

ENVIRONMENT
IS THE
SILENT
CURRICU
LUM

LIQUID CAMPUS MANIFESTO

The campus we value is a campus to explore and engage with. It is the environment we need in order to see and learn, to meet and collaborate, to develop creativity and a sense of responsibility. The campus we value is a physical environment to grow in. But this environment only has the potential to thrive if we recognize its value beyond its mere function, beyond just square meters on a calculation sheet, beyond mere infrastructure. We say there are better ways to develop university spaces. We say that space is of strategic importance for any university, a medium and catalyst for developing future-proof learning environments. We say that the physical environment is the silent curriculum that must be curated, continuously redesigned, redeveloped, retested and updated – by all of us, who study, educate, teach, design, construct and manage. We are moving away from consuming space and booking rooms, away from waterfall planning and away from a fixed final image. We propose a productive, liquid and iterative development process for space and education. A process that remains open and adaptive to unfolding insights and changing requirements. A process that supports dialogue and exploration: the liquid campus manifesto. 7 theses based on our values, experiences, and beliefs. 7 theses on which to act, develop and leverage your own approach to campus development. 7 theses as beginning, liquid, to be used – one by one or all together – in dialogues, workshops, sprints and projects, to be challenged, hacked and taken further.

EMBRACE THE DIALOGUE

Embrace the dialogue to design your teaching and learning spaces together. A collective effort of lecturers, strategic decision-makers, construction departments and designers at the intersection of didactics, technologies and space. It is essential to develop a common understanding of the complex challenges and implement them successfully. Dialogue ensures continuous iteration of requirements, needs and objectives. Dialogue enables solution-oriented adaptation to changes and mutual support in the implementation process. In dialogue we can advance new mental models that, if visualized, impact our actions. Designing the spatial environment is central to innovate the university.

BRING SPACE IN THE LOOP

Spatial teaching and learning environments shape how and what we experience and learn. They shape and mirror our values and our understanding of education. Beyond the functional level, they meet strategic and qualitative requirements. Teaching and learning spaces are a medium, they are a catalyst, and they are an actor for the transformation of educational institutions in a digital society. When we try to uncover the functions of learning environments, their influence as a silent curriculum becomes tangible. Likewise, the values and attitudes of an educational organization can be experienced through physical learning environments. Center spatial learning environments in teaching strategies according to their importance.

DON'T RELY ON TECHNOLOGY

Don't rely on technology alone to develop learning environments. Humans are spatial beings. Social interaction, and exchange are essential for education, engagement and exploration. A physical space provides orientation. It shapes and encourages behavior. Built space can foster and enhance thinking with the hand, physical and spatial experience, sensory activation, empathy and spatial intelligence for dealing with complexity. The extent to which technology should determine physical spaces needs to be balanced in a digital future. With changing technological developments, spatial solutions that are independent of time and technology are sustainable solutions. Teaching and learning spaces should be adaptable and technology-enhanced, but not – particular lab spaces aside – determined by technology. They need to remain adaptable and inspiring in the long term. But technology is also a “must have” for transparency, communication and dialogue, for operation and development of (physical) spaces. Don't rely on technology. But use it to ease our operations.

TELL A SILENT STORY

Spaces are narratives. They tell stories, promote imagination, create identity – if they are developed and designed with intent and purpose. A room, area, floor or building becomes a meaningful place when it conveys a theme, is read and used by people. When a space supports self-actualization, it becomes a place of opportunity and creativity. In teaching and learning spaces, we develop narratives. It matters investing time to create a strong narrative that guides the conceptual and structural implementation and promotes acceptance and appreciation. In this way the intention we pursue with a space becomes tangible. And memorable.

PROTOTYPE THE SPACE

There are more collaborative ways to develop university spaces. We recognize that space is not just hardware, but is also like software that must – and can – be continuously redesigned, redeveloped, retested and updated. Therefore, we are moving away from planning with a fixed final image. Instead we propose an agile and iterative, open and adaptable, liquid (space) development process. In this process, we are guided and taught by experiment, and by the preliminary draft of a future reality: the prototype. The minimum viable product (MVP) known in software and product development is transferred to the physical space. We define the minimum viable space (MVS) as a prototype to promote flexible, iterative and participative processes in spatial development. In this approach testing begins at an actionable scale. This makes it possible to activate spaces quickly, also temporarily, and continuously improve them in dialog with others.

RELATE TO THE WHOLE

Relate to the whole – as far as possible. The development of a room, a floor, an area, a unit or a building is the development of a system of possibilities: for communication, for interaction, for learning processes. It is part of a holistic transformation of the education system at the university. It relates to the vision and the strategy of the university, it influences and shapes both. When we design a room, floor, area or building, we ask requirement-oriented questions. We should add a few more overarching ones: How do we meet the social challenges posed by the transformation of teaching and learning? What are the skills necessary for the future? What kind of atmosphere do we want to create – and how does this affect the design of learning processes? The learning environment as a silent curriculum is an essential part of the educational system. As the space of possibilities it offers and guides what should happen in that space – the interaction within the framework of university teaching. And thus, this embodies the core of an educational institution. Be aware of the impact your space has on the whole.

ALWAYS BE IN BETA

Learning environments are always in beta. Spaces are constantly changing. Their content is rearranged, elements are added or removed, usages shift. With a liquid approach that regards spaces as dynamic and changeable “software”, we can continuously adapt them to alternative ways of working, teaching and learning. This liquid approach makes it possible to create spaces that not only meet current needs, but also remain open for adjustments and future developments. A liquid approach activates multiple stakeholders to assume responsibility for spaces. And it relieves us of the burden to finish, when requirements and needs are in constant flux and liquid. Be in beta. Always.

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