

# DEPARTMENT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SPATIAL PLANNING

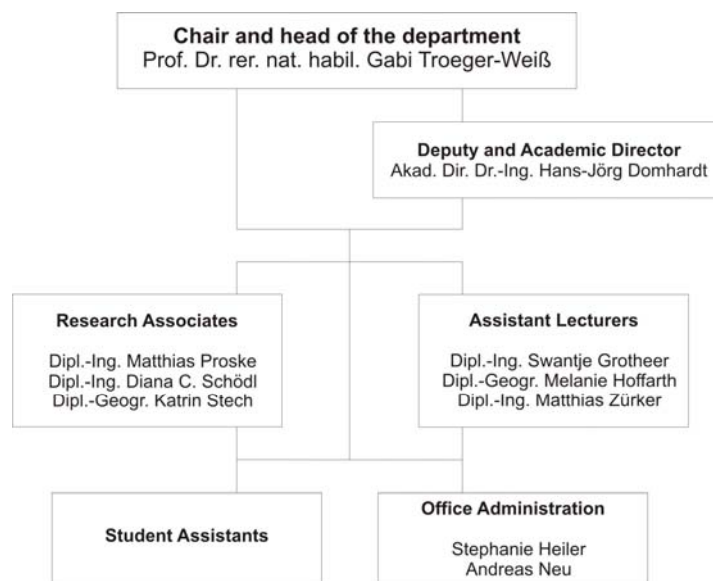
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## General Information on the department

The department of Regional Development and Spatial Planning is assigned within Kaiserslautern University of Technology to the faculty of Architecture/ Spatial and Environmental Planning/ Civil Engineering. There, it represents one of the seven professorships of the course of studies Spatial and Environmental Planning. It is headed by Prof. Dr. rer. nat. habil. Gabi Troeger-Weiß and shows the following organisational structure.

Fig. 1: Organisational structure of the department Regional Development and Spatial Planning



**Source:** Department Regional Development and Spatial Planning, Kaiserslautern 2005.

## General Information on Spatial Planning and Regional Development

At the centre of Spatial and Environmental Planning is the harmonisation of the different spatial claims of use with each other in order to establish a formal spatial plan or to contribute to the development of a specific area in a more informal way. Spatial planning, as the formal aspect of planning, may be best described as the calculated intervention in the spatial development of society and economy as well as in the natural, built and social environment, paying attention to the different spatial levels (district, town, region and state). This particularly refers to the overall spatial planning with its far-reaching assignments of coordination and consideration. Being

not only focused on building and urban design, spatial planning is more of a comprehensive attempt towards a sustainable development of the overall settlement and land-use structure.

Planning requirements that exceed the municipality level are of major importance within a coordinating overall planning system. Regional planning and development concepts will have to pay a gaining amount of attention to these requirements.

The last decades have brought far-reaching social changes, planning has become more complex as well as the threats on ecologic, social and economic living conditions did grow. This has led to a change in the conception of planning, especially in the conception of regional planning and development, shifting the essence and effects of spatial planning tools. Therefore, 'soft' planning strategies such as regional marketing and regional management that built upon voluntary cooperation and informality gain more and more importance, whereas the basic planning tools such as state development programmes, formal regional plans and procedures lose their dominant role.

In addition to this, a gaining complexity of planning requirements often goes beyond local resources and efficiency, giving rise to several forms of cooperation between different municipalities as well as between cities and their hinterland. Networks of cities emerged out of the realisation that cooperating might be the only opportunity to overcome structural problems. These aspects are of major importance in terms of regional planning and development issues.

Finally, the great variety of European funding opportunities do have effects on regional planning and development. Programmes that aim towards the development of selected regions make up new opportunities for national regional development. As one example, the programme INTERREG, which promotes border-crossing, transnational and interregional cooperation, should be named. The spatial and political development of Europe has become essential for national planning issues and will even more gain in importance in the near future.

### **Courses of studies and course offers**

The above mentioned comprehensive attempt of Spatial Planning was one of the main goals when the course of studies Spatial and Environmental Planning was established decades ago. Within this course of studies, all different aspects of Spatial and Environmental Planning are represented by seven professorships and linked together within lectures. Besides the complex of topics of overall Spatial Planning and Regional Development, represented by the department, other issues such as City and Urban Planning, Landscape Architecture or Public and Planning Law contribute to the great variety of the lectures.

At the moment, the department of Regional Development and Spatial Planning accounts for the following courses:

- Spatial Planning and Regional Development
- Methods in Spatial Planning
- Economic Strategies in Spatial Planning
- Theories of Spatial Planning
- Several projects and advanced seminars with the main focus on demographic issues

These courses together with the courses of the other professorships form the nine semesters standard period of study and lead to the academic degree of „Dipl.-Ing. Spatial and Environmental Planning“. However, the course of studies is about to be transformed in a bachelor/ master system made up of one bachelor course of studies (“Spatial Planning”) and three master course of studies (“Urban and Regional Development”, “Environmental Planning”, European Policies and Regional Development”). With this transformation, the courses of studies will not only adjust to new basic trends of Spatial Planning and Regional Development, such as the demographic change and the gaining importance of economic issues, but will also improve its international compatibility in terms of taking up international students or exchanges of scientists or students.

Being not only focused on regional or national issues, the department also supervises student projects or degree dissertations at the international level. In this regard, a group of students elaborated a development concept for the Maltese Islands, paying special attention to the tourism-sector. As the European Union saw Enlargement in 2004 by ten new countries, this topic was at centre of several degree dissertations. In one case, the dissertation discussed specific strategies regarding how to bring the Polish region of Wielkopolska closer to the EU. In another case, it was discussed how regional development could be promoted through an interregional cooperation between a region of the old and one of the new Member States.

## **Research**

Even though lectures play an important role of the overall work of the department, the overall focus lies, however, on research. Being responsible within the course of studies for the complexes of topics above the municipal-level, this concentration is mirrored also in the numerous fields of research, such as

- Demographic Change and its impact on Regional Development,
- Tourism Geography,
- Cross-Border Development,
- Regional Development in rural areas,
- Regional and City Development Concepts,
- Development of City Regions,
- National and European Regional Policy,
- Regional Economic Development,
- Regional and Municipal Economic Policy,
- Military Conversion or
- Formal Regional Planning.

Within each field of research, the department elaborated or is currently engaged in several projects – both at national or international level. To name but a few, the department is currently engaged in the elaboration of strategies for several municipalities in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate who face the pull-out of the military in the upcoming years or conducts basic research in the context of formal Regional Planning with respect to the further development of this planning instrument. At

international level, the department is engaged in several INTERREG projects funded by the European Union, such as “DART – Development of Active Regions and sustainable Tourism” or “PUSEMOR – Public Services in sparsely populated Mountain Regions – new needs and innovative strategies”.

### **International Relations**

In addition to these international research projects, the staff of the department shows a sound experience and reputation at the international level of Spatial Planning and Regional Development. Several members are engaged in a partnership with the Geographic Institute of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador in Quito, aiming at enhancing the lectures on both sides through a fruitful exchange of knowledge and persons. The qualification of lecturers and planning-practitioners in Georgia is at the centre of an exchange programme funded by the German “Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, GTZ” (Society of Technical Cooperation). Furthermore, the department was also asked for its expertise within the scope of the preparation of future concepts for Regional Development in the Arriyadh Region (Strategy Plan for the Arriyadh Region – SPAR) of Saudi-Arabia.

### **Series and conferences**

All these experiences as well as the results of research projects, student projects or degree dissertations are made available to the public within two series edited by the head of the department. The series “Materials of Regional Development and Spatial Planning” comprises research projects, degree and doctoral dissertations. The series “Working-papers of Regional Development” comprises the results of selected student projects.

Alongside the editing of the two series, the department host an annual conference, the “Kaiserslauterner Forum (Kaiserslautern Forum)”, bringing together practitioners and lecturers within the field of Regional Development and Spatial Planning to discuss contemporary topics. This forum is also open to students who always take part to a great amount.