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The 2014 EuroFM Winter School went to a Shopping Mall!

By Pekka Matvejeff

The third EuroFM Winter School was held in February 2014 at Laurea University of Applied Sciences in Espoo, Finland. The topic was “Service Innovation and Design in FM context”. A group of 24 international students from 10 European universities went to a shopping mall in order to develop its current services and come out of new innovative service ideas and concepts.

Sello Shopping Mall is the second biggest shopping mall in Finland having more than 170 shops and 23 million annual visitors. Sello is managed by Ovenia Group, which is a leading real estate and property service provider in Finland managing 12 shopping malls in Finland through a management contract with the owners of the buildings.

Ovenia Group has identified growing needs for developing innovative and cost efficient service concepts in shopping malls and other multi-use facility-type of buildings. In shopping centers these developments mean an increasing combination of commercial and public services for the benefit of the end-users and the community. At the same time commercial space and public space are blended into each other. Sello’s marketing slogan “More than just shopping...” also indicates that the shopping mall is also a place for socializing and spending time with friends.

Applying Service Design tools in FM context

From this standpoint EuroFM Winter School students took themselves to the streets of Sello Shopping Mall, which is situated within a walking distance from the Laurea Service Innovation and Design (SID) Campus in Espoo. In six

subgroups students focused on certain selected end-user groups (families, students, teenage girls, single mothers, singles and elderly people), which the client (Ovenia Group) saw as potential groups for future service developments. The main objective for the intensive project was to come out with ideas to enhance socializing opportunities and develop a community-type of feeling in a shopping mall.

Laurea’s service design (SD) specialists trained the students to use various SD-tools (e.g. customer journeys, personas, interviews) to gain detailed insight of the space usage, “hotspots” of target groups and customer behavior. With another set of SD tools new service concepts were analyzed and further developed. The intensive Winter School week ended with a poster exhibition where each student group presented their new service concepts for the shopping mall management. “The development ideas of students were very innovative and open-minded. We will definitely choose some of them for implementation in the near future”, stated Mrs. Marjo Kankaanranta, director of the Sello Shopping Mall management company.

According to the student feedback the intensive week was also successful.



Here are some comments received from students:

“The way of teaching was very innovative and interesting, because there was a lot of interaction.”

“Apart from the extensive school week we got to know many other students with different backgrounds. We had the chance to get to know them and to exchange experiences.”

“This intensive week was worth to go. We have improved our knowledge, made new friends and got a chance to expand our network. If we could, we would definitely participate again.”

For the first time, EuroFM Winter School also offered the EuroFM Education Network Group (ENG) member university lecturers to participate in the Winter School as observers and assistant coaches. Four lecturers from Hanze, InHolland, Saxion and NHTV Breda UAS were along for the whole week to deepen their knowledge in service design and learn from each other.

Future prospects

FM is increasingly one of the driving forces in improving the quality of life and wellbeing of different stakeholders. FM has become the facilitator of sustainable life-cycle solutions for buildings, new ways of working initiatives and services innovations.

Urban areas and our growing cities of today are becoming complex ecosystems. This development creates challenges in ensuring sustainable development and safeguarding the quality of life of citizens. Many public and private organizations are facing demands that cannot be solved by separate entities; the solutions need to be created by increased participation of all stakeholders. Companies and public service providers operating within domains like healthcare, urban planning, energy, and safety or even shopping malls are in constant pressure to renew their approach to deliver services to their citizens or clients in a way that is more user-centered and cost efficient.

Winter and Summer Schools, joint study modules, internships and even publicly and privately funded development projects are good “vehicles” to push forward applied

research in this field amongst European universities. The collaboration has already created innovative operating models based on partnership, experiential learning and research. Implementations are genuinely rooted in the working life and aim to produce new practices. This progress requires increasing collaboration between universities, lecturers, students, business and public enterprises and other working life experts. In the end, it will add substantial value to all stakeholders in the process.

The faculty representatives of EuroFM Winter School participants are convinced that applying FM knowledge and utilizing Service Design methodologies within a co-creational process with stakeholders can have a substantial value for addressing the above indicated complex societal challenges.

EuroFM Winter School was founded by the EuroFM Educational Network Group members.

It is a one week intensive study period, which offers students another type of learning experience in an international and multicultural environment.

Each Winter School has a specially selected theme based on the expertise of the hosting university.

The first Winter School was held in 2012 in Hanze UAS (Groningen), 2013 in Zurich UAS (Wädenswil), 2014 in Laurea UAS (Espoo).

The 2015 Winter School will be hosted by the Hague UAS in the Netherlands.

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Laurea UAS offers a Master’s Program in Service Innovation and Design and is a forerunner in using Service Design tools in FM context in Europe.

