

**MASTER'S PROGRAMME**  
**SOCIO-SPATIAL PLANNING**  
FACULTY OF SPATIAL SCIENCES  
**UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN**

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This report was finalised on 4 October 2019.



# REPORT ON THE MASTER'S PROGRAMME SOCIO-SPATIAL PLANNING OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN

This report takes the NVAO's Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands for limited programme assessments as a starting point (September 2018).

## ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMME

### Master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning

Name of the programme:	Sociale Planologie
International name of the programme:	Socio-Spatial Planning
CROHO number:	66653
Level of the programme:	master's
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	60 EC
Specialisations or tracks:	-
Location(s):	Groningen
Mode(s) of study:	full time
Language of instruction:	English
Submission deadline NVAO:	01/11/2019

The visit of the assessment panel Human Geography and Urban Planning to the Faculty of Spatial Sciences of the University of Groningen took place on 16, 17 and 18 April 2019.

The programme's management proposes to change the CROHO programme name, see Standard 1.

## ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE INSTITUTION

Name of the institution:	University of Groningen
Status of the institution:	publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	positive

## COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The NVAO has approved the composition of the panel on 11 February 2019. The panel that assessed the master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning consisted of:

- Em. prof. dr. L.J. (Leo) de Haan, emeritus professor of Development Studies, at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University Rotterdam [chair];
- Em. prof. dr. C. (Christian) Kesteloot, emeritus professor at the Division of Geography and Tourism of KU Leuven (Belgium);
- Prof. dr. E.M. (Ellen) van Bueren, professor of Urban Development Management at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of Delft University of Technology;
- Prof. dr. M.A. (Maria) Koelen, professor of Health and Society, Wageningen University;
- L. (Lars) Stevenson BSc, bachelor's student Political Science and master's student Comparative Politics, Administration & Society at Radboud University [student member];
- Prof. dr. ing. C.M. (Carola) Hein, professor of History of Architecture and Urban Planning at Delft University of Technology [referee].

The panel was supported by drs. Mariette Huisjes, who acted as secretary.

## WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences of the University of Groningen was part of the cluster assessment Human Geography and Urban Planning. In April and May 2019 the panel assessed nineteen programmes at four universities. The following universities participated in this cluster assessment: University of Amsterdam, University of Groningen, Utrecht University, and Radboud University.

### *Panel members*

The panel consisted of the following members:

- Em. prof. dr. L.J. (Leo) de Haan, emeritus professor of Development Studies, at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University Rotterdam [chair];
- Em. prof. dr. C. (Christian) Kesteloot, emeritus professor at the Division of Geography and Tourism of KU Leuven (Belgium);
- Prof. dr. E.M. (Ellen) van Bueren, professor of Urban Development Management at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of Delft University of Technology;
- Drs. J. (Judith) Borsboom-van Beurden, senior researcher Smart Sustainable Cities at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU, Norway);
- Dr. L.B.J. (Lianne) van Duinen, project manager at the Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (Rli);
- Dr. C.J. (Kees-Jan) van Klaveren, senior auditor and data protection officer at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences;
- Prof. dr. M.A. (Maria) Koelen, professor of Health and Society at Wageningen University & Research;
- Prof. dr. F.J.A. (Frank) Witlox, professor of Economic Geography at the Department of Geography at Ghent University (Belgium);
- J. (Jim) Klooster BSc, master's student Economic Geography at the University of Groningen [student member];
- L. (Lars) Stevenson BSc, bachelor's student Political Science and master's student Comparative Politics, Administration & Society at Radboud University [student member];
- N.J.F. (Niek) Zijlstra, bachelor's student Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Amsterdam [student member];
- Prof. dr. ing. C.M. (Carola) Hein, professor of History of Architecture and Urban Planning at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of Delft University of Technology [referee assessment University of Groningen].

For each site visit, assessment panel members were selected based on their expertise, availability and independence.

The QANU project manager for the cluster assessment was dr. Irene Conradie. She acted as secretary in the site visit of the University of Amsterdam. In order to assure the consistency of assessment within the cluster, the project manager was present at the panel discussion leading to the preliminary findings at all site visits. All draft reports were checked by QANU. Dr. Meg van Bogaert and drs. Mariette Huisjes, freelance secretaries for QANU, acted as secretaries in the site visit of the University of Groningen. Dr. Meg van Bogaert also acted as secretary in the site visits of Utrecht University and Radboud University. Dr. Marijn Hollestelle, employee of QANU, was present at the site visit of Utrecht University, specifically for the ECA assessment report of quality in internationalisation of the master's programme International Development Studies. The project manager and the secretaries regularly discussed the assessment process and outcomes.

### *Preparation*

On 18 February 2019, the panel chair was briefed by the project manager on the tasks and working method of the assessment panel and more specifically his role, as well as use of the assessment framework.

A preparatory panel meeting was also organised on 18 February 2019. During this meeting, the panel members received instruction on the tasks and working method and the use of the assessment framework. The panel also discussed the domain specific framework.

A schedule for the site visit was composed. Prior to the site visit, representative partners for the various interviews were selected. See Appendix 4 for the final schedule.

Before the site visit, the programmes wrote self-evaluation reports of the programmes and sent these to the project manager. She checked these on quality and completeness, and sent them to the panel members. The panel members studied the self-evaluation reports and formulated initial questions and remarks, as well as positive aspects of the programmes.

The panel also studied a selection of theses and their assessment forms for the programmes. Because of the large number of programmes at the University of Groningen site visit, the selection consisted of ten theses per programme. This was in agreement with the additional conditions for an adjusted thesis selection (i.e. ascertainable overlap between the programmes and a shared Board of Examiners) set by the NVAO. The selection was based on a provided list of graduates in 2018. A variety of topics and tracks and a diversity of examiners were included in the selection. The project manager and panel chair assured that the distribution of grades in the selection matched the distribution of grades of all available theses.

#### *Site visit*

The site visit to University of Groningen took place on 16, 17 and 18 April 2019.

At the start of the site visit, the panel discussed its initial findings on the self-evaluation reports and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit.

During the site visit, the panel studied additional materials about the programmes and exams, as well as minutes of the Programme Committee and the Board of Examiners. An overview of these materials can be found in Appendix 5. The panel conducted interviews with representatives of the programmes: students and staff members, the programme's management, alumni and representatives of the Board of Examiners and the Programme Committee. It also offered students and staff members an opportunity for confidential discussion during a consultation hour. No requests for private consultation were received.

The panel used the final part of the site visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards, the panel chair publicly presented the panel's preliminary findings and general observations.

#### *Report*

After the site visit, the secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it to QANU for peer assessment. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel. After processing the panel members' feedback, the project manager sent the draft reports to the faculty in order to have these checked for factual irregularities. The project manager discussed the ensuing comments with the panel's chair and changes were implemented accordingly. The report was then finalised and sent to the Faculty of Spatial Sciences and University Board.

#### *Definition of judgements standards*

In accordance with the NVAO's Assessment framework for limited programme assessments, the panel used the following definitions for the assessment of the standards:

#### **Generic quality**

The quality that, from an international perspective, may reasonably be expected from a higher education bachelor's or master's programme.



**Meets the standard**

The programme meets the generic quality standard.

**Partially meets the standard**

The programme meets the generic quality standard to a significant extent, but improvements are required in order to fully meet the standard.

**Does not meet the standard**

The programme does not meet the generic quality standard.

The panel used the following definitions for the assessment of the programme as a whole:

**Positive**

The programme meets all the standards.

**Conditionally positive**

The programme meets standard 1 and partially meets a maximum of two standards, with the imposition of conditions being recommended by the panel.

**Negative**

In the following situations:

- The programme fails to meet one or more standards;
- The programme partially meets standard 1;
- The programme partially meets one or two standards, without the imposition of conditions being recommended by the panel;
- The programme partially meets three or more standards.



## SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

### *Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes*

The panel finds the programme's profile to be relevant to society and underscores that educating spatial planners with a clear eye for the human factor is a much-needed approach. As described in the self-evaluation report, it feels the profile is still somewhat vague. It recommends that the programme define its core goal and its relation to specific societal challenges in one or two sentences. In addition, it recommends narrowing down the programme's scope, which is very broad. This will also help to set it apart from other programmes in the Netherlands, and will give the Groningen programme a truly unique, internationally attractive niche. The panel expects that this will help to realise the programme's growth potential.

The programme plans to reposition itself internationally and proposes Society, Sustainability and Planning as its new name. The panel does not wish to stand in the way of this name change, but recommends thinking it over carefully. It should be taken into account that 'society' and 'sustainability' only hold distinctive power in today's global marketplace for higher education in combination with a socio-spatial planning perspective. In the panel's view, the 'human factor' that is so typical for the programme's identity deserves to be recognisable in its name.

The panel states that the intended learning outcomes as formulated by the programme mirror the Domain-Specific Framework of Reference for the human geography and urban and regional planning domain in the Netherlands, even though the self-evaluation report does not mention it explicitly. It also found that the programme's level and orientation align with the international requirements set for an academic master's programme, since they are based on the Dublin Descriptors.

### *Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment*

The panel judges that the curriculum content and structure enable students to realise the programme's intended learning outcomes. It appreciates the careful attention being paid to bringing practitioners into the classroom and students into practice, while at the same time, the literature and level of courses are of a good academic level.

The panel did find that the curriculum is light on methodology. It ascertained that the master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning deserves its own methodology course, combining research methods from the social sciences with planning practice. This will reflect and strengthen its own socio-spatial planning profile. The panel recommends that the programme develop such a course. Two points of improvement in the curriculum have already been identified by the programme: the peak workload in the first half of the second semester and the thesis process. The panel is convinced that these issues are on the management's radar, but it is too early to tell whether or not the measures taken are sufficient. As it is, students find it almost impossible to do an internship within the nominal course duration. The panel advises the programme to either organise the programme in such a way that an internship becomes a feasible option for students – for example by linking it to the thesis research – or to phase out the internship option altogether. Without an internship, the programme is already sufficiently linked to practice, in the panel's view.

Finally, the panel established that the programme's teaching staff is well qualified. Though the programme is vulnerable because of its small scale in combination with the fluctuating numbers of students taking part in the courses, there is sufficient teaching staff to enable students to realise the intended learning outcomes. This judgement takes into account that two new staff members will be hired as of 2019.

### *Standard 3: Student assessment*

The panel states that assessment throughout the courses in the Socio-Spatial Planning programme is sufficiently valid, reliable and transparent. Although it found that individual competencies are sufficiently assessed, it recommends replacing some of the group assignments by individual assignments, allowing the students to practise their skills. The panel thinks that the faculty could



gain even more by intensifying a shared faculty-wide assessment culture. This will become especially relevant as the staff diversifies and becomes more international.

The panel reviewed a sample of 10 master's theses and found that they are validly and reliably assessed. The level of transparency of the assessment however differs, both between and within the programmes. The panel recommends one thesis assessment procedure in all master's programmes. This enhances transparency, enforces validity and makes it easier for students to know what to expect. In the panel's view, thesis assessment forms with recognisably independent feedback from both the first and second examiner can be seen as a good practice. The panel found that, since the 2014 evaluation, the Board of Examiners greatly improved its procedures. It has become very professional, with a clear view of its responsibilities, and works proactively and quickly. The panel encourages the Board of Examiners to continue its good work.

*Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes*

Based on a selection of the master's theses, the alumni survey and interviews with alumni during the site visit, the panel concluded that students realise the intended learning outcomes as formulated by the programme. Many of the theses deal with original topics, contain in-depth analyses and use mixed-methods research, which is very fitting to the field of socio-spatial planning. A 2016 survey shows that a majority of the programme's alumni (53%) acquire a relevant job in less than two months after graduating. Within a year, practically all alumni (98%) have found a relevant job. Alumni told the panel that they are happy with the skills they learned. In particular, they mentioned that they can manage complex processes with multiple stakeholders and interests, not only in socio-spatial planning, but in large firms as well.

The panel assesses the standards from the *Assessment framework for limited programme assessments* in the following way:

*Master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning*

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	meets the standard
Standard 3: Student assessment	meets the standard
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	meets the standard
General conclusion	positive

The chair, prof. dr. Leo de Haan, and the secretary, drs. Mariette Huisjes, of the panel hereby declare that all panel members have studied this report and that they agree with the judgements laid down in the report. They confirm that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the demands relating to independence.

Date: 4 October 2019



# DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARDS FROM THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR LIMITED FRAMEWORK ASSESSMENTS

## Context

The master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning is one of nine programmes offered by the Faculty of Spatial Sciences at the University of Groningen. Within the faculty, four departments are responsible for research and teaching in a specific discipline: Demography (bachelor's programme Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning, bachelor's programme Spatial Planning and Design, master's programme Population Studies), Economic Geography (bachelor's programme Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning, bachelor's programme Spatial Planning and Design, master's programme Economic Geography, master's programme Real Estate Studies), Cultural Geography (bachelor's programme Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning, bachelor's programme Spatial Planning and Design, master's programme Cultural Geography) and Spatial Planning (bachelor's programme Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning, bachelor's programme Spatial Planning and Design, master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning, master's programme Environmental and Infrastructural Planning). The Faculty Board is responsible for all research and teaching at the faculty. It is chaired by the dean. The Economic Geography and Real Estate programmes share a Programme Committee, as well as the Socio-Spatial Planning and Environmental and Infrastructural Planning programmes. The other programmes all have their own Programme Committees. The Programme Committees advise the management as to how to safeguard the quality of each programme. The faculty has one Board of Examiners.

### Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

## Findings

### *Profile*

The master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning at the University of Groningen aims to educate a new type of planning professional, who is equipped to respond to societal and spatial challenges and works as a researcher, spatial planner, policy advisor or consultant. Their expertise covers housing (segregation, gentrification, affordability), well-being (healthy ageing, quality of life, spatial quality), mobility (transport, poverty, forced car ownership, accessibility of facilities), sustainability (societal adaptation, leadership, climate mitigation) and citizenship (participation in decision-making, social rights, civic initiatives). Students learn to analyse challenges in these fields, formulate interventions and evaluate their consequences. The programme is multidisciplinary, with elements of spatial planning, human geography and sociology. Its specific niche is that it explicitly focusses on people as end-users, not the built environment. At the same time, the programme's graduates are not mere onlookers to social processes, but possess skills to intervene and take a policy perspective.

The programme is currently positioning itself in the international market for higher education. In the Netherlands, the programme has most in common with the master's programmes Spatial Planning and Environment & Society Studies at Radboud University and the master's programme Spatial Planning at Utrecht University. Other comparable master's programmes such as Environmental & Infrastructure Planning at the same faculty of the University of Groningen and Urban & Regional Planning at the University of Amsterdam focus more on the 'hardware' than on the human factor.

The master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning became an internationally oriented, English-language programme in 2017. With 17 students entering the programme in 2018, the programme is still small but has, in the panel's view, potential to grow. The panel underscores that educating planners with a clear eye for the human factor is a much-needed approach. It found that a clear profile for the programme emerged from the conversations with students and staff. As described in



the self-evaluation report, however, it considers the profile still somewhat vague. It recommends the programme to define its core and its relation to specific societal challenges in one or two sentences. This recommendation aligns with the programme's own intention to sharpen both profile and scope of the programme. In addition, the panel recommends narrowing down the programme's scope, which is very broad. This will help to clearly distinguish itself from other programmes in the Netherlands, and give the Groningen programme a truly unique niche, which is internationally attractive and will help it to realise its growth potential.

The Domain-Specific Framework of Reference for the human geography and urban and regional planning domain in the Netherlands was updated for this review by the four participating universities. The panel noticed, however, that although some programmes refer to the framework of the Association of European Schools of Planning, none makes explicit use of the Dutch framework to position itself. The panel is of the opinion that the Dutch framework could be a useful tool to position the eight programmes in relation to each other and the broader discipline.

#### *Intended learning outcomes*

The intended learning outcomes as defined by the programme (see Appendix 1) have three focal points: the intersubjective nature of spatial planning, or how people give meaning to places; the ethical side of planning, concerned with winners and losers in spatial planning processes; and the international dimensions of spatial planning, concerned with comparative analyses across regions. To cover these focal points, the programme has formulated 24 final qualifications, based on the Dublin Descriptors. To the five groups of intended learning outcomes classified by the Dublin Descriptors, the programme has added a sixth group: attitudes. These comprise: critical engagement with new ideas and working with a scientific attitude. The panel confirmed that the intended learning outcomes mirror the Domain-Specific Framework of Reference for the human geography and urban and regional planning domain in the Netherlands, even though the self-evaluation report does not mention it explicitly. It considers the addition of a sixth 'attitudes' group fitting for the profile of the 'new planning professional'. It also found that the programme's level and orientation align with the international requirements set for an academic master's programme, since they are based on the Dublin Descriptors. The panel supports the programme's intention to reduce the number of learning outcomes and to sharpen the positioning of courses within the curriculum vis-a-vis each other by formulating fewer, sharper, more concise and more strategic intended learning outcomes for each course.

Since 2012, the faculty has had an advisory board consisting of alumni from all master's programmes, which meets two to three times a year. Thus, the faculty management remains well informed on recent developments in the labour market and appropriate desirable changes in the intended learning outcomes. The panel finds this a good practice. In addition, the faculty has long-standing connections to partners from the professional field and numerous guest lecturers. This allows the programme to include the developments in, and wishes from, the professional field.

#### *Proposed name change*

The programme plans to reposition itself internationally and proposes a new name. The original Dutch name was *Sociale Planologie*, which was translated into English as Socio-Spatial Planning. Society, Sustainability and Planning has been suggested as a new name. The panel recommends thinking this name change over carefully, taking into account that both 'society' and 'sustainability' hold little distinctive power in today's global marketplace for higher education. In its view, the 'human factor' that is so typical for the programme's identity deserves to be recognisable in its name. Students told the panel that this is what attracted them to the programme.

#### **Considerations**

The panel finds the programme's profile to be relevant to society and underscores that educating spatial planners with a clear eye for the human factor is a much-needed approach. As described in the self-evaluation report, it feels the profile is still somewhat vague. It recommends that the programme define its core goal and its relation to specific societal challenges in one or two sentences.

In addition, it recommends narrowing down the programme's scope, which is very broad. This will also help to set it apart from other programmes in the Netherlands, and will give the Groningen programme a truly unique, internationally attractive niche. The panel expects that this will help to realise the programme's growth potential.

The panel states that the intended learning outcomes as formulated by the programme mirror the Domain-Specific Framework of Reference for the human geography and urban and regional planning domain in the Netherlands, even though the self-evaluation report does not mention it explicitly. It also found that the programme's level and orientation align with the international requirements set for an academic master's programme, since they are based on the Dublin Descriptors.

The programme plans to reposition itself internationally and proposes Society, Sustainability and Planning as its new name. The panel does not wish to stand in the way of this name change, but recommends thinking it over carefully. It should be taken into account that 'society' and 'sustainability' only hold distinctive power in today's global marketplace for higher education in combination with a socio-spatial planning perspective. In the panel's view, the 'human factor' that is so typical for the programme's identity deserves to be recognisable in its name.

## Conclusion

*Master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning:* the panel assesses Standard 1 as 'meets the standard'.

### **Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment**

The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

## Findings

### *Student intake*

The master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning is a good follow-up to a bachelor's programme in spatial planning or human geography. Graduates with other bachelor's degrees have to follow a 60 EC premaster's programme to qualify for admission. In the past few years, the number of students taking part in the programme has fluctuated from 36 in 2013 and 2014 to 15 in 2016 and 17 in 2018. At the moment, virtually all of the students are Dutch. In 2018, one international student from the European Union enrolled. In 2013, the programme received three international students: from Australia, Brazil and Puerto Rico. The Admissions Board assesses whether international students are sufficiently qualified to enter the programme. The development of clear admission criteria for international students is still in progress.

### *Curriculum content and structure*

Students start by acquiring the theoretical tools to analyse socio-spatial processes in the 'Interaction, society and space' and 'Planning theory' courses (5 EC each). In the second half of the first semester, students take a thesis writing course that is shared with the master's programme Environmental Infrastructure Planning. The starting point is a master's thesis market, in which staff members and planning professionals pitch their research questions. Students may either take up one of the research questions on offer or propose their own. On the basis of their thesis proposal, students are matched with a supervisor. The total thesis project amounts to 20 EC. In the 5 EC course 'Engaging society in spatial transformation', students reflect on a collective citizens' initiative. After this theoretically oriented first semester, subsequent courses combine conceptual thinking and planning practice. In the 'City matters' course (5 EC), students learn to analyse social and spatial mechanisms of urban inequality; in 'Revitalizing neighbourhoods' (5 EC), they assess new forms of self-governance and how planners can facilitate this. In the final course 'Living lab sustainable places' (5 EC), groups of students do fieldwork, make an in-depth spatial analysis of a specific area and formulate a policy advice based on the knowledge and skills they acquired in the previous courses. Parallel to these programme-specific courses, students have room for two 5 EC electives within the



Faculty of Spatial Sciences (which may either be broadening or deepening) or an internship. The 'Programme management and planning methods for smart governance' (part of the master's programme Environmental and Infrastructure Planning) and 'Institutional design and spatial planning' courses are recommended electives.

For thesis subjects, internships, real-life case studies and guest lectures, the programme collaborates with planning practitioners such as the city of Groningen, Rijkswaterstaat, housing associations and consultancy firms in the north of the Netherlands. Twice a year, the programme organises 'A day in planning practice': an in-house day at a potential future employer, to give students a better impression of the work field. The panel appreciates that the programme makes use of its regional surroundings, without in any way adopting too narrow a scope. On the one hand, it cherishes a fertile cooperation with local firms and government institutions. On the other, it manages to take local themes to a higher abstraction level and position them as examples of international developments. The panel considers this a wise and successful practice.

The panel found that most students are enthusiastic about the curriculum. They like the variety it offers them: multiple themes, both an abstract and a down-to-earth, a conceptual and empirical perspective, and zooming in on a macro- as well as a micro-level. Students also appreciate that the curriculum leaves them sufficient space to personalise it, by choosing electives and a master thesis topic. Given the strong emphasis on the human factor in spatial planning, the panel at first felt social science disciplines such as psychology, sociology and political science were missing in the curriculum. During the site visit, however, it turned out that insights from the social sciences are woven through all of the courses. This is what the students told the panel, and what the panel itself found when studying the course literature. It did find, however, that the curriculum is very light on methodology. Even though students can 'borrow' a methodology course from another programme as an elective (which is indeed recommended), it is possible to graduate without ever having taken an advanced methodology course. The panel feels that the master's programme deserves its own methodology course, combining research methods from the social sciences with planning practice. This will reflect and strengthen its own socio-spatial planning profile. The panel recommends developing such a course, or oblige students to take a relevant advanced methodology course elsewhere.

Taking into account the recommendation concerning methodology, the panel finds the curriculum adequate in enabling students to acquire the intended learning outcomes. It is structured around themes rather than clear learning trajectories, and there is the division between theoretical knowledge in the first term and application of knowledge in the second term. Formally, the programme is designed to enable students to start in September and February. February enrolment however entails a suboptimal curriculum structure, in which application of knowledge precedes acquiring the knowledge. Nearly all students start in September. This should be the only enrolment date in the panel's view.

#### *Teaching methods and feasibility*

The faculty's didactic vision emphasises learning rather than teaching. As a consequence, the master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning as well as the other programmes at the faculty aims for an active learning environment with a focus on knowledge development, experimentation, fieldwork and shared learning experiences. In the interviews and self-evaluation, the students mentioned the small scale of the teaching and the varied and challenging teaching methods as positive features of the programme. Careful attention is paid to bringing practitioners into the classroom and the students into the practice. Guest lectures, empirical assignments organised in collaboration with societal partners, the 'day in planning practice' and the one-day business course offered by a local consultancy firm are some fruits of this attitude. The panel appreciates the interweaving of theory and practice, since it allows students to link their theoretical knowledge to application and contributes to their employability.

Students bear witness to an unevenly divided workload, which particularly bothers them in the first half of the second semester. In this period they do an intensive course, 'Revitalizing neighbourhoods',



while at the same time their thesis trajectory peaks. The programme management assured the panel that this issue has already been taken up, by reducing the number of small in-class assignments of the course. The master's thesis has proved in the past to be a bottleneck that kept students from finishing the programme within one year, not least because there were no hard deadlines, as alumni told the panel. Measures have been taken to counter this: reduction of the course workload, introduction of a compulsory thesis workshop and closer supervision of the thesis process. In September 2018 a stricter time planning was introduced, with milestones and a penalty for missing the deadline. The panel acknowledges that the feasibility of the thesis trajectory is rightly on the management's radar. It is too early to tell whether or not the measures taken will be sufficient.

Theoretically, the programme offers the possibility to do a 5 EC internship instead of an elective. In practice, however, the programme's schedule has made this difficult since the introduction (as of 2018) of the 'Living Lab Sustainable Places' course in the final term, which previously contained no compulsory courses. An internship can only be done if it is part-time and fits in with the schedule, and the students are prepared to put in extra hours. Some students therefore prefer to prolong their studies in order to do an internship. The panel acknowledges that while many students would like to do an internship, the practice-oriented 'Living Lab Sustainable Places' course is greatly valued, and the programme is practice-oriented throughout. The panel judges that currently an internship is hard to manage within the master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning. It advises the programme to either organise the programme in such a way that an internship becomes a feasible option for students – for example by linking it to the thesis research – or to phase out the internship option altogether. Whatever the choice, the panel is of the opinion that the 'Living Lab Sustainable Places' course and other practice-oriented programme parts sufficiently guarantee the link to practice.

The Faculty of Spatial Sciences chooses to offer two bachelor's and six master's curricula that are substantively related as separate programmes, instead of tracks within one overarching bachelor's and one master's programme. The panel discussed the advantages and disadvantages of this decision with the faculty management. A positive consequence is that now each of the programmes is at liberty to establish its own profile and recruit students that match the profile in a goal-oriented way. A potential challenge resulting from the decision to offer separate programmes is that it may create a hurdle to communicate and collaborate across the boundaries of programmes and (particularly) departments. This is especially the case because many lecturers work within one programme. The fact that there are clear boundaries may impede the sharing of best practices and learning from one another, thus moving all programmes forward. The panel is of the opinion that the faculty does not fall in this trap, mainly because of the enthusiastic teaching staff, who intuitively and informally maintain a cycle of innovation and evaluation across programmes. The faculty manages to attract staff members who fit well into this approach, that supports the quality and improvement culture. The panel would like to stimulate the synergy between programmes even further, to guarantee that opportunities to share best practices are fully explored. It recommends a framework that ensures a minimal level of formal embedding. For example, the six programme committees could structurally meet, which they do not do now.

The panel is very positive about the fact that the faculty publishes the results of student evaluations of all courses on Nestor. This clearly reflects a quality culture within the faculty, and shows the students that their input is taken seriously, valued and used to improve the quality of education. The panel thinks that this attitude and method add significantly to the high response rates to course evaluations (85%). If a course evaluation suggests a course is not up to scratch, then the programme management forms a student panel to discuss this with the lecturer. He or she subsequently writes a reflection report, which is also published on Nestor. The panel finds this a good practice.

Twice a year the faculty organises a Graduate Research Day, where fresh graduates of all master's programmes present their research in different ways (the best theses in plenary presentations, others in parallel meetings or poster presentations). Students look forward to this day, the panel found. It is a good way to showcase their final projects and also bring the different programmes together.



### *International classroom*

In the past years, the programme has hosted only four international students. The 2018 intake counted one international student among a total of 17, in spite of the programme's ambition to offer an international classroom. The panel fully endorses this ambition, since it considers a plurality of perspectives of particular importance in a relatively normative programme such as Socio-spatial Planning. Luckily, for quite a few courses, the classroom is enriched by international students from the Environmental and Infrastructure Planning programme, who choose these courses as electives.

The programme also plans to develop double-degree programmes with foreign universities. In December 2018, a double-degree master's programme was approved with the Faculty of Engineering of the Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Thus, the programme hopes in future to use cultural diversity as a means to further improve its quality. It does include international case studies and international literature.

To facilitate this, all courses are being taught in English (since 2017). The language centre of the university is involved in assuring that the teaching staff has an adequate level of English. Students do not complain about the English level of their regular lecturers, though they say the proficiency of guest lecturers is sometimes below the mark. Since this occurs only occasionally (and is apparently compensated by a high level of applicability of the guest lectures), the panel does not see this as a major problem. Although the use of English for the entire programme is in accordance with the programme's international ambition, most students find employment in the Netherlands. They therefore need to be skilled in presenting and writing in Dutch. The panel recommends that the programme somehow responds to this need, perhaps by offering a dedicated training at the central university level. After all, many other programmes at the University of Groningen will face the same challenge.

### *Teaching staff*

The varied backgrounds of the lecturers in the programme reflect the need to take various perspectives. Staff members each have their own focus, such as spatial design, community engagement, spatial justice, adaptive planning or citizen initiatives. Most lecturers hold a university teaching qualification as well as a PhD. Students said that they experience their teachers' quality as very high: inspiring, enthusiastic and involved. The low number of students in the programme combined with a relatively small staff (11 members) makes the programme vulnerable, in the panel's view. Due to students from other programmes taking electives, the student/staff ratio is unpredictable (fluctuating between 14.3 and 29.3 between 2012 and 2017). The programme reported that there have been some workload concerns, and that it will hire two new staff members in 2019 on the topic of 'Sustainable transformation and regional planning'. This will reduce the workload of the current staff. Taking this into account, the panel established that the teaching staff is well qualified and that there is sufficient teaching staff to enable students to realise the intended learning outcomes.

### **Considerations**

The panel judges that the curriculum content and structure enable students to realise the programme's intended learning outcomes. It appreciates the careful attention being paid to bringing practitioners into the classroom and students into practice, while at the same time, the literature and level of courses are of a good academic level.

The panel did find that the curriculum is light on methodology. It ascertained that the master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning deserves its own methodology course, combining research methods from the social sciences with planning practice. This will reflect and strengthen its own socio-spatial planning profile. The panel recommends that the programme develop such a course.

Two points of improvement in the curriculum have already been identified by the programme: the peak workload in the first half of the second semester and the thesis process. The panel is convinced that these issues are on the management's radar, but it is too early to tell whether or not the measures taken are sufficient. As it is, students find it almost impossible to do an internship within



the nominal course duration. The panel advises the programme to either organise the programme in such a way that an internship becomes a feasible option for students – for example by linking it to the thesis research – or to phase out the internship option altogether. Without an internship, the programme is already sufficiently linked to practice, in the panel’s view.

Finally, the panel established that the programme’s teaching staff is well qualified. Though the programme is vulnerable because of its small scale in combination with the fluctuating numbers of students taking part in the courses, there is sufficient teaching staff to enable students to realise the intended learning outcomes. This judgement takes into account that two new staff members will be hired as of 2019.

## Conclusion

*Master’s programme Socio-Spatial Planning:* the panel assesses Standard 2 as ‘meets the standard’.

### **Standard 3: Student assessment**

The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

## Findings

### *Assessment policy and practice*

The Faculty of Spatial Sciences at the University of Groningen has a shared assessment policy, which is described in the *Faculty of Spatial Sciences Assessment Policy Memorandum*. This memorandum provides directives for the relation between assessment and learning goals, the demands that all assessment forms need to meet, the ways in which students have to be informed, etc. The memorandum sets the boundaries within which each of the programmes can choose its own assessment forms and criteria, and thus shape its own identity. Every programme has *Teaching and Examination Regulations*. Based on these, the programme management is asked to draft an assessment plan, which constitutes the intended learning outcomes and the modes of assessment of all courses in the programme, and a matrix clarifying the relationship between the two.

The panel concludes that quality control of assessment is in order. Beforehand, lecturers have the quality of their exams assessed through peer review by another member of staff. Afterwards, the quality is measured again as part of the course and programme evaluation. In this evaluation, students can indicate the extent to which the assessment ties in with the learning objectives of a course. The course coordinator and the relevant programme committee reflect upon this evaluation, and it is also made publicly available to students and to the members of the Board of Examiners. From these evaluations, it turns out that in general, students are satisfied with their exams.

The self-evaluation describes that the programme uses at least five categories of assessment: exams with open questions; exams with multiple-choice questions; essays, reports and presentations; giving feedback to other students; and in-class presentations and debates. The panel approves of this variety. As far as assignments go, however, students told the panel that these were all group assignments. Although they appreciate that group work can be enriching, they felt that this was too much of a good thing, and the panel agrees with them. It underlines that individual competencies are sufficiently assessed by the exams and presentations and the master’s thesis, but recommends allowing students to practice more with individual assignments such as writing essays, so that they get individual feedback in preparation for the master’s thesis.

The panel found that course assignments are well described in general, with clear assessment criteria. Exams are properly archived, with the appropriate answer key. The panel states that assessment throughout the courses is sufficiently valid, reliable and transparent. It recommends improving the assessment further by sharing successful innovations between the departments.



### *Thesis assessment*

The panel studied a sample of the theses in the Socio-Spatial Planning programme and their assessment forms. It found that the master's theses are validly and reliably assessed. A characteristic of the assessment culture within the Socio-Spatial Planning programme is that lecturers are relatively frugal with feedback. The panel encourages the programme to give more extensive feedback on the master theses, since this enables students to shape their own learning process. It also recommends giving more space to the second examiner's comments, thus making his or her independent judgement more explicit. The faculty management explained to the panel that each of the master's programmes at the faculty has its own procedure of assessing the master theses and its own standard assessment form, with slightly differing criteria or prioritisation of criteria. The panel finds this justifiable, as a way of underlining the specific identity of each of the programmes. This is particularly so in view of the fact that the forms play an important role not only in the assessment itself, but also in guiding the students through their writing process. 'Straightjacketing' would then be ill-advised. While endorsing some free rein on the assessment criteria for each individual programme, the panel does recommend harmonising the assessment processes (see below). This will enhance transparency, enforce validity, and make it easier for students to know what to expect.

In the panel's view, one thesis assessment procedure, which documents recognisably independent feedback from both the first and second examiner can be seen as a good practice. The role of the second examiner is to form his or her own judgement and add this to the first examiner's judgment on the assessment form, after which the first and second examiner compare notes and work towards a collective final mark. The assessment form should reflect the independent procedure. This procedure should be implemented consistently through all programmes, the panel recommends. Also, the assessment form should be consistently shared with the student, so that he or she can take advantage of the feedback that is given. The panel also suggests that while academic accuracy is well covered on the assessment forms, creativity, scientific depth and societal relevance could be evaluated more strongly and explicitly.

### *The Board of Examiners*

The Faculty of Spatial Sciences has one Board of Examiners, responsible for the examination and assessment quality of all bachelor's and master's programmes, awarding degrees and handling requests by students regarding deviations from the regular curriculum. The Board consists of six members, representing each of the departments. It also includes one external assessment expert. The Board itself meets six times a year, and besides that, it regularly meets with the university's central Board of Examiners, in order to deal with shared challenges and innovative solutions.

The panel found that, since the 2014 evaluation, the Board of Examiners has greatly improved its procedures. At the time, the previous panel considered the Board of Examiners to be only slowly moving towards a more professional attitude. Now this faculty's board is seen as a good example throughout the university. Its particular merit is that its members aim to work pro-actively and quickly, communicating directly with students who are unhappy with the assessment methods. In this manner they have been able to prevent appeal procedures, while at the same time retaining broad support from the work floor. As the 2014 evaluation panel recommended, the Board's time allocation was increased. The present panel is very happy with these developments.

The panel noticed that the Board of Examiners has a clear definition of its own responsibilities, as demarcated from those educational aspects that are primarily the management's responsibility. The latter develops the course and assessment methods, while the Board of Examiners safeguards the quality and sees to it that the programmes live up to their intended academic level. As soon as the Board spots an irregularity (relatively low average grades, complaints by students, evaluations that are below the mark), the secretary of the Board of Examiners discusses this with the lecturers involved. Every six months, the Board picks five courses for a systematic evaluation of its assessment methods. These may be courses that stand out in the course evaluations, in the proceedings of the Programme Committees, or in the day-to-day communications between Board members and their colleagues. The Board also makes a random and anonymous selection of ten bachelor's and ten master's theses, which are then re-assessed by one of its members. If there is a significant difference

between the original mark and that given by the Board member, this difference is discussed with the examiners involved. All parties find this an instructive process. In 2018, the Board started a pilot project screening the assessment practices of two complete programmes, with the intention of repeating this exercise with two new programmes each year. The panel applauds this initiative. As well as being instrumental to further reinforcing quality assurance, it also contributes to a broadly shared awareness of how student assessment should be embedded in the bigger picture.

The panel encourages the Board of Examiners to continue its good work. The Board of Examiners, the Programme Committees and the programme management each take on their individual tasks well. In the panel's opinion, the faculty could gain even more by coordinating them toward a shared faculty-wide assessment culture, e.g. by discussing problems of mutual interest together and actively exchanging lessons learned and best practices. This will become especially relevant as the staff diversify and become more international. Part of such an exercise could be, for instance, to initiate a biannual assessment day.

### **Considerations**

The panel states that assessment throughout the courses in the Socio-Spatial Planning programme is sufficiently valid, reliable and transparent. Although it found that individual competencies are sufficiently assessed, it recommends replacing some of the group assignments by individual assignments, allowing the students to practise their skills. The panel thinks that the faculty could gain even more by intensifying a shared faculty-wide assessment culture. This will become especially relevant as the staff diversifies and becomes more international.

The panel reviewed a sample of ten master's theses and found that they are validly and reliably assessed. The level of transparency of the assessment however differs, both between and within the programmes. The panel recommends one thesis assessment procedure in all master's programmes. This enhances transparency, enforces validity and makes it easier for students to know what to expect. In the panel's view, thesis assessment forms with recognisably independent feedback from both the first and second examiner can be seen as a good practice. The panel found that, since the 2014 evaluation, the Board of Examiners greatly improved its procedures. It has become very professional, with a clear view of its responsibilities, and works proactively and quickly. The panel encourages the Board of Examiners to continue its good work.

### **Conclusion**

*Master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning:* the panel assesses Standard 3 as 'meets the standard'.

### **Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes**

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

### **Findings**

Prior to its site visit, the panel studied a sample of recent master's theses. They sufficiently demonstrate that the students realise the intended learning outcomes. Many of the theses deal with original topics, contain in-depth analyses and use mixed-methods research, which is very fitting to the field of socio-spatial planning. Many students also based their theses on extensive field work, thus demonstrating organisational skills and a collaborative, creative attitude. In the future, as the faculty's international ambitions blossom, one might expect more emphasis on the inclusion of transnational or cross-cultural perspectives as part of the instructional approach to the master's theses. This may need to be addressed at an institutional level, with the Faculty Board encouraging and possibly facilitating such an approach. Moreover, attention for spatial patterns could be more recognisable, while the amount and quality of maps leaves room for improvement.

That the intended learning outcomes are achieved can also be deduced from the alumni's position on the labour market. The faculty regularly performs alumni analyses, charting where its alumni work and how long it took them to find a job. The 2016 survey shows that a majority of alumni (53%)



acquire a relevant job in less than two months after graduating. Within a year, practically all alumni (98%) have found a relevant job. Most alumni find employment with provincial, municipal or national government institutions, and in consultancy, engineering or education. Alumni told the panel that they are happy with the skills they learned. In particular, they mentioned that they can manage complex processes with multiple stakeholders and interests, not only in socio-spatial planning, but in large firms as well.

The panel values the many different ways in which alumni of the master's programme in Socio-Spatial planning and other programmes remain in touch with the faculty: on the advisory board, as guest lecturers, as internship supervisors, as data suppliers, or as mediators introducing a constant stream of young pupils to the faculty (if they become teachers). The faculty's active alumni association (the Professor Keuning Vereniging, which organises a big alumni event every two years) is partly responsible for this. Involving alumni in the programme is done very well, in the panel's view, and contributes to its quality.

### **Considerations**

Based on a selection of the master's theses, the alumni survey and interviews with alumni during the site visit, the panel concluded that students realise the intended learning outcomes as formulated by the programme. Many of the theses deal with original topics, contain in-depth analyses and use mixed-methods research, which is very fitting to the field of socio-spatial planning. A 2016 survey shows that a majority of the programme's alumni (53%) acquire a relevant job in less than two months after graduating. Within a year, practically all alumni (98%) have found a relevant job. Alumni told the panel that they are happy with the skills they learned. In particular, they mentioned that they can manage complex processes with multiple stakeholders and interests, not only in socio-spatial planning, but in large firms as well.

### **Conclusion**

*Master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning:* the panel assesses Standard 4 as 'meets the standard'.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

The panel's judgement on standards 1, 2, 3 and 4 for the master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning at the University of Groningen is 'meets the standard'. Therefore, according to the rules of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders, the general and final judgement is 'positive'.

### **Conclusion**

The panel assesses the *master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning* as 'positive'.

# APPENDICES



# APPENDIX 1: DOMAIN-SPECIFIC FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE

## **The Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning domain in the Netherlands**

The current domain-specific reference framework confines itself to a substantive description of the two core disciplines, in combination with the general expectations regarding the competencies of graduates. Therefore, it is a more concise document than the previous (2012) one. The exit qualifications for bachelor and master programmes are no longer included, partly because the Dublin descriptors already provide an adequate general description of the desired scientific level, but also to give the programmes taking part in the reaccreditation ample opportunity to demonstrate their own specific profile in their self-studies.

The Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning domain is very broad and diverse, and the different academic programmes within the Netherlands highlight different elements. They vary, for example, in the balance between scientific and professional training, degree of research intensity, degree of integration between the two core disciplines, opportunities to specialize, and types of specialization offered. This domain-specific reference framework emphasizes the common features applying to all programmes.

The Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning domain revolves around the complex relationship between people (society) and their environment (space). There are five qualities that determine the mind set of geographers and planners. First of all, the ability to think from a time-space perspective, these being the two dimensions within which human action unfolds. Secondly, the ability to study the relation between people and environment in the context of intertwined spatial scale levels (local, regional, national, global). Insight into socio-spatial transformations is gained by studying the interaction between these scale levels (the multi-scalar perspective), without making prior assumptions about the dominance of any one level (e.g. the global level) over another (e.g. the local level). Thirdly, the mind set of geographers and planners is based on the idea that space and society closely interact and shape each other. Human actions, and the behavioural patterns that develop in the course of time (institutions), crystallize in space, while conversely, spatial structures and place-related features trigger and shape human actions. A fourth quality relates to the strong multidisciplinary orientation in the work of geographers and planners; relationships between humans and their environment are studied from a range of mutually supplementary disciplinary perspectives. The precise combinations chosen depend on the nature of the socio-spatial problems being studied and will vary per programme within the domain. Finally, the fifth quality is closely linked with all the above: the integrative character of the geographical and planning approach. This crux is an ambition to understand the mutual cohesion between economic, social, cultural and political phenomena and processes within their specific spatial contexts.

Key terms in the domain are space, place, location, scale, networks, linkages, spatial behaviour, place attachment, spatial quality, spatial design and spatial interventions. Within the domain socio-spatial problems are taken as starting points of scientific inquiry. These issues include spatial inequality, globalization, migration, segregation, diversity and identity, environmental burden, sustainable area development, mobility and governance. The aim is not only to make critical analyses of the issues concerned, but also to design plans and interventions that may solve or reduce socio-spatial dilemmas.

The international and comparative character of studying the relation between people and environment is inherent to the Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning disciplines. Socio-spatial problems, and planned actions to deal with them, are marked by the specific national, regional and local context in which they arise. The significance of the embeddedness of socio-spatial phenomena is the key to Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning. However, awareness of the importance of context does not imply that the disciplines are merely the sum of an endless series of case-studies. The ambition is to identify the international similarities and differences of socio-spatial processes and developments, in order to unravel both their unique and generic aspects. Both facets are typical of the quest of Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning to



formulate theories (explanation in context). To emphasize this international, comparative character, teaching does not focus solely on the Netherlands. And when studying Dutch cases, the international importance and international suitability of the theoretical perspectives and research angles developed will always be considered. Continuing on from this, the composition of staff and students in all the Dutch programmes in the domain is becoming increasingly diverse (in many ways). The 'international classroom' being introduced in more and more programmes, facilitates and reinforces the international-comparative orientation of both disciplines.

The Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning domain has evolved in close cohesion with the other social sciences. While it shares important qualities with the latter - such as attention for formulating theory and the need for rigid methodology - it is also distinct by emphasizing particular qualities. The strong empirical orientation, apparent in the importance attached to primary data collection and fieldwork, is a typical feature of our domain. Furthermore, 'learning by doing' has become an important part of all programmes, partly because it enhances sensitivity to the time and place (context)-bound character of social, cultural, political and economic phenomena and developments. Geographers and planners are constantly challenged to step outside the comfort zone of their own field. Finally, research within the domain has increasingly opened up for a wide spectrum of methods and techniques. This methodological pluralism corresponds with the choice to study socio-spatial problems at various scale levels, which precludes a standard method of analysis.

Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning graduates are able to identify, analyse and explain socio-spatial problems, based on and contributing to the 'body of knowledge' adhering to the discipline. They are also fully conversant with general social-scientific methods and techniques, as well as more domain-specific research methods, such as GIS and spatial impact analysis. The Bachelor's programmes do this, in line with the basic level of the Dublin descriptors, by laying a broad scientific foundation in the two core disciplines, while the Master's programmes train students, again following the Dublin framework, at a theoretically and methodologically more advanced and specialist level.

The programmes under consideration prepare students for a variety of professions and sectors. Typical jobs include researcher, teacher/lecturer, consultant, policy official and project manager. A common characteristic of staff qualified in Human Geography and/or Urban and Regional Planning is their inclination for a comprehensive approach to problems, and their ability to create awareness on the spatial diversity of societal problems. Students with a specialist Master's degree often find themselves in professions directly connected with their specialism, such as spatial planning, area development, urban policy, construction and housing, regional policy, traffic and transport management or environmental policy. The self-studies of the individual degree programmes will inform more specifically on the professions and sectors in which graduates work.

*The domain-specific framework of reference (DSFR) has been formulated by the national disciplinary meeting (Disciplineoverleg Geografie en Planologie). The former DSFR has been adjusted, i.e. updated and shortened by omitting the concrete exit qualifications for bachelor and master. The participating programmes have been able to comment on the draft. It has been laid down during the meeting on 6 September 2018.*



## APPENDIX 2: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

### **Master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning**

#### *1. Impart Knowledge and Understanding*

- A. Understand issues in context: to understand issues relating to spatial changes in neighbourhoods and cities, and the social significance of those changes, in their specific administrative and social context (place analysis)
- B. Conduct actor analysis: to describe institutions and decision-making processes relating to spatial changes and place them in the context of broader administrative and social trends and processes (actor analysis)
- C. Acknowledge political tensions / complexity: to recognize that, given the diversity and complexity of the relationship between society and the spatial environment, politics and friction are concomitant with planning
- D. Explain, recognize, use theories: to explain relevant theories on the social implications of spatial change, recognize the theories in societal reality and use them to conduct research
- E. Critical assessment: relations theory, methods, results: to formulate a critical assessment of the relationships between theoretical concepts, research methodologies and empirical findings in international scientific publications
- F. Contribute to knowledge development (in Planning): to make an independent contribution to knowledge in the field of Planning

#### *2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding*

- A. Conduct research: independently to conduct research into spatial issues, decision-making processes and the social consequences of solutions
- B. Design research and report on it: independently to formulate a question, produce a research design, select and apply research methods, and report on these clearly and comprehensively
- C. Develop solutions: to design creative and intelligent effective solutions (to spatial issues) that are effective because they are realistically based on socio-spatial planning theories and can find support because they take account of societal and administrative aspects
- D. Conceptual and pragmatic thinking: to think in a practical and pragmatic way, but to balance considerations at the conceptual level, leading to well-founded recommendations

#### *3. Forming Judgements*

- A. Critical and ethical reflection: to reflect critically on ethical and normative aspects of spatial problems and solutions
- B. Giving feedback: to give constructive critical feedback on analyses and solutions produced by others.
- C. Integration ethics in research: to integrate ethical, normative and expressive modes of thought with scientific thinking
- D. Reflect on application: to reflect on possible applications and limitations of science in general, and of planning in particular
- E. Open and critical attitude: to have an open and critical attitude towards new ideas and developments within the field of planning

#### *4. Communication*

- A. Interdisciplinary collaboration: work in interdisciplinary teams to analyse complex spatial problem situations
- B. Sensitivity in dealing with societal issues: show sensitivity and respect for societal opinions in working with commissioners, respondents and informants
- C. Debating/discussing issues: discuss and debate about developments in the planning profession and in society
- D. Convincing presentation (oral/written): convey a problem analysis in a convincing way by means of written text and oral presentation



### *5. Learning Skills*

- A. Discern relevant information: purposefully derive relevant information from large quantities of text with a large variety of intentions
- B. Acquire knowledge: quickly acquiring basic knowledge on specific domains while distinguishing main issues and side issues
- C. Critically follow developments in the field: critically staying in touch with developments in the planning profession, in an independent and critical way

### *6. Attitudes*

- A. Critical engagement with new ideas: deal with new developments in the planning profession in an inquisitive and critical way
- B. Work with a scientific attitude: work with a scientific attitude in societal and scientific professions

## APPENDIX 3: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM

### Master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning

Socio-Spatial Planning			
<i>Term 1A</i>	<i>Term 1B</i>	<i>Term 2A</i>	<i>Term 2B</i>
Interaction, Society and Space (5 ects)	Engaging Society in Spatial Transformation (5 ects)	City Matters (5 ects)	Living Lab Sustainable Places (5 ects)
Planning Theory (5 ects)	Optional Course (5 ects)	Revitalizing Neighbourhoods (5 ects)	
Optional Course (5 ects)	Thesis (20 ects)		

Compulsory

Thesis

Optional  
Course



## APPENDIX 4: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

<b>DAY 0 Monday April 15th, 2019</b>		
16.45	17.00	Arrival panel and reception at the hotel
17.00	21.00	Preparatory meeting panel
<b>DAY 1 Tuesday April 16th, 2019</b>		
08.45	09.00	Arrival panel
09.00	09.45	Meeting with programme coordinators of the study programmes of day 1
09.45	10.15	Break / Internal consultation assessment panel
10.15	11.00	Meeting with students BSc Human Geography and Planning
11.00	11.45	Meeting with lecturers BSc Human Geography and Planning
11.45	12.15	Virtual Reality Lab Tour
12.15	13.15	Lunch / Internal consultation assessment panel
13.15	14.00	Meeting with students MSc Economic Geography / MSc Real Estate Studies
14.00	14.45	Meeting with lecturers MSc Economic Geography / MSc Real Estate Studies
14.45	15.15	Break / Internal consultation assessment panel
15.15	15.45	Meeting with students MSc Cultural Geography
15.45	16.15	Meeting with lecturers MSc Cultural Geography
16.15	17.00	Break / Recording of first findings day 1 / walk-in consultation
17.00	17.45	Meeting with alumni MSc Economic Geography / MSc Real Estate Studies / MSc Cultural Geography
<b>DAY 2 Wednesday April 17th, 2019</b>		
08.45	09.00	Arrival panel and preparation for day 2
09.00	09.45	Meeting with programme coordinators of the study programmes of day 2
09.45	10.15	Break / Internal consultation assessment panel
10.15	11.00	Meeting with students BSc Spatial Planning and Design
11.00	11.45	Meeting with lecturers BSc Spatial Planning and Design
11.45	12.15	Design Course Tour
12.15	13.15	Lunch / Internal consultation assessment panel
13.15	14.00	Meeting with students MSc Socio-Spatial Planning / MSc Environmental and Infrastructure Planning
14.00	14.45	Meeting with lecturers MSc Socio-Spatial Planning / MSc Environmental and Infrastructure Planning
14.45	15.15	Break / Internal consultation assessment panel
15.15	15.45	Meeting with students MSc Population Studies
15.45	16.15	Meeting with lecturers MSc Population Studies
16.15	17.00	Break / Recording of first findings day 2 / walk-in consultation
17.00	17.45	Meeting with alumni MSc Socio-Spatial Planning / MSc Environmental and Infrastructure Planning / MSc Population Studies
<b>DAY 3 Thursday April 18th, 2019</b>		
08.45	09.00	Arrival panel and preparation for day 3
09.00	10.00	Meeting Board of Examiners
10.00	10.30	Internal consultation assessment panel, draw up provisional findings
10.30	11.30	Final meeting with programme management
11.30	14.00	Lunch / Internal consultation assessment panel / draw up provisional findings
14.00	14.30	Oral report provisional conclusion
14.30	14.45	Break
14.45	15.45	Development Dialogue
15.45	16.00	Closing site visit

## APPENDIX 5: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 10 theses of the master's programme Socio-Spatial Planning. Information on the selected theses is available from QANU upon request.

During the site visit, the panel studied, among other things, the following documents (partly as hard copies, partly via the institute's electronic learning environment):

- Lecturer handbook
- Programme committee handbooks and regulations
- Task division model 2018-2019
- Faculty plans for quality agreements
- Vision on teaching and learning
- Strategic report for the Faculty of Spatial Sciences
- Alumni analyses 2010-2017
- FSS career newsletters
- Summary of all relevant courses
- Top 3 most valued courses of the 2018-2019 semester
- 'Richtlijnen interne evaluaties'
- Course guide format
- Minutes of all meetings by the Board of Examiners
- Annual reports of the Board of Examiners
- Assessment protocols
- Assessment plans

Of the following courses, the panel studied complete portfolios (course literature, assignments, tests and answer keys, fieldwork assignments, reports and assessment criteria if relevant, course evaluations):

- Interaction, Society and Space
- Revitalizing Neighbourhoods