 In Brazil he studied the technical aspects of soil and groundwater remediation – here in Tübingen, he is delving into its chemical aspects and is thus rounding out his knowledge of environmental science. “Tübingen is just a wonderful place to study and live”, says Fernando from Brazil, who came here to do his master’s degree in 2003, and stayed – not only to enjoy Tübingen’s student life, but also to work on his PhD. It’s the typical scenic sites – like the Old Town and the Neckar Bridge with the nearby Hölderlin Tower – that fascinate the 31-year-old graduate student in Environmental Geoscience. “Although I will have very good opportunities for a job in Sao Paolo, I plan to stay here a while longer after I’m finished,” says Fernando, who will marry his Austrian fiancée this summer. “The state of the art in my academic field is amazing here in Tübingen; the quality of the laboratories and libraries really impressed me.”

Since it is taught entirely in English, the Environmental Geoscience doctoral programme is very international, yet a number of German students are also taking part. Its interdisciplinary nature is another important aspect: biologists, chemists, engineers and, of course, microbiologists come together as students and lecturers to share and broaden their knowledge of how to improve the quality of our environment.

“Regulations have become stricter in recent years and the attendant efforts required to ensure compliance are increasing”, exp-

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lains course co-ordinator Dr. Peter Merkel. Public funding for remedial measures has dropped considerably since the golden days of the 1980s, so the challenge is to achieve the best results using innovative approaches. Fernando was involved in a project that tackled a contamination problem in a city near Hanover: by pooling their expertise, the universities of Kiel and Tübingen solved

«Tübingen is a wonderful place to study and live.»

it. “We sometimes provide services to organizations, cities or companies facing environmental problems. Generally, PhD students are funded by research projects and grants or scholarships. Third-party funds also go to support basic research in innovative fields”, says Merkel. “The number of students we can accept is therefore limited by the availability of funding from projects.”

Studying in Tübingen is less expensive than in Switzerland or in England – the fees are lower, housing in the dorms is affordable and PhD students receive a 50% salary. And what’s more, there’s no better beer garden in the whole of Europe than the one on the banks of the Neckar River. Brazil simply cannot compete – at least not for the next few years, according to Fernando. 

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