

STANDING STONE TO THE SEA

HOW TO TRANSCEND THE STEEP HILL BETWEEN THE CITY CENTER AND THE HARBOUR

Larvik (NO)

At a time when the urban fabric tends more and more towards massive industrialization using many technologies, it is important to return to simpler and more local ways of building.

Larvik is the perfect example. Located between Lake Farris and the sea, the city benefits from an exceptional location that must be enhanced without distorting the natural character of the site. The area is just as amazing, thanks to its mineral character with the very strong presence of Larvikite, but also the density of magnificent forests like that of Bøkeskogen. Finally, proximity to the water plays a very strong role. These three elements are part of the local wealth that will constitute the heart of this project.

To activate this area located below and connect it with the center of Larvik town, the first question to raise is how to cross the railway line? And by what means? The easiest solution might have been to design a footbridge with an elevator to easily cross the barrier represented by the train tracks and the mountain of the old port. But in our opinion, this incredible site does not deserve such a scar in the landscape. What's more, a bird, a frog or even a lizard cannot take an elevator!

We do not think that an ultra-technological and high-tech intervention would simplify the access to the sea and make the city a unified whole. We prefer to believe in the know-how and local assets that contribute to the development of the old port of Larvik. Our perspective is more holistic, with a project fitting into the landscape, preserving it as it is. Indeed, local and natural materials such as stone and wood are much more durable elements than a concrete or steel construction.

The upper part of the promenade follows the already existing path and the trajectory is designed to preserve the existing trees. The promenade creates a natural link between the old port and the high point of the Bøkkerfjellet hill, meandering like a stream and connecting the city center to the sea. Gently sloping down, the project intends to integrate everyone, from humans young and old to flora and fauna, whereas a footbridge with an elevator would have isolated Man from his natural environment.

To carry out such an enterprise without disturbing any of the living beings, but also for economic reasons, this project is organized in several phases.



1. Bøkeskogen forest



2. Larvikite quarry



3. Bøkkerfjellet park

THE OLD PORT AS A DESTINATION

Larvik (NO)

FIRST STAGE

First of all, it seems important to us to raise awareness among the inhabitants of the city by delimiting the scope of intervention of the project. This awareness goes through Land art interventions, made up of the local heritage, the Larvikite.

Like the Larvikite column already present on the Torget Square, a series of columns link the city center, the old port and the water. These local stone columns will also support the local fauna and flora, becoming one with its ecosystem. These Land art installations will then serve as a structural pillar for the new pedestrian promenade that will be created in phase 2. Finally, in a third step, the columns will also house the future Larvik library below the promenade built in phase 2. These stone artefacts will therefore be sculpted in such a way as to accommodate the beams that will support these two programs. Positioned very precisely, these columns are located along the Bøkkerveien and Storgata roads without hindering car traffic.

Beyond sensibilizing the inhabitants through our land art intervention, it seems important to make the destination point clear for visitors coming from the city center. That is why the lower part of the site is designed as an open and democratic public space. This mixed-use public space will make it possible to welcome potential bathers and also food lovers.

Docks and small kiosks are created. The waterfront is shaped after the original design of the old port, allowing water to penetrate the site. The platforms are accessible by all and are made of stone as a protection from rising waters. The kiosks build up a food court positioned in the continuity of the Pakkhuset restaurant.

A reflection on mobility is carried out. The Strandpromenaden road is slightly offset to work with the future project and is part of the continuity of the promenade, making it possible to reach the current Larvik station. During phase one, about twenty parking spaces for cars are kept. These parking slots are on grassy pavement, allowing nature to grow on this mineral area and so that trees may be planted in a second time. Photovoltaic bike shelters encourage visitors to come by bike. The 85 m² energy production area created by the bicycle shelters will allow the Tollboden and Toldkamer buildings to operate completely independently. The paving of the old port is made of granito with pieces of Larvikite, reusing the waste from the cutting of stone which the local quarries have no use of.

Phase 1 allows a complete reorganization of the surroundings of the water, returning the old port of the city to its original state enriched with various uses and a quality public space.



4. Torget place



5. Larvikite column



6. The old harbour

A WALK ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

SECOND STAGE

Larvik (NO)

Phase 2 is certainly the most important part in this project: the creation of the physical junction between the high point of the Bøkkerfjellet hill and the old port of Larvik. This walk aims at fitting harmoniously into the landscape without distorting it. When coming from the city center, the walk starts at the top of Bøkkerfjellet hill, preserving the Bøkkerfjellet house and completing it with a canopy marking the start of the walk and providing shelter for bikes.

The reorganization of the top of the hill offers two paths. A first path leads directly down to the beginning of the walk. A second path invites the visitor to contemplate the view and get closer to the old well which is thus highlighted. At the end of this path, stairs lead to the promenade. These stairs, carved into the rock are located in the same place as the existing ones. We are transforming the previously artificialized part of the hill without further altering the mountain. The idea is to rethink the paths by touching the green spaces as little as possible. Both the spirit of the Bøkkerfjellet park and the trees are preserved.

The descent to the old port of Larvik is planned to be a gentle slope. The 270m walk makes it easy to descend the 20m drop that separates the top of the hill from the old port without having too steep a slope. It also allows cyclists and local wildlife to come down.

The promenade rests on the Larvikite freestone pillars built on the site as mentioned in phase 1. On these stone columns are placed wooden beams of 8m span. Joists and paving come to rest on these beams. It is from an ancestral assembly of stone and wood that the footbridge contributes to extending the city center towards the port.

Sequence work is devised for the promenade. A play on levels and density of the paving punctuates the walk, allowing time for exposure, rest and contemplation of the landscape. The materials used for the footbridge are made up of waste from local quarries during the cutting of Larvikite stone. The paving merges with the rock of the hill until it disappears into the landscape.

To ensure the transition with the redeveloped part of the old port, the promenade is part of the continuity of the Strandpromenaden road which borders the railway lines. As in phase one the road leading to the station is diverted, the project proposes to make it pedestrian, allowing continuity with the pedestrian promenade.

We can thus imagine an exit from the Larvik train station facing south and towards the water, making it possible for tourists to use a continuous pedestrian path to the center of Larvik via the footbridge, allowing them to enjoy the beauty of the landscape.

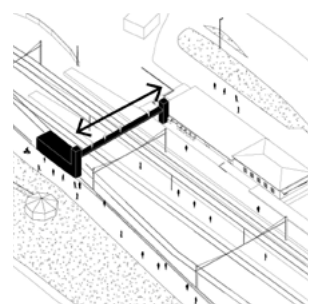
In addition to the creation of this physical junction between land and water, work is planned to densify biodiversity. More than 40 new trees are integrated into the site bringing freshness and shade during the summer. Besides, more than 600 m² of green space allow nature to grow.



7.A Gentle slope toward the harbour



8. A play on levels and density



9.A crossing station

A BRIDGE SHELTERING A LIBRARY

Larvik (NO)

THIRD STAGE

At the end of phase 2, the junction between the city center and the port is completed, the surroundings of the old port are entirely redeveloped in order to attract people to this under-frequented place. Besides, it is crucial for the city of Larvik to give back to the library its major role. The future library is inserted into the walkway, in a space below the promenade.

As a 'bridge of knowledge', this place will become a real link between the city and the water. The library is designed to leave the necessary height for the passage of the train. But if the train line were to be relocated, the tracks could become a pedestrian promenade.

Like any gateway, the library has two ends and therefore two entrances. The first entrance is located at the level of the staircase refitted in the rock. There, the footbridge widens to reach the staircase, creating a small forecourt. An entrance allows you to descend into the library by means of an elevator. A staircase at the edge of the rock is also created to reach the inside of the library. The forecourt, the entrance of the library and the access to the old bunker on the hill become a strategic convergence point.

Inside the bunker, library users will enjoy a calm and intimate space in a bubble cut off from the world. Scenography work is carried out to highlight this original volume and turn it into both a reading space and an exhibition area.

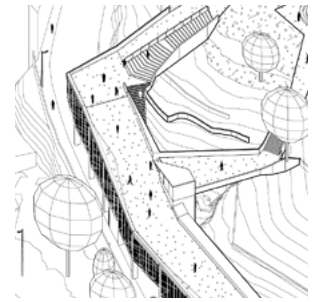
The second entrance is located on the re-organized port. Open onto the water, the library offers calm and also quality spaces. An agora space is created so as to enhance the democratic function of the library with reading areas, but also places for conference meetings and social gatherings.

The agora space with its tiered seating leads to the first level which spans the train tracks and serves the different spaces. An elevator gives access to the library and to the upper part of the footbridge. Each level of the library corresponds to the framework of the Larvikite columns and is devoted to a specific theme (literature, youth, history, art).

Users and visitors circulate between the levels on a gentle slope starting from the edge of the rock. In direct contact with the minerality of the rock and lit by a crack of light, the library provides shelter from the urban bustle. This circulation offers an exceptional and singular quality of space specific to a library anchored in its heritage.

A large part of the facade of the library is facing south, so that it is necessary to provide indirect light for users, both for reading comfort and to protect the works. The facade protects readers from direct light and offers visual comfort thanks to a specifically designed stone assembly which allows the library to blend into its environment.

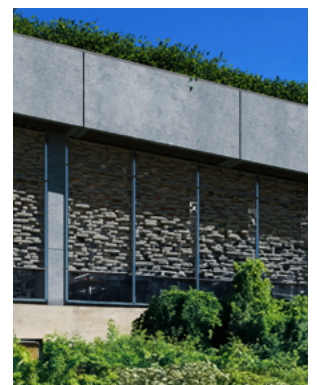
Our proposal for this competition intends to be respectful of local heritage and to give an important place to biodiversity. We strongly believe in local initiatives and living projects rooted in territories so as to better meet the challenges of the 21st century.



10.A «Bridge of knowledge»



11.The old bunkers as a lecture's room



12.The library facade protected by Larvikite