

The Design of a Meeting Point for students and staff of University College Twente

Creating an attractive space to meet, communicate and work together

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University College Twente (UCT) is the host of the ATLAS study programme at the University of Twente (UT). ATLAS combines technology with liberal arts and sciences to educate a new generation of engineers. Within UCT, the community is important. Students and staff are supposed to communicate and work together closely. (Herek, Netjes, & Wichman, 2016) Currently, UCT is facilitated in the Citadel, a University building. The facilities of UCT do not support the vision of UCT, there is no space that enhances the community of UCT students and staff. A plan to move UCT to another building created the occasion for the Facility Service Centre of the UT to redesign the facilities of UCT. Therefore, the aim of this assignment was to design a meeting point, where students and staff of UCT are attracted towards to communicate and work together.

The design process started with thorough research regarding stakeholders and users of the meeting point. Therefore, interviews were performed and a Co Design Workshop was organized.

The current location and its two meeting points (Foyer and Aquarium) were analysed through the interviews and by means of the Product Impact Tool (PIT), a philosophical framework to analyse the influence of technology on humans. (Dorrestijn, 2012)

The research clarified that the Aquarium was planned as a meeting point for students and staff but is in fact a meeting point for students. The future meeting point should be placed in the centre of the building and should attract both students and staff. The Foyer was chosen as future location for the meeting point. It should be separated into a community space, a casual work space and an entrance that should guide visitors through the building.

The functions established for the future meeting point were further analysed on how to achieve them.

The PIT was used to analyse various spaces on the University that share functionalities with the meeting point. At a University people work everywhere, so the encouragement of communication and discouragement of working in the community space is



Figure 1.1: *The Foyer*



Figure 1.2: *The Aquarium*

more important than the encouragement of working in the casual work space. To discourage working, the community space should lack working facilities such as sockets and should facilitate taking breaks.

During research, many ideas were gathered and developed. Those ideas were combined into elements that formed a framework for the ideation process.

Furthermore, the wished atmospheres in the meeting point were established: it should be playful and creative. The community space should be cosy, protected and informal, while the casual work space should be open and concentrated, the entrance representative and welcoming.

To combine all elements, atmospheres and functions an overarching style is developed; the bubble style. It represents the community, internationality and the logo of UCT. Figure 2.1 shows a mood board of the bubble style.

Afterwards, concrete ideas were generated per element while existing solutions were analysed simultaneously. The best ideas were combined into room ideas, reviewed and further developed into two room concepts, one very playful and one conservative. Both concepts were reviewed with a team of UCT, the architect and afterwards with the requirements.

Because of the strong preference of UCT and better accomplishment of the requirements of the playful concept, it was chosen as final concept.

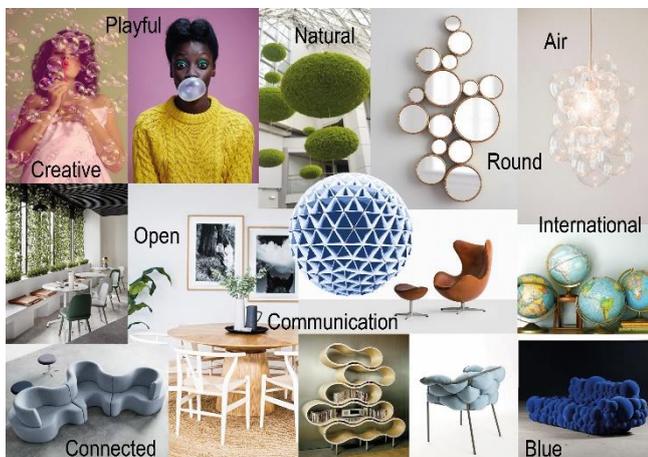


Figure 2.1: Mood Board

The concept was finalized while some elements were adjusted. Some elements need to be constructed and some can be bought. The dimensions of the constructible elements were established. A shopping list and cost price estimation for the whole meeting point were developed.

The final meeting point is shown in Figure 2.1 and Figure 3.1. The community space is placed on a podium, the casual work space on artificial grass. Therefore, visitors are guided around the meeting point. During a user evaluation the users perceived protection while being in the meeting point, especially in the "house". The meeting point is perceived as welcoming at the building entrance and the entrance from the offices. The bubble style is representing UCT. The community space creates the atmosphere of a living room or a café, to use for communication and breaks. Some users mentioned during the user evaluation that they would use it for group discussions. The casual work space creates the atmosphere of being outside. It might be too playful, because some users mentioned that they would take breaks there and not only work.

Two furniture elements are special and cannot be bought; the Tetris chairs and the tables. The Tetris chairs can be turned around and stacked to create unique seating opportunities and users can play with them. The users mentioned during the user evaluation



Figure 2.2: 3D view

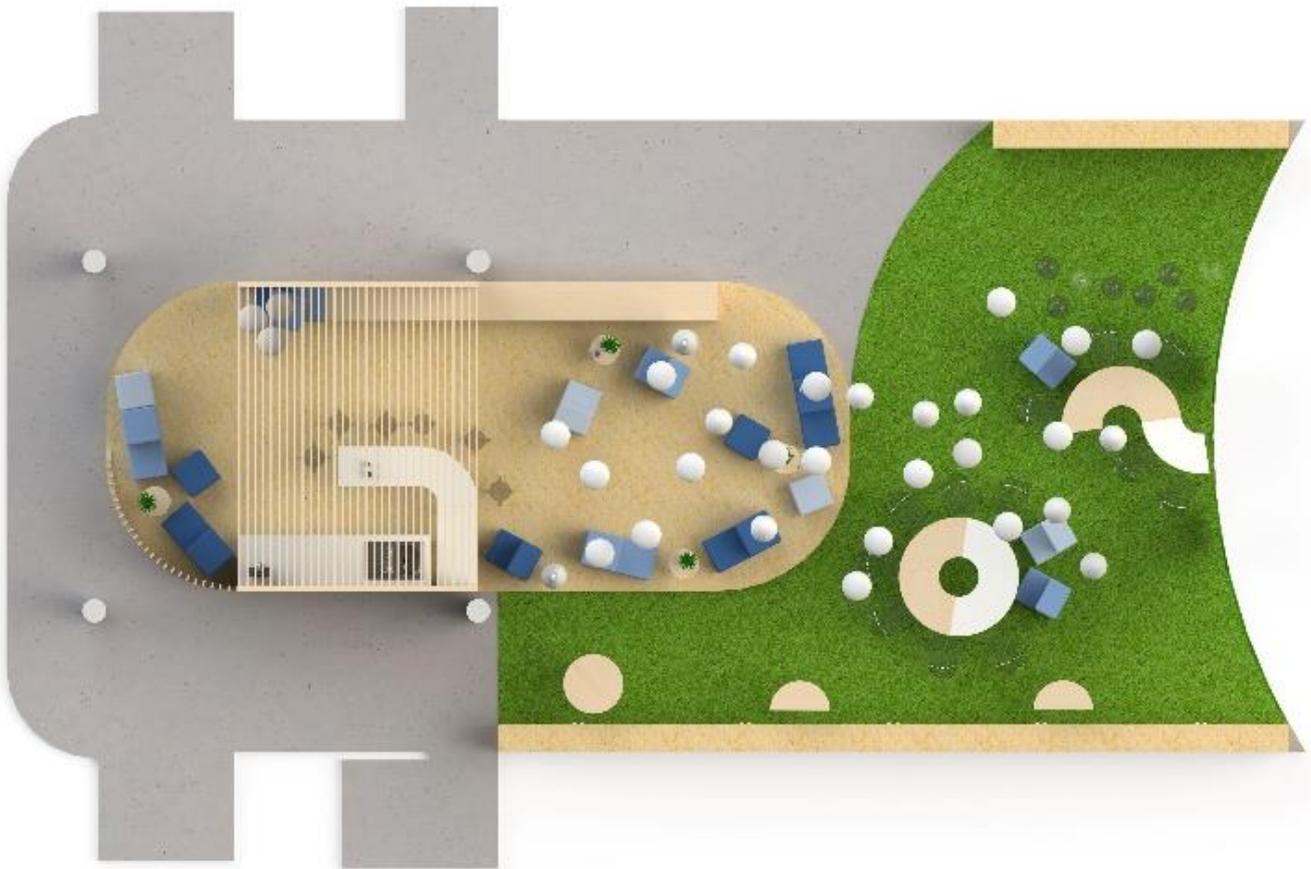


Figure 3.1: *Floorplan*

to use the chairs mainly to sit. The tables represent the logo of UCT by using circles and triangles. They are flexible to create different group settings.

Overall, the assignment aim is achieved. Students and staff of UCT are very positive and curious about the meeting point that will be implemented. The meeting point will attract both students and staff to meet,

communicate and work together. It creates a unique, creative and UCT representing atmosphere, making the users feel comfortable.

Before implementing the meeting point, the constructible elements and especially the tables need to be further developed. If the meeting point moves to another building in the future the spaces should be recreated to achieve the same functionality.

References:

Dorrestijn, S. (2012). Theories and figures of technical mediation. In J. Donovan & W. Gunn, *Design and Anthropology* (pp.219-230) Surrey, UK; Burlington, USA: Ashgate.

Herek, J., Netjes, A., & Wichman, S. (2016). *University College Twente* [Press release]. Obtained from: R. van Leeuwen.