P2 Graduation Plan: Architecture
The graduation plan consists of at least the following data/segments:

Personal information

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Studio

Theme (general): Explore lab
Teachers (the head of the studio): Robert Nottrot
Argumentation of choice of the studio: Explore lab is the only studio allowing free exploration of the chosen topic. It also enables in-depth research of a desired theme. Moreover, personally, I prefer to research on my own, with the chosen mentors, over fully guided studio.
Theme (personal): Housing neighborhood (in Slovenia)
Teachers: Sang Lee (1st), Jan van de Voort (2nd), Gregory Bracken (research)

Title

Title of the graduation Project: Feeling the sense of neighborhood

1. Product

Problem Statement

Problem
To begin with, my project will concern housing in Slovenia. While researching on this topic, I discovered many problems concerning this issue, however, problem that stroked me the most, is not concerning housing only, however, it is highly relevant for everyday life in the local environment. The research problem is disconnection between individuals or phenomenon marked as individualism, present in Slovenian society, but also in broader range.

What is crucial, individualism means an ideology or a value, also, ‘the orientation of the man to himself (or to his family), to the pursuit of his own goals and interests and it also means the society, where social ties between members are not strong’, according to Geert Hofstede (Zver, Milan, Živko, Tjaša, 2003, p. 2). As human beings are more individualistic, they are less connected one to another. Moreover, as social circumstances changed through the years, individuals became free-choosers of their life-trajectories. As their everyday life needs to be flexible in adapting to current circumstances, it is full of risks. Moreover, daily risks intensify in a condition of permanent uncertainty, which brings stress in the life of people.
How individualism is displaying in Slovenian society is illuminated by Ivan Svetlik (2012). He points out that the value, which makes Slovenians different from other nations, is individualism. At first, Slovenians identify with their family, but after a while a social connectivity weakens drastically. Further more, Slovenian inhabitants are trying to solve problems alone, even though that is sometimes not possible.

The “problem” of individualism in Slovenia is also evident from the organization of housing environment. According to Ivanšek (1988), the most typical and highly popular type of housing in Slovenia is single-family house, which is highly individualistic. This is, on one side, showing in wish to poses detached house, standing on its own parcel, with the option of the path going around the house and on the other, in tendency that individual’s house should differ from others in at least some details, as for example color.

The problematic aspects of these trends are that on one hand, diverse residential units combined are not creating coherent urban tissue, but moreover, in such environment, there is no common space for individuals to connect, to interact.


**Research questions**

Identifying the described problem, a research question was formed as following:

How should a neighborhood in Ljubljana be designed and organized according to its functional and physical characteristics that it would encourage connections (encourage interactions and strengthen identity) between its inhabitants, individuals?

**Design assignment**

Firstly, after a finished theoretical research, derived principles, answering a set question, will be used as guiding points for design assignment. Practically, housing neighborhood in Ljubljana, Slovenia will be designed. A neighborhood will contain individual housing units, but also an accompanying common spaces and public infrastructure, such as for example a grocery store, playgrounds, parks, kindergarten and etc.

A diagrammatic scheme of larger neighborhood will be proposed and a part (a stripe) of it will be designed in detail. The neighborhood will be made according to specific layout, following acknowledges from the research. Connecting inhabitants in built environment will be the main principle within this.

**(Project) goal**

To begin with, general goal of my project would be using architecture, a neighborhood, as a tool for encouraging social connections between the inhabitants in their living environment. Moreover, an important task would also be establishing opportunities for connecting processes, interactions and strengthening an identity of the build environment as described in research paper.
It is already evident from the problem description, why I think, it is important to strengthen bonds between individualists. Moreover, stronger connections can contribute to more stable social, living environment. It is also important that the theoretical acknowledgments and moreover identified characteristic of Slovenian cultural background could be used in any future practical project located Ljubljana.

2. Process

Method description

Several methods were and will be used within this project. They will be briefly described in the following section.

Literature review
“The literature” is defined, “as a body of information, existing in a wide variety of stored formats, that has conceptual relevance for a particular topic of inquiry” (Groat, 2002). Literature was used, firstly, to define the framework of the research, after that, it has been serving for defining the background theories and principles. For example, topics as following have been studied with its use: firstly, a phenomenon of individualism was researched, then term connecting was described, also other relevant occurrences were defined with its use, moreover, practical principles of built environment, encouraging connections among inhabitants, are being identified. Mostly, literature has been contributing in studying general characteristics linked to broader environment, not just Slovenian conditions.

Observations
The everyday life of individuals was observed and monitored (photographed) in order to discover, how people interact, where interactions occur and what type of interactions there exists. Also, this part is linked to more general population, not just Slovenian one.

Interviews
The interview is being helpful in defining and interpreting the contemporary situation in Slovenia. Interviews were done with different individuals in Ljubljana, in order to confirm some principles discovered with literature and moreover, acknowledge specific characteristics of Slovenian inhabitants. Moreover, in this way, the participation of the “potential clients” can contribute drastically to the positive outcome of the project.

Mapping
Mapping of the broader location has been used, mostly, to identify the characteristic of build urban tissue in Ljubljana. For now, characteristic such as roads connections, public transport and public infrastructure were mapped and analyzed.

Literature (and general practical preference)

In this part, the literature used in each chapter of the theoretical research is noted:

1. Individualism
2. Defining connection

- Filippovič Hrst, Maša, Dolničar, Vesna (2011) Sense of community and the importance of values: comparison of two neighborhoods in Slovenia. Ljubljana: University in Ljubljana, Faculty for social studies.

3. Neighborhood and sense of neighborhood


4. Interactions and common space


5. Encouraging interactions


6. An identity of build environment


7. Strengthening an identity


Legend: Main literature, Additional quotations
3. Reflection

Relevance

In general, a topic chosen for this graduation project, strengthening connections between inhabitants in neighborhood is not broadly common, thus it is under-researched. Moreover, as there does not exist any solid theory, concerning explored theme, literature from various authors was studied for the sake of this research and their partial knowledge was combined into new whole. Further more, theoretical findings have been tested with the use of interviews held by potential clients, inhabitants of Ljubljana. Therefore, meaningful information has been produced and can be used by the future explorers.

Time planning

Time planning is attached at the end of this document.

Building technology

Here some principles, relevant for the contribution to building technology part, will be discussed. They will also be presented at the P2. Designed neighborhood will not be designed at once, but it will grow part by part according to future demands. Also, the residential units will not be designed as separated units, but several units will be combined in one building. Moreover, residential units will be established according to certain modular system, therefore, the structure and construction will follow this principle. Finally, structure will be established in a way that it will allow the flexibility of the unit’s plan.
<table>
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<td>23 3-7 Jun</td>
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<td>26 24-28 Jun</td>
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<td>27 1-5 Jul</td>
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General research scheme and methodology

I. Theory
Linked to general conditions
- Literature
- Observation, photography assignment

II. Practice
Linked to Slovenian conditions
- Interviews
- Mapping

Research scheme: Theory

Individualism: a problem

in relation to built environment
- Defining connecting

Connecting individuals through
- Sense of neighborhood

Interactions and common space
- Interactions
- Encouraging interactions

Identity of built environment
- Identity
- Strengthening identity

Interactions
- Diversity and types
- Mixing functions and sequence
- Flexibility and indetermination

Function
- Articulation of space
- Disconnection by floors
- Congestion and siting

Physical characteristic
- Uniqueness and distinctiveness
- Flexibility and indetermination
- Unity
P4 REFLECTION PAPER

This paper is a reflection on my graduation work within last few months. To start with, within this first paragraph, I will explain, how I approached my project, what was my theme, why I chose this theme and what was a question that guided my graduation process. For my graduation studio I chose Explore lab, therefore, I approached my graduation project in a different way that most students do in others studios. To begin with, before I really started with my graduation, I already had an individual theme in my mind I wanted to explore. Firstly, I knew my project will concern housing and secondly, I wanted that my project is located in Slovenia, as most likely that will be my working context after I graduate. Moreover, human beings today, particularly in Slovenian society, are highly individualistic, especially, when it comes to a built environment. Therefore, I wanted, within my graduation research, to explore human connections in living environment. Consequently, the main research question posed has been: how should a neighborhood in Ljubljana be designed and organized according to its functional and physical characteristics that it would encourage connections between its inhabitants, individuals?

Research

In this next paragraph, I will explain the research process. Firstly, the used methodology will be mentioned, then, short content-description will be given and finally, research conclusions will be listed.

Research, aiming to answer research question, was divided into theoretical and practical part. In the first one, mostly, literature was studied, where in the second one, nine interviews were made. Firstly, literature was used as research method, as I wanted to collect already existing information and facts, linked to my theme, concerning the brother social context. However, I also wanted to understand the specific, Slovenian social context, therefore, semi-structured interviews were made with the residents of the city Ljubljana. Concerning the content of the research, a notion ‘the sense of neighborhood’ was realized as a crucial point in connecting inhabitants in the neighborhood. Further more, it has contained two sub-notions, interactions in and identity of the built environment. A list of characteristics of built environment was collected, firstly, encouraging interaction and secondly, strengthening identity. This list of theoretical characteristics can be used and applied on an actually design, when aiming to achieved described goal (see research question). The research scheme with listed theoretical principles is shown on scheme1.

Moreover, interviews were done to verify these principles, also in relation to specific cultural occurrences. Only, when interviews were analyzed, it was possible to fully answer the research question. It is possible to encourage connections between inhabitants, individuals, within a neighborhood in Ljubljana, with the use of following functional and physical characteristics shown on scheme2.

The research process was set systematically and brought results that answered a research question set at the beginning successfully.
Aspect 1
(the relationship between research and design)

In this next paragraph, I will describe, what was a relation between the research and design and, if it was successful. The list of principles shown on scheme 2 was also a main guiding point and a drive of my design. Some of these principles were used in forming an urban concept of a design and others in forming an architectural concept of a design. In an urban scheme of the neighborhood a functional diversity is applied, functions were chosen with the help of interviews, according to activities inhabitants of Ljubljana do in their free time. Functions are placed in a certain way, according to the acknowledged theory. Moreover, non-residential functions are set in such way that they can be replaced in a future, also, some places are left undetermined. In terms of physical characteristics, a special attention has been paid to articulation of the outside common spaces, in terms of dimensions, openness and enclosure and folding, also, these principles were realized through the theory. As all the individual units are two stories high, they are also physically related to the outside space. Also, the units are placed in relation to the outside space, as well as other individual units. Moreover, the aim was that the individual units would be distinctive and unified as total on one hand, however, that they would also be flexible and that individuals could cooperate in their final determination. These last principles, unity, flexibility and indetermination were also a drive for architectural concept of a design. Individual houses have been designed in such way that they create a unity on one hand and leave some interpretation to the users. All the principles, realized as an answer to a research question, were used as guide points for a design, helped forming a design concept, but they are also expressed through an actual design. Therefore, as research conclusions were used as guiding point for a design, the relation between the research and a design was successful.

Aspect 2
(the relationship between the theme of the studio and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

Concerning this aspect, there is probably a difference between Explore lab-members and other students. As we did not have any other common theme in a studio, other then explore, our themes were chosen individually. Also, in my case, theme, location and program or type of building were chosen in parallel. The fact that my project will be housing was actually decided before choosing a theme. However, specific location was chosen, as it was set on the outskirt of the city Ljubljana, where built tissue was degraded, almost rurally oriented and people have been living in individual housing, with no actually connection between them in terms of physical connection, as well as the appearances of their individual units. Therefore, the spirit of this location coincided with the investigated theme.

Aspect 3
(the relationship between the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework)

Again, it is hard to refer to this aspect as an Explore lab-member. As studio did not have any predetermined approach, except prescribing an extensive research, our hands were totally free in choosing the methodology for our process. However, an extensive research determined our project probably more then projects in other studios.
Aspect 4
(the relationship between the project and the wider social context)

To begin with, a theme chosen for my graduation project was predominantly a social theme. Here, I will explain, how is this research theme, as well as my project socially relevant. To begin with, a topic chosen for my graduation project, strengthening connections between inhabitants in neighborhood is not broadly common, thus it is under-researched. Moreover, as there does not exist any solid theory, concerning explored theme, literature from various authors was studied for the sake of this research and their partial knowledge was combined into new whole. Further more, theoretical findings have been tested with the use of interviews held by potential clients, inhabitants of Ljubljana. Therefore, meaningful information has been produced and can be used by the future explorers. Also, a project and design itself is socially sensitive, as it is, in a way based, on a participatory approach. If such project would be realized in reality, it would demand a cooperation with actual clients, from choosing functions in a neighborhood, to choosing certain features from an established catalog, such as desired volume configuration, plan determination, facade textures, window openings, fence-materials and so-on. As the project is conceived in a way, leaving a space for a cooperation of residents, it is socially responsible. According to described, there is a relation between my project and a wider social context.
P5 REFLECTION

In the following few paragraphs, there will be given a reflection on my graduation work within past year. Firstly, I will explain, what were the staring circumstances for my project, how I approached my project, what was the theme of my research and why I chose such theme.

To begin with, Explore lab was chosen as my graduation studio. In this studio, students usually approach graduation projects in a different way that most students do in other studios, mostly, more individually. There is no common theme prescribed, also, no approach, location or graduation process is set. However, an extensive research is demanded, with individual theme. This theme is usually driving the process of researching, but also, further on, a design itself.

Before I started with my graduation project, I already knew that I want to locate a design on a specific area, in Slovenia, mostly, due to a fact that this will be my working context in the future. Also, I was particularly interested in housing architecture, more specifically in collective housing architecture. Therefore, I started looking at the ‘problems’ occurring in Slovenia, concerning housing architecture.

Problem that stroked me the most was that human beings today, particularly in Slovenia, are highly individualistic. This problem reflects also in built environment, as inhabitants want to live in individual house, located on its own plot and differing highly from surrounding houses. Therefore, I started to explore the problem of individualism or more specifically human connections in general and in built environment. Consequently, I set my research question as: how should a neighborhood in Ljubljana be designed and organized according to its functional and physical characteristics that it would encourage connections between its inhabitants, individuals?

Research

In this next paragraph, I will explain the research process. Firstly, I will mention, which methodology I have been using, then, I will shortly describe the content of my research and finally, research conclusions will be listed. I will explain all this, so that it will be easier to understand the relation between a research and a design.

Research, aiming to answer a research question, was divided into two parts, theoretical and practical part. In the first one, mostly, literature was studied, where in the second one, nine interviews were made. Firstly, literature was used as research method, as I wanted to collect already existing information and facts, linked to my theme, concerning the brother social context. This was rather problematic, as there is not a lot of specific literature on this theme. Therefore, I needed to study various authors and combined their view in a holistic story.

Next to that, I also wanted to understand the specific, Slovenian social context, therefore, I made several semi-structured interviews with the residents of the city Ljubljana.

Concerning the content of the research, a notion ‘the sense of neighborhood’ was realized as a crucial point in connecting inhabitants in the neighborhood. Further more, it has contained two sub-notions, interactions in and identity of the built environment. Mostly with the help of literature, a list of characteristics of built environment was collected, firstly, encouraging interaction and secondly, strengthening identity. As conclusions of the research paper, a list of principles was made. This list of theoretical characteristics can be used and applied on an actually design, when aiming to connect inhabitants within the neighborhood (see research question). The research scheme with listed theoretical principles is shown on scheme.1.

Moreover, interviews were done to verify these principles, also in relation to specific cultural occurrences. Only, when interviews were analyzed, it was possible to fully answer the
research question. It is possible to encourage connections between inhabitants, individuals, within a neighborhood in Ljubljana, with the use of following functional and physical characteristics shown on scheme2 and 3.

More information about the extensive research is collected in a separate booklet. The research process was, in my opinion, successful. It was successful mostly, because of the following facts: a research process was set in highly systematic and planed way, a large amount of literature was studied and connected in a coherent whole, also a lot of information was collected within interviews. Therefore, this process brought results that answered a research question set at the beginning successfully.
Scheme 2

Scheme 3
Design

Here, some main design guiding points will be described. As already described, a design assignment set was collective housing or a neighborhood. A scheme for a larger area was made, where a part of the scheme was also detailed. An urban scheme also contains different public functions, where an emphasis was given to residential program. A group of 12 houses was designed, where three types of houses were drawn more specifically and smallest housing unit was detailed. Main design approach was following the conclusions of the research as thoroughly as possible. This relation will be described in the following paragraph. Also, interviews with inhabitants gave important information, which were helpful in designing process. As an assignment was a neighborhood, an important issue was to understand the surrounding urban context. Extensive urban analysis were made and collected in a separate booklet. Also, these analyses were highly informative for a design and served as another guiding point for a design. Moreover, next to mentioned two guiding points, surrounding context was important for a design. Just one example is the use of wood as constructional material, as wood is highly accessible in Slovenia. These guiding points, set at the beginning of the process of designing, were highly relevant and they strictly framed the design process and a design itself.

Aspect 1
(the relationship between research and design)

In this next paragraph, I will describe, the relation between the research and design. As a research was highly relevant for my designing process, this was also the most important aspect for my project. The list of principles shown on sheme2 and 3 was also a main drive of my design. Some of these principles were used in forming an urban concept and others in forming an architectural concept of a design. To begin with, in an urban scheme of the neighborhood a functional diversity has been applied. This was realized as relevant with the help of literature. Functions were chosen with the help of interviews, according to activities inhabitants of Ljubljana do in their free time. Moreover, functions have been placed in a sequence, following the acknowledged theory. Next, non-residential functions have been set in such way that they can be replaced in a future, also, some places have been left undetermined. Concerning physical characteristics of built environment, a special attention has been paid to articulation of the outside common spaces, in terms of dimensions, openness and enclosure and folding, also, these principles were realized through the theory. As all the individual units have been two stories high, they have been physically related to the outside space. Then, the units have been placed in a relation to the outside space, as well as to the other individual units. Moreover, the aim was that the urban layout and individual units together would be distinctive and unified on one hand, as this is helping in strengthening the identity of the neighborhood. However, that they would also be flexible and that individuals could cooperate in their final determination, as this is also important for better identity. These last principles, unity and flexibility were also a drive for architectural concept of a design. Individual houses have been designed in such way that, when combined, they create a unified setting on one hand, but leave some individual interpretation to the users. Also, they have been made in a flexible way, so they can grow and can be changed in the future. In this way, they can adapt to individual wishes, but, can also be changed, if household grows for example.
All the research principles have been used as guiding points for a design, helped forming a design concept, but they have been also expressed through an actual design. As most of the principles from the research were used in design process, this relation was highly successful.

Aspect 2
(the relationship between the theme of the studio and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

Concerning this aspect, there is probably a difference between Explore lab-members and other students. As already explained, we did not have any common theme in a studio, other then explore. Also, in my case, theme, location and program or type of building were chosen in parallel. A specific location was chosen, as it was set on the outskirt of the city Ljubljana, where built tissue was degraded, almost rurally oriented and people have been living in individual housing, with no actually connection between them or the appearance of their individual units. Therefore, the spirit of this location coincided with the investigated theme. So, there was a relationship between the investigated theme and location, but as well the chosen program and assignment.

Aspect 3
(the relationship between the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework)

Again, it is hard to refer to this aspect as an Explore lab-member. As studio did not have any predetermined approach, except prescribing an extensive research, our hands were totally free in choosing the methodology for our process. However, an extensive research determined our project probably more then projects in other studios.

Aspect 4
(the relationship between the project and the wider social context)

To begin with, a theme chosen for my graduation project was predominantly a social theme. Here, I will explain, how is this research theme, as well as my project, socially relevant. To begin with, a topic chosen for my graduation project, strengthening connections between inhabitants in neighborhood is not broadly common, thus it is under-researched. Moreover, as there does not exist any specific, solid theory, concerning explored theme, literature from various authors was studied for the sake of this research and their partial knowledge was combined into another whole. Further more, theoretical findings have been tested with the use of interviews held by potential clients. Therefore, meaningful information has been produced and can be used by the future explorers. Also, a project and design itself is socially sensitive. A design assignment chosen was a neighborhood or collective housing, where also common places have been set, as well as common set of rules for individual units. These rules are based on a participatory approach. If such project would be realized in reality, it would demand a cooperation with actual clients, from choosing functions in a neighborhood, to choosing certain features from an established catalog, such as desired volume configuration, plan determination, facade textures, window openings, fence-materials and so-on. In my opinion, if a project is conceived in a way, leaving a space for a cooperation of residents, it is socially responsible. Therefore, according to described, there is a relation between my project and a wider social context.