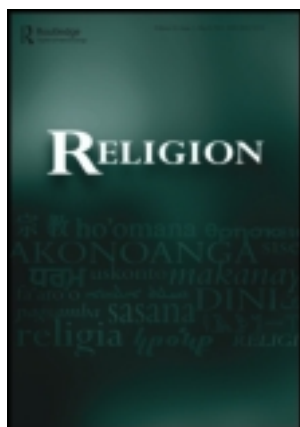


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The Bologna process and the study of religion\ s in (Western) Europe

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The Bologna process and the study of religion\ s in (Western) Europe

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ABSTRACT The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999 signed by ministers of education from 29 European countries resulted in the so-called Bologna process: a starting point and platform for various university reforms in the signatory countries. The present paper explores the implications of the Bologna process for the situation of the study of religion\ s in selected countries that are subject to this process.

KEY WORDS university degrees and programs; university reforms; Bologna process

Introduction

In the period following World War II, and especially since the 1960s, there has been a massive global increase in the number of tertiary educational institutions,¹ to the extent of offering, in some countries, almost universal access to tertiary education (Trow 2006). This process of expansion went along with variously described changes in the nature of universities.² There have been several waves of university reforms (mainly beginning in the late 1960s and 1990s). Given that these reforms impact on the social and pedagogical aspects of disciplines, they may require attention if one is interested in disciplinary history.³ The present article tentatively focuses on one international platform of reforms, the so-called Bologna process, to which European countries have been subject since 1999 (see below for further details). The Bologna process, which has to be seen in the broader project of European integration (see Amaral et al. 2009), is not an 'ordinary' university reform (Musselin 2009) but an inter-governmental platform on which reforms were staged in various countries.

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¹ While the percentage of students enrolling in the Humanities has declined, the Social Sciences have grown, possibly resulting in a situation of tension for Religion and Theology in the contemporary university – between a branch steering towards the Humanities and one towards the Social Sciences (Alles 2008: 309–311).

² According to Teichler (2007: 20), 'institutions of higher education have lost much of their special character. They are *expected to be more similar to other institutions*, and the functions they perform are less exclusive' (emphasis in the original).

³ See our introductory essay for a discussion of the status of the study of religion\ s as an academic discipline and criteria for the identity of academic disciplines (Engler and Stausberg 2011).

My impression is that to many faculty members, university reforms tend to look like yet another meaningless assault on their precious time, typically launched from the top and distracting them from their core work. Yet such reforms are embedded in much wider societal, political, and economic transformations (see Wright and Rabo [2010]), such as the emergence of global knowledge economies, the marketization, commodification, and corporatization of education and knowledge, managerial approaches and talk of cost-efficiency, so that universities are increasingly perceived as companies (and no longer as institutions). In Europe (but also elsewhere) such 'neo-liberal' or 'new public management' changes have raised quite fundamental issues, such as the functioning, the function, the meaning, the structure of university education and universities, and the nature of their ties to nation-states and the economy. In some countries, relationships between academia and other professions, on the one hand, and the state, on the other, are now conceptualized in contractual terms, where universities are expected to provide services to society and the economy, and where the students are considered as customers and the economy or the public as recipients or purchasers. The autonomy of the universities has been challenged and redefined.

University reforms are important in many ways, and are professionally studied by fields such as Sociology, in particular the Sociology of Knowledge, as well as Higher Education Studies, Policy Studies, and others (including Anthropology). In the present, much more modest context, I will point to the potential impact of the Bologna process and its various implementations on the discipline of the study of religion\

Let me start by recalling the ramification of university reforms for faculty members. Typically, university reforms tend to impact on the deteriorating reputation and working conditions of the members of the academic 'tribe,' generally characterized by an overall intensification and degradation of academic work (in many places also in terms of pay) with faculty typically expected to 'work longer, on a greater variety of tasks with fewer resources' (Becher and Trowler 2001: 13). University reforms force faculty members to reorganize parts of their work routine – in particular teaching and supervision – which often results in new duties, typically of an administrative nature. From some places, including Britain, it is reported that faculty today spends more time on administration than on research and teaching (Hinnells 2004: 131). An international study has indicated that a number of European academics report that increasing demands were made on them to participate in commercial activities and commissioned research and to contribute to life-long learning activities; that they had less uninterrupted time for research; and that they had less control over their time and that they faced 'decreasing freedom to pursue their own research interest' (Gornitzka and Langfeldt 2005: 7). On an understanding of the role of faculty that prioritizes research as its 'core business,' which is, to my eyes, legitimate, these are naturally considered effects that distract from what faculty is 'really' meant to do by stealing precious time and valuable energy from that core task.

Note that in several countries, research is no longer funded as part of academic positions but needs to be funded externally (at least at some or even the majority of universities). In addition, in countries where research is still a right or duty of faculty (whether *de jure* or *de facto*), administrators encourage or even demand that faculty seek external research funding, devising various forms of incentives or exerting pressure to this effect. This redefines the roles of faculty, where a

successful professor nowadays has to be an able (sub-) entrepreneur who chases the Euro on behalf of one's employer, the university (Wright and Rabo 2010: 7).

Another factor leading to the extension and fragmentation of our job description (Becher and Trowler 2001: 17) is that dissemination and popularization of learning is increasingly recast as the ability to create media attention for one's work. A further implication of the new realities faculty members find themselves navigating in Europe – which is directly linked to the Bologna process (see below) and the increase in administrative duties – is evaluation. All courses, and that implies the performance of the teachers, are now regularly evaluated. In some countries, the research output of faculty is also evaluated.⁴

It turned out that the Bologna process has caused something like a chain reaction, leading to the reform of faculties and the creation of new departments, typically merging smaller units into larger ones.⁵ In several countries, this went along with strengthening the power of university administration over staff and faculty, either on a central level or by creating new forms of departmental leadership, as happened in Denmark and Norway. Correspondingly, leadership qualities are now increasingly seen as important skills of faculty (and as such they occasionally become part of the educational program of doctoral candidates).⁶

Now the time has come to briefly – and rather selectively – review the main lines of the Bologna Accords and the various processes they have instigated.⁷ My impression is that, among faculty members and students, the general perception is that the Bologna process has been a top-down bureaucratic process rather than a challenge to rethink university education;⁸ whereas departments and universities have had to revise their degrees and programs, in the study of religion's there has not been a notable academic debate about the purpose of the discipline and the kind and content of education it should offer.⁹

The Bologna process

The Bologna process is embedded in a wave of earlier and parallel changes of the landscape of higher education in Europe, all aiming at increased internationalization, competition, and academic productivity (Neave 2009). Its starting point was a joint declaration signed by the education ministers of France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom in 1998, the so-called 'Sorbonne Joint Declaration' in which the four ministers committed themselves to 'harmonising the architecture of the European Higher Education system.'¹⁰ In this declaration, the ministers speak of

⁴ See Hinnells (2004) for a review of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and the Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) and their implications for Religious Studies in Britain.

⁵ This process is in tune with changes in the structure of universities characterized by a concentration of resources and an output-based allocation of funds; see Münch (2007: 377).

⁶ The Center for Leadership and People Management at the Ludwig Maximilians University München offers courses for PhD candidates.

⁷ For recent accounts see Amaral et al. (2009); Brändle (2010); Gaston (2010). In addition to scholarly works, there are many published evaluation reports; many popular publications discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the Bologna process.

⁸ To some extent, this reflects a widespread scepticism Europeans share towards the European political machinery.

⁹ In this respect, the study of religion's has probably not been different from most other disciplines.

¹⁰ http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Sorbonne_declaration.pdf.

'[a]n open European area for higher learning.' This vision and this commitment then unfolded in a meeting of the European ministers of education in Bologna, in June 1999, which resulted in the so-called Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999. This document was signed by ministers of education from 29 European countries. The Bologna Declaration spells out some guiding ideas for 'the establishment of the European area of higher education,' which according to the signatories requires a 'greater compatibility and comparability of the systems of higher education.' In order to achieve that, the Bologna Declaration spelled out six goals, namely: (1) the creation of 'easily readable and comparable degrees,' which it hopes to achieve through the implementation of a 'Diploma Supplement,' held 'to promote European citizens [sic!] employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system,' which in effect are two important sub-goals; (2) the adoption 'of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate,' where access to the second cycle presupposes successful completion of the first;¹¹ (3) the introduction of a system of credits, which should facilitate the achievement of the next goal, namely (4) the promotion of mobility, both for students and faculty and staff; (5) '[p]romotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies;' (6) '[p]romotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, interinstitutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.'¹²

While the Bologna Declaration gave impetus to a process of substantial change – the so-called Bologna process – the Declaration as such mainly tossed these goals into the air. The implementation of these ideas, which of course can and have been criticized, was then monitored and specified by a working group, the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), and bi-annual meetings, the last of which took place in Leuven in 2009. The process initiated by the Bologna Declaration gained a new impetus by the development plan for the European Union for the decade 2000 to 2010, generally known as the Lisbon Strategy, or Lisbon Agenda, set out by the European Council in Lisbon in March 2010. One of the cornerstones of that strategy is the concept of 'knowledge economy,' or 'learning economy,' as a crucial aspect of desired innovation.

The Bologna follow-up conferences led to a number of changes. To begin with, the number of signatories increased substantially, so that the area covered by the Bologna process now covers 46 participating countries, which is much more than the current membership of the European Union (27 states). Examples of non-EU countries include Russia, Turkey, several Caucasian countries, the Holy See, and Norway. Note that the 'Bologna process is not a EU policy' (Musselin 2009: 182). While the Bologna Declaration was mainly the work of politicians, in the course of the follow-up conferences, ever more interested parties ('stakeholders') were involved, starting with representatives of students and institutes of higher education in the Prague Conference (2001), followed by representatives of industries

¹¹ It should be pointed out that this two-tiered structure is interpreted in most European countries as two stages rather than as a dividing line; for the most part, teaching and learning styles across these stages are only moderately different, and both kinds of programs are typically offered by the same institutions (see Teichler [2007: 201]).

¹² http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/bologna_declaration.pdf.

and employers at later meetings. This reflects the increased importance of the aim of 'employability,' a typically underconceptualized set of achievements and personal attributes often reduced to promoting generic 'skills' thought to enhance suitability for employment, to be achieved by each of the educational cycles and degrees.¹³ Yet an immediate translation of employability into higher rates of graduate employment will probably, at least for the Humanities, remain a pipe dream.

At the Berlin Conference (2003), the ministers committed themselves to start implementing the introduction of the two-cycle model by 2005. At the same conference, the doctoral degree became part of the Bologna process and is now called the 'third cycle.'¹⁴ The subsequent conference in Bergen (2005) highlighted the need to introduce concrete means of quality management and to safeguard social justice. The demand for quality assessment resulted in the establishment of an institutional apparatus in charge of the accreditation of the reformed degrees, which thereby are no longer the prerogative of universities and political institutions. Given the extension of the aims and scope and the broadening participation as well as its social, economic, legal, and cultural implications – most visible, perhaps, with regard to the demands on increased mobility – the Bologna process has become increasingly complex and its implementation continues to be regarded as insufficient. At the latest follow-up conference in Leuven (2009) this has led to a change in strategy, in that the ministers now no longer give any recommendations but have decided to leave the process to its own unfolding dynamics (Brändle 2010: 68). At the same time, the Leuven Declaration proclaimed the necessity of opening alternative ways of financing higher education, which is one of the most fundamental changes in a system that until recently relied almost exclusively on public (state) funding, but which in most countries suffers from chronic underfunding (Trow 2006: 273).

Inconsistencies, intersection, and consequences: between crisis and creativity

According to a prominent higher-education scholar, the Bologna process is/was '*not a highly coordinated process*' (Teichler 2007: 173; emphasis in original). In addition, the Bologna process and the reforms it aimed at were interpreted and implemented differently, and to a different degree, in the signatory countries.¹⁵

Let us look at the implementation in the UK and Germany. While the UK was part of the core group of initial initiators, many of the changes in principle demanded by the Bologna process appear not to have been implemented in the UK, probably because the UK had already previously undergone similar reforms, for example, by introducing modularized degrees, credit points, and by emphasizing so-called transferable skills (all to become major elements of the Bologna reforms). So far, the UK does not use the standard European Credit

¹³ Higher-education scholars (e.g. Knight and Yorke [2004]) are seeking to promote new understandings of the concept of 'employability' and its curricular and practical implementation; in addition they study the relation of graduates to the world of employment and employers' expectations.

¹⁴ Reflecting this three-tiered structure, in France the Bologna process is referred to as LMD (licence [= bachelor], master, doctorate). In many program descriptions, the abbreviation Bac + 3 refers to the first cycle (made up of three years of university education), Bac + 5 refers to the second cycle, and Bac + 8 to the third cycle.

¹⁵ In the following, the various interpretations of the aims and goals of the Bologna Declaration will not be discussed.

Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credit-point system, which is generally perceived to be one of the core elements of the Bologna reforms,¹⁶ and British universities apparently did not see a need to revise their degree structures because the Bologna process was perceived to be in tune with an earlier wave of reforms of the degree structure. In Germany, on the other hand, where the Bologna process was perceived as amounting to an Anglo-Americanization of higher education,¹⁷ the entire degree structure was completely changed at all universities, and changes were demanded by different actors that went beyond the framework set by the international declarations.

In Germany, but also in other countries, e.g., in Spain, the transition to the new system was met by sharp critique, and even resulted in public demonstrations and protests. Whereas some oppose aspects of the new system and its implementation, others completely reject the Bologna process. While many German academics, at least in the Humanities, tried to avoid the introduction of the new system as long as they possibly could – perhaps a sign of the excessive ‘conservatism of the German system’ (Trow 2006: 273) – other countries, such as the Netherlands, have been more inclined to reform. In Italy, the reform was introduced late but rapidly (Moscato 2009). Some environments were more efficient than others in circumventing the reform by window dressing their extant degrees.¹⁸

Comparing different countries, ‘no unified logic of the system of graded programs can be detected’ (Alesi, Bürger and Kehm 2005: 1). Here are some examples. While most countries and universities established two cycles of three plus two years of education respectively,¹⁹ in Spain, the first cycle, the *Título de grado*, has four years, followed by a *Título de master*, which has either one or two years. The Master in Sciences of Religions (*Máster universitario en ciencias de las religiones*) offered at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and the master’s program in Religions and Societies (*Religiones y sociedades*) at the Universidad Pablo de Olavide at Seville, are one-year programs, while the *Màster: història de la religiones* (Master in History of Religion; taught in Catalan) at the University of Barcelona is a two-year program. In Switzerland, master’s degrees comprise a ‘major’ degree of

¹⁶ In some countries, ECTS is known by names such as *studiepoeng* (STP) in Norway, *högskolepoäng* (hp) in Sweden, *studiepunten* in Dutch (where the abbreviation ECTS is used), or *credito formativo universitario* (CFU) in Italy. In Germany, there are several names. One academic year corresponds to 60 ECTS, and one semester to 30 ECTS. One ECTS corresponds to a workload of some 25 to 30 hours. In addition to the ECTS credit system, an ECTS grading system was introduced, initially in order to compare the various grading systems in place in different countries. Some countries, however, have changed their grading system and adopted one main principle of the ECTS grading system, namely the assigning of grades based not on achievement but according to relative position in a given cohort. In this system, the grade A is given to the top 10 percent of students. In practice, there is a fair degree of flexibility in using this system.

¹⁷ Trow (2006: 269) argues that core elements of the Bologna process witness in fact tendencies of convergence on American models; to his eyes, this is ‘because American higher education as a system is simply better adapted, normatively and structurally, to the requirements of a “post-industrial” age’ (p. 269). Gaston (2010), on the other hand, challenges U.S. higher education to learn from the Bologna process.

¹⁸ This is the case for the Norwegian master’s degrees in history analyzed by Mangset (2009). Similar window dressing seems to have been applied when the new master’s degrees in the study of religion were devised.

¹⁹ In many countries, some subjects are excluded from this structure; Medicine is typically exempt from the new two-tier structure and temporal restriction (Teichler 2007: 211).

three semesters (90 ECTS), which are taken in combination with a one-semester 'minor' degree (30 ECTS).²⁰

The UK and the Netherlands, on the other hand, have retained and even further developed a system with second degree programs of one year only; Leiden has recently ended its two-year master's program in Comparative Religion. In the Netherlands, one now finds two classes of master's programs: ordinary programs (one year) and research programs (two years), where the main difference is that the second requires the writing of a research thesis.²¹ The research masters' are designed for students who aim to continue their education by taking a doctorate. Note, however, that the Master's of Research degrees (sometimes called Master's by Research or Master's in Research) at British universities (e.g., Religious Studies in Edinburgh), which also put an emphasis on a dissertation (typically up to 40,000 words) in addition to some taught modules, are one-year programs (two years when taken part time). In addition to these Master's of Research programs, there are so-called taught master's programs (a relatively recent category originally devised to create a closer link between education and prospective employment), also of one year, with a relatively short dissertation (typically 10–12,000 words). More advanced than both these degrees are MPhil programs, which last for two years and comprise a lengthy dissertation (typically 40–60,000 words); in the end, they are often preliminary stages within doctoral studies. There are examples of all types of master's programs for Religious Studies in the UK.

In Italy, there are both one-year and two-year master's programs; in addition there are master's programs on two levels (called *livello I* and *livello II* respectively), where the first level is part of the second cycle, while the second level belongs to the third educational cycle.²² In the study of religion's we find examples of both varieties: Urbino offers a one-year first-level program, *Scienze storico-antropologiche delle religioni: pluralismo religioso e coesione sociale* (Historical-anthropological Sciences of Religions: Religious Pluralism and Social Cohesion), which is directed mainly towards kindergarten and primary school teachers, while Roma Tre (the third state university founded in Rome, in 1992, which has more than 40,000 students) offers a second-level two-year program *Scienze della Cultura e della Religione* (Science of Culture and Religion), which is also qualified as an international program.²³ For outsiders, the Italian situation appears confusing also because (in addition to the first-level master's programs, admission to which requires the completion of the first cycle), there is also the degree/program of the '*laurea magistrale*'

²⁰ Minors (*minoren*) are also established at Dutch universities. Groningen, for example, offers two minors: Religions in the Modern World (30 ECTS) and Religion in Europe: Pluralism and Identity. French universities sometimes offer majors ('majeur de formation') and minors ('mineuer de formation').

²¹ Even Leiden offers several research master's programs, including the following: New Testament and Early Christian Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Comparative Area Studies: Asia and the Middle East.

²² Giorda and Stilla (2010) provide the most up-to-date survey of the History of Religions at all Italian universities.

²³ According to the list of teachers (<http://host.uniroma3.it/master/scr/docenti.htm>), the teacher in charge of the History of Religions course is Marco Bartoli, a specialist in Medieval History based at Libera Università Maria Ss. Assunta (LUMSA, Rome), a private Catholic-Humanist university (founded in 1939) that belongs to the national Italian network of universities.

(master's degree), which is a second-cycle program following a first-cycle '*laurea triennale*' (three-year degree).²⁴ These programs are often conjoined with first-cycle programs, so that program descriptions list the curriculum as if it were a comprehensive five-year program (300 ECTS). For the study of religion's, this kind of duplex structure can be found at the University of Torino, which until recently offered a cross-faculty program in *Scienze delle religioni* (Sciences of Religions),²⁵ and at the cross-university program of the same title offered by the Universities of Padova (Department of History) and Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Department of East Asian Studies).²⁶

In France, there is a distinction between two types of master's programs, where both types, however, are two-year programs: a '*master professionnel*' (often called '*master pro*'), which is vocationally oriented, and a '*master recherche*' (research master's). At the same time, there is a category of programs called '*master 2*' (often called 'M2') which are one-year programs that build on a first-year master's program.²⁷ Note that there are both professional and research master's degrees offered in this format, and there are examples of both types in the study of religion's (see below).

In conclusion, then, while the Bologna process aimed at making degrees comparable, in practice this did not lead to standardization. This is also true for the nature of the expected work. A master's thesis in Bergen, for example, is at least a one-year work (60 ECTS), in Brussels it has 25 ECTS, in Bordeaux and Paris (EPHE/EHES) 24 ECTS (in the research variety), in Groningen 20, and at Complutense (Madrid) it has 12 ECTS (15 in Seville); accordingly, the expected workload varies from 300 to 1800 hours of work.

A particular complexity when discussing the Bologna process is that the reform was used by national governments, university administration and faculty leadership as an occasion to stage other kinds of reforms that are only loosely connected to the intent of the Bologna process. Despite its being an intergovernmental process, the various national governments capitalized on the Bologna process by using it to achieve other objects (Musselin 2009: 185). They also emphasized different aspects. In Germany, for example, there was greater concern with increasing institutional competition (and excellence in research²⁸), while Norway had a greater focus on administrative structures (Bleiklie and Lange 2010). In Norway, public funding of the universities was changed to a system in which teaching efficiency, or student performance, measured in credit points, now makes up for a considerable share of the allocation of funds from the state (around 25 percent), while around 15 percent are based on research performance (measured in standardized

²⁴ Officially, the term *laurea magistrale* (introduced in 2004) has replaced the term *laurea specialistica* (introduced in 1999). However, the latter appears to be still widely used in program descriptions at Italian universities.

²⁵ Mariachiara Giorda informs me that the program was recently closed, officially because it had fewer than ten registered students, which is the minimum number for that kind of program. Having such minimum numbers is another feature of the recent reforms.

²⁶ In both cases, students who have taken certain first-cycle degrees can access the second-cycle program directly.

²⁷ Within two-year programs, M1 refers to the first year of studies, and M2 to the second year.

²⁸ For a sociological analysis and critique of German excellence in higher-education politics and rhetoric see Münch (2007). The German case aside, 'excellence' was, alongside 'quality,' already becoming a keyword in higher education policies throughout Europe in the 1980s (Teichler 2007: 147).

points per publication). In the Netherlands, funding for research was transferred from the faculty level to that of the national research agency (NWO), and professors are now explicitly expected to write research proposals. In Germany, the Bologna process happened concurrently with changes in the terms of employment for new faculty, the introduction of junior assistant professors, and several high-profile initiatives to sponsor research 'excellence' – in some occasions focusing on religion (but not always coordinated by scholars with a disciplinary affiliation to the academic study of religion\').

On a local level, the transition went along with faculty politics. At my present university, Bergen in Norway, for example, the transition to the new degree system, which occurred in 2002/2003, was connected to the ambition of creating only inter- or transdisciplinary degrees such as History and Culture, History of Ideas, Ancient Studies, and Middle Eastern Studies, whereas disciplinary degrees were admitted only for the second/graduate cycle. This, however, has now been reversed since it turned out that these degrees did not work out as well as had been hoped; the programs were difficult to administer, and several disciplines felt that they were experiencing a market disadvantage (leading to fewer students) given that their sister departments at other Norwegian universities could offer disciplinary undergraduate degrees.

When speaking of the Bologna process, one therefore invariably encounters a mixture of loosely intertwined changes that occurred on various levels. On the macro level, however, the Bologna process is significant for the reason that it internationalized higher educational politics, which until then had been the exclusive prerogative of national (or regional) policy makers (Brändle 2010: 111). However, as we have seen above, the international dimension is at the same re-nationalized when the desire for reform is 'confronted with national settings, structures, preferences and beliefs' (Musselin 2009: 184).

Disciplinary associations

In what from the outside may appear as a significant coincidence, in May 2000, a year after the Bologna Declaration and shortly after the Lisbon Strategy, the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) was founded in Krakow, Poland. According to its constitution, Article 3: the 'objective of the EASR shall be to promote the academic study of religions through the international collaboration of all scholars normally resident in Europe whose research has a bearing on the subject.'²⁹ This objective shall be achieved 'by the usual means of scholarly activity,' and, in fact, the main activity of the EASR, as far as I can see, has been the organization of annual conferences, often held in collaboration with national conferences, on topics such as 'religion and community' (Cambridge 2001), monotheism (Paris 2002), globalization (Bergen 2003), tolerance and intolerance (Santander 2004), the role of religions in concord and conflict (Turku 2005), religious history between Asia and Europe (Bucharest 2006), plurality and representation (Bremen 2007), scientific, cultural, and political engagement of the study of religions (Brno 2008), and religion in the history of European culture (Messina 2009).³⁰

²⁹ <http://easr.eu/constitution.html>.

³⁰ In addition, the EASR has sponsored several electronic discussion lists.

None of these conferences, as far as I can see, discussed the concurrent changes in the degree structure. Tim Jensen, the first General Secretary, informed me³¹ that this issue never was on the agenda of any of the committee meetings, and Kim Knott, his successor, confirmed that the issue was never discussed explicitly (but implicitly in discussions about research and exchange opportunities in Europe).³² Apparently, the 'academic study of religion' mentioned in the objectives does not count teaching and degrees among its main concerns.

Some among its member associations addressed this issue, while others did not. In 2003, the board of the German association (DVRW) published an opinion on the establishment and implementation of new programs, which consists of a series of elements that are held to be indispensable and others that are recommended.³³ I am told (by Christoph Uehlinger) that the implementation of the Bologna framework was discussed in the Swiss association and (by Francisco Diez de Velasco) that the Spanish association (SECR) has produced some documents. However, Diez de Velasco's assessment is that since each university is autonomous and has in turn to deal with an autonomous region, this will not have any real effect.

Modularity, consecutiveness, employability

Two pillars in the new first-cycle degrees according to the Bologna framework are its modularity, i.e., the introduction of didactic units, and its consecutive structure. The understanding and implications of these two features, however, varies. In Italy and Norway, for example, the reform disrupted the unity of the academic year. In Italy, teaching now happens in two semesters. Some of my colleagues in Bergen complain that the modularized structure led to a separation of theoretical issues (now packed in separate modules) from the empirical or material studies (basically comprising presentations of a series of religious traditions). The one big final annual exam consisting of a day-long written test and an oral examination was replaced by four to six main examinations per year. There is now a somewhat greater variety of forms of examination, and new kinds of courses and classes were introduced. However, while one course corresponds to one module in the Norwegian system, the German system requires that one module stretches over several courses. Norwegian students therefore obtain a much greater amount of ECTS credit points for one course than their co-students on the continent. Some countries give a much more ambitious interpretation of this aspect of Bologna than others, since they hold that a Bologna-type program must consist of a continuous examination, resulting in an increased amount of expected student activities in each course; from such a perspective, the Norwegian reform may look rather shallow.

In a similar fashion, the consecutive character of the modules, or the degree, is interpreted in varying ways, with some countries laying much greater emphasis on the progressive structure of the degree than others. In Sweden, for example, progression from one module to the next within the programs is a major requirement, at least officially, even within the relatively short master's programs.

³¹ Email to the author (10 August 2010).

³² Email to the author (9 September 2010).

³³ http://dvrw.de/html/ba__ma.html.

Moreover, the amount of credit points (ECTS credit points), or courses and modules, specific to the study of religion\’s varies a great deal across programs. The board of the German association in its opinion states that an undergraduate degree with a study of religion\’s emphasis (and *Religionswissenschaft* in its title) should be structured in such a way that at least 50 percent of the ECTS need to be earned in disciplinary courses; our newly introduced bachelor\’s program in Bergen requires that at least 90 out of 180 ECTS must consist of courses in the study of religion\’s. Apparently, this is also the minimum requirement in Switzerland, where different program structures are offered. However, in Rome/La Sapienza (Faculty of Philosophy) – which offers the only first-cycle program (*laurea triennale*) in the History of Religions in Italy and which is firmly grounded in the discipline (rather than interdisciplinary programs) – the History of Religions part only makes up for 72 out of 162 credit points. The share of teaching relevant to the study of religion\’s is even less in some interdisciplinary programs. In the undergraduate program (*Corso di Laurea*) in *Storia culture e religioni: dall’antichità all’età contemporanea* (History, Cultures, and Religions: from Antiquity to the Present) – a program made up of five alternative curricula (Ancient History, Medieval History, Modern and Contemporary History, Anthropology, and History of Religion [*storico religioso*]), which is offered by the Faculty of Humanistic Sciences of the same university – the study of religion\’s (*storia delle religioni*) contribution is limited to between six and 12 ECTS (out of 180, corresponding to between three and seven percent of the didactic units). The same is true for other Italian programs. In the *Licence de philosophie et sciences des religions* (Bachelor of Philosophy and Sciences of Religion), at the Catholic University of Lille (France), in the Faculty of Theology, only two of eight compulsory modules cover History of Religions. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, non-Religious Studies courses in the study of religion\’s programs offered in Groningen and Leiden are the clear minority.

According to the planners’ ideas, the reformed first-cycle degrees should qualify the degree holder for the job market by providing relevant qualifications (‘employability’).³⁴ In fact, however, a majority of the graduates move on to start master\’s degrees (between two-thirds and 90 percent according to Alesi et al. [2005: I]). In Germany, the emphasis on employability has been implemented in the new study of religion\’s programs by integrating training in so-called soft skills or key qualifications (such as presentation methods, communicative competence, verbal skills) and practical training such as internships.³⁵ In Bayreuth, for example, a 240-hour (six-week) internship in a ‘professionally relevant’ field outside the university is required as part of the *Kulturwissenschaft mit Schwerpunkt Religion* bachelor\’s program (Cultural Studies Focusing on Religion). In the bachelor\’s program offered by LMU Munich, students can choose between an internship and a so-called ‘teaching module,’ the latter for those wishing to continue their education. In Bochum, students in the bachelor\’s program are given the opportunity to participate in an optional internship.

For Denmark, a comparison of the recent curricula at Copenhagen and Aarhus points, among other developments, to a greater attention to competencies that

³⁴ At the same time, the bachelor\’s degrees are meant as preparatory for the second-cycle programs, leading to a certain tension in their curriculum.

³⁵ In Spain, internships are also part of the more general first-cycle programs (see also below).

are apparently held to be relevant when entering the labor market (Johansen 2010: 106).³⁶ All program descriptions now have to contain information, as far-fetched as that may appear in many cases, about potential occupational areas or vocational patterns.

In France, the professional master's degrees (*master pro*) are devised to have a greater vocational relevance. At present, as far as I can see, there are two such master's programs offered at French universities, which both navigate outside of the tribal and cultural orbit of the discipline:

- The (one-year) master 2 pro *Management interculturel et médiation religieuse* (Intercultural Management and Religious Mediation) at the Institut d'Études Politiques d'Aix-en-Provence (often called Science Po Aix), one of nine institutes of political studies in France (and part of the Grand Écoles system).³⁷ The parts of that program that recall traditional study of religion's programs are courses on Sociology of Religion (three ECTS), History of Religions: Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Judaism (three ECTS), New Religious Movements (three ECTS), Religions in the Mediterranean Region and in Europe (three ECTS), and Religion and Globalization (three ECTS).³⁸ Other courses include Euro-Mediterranean Dynamics (three ECTS), Practical Beliefs and Norms (three ECTS), Religious and Geopolitical Conflicts (three ECTS), Theory and Practice of Management (six ECTS), English (three ECTS), English and Informatics (three ECTS), Management of Socio-Cultural Difference (three ECTS), Islamic Financing (three ECTS), and Projects for the Unification of the Mediterranean Region (three ECTS). Instead of a thesis, students participate in work experience and write a report on this (nine ECTS).
- The two-year *Religions et laïcité dans la vie professionnelle et associative* (Religion and Secularism in Professional and Organizational Life) offered by the Institut Européen en Sciences des Religions (European Institute for the study of religion) within the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE).³⁹ If taken as a *master pro* at either the EPHE or at the Écoles des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) this program is called *Religions et sociétés* (Religion and Societies). While students can choose between the ordinary courses offered by the EPHE and the EHESS, their curriculum is individually tailored to suit the specific vocational project they want to pursue. Apart from a selection of courses, some of which are also specifically designed for this program, the students have a six-week (second semester) and a 12-week period (fourth semester), about which they have to write a report (six ECTS each).

³⁶ As part of the Bologna process, the Diploma Supplement (DS) was introduced. As defined by the European Commission, Education & Training, the DS 'accompanies a higher education diploma, providing a standardised description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies completed by its holder' (http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1239_en.htm.) One of the aims is 'easier access to opportunities of work or further studies.' The Diploma Supplements issued are not publicly available. The Diploma Supplements that I have seen provide no relevant additional information about the nature of study of religion's programs.

³⁷ This institution runs the <http://world-religion-watch.org> website.

³⁸ Some of these courses are shared with the research master program in Religion et société en Europe et en Méditerranée (Religion and Society in Europe and the Mediterranean Region) offered by the same institution.

³⁹ See Stausberg (2009: 274) for the formation of that institute.

In 2009, Europe's largest university, La Sapienza Università di Roma, started a master's program with a title recalling the one from Aix, namely *Religione e mediazione culturale* (Religion and Cultural Mediation). This program aims at education in professional expertise for multicultural societies. It involves a large number – more than 60 – teachers from different disciplines, including some from other universities.⁴⁰ As part of the program, the students are expected to engage in periods of work experience for at least three months with relevant public bodies, associations, or institutions. The students then write a report on their experiences. So far, there has been cooperation with the Italian Ministry of Interior, the Roman Mosque, the Evangelical Facoltà Pentecostale di Scienze Religiose (the degrees of which are validated and issued by the University of Wales), a magazine, and a Jesuit refugee center.⁴¹

Accreditations and bureaucratization

The Bologna process resonates with other developments in the higher-education sector such as an increasing state concern with 'quality' (Becher and Trowler 2001: 6; Teichler 2007: 147). As mentioned above, evaluation has become standard practice at European universities. Moreover, all new programs need to be accredited. Again, accreditation is practiced somewhat differently in the various countries, and the modalities of accreditation have been changed in some countries. Accreditation has added an extra cost to starting new programs. In Germany, I was told, having a new program accredited cost the respective university between €10 000 to €15 000, which was not exactly a stimulus to launch a large number of programs (especially since attracting more students does not automatically increase the revenues of German universities). The procedure has been criticized, mainly because it once again makes the system more bureaucratic. At the same time, the accreditation process now involves more stakeholders, including representatives of relevant employers or vocational fields and students; in many countries it withdraws the approval of programs and degrees from direct government control (see Teichler [2007: 187]). Moreover, several colleagues, sometimes from other countries, are now part of the process, which leads to increased transparency and dialogue around the new programs. It seems that not all agencies in charge of accreditation in different countries operate with exactly the same criteria. In Germany, one major criterion, as far as I can see, was whether the respective university had enough human resources to safeguard the functioning of the new program. Other criteria concerned the educational object, profile, curriculum, quality assurance of the program and its focus on relevant occupational fields.⁴² In Denmark, where I took part in an assessment procedure, reports on which decisions are based need to account for four main criteria of the program: its

⁴⁰ The program requires a minimum number of 12 students to become activated. The program has a relatively high tuition fee by continental European standards (€ 2,500).

⁴¹ The director of the program, Professor Emanuela Prinzivalli (Sapienza di Roma, Dipartimento di Studi Storici Religiosi), has kindly supplied the information on which the above is based.

⁴² I am told that sometimes seemingly irrelevant aspects of material infrastructures were discussed as well.

grounding in research, its organization, its expected results (learning targets, etc.), and, listed first (!), its occupational relevance, i.e., whether there is a need for the program (where the universities have to prove that they are in dialogue with potential 'buyers' and alumni), and an assessment of the labor situation of the alumni.⁴³ Employability features as the main criterion here (even if it is interpreted in a rather liberal manner).⁴⁴

The increased 'accountability' of the new degrees, the accounting of accumulated credit points in the ECTS, and the demands of transparency have, as far as I can see, led everywhere to a significant bureaucratization (others speak of 'professionalization') of the (increasingly complex) system and to an increased necessity of student guidance (sometimes resulting in the hiring of staff or faculty for this purpose). The fact that the programs are often much more structured – sometimes to the point of becoming rigid and inflexible – has been criticized as an inappropriate regimentation of university education.⁴⁵ The practice of evaluations and the required definition of 'learning outcomes' for each course is in contrast to the inherited pre-mass-university idea that students and teaching are all part of a shared community of learning, teaching, and research (Stichweh 2009). It is generally perceived that the new programs tend to result in a decoupling of the research–teaching continuum.

The (in)visibility of the discipline

In several countries, the introduction of the new modularized and consecutive programs has resulted in an increased amount of teaching per student. At many places, the number of examinations has increased significantly. I am told by some colleagues that this has affected their relationships to students in that their interaction is less concerned with the subject, but more with the students' measured performances in terms of grades. Moreover, there is a greater emphasis on the physical presence of students in the classroom. These two changes have resulted in a demand for more (fixed-term) positions with a higher teaching load, resulting in the creation of something like a new academic proletariat.⁴⁶ In some German federal states, tuition fees were introduced, under the understanding that these revenues should be used for teaching. In Norway, much money was pumped into the system for some years in connection with the so-called Quality Reform (Kvalitetsreformen, 2001, implemented 2003) instigated at the occasion of the introduction of the new Bologna-style degrees, but now, after the influx of funds has come to a halt, many pedagogical initiatives have once again been reduced to 'cheaper' variants.

⁴³ In the report I have seen, this latter criterion was ranked as satisfactory because the alumni did not face more problems in finding a job compared to alumni from other programs in the Humanities.

⁴⁴ In countries where students have to pay heavy tuition fees, career prospects and employability are probably relevant in a different manner for the students, who will need to keep in mind servicing their debts.

⁴⁵ In German, this is called *Verschulung*, which has no counterpart in other languages I am familiar with. The term reflects the idea that universities are qualitatively different from secondary educational institutions; accordingly, universities should not be contaminated by elements commonly associated with secondary education (e.g., with respect to independence and examination).

⁴⁶ In Germany, this category of positions is called *Lehrkraft für besondere Aufgaben* (university teacher for special assignments); in Bremen they are called *Lektoren* (lecturers). In Britain and Sweden there have long been similar positions purely devoted to teaching.

Several countries deliberately kept the number of bachelor's programs small when introducing the new grade system. As a result, several smaller disciplines such as the study of religion's have, in some contexts, become much less visible.⁴⁷ In Spain, the transition to the Bologna system has in practice led to a situation where there currently is no first-cycle degree in Religious Studies available to students. Apparently this is the result of an idea that all more specialized subjects should be moved to the second cycle only, that is, to the master's level. At the Universidad de La Laguna, where students in the pre-Bologna system could opt for an itinerary of specialization in History of Religions comprising of four to five major courses, now there is only one general six ECTS (= 125 hours of work) course in history of religion as part of the fourth-year program within the first-cycle degree in History. The idea that the first-cycle studies should be less specialized is a shared one, but again interpretation varies. In the Netherlands, for example, this idea is implemented not on the level of subjects but on that of courses. Several Dutch universities offer first-cycle programs in the study of religion's, but the courses in these programs are expected to be relatively general. Looking at the topics offered, their content is less specialized than what is common in Germany and Italy, but more specialized than what is usual in Norway.⁴⁸

For various reasons, the transition to the new degree structure turned out to be especially problematic and disputed in Germany. These reasons include, among others, first, the presence of a 'Humboldtian' ideal of the university (with the unity and freedom of teaching and research in a context of close cooperation between students and professors, the pursuit of knowledge for its own ends, and the importance of self-education or *Bildung* as its main ingredients), which is a

⁴⁷ Apparently, there are also developments in the opposite direction. At the Sapienza University of Rome, for example, the reforms have transformed Anthropology from 'what was a specialized major (for graduates with degrees in Philosophy or Letters) into a basic discipline' (Romano 2010: 64). For Anthropology, in Rome, the reforms resulted in increased visibility and consolidation as a discipline.

⁴⁸ In France, the study of religion's has a long tradition of disciplinary invisibility (or, as Despland (2001), has aptly put it: a type of study that is practiced but not taught; see also Boespflug (2010), for a comprehensive survey of Religious Studies in France and other Francophone countries in Europe). This has remained unchanged in the LMD (Bologna) system. Some of the main centres of research such as the EPHE and the EHESS in Paris do not issue first-cycle degrees at all, but they offer a shared second-cycle Sciences des religions et société (Sciences of Religions and Societies), which is a branch (*mention*) of a general master's degree (either *en sciences sociales* [EHESS] or in *sciences historiques, philologiques et religieuses* [EPHE]). A first-cycle program carrying Religious Studies in its name is offered by Lille Catholic University at the Faculty of Theology with its first-cycle program in Philosophy and Sciences of Religion (Licence de philosophie et sciences des religion), which is made up of seven modules: two in Philosophy, one in History of Philosophy, one in ancient languages, one in modern languages, one in *sciences humaines* (which also includes courses on Psychology of Religion, Sociology of Religion, and Sociology of Christianity), and one in Histoire et sciences des religions (comprising introductions to various religious traditions but no systematic, comparative, general modules). Among the master's programs (in addition to the ones already mentioned in the main text), the Université Lumière – Lyon II, the Université Jean Moulin – Lyon III, and the Université de Savoie – Chambéry jointly offer a master II (= one-year program, based on a master I) in *sciences humaines, mention histoire, spécialité histoire des religions* (*mention* and *spécialité* respectively refer to two levels of specializations, i.e., the master in *sciences humaines*, which is a *domaine*, has several optional *mentions*, and the *mention* in history has several optional *spécialités*). This program is situated in the disciplinary context of history, and the teachers are mainly historians (starting with the professor in charge of the program, Yves Kuménacker, a noted historian of [French] Protestantism from the 16th to the 18th centuries). The Université de Strasbourg offers three master's programs relating to religion, among them one with the title Sciences religieuses, which is part of the *mention* Théologie protestante et sciences religieuses, which is again part of the *domaine* Sciences humaines et sociales.

powerful regulative idea and ideological force in German higher-education discourse, and, second, the fact that the reforms were structured in a comparatively thorough way. The academic study of religion's was to a particular degree exposed to the impact of the reform since, contrary to many other countries, study of religion's departments at German universities belonged to the category of one-chair departments, where the single professor, who sometimes had one or several assistants, would conduct the teaching and supervision on all levels, from first-year students to doctoral candidates. Two or more chairs were an exception at German universities. With the way that the Bologna reform has been implemented in Germany, it turned out that such a faculty structure was not sufficient to meet the requirements of the new degree structures.⁴⁹ If solutions were to be found, these required negotiations and networking with colleagues from other disciplines.⁵⁰ This did not work well everywhere. As a result of these changes, the discipline is now no longer taught in all educational cycles at universities where this had been the case previously. Consider the new situation in what were three of the most vibrant departments during the 1990s: Tübingen is now left without any degree program in the study of religion's; Bremen offers a first-cycle bachelor degree and has no master's program of its own, but is part of master's program in Transcultural Studies; Bonn has no bachelor program of its own but is part of the Asia Sciences program and offers a second-cycle master's program in Religions and Arts in Asian Cultures. This latter program emphasizes the learning of Asian languages.⁵¹ This also points to another development, namely some modest tendencies towards diversification and the formation of more clearly devised profiles of the degree programs at different universities. At least for Germany, Peter Antes reports that this has been a demand posed by the accreditation agencies (resulting in serious problems with regard to the compatibility of different programs even within a given university).⁵² While most programs were simply called *Religionswissenschaft* or something similar in the old system, and where it was the professor or student demand that gave it a specific profile (such as Mediterranean religions in Tübingen and East Asian religions in Marburg), the Bologna process gave impetus to the establishment of some more specialized programs.⁵³ Apart from the study of religion's programs, some of which are combined with a second subject, we now find the following master's programs: Judaism and Christianity Compared (Potsdam) and Religion in Cultural Context (Hannover), the latter being interdisciplinary.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ The Wissenschaftsrat (Council of Science and Humanities), an official advisory body on higher-education policy, has recently addressed this problem in a published recommendation and suggested the formation of some new main centres (<http://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/archiv/9678-10.pdf>). This is unlikely to happen, for several reasons; see Bochsinger (2010) for a speech by the current president of the German Association for the study of religion's given at a meeting arranged by the Wissenschaftsrat in June 2010 to discuss its recommendations.

⁵⁰ See Berner (2011) for an example.

⁵¹ A recurrent topic in the German debate about 'Bologna' was that the space for language learning is much too restricted in the structure of the new bachelor programs.

⁵² Email to the author (15 October 2010).

⁵³ Under the assumption that the universities are competing to attract students, such diversification is sometimes desired by administrators.

⁵⁴ The two chairs in Potsdam are held by scholars who were not trained in the academic study of religion's (in a narrow disciplinary sense), which may have influenced their strategy as they may have felt less committed to a disciplinary approach.

In Switzerland, this development has been even stronger. Since 2008, the Centre for Religion, Economy, and Politics (Zentrum für Religion, Wirtschaft und Politik), jointly based at the universities of Basel, Lausanne, Lucerne, and Zurich (founded in 2006), offers a joint master's program in 'religion – economy – politics'. The program is interdisciplinary and involves economics, political science, theology (Catholic and Protestant) and the study of religion's. This center also has a doctoral program.

In addition, consider the following Swiss master's programs:

- Besides a study of religion's master's program, Bern now offers a program in Central Asian Studies and an interdisciplinary program called Religious Cultures: Historicity and Cultural Normativity;
- Lucerne specifies its study of religion's master's program by the subtitle Dynamics of Global Religions;
- Fribourg has an interdisciplinary master's program called Culture, Politics, and Religion in Pluralistic Society.

All these specializations to some extent build on the scholarly profiles of the chair holders. The master's program at Lausanne is an umbrella program where one can opt for one of several specializations including Comparative History of Religions (with three subdivisions), Sociology of Religions, Psychology of Religions, and Multidisciplinary Approaches to Judaism. A similar umbrella model with shared courses-cum-specialization can be found in other countries: for example, in the cross-university program offered by Padua and Venice, where a shared basic program is followed by six optional curricula (Religions of the Classical World, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Indian Religions, East Asian Religions), each with an emphasis on language training; and at various Dutch universities, where the same departments offer (both in the shorter and the longer varieties) general master's program and several specialized 'tracks' (*trajecten*) or specializations (*specialisaties*), each comprising shared and distinct teaching modules. In Leiden, for example, seven such specializations are currently offered (with Biblical Studies, Christianity in the Middle East, and Enlightenment and Modernism in Christianity and Judaism as three varieties that represent the theological tradition of the department, and one variety with an emphasis on philosophy).⁵⁵ Utrecht University has a one-year degree in *Religies in hedendaagse samenlevingen* (Religions in Contemporary Societies) with two specifications, namely *Religie en theologie* (Religion and Theology) and *Islam in de moderne wereld* (Islam in the Modern World).⁵⁶ Radboud University Nijmegen has a one-year master's in *Religiestudies* (apparently an Anglicism aimed at translating 'Religious Studies') with three varieties, including one in *Religie en beleid* (Religion and Politics) and one in Religion and Culture (*Religie en cultuur*). Groningen offers a two-year program with the same title (Religion and Culture) in English. We have also seen the emergence of joined inter-university programs in Italy and France, where the Université Strasbourg also offers a unique program in European Comparative Religious Law (*Droit européen comparé des religions*), which is located in the Faculty of Law.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ It is called Religion, Science and Ethics: Philosophical Approaches.

⁵⁶ The same specialization is also offered in the master's program at the University of Amsterdam.

⁵⁷ The same faculty also offers a master's program in Islamologie. Both programs are affiliated to the large PRISME (Politique, Religion, Institutions et Sociétés: Mutations Européennes) research unit.

Internationalization

Internationalization in terms of physical mobility of students and faculty and the recognition of study achievements across national borders has been one of the main aims and *leitmotifs* of the Bologna process. Student and staff exchanges were meant to be intensified, and to a certain, albeit limited, extent, this seems to have happened; but the growth rate of mobility is not higher than during the years before the Bologna Declaration (Teichler 2010: 14). Academic tourism has been on the increase for several decades. Several departments now have quite active exchange programs involving faculty and students, and all universities are expected to make basic information on their courses available for potential exchange students. At some places, however, the much more rigid and structured organization of the programs, the shorter duration of first cycle, and the more specific profiles of some programs have made it more difficult for students to actually benefit from the exchange opportunities.⁵⁸

For many administrators and academics, internationalization is equated with Anglicization. Hoping to attract international students, Erfurt has introduced a master's program in English; and in the Netherlands, which has a long tradition of offering courses in English, around 50 percent of all master's programs are now offered in English (but students can often also submit their work in Dutch). In the study of religion's, research master's programs in English are offered at universities in Amsterdam (both at the VU Amsterdam and at the University of Amsterdam), Groningen (two varieties, one of 12 months, one of 24 months), and Leiden, whereas most ordinary (one-year) master's programs are taught in Dutch.⁵⁹

Another innovative tendency is the establishment of shared programs. Here are two recent initiatives. One is the master's program Religion in Peace and Conflict (120 ECTS = two years) offered jointly by Groningen and Uppsala (Sweden). This program is taught in English. Another example is the master's program, The Religious Roots of Europe, which also reflects the focus on the European dimension of curricula desired by the Bologna Declaration (point six, see above). This program is offered in cooperation among six Nordic universities in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. With the exception of the University of Bergen, the other partners are mainly theologians. The program has student and staff mobility in the form of compact seminars as an integrated part. Students register at one of the six host institutions, and the general rules of these respective universities and countries apply to the program, but all courses are taught in English. The development of programs like this is greatly facilitated by e-learning and travel facilities, and, in the case of this program, also by the existence of Nordic research institutes in Athens and Rome.

While the developments described so far relate to the first and second cycles of university education, since 2003 the third cycle (doctoral studies) has also become subject to the Bologna process. So far, however, this has not created the same kind of attention as the reforms on the two lower cycles. However, it is to be expected that the Bologna process will resonate with trends to integrate

⁵⁸ At least in Germany, there now is talk that the transfer from the first to the second cycle (from a bachelor's to a master's program) shall also count as mobility.

⁵⁹ In Leiden, the master's program is offered in Dutch if no international students have registered.

doctoral candidates into doctoral schools and to introduce further elements of structured training. This reflects a greater emphasis on a higher completion rate and a shorter timespan – typically three years – for the completion of doctoral dissertations. As a more direct result of the Bologna process, co-supervision and joint degrees are being established. This, for once, is known by a French term, namely *cotutèle*. There are some arrangements of this kind even in study of religion's programs, but their overall impact has been minimal so far.⁶⁰

Conclusions

Changes in tertiary education and university reforms in recent decades have had detrimental effects on the perceived job satisfaction and working conditions of faculty in many countries. Typically, new role expectations were created at the expense of time and energy available for research, which is generally considered the core activity of faculty. In Europe, the Bologna process has created a framework for a series of reforms concerning the 'products' and 'modes of production' of curricula, courses, modules, programs, and degrees at European universities. While partly aimed at greater comparability, the reforms were actualized in different and partly contrasting forms in various European countries, and were often combined with specific reform agendas. Everywhere tertiary education has become increasingly bureaucratic. Comparing the programs and degrees in the study of religion's, their shape continues to be quite different on the master's level (second cycle). On the bachelor's level (first cycle), as a result of the reforms, the discipline has become largely invisible in some countries. The idea of employability has left some traces in the design of German bachelor's programs, and it has taken center stage in Danish accreditation procedures.⁶¹ In some countries, one finds modest tendencies towards differentiation, specialization, and the creation of interdisciplinary programs. The aim of internationalization is often seen as being met by offering courses or programs in English, but some shared programs have also been established. Despite the formation of the European Association for the study of religion, which was founded in 2000, shortly after the Bologna Declaration (1999), the project of establishing a European area of higher education has so far not been reflected upon explicitly within the study of religion's itself, where issues of transmission of the discipline have so far only scarcely been addressed. A detailed document analysis and qualitative studies on the pedagogical transmission of the discipline in various European countries is a task for future studies.⁶²

⁶⁰ The Bologna Declaration has emphasized the importance of life-long learning. This should result in the establishment of advanced training/continuous education programs. I have not noted such developments on a notable scale in our discipline.

⁶¹ My impression is that the issue of employability is emphasized in official documents much more than in actual teaching at the course level; it is unclear to what extent students in our field are concerned with employability, and if so, to what extent that shapes their learning behaviour.

⁶² The same is true, as Alexander Rödel reminds me, of the potential impact of the ideological framework underlying the Bologna process with its key notions of comparability, employability, two educational cycles, and mobility. The discursive prominence of concepts such as employability, promoted by powerful institutions, will probably eventually impact on mentalities among students, administrators, staff, and faculty members, but so far this has not been studied empirically.

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