

# Planning Education in Germany: Impact of the Bologna Agreement

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Abstract: Following the 1999 Bologna agreement, higher education institutions in Germany and other European countries have engaged in a fundamental reform of their programs and curricula with the goal to enhance compatibility and comparability of degrees across Europe. This paper provides an initial review of the impact of these structural reforms on German urban and regional planning education, for which bachelor's and master's degrees have by now almost entirely replaced traditional diploma programs. Findings derive from comparing the typical planning education pathways, study programs and curricula of pre-1999 and current programs. Wider implications for the quality of planning education in Germany are also discussed, including the level of international recognition of programs and whether mobility and transferability between European countries has been increased. The review reveals that the restructuring has led to greater choice and more diversity of planning programs. A considerable number of new master's programs in planning were established post-Bologna by cognate disciplines and faculties, such as architecture, geography, environmental sciences and sociology. However, the reforms have raised issues with respect to professional recognition, for example, which are as yet unresolved.

## 1. Towards a Common European Higher Education Area

### 1.1. The New Bachelor-Master System

Considering the rich diversity of cultures and higher education traditions across Europe, the Bologna declaration (1999) with its goal to establish a common European Higher Education Area (EHEA) within a ten-year period can be viewed as overly ambitious, unachievable – and maybe even undesirable. However, the European project as a whole has never lacked lofty aims, ambition and a certain level of controversy, particularly when attempting to achieve greater harmonization and control. Indeed, the processes initiated in the wake of Bologna seeking to achieve greater compatibility and com-

parability of higher education degrees across Europe may be seen as yet another “phase of European integration and unification” (Adelman 2008:4). The creation of the EHEA follows economic integration and the formation of a common European Economic Community (EEC), as well as political reconciliation after the fall of the Iron Curtain and communism. Thus, the Bologna declaration is not merely a pledge by European countries to coordinate higher education policies and structures to create convergence, but is also a means to support more extensive goals such as strengthening the international competitiveness of European higher education (Bologna 1999). The harmonization of degree structures and the greater transparency of the meaning of degrees also supports and facilitates the ongoing ERASMUS program of student and staff cross-border mobility. This mobility, in turn, contributes to greater intercultural understanding and the diffusion of national tensions. Ultimately, Bologna is vital to the operationalization of a common European labor market, increasing workers' mobility, employability and international competencies.

In support of achieving the goals of the declaration, higher education institutions agreed to:

- Introduce three education cycles (bachelor – master – doctorate) with the first degree being no shorter than three years and relevant to the labor market.
- Adopt a qualification framework detailing learning outcomes and competencies for students at different degree levels to be documented in the Diploma Supplement.
- Introduce a compatible credit system, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).
- Establish quality assurance procedures of European dimensions.

The fact that the education sector falls under the sovereignty of individual nation states means that implementation of the actions will vary between countries, institutions (Farrington 2005) and, indeed, subject areas. In continental Europe, most institutions have traditionally offered long, continuous diploma or magister degrees that require a minimum of 4–6 years of study for a (first/professional) degree that autho-

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rized the holder to commence doctoral studies. The Bologna Agreement has led to a substantial reform of degree structures as well as other more subtle changes in program review and delivery (Ache 2008). These structural changes have created uncertainties and concerns, particularly in fields where higher education degrees represent established educational pathways to a professional qualification, including translation, medicine, engineering (Nord 2005; Nikendei et al. 2009; Shearman 2007), architecture and urban and spatial planning.

### *1.2 Bologna Implementation Update for Germany*

As the responsibility for education in Germany is the responsibility of the federal states (*Bundesländer*) and their institutions, implementation of Bologna across Germany is neither equal nor consistent. In general, all the states adhere to the federal framework legislation, which prescribes a two-tier graduation system as a replacement of the old structures by the year 2010. Within this framework, a bachelor's degree can take 3–4 years and a master's 1–2 years, with a combination of the two not to exceed five years and 300 credit points (National Report Germany 2004).

The far-reaching structural modifications and changes to the degree length did not go uncontested and are still a point of contention. Resistance emanated from academics and administrators concerned about the extra workload in implementing the reform, the new rules of curricula planning and heightened support needed for students and associated costs. In sector-wide protests in 2009, students, particularly those studying in bachelor's degree programs, have also lamented the school-like regimes and inflexible curricula, which have become in some cases overburdened with examinations. Intense discussions between the universities and the Ministers of Education have ensued since in an effort to redress the mistakes made when introducing the new programs. Overall, widening access to and participation in higher education will be far more achievable through the shorter, more structured degrees offered under Bologna. Proponents of the reform also insist that education in general topics, ethics and culture can be integrated in the shorter more structured curricula. However, it is still unclear what level of qualification a student can achieve with a three-year bachelor's degree and how many students should continue their studies with a

consecutive master's program to increase their competencies.

The precise impact of Bologna is often obfuscated as the government has used Bologna as a catalyst for a general review of German higher education structures (Nord 2005:213). This led in addition to the introduction of performance-based pay for academics, tuition fees and increased institutional autonomy to improve the responsiveness of education provision to market needs.

One of the more significant issues arising from the Bologna reforms to date is the loss of the clear alignment that existed between the old degree structures and professional recognition in applied fields such as urban and regional planning, architecture and engineering. In particular, the three-year bachelor's degree in planning, supposedly a degree with relevance to the labor market, falls short of the professional requirements stipulated by the relevant professional bodies (Kunzmann 2004).

Nevertheless, the reform is overall on target. As of 2009, three-quarters of all degrees awarded across all types of German higher education institution, universities, universities of applied sciences and arts/music academies, are bachelor's and master's degrees (Hochschulkompass 2009). Compliance with respect to planning education is even higher: all major German schools offering spatial, urban and regional planning degrees have only allowed students to commence studies in programs with the new degree structures as of 2009/10.

Below, we will compare pre-Bologna planning education, providers and programs to the present educational landscape. Observations from this comparison facilitate a wider discussion of the impact of Bologna (and related reforms) on the quality of planning education and disciplinary recognition. Issues arising from the changes are also explored.

## *2. Planning Education in Germany Pre-1999*

Planning is a "young" academic subject or discipline, which has its roots in other disciplines, such as engineering, architecture, surveying and geography (Grant 1999). In Germany, city planning at the beginning of industrialization was governed by legislation concerned about infrastructure and utilities planning (i.e., street layout and sewers), control of the subdivision of land, issues of hygiene and building densities, and aesthetics (Albers 1997).

| Location       | Institution type               | Year established | Minimum program length | Degree title  |
|----------------|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------------|---|
| Berlin         | University of Technology       | 1972             | 10 semesters           | Dipl.-Ing. Stadt- und Regionalplanung (Urban and regional planning)     |
| Dortmund       | University                     | 1969             | 9 semesters            | Dipl.-Ing. Raumplanung (Spatial planning)                               |
| Kassel         | University                     | 1972             | 10 semesters           | Dipl.-Ing. Raumplanung (Spatial planning)                               |
| Kaiserslautern | University of Technology       | 1973             | 10 semesters           | Dipl.-Ing. Raum- und Umweltplanung (Spatial and environmental planning) |
| Hamburg        | University of Technology       | 1986             | 10 semesters           | Dipl.-Ing. Stadtplanung (Urban planning)                                |
| Harburg        |                                |                  |                        |   |
| Cottbus        | University of Technology       | 1995             | 10 semesters           | Dipl.-Ing. Stadt- und Regionalplanung (Urban and regional planning)     |
| Nürtingen      | University of Applied Sciences | 1999             | 8 semesters            | Dipl.-Ing. Stadtplanung (Urban planning)                                |

Tab. 1: Planning education programs in Germany granting a Dipl.-Ing. degree (1999). (Source: Author's research)

## 2.1 Diploma Degree Programs

In terms of planning education, the first textbooks and journals emerged in the first decade of the 20th century. Chairs with a remit to teach planning became established at universities around the same time (e.g., Theodor Fischer at the University of Technology Munich in 1908). However, it was not until 1968 that the first independent urban planning degree program in West Germany was founded at the University of Dortmund (Kunzmann 2008). Until this time, most German urban planners graduated from schools of architecture with a specialization in urban design and/or urban planning. Additional comprehensive urban and regional (spatial) planning programs were created in the 1970s at the University of Technology Berlin, the University of Kaiserslautern, the University of Oldenburg and the University of Kassel (Kunzmann 2008) in West Germany. The one urban planning program on offer in East Germany was at the University of Weimar, however, it was discontinued in the early 1990s. Overall, in the three decades from 1968 to 1998, the provision and number of dedicated planning programs grew initially and then stabilized. And, although two programs were discontinued, those at the Universities of Oldenburg and Weimar, new planning degrees were introduced in Hamburg, Nürtingen and Cottbus. At the end of the 1990s in a re-united Germany,

there were seven universities that conferred independent degrees in urban planning (Table 1). At the University of Dortmund, planning could even form its own faculty whereas elsewhere planning typically was part of larger architecture faculties. The degree structure followed the continental tradition of a long, continuous full-time first degree of 4–5 years (8–10 semester minimum), leading to a Diplom-Ingenieur degree (Dipl.-Ing. or Dipl.-Ing. FH), equivalent to a master's degree in the British and American systems (David 1998).

At this time, a strong geographic bias existed with planning programs almost exclusively being offered in the German North and West. Baden-Württemberg's planning program at the University of Applied Science in Nürtingen was established only in 1999, and in Bavaria, there was no independent planning degree on offer. Thus, at that time, a large number of planners still gained qualifications through the completion of a planning specialization in a cognate field (e.g., architecture, geography) or via post-graduate study.

In summary, students seeking to gain a professionally recognized planning degree in Germany could pursue any one of three routes:

- Completion of an independent (4–5 years/9–10 semesters) degree program in urban and regional (or spatial) planning
- Completion of a planning specialization within a degree program of a cognate discipline (mostly architecture, also 4–5 years)

- Completion of a postgraduate degree of 1–2 years<sup>1</sup> (*Aufbaustudium*) focusing on planning after a first degree in another discipline of 4–5 years<sup>2</sup>

## 2.2 The Planning Curriculum

The curriculum content for the above listed degrees was decided and approved on the basis of the so-called “framework curricula for diploma degrees in spatial planning and architecture” ratified by the conference of university rectors and ministers for cultural affairs in the respective federal states<sup>3</sup> (Kunzmann 1995; David 1998). Framework curricula exist for all subjects. They contain both general guidelines for the degree program and specific requirements to teach topics deemed essential to a field. In the case of planning, topics include: principles of urban design, planning methods, planning policy and instruments, sector planning (i.e., economic development or transport planning) and project work. Framework curricula are inherently flexible and offered education providers the opportunity to adopt particular foci within the field. As a result, some degrees emphasized urban design and urban planning while others placed more weight on comprehensive spatial planning (*Raumplanung*), which encompasses an integrated approach to planning across spatial scales and sectors. These program specializations were typically reflected in different degree titles such as Dipl.-Ing. in Spatial Planning or Dipl.-Ing. in Urban and Regional Planning.

## 2.3 Status of Planning and Planners

From an international perspective, spatial planning in Germany is considered eloquent with a strong inclination towards integrated, scientific planning, criteria-based decision-making, and a mantra of balance and redistribution (Keller 1996:52). Interestingly, little information exists with respect to the demand for qualified planners and it is unclear whether the planning education provision was adequate to satisfy market needs. An estimated 400–500 planners graduated per year from the seven institutions offering comprehensive planning degrees. This supply of planners was supplemented by an unspecified number of architecture, civil engineering and geography graduates specializing in urban planning and design. Together, the supply of graduates with some level of planning qualification is roughly comparable to other industrialized nations, such as the UK, on a per capita basis (Shaw et al. 2003).

Still, the planning profession in Germany is not well established as a distinct profession in its own right as it is in the USA, UK, Australia or Canada, where planners have a designated qualifying professional body (e.g., the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), or the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)). Instead, professional recognition of urban planners remains under the tutelage of the powerful and fiercely autonomous professional architects associations (*Architektenkammern*). Similar to their architecture peers, planning graduates in Germany need to complete a two-year training period in practice working with an already recognized planner if they want to become qualified and earn the right to carry the title *Stadtplaner/in* (city or town planner). Membership in the professional association binds individuals to a professional code of conduct and requires a commitment to continued professional development. However, there is no legal requirement for planners to become members of the professional body as they are not prevented from working as planners or from signing off statutory plans as is the case in Poland, for example (Frank, Mironowicz 2009). This is just as well, as boards of architects are independent in each federal state and membership requirements with respect to degree background for planners vary regionally. For many years, graduates from one of the independent planning degree programs were not accepted into the professional architects’ association in Baden-Württemberg or Bavaria as it was felt they lacked the relevant urban design skills provided in specialist architecture programs.

Alternatively, planning graduates can also apply for entry into a government trainee program that will qualify them for higher civil service, the so-called urban design internship (*Städtebaureferendariat*), which is conferred at the federal level. This two-year program prepares individuals for employment in government as officers in higher administration with a responsibility for urban design as well as strategic urban and regional development policies. Key elements of the training involve the acquisition of in-depth knowledge in German planning law and building regulations, the European spatial framework and management skills.

Not having a clearly defined professional status for planners has implications for the recognition of planning graduates in the marketplace. For example, the first alumni of the newly established comprehensive urban and regional planning degrees in the 1970s had great difficulty finding employment despite an abundance of

planning posts in city councils at the time. Employers simply did not understand the qualifications, skills and knowledge that planning graduates brought with them and graduates had to compete with peers who were “traditionally” educated within architecture and other disciplines. The situation was particularly problematic in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, where no comprehensive planning degree program was established until the end of the 1990s and ingrained cultural divides created additional entry barriers for planners educated at “northern” universities.

Over time, however, planning became more accepted as a profession with an increasing number of planning graduates establishing themselves in consultancies, city and regional governments and large development corporations. Planners became recognized for their integrated approach and in-depth familiarity and knowledge of planning regulations and laws.

The formation of professional societies contributed considerably to this increased understanding of the planning profession. At present, two (competing) professional societies of and for planners exist:

- The Association for City, Regional and State Planning (*Verband für Stadt-, Regional und Landesplanung*, aka SRL), with ca. 1,700 members, founded in 1969.
- The Information Forum for Spatial Planners (*Informationskreis für Raumplaner*, aka IFR), with ca. 1,100 members, which was established by planning graduates from the University of Dortmund in 1975.

Both societies operate nationwide, run their own journals (*PlanerIn*, and *RaumPlanung*, respectively) and provide a platform for the exchange of experiences and knowledge for practitioners. While these societies cannot offer their members protected titles, they have contributed to the development of planning education and accreditation guidelines. They also frequently lobby governments with respect to planning policies. In addition, there are two smaller associations or networks of professionals that also contribute to the professional discourse in planning practice and research. The German Academy for Urban and Regional Spatial Planning (*Deutsche Akademie für Städtebau und Landesplanung*, aka DASL) with a focus on urban design and regional planning practice consists of a network of experts that is capped at around 400 invited individuals and the Academy of Spatial Research and Planning (*Akademie für Raumforschung und Landesplanung*, aka ARL) which is an independent research and service organiza-

nization. Neither of these latter organizations aim to represent or promote the profession in the same way as the SRL or IFR (Bohne/Kurth 2009) focusing instead on professional topics.

### 3. Planning Education Provision Since Bologna

Similar to other subjects, most planning schools initially had strong reservations concerning the Bologna action program. Immediate anxieties derived mainly from the introduction of two cycle degrees in planning (bachelor’s and master’s), and somewhat less from the need for quality assurance mechanisms. The former, it was feared, might lead to the demise of a comprehensive planning-only education (Kunzmann 2008) and an erosion of a relatively bounded, distinct professional profile developed and nurtured since the 1960s. Concerns over teaching planning in two or three years respectively are valid. Master’s degrees in theory are open to bachelor’s degree holders with any kind of background, leading to a diversity of graduate profiles and multidisciplinary planners who indeed may lack a full understanding of the traditional core of the discipline. Similarly, a three-year degree will provide insufficient time to educate students to the former diploma standards. Both options could lead to a decline in the quality of planning graduates and future planners (Kunzmann 2004, 2008).

#### 3.1 Quality Assurance and Program Accreditation

In response to the Bologna action point of establishing (external) program quality assurance, the professional bodies and societies for architecture and planning in Germany founded a discipline-specific quality assurance agency: the Association for the Accreditation of Courses of Study in Architecture and Planning (*Akkreditierungsverbund für Studiengänge der Architektur und Planung*, aka ASAP). The ASAP (2004), in consultation with practitioners and academics, defined a set of core competencies and learning outcomes for the new type of degree programs. The levels of skills and knowledge expected from bachelor’s and master’s graduates and a list of possible specializations within master’s programs were also specified. The guidelines distinguish between consecutive and non-consecutive master’s. A consecutive master’s is a specialist degree program for students already holding a bachelor’s degree in planning.

A non-consecutive master's offers a generalist education in planning or specialized programs, such as real estate development or urban heritage for students from a background other than planning.

The accreditation process requires applicants to submit a report detailing the institution's profile, program specializations, graduate profiles, target labor market and demand, curriculum structure, module descriptions, qualifications of staff delivering the program, and student feedback and two-day follow-up visit by a panel of peers. Programs not fully satisfying the panel may receive only conditional accreditation contingent on making improvements as specified. Accreditation cycles are typically 5–7 years. Accreditation has become a requirement for programs to ensure continued university and state funding.

### *3.2 Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programs*

The first pioneering post-Bologna programs in planning were established in 2001 at the University of Weimar (Master's in European Urbanism) and the University of Applied Sciences Stuttgart (Master's in Urban Planning). These master's were introduced as non-consecutive programs to encourage students from cognate disciplines, such as architecture, landscape design, and geography to enter the planning profession. In southern Germany especially, there was a demand for spatial planning programs because there was only one independent planning program at Nürtingen. In 2004, the Master's in Urban Planning in Stuttgart became the first accredited program using the new ASAP criteria. Other universities followed suit shortly thereafter, establishing further master's programs in Bochum, Bremen, Koblenz and Leipzig. Most programs are offered through schools of architecture, but some are hosted by other faculties, such as business (Leipzig) or sociology (Bremen).

From 2005 onward, the established planning schools, i.e., those that offered independent programs prior to 1999, began to convert and restructure their courses. Hamburg and Cottbus, for example, established consecutive programs that mirror the former diploma degrees in content. Dortmund established a four-year bachelor's and a master's degree of spatial planning with different specializations, in addition to the international, English-language master's program, SPRING, which focuses on spatial planning and educational needs in developing

countries. By 2008, all seven independent planning degree programs had been converted into two-cycle degrees (with consecutive master's). In addition, the schools established a range of specialized non-consecutive master's in urban design or regional management (Baumgart, Kurth 2004) (Gnest, Schöfer 2006) (Schöfer 2008).

Several new consecutive programs were also created: The faculty of architecture at the University of Applied Sciences in Erfurt developed a completely new planning degree with the first intake in 2008, and the University of Weimar created a new bachelor's in urbanism to bolster its previous provision of a master's in urbanism. And in 2009, the Universities of Applied Sciences in Stuttgart (master's) and Nürtingen (bachelor's) formed a regional alliance to offer a new consecutive planning program delivered jointly by the two schools.

Most universities offer a three-year bachelor's and a two-year master's program. A notable exception is the University of Dortmund, which developed a four-year bachelor's in conjunction with a one-year master's. Most independent programs follow ASAP guidelines and are by now accredited. An integrated curriculum approach based on studio or project work is pervasive, and, although modules should be compatible across programs, little data on the experience of students transferring between programs exists to date (see Table 2).

Aside from the independent planning degree programs, a plethora of new non-consecutive master's programs were also established. Most of the leading architecture schools, e.g., the Universities of Stuttgart, Aachen, Darmstadt and Munich have recently announced plans to transform the urban specialization elements of their architecture diplomas into non-consecutive urban design or urban planning master's degrees. Moreover, faculties such as geography are also introducing planning-related master's programs, which is leading to a wide variety of planning programs. Table 3 provides an illustrative selection of such non-consecutive programs. (Frank, Kurth 2009)

### *3.3 Implications for the Profession and Professional Profile*

It is too early for a full-fledged evaluation as some programs are only coming on stream and the first few cohorts of consecutive and non-consecutive master's graduates are just entering the employment market. Nevertheless, some initial observations can be made.

| Institution   | Bachelor's                                     | Master's   |
|---|--|--|
| University of Technology, Berlin                        | BSc Urban and Regional Planning, 3 years       | MSc Urban and Regional Planning, 2 years<br>MSc Urban Design, 2 years (English)<br>MSc Urban Management, 3 semesters (English) geared toward developing and transition countries     |
| University of Technology, Cottbus                       | BSc Urban and Regional Planning, 3 years       | MSc Urban and Regional Planning, 2 years,  |
| University of Technology, Dortmund                      | BSc Spatial Planning, 4 years                  | MSc Spatial Planning, 1 year<br>SPRING: Int'l. Joint MSc Spatial Planning for Regions in Growing Economies, 2 years (English)<br>MSc in Spatial Planning in Europe, 1 year (English) |
| University of Applied Sciences, Erfurt                  | BSc Urban and Spatial Planning, 3 years        | MSc Urban and Spatial Planning, 2 years  |
| University of Technology, Kaiserslautern                | BSc Spatial Planning, 3 years                  | MSc City and Regional Development, 2 years<br>MSc European and Regional Development, 1.5 years   |
| HafenCity University of Hamburg                         | BSc Urban Planning, 3 years                    | Master's in Urban Planning, 2 years<br>Master's in Urban Design, 2 years   |
| University of Kassel                                    | BSc City and Regional Planning, 3 years        | MSc City and Regional Planning, 2 years  |
| University of Applied Sciences, Nürtingen and Stuttgart | B.Eng Urban Planning, 3.5 years (in Nürtingen) | M.Eng Urban Planning, 2 years (in Stuttgart)   |
| Bauhaus University, Weimar                              | BSc Urbanism, 4 years                          | MSc European Urbanism, 2 years<br>MSc Int'l Integrated Urban studies (IIUS), 2 years   |

Tab. 2: Consecutive bachelor's-master's planning programs in Germany (2009).  
(Source: Author's research)

| Institution   | Program title and focus   |
|---|---|
| RWTH Aachen Faculty of Architecture   | MSc Urban Planning, 2 years (derived from the Architecture Diploma, with specialization in urban planning)  |
| University of Bremen, Faculty of Social Sciences                              | Master's in Urban and Regional Development, 2 years   |
| University of Technology, Darmstadt, Faculty of Architecture                  | MSc Int'l. Cooperation and Urban Development, 2 years (Erasmus Mundus)  |
| University of Technology, Dresden, Faculty of Architecture                    | MSc/Master's of Advanced Studies in Urban Conservation and Development, 2 years   |
| University of Technology, Dresden, Faculty of Forestry, Geology and Hydrology | MSc Spatial Development and Natural Resource Management, 2 years  |
| University of Applied Sciences in Frankfurt/Main, Faculty of Architecture     | MSc Urban Agglomerations, 2 years (English)   |
| University of Kiel, Faculty of Architecture                                   | MSc of City and Regional Development, 2 years   |
| University of Applied Sciences, Koblenz, Faculty of Architecture              | MA Urban Planning, 2 years  |
| University of Leipzig, Faculty of Economics                                   | MSc Urban Management, 2 years (block teaching and distance learning)  |
| Lübeck University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Architecture                | MA Town Planning, 2 years   |
| University of Applied Sciences, Munich, Faculty of Architecture               | Master's in Urban Design and Architecture, 2 years  |
| University of Siegen, Faculty of Architecture                                 | MSc Town Planning and Urban Development, 2 years, cooperative program offered jointly with the Universities of Applied Sciences of Dortmund, Bochum and Cologne |
| University of Technology, Stuttgart, Faculty of Architecture                  | Master's in Infrastructure Planning (interdisciplinary), 2 years<br>Additional master's planned but not yet established   |

Tab. 3: Selected new, non-consecutive master's programs (2009).  
(Source: Author's research)

First, the number and supply of planning graduates fully qualified in the manner of the previous five-year diploma appears not be compromised by the Bologna reforms. All seven independent planning programs were successfully converted to two-cycle degrees that accumulate a minimum of five years of focused planning education. In fact, due to greater autonomy of the institutions, additional consecutive programs were created and there should be more rather than fewer student places. A key question is what number of bachelor's alumni will be allowed to enter the master's programs, an issue not yet resolved, as this will have implications on the number of comprehensive planning graduates.

Second, Kunzmann (2008) has argued that the shorter three-year programs will lead to a reduction in student quality (less time for study abroad and more instrumentalist attitudes). However, one can hope that the increased competition amongst universities will raise the standard of education to offset possible drawbacks derived from the new degree structure. And, in theory, the new modular system and ECTS should facilitate student mobility and mutual recognition of credits and learning obtained in every study program of planning in Europe. In practice, student mobility has suffered post-Bologna changes, as it was not easy for students to study abroad without extending their time of study. There is little doubt that processes of coordinating student mobility between universities need to be improved and streamlined. Discussions at European levels among program directors could smooth the way, and Europe-wide organizations, such as the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP), might offer a platform to facilitate such a debate.

Third, due to the creation of a large range of specialist (non-consecutive) master's programs in urban design, urban management, sustainability or international planning, the number of planners with a multidisciplinary background should increase. It is unclear how the market will react to this influx of non-conventional planning degree holders who will be partly excluded from membership in architects' associations. However, this is not a new situation. Individuals have in the past acquired specialist training/education in urban, sector and regional planning as part of geography, environmental science or engineering degrees and developed a similar multidisciplinary profile. One can safely assume that the majority of the new degrees were born out of previously existing specializations and their graduates are now merely gain-

ing greater visibility in the planning profession due to a new, explicit degree title.

Bologna has initiated and created the opportunity for universities to formally broaden the education of planners and allow individuals to create their own individualized and personal pathways to a career in planning. As a result, we are likely to see a more amorphous and complex job profile for planners. Whether planning as a discipline will be strengthened or indeed weakened by this process is yet to be seen. An educational system in which a professionally qualifying master's in planning can be entered based on a range of undergraduate disciplines is not unique to Germany; rather it is prevailing in the USA (Krueckeberg 1985) and is likely to become more common in Australian planning education (Gurran et al. 2008). In the United Kingdom, a variety of pathways into the profession have been established with the route via non-consecutive master's endorsed by the professional body and supported by the government to address a lack of qualified planners (RTPI 2003).

In the last four decades, planning in Germany has steadily advanced to become recognized as a profession in its own right with an employment profile at the intersection of architecture, geography and other spatial disciplines. Alumni have obtained management positions in administration, politics, universities and consultancies and the importance of integrated planning approaches was reaffirmed in Germany by the National Urban Development Policy and the 2007 Leipzig Charter of the EU (Hatzfeld, Jakubowski 2008).

In future, it will be critical to ensure that employers understand the level of skills and competencies they can expect from graduates holding different categories of planning degrees. Looking at the new educational pathways, it will be important to distinguish and clarify the following profiles:

- The *comprehensive planner* with a planning-only bachelor's and master's; eligible for association membership with the title "urban/town/regional planner" and civil service with a specialization in urban planning and design (*StädtebauassessorIn*).
- The *specialist planner* with a planning bachelor's and a different master's degree.
- The *physical planner/urban designer* with a cognate, design-oriented bachelor's and (e.g., architecture) and planning master's; eligible for association membership and civil service.
- The *spatial (regional) planner* with a cognate spatially-oriented bachelor's (e.g., geography)



and a planning master's; not eligible for association membership.

- The bachelor's *planner* only (technical/low level planning tasks).

While alumni holding influential positions can influence how a profession is perceived, a concerted effort by the professional societies, planning schools, accreditation agencies and architects' associations will be the most effective method to shape, control and promote the profession and clarify the value of the emerging professional profiles. The fragmented nature of professional support with two competing societies (IfR, SRL), architect's associations protecting the professional label of town planner, and two independent academies and professional networks (DASL, ARL), creates a barrier to effective lobbying and communication on behalf of the profession at a national and European scale. The latter may soon become a necessity when efforts to advance professional mobility across the EU are pursued. The interests of those who can speak with powerful backing and authority will be recognized and their standards will likely prevail over others with weaker positions. Although there are drawbacks when professional bodies are overly influential, the influence that a strong professional body, such as the UK's RTPI, has on transnational agendas and professional standards cannot be denied.

#### 4. Evaluation

It is evident that the Bologna process and related reforms have transformed planning education in Germany. However, has there been an "unconditional surrender", as Kunzmann (2004) passionately termed it, to a British-American system of less comprehensive degrees? And, more specifically, what implications has the reform had on professional education for planning, on the quality and quantity of planning graduates in Germany or the recognition of their degrees across Europe?

As far as the conversion to a British-American education system is concerned, it needs to be recognized that while the Bologna action program has adopted the titles bachelor's and master's for its degree cycles, it is a misguided perception that British or American programs were the sole model. This would mean that all degrees in the UK conform by default to Bologna, which is not the case at all. On the contrary, achieving conformity in some subjects appears rather difficult in the UK (Neal-Sturgess 2007). It is important to look at Bologna in a

broader context. The character of universities has vastly changed since their first appearance over a thousand years ago as places of learning, and the university of the 19th century is not fit for the purposes of modern times (Kerstan 2009). The new shorter, staged degrees introduced by Bologna are a means to enable broader access to and increasing participation in higher education, something acknowledged by scholars worldwide to be of great value socially and economically (Adelman 2008, Kim 2009). Shorter degrees may well fit better with today's fast changing education needs. They allow individuals to return to university over the course of their work life for shorter periods, e.g., to attend a specialist master's to upgrade knowledge and skills or facilitate career changes, something far more difficult with the long continuous degrees of old. Whether the new Bologna structures will facilitate greater mobility is not clear. First indications point to the opposite across all subjects. However, this may have to do with a misalignment of funding streams and arrangements and how mobility is measured rather than the new degree structure. As a number of degrees have mobility built into the curriculum itself, it will not be visible in the traditional fashion.

With respect to the development of planning education in Germany over the past decade, the authors venture a cautiously positive assessment. This is for two reasons. First, universities have not only retained the existing planning-only program provision, but have also increased the number of courses; these consist of a combination of bachelor's and consecutive master's degrees that accrue the same minimum study period as the old diplomas. In the longer term, the danger remains that some of the undergraduate planning degrees will falter in competition with bachelor's programs in cognate disciplines such as architecture or geography, which could undermine the concept of a comprehensive planning-only education. However, this is a matter of the quality of the educational provision and perceived employability at the end of the degree. Universities need to ensure that curricula at the undergraduate level are exciting and perceived as essential to gaining entry into the profession, while professional bodies and societies need to promote and clarify educational pathways and profiles sufficiently to foster an appreciation and demand of planning-only degrees. Participants at a recent workshop suggested that recognition of the qualification could be improved if the main German planning schools would adopt a common label such

as “urban planning” (*Stadtplanung*) in the degree titles of planning programs.

Moreover, in addition to consecutive bachelor’s-master’s degrees, a wide range of new non-consecutive spatial master’s have been established. These degrees can be compared to previous post-graduate studies, although the typical entrant into such a program would have only 3–4 years of study rather than 4–5 years as in the pre-Bologna set-up. Nevertheless, these new programs increase student choice and ultimately diversify the professional profile in accordance with planning practice. Their success will depend on the demand of the employment market, i.e., whether these students find relevant positions. The wealth of such new programs for now seems to suggest that there was a latent and so far unfulfilled demand. In any case, students completing one of the new, innovative international programs, e.g., the MSc Mundus Urbano – International Cooperation and Urban Development at the University of Technology Darmstadt, where students experience periods of study in different institutions, countries and cultures, will have entirely new competencies and job prospects.

The first bachelor’s degree holders are now starting to find their first posts or are joining the master’s programs. Thus, the next decade will be crucial in determining whether the new degrees of planning will be accepted and if planning as a profession can be strengthened through a broader planning education at the universities.

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#### Notes

- 1 Such programs were available at the Universities of Technology at Karlsruhe, Munich and ETH Zurich.
- 2 Bundesarchitektenkammer e.V. 2003, online: <http://www.bak.de/site/1286/default.aspx>.
- 3 Rahmenprüfungsordnung im Studiengang Raumplanung an Universitäten und gleichgestellten Hochschulen und Rahmenprüfungsordnung im Studiengang Architektur.

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