



**Allgemeiner
Studierendenausschuss
der Universität Potsdam**

AStA der Universität Potsdam | Am Neuen Palais 10 Haus 6 | D-14469 Potsdam

An:

Sara Meyer

Mitglied des Studierendenparlament,
Autonome Linke Liste

Nachrichtlich:

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Answer to the parliamentary question concerning the free space at the Neues Palais

Dear Sara Meyer,
Dear people in the StuPa,

I would like to clear up some of the confusion regarding the situation with the open space at the Neues Palais.

First of all, I would like to say that the AStA of course recognises the many years of work done by the working group freiRaum Neues Palais and is aware of the political statements of the StuPa, the majority of which demand that the former bookshop at Neues Palais be completely converted into a student-managed open space.

The petition for a StudiCafe at the Neues Palais, which was launched at the beginning of 2019 with around 800 supporters, also makes it clear that self-managed spaces at the university are viewed positively by many students.

However, in terms of reality, it must be considered that the non-student university management, or in the case of the Neues Palais, the Prussian Palaces Foundation as the owner of the buildings, can only give out these rooms for student purposes in compromise with them.

And within the framework of this dialogue process, the solution was finally found to divide up the former bookshop in such a way that a total of only approx. 19m² is available for student self-administration.

To clarify, the 22.5m² self-study area next door is under the administration of the university and therefore has no legal relation to student self-administration.

Since there was no legal body or other legally valid representation of the so-called AK freiRaum, the only contact for the university was of course always the AStA as the official legally valid

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representation of student self-administration.

Since for a long time there was an overlap between the AK freiRaum and the elected AStA representatives, communication between the AStA and the working group usually worked very well.

However, this changed with the election of the 25th AStA, so that we were still faced with the challenge of dealing with this task as AStA.

We tried to do this, but were sorry to see that only a few proactive suggestions were made in the context of this communication.

Therefore, we have also proactively set some impulses ourselves, but always made sure not to make a final decision or would then hand this over to the StuPa.

In order to understand exactly what happened, I would like to list chronologically what the AStA actually did in this context:

It all started when we approached UP Transfer GmbH in August 2021.

This contact came about because I had already made the acquaintance of the people responsible at UP Transfer GmbH from my previous involvement with another university group and we as AStA simply wanted to get to know UP Transfer GmbH on a friendly level, as this non-profit subsidiary of the university had so far had very little contact with the committees of the constituted student body.

During these talks with UP Transfer GmbH, it turned out that there were many positive points of contact.

Directly in the first personal conversation with employees of UP Transfer GmbH, we were given to understand that there are currently many challenges with the operation of the UNIShop and that they would like to work together in this area in particular.

Internally in the AStA, we found this very exciting, as the UNIShop at Neues Palais could potentially become an important anchor point in which the student body can be intensively involved.

In any case, UP Transfer GmbH pointed out to us in this first conversation that the UNIShop in the former bookshop is only feasible if the 19m² room next door can also be used, as a so-called hand warehouse is absolutely necessary for the successful operation of a shop.

Furthermore, it was said in these talks that this 19m² room, which was planned as the StudiCafe of the Freiraum Initiative, is, in the opinion of the university and the UP Transfer GmbH, exclusively assigned to the AStA and that it can therefore decide about this room.

That's why we were asked in the discussion whether the AStA would find a "room swap" exciting in principle, in which the student body would get the previous rooms of the UNIShop in building 9 (room 0.20 with 34.84m² and the office 0.Z19a with 19.3m²) and the UNIShop in contrast would get the 19m² side room in the former bookshop.

We found this idea of "swapping rooms" very appealing because it would effectively provide much more space for the student body and would also solve the problem that the AStA currently has too little office space and therefore currently has no office space for legal advice.

However, as we were aware that the conflict about the free space in the former bookshop has been

going on for years, we naturally did not make any final or absolute promises in these talks.

Instead, I informed the Freiraum Initiative about this proposal directly on 25 September via their email distribution list and asked for their opinions. The only response I received was indignation about why the AStA had interfered and no real concrete statement about whether they agreed with this proposal.

After that, the matter died down a bit and other issues came into focus instead.

After some time, however, the UP Transfer GmbH approached us and said that the university management did not see this "room swap" proposal positively, as it would mean that the AStA would effectively have more space.

Since there was unfortunately still no feedback as to whether the freiRaum working group would agree to other rooms outside of the former bookshop, we had to become active ourselves as the official and only legally valid representative of self-managed student spaces and therefore submitted the following non-binding proposal to the university:

The Freiraum can move into the current AStA meeting room in house 6 and the AStA gets another room for its legal advice and meetings instead. In this way, the university's requirement not to increase the number of square metres would be met.

In addition, this would have the advantage that there would also be keys for the outside door of House 6 and thus longer opening hours would be possible. Furthermore, there is a kitchenette next to the meeting room so that theoretically a StudiCafe would also be possible as originally planned.

The university was very positive about this suggestion and promised us a 27m² office in building 22 as an additional room, as well as pointing out the possibility of booking a room for AStA meetings in the future.

We only replied by e-mail and said that we as AStA agreed in principle and would like to have contract documents.

With these contract documents, we would of course have gone to the StuPa and informed everyone. Unfortunately, no contract has arrived yet, so we assumed that everything had fallen asleep.

In the meantime, however, the university has apparently created facts and transferred the 19m² room to UP Transfer GmbH at the end of November, without explicitly informing the student bodies again. At least, that's what the university's press releases and a look through the window of this room suggest.

Even though we find this somewhat unfortunate communication worthy of criticism, it is of course the right of the university and the Prussian Palaces Foundation to decide on their own rooms and to make them available to the UNIShop instead. After all, there were no legally binding contracts with the AStA yet.

As a result of this "fact-making" by the university, it has to be said that for the time being, only the meeting room in building 6 and the former bicycle cellar in the student dormitory Eiche will be available as open spaces at the Neues Palais.

Greetings,

Pascal Kienast

Vorsitzender / Referent für Netzpolitik & Digitalisierung