

Larvik (NO)

sansevandring

project report

introduction

The municipality of Larvik participates in European 17 by submitting for our attention a part of the city that can be divided into two urban blocks: the new city centre with the Bøkkerfjellet park and the old Ferris terminal with industrial buildings.

These two blocks are separated from each other by a 30-metre height difference and an infrastructural barrier consisting of a railway and a high-intensity roadway that divide Bøkkerfjellet from the sea level.

The questions that have guided us in the design process stem directly from the critical issues that were submitted to us in the call for tenders by both the municipality and the citizens themselves.

With regard to the problems of the two urban blocks, we felt that a greater inclusion in the urban dynamics of the Bøkkerfjellet park, which is currently decentralised with respect to the social activities in the centre, was necessary. On the other hand, for the old ferris terminal (which makes its privileged location its main potential), the objective was to restore the area's beautiful atmosphere as conveyed by historical photos.

Our efforts have focused on how to unite the two urban blocks, not only on a physical level but also on a social level. The physical links we have proposed do not merely connect the two urban blocks but seek to move different interests and activities along this path. In pursuit of this goal, we have integrated the pre-existing buildings (bunkers and the Ferris terminal buildings) into the project and proposed to restore them as much in aesthetics as in use. The built architectures are also part of this complex system and in their integration into the urban and natural context, they maintain a connection with local materials and forms. Finally, we aimed for the intervention to have minimal visual impact so as not to spoil the view from Bøkkerfjellet towards the sea and vice versa.

The following report will be divided into two main blocks: strategic design area and urban design area. The first part will explain the interventions made outside the project plot, how they connect to it and how they feed into its significance; the second part will be concerned with explaining in more detail the connecting route and the strategic redevelopment of the Bøkkerfjellet area and the ferris terminal.

strategic design area

Underlying the design strategy for the entire quadrant is the conviction that implementing bicycle and pedestrian connections between the city centre and the sea will result in a significant decrease in car use and all that goes with it: less traffic, less need for parking, less pollution and less risk for pedestrians. This choice goes hand in hand with disincentivising car use both by providing a viable alternative (i.e. the possibility of getting there by walking and cycling) and by giving back only part of the parking spaces that are taken away from the city for the creation of the pedestrian areas.

This is why we have decided to keep the structure of the area's carriageway unchanged and have concentrated on the design of a cycle-pedestrian link from the city centre to the sea.

In order to encourage the use of this route, interventions are proposed to make the route pleasant on a sensory level and interesting on a socio-cultural level.

In order to make the Bøkkerfjellet part of a system of urban activities, we have made three strategic proposals capable of directing urban flows in this area and making it the focus of the new travel system:

- the creation of a new pedestrian link structured around three small squares, between the main square and the entrance to the park;
- the positioning of the cycle-pedestrian path and the vertical connection system to reach the quay at the end of the park;
- the pedestrianisation and conversion to an urban park of the quay combined with the restoration of existing buildings.

The new pedestrian link takes advantage of a 'in between' space of uncertain use that is developed close to the main square. This is where a few businesses have begun to open and move adjacent to the main square, while the third urban void currently contains a car park. We propose to use these three spaces in

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sequence to open new activities that divert human flows in this area. In this way, a city route will develop through the three squares, joining the pedestrian flow going towards the sea with the pedestrian flow of those who wish to stay. In this way, the lack of activity between the main square and the entrance to the park will be filled.

The proposal to locate the new bookshop, intended as a contemporary work and sharing space, immediately within Bøkkerfjellet contributes to the attractiveness of this area. As well as being attractive as a park, the library and its activities will give citizens more reasons to experience this place.

The layout of the Bøkkerfjellet area, as we shall see in more detail, includes a bicycle and pedestrian promenade leading to a vertical connecting device located at the end of the park. In this way, a large part of the human flows intended to reach the quay will pass through this area, ensuring its centrality. Finally, a large pedestrianisation of the quay is planned in addition to the restoration of the old dock and the creation of a new urban park along the railway boundary. With the restoration of the new dock, the existing large car park will be demolished; the lost parking spaces will be only partially returned and placed in a thin 30 zone located between the railway and the new urban park. The new urban park, in addition to being a green screen to cover car parks, the railway and the high-speed road, will have the role of connecting the Bøkkerfjellet park to the north, the sports field area to the east and the beach area to the west, creating a large cycling and walking area that connects city, sea, green and recreation areas.

Thanks to these interventions, the Bøkkerfjellet will become the centre of activity and cycling in the entire urban area under consideration.

urban design area

In the urban strategy of centralising Bøkkerfjellet, we have studied the area from the park entrance to the pier of the old Ferris terminal in depth.

The design of this area can be schematised in two actions: the design of a bicycle and pedestrian path connecting the park entrance to the pier, and the new layout of the Bøkkerfjellet park with the construction of the new library within it.

A promenade to the sea

The project area under consideration sees the 30-metre height difference of the Bøkkerfjellet as the main barrier to be torn down in order to mend the fracture between the two urban blocks under consideration. Therefore, the first question we asked ourselves is:

how can we overcome a 30m difference in height without compromising the view, with a rapid descent method and with minimal visual impact?

After examining various hypotheses, we came to the conclusion that the crossing bridge capable of crossing the railway and the road had to be placed at the base of the rocks immediately above the roadway so that it would not be visible from above and would not be monumental from below. We then assessed that a linear descent system to overcome such a large difference in height could not be accessible to pedestrians, bicycles, buggies, the disabled, etc. without having a very substantial visual impact.

For this reason, the use of a vertical element capable of quickly overcoming a height of about 16 metres was chosen.

The last problem we had to solve was how to make it invisible from the park and preserve the panoramic view. The solution to the problem was to lower the entrance level of the lift below the height of the park so that it would not be visible in any way.

This introduction is useful to explain the process that led us to the design of the cycle and pedestrian path.

At this point we wondered how we could access the entrance to the lift, located about 2.5 m below the last walkable level of the park.

Analysing the materials provided we understood the true nature of Bøkkerfjellet. According to the historical material provided to us, before being a park it was a larvikite quarry (typical local stone). Over the years the site underwent various changes until the quarry was filled in with topsoil and became a park as we see it today.

Based on this historical fact, we planned an excavation on the side of the plot that, according to the documentation, seemed most suitable.

With this excavation, with a variable section in both width and height, it is possible to reach with a slight slope the height - 2.5 metres at which the vertical connection is located without losing both the visual and physical relationship with the park.

In addition to solving the access to the lift, this project action would bring back the 'quarry' nature of Bøkkerfjellet and offer a unique experience of approaching the sea immersed within the larvikite rocks brought to light. In places where the planned rocks should not emerge, we thought of blocking the ground with large metal boxes containing large larvikite rocks inside them, while for the soil we proposed to reuse agglomerated and compacted waste from the same stone in order to recall the ancient material of the excavation.

With regard to construction, all the excavated material produced in the creation of the path will be stored and reused on the quay where, as mentioned, a substantial green area is planned.

The path with its gentle slope is accessible to everyone both directly from the entrance and from the park thanks to the three intermediate accesses (two stairs and a ramp) embedded in the ground and also invisible. On the way there is also access to the library where there is a bar and reception as well as some rest areas to enjoy the new views towards the sea and the excavation brought to light.

When we reach the end of the basement section, the unobstructed landscape opens up before us and the entrance to the lift, whose role and motivation we have already explained in the introductory part of the chapter. In order to clearly determine its location, we have taken three factors into account: the composition of the terrain, the position of the bunker entrances at the base of Bøkkerfjellet and the view towards the sea.

Regarding the composition of the soil, we chose to use one of the two sides with topsoil at the top and rocks at the bottom. By doing so, it is possible to embed the volume in the ground and have a solid anchorage base for the structure.

We then chose to involve the entrance to the south-east bunker in the climbing system so that it could be included in the new urban path and reused. Finally, positioned in this way, it was possible to orient the lift's view towards the sea.

The lift as designed looks like a wooden box anchored to the rock. Due to its size and natural materials it does not represent a disturbing element to the view from the quay. There are no external volumes; it is an uncovered platform that descends inside three wooden walls, the fourth wall, the one looking at the rock, is made of glass; in addition to being a safety wall, it allows those in the lift to see the rock sliding in front of them.

Taking the lift, it is possible to stop at a lower level and continue the path towards the sea by means of a suspension bridge or go down again and enter the bunkers.

The bunkers will be reused as social spaces for exhibitions, screenings, conferences and other possible activities proposed by citizens. Their reuse is important because of the strategic position they occupy in the succession of activities in the route, which we mention here:

- main square and the three squares: catering and commercial activities
- Bøkkerfjellet Park: bookshop and bar
- Bunker: social and cultural activities
- artificial hill: urban park by the sea, and car parks
- industrial buildings: administrative activities and rented space cultural activities
- dock and pier: recreational activities, entertainment catering

Within this scheme, the absence of the bunker would leave a major functional gap between the park and the sea, which is thus resolved.

Also from the level 1 laughter system, it is possible to access the bridge through which it is possible to reach the new park by the sea. This, having a hilly shape, also acts as a structural support for the bridge itself together with rock, remaining 4.5 metres above the driveway and 5 m above the railway.

The slightly curved bridge finds its direction by looking for the sea and finding it in the space between the industrial buildings and the new residential buildings. The side walls, also made of wood, are approximately 2m high in order to function as a parapet and visual barrier of the road and the railway. This directs the eyes of those crossing solely towards the sea.

The arrival point of the bridge is the new park by the sea, which, with its hilly shape sloping gently and parallel to the sea, allows pedestrians and cyclists to descend to the level of the quay. Once at quay level, the hill with its green volume hides the railway and the car parks behind it, merging into one vertical green landscape with the Bøkkerfjellet park behind it. In addition, as mentioned above, the hill will be built with all the excavated material from the creation of the basement path and the construction of the library (also basement).

Thanks to the rehabilitation of the industrial buildings to the side, a large urban space is created, of which the hill is one side. Here it will be possible to organise large-scale events and set up the space according to the necessary activities. The industrial buildings will be upgraded in their functions: administrative functions on the raised floors (when present) and rental spaces for cultural activities on the ground floor so as to keep the area active both during the day and in the evening.

Finally, for the area of the quay and the old Ferris terminal, as already partly planned by the municipality of Larvik, we propose to return the entire quay to its original form.

In this case, too, historical photos have guided us in the design of the spaces. We have tried to recreate the direct relationship with the water by means of step systems and floats that allow people to experience the sea both actively and passively.

With this in mind, we could only confirm the demolition already planned for the part of the dock that currently houses a large car park. In the dock that will be created, we propose a floating platform that will not only cover the 2 metre difference in height between the quay and the water line, but will also allow everyone to have a full experience of the maritime environment.

Finally, we propose restoring the old Ferris pier and terminal building to its original form by demolishing all the superfluous parts that have altered its appearance over the years.

In fact, we believe that, due to its privileged position and contact with the rest areas, it can easily be used as a refreshment point at sea level.

Inside, there could be fast and slow food outlets as well as bars and restaurants that will be needed both by visitors who want to enjoy the sea and by the people who carry out their various working and creative activities in the adjacent sheds.

The library in the park

Within the process of centralising Bøkkerfjellet, the location of the library in the park plays a key role.

The intervention was guided by the possibility of working with the terrain to make the building inconspicuous and the possibility of offering a public space for citizens to freely enjoy the panoramic view of the park.

The building is located in the innermost part of the perimeter of the plot precisely in order to remain in contact with the urban fabric. In this intermediate situation, the building itself becomes a threshold between the urban and the natural environment.

The entrance to the building is not direct. At the entrance to Bøkkerfjellet there is a paving of hexagonal tiles that defines the pedestrian area as opposed to the parking area (partly returned to the east side of the lot behind the stone box wall). Following the paving, one passes through a bottleneck between a white wooden house and the cliff of the old fire station building and arrives at an intermediate space. This space is characterised by a partly paved, partly green ground to emphasise this break between the natural and urban worlds.

The building has two floors. One basement (open to the sea) the other above ground. The basement part is developed inside five thick walls made of metal boxes filled with larvikite rock, while the above-ground part are volumes with pitched roofs covered with wood on the sides perpendicular to the sea and glass on the sides parallel to the sea at 2.1 m.

On a volumetric level, the visible part conforms as three volumes, one isolated and two attached to each other. In the middle, an empty module of the same size as the first building allows the view and access to the park. The building itself then, due to its volumetric conformation and its position, becomes the entrance to the park.

From the intermediate square it is possible to access from left to right: the workshop, the park or the library/quiet studio space.

Passing through the buildings on the park side it is possible to access from left to right the coworking area - the entrance square and the bar/reception. Entering the bar, it is possible to directly access the basement walkway, having made the elevations coincide at this point so as to have an additional point of connection between the design elements.

In front is Bøkkerfjellet Park, which remains completely unchanged.

The library as we have proposed it is not only a place to go and browse books, but also a place where one can work, socialise, eat and do community activities such as workshops. All the proposed activities feed off the presence of the park and actively interact with it.

Because of its location, its form and its relationship to the urban fabric, the park and the pedestrian zone, this place becomes the functional epicentre of the entire intervention, as it acts as a hub for both the movements and activities of the project, thus making the most of the need to construct a new building on one of the most representative plots in the history and culture of the city of Larvik.