The word ‘deinstitutionalized religion’ does not produce a high number of references in literature data bases; it does not seem to be frequently used in scientific research on religion. I have not explicitly used it as analytic category before in my research and writing. But there are quite a number of other terms by which colleagues and myself have addressed the phenomena under consideration: ‘un-churched religion’ (Perry, Davis, Doyle, & Dyble 1980; Fuller 2002), ‘vagabond religion’, I have coined the metaphoric term ‘off-road-religion’ (Streib 1999); with a somewhat heavier interpretative load, the phenomena are also addressed by the term ‘invisible religion’ (Luckmann 1967); also, terms such as ‘lived religion’ (Ammerman 1997; Grözinger & Lott 1997; Hall 1997; Heimbrock 1998; Orsi 1997) or ‘everyday religion’ (Bukow 1984; Streib 1998a) are considered to include forms of religiosity which have no obvious roots in established religions. And finally, with the pretension to gain inclusiveness and accuracy, the term ‘spirituality’ has experienced some popularity, especially among psychologist (Emmons 1999; 2000; Pargament & Mahoney 2002; Piedmont 1999; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott 1999). This brief semantic problem description indicates that there is some need for clarification. I will do this by testing the term ‘deinstitutionalization’. I want to approach this task by…

1. looking at some statistical evidence for deinstitutionalization of religion; and
2. reflecting on the significance of ‘deinstitutionalization’ as concept for understanding the phenomena, but interpreting this term with a typology of religious organizations and with help of a conceptualization of ‘deconversion’ in order to arrive at a more conclusive understanding.
3. Then, attention is focussing on the question what kind of religion is left after the deinstitutionalizing processes and how we best describe ‘de-institutionalized religion’.
4. Finally I ask how we should proceed further in investigating deinstitutionalized religion.
Thus I seriously consider ‘deinstitutionalized religion’ as candidate for naming the phenomena under consideration.

**Statistical Evidence for Changes in the Religious Landscape with Special Attention to Deinstitutionalization**

Deinstitutionalization describes a change, a transformation. Modernization has been the most prominent paradigm to interpret the changes which have influenced the religious domain. As one of the major effects of the modernization processes, it has been argued—and has become almost consensus among sociologists of religion—that religion has undergone a very fundamental transformation: from religion as fate to religions as choice. And people increasingly appear not only to join the religious organization of their choice, but also leave.

**The Drift from Religious Institutions Worldwide**

We do not have good enough data which is comprehensive and detailed enough to document the deinstitutionalization of religion in every detail. We are far from being able to draw a map of religious institutions, organizations and milieus and keeping track of religious migrations. But we have at least some data. In Table 1 and Table 2, I present results from the *International Social Survey Programme* (ISSP 1991; ISSP 1998) which indicate the drift from organized religion cross-culturally. The percentage of respondents who have answered the questions “In which religion have you been raised?” and “What is your current religion?” with “None” differ greatly from country to country.

The enormous differences in Great Britain and the Netherlands may be due to a much more open wording of the question (“Do you consider yourself to belong to a particular religious group or church?”), but the differences also display a different religious climate. To escape the criticism of comparing inconsistent data, however, I reduce my selection to countries in which the questions were asked with more consistency. The difference between the two answers may lead us the way to quantify the numbers of leave-takers. We have calculated the subjects who responded “None” to the question for current religious affiliation, but say they were raised in a specific religion. The result is the life-span disaffiliation rate.