

“UNO, NESSUNO E CENTOMILA”

-A Line-

“Uno, nessuno, centomila” (meaning: one, no one, one hundred thousand) is the title of one of the most famous books of Italian literature written by L.Pirandello. It was not chosen at random; its content encapsulates an introspective analysis of the protagonist Vitangelo Moscarda, an awareness of how self-perception turns into a hundred thousand different faces -or none- depending on who is looking at us. Each person is a single individual until he or she takes on different forms through the eyes of others.

And so is Larvik, a city made up of multitudes, of different centralities, with different use and purpose but still failing to create a unique “individual”.

We chose Larvik as our project site precisely because it seemed to us to be a city with great but untapped potential. A city rich in history and culture, embraced by an even richer and more flourishing natural environment, but that fails to make the most of all that surrounds it.

The first approach to the site was a thorough investigation of the city’s spaces, an analysis of what makes it up, its potential as well as its barriers. Larvik is a city divided in two by the railway, a division that affects not only the morphology of the territory but also the uses of the city by its inhabitants.

The city also does not have a single center but is characterized by several different spots -the central square, the park, the pier, the historic center-. This, although it may be a limitation now, helps to create a great potential for building a new way of experiencing the city in a capillary way.

There were two main requests that were made by the Larvik municipality for this project: to think about a new connection between the park and the pier, which are currently separated by the railroad, and to consider whether the project area would be suitable to house the city’s new library.

For the first request, the project’s approach was to try to connect not only the two mentioned points, but the two entire parts of the city, creating a unique synergy.

For the second, after careful evaluation, we came to believe that not just one is the right place to host the new library, but multiple, as multiple is the nature of the city. The aim is to create a network, not a new centrality; a series of different but connected spaces that make a unified and compact transition from one part of the city to another.

In our project, therefore, the library no longer assumes its traditional function but is transformed to accommodate the demands of the present, the new needs of the individual. It becomes a space where the individual fully experiences his sociality and can feel part of a community.

THE PROJECT

PROCESS

The first approach to the project was to identify the strong elements that characterize the project area: the city center (Torget), the park (Bøkkerfjettet), the railway, and the pier (Tøllboden).

The only real attractive center, however, remains the city center for now. That is why the second step led to the choice of turning two elements into two new centralities: the park and the pier.

But it is not enough; there is a need to create a major axis that connects everything and makes the process unified and compact.

Only in this way will it be possible to create a larger mesh of connections that holds the entire urban structure of the city together.

URBAN ACTIONS

At project level, these urban connections will be characterized by design accouterments to support not only a

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physical but also a visual and mental connection.

The first action is to link the new centralities through a connection characterized by the same stone paving and street furniture, reinterpreted differently according to the passing sections.

The second action involves the use of water -a defining and representative element of the city of Larvik, both morphologically and industrially-, as the common thread of the long route through the city. Use of small ground tanks filled with seawater to line pedestrian streets and inclusion of larger tanks at street intersections.

Third is the creation of bike lanes to support the city’s soft mobility and increase the use of bike sharing.

Fourth and last, is the reinterpretation of actions within the park that will take on more natural connotations both in terms of paving and water use. This is part of the ambition in keeping the park and the whole project as natural as possible, using nature as a fuel for all the project actions.

PROJECT ACTIONS

Introduction

The design principle arises from *a line*. A line that is not just a line but, like Vitangelo in “uno, nessuno e centomila”, becomes a multitude of transformations. It becomes first a path, then a resting spot, then a crossing, a lookout, a bridge, and finally a building, until it becomes a pier that dives into the water. It is a connection that holds together all the single interventions on Larvik’s soil.

It all stems from the need to create a crossing point between the two parts of the city, between the park and the pier. But for us it was not enough, it is not enough to fill a gap but it is necessary to create a broader and more meaningful connection. That’s how the idea of not designing a simple bridge but an infrastructure was born, which, from the city center starts with a pedestrian path, crosses the park, becomes a belvedere to admire the vastness of the sea, turns into a descent tower, a bridge and then ends its path in the terrace of what will be the new library -now become Social Hub-.



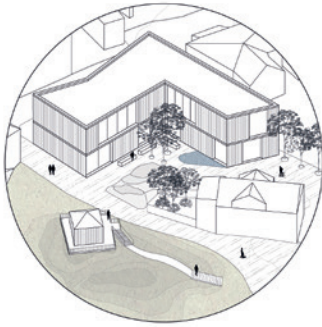
It is along this line that the various design interventions, derived through both the conscious reuse of some buildings, historic and otherwise, and through the insertion of new buildings, as well as the use of the generous open spaces of park and pier, come to life.

The whole project aims to be a collection of different but connected functions with one goal: to give Larvik back to its community.

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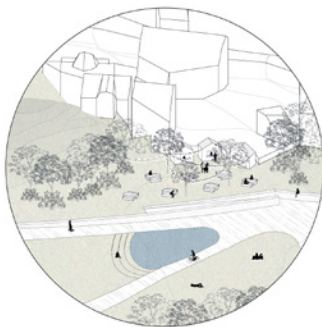
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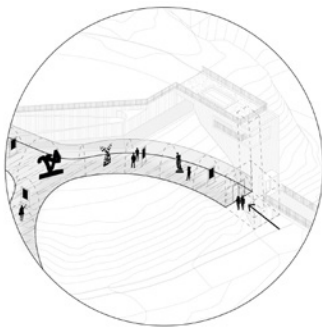
Literary Cafè

This building will be the entrance to the park. It is a branch of the main building positioned in the harbour, the Social Hub, and is conceived as an intermediate spot between the center and the harbour, linked to the outdoor space of the park. The idea is to have not just a cafè but a daily spot for citizens. Its function will be to join both drinking and reading with corners for newspapers, magazines and books on the ground floor. On the first floor the spaces will be dedicated to quieter reading or magazines for children and teenagers.



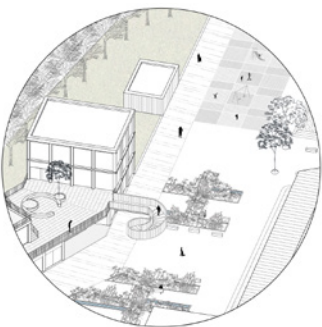
BøkkerFood

In recent years the park has been used for various activities, from community gardens to ice cream spot, to the insertion of artistic installations. What was missing was a place to stop and enjoy the open space and the green environment both during the day and in the evening. This is why we came up with the decision to include a corner dedicated to street food, with tables and chairs, which remains also consistent with the playful spirit of the park.



BunkArt Larvik

The bunker has been there since the war and now needs a new life. It's a long, narrow and dark place, what better than an art gallery to lighten it up? The proximity of the “Artist Town” Stavern is an opportunity to bring art closer to Larvik, enriching also the already existing artistic installations in the park above.



Social Hub Plaza

Larvik doesn't need just a new library, it needs a new centrality for its inhabitants, a space dedicated to all generations, which brings people together and contributes to the well-being of social life.

The existing parking lot is replaced by a new plaza. This element constitutes not only a public space but an opportunity to enrich Larvik's already green landscape with a new natural feature, an excavation of portions of the square that function as a home for dense vegetation as well as a rainwater harvesting basin and flood mitigation tool.



Dive-In Wharf

At the edge of town, where the land ends and the sea begins, leisure takes place. The already existing restaurant will reopen but with a new look. Summer will have another flavor thanks to the inclusion of a swimming pool by the sea and bathing equipment, a semi-covered space for sunbathing, eating and relaxing in good company.

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THE SOCIAL HUB

As mentioned earlier, the library takes on a different meaning here. The name chosen suggests an attempt to create a building for the people, an interactive place where social life takes center stage and books become the binder.

There will therefore be areas inside dedicated to workshops of various kinds, at the suggestion of citizens, quieter areas for studying and reading, conference areas, lounge areas and a bar area.

The primary nature of the building, however, is to serve the downhill infrastructure that connects from the park to the pier via the bridge. We therefore have a dual reading of the Social Hub, one as a resting space fulfilled by the aforementioned functions, and the other as a landing space from the bridge and descent to the pier.

In the former, access is provided both on the ground floor and from the terrace, in the latter, the descent is connoted by the terraces that allow, through a system of public stairs and elevators, to get to the pier without passing through the interior of the building, effectively making the route independent and accessible at all hours.

The entire structure, from the bridge to the building, is also designed to be accessible to everyone thanks to a system of ramps and elevators that, from the park, gently accompany visitors to the sea.

The architecture of the building, on the other hand, stems from an interpretation of the traces of the context, both geographical and urban, as well as from the choice of interfacing with the historical pre-existence that is the former customs building. Thus, a central plaza is created that features lowered parts of paving to accommodate thriving vegetation, with the ambivalent purpose of increasing the biodiversity of the area and collecting rainwater within it to mitigate the effects of flooding.



CONCLUSION

The desired end result is that of a unified project that nevertheless gives a multiple view of the space and the possibilities it offers.

What we attempt to do, as architects, is to give a linear key to the design intent brought to the table, aware, however, that it will then be the people who will give an identity to the space, to give it one, no one and one hundred thousand interpretations.

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