

ETH PBLabs: Transforming learning experiences through spaces

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ETH PBLabs: www.ethz.ch/pblabs

Learning spaces are more than just infrastructure – they shape the way we organise teaching and the learning experiences that become possible. Inspiring and functional teaching and learning spaces not only open up new pedagogical possibilities, but also foster motivation, collaboration and independent learning among students. At the same time, space is in short supply at many universities, and major refurbishments are often unrealistic. In this workshop, using the example of the ETH PBLabs, we will demonstrate how existing teaching spaces can be enhanced using simple means. The focus is less on structural transformation and more on how spaces can facilitate new forms of teaching and learning – for example, through collaborative settings, coaching situations or self-organised learning phases.

The focus is on three key insights:

- I) Flexible teaching requires both space and guidance so that rooms can be quickly adapted by teachers and students to suit different learning activities.
- II) Learning environments should increasingly be conceived as clusters: the more practice-oriented projects become, the more important the interplay between different types of space becomes – from classrooms to workshops and breakout spaces, right through to informal zones.
- III) It is precisely these informal areas that are increasingly becoming central hubs for exchange, coaching and reflection in learning environments for project-based teaching.

We therefore do not view spaces as an end in themselves, but as a strategic lever for the further development of higher education. In the workshop, we provide practical insights and offer transferable ideas for higher education institutions seeking to transform learning experiences and rethink existing learning environments from a pedagogical perspective.