

Internationalisation creates room for space

Christoph Hofrichter and Birgit Hernády

Birgit Hernády: Head of department International Relations

Christoph Hofrichter: in charge of German as Foreign Language and PR for the department International Relations
FH Joanneum, Graz, Austria

A university lives for its students. However, that doesn't necessarily mean that the university creates sufficient space for students to study in a pleasant atmosphere, to relax or express their creativity.

When it comes to internationalisation, "visualising" and "raising awareness" play a vital role, but cannot be achieved without sufficient physical space. It starts on arrival and ends when the final goodbyes are said. Between these points lie almost endless opportunities for students to interact. In the summer of 2014 the department of International Relations began its first efforts to reorganise its premises for future and current students, not only to make them more attractive but to better meet their needs. This "concept of spaces" will continue.

1. Find and get found: greeting rooms

What use is the best service and best possible support if it is not easy for people to find? This problem motivated the International Relations department at FH JOANNEUM Graz in summer 2014 to ask Maria João Negrão, now a graduate of the Exhibition Design programme, to devise a navigation system: the aim was to guide people to the department and prepare them for the opportunities which lie ahead.

Maria João Negrão designed a guidance system which takes account of the target groups and makes the service areas of the International Relations department completely transparent. Starting on the ground floor of the campus building, the route to the department is clearly indicated with eye-catching arrows at staircases and on the floor. And if the stairs are too tiring, an arrow in the lift also indicates the floor which houses the department's two offices.

The 12 m² world map is an eye-catching feature and is marked with flags showing which exchange and international students are currently visiting FH JOANNEUM and which FH students have opted to undertake a study semester or internship abroad.

Newly arrived students from abroad also paint their country flags in coloured chalk on "panels" on the walls, together with greetings in their own language. This raises awareness of the international nature of the student body, as well as generating a feeling of welcome.

We help students prepare for a stay abroad or in Austria both on a personal and an administrative level. This route may sometimes be more difficult but usually succeeds in changing their world views and opening up new perspectives for their studies and careers.



Corridor with arrows

2. "I'm (SOMEWHERE) DIFFERENT": DESIGNING ROOMS

Leah Emery from Australia, a graduate of the Communication, Media, Sound and Interaction Design programme, has designed a series of posters for the International Relations department with the aim of encouraging students to spend a semester abroad as part of an internship or study course. It is designed to motivate students to spread their wings, leave their comfort zone and discover new cultural and learning environments. The poster campaign featuring the slogan "Sieh dich (wo) anders" (picture yourself somewhere else / see yourself differently) has an attractive design that addresses the cultural aspect of gaining experience abroad – namely the merging of one's own culture with what is initially very much a foreign culture – and also focuses on the result, namely identification with the other culture. Leah Emery on her poster designs: "International students often say that the biggest benefit of their semester abroad is a better understanding of the world and of themselves." Leah herself is from Australia and spent a semester at FH JOANNEUM before moving permanently to Graz to start her Master's degree. "The poster campaign builds on this profound change

in personality", she says. What she enjoyed most about this project was developing the concept as she is always keen to get to the heart of the matter, which can often be something that is not immediately obvious or visible. The realisation of the concept of using landmarks and people made up of triangles proved challenging both for her and for her computer, but she's very pleased with the results. "For me as a print designer, with any new project the challenge always lies in getting content and ideas across on paper and making people think", explains Leah Emery.

3. SPACES FOR MEETING AND LEARNING

When knowledge flows, it probably looks like the art installation by Brian Luque Marcos, a graduate of the Exhibition Design programme. The installation on the 3rd floor of the FH JOANNEUM Graz campus building was opened in June 2015 and is a real head turner. Formerly a bare and clinical-looking room, this is now a warm and welcoming place to meet. The installation is an ode to the acquisition and networking of knowledge in a modern and dynamic university. The instal-



Birgit Hernády, Brian Luque Marcos (designer of the installation "Let your knowledge flow") and Christoph Hofrichter

lation sees itself as a plea for knowledge in general as well as making direct reference to everyday teaching and practice at FH JOANNEUM: like in the work of art, areas of knowledge too overlap and enrich one another. Exchange and cooperation between different disciplines are essential these days to ensure that design, management, engineering and health are no longer opposites, but act as mutually inspiring worlds of knowledge. It is also an indirect indication to the exchange of intercultural knowledge which is on the increase at FH JOANNEUM: in 2014/15, FH JOANNEUM has 424 international students (12% of the total number of students) from over 40 countries and each year, over 230 exchange students spend their semester abroad at FH JOANNEUM in Graz, Kapfenberg and Bad Gleichenberg. Both groups are an enormous enrichment for students, teachers and staff.

4. SPACE FOR DIVERSITY

During the spring of 2014 Pharrell Williams' "Happy" sang out on radios and YouTube channels. The song perfectly expressed the mood that students and employees can spread together in an intercultural and academic university environment, which makes FH JOANNEUM what it is. In total over 200 incoming and regular students, together with employees across all departments and programmes at all three FH JOANNEUM campuses, took part in the video project run by, and with, students. ☺

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAYK6EINK5U>

Photos: Christoph Hofrichter



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