



FUŽINE – SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS FOR TRIMO URBAN CRASH 2010/2011

The in-depth interviews were conducted by students of the Faculty of Social Sciences within the framework of practical studies for the Environmental Sociology class, in March 2010.

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A total of 19 interviews were conducted. The interviewees are representatives of various societies that operate within the framework of Ljubljana's Fužine quarter and consist of local inhabitants (youth, pensioners, sportsmen, parishioners), representatives of the City Municipality of Ljubljana, and two Fužine locals who are quite visible in the media.

Persons interviewed:

Sladjana Zarić (SPM SOCIETY – community programs),

Tatjana Božič Geč (MARTIN KRPAN PRIMARY SCHOOL),

Marjeta Smole (SECONDARY SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY),

Simon Kvaternik (FUŽINE PARISH OFFICE),

Meta Čermelj (CONA FUŽINE),

Erika Račič (YOUTH FRIENDS ASSOCIATION MOSTE),

Darja Gogala (local self-government service, City of Ljubljana),

Stanislava Marija Ferenčak Marin (council president of the Moste District Community),

Polona Dominik (Skala society, head of street-level youth education),

Bojana Genorio (retirement home director),

Zalka Lunder (president of the Pensioners' Organization),

Danica Bele (secretary of the Pensioners' Organization),

Zlatan Čordić - Zlatko (hip hop artist),

Danica Simšič (former Mayor of Ljubljana; member of the Ljubljana City Council, elected representative of the Moste District Community),

Vitomir Simunišek (counselling service head at the Moste-Polje Social Work Centre),

Mišo Pavlovič ("Korak" programme head at the Moste-Polje Social Work Centre),

Andrej Torkar (bowls society president),

Slađana Šmitran (head of the Vidovdan society) and

Nina (student helping out in the Vidovdan society).

CHIEF OBSERVATIONS

The interviewees believe that the bad reputation of Fužine is undeserved as life in the neighbourhood is in fact very pleasant and has a lot to offer. The community is characterized by a great deal of social cohesion and a unique combination of customs and habits that result from the colourful cultural backgrounds of its inhabitants.

It has been expressed, though, that the degree of solidarity in the community was higher in the past, something the interviewees are generally nostalgic about.

With regard to desired content deemed appropriate (feasible) for the competition assignment, representatives of both youth and adult associations primarily pointed out content aimed at the younger segment of the population (teenagers and young adults). Representatives of pensioners' organizations put forward infrastructure for the elderly. A combination of sports and social content that could satisfy the needs of a broad population group (spectating, resting, keeping company) is in highest demand, while culture and social engagement were mentioned as well.

The most discussed issue appears to be the decaying spectator stand by the sports grounds of the Martin Krpan Primary School, a popular meeting place where locals socialize and spectate sports and cultural events (the meadow by the sports grounds hosts the largest public events in Fužine). The Preglov trg square (the central square in Fužine) was proposed as a secondary location. An ideal public installation would be safe, modest, useful and sustainable.

Assignment proposal:

On the basis of our conclusions, we believe that the most suitable competition assignment involves the design of a multi-functional spectator stand next to the Martin Krpan Primary School, as such an installation would be of good use to all generations. In order to allow the spectating of sports as well as public events, the structure needs to be open and provide a good view of the sports grounds and the nearby meadow.

Interview summaries:

Sladjana Zarić (SPM SOCIETY – community programs)

The SPM society runs two projects; the programme of Youth Leisure Activities and a joint project (in cooperation with Cona Fužine, the Fužine Counselling Service and the District Community) dubbed "Let's bring life to Fužine". The projects mainly involve actions taking part during three days; namely the December New Year fair, the April cleaning initiative and a whole-day event in September. The latter is organized on the sports grounds by the Martin Krpan Primary School. It consists of a football tournament, children's workshops, folklore presentations of various nationalities and other events.

According to Mrs. Zarić, the Fužine quarter has had a bad reputation while actually offering a lot to its inhabitants (children's playgrounds, footpaths, proximity to the Golovec hill, football fields and basketball courts, numerous activities for children).

Perhaps, she says, something is missing to cater to the **elderly**, a location for senior citizens who do not live in retirement homes. At any rate, the most pressing issue according to her is the alarming condition of the **spectator stand** next to the Martin Krpan Primary School where **youth** like to assemble. They meet there to play cards, hang out, watch others play football, etc. Should the stand be rebuilt, it would also be quite useful during their yearly event organized in the nearby meadow. It seems like no one is willing to assume responsibility for this part of Fužine, though (i.e. the sports grounds next to the school). Mrs. Zarić mentions they asked the school to restore the stand last year but there was no result.

And how would a new public installation be received, according to her? **The Fužine locals are always somewhat suspicious at first, but quickly grow to like new things.** In this manner, for example, the recently installed milk vending machine has become rather popular lately. As far as maintenance is concerned, there might be a few unruly teenagers around but there are also orderly adults who don't mind tidying up after the kids.

Tatjana Božič Geč (MARTIN KRPAN PRIMARY SCHOOL)

Fužine is a typical urban “dormitory settlement”; during the morning and noon hours it is empty, but in the afternoon there are quite many children, teenagers and elderly outside.

According to her, the greatest shortcomings are evident in the area of youth activities, namely content for **senior grade-schoolers and high-school teenagers**. The playgrounds and sports fields are just one aspect of this issue. Her proposal was to rebuild the worn-out **spectator stand**. Children and teenagers, as well as adults watching their kids play, assemble there regularly. The nearby surroundings also serve as the grounds of several local events and certain school activities. The existing stand is no longer safe in addition to being very unattractive (a simple metal framework covered in wood). While the stand undergoes makeshift repairs here and there, a new and more robust installation is certainly necessary.

As far as an installation for the elderly is concerned, she thinks children and teenagers would quickly invade their space, making such a project rather inefficient.

Marjeta Smole (SECONDARY SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY)

Although Fužine is an apartment block quarter with a specific population structure, it is a tidy neighbourhood with extensive green spaces. Inhabitants have all the necessary infrastructure at their disposal (bank, post office, community health centre, stores, schools, etc.). The Fužine castle is its own particular cultural monument.

With regard to shortcomings, Mrs. Smole pointed out the lack of parking space and unattended, overgrown footpaths along the river Ljubljanica. Perhaps, **more benches** could be set up. The district community and her school discussed the possibility of building a public installation next to the Martin Krpan Primary School within the framework of the competition. She said the district community is highly active and in **today's increasingly individualized times requires a sense of togetherness and companionship**. The school vicinity is also the location of several local events that bring inhabitants together.

An appealing, unusual, aesthetically pleasant and yet practical structure would be extremely welcome. The materials would have to be **durable in the long run**, while the location should not be too remote in order to discourage vandalism.

Simon Kvaternik (FUŽINE PARISH OFFICE)

The space available to the parish is extremely limited. They do not even have a proper church, for example. Instead, an old house was adapted into a parish office where church activities are conducted.

The reverend explained that the residential quarter consists of almost exclusively apartment blocks. Private houses are very scarce. This characteristic makes people feel constricted, while the available outdoor physical activities consist merely of recreation. Still, there are quite a few green spaces between the apartment buildings, helping to dispel the sense of the strict urban centre.

There are no places, though, where people could **meet** (except for the church grounds). And most importantly, there is no place devoted to **culture**. Available content is limited to the form of individual actions (the New Year fair, for example) and extensive sports surfaces such as playing fields. It would do well to organize some kind of location for the elderly. Perhaps in the fashion of old city squares where people used to gather. In Fužine, squares exist only by name as they do not perform their social function as a gathering place for locals. The reverend is in favour of building an urban installation in the **Preglov trg square**, in the general direction of the Secondary School and the pharmacy (where there is a green space). The concrete area (above the bank and the library) is suitable for certain events (e.g. the fair) but is too close to the road and thus exposed to a great deal of noise. At any rate, he would not multiply sports structures. He also pointed out the fact that the population of Fužine keeps aging (younger people are forced to move out as they cannot expand their home).

The reverend salutes the idea of building an installation with **artistic rather than strictly functional value**.

If it turns out to be something “pretty”, people are more likely to frequent the place. As far as vandalism is concerned, he says the Fužine neighbourhood is no more exposed to it than other places. While the structure might indeed be “sprayed with graffiti” it will certainly not get demolished.

Meta Čermelj (CONA FUŽINE)

Mrs. Čermelj is a proponent of the **spectator stand** idea. According to her, an access to the river isn't too necessary since the inhabitants of Fužine gladly use their three bridges (climbing the Golovec hill, feeding ducks, heading over to the Štepanjsko naselje quarter). Playgrounds for toddlers are quite abundant. The elderly have many pleasant footpaths at their disposal, as well as activities in retirement homes. The teenage population only has basketball courts and football fields, though. She believes the location of the old spectator stand, already a popular meeting place, would be highly appropriate for a new urban installation that would remain useful to future generations as well.

Erika Račič (YOUTH FRIENDS ASSOCIATION MOSTE)

Mrs. Račič has been living in Fužine for over 30 years. She says small children are taken care of although the playground toys aren't maintained too well. She sees the greatest lack of appropriate infrastructure when it comes to the **growing youth** aged 11 or older. They do not have a place where they could socialize and play. Her proposal is some kind of **skate park** or a special **biking track**. After having read the brochure describing last year's project, she started liking the idea of a structure that would provide **various sitting surfaces**, which could also be useful to adults and the elderly and allow for different generations of Fužine inhabitants to interact. She would personally build such a structure somewhere in the vicinity of the **Pregelj square**. There is a library nearby, a home for the elderly, stores, all in all a great deal of activity. Last but not least, she agrees with the rebuilding of the **spectator stand** by the Martin Krpan Primary School – perhaps it could also serve the purposes of children's theatre plays. The primary function of such an urban installation would be socializing, keeping company and relaxing. As far as vandalism is concerned, she says spiteful individuals can be found anywhere. If people embrace the installation, they aren't too likely to damage it, though.

Darja Gogala (local self-government service, City of Ljubljana) and Stanislava Marija Ferenčak Marin (council president of the Moste District Community)

In their interviews, they both presented Fužine from the viewpoint of an inhabitant and from the viewpoint of their “vocation”. Both of them described Fužine as a closely knit community where **the mutual connections between local people** carry a significant importance (the population of Fužine is around 15 000 people). To this purpose, they organize numerous events aimed at further connecting the community. Although the Fužine quarter was built some 30-40 years ago and the cultural profiles of inhabitants are extremely varied, there is general sense of social awareness in the neighbourhood. One of the main characteristics of Fužine is that they bring together people of radically different cultural backgrounds (largely from ex-Yugoslavian republics). Another distinctive characteristic is the narrow span of the population's age structure since predominantly young couples and families moved in when the apartment blocks were built. Thus, they first had difficulties when it came to kindergartens (insufficient capacities) and had to build new ones, and later on problems with the primary school that required the construction of a second primary school. The current issue appears to be the aging of the population. People who moved into Fužine 30 years ago are now growing old. Even though the quarter has a retirement home, interest for vacancies greatly exceeds its capacities. Fužine also has a strong population of children (children of immigrants, or the children of their children) and adults. The elderly population is proportionately smaller, but constantly on the increase.

Keeping the people of Fužine connected is also the charge of numerous societies and organizations supported by the City of Ljubljana, among others. These societies take care of all generations.

Advantages observed by the two interviewees with regard to **Fužine**: lots of green spaces, proximity to the centre of Ljubljana and to “nature” - the Golovec hill, nearby villages with fields (some supposedly fall under the Fužine quarter), strong mutual connections between the inhabitants (when there is a need to unite, they do so immediately), both primary schools, the kindergartens, the secondary school (soon to conduct a higher education programme as well), playgrounds (these could be equipped better, though), footpaths, the Fužine castle.

Shortcomings: too many cars (there used to be one car per apartment, now it is 3-4 cars per apartment – the children are growing up), insufficient parking space (traffic jams), lack of an appropriate community area, aging of the population. A large problem is also the stigma carried by Fužine, which is completely unjustified as Fužine is in fact, according to police statistics, the safest neighbourhood in Ljubljana.

One of the larger projects they have planned is the “Sports island” that would feature playgrounds and playing fields for kids and adults alike (tennis court, beach volley, open-air fitness...).

When asked what kind of urban installation the company Trimo can build in Fužine, they replied that the target population of such a project should be the youth aged between 12 and 25, as they do not have sufficient appropriate surfaces to meet and socialize on. Basketball courts and football fields are poorly equipped. **There is no appropriate spectator stand to allow for tournaments and no event stage.** According to them, these structures are most necessary since the rest is provided for already (except, perhaps, some kind of shade). They also miss **content aimed at girls** – while local boys frequently engage in sports activities, the girls aren’t seen around sports grounds too often.

Certainly, there seems to be the **problem of maintenance.** An agreement cannot be reached with regard to who should be responsible for conducting the maintenance of sports grounds and nearby areas where people park their cars. The locals believe the City Municipality of Ljubljana should take care of this, while the municipality’s stance is that such work should be done by inhabitants themselves or the Moste District Community, under which the Fužine quarter belongs. Who would take care of the newly constructed Trimo installation is still a matter of debate as well. The district community will try to assume responsibility for it, if it can muster the resources. If it cannot, maintenance will simply have to be conducted by Mother Nature.

Polona Dominik (Skala society, head of street-level youth education)

The youth society prepares various workshops, helps kids learn... Since they do not have their own premises, their operation is based in the library. Most of their activities take place in one of the library rooms, while some also occur in the open or on their mobile van (the “minibus of fun”). **Their proposals were too large in scope** to be taken into account for the planned action of the company Trimo – they mainly expressed a need for large structures for the youth as well as their own organization (facilities, **playing room, gym, youth centre...**). Although we explained we were planning a small-scale project they did not provide more relevant information. The target population they suggest are **the youth.**

Bojana Genorio (retirement home director)

Mrs. Genorio believes that the relations between the inhabitants of Fužine are very good. She stressed that the elderly in the retirement home (even those who are not from Fužine) feel very good here. Although they did have some trouble during construction (locals interrupted it several times), these have been smoothed over into what is now good cooperation. The home takes part in project prepared in Fužine while also organizing their own activities that attract locals (they opened an Activity Centre for the elderly).

As the target population of the project, she suggests the **elderly**, because the population of Fužine is aging and because infrastructure dedicated to the elderly can be used by the youth as well – while the opposite is not too likely. She expressed several ideas that fit the framework of the project: the introduction of a resting place and some shade on the footpath along the river Ljubljanica, perhaps merely in the form of **a shade-casting structure with several benches, or maybe a covered pavilion.** The home is advocating the construction of a sports park for the elderly where various exercise tools would be available to the elderly as well as the youth.

Regarding the maintenance of the proposed structure, Mrs. Genorio said that, providing the installation could be used by the elderly, a part of the maintenance duties could be assumed by the retirement home given an appropriate agreement. It would largely depend on the intended purpose of the structure.

**Zalka Lunder (president of the Pensioners' Organization) and
Danica Bele (secretary of the Pensioners' Organization)**

Mrs. Lunder is not an inhabitant of Fužine but she does feel at home here. She says the people of Fužine are very close and place a great deal of importance on good neighbourly relations, something she misses in her hometown. Mrs. Bele, a Fužine local, supports her views. The problems or difficulties they see in Fužine largely involve misbehaving kids (certain ones) and poorly maintained footpaths and pedestrian crossings. They pointed out the acute lack of organized parking space and expressed annoyance over cars being parked on pedestrian crossings. Their society does not require a particular installation since most of their activities are organized in the open or inside their premises. The interviewees also do not have particular wishes or ideas concerning the project. They do think that the urban installation should serve either the elderly or the youth. They suggest its location should be **near the primary schools, close to the retirement home or in the Brodarjev trg square**. They stress the problem of maintenance, which is already a pressing local issue.

Zlatan Čordiĉ - Zlatko (hip hop artist)

Zlatko has very fond memories of his youth and life in Fužine. The young people were always hanging out, the adults showed a great deal of **mutual solidarity** (e.g.: organized collection of recyclable paper in individual apartment blocks), the social differences among the schoolchildren weren't as obvious as they are now (looking at clothes, schoolbags, shoes...), people loved to socialize outside. "Every person I know that moved out of Fužine would gladly come back in the blink of an eye."

Today, the Fužine quarter offers practically all there is to offer when it comes to basic infrastructure – schools, stores, bars, a pharmacy, a retirement home... the number of sandboxes have decreased, there are more cars now. Zlatko misses **youth activities**, for those who do not play football or basketball etc., who appear "lost" because they don't have a clear picture of what to do in the future. Very few programs are in place to **encourage** the youth and present the possibility of interests, hobbies, leisure time spent in a **productive way, channels that would allow them to express themselves**. He also misses the **general communication of the importance of solidarity, equality, positive values, optimism** (one of his ideas, for example, was to dedicate an advertising billboard to the displaying of positive, optimistic messages to passers-by).

Zlatko says the locals would embrace a new installation if they considered it useful. This can be achieved by making it practical, appealing by design – it's the task of architects. The danger of destruction or damage to the installation is just as present as anywhere else in Ljubljana. He supports an installation dedicated to the youth ("truth be told, I don't even care about adults.") although it could also serve the purposes of **socializing between different generations**. His proposed location would be the **green space on Pregelj square**, the green space between the pharmacy and the main road or the **riverbank of Ljubljana**, as this is a highly popular footpath – even for people who no longer live in Fužine.

**Danica Simšič (former Mayor of Ljubljana; member of the Ljubljana
City Council, elected representative of the Moste District Community)**

Mrs. Simšič has been living in Fužine her entire life. She believes Fužine is one of the most beautiful quarters in Ljubljana. The quarter had all the necessary infrastructure in 1985 already. Fužine is also one of the safest neighbourhoods, in spite of the prevalent stigma. The negative stereotypes don't bother the inhabitants and are gradually disappearing. The ethnical structure is very colourful which escalates certain situations, but there are no serious conflicts.

Fužine is a nice example of a neighbourhood that could become **even friendlier to children, the disabled and senior citizens**. Mrs. Simšič pointed out the dispute between inhabitants and the authorities concerning

public infrastructure. When the District Community presents its proposals for the management of public spaces, all they receive in return is a formalistic reply saying it is their own problem. Let's not forget to mention that the City Municipality of Ljubljana is the actual owner of the Fužine quarter.

According to Mrs. Simšič, Fužine mainly lack the possibility of **organized socializing**, as its inhabitants are no longer as connected as they were 20 or 30 years ago. The social values have changed. The community does not have a single relatively large covered public surface. A location suitable for the organizing of **public or sports events** would be very useful. A new public installation should be multi-functional. It would be maintained by the District Community, if the company Trimo decides so, or perhaps apartment block caretakers and the inhabitants themselves where each apartment would contribute 1 euro. At any rate, the maintenance wouldn't be too expensive. The public installation should be dedicated to the **active generation**, meaning the young or perhaps ranging from kids all the way up to those aged 40 or 50. She says the elderly prefer to frequent locations specifically intended for them, and they also require additional safety measures. She thinks the building of some kind of **riverbank structure with sitting surfaces along the waterside of Ljubljana would be a great idea**. At any rate, the installation should serve a particular purpose, for example the organization of public events. It should also be **environmentally friendly and without sharp edges**. Lively colours would be welcome to provide some positive energy. It could be distinctive, provocative and highly noticeable but it shouldn't really be something »super pompous«. Just as any structure in Fužine or anywhere else, it could be met with disagreement. Nothing suits everyone after all. Mrs. Simšič also said she often visits various events taking place in Fužine, takes frequent walks and likes to climb the nearby Golovec hill. All in all, she is very pleased with life in the neighbourhood.

**Vitimir Simunišek (counselling service head of the Moste-Polje Social Work Centre),
Mišo Pavlovič ("Korak" programme head of the Moste-Polje Social Work Centre),
Andrej Torkar (bowls society president),
Slađana Šmitran (head of the Vidovdan society) and
Nina (student helping out in the Vidovdan society)**

Combined summary of the interviews (Monika Borovnik)

The general attitude of the interviewees towards Fužine is very positive. They don't feel threatened or dislocated from the remaining parts of Ljubljana and pay no mind to the various stereotypes circling around Fužine. In light of being a very compressed settlement with 16 000 inhabitants, the quarter functions rather well. The apartment blocks are huge and well built. There are many green spaces, footpaths, playgrounds, the Golovec hill is near. Each year, the quarter organizes a cleaning initiative which helps do away with the garbage that piles up throughout the year. They pointed out that the general population is aging, although young families are still very abundant. Infrastructure is well taken care of in Fužine. Almost all the interviewees, though, said that they miss another **bench or two where they could sit, rest, enjoy nature, read books, watch others and the like**. All of them focused on the **Preglov trg** square in this regard, which is already a local centre of activity. Three of the interviewees only work in Fužine, while three of them have been living there for a long time.

The three interviewees who run various societies and youth programmes think the installation should be build on the sports grounds next to the Martin Krpan Primary School where there is already an existing **spectator stand**. The old stand should of course be replaced by a new one where people, particularly the youth, could sit, watch football games during one of the many local tournaments, basketball... The location is a favourite meeting place of kids (7th and 8th graders, high school students, too) where they often keep company until late evening hours. The locals can watch over the sports grounds from their apartment blocks. The interviewees believe noise made by the kids doesn't bother the other inhabitants as they have grown used to it already. While toddlers are well taken care of with the many playgrounds, sandboxes and swings, preteen children and teenagers don't have much content at their disposal. The aforementioned location is also the grounds of several cultural events ("Let's bring life to Fužine", presentations of various societies) that attract a lot of locals, so a public installation there would be useful to quite a few organizations as well. It should be able to seat a decent number of people and be artistically appealing. They also mentioned a new open-air fitness machine which is planned in the nearby square. The Preglov trg square, the central square in Fužine namely, should indeed be livened up a bit. People here like to frequent the green spaces around the apartment

blocks. **A smaller installation would certainly not be opposed to, although inhabitants did resist the building of the new retirement home because it took away their meadow.** The new installation should be designed with this in mind so as not to upset the locals. Somebody willing take care of it must be found as well. The fear of damage or destruction isn't too justified, though. While there has been some vandalism in the past, it is now on the decline and was never too serious to begin with.

An older interviewee who has been living in Fužine for over 40 years would prefer if the structure stood by the **Zaloška street**, across from the bank and the store where there is some kind of paved platform with several stairways. He referred to it as a **natural amphitheatre**. This location is noticeable since many people pass by every day. It could definitely use some content, like benches or a structure where people could park their bicycles as well. It should be dedicated to different age groups, the youth as well as the elderly. He doesn't like the spectator stand idea, saying people only play football there which doesn't really interest senior citizens, while the event "Let's bring life to Fužine" only takes place once a year. According to his opinion, a new spectator stand isn't necessary because the old one could be restored well enough. He pointed out the noise that worries some of the nearby inhabitants, whereas the platform on Zaloška street has no apartment blocks in the immediate vicinity. He described Fužine's past, mentioning some good and bad sides, saying that certain individuals or groups are prone to damaging public property. The inhabitants have gotten used to it all, though. Personally, he likes to lead an active life, spending a lot of time in nature, sometimes outside of Fužine and Ljubljana as well.

The remaining two interviewees - young students who have lived in Fužine for over 20 years now - mentioned several possible locations. The first would be **the far end of Fužine, by the Nove Fužine Primary School**, where there is a bowls court, the popular meeting location of several generations. The second location they proposed was **the meadow by the library**, where various societies are based. **The new installation should consist of small benches and tables. It should be quiet and inconspicuous, modern, painted in pleasant green colours so that it makes people feel comfortable.** The third possible location lies next to the river Ljubljanica, where some kind of **footbridge or a platform above the river** could be constructed, surrounded by a safety fence of course, where people could rest, read or converse. They aren't too keen on excessive amounts of construction material. It should be nice, even and modest. Something **overly artistic and unusual could detract the locals from using it.** The inhabitants need to feel that this structure is useful to them. It should be intended for a broad group of people. The two young interviewees are planning their futures in Fužine, they wish to raise their children in this neighbourhood as well. They believe all social groups should be taken care of, mentioning tolerance as an important value. They defended Fužine from unjust stereotypes, stating that the youth population is very active and very pleased with their life in Fužine and has no intention of moving elsewhere. Although they had experiences with a certain degree of vandalism in the past, they believe those times are gone and the current generations are much more relaxed. They enjoy an active lifestyle and spend a lot of time outside. They also like to sit on benches and read. Their parents are very active as well. They tend to their gardens in the vicinity of Fužine and take frequent walks.