

Analysis of ‘special higher education spaces’ – an overview of the findings



Cornelia Dinsleder, Ulrich Kirchgässner & Eliya Pagelli
Lucerne University of Teacher Education

The project ‘Higher Education Space Development – Analysing, Developing and Evaluating Higher Education Spaces’ (HESD, 2024–2026) addresses the discrepancy between current pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning in higher education and the prevailing, more traditional teaching practices at universities. In teacher training colleges in particular, a contradiction is evident between the aspiration for individualised and self-organised learning and the teaching formats actually experienced (Dinsleder & Kirchgässner 2025).

At the same time, transformation processes can be observed at many higher education institutions, or objectives are being formulated to implement the so-called shift ‘from teaching to learning’. Pilot spaces, real-world laboratories, educational workshops and other spaces are being set up which are flexible, adaptable and customisable, and which enable or even encourage interaction and self-organised learning (Prill 2019; Rosenberger 2025, Wertz 2022).

As part of the project’s focus on analysis, visits were made to seven higher education institutions that have established such ‘special spaces’ or are, as institutions, pursuing a spatial-didactic development process towards learner-centred teaching. Data was collected through video recordings, documents and interviews in Switzerland, Germany, Austria and Denmark. The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2010): on the one hand, deductive categories (along the main dimensions: emergence, didactic concept & spatial implementation, use & organisation) and, on the other hand, inductive categories.

This paper presents key findings from the analysis. In particular, it examines the actors and transformation processes involved in the development of learning spaces at universities, and how these either facilitate or hinder such developments.

References:

- Dinsleder, C. & Kirchgässner, U. (2025). High Edu Space Development – Analyse «besonderer» Hochschulräume. Tagungsband. FH ST. Pölten, online unter: <https://adc.fhstp.ac.at/programm/beitraege/high-edu-space-development-analyse-besonderer-hochschulraeume> [11.07.2025]
- Mayring, P. (2010). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken*. Weinheim: Beltz.
- Prill, A. (2019). Lernräume der Zukunft. Vier Praxisbeispiele zu Lernraumgestaltung im digitalen Wandel. Arbeitspapier Nr. 45. Berlin: Hochschulforum Digitalisierung.
- Rosenberger, K. (2025). Raumbildung. In: *journal für lehrerInnenbildung*, 25 (1), 104–114.
- Wertz, I. (2022): «Hochschule als Lernwelt». In: Kirschbaum, & Stang, *Architektur und Lernwelt - Perspektiven für die Gestaltung* (S. 134-148). Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH.