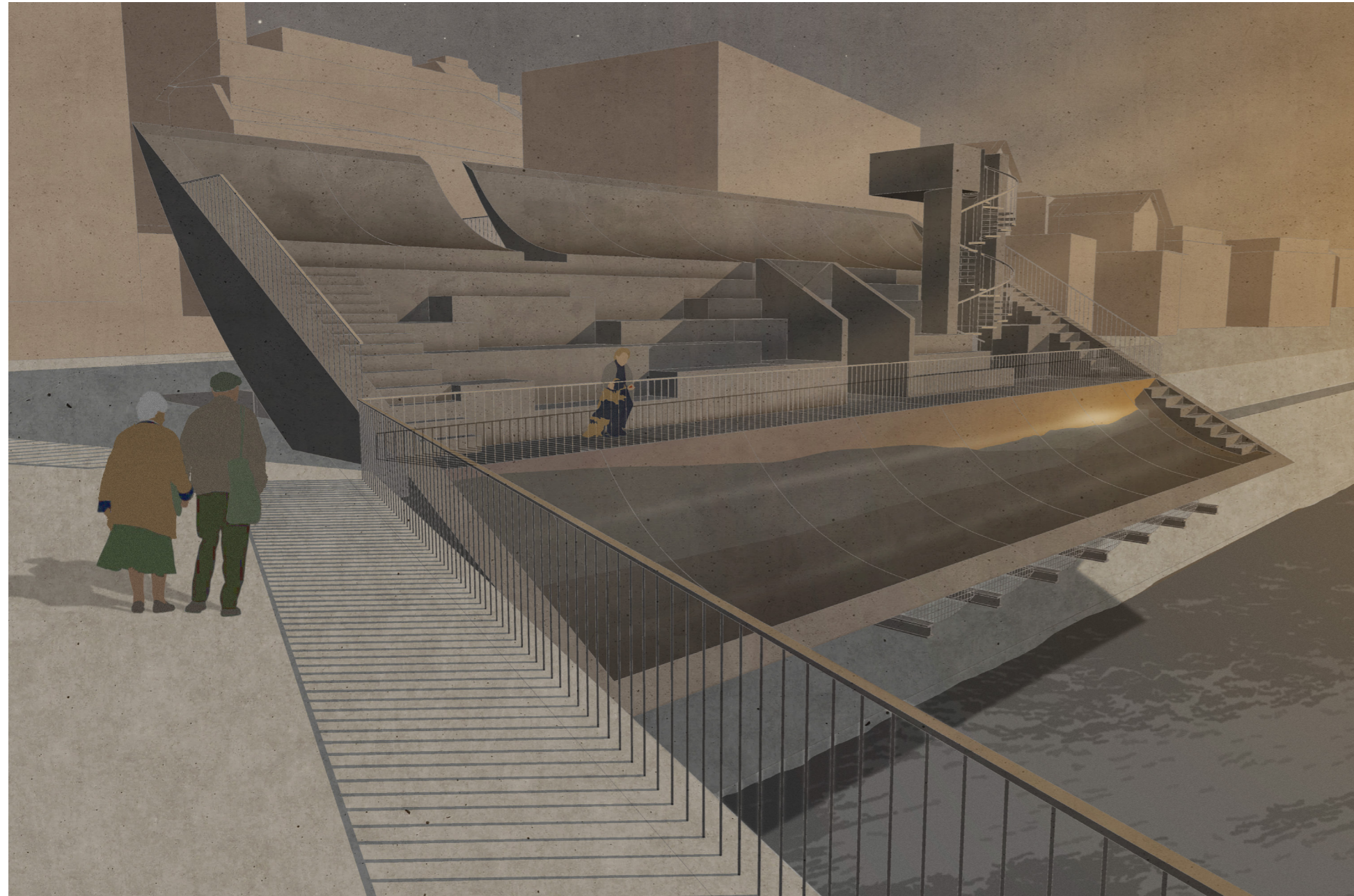


long hemp fiber net

SECTION

This section shows, how all this building steps proceed and how the elements come together.

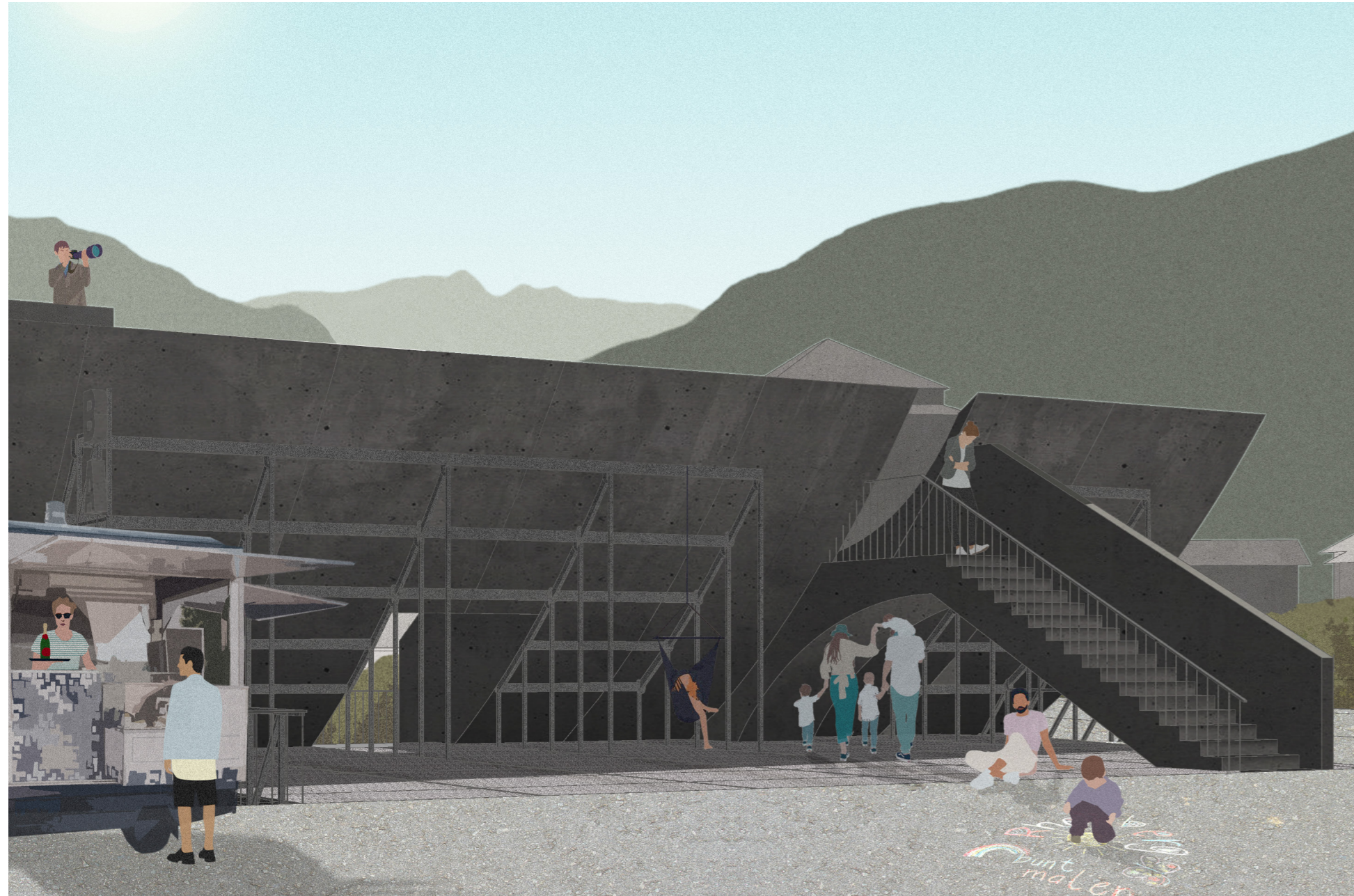
At first the steel beams (2) were fixed with screws on top of the existing motorway wall (1), which is basically the foundation. Before the column could be placed on top of the steel beam, a neoprene tape (3) was inserted as a separating layer in between steel and concrete. Reinforcements fix the column (4) on top of the wall. The next step was to build the scaffold (5) up, to support the prefabricated roof elements (6). To combine all these eight roof elements to one single piece, steel cables (7) were inserted into the leftover holes. After spanning the steelcables, the gaps were cast out with concrete. As soon as this step was done, the roof could be released on top of the columns with the reinforcement. As next the scaffold was fixed on the roof. This was done by tethering up the scaffold with spanning steelcables in between casted in ring-elements (8.1). After the scaffold was fixed, a part of it was taken away. At the same time the eight of fifteen steel beams were taken away and the leftover ones had to be cut off (8.2), to not block the motorway for buses and trucks. Next came the round concrete wall (9) on top of the roof, which is a protection for the metal spiral staircase (10). To complete the view tower the platform (11) was placed on top. After this step the handrails were fixed everywhere. The leftover steel beams (12) were hung into the scaffold. To extend the square, the leftover metal sheets were layed on top of these steel beams. At last a net (13) was hung on the roof and spanned in between the steel beams to create another space underneath the roof.



A STORY ABOUT BALANZ

06:00

I take my coat off the hook and step onto the historic Rathausgasse. Today is my first working day at the hospital Ilanz. The first rays of sunshine pierce through the clouds like swords on the horizon. Through the morning mist, I can see in the distance, how the accessible concrete sculpture on the other side of the Rhine shimmers in a silky gold. Behind it I identify the outlines of the slightly elevated hospital building. Hardly a car is on the usually busy Via Centrala. As I cross the river, I hear the monotonously rushing current of water. During a few breaths, I let the surroundings have a meditative effect on me. For a short time I forget my nervousness about the new beginning. I let my gaze glide over the smoothly polished surfaces at the lower end of the crescent-shaped sculpture. The mountain range and the warm spectrum of colors running into each other in the sky, are reflected in it. The almost dancing shape appears lively through its movements, the different depths, the surface textures, its projections and elevations as it did over the weekend, when it was actively used by passers to linger. I sit down on the lowest step of the sculpture for a few minutes and notice, how the day dawns and my face brightens up.



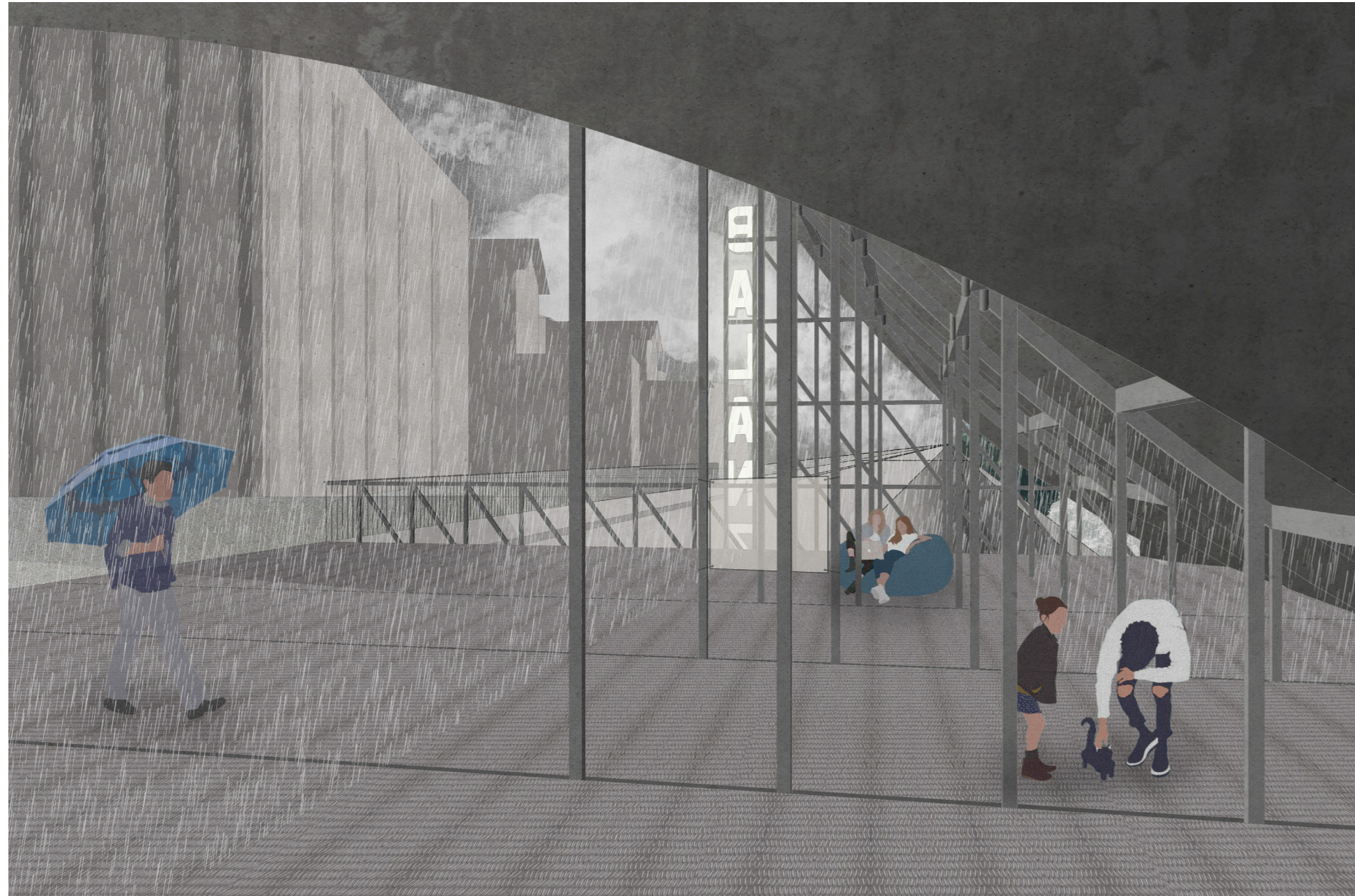
11:00

The morning is over. I was introduced to my tasks in the sanitary facilities. Two young nurses ask, if I would like to join them for lunch. They want to spend their break on „Balanz“. Without knowing what this means, I agree and am happy to have found a connection. We cross the Via S. Clau Sura and are back at the sculpture that fascinated me in the morning. We do not seem to be the only ones who spend their lunch here. One of the nurses explains to me, that a few years ago life in Ilanz was concentrated on the southern part of the city, beyond the Vorderrhein. The northern side was lost in a traffic chaos that offered no public quality of stay. A multitude of possibilities that the place offers since the creation of the architectural sculpture even attracts people from the other side of the Rhine, thus creating a kind of balance between the northern and southern part of Ilanz.



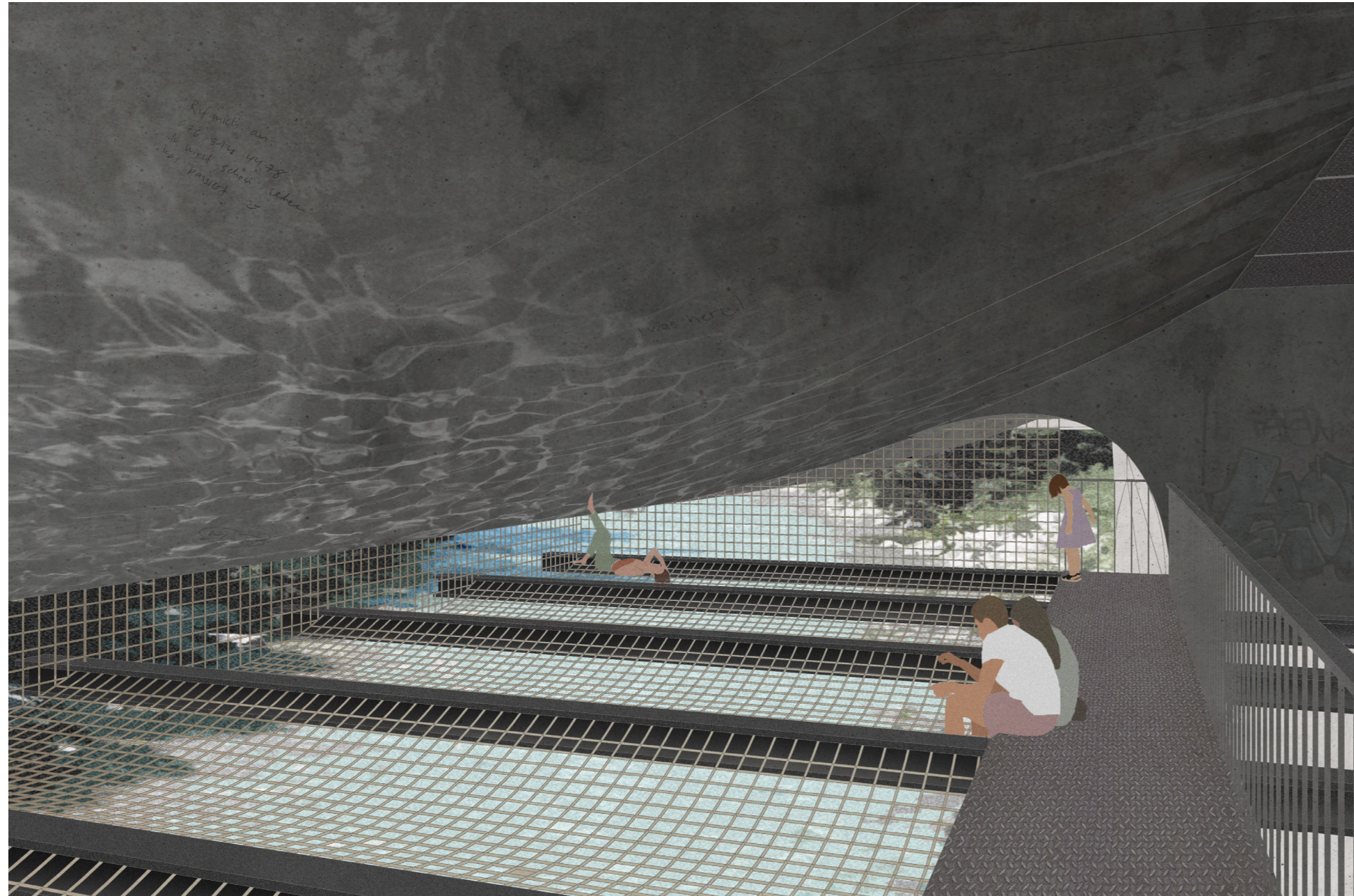
13:00

After we bought our food at a food truck, we walk over the steps towards the tribune. Fine joints dissolve the monolithic effect seen from far and provide information about the construction method using prefabricated elements. No sooner we have reached the point where the stairs break through the curved end of the shape, a fresh breeze blows towards me and I feel transported to another place. A feeling of freedom. In front of me the unrestricted view of the Vorderrhein opens up and in the distance I recognize the silhouette of the surrounding mountain landscape. The concrete, warmed by the sun, awakens in me the desire to touch it. Among the variety of steps, elevations and curves, we choose a free place to sit and enjoy our lunch.



16:00

The afternoon at the hospital is similar to the morning. I get to know the work processes and memorize new faces and names. One of them is Dan. He suggests that I drink a toast to my new start at „Balanz“ after work. I don't understand, why he uses the preposition „at“, and even less do I understand, why I suddenly look forward to it so much after I have agreed to it. So with beer and a few snacks from the canteen, we approach the sculpture again after work. The clouds have closed up like a curtain and shortly after that, rain starts to pour down on us. Laughing, we flee from the wetness across the square underneath the protective vault of the concrete roof. Because of the seamless transition on the ground, I didn't notice at first, that we suddenly found ourselves on top of an underpassing motorway. A steel scaffold connected to the sculpture seems to hold this platform in place, which builds a roof for the cars. After a heavy but short rain shower, the sky begins to clear up again. I observe, how someone attaches a canvas to two steel girders. She notices me and holds up a leaflet towards me. Tonight here will be a movie screening. There are still free seats, she says. I look at Dan and he winks at me.



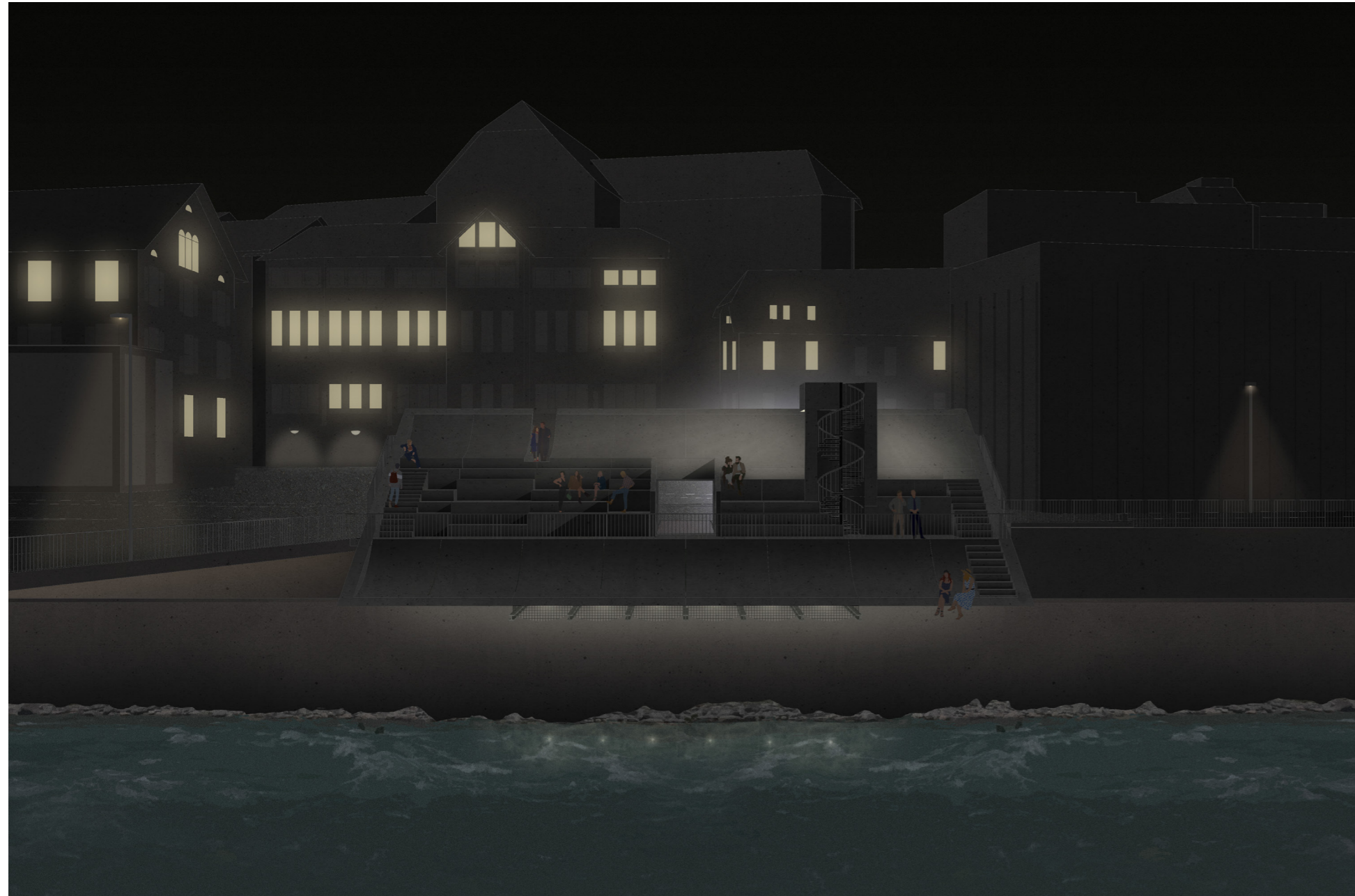
17:00

In a conspiratorial tone Dan convinced me to follow him into „Balanz“. Once again his way of expressing it, makes me sit up and take notice. We go trough an opening in the sculpture and step back onto the side, facing the river. A tower with a spiral staircase leads up to a viewing platform. I am surprised to discover, that the spiral staircase also leads down. Tense, I let my hand slide over the handrail as I climb the steps down. I did not recognise the image that reveals itself to me and I have to blink. We are in a room with a mystical, almost magical atmosphere. The underside of the concrete structure, calm and protective. Meanwhile the clouds have moved away and the sun is reflected over the water surface to the ceiling. A net is stretched between steel beams and invites to lie down inside. Dan tells me, that this is his favorite place in Ilanz. The proximity to the water, the lightplay, the almost invisible net in contrast to the heaviness of the concrete sculpture fascinates him again and again. He swarms about the moments when he forgets time while lying on the net and looking at the countless drawings and scribbles on the ceiling. We put the beer cans down and make ourselves comfortable.



20:00

I was not promised too much and I had completely forgotten the time. The sun was already touching the mountains in the distance. I let Dan know that I have to get up early again tomorrow to go to work and will therefore be leaving soon. He insists on going behind „Balanz“ before I leave. Without asking I agreed, because my desire to experience even more was greater than my guilty conscience. As we climbed up the stairs and got back on the platform the last ray of sunshine blinded me before the bright red circle disappeared completely. Its position in the evening red can only be guessed. Dan takes my hand and leads me through the tunnel to the back of the roof. I watch hypnotized, how a row of cars disappears in the same beat under BALANZ. Not long ago, when my path led me to llanz for the first time, I noticed the sculpture already balancing on the wall, mysterious and unfathomed. I am fascinated how different perspectives create new possibilities. Then I release my gaze and smile into Dan's illuminated face.



22:00

Dan lives like me, on the other side of the Rhine. We leave the „Balanz“ behind us - for today. Dull and only slight audible due to the murmuring of the water, the ringing melody of a film comes to us. I would not have been able to keep my eyes open for long if we had stayed. The day made me tired in a pleasant way. It was full of new impressions and emotions and again and again I found balance through „Balanz“. From far, only the silhouette of the sculpture is visible. Laughter and excited voices let me guess, that this place is also a popular meeting place for night owls. I am looking forward to getting to know this and many other sides of this place as well.

