

MA Eco-Social Design
Eating in University

AQUALITY

Highlighting the quality of
local tap water
by intervening in the
current drinking culture.

*A project by
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Glasses and jugs, a quality signet, group tables, a rack and a fountain are part of the new arrangement in the mensa .

ABSTRACT

In this project we planned some interventions to greatly enhance drinking culture in the mensa at the University of Bolzano.

By reintroducing glasses and jugs in the mensa and shifting the focus from soft-drinks to tap water, we value the extraordinary good quality of the water in this region.

The water also gets its own quality signet and a fountain is introduced to resemble the heart of the community.

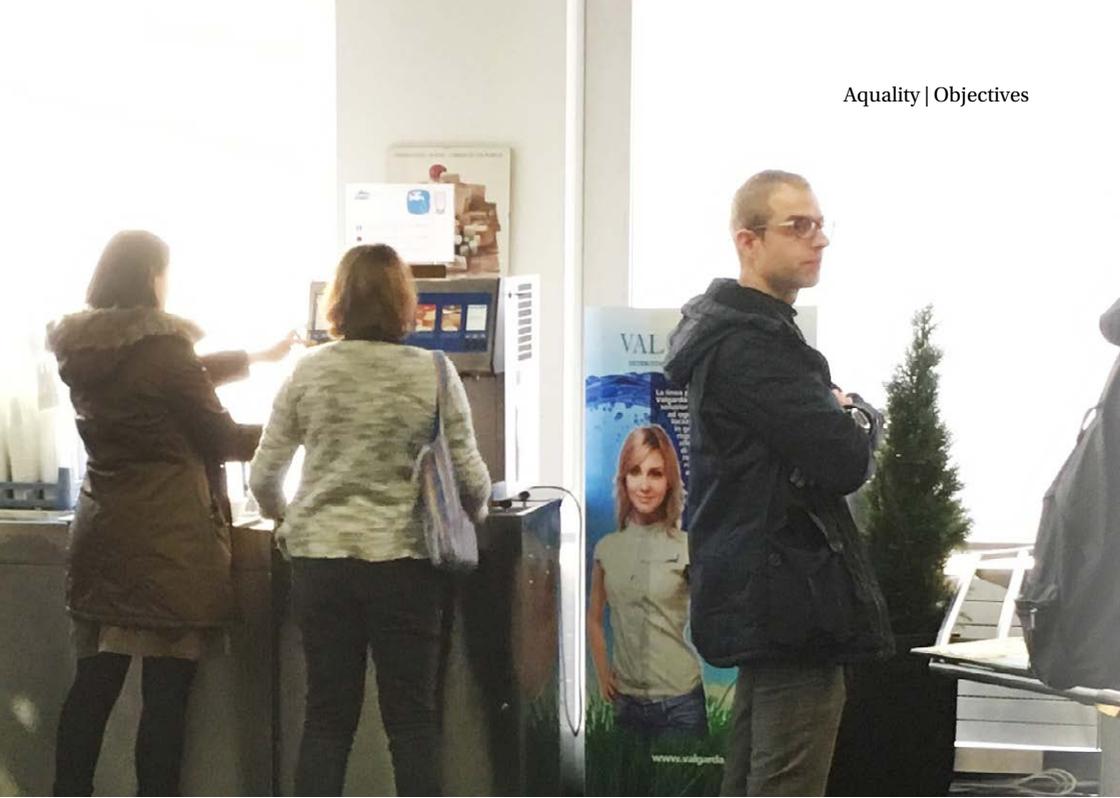


OBSERVATION

We started the project by observing the overall habits in the Mensa of the UniBZ. We soon realized, that drinking was unattractive and could overall be improved. The beverages are served in plastic cups, which the visitor fills on three different dispensers. There are different flavors to choose from, like coke, orangeade and others. Thousands of one-way plastic cups are thrown away and people contaminate their drinks with softening agents. The dispenser also conveys the impression of a fast food restaurant in an otherwise high-grade mensa.

The drinks sold in vending machines across the campus come from far away and have to be transported over hundreds of miles. Also Italy is among the top three countries in Europe in generating plastic waste.

South Tyrol's drinking water has a very high quality. As this is not very common in Italy, few people drink it right away. The Mensa actually makes use of the high quality, as the dispensers are fed with tap water and just filter it and add flavor to it.



OBJECTIVES

The main problems we observed are an excess of plastic waste and measly drinking experience. We aim for improving the drinking culture in the mensa and also replace the plastic cups. At the same time we want to highlight the quality of the local tap water and make it visible to people, so that they drink it more often. Overall, we hope to achieve a reduction of the impact on the environment.

- **reduce plastic waste**
- **make people drink tap water more often**
- **increase people's trust in our local water**
- **reduce environmental impact**

THE INTERVENTION

REPLACING PLASTIC CUPS

To get rid of the main cause of plastic waste, we reintroduce glasses to the mensa. They were replaced a couple of years ago, as they were stolen on a regular basis. To avoid this, we imagine this system: The visitors get glasses before the checkout if they decide to drink something. On the checkout a pledge is paid with the food, so that people are motivated to bring it back. Near the racks on the exit, where the used dishes are given back, there would be a small machine that handles the glasses and returns the money.



REARRANGING THE TABLES

The tables right now are arranged in an effective way, forming long aisles. As eating and drinking is a social activity we want to further enhance the culture. People share their jug of water so we chose to put a pair of tables together to form many square islands, fitting two people on either side. This creates a social space which allows for talking to more people at the same time. Still, it fits the same amount of people by the same amount of people in the mensa.

CREATING A QUALITY SIGNET

To present the ubiquitous tap water as a source for clean and healthy drinking we decided to give it a quality signet like people would expect on an bottle of healthy water. The fact that the tap water of Bolzano is controlled at least 150 times per year is part of the signet. Our aim is to show people, that the water out of the pipe is very good and is free. The signet could be put on the jugs and glasses in the mensa.





REPLACING THE DISPENSER

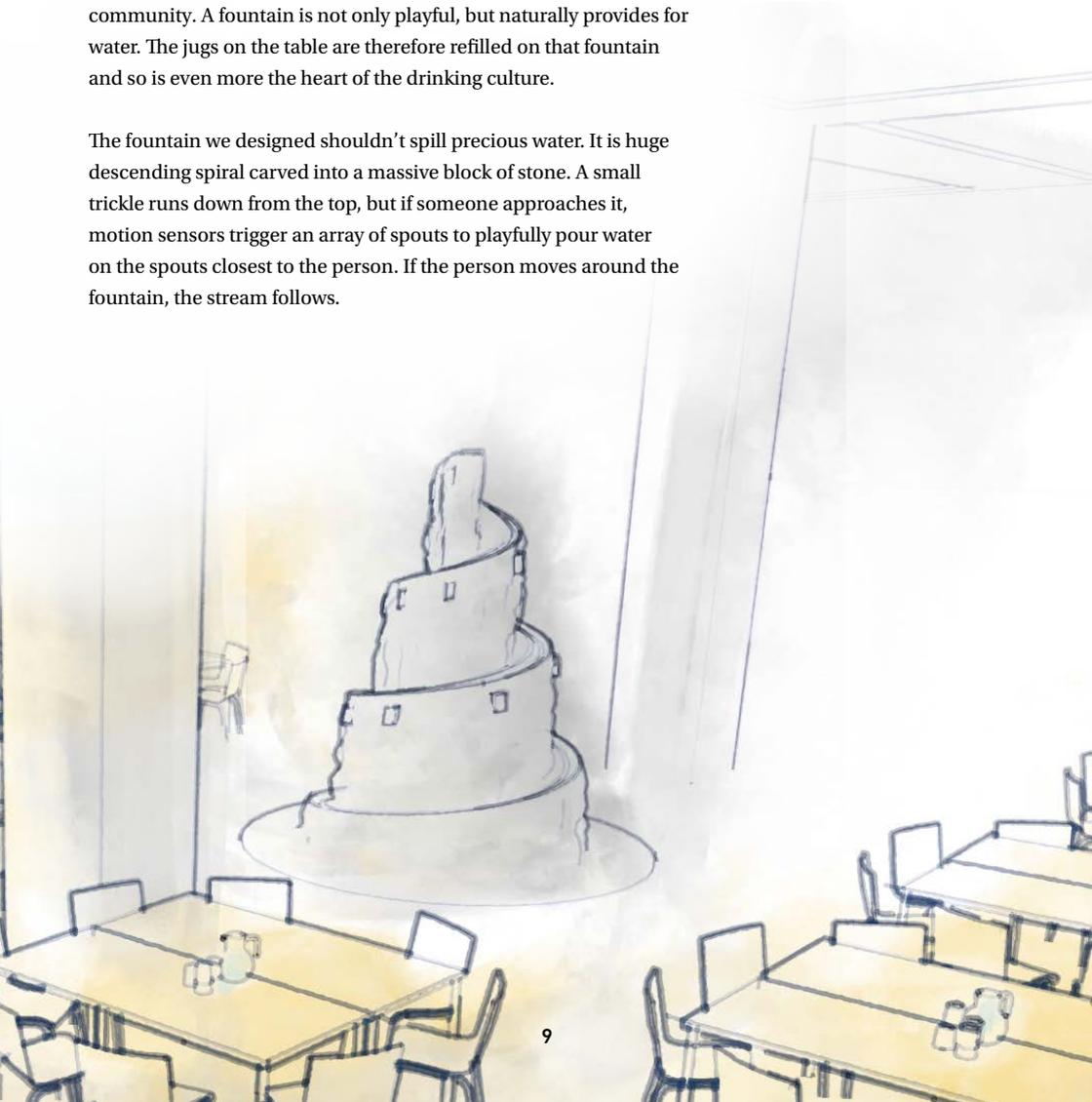
Also the dispenser is replaced. Water is served in glass jugs which can be found on the tables but also in a rack near the checkout. They are freshly filled with tap water but also come in a series of different flavors, like local fruit sirups, fresh mint leaves or slices of lemon. Conventional soft drinks are gone. Guest can choose a jug and take them to a table.



INSTALLING A FOUNTAIN

We want to make the water more present to all senses. Its cleanness, its sound and freshness can best be experienced in a fountain. The fountain should make water touchable, but also is a place where people meet and talk like on an old market square. It's the heart of a community. A fountain is not only playful, but naturally provides for water. The jugs on the table are therefore refilled on that fountain and so is even more the heart of the drinking culture.

The fountain we designed shouldn't spill precious water. It is huge descending spiral carved into a massive block of stone. A small trickle runs down from the top, but if someone approaches it, motion sensors trigger an array of spouts to playfully pour water on the spouts closest to the person. If the person moves around the fountain, the stream follows.





SPREADING

To make the message and fact about the high quality of the tap water in Bolzano also visible outside of the mensa, the quality signet should be spreaded as stickers. These stickers can be put

on glasses and jugs in the whole university, on various personal drinking bottles and even on all taps in the house to remind and to make people aware during their daily routines.

Keywords

Eating, Concrete Utopia, Scenario Design, Empowerment,
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