LOEWE
Exzellente Forschung für Hessens Zukunft

HESSEN

DYNAMIKEN DES RELIGIÖSEN

LOEWE Center Dynamics of Religion: Ambivalent Neighborhoods between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in Historical and Contemporary Constellations (2026-2032)

GOETHE UNIVERSITÄT FRANKFURT AM MAIN

JUSTUS-LIEBIG-UNIVERSITÄT GIESSEN

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1. Summary

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have developed over centuries in close geographical and religious-cultural proximity to one another and remain, to this day, in dialogue and conflict with one another in their respective pluralistic self-conceptions and in different political and social contexts. Against the backdrop of current discourses on the challenges and opportunities of multi-religious constellations in modern immigration cultures, and in view of social tensions and sometimes explosive global conflicts in which religious and cultural differences come to the fore, systematic research on the coexistence and conflict between these three religions is of great importance. The project „Dynamics of Religion“ (DynaRel) aims to create an internationally visible **research network** anchored at Goethe University (GU), Philipps University of Marburg (UMR), and Justus Liebig University Giessen (JLU) **for interdisciplinary and interreligious research into the complex religious, cultural, and political-social dynamics between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in history and the present**. The central objectives are to analyze (**1) what the specific causes of religiously connoted conflicts are in the field of tension between religion and politics,** (**2) in which constellations religious differences are politicized or instrumentalized,** and (**3) what resources different currents within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have at their disposal in their relationship with one another in order to deal constructively with religious diversity and difference.** Due to the great social, political, and cultural relevance of these issues and in view of the threat to public democratic debate culture posed by polarization in connection with migration or political crises such as the Middle East conflict, DynaRel also aims to develop **effective educational strategies for promoting interreligious acceptance, intercultural competence, and** combating **stereotypes and religiously motivated hatred**.

The stated goals are to be achieved through joint research in Jewish studies, Islamic studies, religious studies, Protestant and Catholic theology, philosophy, archaeology and ethnology, history, sociology, political science, educational science, and educational theory on the profound interconnections and continuous interactions between the three major monotheistic revealed religions. The project is guided by a **twofold central hypothesis,** which constitutes the innovative aspect of DynaRel’s multi-perspective approach to interpreting the relationships between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam with the help of the multifaceted **analytical concept of „ambivalent neighborhoods“**: First, the dynamics between the three religions are characterized by *socio-spatial relationship constellations in multi-religious, multicultural, and multi-ethnic* contexts and by *religious-cultural*

interrelationships that can be interpreted in a more differentiated manner than through purely comparative religious research with the help of the **relational concept of neighborhoods**. Second, the open metaphorical content of the concept of neighborhood, which implies proximity, encounter, and familiarity as well as phenomena of distance, demarcation, and opposition, allows for an analysis of *the fundamentally* ambivalent—both dialogical and conflictual—character of Jewish-Christian-Islamic neighborhoods in specific historical and geographical contexts. It thus clearly distinguishes itself from binary paradigms such as tolerance and exclusivity, pluralism and difference, or universalism and particularism.

DynaRel's research perspectives are implemented through five interdisciplinary program areas and a cross-sectional module, in which research groups consisting of principal investigators (PIs), early career researchers (ECRs), and outstanding international fellows work closely together both internally and with the other program areas. In order to answer the overarching questions about the causes of conflict and the potential for dialogue, they use their subject-specific theoretical and methodological tools (historical-cultural studies as well as empirical social and educational sciences) to jointly investigate the internal connections between relevant aspects of the concept of neighborhood. These include (1) the fundamental concrete interdependencies between religious concepts, texts, and bodies of knowledge; (2) the real history of everyday, spatial coexistence of communities and actors shaped by these traditions; (3) the processes of transformation of religious identities and ways of life in immigrant societies as a result of flight and migration; (4) the dynamics of religious difference and dialogism in politically conflictual constellations as well as their politicization or instrumentalization; (5) educational challenges and didactic strategies in the face of increasing religious-cultural and social heterogeneity; and (6) the profound transformation of religious neighborhoods through their partial shift to digital spaces.

As a Hessian project, DynaRel also focuses on issues relating to coexistence in the multi-religious state of Hesse and in the Rhine-Main region, and takes a comprehensive look at phenomena in German immigrant society and in other European contexts. Research is also planned on the Middle East, North Africa, and geographical areas in South and Southeast Asia. It aims to provide a comprehensive historical and contemporary examination of the dynamics that are relevant to a differentiated history of interreligious relations between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In this way, Hesse aims to create a sustainable, internationally connected, interdisciplinary and inter-university location for excellent religious research through cooperation with relevant institutions and projects, which will contribute to the discussion of religion-related social and political challenges in research, teaching,

science communication and knowledge transfer, and promote a constructive approach to religious diversity and difference.

2. Scientific guiding principle and scientific goals

Religions are ambivalent phenomena in their relationship to each other and to the political world. They contribute significantly to the collective cohesion of communities and have significant potential for dialogue and peacemaking. In many cases, however, they are also a source of sometimes highly explosive conflicts, exclusive and conflicting beliefs that can challenge social peace and democratic consensus in pluralistic societies or entire neighboring cultures. This is exacerbated where religious differences cause conflicts in political constellations or are exploited in the context of political interests.

Critical debates attribute a tendency toward intolerance or, in extreme cases, a fundamentalist „language of violence“ primarily to monotheistic scriptural or revealed religions due to their often exclusive claims to validity. Other historical, theological, and sociological approaches to religion, on the other hand, emphasize the indispensable potential of the diverse Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions to at least help limit destructive religious, cultural, ethnic, and political-social antagonisms and conflicts in multireligious, multicultural, or multiethnic (especially (post)migrant) societies. This finds expression in particular in trialogical efforts to achieve an „Abrahamic ecumenism.“ The concept of a kinship between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam rooted in the patriarch Abraham is highly appealing in the context of many local interreligious and peace ethics initiatives. It also has considerable political significance in a number of Middle Eastern states in view of the principles of the 'Abraham Accords Declaration' (2020). However, the concept has also been critically assessed as a modern construct that is overly focused on unity and harmony and, in some cases, theologically overloaded. Even in nuanced variations, it emphasizes only *one* facet of the complex dynamics between the three religions in different eras, world regions, and political contexts, and runs the risk of obscuring the element of conflictual difference that repeatedly erupts, particularly in their proximity to one another.

Against this backdrop**,** DynaRel’s research program aims **to conduct** a **differentiated interdisciplinary and interreligious analysis of the diverse religious, cultural, and social relationships between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in various historical and geographical constellations, both past and present. This analysis is carried out through the interplay of different perspectives, such as theology, religious studies and philosophy, history, archaeology, ethnology and cultural anthropology, sociology, political science, and education.** With its focus on the concept of

‚neighborhoods', DynaRel distinguishes itself from primarily *comparative approaches* that concentrate on the comparison of theological or ethical ‚key concepts' (e.g., God, creation, revelation, salvation, justice, peace, etc.). All three religions are constituted not only by texts, ideas, and practices, but also, and essentially, by plural *contextual constellations of relationships and neighborhoods.* Instead of first considering the three traditions separately and then examining their affinities, differences, and potential for understanding, our **central hypothesis** is that they **should be explored in a *relational process* with regard to their manifold relationships—namely, through joint *interreligious* and *interdisciplinary* explorations.** This methodological approach also goes beyond the focus on the potential for tolerance and dialogue between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the ever-growing number of general presentations, most of which deal with (religious) historical and theological aspects of the topic.

With this working hypothesis and the concept of ‚neighborhoods', DynaRel refers, among other things, to the fundamental theses of David Nirenberg. According to him, the relationships between the three „*neighboring* faiths" can only be understood in terms of the dynamics of concrete cultural and political—and often conflictual—neighborhood relations, which have developed since the emergence of this tripartite constellation in close spatial and religious proximity to one another and have been constantly defined in relation to the „other." Dichotomous notions of a *clash of civilizations* between the „Islamic world" and the („Judeo-Christian") civilization of the ‚West' are, according to our premise, just as inappropriate as the image of a conflict-free synthesis of the humane forces of the Abrahamic religions, insofar as it is based on a mythologization of the era of Jewish-Christian-Islamic *convivencia* in medieval Al-Andalus.

A further working hypothesis is therefore that, in addition to the social factors of *spatial coexistence* in multi-religious, multicultural, or multi-ethnic contexts, the *metaphorical levels of meaning of the concept of neighborhood* are of essential importance: In the *relational approach* of the theoretical model, phenomena such as religious-cultural interdependence, cultural and knowledge transfer, and dialogical encounters play just as prominent a role as differences, demarcations, claims to validity, polemics, and conflicts. It is therefore crucial to systematically grasp the *fundamental ambivalence* of such neighborhood constellations in order to recognize both their conflictual and their potentially dialogical elements and to make these insights applicable in interreligious and intercultural educational contexts.

Three further premises guide our work:

(1) The terms „Judaism," „Christianity," and „Islam" presuppose a high degree *of internal plurality and polycentricity* as their essential characteristics: The three monotheistic

traditions, which—at least in the case of „Judaism“ and „Christianity“, have only emerged as independent ‚religions‘ after a long process of separation, cannot be understood as static or monolithic entities, but are characterized by a strong dynamic of historical and cultural change and by a pronounced internal diversity of often conflicting currents, manifestations, and positions. Their mutual interactions are correspondingly diverse and polyphonic, and must be considered in specific temporal and spatial constellations.

(2) DynaRel's focus on the history of the relationship between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is based on their historically conditioned incomparable proximity to one another. It also takes into account the intended contemporary relevance of the research program, insofar as debates about the pluralism and democratic capacity of religions and about the implications of migration, at least in Europe and North America, still primarily refer to the relationship between these three traditions. However, the Center's work also explicitly takes into account dynamics that go beyond this constellation , i.e., the relationships of the three „religions“ to other religious traditions and communities in multireligious societies or in other regions of the world (especially in South and Southeast Asia).

(3) At least with regard to modernity and the present, the ‚monotheistic triangle‘ cannot be understood in its mutual relations without the complex neighborhood of the equally plural sphere of the secular (‚*multiple secularities*‘), just as, conversely, the recognition of the ‚return‘ of religions and their increased role in ‚post-secular‘ culture requires a nuanced understanding of the dynamics within and the interdependence between the two spheres.

Goals of the LOEWE Center *DynaRel*

Theory formation

- *Interdisciplinary theory formation* with a view to the concept of ‚ambivalent neighborhoods‘ as a comprehensive analytical category for religious studies.
- Development of theoretical and methodological tools for *interdisciplinary, interreligious, relational, and transnational* research on the relationships between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (as well as secular parts of society).

Research goals

- **Program area 1 (P1)**: Research into the dynamics of interreligious and transcultural interrelationships and processes of knowledge circulation between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in different historical contexts.

- **Program area 2 (P2)**: Research on forms and characteristics of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic communities in the field of tension between socio-spatial proximity and religious-cultural difference.
- **Program Area 3 (P3)**: Research on religious neighborhoods and social transformation processes in (post)migrant constellations in the context of flight, migration, and mobility.
- **Program Area 4 (P4)**: Analysis of constructions of difference with regard to religious otherness, conflicts, power structures, and the politicization of religion.
- **Program Area 5 (P5)**: Investigation of the resources of the three religions with regard to religious-cultural plurality and the potential for their activation in educational contexts and dialogue settings in pluralistic societies.
- **Cross-sectional module ‚Digitality‘**: Analysis of new forms of community building and religious identity and alterity constructions in the course of the transformation of neighborhood constellations in digital spaces.

Goals in the area of transfer between science and socoety

- Establishment of a ‚Competence Center for Religion‘ with the aim of closely linking university research and central social debates on religious and cultural diversity, migration, the cohesion of democratic societies, and challenges such as racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia, with particular consideration of the regional context of Hesse.
- Effective measures for the participation of local social actors and institutions in research work through the targeted inclusion of their experiences, needs, and expertise by means of a practice fellowship program.
- Development and communication of concepts of interreligious and intercultural learning for school and other educational contexts, as well as knowledge transfer through the production of teaching and learning materials.
- Knowledge transfer and exchange with a view to political institutions within the framework of science-policy communication.

3. Overview of the program areas (P) and subprojects (SP)

P1: Religious-cultural Interrelationships: Translation – Transfer – Mediality (Spokesperson: Prof. Dr. Rana Alsoufi)

Research perspectives: P1 focuses on trans-epochal and trans-religious research into the interrelationships between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam from late antiquity to the present day. The emphasis is on the constitutive interreligious and intercultural interrelationships in relation to authoritative texts, terms, and concepts, but also with regard to the corresponding social practices and the ongoing negotiation processes between religious actors (and with non-religious and secular actors). The research in the individual case studies is conceptually structured around three common questions: (1) Formal interreligious dialogues or those documented in later reports are examined, as are discourses of teaching communities oriented toward traditional traditions or communications within networks that often arise from intellectual neighborhoods. In the case of SPs devoted to the present, questions of ethics and digitality play a particularly important role. (2) The research also analyzes how and by what means transfer processes took place in neighborhoods and networks (oral tradition or the targeted transmission of texts) and what consequences they had. In many cases, the linguistic and cultural translation of religious texts or theological and philosophical ideas and concepts into other languages and bodies of knowledge poses a significant challenge. Such processes can lead to both ambiguity and disambiguity in discourse on religious issues; in the case of mission and conversion, religious contacts can have a homogenizing effect, but they can also give rise to hybrid constellations. The project also examines the extent to which certain religions become the subject of social debate in societies that define themselves as secular, and are thus exposed to new processes of self-understanding, and whether changed forms of negotiating the relationship between the respective normative religious and ethical traditions and the secular spheres of politics and society can reveal commonalities between different religions. From a comparative perspective, it is necessary to ask under what conditions the communications examined caused or prevented dialogical or conflictual developments. (3) Another integrating element in P1 is the thematization of religion in various historical and contemporary contexts. Prescriptive ideas of religion can coexist alongside cultural studies approaches. Debates about religion also raise the question of how and with which concepts of rationality religious views can be justified and refuted, or to whom the authority is granted to define what belongs to the field of religion in their respective areas.

SP 1.1: Religious Dialogues in Late Antiquity: The Perspective of the Other (Prof. Dr. Hartmut Leppin, Frankfurt) – Doctoral position (65%)

Contexts: Late antiquity is often described as a period of religious conflict. This makes it all the more important to explore forms of dialogue between Christians and representatives of other religious traditions and communities. The necessity for such dialogues, which are attested to in both the Roman and Persian empires, often arose from neighborhood constellations that required offers of understanding or the marking of boundaries. However, the dialogue situation was usually characterized by clear asymmetries, so that behind the seemingly peaceful façade of willingness to engage in dialogue, there was usually a desire to suppress the other side.

Goals/methodology: The SP aims to examine the dynamics of late antique religious dialogues between Christians and non-Christians, as they often took place, not infrequently in public. These dialogues are distinguished from the councils, which included numerous forms of dialogical procedure, in that religious dialogues were not aimed at reaching a decision on matters of faith, but rather at promoting exchange between religions and, where applicable, the argumentative victory of one side. In terms of methodology, the project will employ historical-critical and narratological analysis, since the source texts appear to be protocols but in some cases offer highly stylized representations. The key questions address (1) the rhetorical strategies used to portray the image of the other; (2) the role of commonalities between the groups (such as argumentative logic); (3) the significance of strategies of ambiguity and disambiguation, which were intended either to enable compromise or to ensure intellectual consistency; (4) the question of who was granted the authority to speak for a group. The first phase of the project focuses on the analysis of the perceptions and negotiation processes expressed in the dialogues.

SP 1.2: Contextualizing the Ambivalent Positions of the Quran on People of Other Faiths based on Early Islamic Traditions (Prof. Dr. Ömer Özsoy, Frankfurt) – Doctoral position (65%)

Context: The roots of the suspicion that Islam is a religion of war and violence date back to the Christian Middle Ages, but can still be felt in many publications by Western Islamic scholars from the 19th and 20th centuries and in current public discourse. The reason for this is that in many acts of terrorism committed by Muslim perpetrators, violence is legitimized by recourse to religious texts, especially the Quran. However, an unbiased

historical analysis of Quranic texts reveals that this circumstance can be attributed to the fact that the process of the Quaran's creation was accompanied by ambivalent, but not non-violent, relationships with other religious groups and reflected these. Early Islamic traditions, which have so far been largely ignored by researchers, provide valuable information about these conditions of origin.

Goals/methodology: Reconstructing the historical contexts of warlike passages in the Quran requires depicting the practice of coexistence in the multi-religious context of the *Hejaz* in the 7th century between Jews, Christians, Muslims (and henotheistic Arabs). The SP aims to identify the traditions that report on the context of the relevant passages of the Quran and to make them available in a corpus ('Corpus Jihadicum') in order to illustrate the interconnection between these Quranic passages and the situations in which they originated. In the first funding phase, the SP will focus on the textual reconstruction of the genesis of the recorded traditions and their textual, editorial, and formal development, as well as their temporal and geographical contextualization (*isnād-cum-matn* analysis).

TP 1.3: Neighborhood Bibles*: The Dissemination of the Tanakh/OT Text Among Muslim Authors (Prof. Dr. Nathan Gibson, Frankfurt)* – Doctoral position (65%)

Contexts: Arabic prose developed in the 8th century. Around the same time, Jewish and Christian communities translated the Bible into Arabic. Muslim authors have since drawn on these translations, as extensive quotations show, but in many cases it remains unclear exactly how and in what form. Like wells in the neighborhood, Arabic Bibles brought people into close proximity and intellectual exchange with one another. Each translation could be circulated in one or more „neighborhoods," i.e., social and literary networks in which the texts were studied, recited, and copied.

Goals/Methodology: The overarching goal is to trace the intercommunal dissemination of certain translations of the Tanakh/Old Testament through quotations in Islamic texts in order to shed light on both cooperation and controversy within the neighborhoods of knowledge production. In doing so, it is important to include genres such as Quranic commentaries in addition to the well-known polemical literature. In order to answer the question of *which* texts were quoted and adapted in which versions and who were the mediators or sources that gave Muslim authors access to biblical texts, the project proceeds in three steps: In a first step, digital tools for ‚text reuse' are used to track down previously unidentified Bible quotations in Islamic literature, comparing newly accessible large Arabic text corpora with

known biblical versions. In a second step, the question of both the rhetorical position of the quotations and the social connections and networks that may have helped to transmit the respective text is examined. In a third step, these findings on the dissemination of previously undiscovered biblical quotations will be combined with what is already known from examples in secondary literature in order to create a chronological model of the accessibility of specific Arabic versions of the Bible.

SP 1.4: Knowledge Transfer in the Encounter between Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Philosophy: Historical and Historiographical Perspectives (Prof. Dr. Yossef Schwartz, Tel Aviv, and Prof. Dr. Christian Wiese, Frankfurt) – Postdoctoral position (100%)

Contexts: The Middle Ages represent a decisive epoch for the development of fundamental concepts of interreligious dynamics and contemporary political and intellectual history in general (i.e., Western culture, but also the global cultural-political environment due to colonial processes and postcolonial discourses). In this context, Judaism and Jewish history as a phenomenon of world history can only be understood as inextricably intertwined with specific – non-Jewish – cultures. Judaism in its plural forms was and is therefore uniquely and always part of multi-religious and multicultural neighborhoods.

Goals/methodology: Against this backdrop, the SP undertakes an analysis of the various medieval mechanisms of transmission and reception of the ancient Jewish philosophical heritage up to the present day. The starting point is an extensive metadata project that collects all relevant local sources in the field of Jewish studies, including critical editions, biographical studies, etc. and organizes them in a systematic database that maps every trace of Jewish engagement with philosophical content—organized according to precise linguistic, chronological, and geographical criteria—in order to create a comprehensive historical atlas of Jewish intellectual networks. The second step is to produce a theoretical study of the intercultural constellations and the hegemonic Jewish intellectual and social centers or peripheries in which such actors were active and which were subject to constant change over the centuries due to historical and political shifts. Thirdly, the aim is to conduct a reflexive study of the historiography of prevailing approaches in the history of philosophy, religion, and mysticism in Jewish studies and other relevant disciplines in order to enable a critical analysis of earlier scholarly traditions.

SP 1.5: Syncretism in Practice? Jewish-Christian Communities in the Context of the Herrnhut Brethren's Pietistic Mission to the Jews (Prof. Dr. Rebekka Voß, Frankfurt) – Doctoral position (65%)

Contexts: As one of many religious renewal movements that developed into significant social forces in 17th and 18th century Europe, Pietism was not only directed at Christians, but also proselytized among Jews. It was in this context that the Moravian Church's mission to the Jews, which has been little researched to date, emerged. The Moravian Church sought to achieve its missionary goals by establishing Jewish-Christian communities, thereby also competing with other forms of Lutheran Pietism. These religious neighborhoods thus exist in the context of the Pietist mission and the complex situation of competing Christian groups in one place. At the same time, recent research shows that missionary cultural contact and the associated transfer processes gave rise to fluid and hybrid religious practices and identities in mixed-denominational contexts, which, in line with the concept of ‚polycentric Christianities', require, among other things, a reinterpretation of local Judaisms in Europe.

Objectives/methodology: First, previously unconsidered sources on Jewish-Christian communities in the context of the Pietist Jewish mission of the 18th century will be collected and systematically analyzed (Amsterdam, London, Switzerland). The aim is to identify parallels and differences between the religious teachings and practices of these groups and those of the Moravian Church and Jewish beliefs and principles of life, and to draw comparisons with the strategies of other missions (e.g., *Institutum Judaicum)*. Subsequently, in order to deepen the conceptual understanding, the relationships between Jews and Herrnhuters in the centers of the Moravian Church in the Old Empire (e.g., Hesse, Saxony) will be examined. This will involve pursuing approaches that focus on Jewish action and cultural transfer (including in the field of translation studies) and understanding mission as a history of interconnection in a transcultural contact zone or as an encounter in an interreligious 'third' space.

SP 1.6: Dimensions of Morality in Religious Laws in a Secular Context Using the Example of Sssisted Suicide (Prof. Dr. Rana Alsoufi, Frankfurt) – Doctoral position (100%)

Contexts: Over the centuries, both Islam and Judaism have developed legal systems that are intended to provide moral and spiritual guidance and claim authority in both private and public spheres of human activity. In both religions, law plays a decisive role in shaping the

beliefs, practices, and organizational structures of religious communities. Representatives of both religious-legal traditions also emphasize their continuing relevance in secular areas. In Germany, too, Jewish and Muslim scholars—at the intersection of secular and religious contexts—are participating in current ethical and legal debates.

Objectives/methodology: From the perspective of comparative research on Jewish and Muslim legal principles (*Halakha* and *Sharia)* in the context of bioethical and medical ethical debates, the SP analyzes the role and transformation of ideal religious neighborhoods in their respective different and common relationships to secular value and order systems. The focus is on the role of moral principles in both legal traditions and the relationships between ‚legal' and ‚moral' norms in the statements of Jewish and Muslim scholars on the legality of euthanasia and assisted suicide in Germany. To this end, the sources of moral knowledge will first be identified and analyzed on the basis of authoritative legal texts in both traditions, in order to then interpret current Jewish and Muslim positions in the broader context of overarching philosophical, ethical, and legal debates. Using the method of comparative legal analysis, the project will examine how the internal demands of the respective religious-legal traditions are systematically brought into line with the theological teachings of Judaism and Islam (*theological-legal approach)*.

SP 1.7: Co-construction of Islamicity in Constellations of Institutional and Scientific Proximity (Prof. Dr. Bekim Agai, Frankfurt) – Postdoctoral position (100%)

Contexts: The term ‚Islam' is used in many different ways: in Islamic theology, Islam is a system of normative and prescriptive derivations from fundamental testimonies of faith; Islamic studies work with a largely culture-oriented and civilizational concept of Islam; Ethnology and sociology examine the everyday life and social actions of Muslims; religious studies focus on the practices of religious observance. In doing so, it is often overlooked that ‚Islam' in the sense of co-constitution takes shape and changes not only in a self-referential way, but also in various relational constellations in concrete historical situations.

Goals/methodology: The SP takes up this relational aspect of self-understanding in a pluralistic environment and inquires into the construction and thus the redefinition of Islamicity in the modern, secular context of Germany from the interwar period to the present. The aim is to use a religious-historical and discourse-analytical approach to examine how Muslim actors in religious communities in Germany have actively shaped the concept of ‚Islam' through self-positioning, forms of organization, religious self-legitimization, and public

action, as well as to analyze the significance of neighborly constellations with institutions of other religions, the secular environment, and state structures. To this end, previously unprocessed archival material from mosque communities will first be accessed and examined. Subsequently, a scientific-historical analysis of research on Islam in Germany during the same period will shed light on the premises with which the ‚new neighbors' were conceptualized.

P2: Constellations of coexistence in multireligious, multicultural, and multiethnic contexts (Spokesperson: Prof. Dr. Albrecht Fuess)

Research perspectives: P2 aims to conduct archaeological, ethnological, religious-historical, and sociological research on specific *spatial neighborhoods* in various geographical and historical contexts that complements P1. Based on theoretical discourses on the cultural significance of space (*spatial turn)*, *contact zones*, or the ambivalences of socio-cultural *proximity,* case studies will be used to define the topographical and social dimensions of religious-cultural relations in connection with the other facets of the model of „neighborhood". The individual SPs are closely related to each other through the question of different but interrelated levels of interaction in the coexistence of religious (and non-religious) communities in plural constellations.

(1) The study of *spatial interactions* examines the orders and hierarchies of religious sites, spaces, and buildings, including the tolerance of minorities in public spaces, the tension between spatial encounters and the segregation of pluralistic worlds or their transformation through migration, mission, conversion, and power shifts, as well as constellations of shared places of worship, pilgrimage sites, festivals, or rituals, and phenomena of hybridity or syncretism. (2) This is linked to the reconstruction of social relations through *material interactions,* e.g., with regard to clothing, nutrition, the exchange of material goods and gifts in the local area and in the context of trade relations and networks. (3) Using methods of epigraphy, empirical field studies, qualitative analyses, and discourse analyses, all SPs simultaneously investigate local everyday *social interactions,* including friendships, marriages, acts of hospitality, encounters between religious groups and their social acceptance, as well as openness to contact with secular spheres. Key overarching questions, which have strong synergies with P3, P4, and P5 (through knowledge transfer into educational contexts) concern social and political factors such as everyday coexistence in pluralistic contexts shaped by migration, legal systems with regard to majority-minority

constellations, the respective power relations, negotiations of difference and conflict, and political references to historical narratives.

SP 2.1: Interreligious Contacts/Neighborhoods in the Middle of the First Millennium AD: Perspectives from Archaeology (Prof. Dr. Hagit Nol and Prof. Dr. Dirk Wicke, Frankfurt) – Postdoctoral position (100%)

Contexts: The SP is located between Near Eastern and Islamic archaeology and deals primarily with material remains from the perspective of individual households to urban settlements and landscape studies. Two comparative case studies of smaller settlements in northern Iraq and southern Portugal will be used to reconstruct religious affiliations and interactions between members of different religions. The SP examines processes of conversion of individuals or communities as well as the migration of populations with new identities (especially Christianization, Islamization) during the first millennium AD.

Objectives/methodology: The SP brings together results from field projects on the late Sasanian and early Islamic periods in northern Iraq and on the 7th-13th centuries in Mértola (Portugal) in a comparative manner. Small finds, epigraphic finds, architecture, and burials are examined, as well as differences in land use, which provide clues to the religious affiliation of different communities and to social, economic, and religious relationships. The fundamental question is how religions are identified in material culture and how the relationships between religious communities (from diffusion and adaptation to demarcation and segregation) can be recognized in spatial behavior. Particularly in a supraregional comparison between Europe and the Near East, the aim is to investigate whether changes in the formative era of early Islam are region-specific or universally valid. The initial focus is on evaluating the material finds from the field projects, followed by theory-building research on the possibilities of network analysis in determining intra- and interreligious dynamics.

SP 2.2: Religious Minorities in the Desert City of Yazd (Iran) in the 19th century – Interreligious Neighborhoods and Transnational Trade Networks (Prof. Dr. Catherina Wenzel, Frankfurt) – Doctoral position (65%)

Context: The Iranian city of Yazd is a desert city where religious minorities such as Zoroastrians, Jews, and Bahá'ís lived together and interacted both among themselves and with the Shiite majority society. At the same time, significant social and interreligious processes of change became visible here, which had been initiated in Iran since the mid-

19th century by transnational trade, charitable, and educational activities of Indian Zoroastrians (Parsis) and by international actors such as diplomats, explorers, and Christian missionaries.

Objectives/methodology: The aim of the microstudy on Yazd is to reconstruct interactions between the religious groups based there, with particular emphasis on the role of transnational actors in the period from the mid-19th century to the beginning of the so-called Constitutional Revolution in Iran (1905-1911). Social, economic, and material relationships such as marriages, collaborations, trade, and complex forms of interrituality will be analyzed. Furthermore, Yazd's geographical location as a desert city and its sacred topography play a major role, as they strongly influenced interreligious perceptions and boundary drawings. The SP works primarily with historical source material (travel and mission reports, reports and documents of Indian Parsis, studies by diplomats, orientalists, geographers, and physicians) and contributes to basic research through the digital indexing of new archival materials on Zoroastrian trade networks. By researching the political, social, and economic strategies of self-assertion among religious minorities and in relation to the Shiite majority society, it offers an innovative case study in religious history with a view to developing overarching theories, particularly on (inter)religious dynamics in spatial neighborhoods under asymmetrical power constellations. While the initial focus is on religious minorities, later research will examine how the Islamic majority society developed during this period in order to better understand the interrelationships.

SP 2.3: Interreligious Neighborhoods on the Island of Djerba and in Sousse during the Colonial and Postcolonial Periods and their Staging in the Present (Prof. Dr. Nessim Znaien, Marburg) – Doctoral position (65%)

Context: The Jewish communities in Sousse and Djerba are among the oldest in North Africa. Although both cities are home to diverse religious groups in comparable numbers, they are perceived differently. Religious coexistence on Djerba is often presented as a successful model of religious tolerance, whereas the multi-religious past of Sousse is documented and remembered to a much lesser extent. Research into this discrepancy is an important desideratum for a better understanding of references to interreligious neighborhoods and their function in political culture in the postcolonial Maghreb context.

Objectives/methodology: Using qualitative analyses, including colonial administration files, newspapers, and literary evidence, as well as semi-directive interviews with representatives of religious communities, the SP aims to reconstruct the coexistence of the

various Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities in Sousse and Djerba from the colonial period (1881) to the present day from a comparative perspective. In this way, spaces of encounter or exclusion and segregation will be identified and placed in relation to administrative, political, and economic contexts. Studies of material culture (clothing, nutrition, geography of places of worship) also play an important role. The study of this long historical period serves to highlight the breaks and continuities, especially the influence of historical turning points (the Israeli-Arab wars of 1948 and 1967; the Vichy regime; the ‚Arab Spring') on social reality and the political and cultural staging of religious neighborhoods. A central question is the extent to which the situation in the geographical and economic center (Sousse) and in the periphery (Djerba) has influenced the dynamics at work here. Later, the focus shifts to an ideology-critical analysis of the political and cultural motives behind narratives about ‚good neighborhoods' in the Maghreb.

SP 2.4: Religious Plurality in the Field of Tension between State Policy, Sunni Normativity, and Everyday Religious Practice in Contemporary Yogyakarta (Prof. Dr. Edith Franke) – Doctoral position (65%) or postdoctoral position (100%)

Context: In Indonesia, religion as such is protected by constitutional law, but the majority religion, Islam, enjoys a privileged status in various respects. In social discourse, there is often a polarizing contrast between *agama*/religions as modern, progressive organizations and *kepercayaan*/belief as rural religious practices rooted in outdated traditions and not primarily connected to the goals of Indonesian politics. This attitude changed under President Suharto (1967-1998) to a more open position. An analysis of the majority and minority constellations in multi-religious, multi-ethnic Yogyakarta will highlight areas of tension, but also successful neighborly coexistence in dealing with religious plurality, and will demonstrate the influence of state regulatory measures, the impact of increasing Sunni normativity, and the relevance of historical and everyday experience in dealing with religious plurality.

Objectives/methodology: The SP focuses on questions concerning the tension between everyday religious practice and neighborly interactions on the one hand, and the influence of religious authorities and state measures on the other. A qualitative study (participatory observation, expert and guided interviews) will be used to gain insights into the factors that determine coexistence in a multi-religious neighborhood: (1) What impact do state regulations have on neighborly interactions between people of different religious affiliations?

(2) How important are references to local Javanese traditions for coexistence in a religiously pluralistic neighborhood? (3) Which events (political regulations, administrative changes, global or regional conflicts) lead to tensions between religious communities? In addition, a comparative study of another metropolitan region (e.g., in a predominantly Christian context) is planned, taking into account the influence of social media.

SP 2.5: Multireligious Neighborhoods in Post-Soviet Microdistricts in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan (PD Dr. Susanne Fehlings and Prof. Dr. Roland Hardenberg, Frankfurt) Postdoctoral position (100%) and doctoral position (65%)

Contexts: In almost all cities in the post-Soviet space, there are prefabricated housing estates that have grown over decades. Individual high-rise buildings, but also blocks and entire estates (so-called mikrorayons) began to differentiate themselves. Residential areas became places of coexistence, where people not only worked, traded, and shopped, but also openly practiced their own religion, especially from the 1990s onwards. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has been an enormous increase in religious buildings in all major cities in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The influx of people from a wide variety of religious communities has turned the mikrorayons into places of coexistence, but also of conflict between different religious worlds.

Objectives/methodology: Based on the method of long-term empirical field studies, the research project will focus on two different cities with the help of participant observation, interviews, audio-visual documentation, cartography, and archival studies: Tbilisi in Georgia and Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan. The SP builds on comprehensive ethnographic preliminary work and promotes existing institutionalized cooperation with universities in Tbilisi and Bishkek. The aim is to examine religious neighborhoods there, particularly with regard to successful examples of coexistence, but also in relation to existing areas of tension. Initially, the aim is to systematically map (1) the coexistence and conflict between different religious sites in these confined, densely populated urban areas and (2) to conduct ethnographic research into the shared use of this space for different religious practices such as rituals and festivals. For a later phase, further intensive field studies are planned (3) on the conversion efforts of individual religious groups in these neighborhoods and (4) on the emergence of controversial interreligious relationships such as friendships or marriages.

TP 2.6: Dealing with Religious and Intercultural Tensions since 2001 in Local and Neighborhood Constellations in Hesse (Prof. Dr. Albrecht Fuess, Marburg) – Doctoral position (65%) or postdoctoral position (100%)

Context: Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Islam has been perceived even more strongly than before as a „security problem" and constructed as a foil to an enlightened – Judeo-Christian – Western image of religion. In response to such debates, which were perceived as exclusionary, civil and religious actors in Hesse launched initiatives to resolve problems of religious coexistence and promote Abrahamic dialogue. The establishment of round tables of religion and councils of religions in recent years has contributed to an improvement in the situation of interreligious coexistence. However, the terror of Hamas on October 7, 2023, and its consequences threaten to undermine the trust that has been built up.

Objectives/methodology: Building on preliminary work on interreligious coexistence in Hesse, the SP plans to use qualitative religious research methodology to present a ‚mapping of religious dialogue' in the region since 2001. The interviews conducted will be evaluated according to the principle of qualitative content analysis. This will be accompanied by an analysis of the writings, websites, and social media activities of the Hessian dialogue initiatives. The research will focus on questions (1) about the discussion strategies of different groups and their actors, (2) about the self-perception and external perception of religious groups in Hessian dialogue forums, and (3) about the role of theological debates in this context. Based on the inventory and interviews to record the current mechanisms of religious dialogue structures in Hesse, the theological premises underlying interreligious dialogues will be examined using discourse analysis.

P3: Flight and Migration as a Challenge (Spokesperson: Prof. Dr. Nicole Immig)

Research perspectives: P3 focuses on the interdisciplinary analysis of the dynamics and negotiation processes in multi-religious and multi-ethnic societies that are (re)constituted through migration and mobility in their various forms. The historical SPs examine, above all, how Jewish, Christian, and Islamic communities in different contexts have adapted to new neighborhood and power constellations in the wake of expulsions, flight, or migration, how religious identities and practices are changing as a result, and what role memories of places, traditions, rituals, and practices have played in coping with migration experiences and the

development of migrant religious traditions. The contemporary projects focus on (1) the reaction of modern immigrant societies to flight and migration, e.g., the defensive attitudes aroused by immigration from religiously and culturally different circles, as well as the effects of certain debates on acculturation processes; (2) phenomena of (re)constructing neighborhoods among religious actors in digital spaces and networks; (3) the question of the ethical and political potential (and limitations) of religious traditions and theological or philosophical concepts with regard to conflictual aspects of migration-related pluralization and heterogenization; (4) empirical analyses of social practices and networks for creating structures of neighborly conviviality.

Regardless of different approaches and methods (migration sociology, ethnography, narratological oral history interviews, discourse and media analysis), the SP are linked by central overarching research questions: How do actors network locally, nationally, and transnationally, and what structures of interreligiousness, interculturality, and intersectionality do they form? What role do religion(s), religious communities, discourses, and practices, as well as interreligious relationships, play in processing experiences of flight or with regard to the transformation of religious identities in the course of acculturation and integration processes? What significance does the materiality of memories of ‚home' have in the networks of refugees and migrants and for their interactions in spatial and digital neighborhood constellations?

SP 3.1: Huguenots in Hesse. Beyond the Myth of Exemplary Integration of Religious Refugees (Prof. Dr. Xenia von Tippelskirch, Frankfurt) – Doctoral position (65%)

Contexts: The settlement of Huguenots in Hesse is considered a historical example of the successful integration of religious refugees. They settled in separate communities, which enabled cultural and linguistic continuity lasting into the 20th century, reflected, among other things, in networks that existed long after the migration process had ended. However, conflicts also arose, leading to ambivalent neighborly constellations in which both interdenominational exchange and demarcations played a role. This ambivalence did not find its way into the culture of remembrance, however, which raises the question of the practices of memory politics that anchored pre-modern Huguenot immigration in the collective memory. In German-language local historical research on individual settlements, questions of social differentiation and the practices of remembrance of the Huguenot diaspora have not yet been addressed.

Objectives/methodology: In a first step, the SP aims to generate new insights into the everyday, social, and religious history of the Huguenots by digitally indexing source material from the Friedrichsdorf city archives, thereby enabling a new perspective on religious coexistence in the late 17th and 18th centuries. Through an intersectional perspective and with the help of approaches to researching the dynamics of social interaction in the crafts, internal diversification processes and the social and cultural consequences of religious difference will be examined more closely than before. In line with the approach that ‚provincializes' the history of the Old Empire, the colonial dimension of the count's settlement projects will be critically examined. In a second step, the project will examine how Huguenot history was narrated and rediscovered in the context of Hessian regional identity, and what role references to other religions played in this process. Subsequently, a comparative study of the politics of memory of Huguenots and Waldensians in a broader Hessian context (Friedrichsdorf, Neu-Isenburg, Hanau, Rohrbach, Wambach, Mörfelden-Walldorf) is planned.

SP 3.2: Religious Aspects of Greek Labor Migration in the Federal Republic of Germany (1960-1982): An Oral History Project (Prof. Dr. Nicole Immig, Giessen) – Doctoral position (65%)

Context: The majority of Greeks who immigrated to Germany in search of work in the 1960s and 1970s professed Orthodox Christianity. However, a smaller group was Catholic or belonged to Turkish- or Slavic-speaking Muslim minorities. Although migration research considers religion to be an important criterion for organizing life worlds in the migration process, it has hardly been taken into account in research on Greek labor migration to Germany, which is characterized by multilingualism, multi-ethnicity, and multi-religiousness. Closing this research gap opens up new perspectives on the role of religion in the modern migration history of Germany and Europe.

Objectives/methodology: The SP examines how local and social circumstances in multi-religious and multi-ethnic spaces (neighborhoods, workplaces, associations, schools, public spaces, or multi-denominational churches) has affected the development and transformation of Greek migrant workers' religious practices and their intra- and interdenominational as well as interreligious relationships during the phase of active labor migration to Germany (1960-1982). At the same time, the role of religious institutions as actors in everyday life and thus in shaping migration, as well as the significance of religious affiliation in the administrative management of the migration process by authorities, will be

examined. By drawing on microhistorical approaches such as emotional history and oral history in the form of life history interviews with first- and second-generation migrants, conducted in several communities in Hesse as well as in Greece, the aim is to overcome the state-centered perspective that prevails in research and to open up space for diverse perspectives on religiosity and spirituality as parts of individual everyday life in specific neighborhood constellations.

SP 3.3: The Influence of Religious Neighborhoods on the Acculturation of Migrants in the Context of Secularization and Social Polarization (Prof. Dr. Antje Röder, Marburg) – Postdoctoral position (100%)

Contexts: Perceptions of cultural threat often lead to a rejection of migration, especially on the part of the political right, which sees it as a threat to Western values. This is particularly evident in debates on gender roles and sexuality, in which migrants, especially Muslims, are portrayed as backward or extremist. However, research shows that the relationship between religiosity and attitudes is complex: while there is a connection to traditional attitudes, this is influenced by individual factors and the environment. Recent studies also show that rejection leads to a return to traditional values rather than acculturation.

Objectives/methodology: Against this background, the SP examines the effects of local contexts and religious neighborhoods on the acculturation processes of migrants in European contexts, taking into account the degree of secularization and the polarized debates on religious and cultural identities. Building on the field of quantitative religious research, which determines the significance of local contexts using geographically networked data, relevant contextual factors will be theoretically identified and operationalized at the neighborhood level. International comparisons as well as national case studies and trend analyses are planned, based on secondary data from quantitative surveys (primarily the European Social Survey), which will be linked to regional and context-relevant indicators from other data sources. Some of the indicators will be developed at the national and regional levels in the course of the project. The polarization of debates will be systematically recorded by analyzing data from social and traditional media using large language models (LLM). In the first phase, the SP will simultaneously explore the possibilities of defining and utilizing the neighborhood concept for quantitative research. In the second phase, additional case studies, including non-European contexts, will be conducted in collaboration with international partners.

SP 3.4: Religious Neighborhoods in Digitalized Spaces in the Context of Superdiversity (Prof. Dr. Armina Omerika, Frankfurt) – Postdoctoral position (100%)

Contexts: Digital media and platforms play a central role in migration-related processes of accelerated social differentiation and heterogenization, for which ethnologist S. Vertovec coined the term „superdiversity," as they also create and structure spaces for interaction and the reconstitution of communities and neighborhoods beyond the usual coordinates. Through their affordances and possibilities for digital use, they are also instruments for the mediatization and shaping of these processes.

Goals/methodology: The SP, which combines approaches from Islamic and media studies, aims to examine the mechanisms of (re)construction and mediation of neighborhoods among religious actors in social media. With an initial focus on Islam, which will be expanded to other religions, it asks (1) which elements of superdiversification (e.g., internal differentiation, transnationalization, etc.) are effective in digital spaces in relation to interreligious dynamics; (2) how new, digital forms of religious agency affect interreligious offline and online relationships; (3) which aesthetic and communicative practices are used to mediatize and discursively negotiate the migration experiences of religious actors; and (4) what role religious motives play in this process. Particular attention is paid to the internal logics of the media and their influence on the construction of religious identity and alterity. In terms of theory formation, the SP explores how the concept of social and religious neighborhood can be conceived in the context of space and time regimes in digital space and made operationalizable for analysis. Initially, the SP will focus on actors in European immigration contexts and on media in German and English; later, the research question will be expanded to include other regions with their specific linguistic contexts in which religious neighborhoods are being renegotiated as a result of migration, e.g., the Balkan states, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, or Pakistan.

SP 3.5: Exodus and Diaspora. Contemporary Political Theologies as Jewish-Christian Practices of Remembrance (Prof. Dr. Rebekka Klein, Frankfurt) – Doctoral position (65%)

Contexts: Exodus and diaspora are currently being taken up in Jewish and Christian political theologies, but also in secular contexts, as a „rich treasure trove of experience" that can reinterpret contemporary migration movements as a central model of life in late modernity. Significant here is the interpretation of migration and dispersion movements as

politically influential beyond the territorial nation-state. Thus, using the thread of exodus and diaspora, an attempt is made to show that political movements and initiatives are not bound to territories, particular communities, or nations, but are also constituted by reference to common aesthetic practices, fluid lifestyles, shared experiences of flight, or minority existence.

Goals/methodology: The goal of the SP is to use hermeneutic and discourse analysis methods to identify current Jewish and Christian conceptions of exodus and diaspora politics and reconstruct them as political-theological initiatives. „Political theology" is understood here as a concept that views the political and theological forces shaping identity and community as intertwined. The reconstructed exodus and diaspora politics of Judaism and Christianity are critically reflected upon with regard to the question of the ambivalence of religious neighborhoods in terms of their intended and unintended dynamics of mobilization. The focus is on the question of the extent to which biblical narration is the starting point and accompanying horizon of an intertwining of the two religions and, in the course of individual political-theological interpretations, becomes a place of rapprochement or demarcation. Initially, the focus will be on the Exodus narrative and its theo-political mobilizing forces, later shifting to the motif of the diaspora. In both phases, Christian and Jewish texts will be compared.

SP 3.6: Doing Neighborhood*: The Transcultural and Interreligious Infrastructure of Conviviality in (Post)Migrant Societies (Prof. Dr. Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Frankfurt)* – Doctoral position (65%)

Contexts: Research on ‚coexistence' in neighborhoods shows how migration forms, challenges, and promotes solidarity networks beyond religious and ethnic boundaries. Nevertheless, work on ‚convivial cultures', ‚translocal geographies' and conviviality shows that it is necessary to take a closer look at the actors who organize community support networks in order to understand the dynamics and relationships that enable or hinder coexistence. Especially in times of increasing discourses of exclusion (xenophobia, anti-Semitism, racism), there is a need for a differentiated understanding of the transcultural fabric as well as religious and interreligious dynamics and practices of shaping and strengthening neighborhoods.

Objectives/methodology: The SP aims to develop an empirically based theoretical approach to the infrastructure of conviviality by examining neighborhood networks in southern Hesse that provide support structures for childcare, care needs, and grieving

processes. The focus is on local transcultural and interreligious relationships and connections, as well as on practices, materialities, affective bonds, and discourses that play a role in the organization of support. In the transfer part, this knowledge will be passed on to interested actors at the municipal and regional level. The field research will be conducted in Offenbach, Hanau, and Darmstadt using methods of ethnography and qualitative social research (group discussions, interviews, participant observation, and ethnographic walks). Regional heterogeneity will be captured using a relational approach that relates the different regional realities through inductive analysis. In a second phase, the local perspective will be expanded to include a global dimension in order to enable comparisons with societies in the Caribbean and Latin America that are already intercultural. The historical and current conditions for the emergence of convivial, interreligious, and transcultural communities will be examined in two metropolitan areas in Trinidad & Tobago and Brazil.

P4: Politicization and Instrumentalization of Religious Difference (Spokesperson: Prof. Dr. Sita Steckel)

Research perspectives: The aim of P4 is to conduct interdisciplinary research on debates and conflicts about religion within political publics, which have been constituted from antiquity to the present day through various (now increasingly digital) media. In cooperation with P1, different preconceptions of religion, religious difference, and secularity(ies) in various historical contexts of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic theory formation will be discussed, as well as questions about the dynamics of the political and the religious in specific constellations of socio-spatial proximity, in dialogue with the case studies of P2 and P3. By linking political and social science models with historical findings and theological and religious studies perspectives, P4 will also provide theoretical groundwork for the entire center and, together with P5, participate in the provision of materials for historical, (inter)religious, and political education.

Several related phenomena of the instrumentalization, politicization, or even depoliticization of religion are in the foreground. (1) In cross-epochal and regionally comparative interdisciplinary case studies, a broad spectrum of historical and current constellations of actors, causes of conflict, and power relations will be analyzed, ranging from the Jewish communities of ancient Rome to medieval urban conflicts to modern neighborhood relations of European Jewish minorities or networks of right-wing Christian action alliances. A further goal is to investigate different political conflict dynamics as well as typical escalation patterns and ‚tipping points' that lead to the politicization of religious

differences in historical and contemporary situations. (2) Particular attention is paid to escalating processes of spreading central images of the other and the enemy, as well as the intensification of conflict situations, with a view to the pre-modern, modern, and contemporary periods (e.g., phenomena of the ‚normalization' of racist or anti-Semitic discourse). In addition, (3) the repercussions of political debates and experiences of discrimination on the identity formation and norm setting of religious groups will be examined. This includes, among other things, the analysis of philosophical, theological, and political concepts for the social ‚exclusion' or neutralization of religious differences, some of which are directly rooted in constellations of neighborly sociability, or affirmative conceptualizations of neighborliness, for example in the context of interdenominational constellations of the pre-modern era or Jewish theory formation on the subject of neighborliness in the recent past.

SP 4.1: Practices and Effects of Religious Separatist Groups in Urban Roman Society (2nd century BC – 2nd century AD) (Prof. Dr. Thomas Blank, Mainz) – Doctoral position (65%)

Contexts: Since the 3rd century BC, strategies for marking foreignness in the field of religion can be traced in the ancient metropolis of Rome. The range of reactions of *the res publica* and its representatives to religious groups present in Rome but marked as *foreign* ranges from integration into the state cult to non-interference to expulsion from the city and the country. In the field of religion, the intertwining of Rome with the regions of the emerging empire also reflected phenomena of the ‚separate' social positioning of religious groups that were active in Rome in the immediate vicinity of the polytheistic urban majority culture.

Objectives/methodology: Using discourse analysis methods and archaeological and epigraphic findings, the SP aims to analyze the dynamics of urban discourse on the relationship between the bourgeois-political world and religious separatist groups in conflict situations (e.g., religious bans, public integration, legal conflicts). The questions to be asked in each case are: (1) What significance did practices of religious separation have or gain for the emergence or course of the conflicts in question? (2) What interpretations of these practices did the actors in the conflict represent? (3) To what extent were the practices influenced by the outcome of the conflict and how did this change the social position of the religious group concerned? (4) Did the particularity of the monotheistic religious worldview affecte the mutual handling of the problem of social separateness (and in which way)? The first phase focuses on overarching questions concerning the religious and cultural diversity

of metropolitan society; in a second phase, the focus is specifically on the presence of Jewish communities and religious practitioners in the field of tension between external events, internal discourse on foreignness, and civic law enforcement.

***SP 4.2: Urban Competition and Religious Polemics. Inter- and Intrareligious Differences in the Context of the Parisian Mendicant Controversy in the 13th century (Prof. Dr. Sita Steckel, Frankfurt)* – Postdoctoral position (100%)**

Contexts: Recent interdisciplinary medieval research shows that even before 1500, religious neighborhoods in the emerging cities of Latin Europe were characterized by two forms of religious plurality: encounters between regional Christianities and Jews, Muslims, and other minorities were accompanied by intra-Christian diversity, such as the diversity of religious orders, whose rivalries often sparked regional and supraregional debates.

Goals/methodology: The SP therefore focuses on polemical demarcations in situations of competition between different Christian elites in Western European cities. Using the example of the so-called mendicant controversy in the environment of the University of Paris in the 13th century, it examines patterns of conflict escalation and the devaluation of religious ‚others' by clerics, religious orders, and laypeople. Particular attention is paid to the intertwining of inter- and intra-religious polemics, which has not yet been systematically researched, for example when orders and clergy compared each other with religious ‚others' such as heretics and Jews. Using methods of discourse analysis, the SP inventories and categorizes relevant historical text sources (polemical texts, sermons, satires), transfers relevant texts to a digital database, and analyzes them using the annotation and visualization tool CATMA at the level of rhetoric, argumentation, and semantics. In addition, methods of conflict research are used to reveal escalation processes, shifts in ‚trigger points' and ‚limits of what can be said' in conflicts. In the first phase of the project, the focus is on the intensification of conflict rhetoric in connection with accusations of threatening masculinity and sexual assaults against Christian, Muslim and Jewish opponents. In the further course of the project, investigations into the history of the transmission of relevant polemics in manuscripts and early prints will be carried out, and important manuscripts and prints will be inventoried in the database.

SP 4.3: Confessional Tipping Points: Crises and Conflicts in Urban Societies of the Early Modern Period (Prof. Dr. Birgit Emich, Frankfurt)

Context: The conditions under which confessional constellations became conflictual in the early modern period can be observed particularly well in the multi-confessional cities of the Holy Roman Empire. Whether religious coexistence took the form of peaceful neighborliness or led to conflict and violence depended on numerous factors. For example, the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 brought almost three decades of peace to the Holy Roman Empire, but from the 1580s onwards, it increasingly lost its binding force. The period of peace was followed by a hardening of confessional and political fronts, which initially led to the blockade of the imperial organs and ultimately to the Thirty Years' War.

Objectives/methodology: While the increasing instrumentalization of confessional opposition at the level of imperial politics has been well researched, the question of how the political climate change affected people's everyday religious lives has hardly been addressed. In order to examine the tipping points in the confessional conflict, city council minutes, court records, chronicles, and journalistic sources are used to reconstruct how the political charge of confessional differences was reflected in the coexistence of an urban society. The questions to be asked are: in what stages did tensions and conflicts escalate, what local conflicts arose, were there any moderating forces or neutral zones, and what role did political instrumentalization play? The SP aims to answer these questions using the example of the imperial city of Frankfurt, which is particularly suitable for this purpose as a multi-denominational trade fair city and place of imperial coronation, and which also experienced an escalation of confessional conflicts into interreligious conflicts with the Fettmilch uprising of 1614, which culminated in an anti-Jewish pogrom. For a second phase, the royal seat of Dresden (as a Lutheran stronghold where there were numerous waves of anti-Calvinist purges), with its completely different conditions, provides an ideal foil for comparing the course of confessional escalations.

SP 4.4: Political Theology and the Politicization of Religion: Perspectives on Interreligious Neighbourhood (Prof. Dr. Annette Langner-Pitschmann, Frankfurt) – Doctoral position (65%)

Contexts: The politicization of religious topoi and beliefs is sometimes used as an implicit strategy for constructing identity and difference. In the context of political theology, however, it becomes an explicit subject of reflection. On the one hand, the relationship between secular and religious concepts is addressed from a *descriptive-conceptual-sociological*

perspective, whereby theological concepts are understood as material for a radically antagonistic construction of political difference. On the other hand, this relationship is analyzed from a *normative* perspective , whereby religious interventions in secular discourse are regarded as elements of necessary social criticism. This ambivalent relationship between theological semantics and political difference is received politically and theologically in all monotheistic religions.

Objectives/methodology: The TP examines this process in the first FP using the example of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Using a conceptual analytical approach, it *first* examines the religious-cultural interrelationships from which Christian and Jewish approaches to political theology generate moments of mutual stimulation and demarcation. *Second*, it elaborates on the irreducible ambivalences in the relationship between Jewish and Christian political theology with regard to the (de)construction of political antagonisms. The common point of reference here is the constitution of legal authority. The questions asked are: (1) in what way is the normativity of legal provisions reconstructed in political theology, (2) what effect do the different modes of dealing with political difference aim to achieve, and (3) to what extent do they incorporate factors and ambivalences of interreligious coexistence? In a second phase, the neighborhood between Islam and Christianity will be analyzed using a comparable heuristic adapted on the basis of the results obtained.

TP 4.5: Anti-Muslim attitudes of right-wing Christian actors and groups in Germany (Prof. Dr. Anja Middelbeck-Varwick, Frankfurt) – Postdoctoral position (100%)

Contexts: Anti-Muslim racism (Islamophobia and hostility toward Muslims) is currently widespread among large sections of the German population. Despite the churches' efforts to promote interreligious understanding with Islam, Christian believers and groups also participate in this: through the internalization of historically grown stereotypes, the normalization and acceptance of so-called 'right-wing populist' positions in the church sphere, or actively through the open anti-Muslim positions of certain right-wing Christian actors and groups.

Goals/methodology: The goal of the TP is to research the content and forms of expression of current anti-Muslim attitudes within Christian communities in Germany. The basis for this is the analysis of existing studies and the creation of an up-to-date cartography of the spectrum of groups or individuals (including their media) who identify as Christian and at the

same time represent right-wing populist, nationalist-radical, or identitarian views and are decidedly anti-Muslim in their public appearances. Further critical analyses will use the tools of discourse and media analysis, social network analysis, and qualitative content analysis to examine selected Christian groups and actors from a micro-perspective (e.g., small intermedia groups, local references). Of primary interest here is the question of how references to Christian tradition are used to argue against "Islam" and "Muslims," which anti-Muslim/anti-Islamic statements are central, and to what extent one of the religions is being instrumentalized in the process. Digital formats and online media are a central research topic, including the question of which individuals from the 'right-wing' Christian milieu support the respective platforms, forums, channels, or bloggers, and to what extent they – intentionally or unintentionally – perform pivotal functions for the extreme right. In a second phase, the perspective will be broadened through a comparative study of similar right-wing Christian circles in other European countries.

TP 4.6: Jewish diasporic concepts and experiences of multireligious neighborhoods in confrontation with modern anti-Semitism (Prof. Christian Wiese and Prof. Stefan Vogt, Frankfurt) Postdoctoral position (100%) and doctoral position (65%)

Context: European Jewish history is marked by the experience of existing as a minority in a non-Jewish majority society, with which there has always been intense contact, especially in modern times. Despite progressive emancipation, deep-rooted anti-Jewish stereotypes and modern forms of anti-Semitism have repeatedly resulted in discrimination, persecution, expulsion, and pogroms. Even before World War II, but especially after it, other religious and cultural minorities played a role in these constellations, particularly Muslim communities in recent decades. Multireligious neighborhoods were and are characterized by the ambivalence between anti-Semitic tendencies and resources for combating them.

Goals/methodology: Using the German-speaking region and France as examples, the TP takes a comparative perspective to examine the question, which has not yet been systematically researched in anti-Semitism studies, of how Jews have experienced anti-Semitism in their concrete coexistence with their non-Jewish environment and how they have responded to it. The main focus is on which interpretations of anti-Semitism, which concepts for combating it, and which understanding of the situation of the Jewish community in the plural cultures of the European diaspora were developed. One dissertation project is devoted to the 19th and early 20th centuries, while a postdoctoral project focuses on the

period after 1945 and, in particular, current debates. In terms of methodology, the focus—complementing previous research—is on individual and political engagement with manifestations of everyday anti-Semitism. The TP pursues a discourse-analytical and cultural-historical approach, drawing primarily on memoirs and correspondence, the Jewish press, and cultural and religious-philosophical writings by Jewish authors. In the second phase of the project, the comparative perspective will be expanded to include the United States of America, examining developments both before 1933 and after 1945.

P5: Public Education and Training, Religion and Didactics in the Context of Transnational and Digital Knowledge Order (Spokesperson: Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Meseth)

Research perspectives: Using a multi-method approach, P5 aims to explore the challenges of dealing with the topic of religion in school and extracurricular teaching as well as in informal (digital) learning and experiential spaces, highlighting the ambivalence, recognition, and conflict dynamics of the ways in which religion is represented and appropriated, and determining the relationships between religion(s) and between religion and politics that are expressed therein. The aim is to establish an educational science and religious education think tank on forms of 'dialogical learning' in cooperation with civil society institutions for the purpose of developing and implementing more effective strategies for promoting interreligious acceptance, intercultural competence, and combating anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and racism. By researching contrastively selected areas of public education and their media environment, the aim is to produce empirically rich descriptions of the social reality of religious neighborhoods, their conflictual dynamics, and their potential for dialogue and understanding in educational contexts. In addition, the aim is to provide professional knowledge for the design of school and extracurricular teaching and learning processes, as well as for conflict management and religion-related understanding in schools, youth work, and social work. On this basis, new teaching and communication materials (including digital educational media) are to be developed.

Specifically, the subject-specific cultural characteristics of the representation of religions in methodological and didactic modeling as well as in school teaching practice are examined comparatively using the example of different school subjects. From the perspective of school culture research, the question is asked how individual schools in (post)migrant societies conceptually respond to the topic of religious diversity and its politicized references. For

research into non-formal and informal learning and experiential spaces, the question arises as to how religion-related orientations and conflicts are inscribed there and what role civil society initiatives and providers of historical-political education can play in moderating, resolving conflicts, and shaping interreligious dialogues. From a media education and didactic perspective, and with a view to the conditions of digital penetration in educational contexts, we analyze what knowledge about religion and religion-related conflicts is presented in relevant social media channels and what conflict-exacerbating, but also dialogue- and understanding-related dimensions of religious neighborhood are conveyed here. Whether and to what extent so-called algorithmic virtual learning settings ('avatars') can productively complement this *bias of* conventional teaching and learning settings is an important question for subject-specific didactic development research.

P5 has direct links to other program areas insofar as (1) educational contexts are under discussion in which, in the wake of flight and migration, plurality or superdiversity is an everyday experience (P3), and (2) topics are discussed that focus on the analysis of educational strategies with regard to and the teaching of knowledge about the history and present of ambivalent neighborhoods between religions, including their interdependence and dialogical potential (P1, P2) as well as their differences and politically explosive conflicts (P4).

TP 5.1: Narratives of 'religious neighbourhood' from a history didactics perspective – analysis, conception, transfer (Prof. Dr. Josef Memminger, Frankfurt) – Doctoral position (65%)

Contexts: Reflective historical teaching and learning is inconceivable without taking the religious dimension into account for most eras (especially the pre-modern era). Nevertheless, the subject-specific approaches to content related to Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, as manifested in historical representations such as historical-cultural (digital) textbooks and teaching materials, are often characterized by omissions, stereotyping, and exaggerations. Existing empirical studies usually focus on one religion in isolation. The multi-perspective concept of 'neighborhoods' is suitable for preparing the often neglected aspects of cultural interdependence and the relational connections between the three religions, as well as the associated ambivalences and ambiguities, both methodologically and in terms of content, for the didactics of the (school) subject of history.

Objectives/methodology: In the first phase, the 'current situation' will be empirically determined. (1) An analysis of curricula, textbooks, and media will examine where and how religion-specific topics play a role and religious neighborhood relations are addressed in

curricula, textbooks, teaching materials for history lessons, and media (digital) products (e.g., explanatory videos or social media formats). The focus will initially be on Hesse and will be gradually expanded. (2) With a view to developing a theoretically sound didactic concept, the project will also examine which narratives dominate in the identified representations, where interrelationships are deliberately taken into account, and what differences can be found in the content and methodological approaches of the school subjects 'history' and 'religion'. (3) At a later stage, the focus will be on the creation of suitable (analog and digital) materials that enable new approaches to the topic of 'religious neighborhood', with reference to the research of the other program areas.

TP 5.2: Religion(s) in school education between subject-specific teaching and politicization. On the communicative construction of religion in the classroom (Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Meseth, Frankfurt) – Postdoctoral position (100%)

Contexts: Schools and classrooms are socially embedded places where publicly controversial issues resonate. Currently, this applies above all to Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7, the war in Gaza, and the escalating conflict in the Middle East. In Germany—but also worldwide—this conflict is also taking shape as a dynamic of the politicization of religion. At the same time, high expectations are placed on school teaching with regard to the teaching of fundamental democratic values, the prevention of anti-Semitism, racism, and right-wing extremism, and the practice of dialogicity . In school lessons, these expectations are usually implemented through the medium of imparting subject-specific knowledge, whereby the subject-specific and political-moral learning expectations differ from subject to subject and factual and value judgments in relation to the topic of religion can be related and emphasized differently.

Objectives/methodology: Based on this dual situation of politics and religion in school lessons, the micro-ethnographic TP in the first FP analyzes how religion is established in classroom interaction under the conditions of different subject-cultural modeling and what role the reference to the dynamics of the politicization of religion in the mediatized public sphere plays in this. The question will be examined comparatively in history, ethics, and Protestant, Catholic, and Islamic religion classes in grades 9 and/or 10 at an integrated comprehensive school and a high school. The project promises (1) empirically based knowledge about the ways in which religion(s) are addressed in school lessons and (2) knowledge about the effectiveness of school lessons in meeting the historical and political

demands placed on them to provide education. It also aims to generate (3) reflective knowledge for the (re)design of school subject teaching and the innovation of teacher training.

TP 5.3: School cultures and the creation of a differentiated order (Prof. Dr. Merle Hummrich, Frankfurt) – Doctoral position (65%)

Contexts: Secondary level I qualifies students for further educational careers and enables young people to participate in society and politics by teaching them basic democratic values. At the same time, the current dynamics of crisis and conflict are reflected in the religious orientations of young people. In migration societies, schools thus become a central place for negotiating opportunities for participation and for conflict prevention and resolution. This raises the pressing question of how contradictory orientations, e.g., different backgrounds, religious orientations, and anti-Semitic/racist/right-wing extremist orientations, can be "contained."

Objectives/methodology: The aim is to investigate the significance of differentiating orders in secondary school cultures and the religious dynamics within them. An intersectional comparative analysis will examine the creation of proximity/neighborhoods between schools, with a particular focus on the differentiations (ethnically coded, milieu-related, religious) embedded in the construction of neighborhood ( ). *Mixed methods* are used as follows: (1) Quantitative overview of religious orientations of Hessian (religious and secular) secondary schools based on websites (urban and rural contexts); (2) Qualitative ethnography of selected contrasting schools in the eighth and tenth grades: religious practices, interviews with school administrators, school websites and documents, group discussions with students and teachers; (3) Qualitative study of young people's use of religious content in social media. The qualitative data will be evaluated using objective hermeneutics. At the end of the first FP, an empirically based theoretical contribution on religiosity and youth in the context of school cultural orders will be available (including habilitation). A comparative perspective on US schools is planned for a later phase.

TP 5.4: Transformative dialogue on anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. An ethnographic study in the Rhine/Main region (Prof. Dr. Naime Çakir-Mattner, Giessen) Postdoctoral position (100%) and doctoral position (65%)

Context: Anti-Semitic, racist, and Islamophobic attitudes have intensified since the Hamas terrorist attack on October 7, 2023, leading to a dramatic increase in anti-Semitic attacks and discrimination against Muslims. It is also disturbing that the conflict is pushing many dialogue initiatives and projects to their limits. However, it is precisely in times of crisis that intensified interreligious dialogue is necessary in order to break down prejudices, overcome enemy stereotypes, and—in the spirit of "governance of religious diversity"—moderate the challenges of religious diversity. To be effective, these dialogue initiatives must also overcome culturalist and ethnicizing patterns of thought that are rooted in dichotomous 'us-them' schemata.

Objectives/methodology: The TP combines approaches to social work, such as community and social space orientation, with the concept of neighborhood in a critical examination of difference-based concepts in interreligious settings. It consists of two main parts: (1) In three cities in the Rhine-Main area (Hanau, Offenbach, Giessen), interactive problem-solving workshops based on H.C. Kelman's model are held, in which Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities as well as representatives from education and anti-racism initiatives discuss the Middle East conflict, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia . In parallel, (2) an ethnographic study will be conducted using a mixed-methods approach (focus groups, guided interviews, participant observation) to examine the experiences of the participants during the workshops and how these influence the effectiveness of the methods and vice versa. The analysis (3) will be carried out using grounded theory. At the end of the first phase, an empirically based theoretical contribution to topic-related conflict management should be available. In the second phase, the dialogue models will be integrated into local structures, while the results of other thematically related TP will be incorporated into the analysis and integration of the dialogue models and target group-specific handouts will be developed.

TP 5.5: Media Neighborhoods – Reconstruction of (Inter)Religious Encounter Dynamics in Social Media (Prof. Dr. Viera Pirker, Frankfurt) Postdoctoral position (100%)

Contexts: Although non-institutional contexts have a profound influence on young people's upbringing, changing media socialization patterns are given too little attention in research on social education dynamics – this also applies to religious and religion-related education and upbringing. Faith, as a deeply 'personal matter', is strategically used in platform communication in the semi-private public sphere of social media by individuals who address emotional depth. This has an impact on religious communities and their social embeddedness. Religious clarity and positioning follow liberal and conservative lines. Controversies also arise in the social media dialogue space on religious topics: anti-Muslim racism stands alongside anti-religious discussions among major influencers; since October 7, 2023, anti-Jewish hate speech has been on the rise. Voices of interreligious neighborliness are rare and mostly quiet in these online worlds.

Objectives/methodology: Using a multi-perspective approach, the study examines whether and how (inter)religious relationship dynamics are expressed in the communication of content creators on social media, what motives guide the actions of these individuals and what risks they are exposed to, and how recipients deal with this. This will be used to develop recommendations for action in formal and non-formal educational contexts. Methodologically, the TP is based on reconstructive methods (qualitative-empirical: netnography, interviews, focus groups). The initial focus is on (1) data ethics fundamentals, sampling for ethnographic recording, and delimitation of ephemeral media communication spaces; (2) iterative field access; (3) data analysis and evaluation; (4) reflection on the connections between religious education and public education. In the second phase, the findings will be expanded to include their potential for forms of community building and education in religiously interested target groups by examining interdependencies with and repercussions on the social organizational forms of religions (congregations, associations, media).

TP 5.6: Avatars as hosts of interreligious learning – Empirical studies on the promotion of diversity competence in virtual space (Prof. Dr. Britta Konz, Mainz) – Postdoctoral position (100%)

Contexts: In the 'age of migration', religion is increasingly being negotiated as an identity marker in schools. In interreligious learning, attention must be paid to unconsciously

incorporated 'patterns of perception, evaluation, feeling, and action' that create a sense of *belonging* among members of a culture or religion. Confrontations with unfamiliar forms of cultural and religious expression can therefore trigger feelings of alienation and mechanisms of exclusion and demarcation on a physical level. School settings do not always provide opportunities for dialogue-based learning. Furthermore, those who are labeled as 'different' may feel alienated in their interactions or encounter nonverbal resistance.

Objectives/methodology: The TP explores (1) the extent to which virtual learning formats can be used in interreligious learning processes as *an* imaginative *third space* for negotiating contact zones and breaking through processes of signification. It investigates whether virtual bodies can be used to make life and faith stories tangible in order to reduce feelings of alienation and build bridges for subsequent real-life encounters. It examines (2) how the virtual learning environment must be designed in order to do justice to the intra- and interreligious diversity of faith and life stories. Through iterative, cyclical testing and evaluation of theory-driven learning settings, empirically based findings are to be obtained that will result in subject-specific didactic theories and evaluated lesson designs. In the first FP, a participatory approach is chosen for the design and development process of a virtual learning setting; qualitative empirical interviews and the method of storytelling are used to collect subject perspectives on religious feelings and practices. In the second phase, laboratory experiments are conducted to investigate the dynamics of social and physical interaction with the avatars. The data collected using guided interviews will be evaluated from multiple perspectives after content-structuring qualitative content analysis with MAXQDA. Sequence-analytical evaluations of videotaped key scenes will also be used.