



Intercultural Dialogue through Spatial Planning

Establishing a Planning Network Middle East □ Stimulating the Potentials of Historic Towns

Serious conflicts and political instability - bad news mainly shape the image of the Middle East today. In this situation it is essential to seek the intercultural dialogue and to support a peaceful, democratic development. Discussing a cross-cultural understanding of a sustainable, democratic spatial development can be an important element in this process.

When the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) established the programme "German-Arab/Iranian University Dialogue Programme", the Faculty of Spatial Planning in



Dortmund took the chance to extend already existing international activities and co-operations with Middle-East partner universities, such as the partnership with Birzeit University in Palestine and Al Balqa Applied University in Jordan or workshops for the establishment of a Planning Faculty at Kurdish universities in North Iraq.

In the beginning of 2007 the joint project "Spatial Planning through Intercultural Dialogue: Sustainable, Integrated Urban Regeneration and Revitalisation of Historic Town Centres" was initiated and selected to be funded by the DAAD. The project aims to bundle and intensify the previous activities in order to create a strong **Planning Network Middle East**. It provides the possibility of bringing together students, young academics and senior lecturers from North Iraq, Palestine, Jordan and Germany. The topic of a sustainable, integrated revitalisation of historic town centres allows for a fruitful exchange of ideas, experience, and methods in the field of spatial planning. Finding new ways of developing our urban heritage provides a suitable framework to experience an intercultural dialogue and to initiate learning processes.

ONE PROJECT - TWO PILLARS

Such a dialogue cannot be realised only by communicating via email or exchanging reports. It requires intensive phases of physical collaboration. This is to be achieved by two elements of exchange:

Joint supervision of international student projects: Students from all partner universities will work on the same topic, dealing with the same case-study at the same time. The project will be supervised and evaluated by a team of lecturers from all participating universities. In several joint workshops students and lecturers have the opportunity to work and discuss together as well as to share their experience and ideas.

The student projects will be complemented by an **exchange of guest-lecturers and PhD-students** and joint research in order to ensure a medium-term perspective and to accentuate scientific aspects of the case-studies.



KICK-OFF MEETING IN JUNE 2007

The first step towards the joint project was a kick-off-meeting with the protagonists of the Planning Network Middle East. The meeting took place in June 2007 at the department of Urban Design and Land Use Planning of the Faculty of Spatial Planning at Dortmund University. In working sessions and presentations the contents and the organisation of the first module of the joint project dealing with the historic town Madaba in Jordan were discussed.

The delegation of the partner universities also visited two examples of historic towns in North-Rhine-Westphalia: the historic centres of Hattingen and Aachen. In Hattingen, the group joined the public presentation of a study about Hattingen, where the main challenges in developing historic towns in Europe were discussed. In a one-day excursion the participants visited several examples of former industrial areas in the Ruhrgebiet and discussed the chances of a sustainable regeneration of these brownfields and their potential within the urban context.

THE NEXT STEPS

The intensive dialogue will be continued in several joint student workshops dealing with the development of Madaba, starting with a student workshop in Jordan in October 2007. Another workshop is planned in February 2008, followed by the presentation of the results in summer 2008. At Dortmund University, the case study and the intercultural dialogue will be the topic of an advanced student project.



THE FIRST CASE STUDY: MADABA, JORDAN

The historic town of Madaba is located 35 km south-west of Jordan's capital Amman. It is situated in a hilly landscape near the Jordan valley and the Dead Sea. The town has approx. 70.000 inhabitants (2004), including a large group of Christians (ca. 35-40%). There are also some Palestine refugee camps located in the city. Madaba is one of the 12 Governorates in Jordan.



The town is well known for its ancient mosaics, especially the "Map of Madaba" from the 6th century, showing Jerusalem and the Nile Delta. The history of Madaba dates back to the Bronze Age. The town was destroyed in the 8th century and re-populated by Christians in the 1880ies. The different archeological layers are still visible in the town.

The main challenge for Madaba is to strengthen its economical basis and to develop a tourist infrastructure. The main goal of the project is to find joint ideas for a sustainable development of Madaba that integrates cultural, social, economical, and ecological issues. This includes ideas for the urban environment and design as well as for the implementation of the process.

FUTURE CASE STUDIES

Madaba will serve as a pilot study. It is planned to continue the joint research and student projects dealing with Birzeit in Palestine (2008/09) and Amedy in North Iraq (2009/10), depending on the political situation. All case studies will be evaluated. The co-operation and intercultural dialogue will continuously be reflected, too.

PARTICIPATING UNIVERSITIES



University of Dortmund
Faculty of Spatial Planning, Dortmund/Germany



Birzeit University
Faculty of Engineering, Birzeit/Palestine



Al Balqa Applied University
Faculty of Planning, Al Salt/Jordan



German Jordan University
Faculty of Architecture, Madaba/Jordan



University of Dohuk
Dohuk/North-Iraq



Salahaddin University
Erbil/North-Iraq



University of Sulaimani
Sulaimani/North-Iraq

CONTACT & INFORMATION

University of Dortmund
Faculty of Spatial Planning

Department of Urban Design and Land Use Planning

PHONE: +49-(0)231-755-2241

FAX: +49-(0)231-755-4396

EMAIL: stb.rp@uni-dortmund.de

WEB: www.raumplanung.uni-dortmund.de/irpud/networkmiddleeast/

TEAM

Prof. Christa Reicher
Thorsten Schauz
Katrin Weiß

Prof. Dr. Günther Kroës
Silke Edelhoff
Alexandra Hill
Christian Lindner
Hasan Sinemillioglu
Dr. Viktoria Waltz
Dirk Weiß

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