

Levanger (NO)

## Kultur-hub-set!

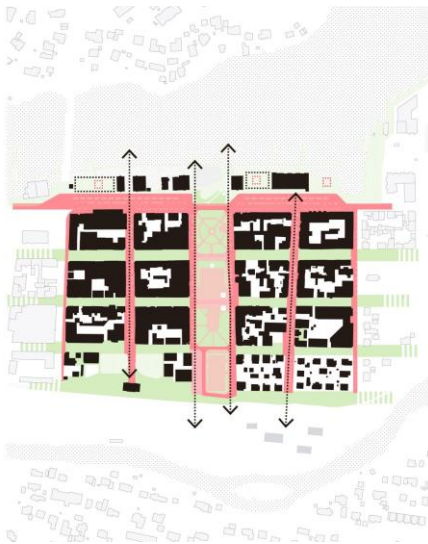
The real asset of any society in today's globalised world is its cultural heritage and Identity.

Levanger stands as a reference element in the region, a meeting point for trade and culture. Therefore growth should not only be measured in terms of how much built volume a town holds, but by the cultural, social and economical activity linked to the services and interchanges nested within its community. A listed urban center has in its own urban and architectural constraints, its greatest value and we are certain we can revitalize and turn Levanger into a vibrant, dynamic town building upon the original ideals of the city plan and the city's wooden architectural heritage.

Working around the concept of Hilsegata, the project aims to bring life back to Levanger, bringing back synergies that will re-activate the old town through pedestrian oriented dynamics, away from the speed and pollution of the car. The project understands the city as a complex entity that requires an integral approach. It addresses city dynamics as a whole around a backbone idea, a very simple yet ambitious re-thinking and re-organization of the actual flows and programmatic distribution of the city.

### The Backbone Diagram

A new organizational scheme is laid out, understanding the unique condition of Levanger as a town between two bodies of water, encouraging the relationship towards and along them, limiting the traffic, prioritizing pedestrian and bicycles over cars, creating a system of green corridors and focusing development organized around the Park Axis Spine.



A. The main attraction pole is focused along the Levangersundet and the consequent Allmenningen space (**red**). This is a magnetic element to the city, and the origin of the first settlement. The perpendicular streets encourage this connection between the water and the river through programmatic bands that encourage communal, productive and commercial activities

B. The **green** streets parallel to the water are the ones that act as circulation vectors and have borne the greatest traffic load in the last decades. They are re thought as green corridors with the insertion of small planters and gardens, small bushes and SuDS (water treatment) to encourage biodiversity and respectful water treatment. Other functions are encouraged as the space is gradually recovered from the car.

C. Car-Loop. A single-lane loop will be delimited to 50 km/h to allow for effective circulation, while the rest of the downtown area will be limited to 30km/h.

D. The **Park Axis** is renovated with the necessary infrastructure to make it the social heart of the old town of Levanger in the long term.

In order to turn this vision of Levanger into a reality, we have developed a comprehensive set of measures around 4 main pillars, all working independently and adding value on their own, but really making sense when they get to work together as part of a bigger Puzzle.

## 1. MOBILITY CONCEPT

Levanger needs a new Mobility concept; a future oriented, long-term investment in a green, climate-friendly and efficient system. We have developed a progressive implementation of measures to guarantee an alternative to the dependency on the car that has damaged the original principles of the town.

### A. Effective management of car usage.

We have to reduce the amount of cars, their speed and their pollution and define pedestrian-only areas that will allow people to recover the public space and new activities will flourish. In 10 years, the old town will only be accessible to cars that belong to residents, emergency services and city services, achieving a complete pedestrian and green-mobility scheme.

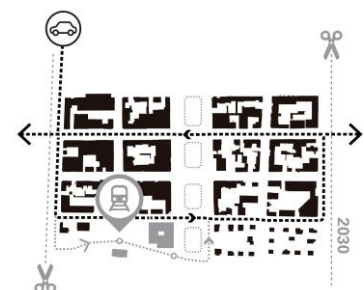
1. Streets will be limited to one **single direction** with the creation of an efficient loop around Levanger.

2. The **speed limit** will be restricted to 50 km/h in the Car-Loop, and to 30km for the rest of the old town.

3. Access and **Parking** in Levanger will be restricted to residents-only, making all other parking spaces in the city limited in time at a fee. E-cars will be exempt of this fee to encourage their switch to green systems.

4. **Discharge Parking lots**. The only public, free available parking lots will be located outside the city, serviced with an effective, free of charge bus-loop around the city.

5. - New underground Parking. The future functioning of the Levanger Kulturhuset as a future proof cultural venue is linked to the construction of an underground parking that will welcome visitors and ease the use of open space.



## B. Efficient and eco-friendly transportation system.

At the same time, we will create an attractive alternative to cars, understanding the train station as a neuralgic point for close and long distance commuters.

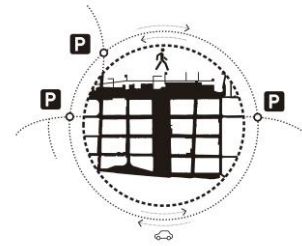
1. **Bus network.** Reinforcing the bus network, with electric vehicles that run every 15-20 minutes and allow people to move effectively within and also from outside the city, connecting the main players in the town where discharge Parking lots appear like the University, the Hospital, the Mall, the new Housing development in the port and different residential areas with the old town and the train station.

2. **E-car Rental & Sharing platform.** Similar to many cities around the world, we propose a platform that will allow people to rent or share an electric car parked outside the station and other strategic points such as the mall or the university. More docking stations will be planned around the municipality to encourage people to stop using personal cars and switch to a more eco-friendly future of shared transportation.

- **Autonomous Vehicles.** The car service could be substituted with autonomous vehicles in a not so far away future.

3. **Dedicated Bike-Lanes** will appear on every street, together with dedicated **bicycle parking sheds**, to make the use of the bicycle as safe and convenient as possible.

4. **City e-Bike & e-Scooters:** The already present city-bike system will be reinforced with docking stations strategically placed around the municipality.



Ultimately, the Train, Bus, Taxi, e-Cars and e-bikes will all work seamlessly together to provide a transportation solution that will substitute the need for private cars. Anyone willing to attend an event or have dinner at one of the nice restaurants, should find it easier to use the public transport system, than to deal with car traffic and scarce parking in the old town.

## 2. URBAN DESIGN STRATEGIES

Once the use of the car is restricted, and so is the pollution and noise linked to it, the public space that can be enjoyed in any way imaginable. In order to turn the ambitious vision of Levanger into a reality, we propose the following interventions in the city.

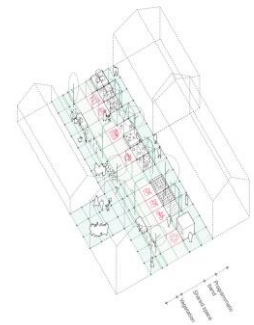
### A. Street Sections & Programmatic Bands.

The project undertakes a re-design of the street sections, from a car-based design we switch to a programmatic distribution where different elements and uses come to play following the Backbone diagram. The area traditionally dedicated to parking spaces is no longer car-exclusive oriented. We envision the implementation of designed, programmable bands that can act as a space and vector for new activities. They can be appropriated by the citizens and host a variety of uses, including parking spots when and if necessary.

1. **Pavement.** The streets with special stone pavement will be maintained, with strategic markings on the floor. On the contrary, those with asphalt should undergo a suppression of the different levels, creating a uniform space with pedestrian priority.

2. **Green Corridors.** The incorporation of new planters and the plantation of trees always respecting the fire limitations will foster the creation of bio-diverse green channels through the city. Streets now empty of any vegetation will vibrate with small vegetable gardens, flowers and small bushes.

3. **Wooden Boxes.** This scheme is supported by the installation of "Programmatic Units". Take the example of a wooden shed placed on the street, with a code access given to all the block dwellers containing different sets of tools: A barbeque, a number of wooden chairs, a couple of tables, gardening tools, kids games... etc. This way, every street can be turned into a small, controlled, safe community space where locals and visitors, as well as local business come together and enjoy public space.



### B. Levangersundet. The Waterfront

We envision the installation of a water promenade to strengthen the relationship between the city and the Levangersundet. The wooden walkway on the water would run the complete waterfront, opened at both ends, in order to encourage citizens and visitors to take a stroll close to the water. The wooden catwalk can either be built on pillars or stand seasonally on floaters. Different openings will grant access to the current industrial buildings.

### C. Allmenningen & the Renovation of the waterfront space

The level drop between the Sjøgata and the Allmenningen space by the water is repurposed into a dynamic public space where the car is no longer the main actor. Closeness to the water is attractive by itself, and the industry spaces, empty during the weekend, should allow the public to benefit from this closeness to the water. The productive activities are deeply rooted in the city, but the spaces that service them should be repurposed to make the most out of them. The activation of this area could then lead to the reconversion of some industrial buildings into mixed-use units with cultural venues and housing solutions in the future. The higher the population density in Levanger, the more vibrant and lively the downtown area will be.

### E. Real State in Levanger, housing strategies: available state properties & unbuilt land.

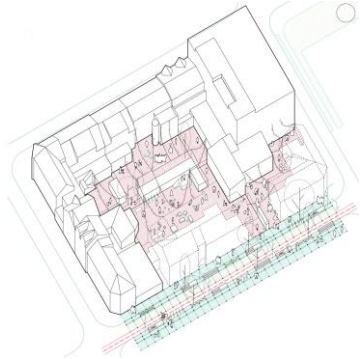
1. **Densification & Productive uses:** We understand that the future development of Levanger is attached to densification. More dwellers bring more activities and dynamics, that bring more services and business and the cycle of re-activation begins.

2. **Rehabilitation:** We strongly encourage the Levanger commune to rehabilitate the empty housing units and turn them into Housing solutions for Students, Young couples or mixed living spaces.

**3. New Developments.** Moreover, the empty plots available for construction should be consolidated with Housing solutions that respect the Architectural Heritage, with Services or Productive uses in the lower levels.

**4. Local Synergies:** The wooden architectural quality of the old town guarantees a certain level of renewal; for example, through the life-span of architectural elements like the facade, the roof or stairwells. This characteristic links the future life of the town to local industries and fosters the creation of circular economies around climate-friendly wood harvesting and traditional construction methods.

#### D. Patios & future developments.



The Patios are a key element of the Levanger urban and architectural heritage, and new developments in the old town center should respect this building typology:

**1 - Maintain building restrictions.** The old town guideline restricting the maximum depth of the buildings to guarantee the generation of Patio spaces inside the city block, a facade alignment to the street line and a maximum cornice height plus rooftop setbacks or tilted roof should be respected to preserve the uniqueness of Levanger.

**2. - Patio Access:** A controlled access should be guaranteed, through a gate or a covered hallway, granting eventual access to the Patios when desired.

**3. - Artifacts: Wooden Structures, Recycling & Upcycling.** The construction of temporary structures like stands and public seating can transform any patio, street or square into a vibrant performance venue. We propose the design of various elements.

**4. - Interweaving into the cultural scene of Levanger:** Chapter 4.

#### F. The Historical Park Axis

**1. The vision:** The Park Axis will act as the main open air cultural venue, providing the old town with several spaces that can accommodate events of diverse character and scale, ranging from the annual Marsimartnan Market or Christmas market, to any event linked with the rich artistic scene present in Levanger:

- Sjøparken - Extra Small events (**XS**): Poetry Slam, Kids Marionettes.
- Torvet historical kiosk - Small events (**S**): small trio music concert, dance, theatre
- Torvet Esplanade - Large events (**L**): Annual Market, Fairs, Food Festival.
- Nedre park esplanade - Medium events (**M**): small concert, summer cinema, market
- Nedre Torv esplanade – Extra Large Events: big concerts with bar, festivals, summer fairs.
- Levangerelva – (**XXL**) The openness and proximity of the land available by the river opens a

whole dimension for the old town, where event linked with the Sami culture like reindeer races and other open air events can take place

All these spaces will be managed through de Levanger App (Chapter 4).

The following Design Strategies will be undertaken:

**1. A continuous linear Park, from the river to the fjord:** The restrictions on traffic and the re-activation of the streets as a space for pedestrians will translate into more people moving freely around the downtown area at a slower pace. The park will be perceived as a linear green element connecting the two lines of water. The suppression of barriers and sidewalks will encourage pedestrians to move freely while making cars aware that they do not have a priority role in the downtown area.

**2. Functional Pavement:** A general intervention in the pavements is undertaken, equipping the different parts of the Park with electricity, Wi-Fi and effective water sewage. This equipment will create a system of flexible spaces that maintains the original character of each square, allowing them to adapt to the many different activities around the year.

**3. Wood Boxes** will also appear together with the pavement treatment, hosting the necessary elements to transform the public space. Where a chess-board appears on the pavement, a wood box will also appear storing wooden pieces available for people to play chess. The same will happen with boulder and other "street & Park friendly games" The Park axis will become a public, open playground available for all dwellers and visitors alike, regardless of age and culture, turning it into a diverse and inclusive meeting place.

**4. Interweaving.** The Park Axis will remain a central element also to the newly proposed transportation system. Parking for bikes, Bus-loop stops and e-cars will make sure the whole green spine is well communicated and nurtured, within a walking distance to the Levanger Train Station.



#### G. Levangerelva: The River Basin.

The current river basin offers some 30.000m<sup>2</sup> of available open space.

A connection through a pedestrian & bicycle bridge is foreseen in the future. In the short term, a controlled and safe level crossing leaving from the entrance of the Kulturhuset will guarantee the vertical extension of the Park Axis towards the river. This way, the railway tracks will no longer stand as a physical boundary to the city and an effective connection to the river will be achieved. Although the space is not suitable for permanent structures due to the risk of flooding, temporary events like Fairs, Circus and events linked with the Sami culture can benefit from the openness and yet proximity of this space. The mentioned Wooden Boxes and programmatic bands will bring life to these spaces, with running and off-road biking trails that will allow for a quick walk into the nature.



### 3. LEVANGER KULTURHUSET

We envision a complete new Kulturhuset for Levanger.

We propose a building that is much more than a library, acting like a cultural heart that spills out to the neighboring plots, extending its tentacles to reach out to the whole downtown area. Levanger Kulturhuset stands as a unique Building, a new Icon that bridges the wooden heritage of Levanger with a fully equipped architectural piece for the future.

The Architectural scheme is very simple to offer the greatest possible flexibility:

A number of wooden boxes with closed wooden skin float over an open and welcoming ground floor, creating a diagonal connection between the park axis and the new Transportation Hub. Based on the previous studies, we have developed a wide program that fits into the different sized boxes: a big Kinosaal / Auditorium for 280 people (A), a Newton room/ Exhibition room (B), a small Kinosaal for 180 people (C) and multipurpose performing arts room with retractile seating.

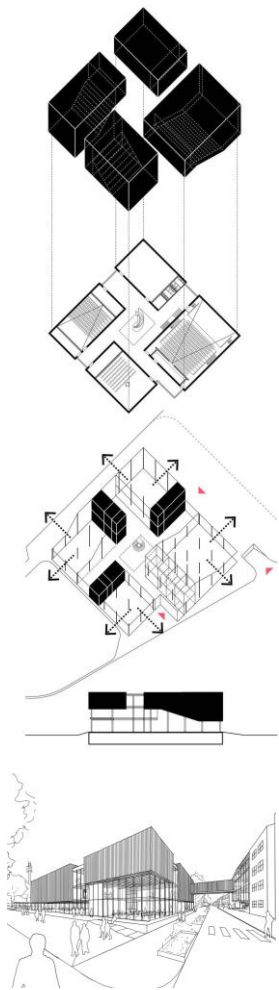
In contrast to this close wooden skin, the transparency on the ground floor is a welcoming feature, blurring the limits between the inside and the outside. These spaces can act all as independent units or come together as a communal space that spills out to the surrounding parks and streets. The circulation spaces are well lit through a central skylight and look over to the park axis, the Levangerelva, the Station and the Jernbanegata.

The ground floor is elevated over the street level to guarantee flood compliance but is connected seamlessly to the Nedre Torv through a sloping access, creating a Plaza that extends until Tollbugata. The new Kulturhuset is planned to host an underground parking that will host all HVAC systems and help free the Nedre Torv square when big events take place. The pavement to the plaza extends like a carpet, hosting any necessary cultural events in connection with the Levanger Kulturhuset. This square will be featured with a perimeter of fixed Posts with electricity, which will allow for a removable light canopy to be mounted in the event of concerts and big events. These posts will blend together with the trees when not in use.

The building stands as an iconic figure, while at the same time blending perfectly with its surroundings. The wooden structure and facade, together with the volumetric adaptation to the building guidelines ensure a seamless integration into the old town.

Directly across the street, the House at Jernbanegata #21 will be renovated and turned into reading spaces in connection with the **House of Books** that will be built in the empty plot behind the City Council, granting access to the parking ramp through a free floor standing on pilotis.

A new stairwell and elevator will connect the two buildings, while a footbridge links the plot over to the big Levangerhuset.



### 4. LEVANGER HUB: Cultural and Public Space management tool. "A platform to manage them all"

Free space can become anything we can imagine when made available to the public. The big question is how to manage these spaces and most importantly, how to engage people and encourage citizen participation.

**A sense of Belonging & Community** will be created as the measures mentioned above are implemented. When citizens from Levanger and all neighboring communities feel they can actively use their city and recognize it as their own, the feeling of belonging will naturally flourish.

**Participation:** Now the question is how to manage all this public space made available to them. We believe that technology can really help us to engage the community and create a participatory platform where people can keep updated with the latest events, get a sense of community and actively participate and give feedback to their community.

**Levanger Hub** is the proposed tool to create a democratic platform, where Levanger Commune as a whole is made available to its citizens. Levanger Hub is thought as a modern database, present in all traditional and new technology media alike: A cultural or administration office where the elderly can walk in and be informed, posted every weekend on the newspaper but also present in an online domain as well as on a Mobile App.

The **PLATFORM** will manage and match **LOCATIONS & PLAYERS**.

**LOCATIONS** understood as any given space, public or private, with the inherent potential of becoming a piece of a bigger puzzle that we call Levanger Hub. That is, the new Kulturhuset, the Patios, the entire Park Axis, streets, squares; even the new waterfront or river promenade can act as independent Locations or get connected and become part of a greater cultural landscape.

**PLAYERS** are all the main existing actors Public and Private that have an important role: The University and Student Groups, Commercial Spaces, the City Council and the Library as well as associations like the By&bygdeLAB. Moreover, nearby towns, schools or any given group like music bands, book clubs or even single citizens like artists and performers are encouraged to take an active role. The more people feel and are actively involved, the more successful the platform will be.

The role of this platform is to create an open, democratic and dynamic space where everyone can have a voice, an opportunity to engage in their city, to propose and organize events. The platform will link all this potential activity, with the great offer of Locations available and most importantly, to any visitor wanting to attend an event!

