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Interreligious Practice in Hamburg

A Mapping of Motivations, Conditions, Potential Benefits and Limitations from a Participant's Perspective

1. Research on interreligious practice in a Hamburg neighbourhood – an introduction

Against the background of religious plurality in German society and the increasing public attention given to religion, the term 'interreligious dialogue' has developed into an important discourse concept in recent decades (Klinkhammer, 2008, p. 21). This is primarily the case in debates on integration policy, social conditions, and cultural matters. Current circumstances require a deeper understanding of the local individual actors of interreligious practice. Our contribution examines these participants' perspectives. We consider their individual experiences and assessments as important factors within interreligious practice.

Due to its active local 'dialogue scene', Hamburg offers an interesting context for our investigation. Until the middle of the last century, the population of Hamburg primarily belonged to the Lutheran Church. Around the end of the 20th Century church membership declined sharply, while the percentage of citizens affiliated with another religion or no religion increased. Currently there are more than 100 different religious communities represented in Hamburg (cf. Körs in this volume). Both the changed composition of the population and the pluralisation of religion and world-views present Hamburg with new questions of coexistence. On a local neighbourhood level these are related to possibilities and different forms of religious encounter, and to interreligious understanding in everyday interactions. While the first dialogue groups and activities initiated in Hamburg were primarily concerned with the mutual exchange of information, various new forms of interreligious encounter and cooperation have emerged in recent years (Klinkhammer, Frese, Satilmis, & Seibert, 2011, p. 66 f.). These include neighbourhood development projects, joint prayer services for first graders at school, or the repurposing of religious buildings.

In this chapter our aim is to develop a framework for the study of the individual factors involved in interreligious dialogue. The results will be presented as a general mapping regarding motivations and conditions as derived from the actors' experiences, as well as assessments of the potential benefits and limitations of interreligious practice. This general mapping process can be employed in subsequent research offering an analysis grid for individual interreligious activities. The following questions can be derived from this research interest: What motivations for interreligious practice can be identified in the local Hamburg area? What are the most important conditions for interreligious practice? What do the actors consider to be its possibilities and

limits? In order to shed light on these research questions we focus on participants in ‘inter-religious activities’ (Nagel, 2013), by which we mean organised events of religious encounter in the broadest sense.

2. Interreligious practice on the organisational level – state of research

As we will detail below, previous studies within the social sciences have examined interreligious practice from various perspectives, but primarily on the organisational level, focussing on its forms and the factors influencing it, as well as on its achievements. In a study of Christian-Muslim discussion groups, Annette Wilke (2006) identified two different kinds of attitude; a harmonious-integrative dialogical attitude and an oppositional-confrontational dialogical attitude. According to Wilke (2006, p. 17) the harmonious-integrative attitude creates situations characterised by a high degree of tolerance between the actors, while the oppositional-confrontational attitudes contributes more tensions as a result of one actor or group dominating the dialogue adopting a rather patronising attitude. While Wilke considers the first to be an attitude that promotes dialogue, she describes the second attitude as obstructive to dialogue (2006, p. 17 f.).

Also of interest is a study that focuses on Muslim associations and their institutional dialogue partnerships in Baden-Württemberg against the background of questions of integration. In this study Hansjörg Schmid, Ayse Almila Akca and Klaus Barwig (2008) address motivations and aims, assessments and criticism as well as obstacles to dialogue, before moving on to offer recommendations for action to actors on this basis. As motivations and objectives for dialogue, the authors mention getting to know each other, reducing prejudices and negative images, as well as solving concrete local problems (Schmid et al., 2008, p. 203 f.). As central obstacles to this institutional dialogue, they identify language barriers, structural deficiencies (such as frequent changes of contact persons), pre-existing fears on all sides partly based on ignorance and unfavourable depictions in the media, lack of interest, and finally, also a lack of human resources and time (Schmid et al., 2008, p. 209 ff.).

Using similar research categories, the sociologist Eva Maria Hinterhuber (2009) deals with initiatives committed to trilateral dialogue between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Hinterhuber (2009, p. 136 ff.) subdivides the motivations for engaging in trilateral initiatives into personal motivations (such as religiously mixed partnerships or studies abroad), theological or spiritual motivations (such as finding religious similarities), and more socially-oriented motivations (such as the wish to get to know each other, or to shape coexistence in a positive way). The last-mentioned group of motivations is linked to broader aims like reducing prejudice, promoting networking, and facilitating access to resources and decision-making processes (Hinterhuber, 2009, p. 126 f.). In addition Hinterhuber also includes aspects relating to attitudes such as the rejection of extremism and racism, a capacity for self-criticism, and an

appropriate language capability. She also includes aspects connected to the dialogic relationship, such as communication on a level playing-field, mutual trust, and a fair inclusion of all participants (Hinterhuber, 2009, p. 94 ff.). With regard to the effects of trilateral initiatives, she explains that they have a positive effect on dealing with conflicts, facilitating personal acquaintances, increasing insights and competences and strengthening mutual perception and appreciation. A limiting factor is their relatively insignificant impact on a broader scale. In addition, she identifies structural problems (such as organisational barriers and insufficient education) and interpersonal problems (such as the lack of representative contact persons), as well as further limitations with regard to financial, personal, and temporal resources, as having a negative impact on continuity (Hinterhuber, 2009, p. 135 ff.).

One of the most comprehensive studies within the German context emerged from the so-called *Dialogos Project*. This research project aimed at an evaluation of Muslim-Christian dialogue initiatives, including their emergence, working methods, composition, aims (Klinkhammer et al., 2011), as well as conditions for interreligious dialogue (Satilmis, 2008). According to Gritt Klinkhammer and colleagues (2011) there was an increase in the number of projects founded after 2001. Events in global politics seemed to trigger the formation of such initiatives. 63 percent of the initiatives that emerged after 2001 cited the attacks in New York in 2001 and in Madrid in 2004 as important triggers (Klinkhammer et al., 2011, p. 39). Even more frequently than these events, neighbourly interest was declared to be an important trigger. Klinkhammer and colleagues (2011) differentiate between four directions of dialogical action – sensitisation, cooperative problem-solving, empowerment and theological debates – which point towards different motivations for the dialogue initiatives. Firstly, sensitisation constitutes ‘a relatively low-threshold kind of dialogue’ (Klinkhammer et al., 2011, p. 23) dealing mainly with a basic exchange of information and the overcoming of prejudices. For working through virulent problems, the authors introduce the term ‘action for cooperative problem-solving’. In this case, the aspects of integration of different groups have an important role. Empowerment is used for efforts aimed at promoting disadvantaged groups, while theological debates aim at an exchange on the contents of religious or theological questions (Klinkhammer et al., 2011, p. 23 ff.). The authors also deal with ‘obstacles and problematic areas’ of Christian-Muslim dialogue. The greatest obstacle, according to the researchers, is the limited nature of personal and material resources as well as the unequal distribution of material resources between participating groups. This aspect is followed by problems of acceptance in the widest sense, for example, different aims or undifferentiated media reporting. A final obstacle is related to conflictual or potentially conflictual situations of interaction on the interpersonal or inter-group level (Klinkhammer et al., 2011, p. 90 ff.).

In her analysis within the *Dialogos Project* Ayla Satilmis (2008) lists a number of additional factors that she describes as important ‘conditions for successful dialogues’, subdividing them into subject-related factors and structural conditions. On the subject-related level important qualities include curiosity, empathy, and a capacity

for self-criticism as well as aspects which focus more on the interaction between the participants such as respectful intercourse with each other and a certain capacity for conflict. Besides these she also lists dynamics that are detrimental to successful dialogue. These include, among other things, a pressure to justify oneself, generalisations, and proselytising activities (Satilmis, 2008, p. 117 ff.). On the structural level Satilmis emphasises the importance of resources of time, space, and funding, or of a well-established network for contact. There are also further factors which help to lend focus to the interaction itself. These include for example a practice-related (i. e. lifelike) processing of themes, agreement about the mode of understanding, as well as an appropriate allocation of roles (Satilmis, 2008, p. 122 ff.).

In a more recent study Nelly Schubert (2015) has focused on the factors that influence the work of interreligious initiatives. Schubert differentiates between internal factors, subdivided into positive and negative ones, and external factors. Internal factors that promote interreligious initiatives are strategical considerations (such as improving the image of one's own tradition) and ideational ones (such as intercultural understanding and tolerance), perceived similarities in theological orientation, for example, as well as existing dialogue structures (such as the appointment of a commissioner for dialogue). Negative internal factors may include the interference by umbrella organisations and religious authority figures, generalised or specific (including religious) prohibitions on cooperation, historically rooted (and also political) reservations, proselytising activities, as well as the lack of language competence. Furthermore there are also other external influence factors such as xenophobic events or debates seemingly unattached to religious issues (Schubert, 2015, p. 233 ff.). Schubert points out that the formation and work of dialogue initiatives may also be promoted by various societal discourses (sometimes involving financial support) (2015, p. 240).

So far, there has been a notable concentration of research on dialogue groups or initiatives (Schubert, 2015; Klinkhammer et al., 2011; Hinterhuber, 2009; Satilmis, 2008; Wilke, 2006), and a multi-dialogue focus that includes a multiplicity of religions has only been pursued on a limited scale (Schubert, 2015). However, questions of orientations, conditions and the perceived potential benefits and limitations of interreligious practice cannot be considered solely at an organisational level of Christian-Muslim dialogue groups; they also need to be addressed at the participant level, focusing on the way people from different religious and non-religious backgrounds experience the various forms of interreligious activities as they are currently practised. To date only a few studies, for example those of Alexander-Kenneth Nagel and Mehmet Kalender (2014), have done so.¹

1 Based on their research, Nagel and Kalender (2014) have examined motivations for participating in various interreligious activities, differentiating between external triggers and internal matters of concern. Among the external triggers, they found structural conditions and changes (e.g. a significant surplus of Muslim students in religious services on the occasion of graduation), external (e.g. public) expectations, and global political events,

3. Exploring an area of Hamburg² – research field, methods and data material

Our surveys have their starting point in an inner-city area, situated on both sides of the Alster Lake in Hamburg. This area consists of several neighbourhoods differentiated demographically with regards to the number of people with a migration background, their educational and economic status, and it accommodates a wide range of religious communities.³ As well as a Jewish community on the western side of the Alster, there are also larger and smaller Christian denominations, several Buddhist centres of different traditions, a Sikh community, a Baha'i community, an Ahmadiyya community and various religious students' communities. On the eastern side there are a number of Muslim and Christian communities, two Sikh communities, one Alevi community, one Baha'i community, and a Buddhist association, as well as three Hindu associations. This particular area was chosen for our research in order to achieve as much diversity as possible in our sample so as to capture examples of local interreligious practice in their full complexity.

This is a qualitative study that has an explorative design. The research was carried out between November 2013 and June 2014. We started with participant observations⁴ of different interreligious activities and continued with individual interviews. Based on our understanding of interreligious practice as organised events, a wide range activities were included (Nagel, 2013);⁵ among them interreligious services for school starters, peace prayers, and opening events at the start of the semester, an

but also local events such as a demonstration by right-wing groups (Nagel & Kalender, 2014, p. 88 ff.). Among the internal matters of concern, they differentiate between four areas of interest; political interests, symbolic interests, dialogue-oriented interests, and communitarian interests (Nagel & Kalender, 2014, p. 90 ff.).

- 2 There have previously been hardly any investigations into the local interreligious practice in Hamburg. In this context, the study 'Post-Migrant Hamburg' can be mentioned, in which attitudes towards Muslims in the population of Hamburg were investigated (Foroutan et al., 2014). Furthermore, a rather descriptive contribution focussing on interreligious dialogue in Hamburg by Tietze (2007) should also be mentioned here, in which the author presents case studies for interreligious activities in Hamburg in which local authorities take part (cf. Tietze, 2007).
- 3 For an overall perspective on Hamburg cf. the contribution by Anna Körs in this volume.
- 4 The extent of our participation in the interreligious practice observed by us varied according to the respective form of activity. Thus, for example, in an interreligious women's breakfast, we participated in the conversation at the table because 'mere' observation would have caused irritation. By contrast, we were able to observe as visitors from the audience in the framework of an interreligious panel discussion. Generally, we tended to take not an active but a more restrained role in the field.
- 5 Nagel differentiates between six types of interreligious activities: interreligious neighbourhood encounter, interreligious dialogue (here understood as a discussion circle), interreligious peace prayers, interreligious school prayer services, Open Days, as well as interreligious events (Nagel, 2013, p. 250 f.). Beyond these types, we could identify

interfaith women's breakfast, iftar receptions in mosques and open days, civic action events, public panels and meetings of dialogue circles. Other events such as the *Long Night of World Religions* in the Thalia Theatre were also included.⁶ Our observations of 39 such activities were recorded in field notes. The following excerpt is taken from one of these events. This passage describes the first part of an interreligious event within the framework of the 34th Protestant Church Congress which took place in Hamburg in 2013:

When we arrived at the church, those arriving had already been counted, so as only to fill up the remaining of the 600 available seats. Quite a number of scouts were in charge of the seat allocation. There were primarily middle-aged and elderly people (50+) present, few young adults and teenagers. [...] In a brief introduction, [...] the moderator first addressed the multi-dimensional character of dialogue in Hamburg and pointed out that the Interreligious Forum was an important pillar of this dialogue. The Forum is characterised by a 'shared vision' according to which the viability of the dialogue is not only supported by mere acquaintance ('getting to know each other') of the people, which is an important basic condition for dialogue as such, but must be strengthened through the fundamental overcoming of 'friend or foe thinking'. Differences – such as religious differences – should therefore not lead to the drawing of demarcation lines but should rather be considered a resource. [...] Following the introduction, the representatives of the Interreligious Forum sat down on chairs arranged on the stage facing the audience. They were asked to present positions on the motto of the Church Congress ('As much as you need' 2. Moses: 16, 18). As the first of seven, the bishop of the Nordkirche, relating the phrase 'as much' to 'religion', explained that the motto is also a message to society addressing the presence of religion in society. It is primarily the 'promises of peace' inherent in religions which could make a significant contribution to social peace building. [...] As the last speaker, the Buddhist representative, began by presenting himself in a self-deprecating manner ('Do you really want to hear yet another one? Sometimes plurality can also be a problem') [...] Referring to the motto, he explained that people, in principle, need love and wisdom/ reason. [...] For this reason all religions offer very similar approaches under the key words 'modesty and ethics'. The particularity of Buddhism consists in its offer of concrete systematic techniques and exercises as well as a specific Buddhist philosophy based on a mutual dependence of everything in existence. Consequently, there is no 'I' at all, but rather a collective that works towards a kind of 'social Nirvana'. At the end of this first round of presentations, the moderator noted that, given centuries of conflict, it was remarkable that representatives of the different traditions could sit on a panel together without differing too much with regard to their basic thoughts. The discussions in the Forum, however, are not always so peaceful; sometimes people also quarrel. This disagreement, the moderator emphasised, is a 'basic virtue of dialogue'.

two further forms of activities, interreligious panel discussions and interreligious study courses that cannot be classified under Nagel's typology.

- 6 This was an evening event in a theatre, lasting several hours, with presentations of scriptural recitations from different religious sources, discussions, and musical performances on topics related to religion.

In his conclusion, the moderator explained that the whole point of dialogue is that, in engaging with the respective other, one comes to know oneself better and becomes more conscious of one's own tradition. Finally, all the representatives got up and gave each other a demonstrative hug to thunderous applause from the audience [...]. (FN06⁷)

We acquired some of our interview partners within the framework of the activities which we observed either by addressing the participants directly or by contacting them through key figures. In addition we contacted the religious communities in our research field whom we had not met within the framework of the events we visited. We purposefully interviewed members of these faith communities to broaden the religious spectrum and also to make possible the inclusion of voices critical of dialogue in our study. As far as possible, we carried out the interviews in the natural environment of our interview partners, for example at home, at the venue of the interreligious activity or the religious community. We conducted semi-structured interviews. Our interview guide included two areas of questioning. At first it was primarily about the participants' experiences with regard to interreligious practice in their local area. Following up on their initial narrative, we asked more in-depth questions about the individual dialogue experiences. This was followed by a second area of questioning on the attitudes and interpretations of our interview partners, including questions related to their motivations for participating in interreligious practice and what they perceived to be the potential and limitations of interreligious practice. Most of the participants interviewed by us can be classified in four socio-urban fields: religion, politics, culture, and the social field.⁸ Our sample includes members from different religions and worldview communities: German Protestants, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Adventists, Methodists, Russian Orthodox, Coptic, Free Church communities, Jews, Sunni and Shia Muslims, Ahmadiyya community, Alevi and Hindus, members of Buddhist centres as well as members of a Baha'i and a Sikh community. Among the political participants are staff members in public administration offices (for example the district administration office), members of political parties, and individuals committed to civic action. In the cultural field, we interviewed artists and staff members from different cultural institutions (such as the art gallery). Finally, persons from the social field were also included, among them co-workers in social neighbourhood projects and institutions (such as advisory and education centres). In total, we conducted 44 individual interviews. Each interview lasted about one and a half hours. Every interview was audio recorded and subsequently transcribed.

To analyse the processed data material, we used qualitative content analysis and developed our categories inductively (Mayring, 2015, p. 67). Here, the phenomenon

7 Quotes from our field notes have been marked with the abbreviation 'FN' for the German word *Feldnotiz* and with the number of the note in order to identify where they have been taken from.

8 Beyond these four fields we also encountered actors from the field of education and academia during the course of our research.

of interreligious practice as it appears in the data was codified through text passages referring to specific social events. With the help of a comparative codifying process, an increasing abstraction of the emerging concepts was pursued. Such encoding is the tool with which theoretical concepts that transcend the concrete case are generated from the data. We thus successively encoded and categorised our processed data material for comparison, with the help of the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA.⁹ In this process, we summarised the different forms of activities and participants.

4. Presentation of findings

In the following section we discuss different motivations for participating in interreligious practice. Afterwards we look at the participants' experiences with regard to the conditions of interreligious practice. Finally we deal with participants' assessments of the fundamental potential and limitations of interreligious practice. The chapter concludes with a brief summary, including a tabular overview of the main categories of our analysis and discussion of the results as well as consideration of further research possibilities.

4.1 Motivations for interreligious practice

Based on our observations as well as on interview questions concerning aims, wishes, and motivations in interreligious practice, we were able to collect a large pool of participants' motivations. In the course of the analysis, we developed four superordinate categories which we present as four frames of orientation.¹⁰ We differentiate between the *social*, the *political*, the *personal*, and the *religious frame of motivation*.

'offering neighbourliness ...' – the social framework

Within the social framework of motivation, interreligious practice is understood by the participants as a social task. It is primarily their communitarian interests that are

9 The main categories worked out by us have been italicised for the purpose of clarifying the presentation of the results.

10 In this context, we use the concept of a framework in accordance with the sociologist Erving Goffman (1980, p. 19) who uses it for summarising those elements by which participants in a social situation define their personal involvement in this situation (in our case, the interreligious activity). In this case, the frames of motivation are not static entities but rather dynamic reference points towards which the actors in interreligious activities are oriented. This is an ideal-typical construction, i. e. such frames, in their pure form, do not occur like that in actual reality. Rather, actors are able to change situationally between different frames within the course of an event, and sometimes even several frames may exist as reference points at the same time.

in the foreground. On a more abstract level, in the context of an increasingly plural society, this includes social cohesion, mutual recognition, and a respectful dealing with each other. This is consistent with the desire for social negotiation and integration of that diversity, as one actor from the cultural field describes it: 'It is all the more important that we should know about religions so [...] that we do not develop sort of parallel societies or shut ourselves off or become fearful' (I24¹¹, cultural field). The misgivings that are expressed here lead to a second main focus within the social framework, on concrete measures for improved understanding and educational work. Actors enter interreligious practice with the aim of increasing their understanding of each other. This often happens on a more local level and is linked to concepts of neighbourliness and common humanity. It needs the kind of basic interest in the Other that can be found in the following description from a Catholic priest:

You can only really talk about neighbourliness if people look to each other. I mean, in the sense of [...] offering neighbourliness. Not to just be neighbours objectively, but to contribute to becoming neighbours. [...] So that those who are interested can also get to know us from the inside. (I41, Catholic)

The neighbourliness emphasised here includes efforts to overcome obstacles in everyday coexistence. It is often a matter of uncovering and de-constructing prejudices that impede social coherence and feed conflicts. An example of this is the image of Islam as represented by various media which is perceived to be simplistic and negative. The work on images or sensitisation that is meant to counteract these images does not always only proceed from people who have been affected themselves (for example when a mosque community seeks to portray a positive image that is in tune with an open society by having an open day) but is also carried out by informed outsiders who want to reduce barriers by throwing light on certain prejudices (such as a Christian with knowledge 'of Islam' who tries to explain the Muslim perspective). Finally the design and cultivation of networks is considered to be a significant element of interreligious practice within the framework of social motivation. Therefore, making contacts is in the foreground for some actors when they participate in activities:

I also volunteer for the citizens' platform (Bürgerplattform) because it has just opened doors for me. That I went into the church, that I got to talk to the authorities at all [...]. I wouldn't have managed it alone, and for years I couldn't manage it. But with the citizens' platform, we managed it, we now have a network here in this place. (I04a, Sunni)

As the quote demonstrates, interreligious practice also functions as a door opener to certain contacts and resources. In this context there seem to be institutional motivations for interreligious practice, for example when interreligious practice is consid-

11 Quotes from our transcripts are marked with the abbreviation 'I' (for interview) and the number of the interview.

ered to be an integral part of one's professional field or responsibilities as it is in the case for commissioners for integration and dialogue of various religious and public institutions.

'they need a public forum here ...' – the political framework

Within the political frame of motivation considerable emphasis is given to the themes of participation and integration of people with different religious backgrounds. Thus some actors refer to the creation of opportunities for disadvantaged or alternative voices to be heard as a special concern. This kind of empowerment is sometimes accompanied and strengthened through awards sponsored by the local authorities and the state. It is meant to counteract the isolation of minorities and marginal groups. Within the framework of political motivation, interests of this kind are translated into (party-) political programmes, as the following field note from an Iftar reception shows:

We reached the small mosque complex (prayer and wash rooms, events hall, small bookshop, travel agency) at about 8 pm. Many people, primarily casually dressed men, were sitting talking in the yard or on benches at wooden tables along the way to the festival hall. In front of the entrance of the hall, several small groups of rather festively dressed persons, among them also some women. [...] The hall had been decorated for celebration. On the wall above the rostrum, three flags were hanging: the German one, the Turkish one, and the flag of DiTiB Nord (the North German branch of a Turkish dominated Muslim umbrella organisation in Germany). About 20 round tables with table cloths, place cards, programme flyers, cutlery, and napkins had been distributed inside the hall, each offering a place for eight persons. [...] Altogether about 200 persons arrived, primarily men, primarily middle-aged. There were no children present inside the hall; a few boys and girls, however, were playing in front of the door in the courtyard.

The moderation for the evening was taken up by Murat Kayman, the second co-chair of DiTiB Nord Hamburg. He proved to be a very skilful and well prepared moderator who had prepared short quotes and anecdotes on each speaker. Not infrequently, he also inserted humorous contributions in the process ('Not only are we all equal before God but also before NSA'). After a short welcome there was a recitation from the Qur'an. Afterwards, various male personalities from local politics, religious communities (among them church representatives), and from the fields of science were successively asked to offer their welcoming address. All speakers greeted the honoured guests from the political arena (among them the Interior Senator of Hamburg, Detlef Scheele, and The Turkish consul general). [...] At the beginning of his welcoming address, Senator Detlef Scheele characterised the Islamic month of fasting, Ramadan, as a month of introspection, spirituality and mindfulness. Even for non-Muslims, this time could signify a great enrichment because it sharpens one's awareness for everyday action 'in work, family, and community'. Since every second child in Hamburg has a background of migration, urban society in Hamburg must engage intensively with the question of integration. Of particular importance is a basic open attitude and also

a readiness for reception ('We adopt an inclusive attitude'). The recognition of people with other cultural backgrounds also includes respect for the respective religions and the practice of religion. The emphasis of shared values is in the foreground. The city of Hamburg presents some merits in this field, such as the state contracts in which Islamic holidays are recognised, for example. The present concept of integration represents a 'we'-concept which provides an opening towards the outside (being a gateway to the world) and towards the inside (intercultural opening; offers to reach everyone). He closed his welcoming address with a commitment to 'plural democracy' ('we are all inhabitants of Hamburg'). (FN08)

This Iftar reception shows how aspects of integration policy can come into play within interreligious activities. The concretisations of such integrative efforts are meant, among other things, to improve the situation of primarily migrant religious communities. They include the aforementioned negotiation and expansion of religious infrastructures such as religious buildings, or the conclusion of state treaties with the Alevi and various Muslim associations in Hamburg in 2012.¹² Besides political motivations that are more or less closely linked with processes of communal or national politics there are also those that could rather be understood as a kind of lobbying. Political interests in the more narrow sense have only a secondary role within the political framework, it is rather about self-positioning, self-presentation, and self-assertion of one group in contrast to other groups in society. Here we find efforts to emphasise the theme of religion in general, thereby strengthening the social status of religious communities as such. In addition, there are activities that aim at 'lobby work' for a particular religious community. An example for this is the *Night of Churches* that, as a co-initiator described it, was also meant to get the church 'perceived as a church again' (121, Adventist). Moreover, smaller denominations in particular seem to have a need to assert themselves against the larger denominations of their own religious community through their presence in interreligious activities. Finally, the desire for the widest possible public awareness and acceptance of interreligious practice and its fruits is also related to a kind of 'lobby work'. Thus demonstrative partnerships and a demonstrably good relationship between representatives of different religious traditions are understood to be positive signals to the wider society.

'you can have an excellent discussion ...' – the personal framework

Besides the social and political frameworks there is an individual level on which interreligious practice can be understood as a personal concern. While personal interests in the shape of mutual understanding and overcoming prejudices have already been discernible within the social framework, they have an outstanding significance within the personal framework. Among the actors whose statements may be placed

12 For further information cf. Laura Haddad's case study on the state treaties in Hamburg (2017, p. 141 ff.).

within this framework of motivation are those for whom dialogue is a personal concern and a passion. They tend to search for similarities and differences between the religious traditions and the different religious lifestyles in their spare time. In the course of these, at least partly, theological discussions, it is often aspects of personal development that come to the fore, such as the testing and sharpening of one's own views and positions. As one of the interviewees expressed it:

Talking to people who are committed adherents of another religion is interesting, you see. With someone who is rooted deeply in the Catholic faith, you can have an excellent discussion. Then [...] one won't convert the other, that much is clear. But you also get to see aspects that are slightly different and you get the impulse to talk about why you have the beliefs that you do. (I08, Baha'i)

The quote shows that dialogue with the Other throws new light on aspects of one's own faith. As well as dialogue being a passion and a method for personal development, interreligious practice plays a significant role as a field of social contact. Thus a network of relationships and friendships can be built up through long-term participation in interreligious activities that can even provide a social foundation in old age. An elderly Hindu describes it like this: 'At my age [of] 61 years I'm de facto unemployable, so that over the past five, six years I sort of drifted more and more into [...] this religious thing, interreligious dialogue and so on' (I25, Hindu). The field of social contact that has replaced the social contacts in the work place in this case is also used as a place of relaxation and for 'recharging batteries' among like-minded people.

'spiritual encounter ...' – the religious framework

Finally a religious framework of motivation for interreligious practice can also be discerned alongside the social, political, and personal ones. The religious frame includes motivations in interreligious practice that emerge from a religious occasion. This involves a religious mandate (derived from the scriptural sources) for encounter for the sake of spiritual interaction on an interreligious level of experience, and a missionary mandate (equally derived from the scriptural sources). Therefore within this framework, dialogue or the contact with non-religious people and followers of other religious traditions is understood as a core religious task. A chairman of the Protestant faith community whom we asked about the benefit of interreligious practice for his community said:

I don't think [dialogue] absolutely needs to be useful for our parish. But, and this shows my Christian values and anthropology, I am not there in order to do well. I am there so that others may do well [...], so that our community does well, and the people in that community. (I05, Protestant)

As the example shows, Christian values seem to function as an 'engine' for dealing with the socially and religiously plural environment. Sincerity and non-violence are

also present among the values mentioned by members of different religious traditions in this sense as the essence of their own religion or even of all religions. Religious sources are cited as explicit mandates for an exchange with the religious Other.¹³

Besides interreligious practice as a core religious task, the religious framework of motivation also includes motivations that can best be described as a wish for spiritual encounter and experience. One example is the description by a member of a protestant community of an interreligiously composed Yoga group that met in his faith community several times a year. It was led by an Indian who is described as a 'spiritual teacher' in the interview. The participants mainly belonged to the Christian faith. Their motivation is described by our interview partner as follows:

They were people who let themselves be touched by (-) Eastern wisdom, and [it was] rather spiritual, but [also] – I'd call it knowledge of life, value-oriented, experience-oriented, meditation, [...] having self-experience on this way, something that I absolutely support for myself, it is always also spiritually-religiously motivated (I15, Protestant).

In this case, the wish for spiritual encounter led to a lasting interreligious contact that was not restricted to a contents exchange, but also took on forms of shared spiritual practice. According to the interviewee, the view of one's own faith can be sharpened through such forms of interreligious practice. Thus he 'rediscovered' the spiritual side of his own Christian faith through an intensive engagement with Buddhism (FN39, Protestant).

Thirdly, while proselytising was frequently denied any legitimacy by our interviewees, we could nevertheless identify some motivations that revealed an interest in conversion within interreligious practice as is demonstrated by the following statement: 'You should be an advocate for your own religion to convince others of it' (FN16, Catholic). Thus the desire to convert someone may lead to a commitment to interreligious practice but it seems to be a desired by-product rather than a main concern for our interviewees.

4.2 Conditions for interreligious practice

A further focus of our research besides motivations in interreligious practice is its conditions. While, in the analysis, the questions of motivation led us to the construction of frames of motivation, the question of the concrete conditions for interreligious practice made us see that these are localised on three different levels. For this reason, the following presentation of the conditions for interreligious practice from the participants' perspective is subdivided into conditions relating to the individual actor,

13 A Qur'anic verse that was often referred to in this regard is: '[We] have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another' (Qur'an, sura 49, verse 13, translation by Muhammad Asad).

conditions that come into play within interreligious activities, and conditions relating to the context of the activity.

Actor-related conditions – aspects of a ‘dialogical attitude’

Interreligious activities are potential areas of tension as occasions where actors with different world views can meet. This generates fears, for example of fundamentalism or relativism. A Catholic nun describes the latter:

Mhm Yes, when [...] there is too much mingling. [...] Either: “I don’t care at all” or: “It’s all the same anyway”. That worries me [...] I would like us to remain profiled, that we can remain diverse, in my opinion, that we must remain that. And wherever it is said, ‘It doesn’t matter anyway, it’s all religion after all’, there, for me, culture gets lost, there, for me, appreciation for religious culture gets lost too [...]. (104, Catholic)

For this reason, interreligious encounters are not only perceived as an enrichment but also as a challenge. Many of the actors we interviewed mentioned a certain degree of openness towards the Other as a central condition for participating in interreligious activities. In this context, openness is described as part of a basic attitude for successful interaction. In this section of the chapter we first attempt to outline characteristics of a dialogical attitude and afterwards dwell on aspects of more non-dialogical attitudes. Respect and tolerance are primarily concluded to be supportive *actor-related conditions* which are expressed, for example, in the following quote:

One should come with a certain tolerance, right. Well, I also think such a – I would call it something, so a little bit in the direction of humility, that one is able to keep oneself back so far – that is oneself and one’s own viewpoints – that one can also give space to the Other. (128, social field)

The mutual respect and humility before the Other demanded here are meant to guarantee that interreligious activities do not just consist of a mere ‘lining up of words’ (FN03, Shia), but rather enable an open exchange between the participants. Here a basic interest in the Other and a certain measure of empathy are important. A Muslim representative, for example, describes the importance of having some understanding for the other actors:

One [must] have a bit of understanding there because people have different [...] ways of thinking. [...] In my opinion, [for example] the term ‘Islamic terrorism’ is outrageous. [...] so people have e.g. Muslim roots or Jewish or Christian roots, but one can’t describe it as ‘Islamic terrorism’. [...] Such questions about terrorism, violence, I can’t accept them but I [have] some understanding for them because people presented it like that. Although [this formulation] is not acceptable [for me] I must understand them. (I10, Muslim)

Here holding back one's own emotions in favour of an understanding atmosphere is emphasised as a significant condition. This way, a foundation should be laid to enable the clarification or at least discussion of questions that are possibly based on misunderstandings or some influential contextual factors (here 'the media', for example). At the same time, an appropriate capacity for criticism among the participants is required alongside efforts for deeper understanding, so a Hindu who was interviewed by us said:

In interreligious dialogue – I think – real openness and honesty is missing. There is still too much diplomacy involved and not wanting to hurt the Other through criticism. Although, strictly speaking, I don't understand criticism as wanting to hurt. One must rather be grateful for criticism. If anyone criticises me, my attitude must be 'Ah, I thank you for this criticism. I'll think about it'. (I25, Hindu)

Here, interreligious contact is presented as an opportunity to have one's own view reflected back by the other participants. This also demands a capacity for critical self-reflection. Thus one's own prejudices and distorted images can be exposed and changed. Further important competences in this context are competences like self-perception and self-assessment. Thus for example actors emphasise the great significance of knowledge about one's own viewpoints. This capacity for positioning oneself with regard to the themes under discussion is therefore inevitably linked to a certain degree of knowledge about the contents and practice of one's own religious tradition. As a Buddhist describes it: 'The deeper someone is really rooted in his tradition, the easier dialogue becomes' (I37, Buddhist). Beyond that, some rudimentary knowledge at least about the other religions can contribute to an increased capacity for speaking and may also increase one's sensitivity towards the views of the other party.

A know-all manner, dogmatism, and a will to proselytise are seen by our interviewees as obstructive to interreligious practice. The first characteristic of a non-dialogical attitude, a know-all manner, makes claims to be corrective. An Adventist compares this attitude with traffic: 'That's exactly like when I drive a car and honk, (-) thinking that I can teach someone that way or the like, and I want to correct him. And that does happen quite quickly (-), I think, also with other religions' (I21, Adventist). Honking here stands for pointing out alleged misbehaviour and misinterpretation by other actors. In this context, a conviction that one's own religious tradition is beyond making equivalent mistakes often plays a part. Besides the know-all manner, an overly rigid dogmatism is described as an impediment to dialogue: 'Well, such a rigid dogma is always an obstacle. We must be able to talk with each other. And if one, no matter what one says, is confronted with a rigid dogma then discussion is pointless' (I08a, Baha'i). In this critique of dogmatism, the aforementioned field of tension between one's own conviction and the opening towards the Other is reflected once again. Here, insisting too much on one's own conviction and holding to it unconditionally virtually prevents any exchange. Closely related to this is the third aspect of a non-dialogical attitude, the will to proselytise. As mentioned in the section on orientation there are

actors who consider convincing the Other to be desirable. On the whole, however, proselytising seems to be widely rejected by actors as inappropriate and is sometimes even described as a criterion for exclusion from interreligious activities.

Activity-related conditions – interreligious practice between harmony and confrontation

Following the aspects of a dialogical attitude outlined above we now focus on *activity-related conditions* for interreligious practice. These combine two aspects. On the one hand we direct our attention to factors of dialogue partnership between the participants of interreligious activities, and on the other hand we are going to deal more concretely with the modes of interaction. As temporally and spatially limited meetings of people with different religious and non-religious backgrounds, interreligious practice depends to a considerable extent on the respective dialogue partnerships in which the participants are relating to each other. Because of the diverse manifestations of the activities (for example, an interreligious neighbourhood meeting, an interreligious peace prayer or an open day) there are quite different relational structures with regards to duration and content as well as roles.

Based on our analysis, some important factors of dialogue partnerships can be identified as conditions for interreligious practice. From the participants' perspective, mutual trust is considered to be an important foundation for an open exchange. This includes both a leap of faith when entering into a new situation with what are first and foremost strange persons, and the trust between the dialogue partners growing in the process of coming to know each other. A pastor who has been engaged in an interreligious working group for several years, for example, explained that through the increasing trust between the members of the circle fears of snubbing the other through unwary statements were eliminated. Accordingly, a trusting atmosphere facilitates an increasingly relaxed interaction, possibly paving the way for a more authentic exchange. In connection with the necessity for trust, the importance of an encounter on a level footing is often mentioned. Besides the renunciation of claims of dominance mentioned above, this seems to be about equality in the shaping of activities including the avoidance of overreaching, if possibly well-meant, paternalism. Beyond a trusting and equitable encounter the actors mention another aspect that is significant for the relationship between participants in interreligious practice and may best be described as a common vision. The coordinator of a government-sponsored neighbourhood project in Hamburg, for example, describes this as follows:

The imam, for example, well, that's such a great person, he has, in my opinion, such a great world-view. [...] Well, if he then, with the minister so to speak, whom I also find really great and who also has a great world-view. Well, it fits somehow, and then we also come in [...] who are not even religious, and that also fits. We have in fact the same, well, the same vision really of a society [...] Well [...] there one is really simply

incredibly lucky with the individual persons who have an influence precisely there.
(I13, non-religious with Protestant background)

This shows that sometimes being on the ‘same wave-length’ or having a ‘matching chemistry’ can be just as important as a common vision. At the same time some of the actors consider a critical and conflict-capable attitude often to be more desirable than a harmonious-minded attitude. The field of tension that opens up on this level consists of both explicit and implicit negotiations of the mode of interaction between the actors and the related ideas of how an interreligious activity is meant to run in order to be considered successful. These ideas differ considerably according to the temperament and composition of the participants. The type of activity and the chosen subject also play a role. Thus, a peace prayer is, as a rule, less confrontational than a discussion group on ‘Islam and Democracy’. It is precisely on the question of how to deal with controversial issues that strikingly different positions are taken. A Muslim representative, for example, emphasised the importance of not always pointing out the negative:

One must also [...] in interreligious dialogue [...] always put [the] positive aspect into the foreground. That is, when one carries out interreligious dialogue [...], one should not say, okay, the Germans have prejudices, that is, immediately starting with negative aspects, but more like, well, it is a dialogue [if one] concentrates on [the] positive things so that [...] the dialogue can work. (I10, Sunni)

Only by strengthening a positive perspective, according to the quote, can a dialogue succeed. This view is countered by others that, according to the topos *Wider den Kuschedialog* (*Against Cuddly Dialogue*), put the conflict-capability into the foreground, defining this as a ‘fundamental virtue of dialogue’ (FN06, 50). The moderator of a debate event, for example, declared approvingly in his closing words that the conduct of a debate on the character of the relationship between Islam and Europe must not be ‘dosed in harmony sauce’ (FN01, 27), and that the event had represented precisely this. On a similar note there is the statement by a speaker at an Iftar reception in a mosque that there must not be only ‘sunny weather dialogue’ (FN08, 21). The contrasting views on dealing with difficult themes or on the mode of communication, demonstrate the field of tension between harmony and confrontation to which the actors of interreligious practice are exposed – and that they themselves shape.

Context-related conditions – between promotion and rejection of interreligious practice

From the participants’ perspective, interreligious practice essentially depends on the resources available. We understand resources as *context-related conditions* for interreligious practice, presenting them in what follows as differentiated into temporal, financial as well as ideational and spatial resources. The field of tension that can be

identified on this level follows from issues of recognition and rejection of interreligious practice.

A constantly recurring and frequently mentioned contextual factor for interreligious practice is that of temporal resources. Despite specifically dedicated posts (such as the Protestant Church's Commissioner for Islam), voluntary engagement is a key factor. Human resources of various kinds are in demand and necessary here. On the one hand, organising and carrying out interreligious activities sometimes requires a considerable expenditure of time, starting from the idea and design of an event through logistical planning to the actual implementation. On the other hand, mobilising participants is time-consuming and also requires the readiness of potential participants to invest their time. Some interviewees explained that there is frequently a readiness for interreligious practice but that the necessary time is often lacking. This also includes the significance of time for building up a deeper relationship of trust between the participants – an important condition, as indicated in the previous section.

As explained before, interreligious practice is dependent on the civil society-related and often voluntary commitment from the actors. Because long-term and institutionally organised financial backing is often missing, financial resources play a significant role:

Many projects that started like this have [...] after a lot of work and good will [...] simply died because no more funding could be found anywhere, and without funding [...] there couldn't be any more freelance assignments and not everything can be done by volunteers, after all. (I39, social field)

The importance of the stability of sponsoring is especially emphasised here. Closely linked to these financial resources are ideational ones. These pose the question into what ideational context – more favourable or more rejecting – the interreligious practice is embedded. Here the institutional framework has an important role:

What's disappointing is that the leadership of the church – that they have so little interest in us. You see, that they are only interested in spectacular and high profile things. Like, when all the bishops together throw that Orthodox cross into the Elbe and that is then rescued and so on, then they are all there. Then all are filmed, they also utter some phrase [...] But we are not noticed at all. (I06, Catholic)

The lack of interest in the interreligious engagement of a discussion circle at the leadership level may lead to frustrations and indicates the significance of institutional perception and appreciation. In another case not only was the interest of the leadership missing, the work of dialogue was met with a clear attitude of rejection. Thus, the participant only declared himself ready for an interview with us after our repeated assurances that it was solely about his personal experience in dealing with people of other faiths and not about the official attitude of his religious faith community.

Public discourses can be referred to as aspects or influencing factors of ideational resources. Thus the context of the freedom of religion and opinion not only has an

important legal but also a discursive role in interreligious practice, when it is cited as an argument in a discussion, for example. In addition public discourses like that on integration and also images presented by the media (including images of ‘the enemy’) are of great importance. Again and again international events and local situations are intertwined. A Muslim emphasises how important it is to differentiate in this regard: ‘We live in Germany, we discuss the theme in Germany. What Saudi Arabia itself does is not interesting for us because Saudi Arabia does not represent Islam. And we talk about tolerance and Islam in Germany now’ (I14, Sunni). By emphasising a separation between the international and the local situations, the actor quoted here is responding to those who use aspects of public discourses against a local group of people. The example shows the influence of ideational resources and how discourses can have a negative effect on the mood in interreligious activities. But there are also regional and local images and positions that have an influence, like when the history or image of a city takes on an influential role and this is exported to the rest of the world. Thus, for example, Hamburg, because of its harbour, is not only readily described as Germany’s ‘Gateway to the World’, but the phrase ‘Capital of Interreligious Dialogue’¹⁴ has also developed into a familiar quotation in some contexts of activity.

In this discourse context, local interreligious practice can be charged ideationally as the following quote shows: ‘[W]hen interreligious dialogue works well, then it can function as such a kind of a model for other countries. [Meaning]: “Now it worked well in Germany, people get along with each other in a good way, and we must do the same as in Germany”’ (I10, Sunni). Understanding models of interreligious practice as a product for export leads to a self-image oriented towards being a paragon. A context in which one’s own area of activity is afforded paragon status brings with it both ideational advantages and disadvantages. Whilst there is comparatively high degree of public perception and acceptance, at the same time a competitive field is opened up in which competing actors vie for sponsorship.

In the widest sense, spatial resources also have a significant role. Starting from a location in a constitutional state and a definition of relationships in the context of religious (and other) diversity in Germany against the background of liberal values, a Baha’i explains:

[W]hat the Germans presented as forerunners [in] secular understanding in Europe, that is, in the time of Martin Luther, the translation of the Old and New Testaments. [...] Now one must underline what an effect that had [...], and then there is [...] the freedom that one enjoys here [e.g.] with regard to the separation of religion and state and the freedom of opinion. This, of course, is a completely different condition here from that which is known with us. Well, in Iran right now, as a Baha’i, one is forbidden even to teach. (I11, Baha’i)

14 This term is also used for example by members of the Hamburg parliament with reference to the local model of religious education (‘Religious Education for All’) or when establishing Islamic and Alevite chairs at the university (cf. FN82, Politician).

Freedom of religion and expression are frequently identified as conditions when talking about Germany's place as a context of interreligious practice. These values are mentioned with appreciation by those who, like the Baha'i quoted here, have also known different national contexts. On the concrete local level, structural factors also have a role alongside these legal ones. Thus the significance of occasions and occasional structures are pointed out in interviews, for example when a pastor open to dialogue likes to organise excursions with parishioners to neighbouring mosques but does not consider a visit to the Hindu temple situated in an adjacent neighbourhood because the encounter with Hindus has no relevance for the parishioners' everyday life. Here experiences in the living local environment have a role aside from the occasions for exchanges with Muslims rooted in the public Islam-related discourse. In this context the catchment area or the spatial proximity – both the actual geographic proximity and the proximity in the sense of quickly accessibility through a network – are important. Finally, on the organisational level, spatial resources are necessary in the sense that a suitable place for the activity is needed that ideally offers a protected environment.

4.3 Assessments of the potential and limitations of interreligious practice

Closely connected with the motivations and conditions of interreligious practice are questions regarding its potential and limitations. In this final section on results, we would therefore like to present assessments by actors focussing on the capacity of interreligious practice. Therefore, we will first engage with the *perceived potential* and afterwards with the *perceived limitations*.

Perceived potential of interreligious practice

So far four areas of potential for interreligious practice can be identified from the gathered data. These are the production of encounter, the generation of bridge-building resources, the changing of structures and of attitudes. Interreligious practice creates possibilities for encounter. It brings people together on different levels and generates reciprocity. In this regard, we were able to identify two different forms of relationship. Some of the interviewed actors assumed that new contacts emerge in the process of interreligious activities. By way of example, the following statement by a co-worker of a communal administrative unit may be quoted here: 'And there is the project (...) there are people (or) institutions that joined who never took part before. (...) And by now, some of them are part of it as a matter of course, and that's amazing! (...) Entirely new constellations have formed. It really couldn't be better' (I39, non-religious). In the framework of the social project even religious actors who had otherwise hardly appeared before could be mobilised for neighbourhood cooperation, as described here. Through their inclusion, new constellations of actors have been formed.

Alongside this potential for cooperation, interreligious activities have enabled people to get to know each other better on a more personal level, across religious boundaries. An example of this is an interreligious garden project which, according to an actor from the cultural field, offered an opportunity for just such a process of getting to know each other:

What fascinated me so much is that there was a sense of community that came about among the actors, that they could somehow manage this together. [...] During winter break, for example, when you can't do all that much in the garden, [...] they just met. Doing some kind of project together, that's really the best way to get to know each other. Because the dialogue took place, something has emerged [...]. Like, you really got closer to each other and really didn't just work together, but to a degree even found new friends. (I38, cultural field)

As these words indicate, a feeling of community could emerge over the course of the shared work on the project. In this case developing the 'interreligious garden' together provided a structured opportunity for establishing friendly relationships. Interreligious practice thus facilitates the building of relationships across religious boundaries. Moreover, the participants interviewed described these emerging relationships as accompanied by 'bridge-building' resources:

Well, Nicolai would be stewing in his own juice and we'd be stewing in ours. We bridged that. Like, we really built a bridge in this neighbourhood with which we can cross difficult waters, if there are crises or such. It's a mechanism that works, and that can help in a crisis [...] like, we have options, then. (I06, Catholic)

This description by a Catholic parishioner expresses vividly how trust and a willingness to engage with each other can emerge from bridge-building processes. These resources enable new courses of action to confront problems as they arise and to deal with events endangering the community.

Beyond its potential for bridge-building resources, interreligious practice creates both an attentiveness to existing hierarchies and space for structural changes in the social fabric or the local religious actors. Thus, as the coordinator of a neighbourhood project explains, interreligious practice can trigger processes of self-empowerment: 'We've seen a lot of empowerment, groups that were unknown and really small could see how they grow beyond that. And now they are actors in their own right' (I30, Protestant). As the quote illustrates, interreligious activities can work as opportunities for participation through which the actors learn to represent their interests in a personally responsible and self-determined way. This may lead to a redistribution of responsibilities, thus changing existing structures.

According to another important argument by the actors we interviewed, interreligious practice contains the potential for changing attitudes. The possibility to widen one's own horizon or to learn from the other, developing one's own perspectives in the process, is one of the most frequently mentioned potential benefits of interreli-

gious activities. In the process of interreligious practice, one's own prejudices can be revealed and a consciousness for diversity can be developed. The co-worker of a social institution, for example, explains that people overcome monolithic images like 'Islam' or 'Christianity' in this way and can recognise the characterisation of something, for example as 'Jewish', as undifferentiated. The reduction of inhibitions in relation to persons or lifestyles perceived as alien also has a role here. Moreover, interreligious activities offer the opportunity to learn that different and even contradicting positions are normal and may even be helpful, for example, in enabling participants to reflect on and thus gain a better understanding of their own faith.

Perceived limits of interreligious practice

Alongside the potential benefits set out above there are also findings concerning the limits to the effectiveness of interreligious practice. These include aspects related to lack of quality, insufficient scope, absence of social relevance, and limitations related to the possible aims. These will be presented below.

Some actors questioned the quality of current interreligious practice by finding faults with the lack of an 'inner effect', as illustrated in the following quote:

Well, real [dialogue] as I would understand it, something like that can only work if I have an idea somewhere and they have an idea, and then both of us look what's happening there. Then one can discover, we have quite different opinions, or we notice, 'wait a minute, at this point that is rather thrilling', and when I then go home then my position has perhaps changed or theirs. But that is just not there. (I07, Christian)

In this Christian actor's understanding, the core of a 'real' dialogue lies in its quality of bringing about a change in the sense of an expanded consciousness in the actors. In much of what takes place under the label of interreligious dialogue, this effect (in his eyes) is not present. Besides, interreligious practice is denied the necessary scope because a key proportion of the population is not integrated into its practice. A Muslim representative explains that it only reaches those people who are open for dialogue in the first place, but not wider society:

People who are willing to enter into dialogue mostly don't come with a lot of prejudice. They're well informed to start with anyway. [...] But the people who are unwilling, those who haven't informed themselves, who have no contact to those communities, this group is the one I'm concerned about, and they aren't reached, I think. (I10, Sunni)

From this perspective, interreligious practice is denied any social influence because of its failure to integrate larger proportions of the population. Another aspect that concerns the perceived limits of interreligious practice applies to its lack of social relevance. In this regard, different arguments can be identified. According to one argument, religious world views are in principle incapable of serving as a resource when dealing with essential or with problematic issues of contemporary societies.

This is illustrated in the following quote: ‘The religions really can’t understand or solve problems of the modern age. That is a private retreat, it’s ok. You should have that, no problem (...). But as soon as you step into the public sphere all religions are useless. They don’t have the answers to our questions’ (I25, Hindu). According to the speaker, religious world views can only work as a system for finding meaning in the private sphere but not when enlisted in a dispute or as a framework for orientation in social discourses. In addition, some actors assume that interreligious activities do not touch on topics relevant for everyday life, thus having no connection to people’s ‘real life’. And finally there is also the view that interreligious activities do not present a meaningful response to current social problems such as, for example, the development of images of ‘the enemy’:

I don’t understand why this theme [interreligious dialogue] is so hyped up, we have developments where the cause is not religion. It is ultimately the question, how do I deal with the stranger? The stranger is, however, not the faith, what is strange is that he is different, then they always say that this has to do with his faith, but that’s true only conditionally, different behaviour, that’s shaped culturally and that causes insecurity. I think there should rather be a discussion about how we deal with strangers, well, that [interreligious dialogue] doesn’t help at all. (I07, Protestant)

As this quote indicates, discussion about how to deal with behaviour that is perceived as strange is taken to have greater social relevance and to be more effective than interreligious practice.

Finally, in addition to these two perspectives that question interreligious practice, we present the limits of interreligious practice with regard to its aims. First of all this is a question of interreligious practice not being a ‘panacea’ but rather representing one tool among many:

There’s no guarantee for this dialogue, (-) and dialogue is just, just a tool, I’d say. It’s not the cure. [...] And that is why (-), we so often always hear this word dialogue and it’s presented as a kind of panacea, and I do think it’s a very important tool, but it definitely is not the panacea and not the only thing there is, either. (I21, Adventist)

According to this perspective on interreligious practice, it is in principle not possible to overcome extreme attitudes, to prevent each and every instrumentalisation of religion for other ends, or to overcome all fears and prejudices in society. Likewise the adequacy of certain forms of interreligious practice, with certain aims, is questioned by some of the actors:

Especially when you work with pupils, and I have this, a [confirmation education class] here, you notice [...] understanding works through relationships at that age, and later, too. When you find friendships, then things change. And that, in my opinion, isn’t the case with the issue of dialogue, [...] you see that when these people talk to each other, nothing really changes [...] but friendship is one of the most powerful tools. (I21, Adventist)

The above quotation emphasises the need to adopt forms of activities suitable for the target group when designing interreligious practice. While theological exchange may be useful for some target groups in order to achieve changes in interreligious coexistence, creating opportunities and structures for getting to know each other would be a more suitable offer for young people. As demonstrated in the quote, friendly relationships represent the most influential tool for change in interreligious coexistence in the case of young people.¹⁵

There are some topics that apparently do not (yet) qualify as content for certain interreligious practices. This was evident in the resignation of one religious community from the management of a symposium:

We've been noticing now that there are limits, in a way [...]. We wanted to hold a symposium for the end of the third year, a mosque had suggested that [...]. And in the end this [faith] community cancelled at very short notice [...]; if you look very closely, I would strongly suspect that the reason for it was something thematic, because we always insisted that AIDS support also should be addressed because it is very relevant in this neighbourhood and homosexuality also figures in there often and would also become a topic addressed on the podium. And those representatives of the mosque, I think they were ready for it, cos they have been working together with members of the gay and lesbian community, for three years on the committee, where we have a close personal contact. But it couldn't be carried into the wider communities yet. At any rate not to the people who really made these decisions. [...] It's still too hot to touch. Well, at least it was for this mosque, that's also different between mosques. (I13, non-religious with Christian background)

The coordinator of the neighbourhood project within whose framework the symposium was to be implemented reported that an event in which the themes of AIDS and homosexuality were to be addressed on the panel was cancelled by the organisers, members of a Muslim faith community. She assumed that the actors resigned from their position because they were unable to represent the topics of AIDS support and homosexuality for the symposium before their faith community, although they themselves would have been ready for it. These are only two among several themes that have been described as too explosive by the actors.¹⁶

5. Conclusion

In this chapter we have focused on the micro level of interreligious practice. Our research questions have been developed in accordance with the research interest of the ReDi project – focusing on the possibilities and limitations of lived dialogue from

15 Nevertheless, the dialogue among young people about theological contents for example in the school context also plays an important role. See also the contribution by Dörthe Vieregge and Thorsten Knauth in this volume.

16 As another theme in this case, the Israel-Palestine conflict could be mentioned.

an actor-centred perspective. In order to elucidate this participant perspective in a differentiated way we have used a wide, non-normative understanding of interreligious practice as organised events that include both religious and other social actors. To be able to collect examples of interreligious practice in its diversity, we chose an urban area of Hamburg with a high density of communities from different religions for our research. Our analysis has been structured within four different frameworks of motivation for participation in interreligious practice, experiences with regard to the conditions for such practice and assessments of the potential and limitations of interreligious practice. As a result, we presented a general mapping with regard to the aforementioned research dimensions which we will briefly summarise and discuss in this final section. To provide a better overview we have arranged our findings according to main and subordinated categories in the table below:

Frameworks of motivation	Social framework	Political framework	Personal framework	Religious framework
	Promoting social cohesion	Participation and integration	Dialogue as a passion	Religious core task
	De-constructing prejudices	'Lobby-work'	Personal development	Spiritual encounter
	Design and cultivation of networks	Desire for public perception and acceptance of dialogue	Field of social contact	Proselytising
Requirements	Actor-related	Activity-related		Context-related
	Respect and tolerance	Dialogue partnership		Temporal resources
	Basic interest and empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual trust • Equitable possibilities for shaping the activities • Common vision 		Financial resources
	Capacity for criticism and critical self-reflection	Modes of interaction		Ideational resources
	Self-perception and self-assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmonious • Confrontational 		Spatial resources
Potentials & Limitations	Perceived Potential benefits		Perceived Limitations	
	Production of encounter		Lacking quality	
	Generation of bridge-building resources		Insufficient scope	
	Changing of structures		Lack of social relevance	
	Changing of attitudes		Limitations regarding possible aims	

Starting from the question of motivations in interreligious practice, we differentiated between four frames of motivation, understood as dynamic reference units towards which the actors in interreligious activities are oriented. Within the social framework of motivation, interreligious practice is considered a means for producing social cohesion, mutual recognition and respect as well as for building up and cultivating networks between the actors. Motives of empowerment as well as the participation and integration of minorities can be identified within a political framework. Within the personal framework, interreligious practice is considered as a passion, as a means for personality building, and has a role as a social field of activity. Finally, the religious framework of motivation moves interreligious practice into the centre as a religiously substantiated task. Besides this, there is the wish for spiritual activity beyond a verbal exchange, and finally, to a lesser extent, proselytising may also be identified as an aspect within the religious frame.¹⁷

With regard to the conditions for interreligious practice we identified central factors concerning the actors, the activities, and the activity context. Based on our results characteristics such as tolerance and empathy, as well as the capacity for self-reflection and self-assessment, were considered important individual conditions. Alongside this actor-related level, as we have shown, interreligious activities require a dialogue partnership which we characterised as mutual trust, an encounter on equal terms, and a shared vision.¹⁸ In the interaction itself there is a field of tension based on the decision in favour of or against exchanges with conflict potential. This is primarily reflected in the choices made between an emphasis on common ground on the one hand and a rejection of ‘cuddly dialogue’ on the other hand. The contextual factors of interreligious practice in Hamburg primarily comprise temporal factors as well as the permanence of financial resources. Another factor must be added, namely ideational resources, taking into account discursive contexts and questions of the endorsement and rejection of interreligious practice.¹⁹ Finally, spatial resources, such as the con-

17 Most ‘directions of dialogical action’ outlined by Klinkhammer et al. (2011), such as sensitisation, cooperative problem solving and empowerment, are consistent with our results on orientations in interreligious practice. Nagel & Kalender (2014) also point out important driving forces for participating in interreligious activities, as dialogue-oriented, symbolic and political interests which can be confirmed by our results presented here.

18 These relationship features presented by us are confirmed in Satilmis’ (2008) and Schmid’s (2008) expositions, which emphasise corresponding factors such as dealing respectfully with one another or an appropriate role allocation (Satilmis, 2008, p. 122 ff.; Schmid 2008, p. 289).

19 Here there are parallels with Schubert (2015) who also highlights the institutional support for interreligious relationships of cooperation (e.g. structural strengthening through commissioners for dialogue) as an important factor for the context of the Ruhr area. At the same time, she also points out negative consequences of missing ideational resources, for example if interference on the part of umbrella organisations proves to be a hurdle for work, or if cooperation is prevented by historically grown reservations, political demarcations, or also by religious dogmas (Schubert, 2015, p. 234 ff.).

sideration of the (legal) context of Germany, can also be seen as a relevant contextual factor.

Lastly, with regards to the participants' assessment of the performance of interreligious practice, we also reconstructed its perceived potential benefits and limitations. As shown above, interreligious practice serves as an opportunity and structure for new kinds of cooperation in local neighbourhood work as well as for the establishment of relationships, even friendships, which transcend religious boundaries. The bridge-building resources (like trust and a willingness to engage with each other) that accompany these emerging relationships enable new courses of action in cross-boundary cooperation between people with different religious affiliations. Moreover, interreligious practice produces both an attentiveness to existing hierarchies and space for structural changes in the social fabric of the local religious actors by triggering processes of self-empowerment, as well as the potential for changing attitudes. Besides the perceived potential, we identified four limitations of interreligious practice: deficiencies in quality related to the criticism that dialogue often falls short of its declared claim of effecting a change in the consciousness of the participant. Moreover, with regard to its limited reference group, concerns are raised about its insufficient scope, and the relevance of interreligious practice for acute social issues and problems is questioned in general. Finally, limitations with regard to certain aims are described, for example, with regard to the application of certain types of activities for specific target groups.

Our results confirm many of the previous research findings within the field of interreligious dialogue. These may be expanded, however, with three important findings regarding the personal frame of motivation, diverging conflict strategies within interreligious practice and the perceived limitations of interreligious dialogue. We can expand the existing insights with important aspects from within the personal framework of motivation as based on our individual actors' approach. Thus, while the objective of personal development and work on identity (including a better understanding of one's own religion) has so far been considered and described (Klinkhammer & Satilmis, 2007, p. 28 f.; Klinkhammer et al., 2011, p. 47), the significance of interreligious practice as a passion and a social field of contact has not. Therefore our analysis revealed that interreligious practice represents a passionately pursued leisure activity as well as working as a social contact field, making it possible for like-minded people to share time together.

Moreover, we also noted that a confrontational attitude is frequently described as detrimental to dialogue while, at the same time, a confrontational mode of interaction can be quite desirable and preferable. In contrast to Klinkhammer and colleagues who, in their study, interpret conflictual or potentially conflictual situations as an obstacle to dialogue in principle (2011, p. 90 ff.), and to Wilke who ascribes a greater dialogue potential to an harmonious-integrative attitude as opposed to an oppositional-confrontative one (2006, p. 18), we can highlight within our results the significance of the strategies chosen when dealing with (potentially) conflictual situations. If the strategies of the participants in an interreligious activity concur, for example, in a

rejection of a ‘cuddly dialogue’, then confrontations do not constitute an obstacle to interreligious practice. With this knowledge about the existence of different conflict strategies gained through our research we were able to work out this important aspect of interreligious practice.

Finally, we also examine critical views on interreligious activities in this contribution. The limitation of insufficient scope corresponds to Hinterhuber’s findings that dialogue only reaches those people who are open to it in the first place, rather than the broader population (Hinterhuber, 2009, p. 143). Nevertheless, perceptions of at least some of the actors involved with regard to limitations of interreligious practice, such as the lack in quality and relevance, have apparently not been taken into consideration so far. Here our results present indications of a perceived lack of inner transformation as well as a lack of relevance for social issues of our time.

The conclusions presented here are exploratory insights into motivations and conditions, as well as perceived potential and limits of interreligious practice by local actors in a context limited to Hamburg. In our opinion, the system of categories that has been developed can be employed as an analytical tool in the sense of a systematic framework in subsequent research both in Hamburg and in other metropolitan areas. One application would be case-by-case analysis or evaluations of existing interreligious activities. It would thus be possible to imagine choosing one particular interreligious activity (such as a panel discussion) or a whole process (such as the move of a Muslim community into a re-designated church building) as a case study and analysing it according to the categories presented here. Thus individual cases could be described systematically and compared with regard to the motivations, conditions, and their potential and limitations. An additional and connected application emerges if a concrete interreligious conflict arises and an activity fails or seems doomed to fail. In this case, the systematic framework could be employed for analysing the causes, for detecting central problems, and, as the case may be, for formulating recommendations for action.

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