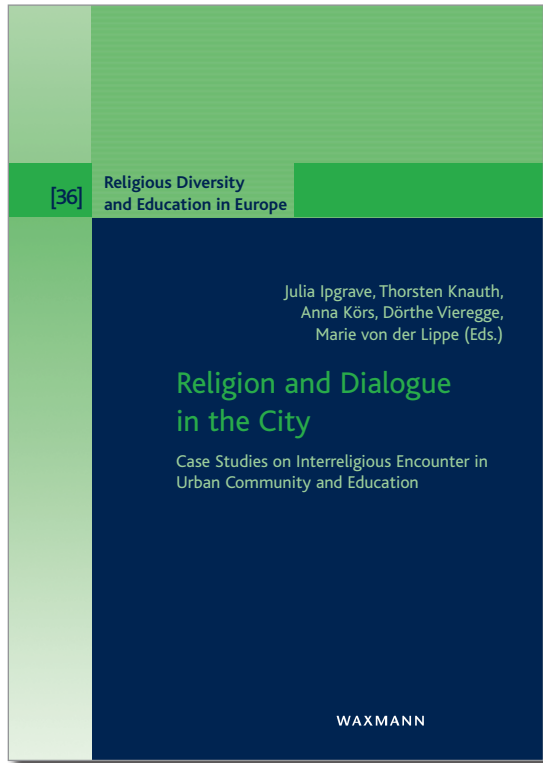


Anna Körs

How Religious Communities Respond to Religious Diversity. From Interreligious Dialogue to Interreligious Relations



Julia Ipgrave, Thorsten Knauth,
Anna Körs, Dörthe Vieregge,
Marie von der Lippe (Eds.)

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Steinfurter Str. 555
48159 Münster

Fon +49 (0)2 51 – 2 65 04-0
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How Religious Communities Respond to Religious Diversity

From Interreligious Dialogue to Interreligious Relations, Contacts, and Networks

Abstract

This article examines, from a sociological perspective, how religious communities and their congregations respond to religious diversity, that is the extent to which they enter into interreligious relations, and under what conditions they do so.¹ Starting from a ‘dialogical turn’ – in the sense of an increasing *normative* claim to a dialogical organisation of social processes aimed at recognizing diversity, and taking into account the high expectations of interreligious dialogue in particular – the article explores how far this corresponds to the *empirical* practice of religious communities. For this, it investigates the interreligious relations between individual congregations and how these are influenced by religious affiliation, religious beliefs, social integration, and context. The results are based on a representative study in which the leaders of 350 of the 547 identified congregations in Hamburg were interviewed.

The study shows that interreligious relations between congregations are a relevant phenomenon in the religious field and for its transformation in the course of pluralisation and secularisation. However, interreligious relations do not automatically result from religious diversity. Rather, they need to be developed and depend both on their position in the religious field and the degree to which the congregation is integrated into society at large. The high commitment to interreligious relations among Muslim and other non-Christian congregations in particular suggests an advanced process of integration (rather than the existence of ‘parallel societies’). Even though religious beliefs turn out not to be essential for interreligious relations, exclusivist attitudes, however, continue to be a challenge in plural societies and require further empirical research.

The contribution is structured as follows: Against the backdrop of interreligious dialogue as a normative concept, the relevance of interreligious relations is first established as the empirical object of investigation of this study (1). Based on the assumption that interreligious relations cannot be considered as isolated from the context, the city of Hamburg is outlined in its relevant aspects as the study area that is of interest here (2). Subsequently the research question of how far interreligious relations are built and how they are influenced is considered theoretically and against the background of the research status in order to derive substantiated hypotheses from it (3). This is followed by specifications on method, sample,

1 The term ‘religious community’ is used for the spatially spanning community and its organisation, while the term ‘congregation’ refers to the individual spatially determinable gatherings of its members and adherents. For the exact definition of congregations which is used in this study see section 4.1.

and the included variables (4). In the results section, the findings of the data analysis are first presented (5), before then being discussed and interpreted (6).

1. Introduction: from interreligious dialogue to interreligious relations

The religious situation in Germany has changed considerably over recent decades. In 1950, about 96 percent of the German population still belonged by membership to the Protestant or Catholic Church. Sixty years later, in 2010, the proportion of the population belonging to these two great Christian churches has declined to about 59 percent, while about 30 percent have no religious affiliation and 10 percent belong either to another Christian denomination or to another religion, with Muslims being the largest group at around 5 percent (Pollack & Müller, 2013, p. 34). According to Peter L. Berger (2011) we therefore live in an ‘age of relativity’: nothing is self-evident, neither religious affiliation as such nor membership in a particular religion. In his global diagnosis of the contemporary world he considers modernity to be characterised by ‘two pluralisms’ (2014, p. 53): ‘The first is the pluralism of different religious options co-existing in the same society (...). The second is the pluralism of the secular discourse and the various religious discourses, also co-existing in the same society.’

This situation calls for a new determination of the relationship both between the religions and between religion and secular society which applies not only for Germany, as for many other countries, but especially also for cities in which both processes – pluralisation and secularisation – can typically be found in an even more intensified way (Krech, 2008, pp. 36, 41). A central concern here is the formation of a common consensus of values, a process in which all subsystems of democratic society are challenged to cooperate and find ‘dialogical solutions’ (Hafez, 2013, p. 313). In this, dialogue is considered a promising instrument and there is an expectation that it should be able to accomplish this consensus, not only in dealing with religious diversity but also in other social areas. This is because religious pluralisation is also part of a more comprehensive process of differentiation in which society altogether becomes more complex (Berger, 2014, p. 57). The popularity and the almost inflationary use of the term dialogue – it appears more than 30 times, for example, in the coalition agreement of the German federal government, with references across the social range (CDU, CSU, SPD, 2013) – can therefore not only be traced back to its ambiguity but also correspond to an increasing social differentiation and the need for communication within and between social subsystems.

This, however, becomes more difficult the more what Richard Sennett (2012, pp. 8–9) attests to modernity is true: ‘(M)odern society is “de-skilling” people in practising cooperation. (...) (P)eople are losing the skills to deal with intractable differences as material inequality isolates them, short-term labour makes the social contacts more superficial and activates anxiety about the Other’. According to Sennett, demanding sorts of cooperation – those which try, ‘to join people who have separate

or conflicting interests, who do not feel good about each other, who are unequal, or who simply do not understand one another' – thereby belong 'more to the ideal realm of what ought to happen than to the practical realm of everyday behaviour' and call for exactly those 'dialogical skills' which have become weakened in modern society (Sennett, 2012, p. 6). In other words: In this perspective, modernity will become increasingly less able to generate what is actually needed and, with this 'downward spiral', calls for dialogue will become louder. This is precisely what interreligious dialogue is supposed to accomplish: 'to contribute to the construction of a positively valued form of cohabitation of differences, under the assumption that this positive structuring will not happen by itself; rather the opposite' (Beyer, 2014, pp. 49–50).

Interreligious dialogue has therefore developed beyond a theological concern (Amirpur, Knauth, Roloff & Weisse, 2016) to a social project, thereby virtually becoming a 'political beacon of hope' at both the European and the German level. In the 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue' the 47 member states of the Council of Europe state: 'Interreligious dialogue can also contribute to a stronger consensus within society regarding the solutions to social problems' (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 13). Interreligious dialogue is thereby considered to be part of an intercultural dialogue, propagated as a political strategy 'to prevent ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural divides', which enables us 'to deal with our different identities constructively and democratically on the basis of shared universal values' (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 2). The central position of religious communities both in interreligious and religious-secular dialogue is especially underlined here: 'Apart from the dialogue between public authorities and religious communities, which should be encouraged, there is also a need for dialogue between religious communities themselves (interreligious dialogue)'. It is also considered to be 'the responsibility of the religious communities themselves, through interreligious dialogue, to contribute to an increased understanding between different cultures' (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 13). For this, both in national committees such as the German Islam Conference ('Deutsche Islam Konferenz') and in many places in regional and local forums and networks it is referred to with a fairly high symbolic effect by the representatives of the religious communities. Furthermore, several hundred initiatives for interreligious dialogue, trialogue, or multilogue have emerged throughout Germany since the 1990s that are influenced more by interested individuals and 'simple believers' rather than by officials and leading representatives of religious communities (Klinkhammer, Frese, Satilmis & Seibert, 2011, pp. 40 and 57 f.; Hinterhuber, 2009, pp. 70, 99).

This study, however, is not limited to interreligious dialogue as a specific and demanding form of communication which aims at mutual understanding, but focuses on interreligious relations in general in the form of contacts and networks. Such less intentional forms of interaction may initially appear to be less important, but in fact they are not only significantly more widespread in everyday (urban) life (Vertovec, 2007, p. 14), but are also highly relevant for the reduction of prejudices and the promotion of tolerance (Pollack, Friedrichs, Müller, Rosta & Yendell, 2014, p. 224; Pollack & Müller, 2013, p. 46 f.). For this purpose, it is precisely the level between

religious representatives and individual believers which moves into the focus, something which has remained rather underexposed in previous research, despite its considerable size: this refers to the meso-level of the religious communities, with 14,152 congregations of the Protestant Church (EKD, 2016, p. 8), 10,817 congregations of the Catholic Church (Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 2016, p. 41), a numerically hardly comprehensible number of congregations of the many other Christian denominations, 2,231 Muslim and 111 Alevi congregations (Halm, Sauer, Schmidt & Stichs, 2012, p. 54), more than 130 Jewish (Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland, 2016; Union Progressiver Juden in Deutschland, 2016), several hundred Buddhist and Hindu, about 30 Sikh, a few hundred Bahá'í, and many more congregations throughout Germany. As great as the differences between all these congregations may be, their common ground is that people assemble in them in local places in order to practice their religion and possibly to come together for other social activities – and they therefore constitute a local *potential* for interreligious relations and interactions. The question is: To what extent do congregations actually participate in interreligious relations, and how is this influenced?

2. Research context

Assuming that the various ways of dealing with religious diversity are played out on site and differ locally (Körs, 2017), the case of Hamburg, the second-largest city in Germany, and one equipped with the powers of a city-state in the federal system of Germany, is certainly not representative. Rather, with its self-ascribed as well as attributed 'pioneering role' in dealing with religious diversity (Foroutan, Coşkun, Schwarze, Beigang, Arnold & Kalkum, 2014; Spielhaus & Herzog, 2015) Hamburg offers an interesting reference point where current developments become particularly evident.

2.1 Hamburg as highly diverse city

Shaped by Christianity, the city of Hamburg is both religiously plural and secular at the same time, thus constituting the case of a religiously relativised city. The German micro-census of 2011 shows that 33.9% of the Hamburg population of around 1.7 million belong to the Protestant Church, 10.9% to the Roman Catholic Church, 0.9% to Evangelical free churches, 1.7% to Orthodox churches, 0.1% to Jewish communities, and 3.7% to other religious communities with the status of a body under public law. Statistically, the remaining 48.8% belong either to no religion or to a religion without the status of legal recognition, among them – as can only be estimated – about 10% Muslims and Alevis and about 1% Buddhists and Hindus. In terms of religion, therefore, Hamburg is a highly diverse city, and is characterised by the fact that there is no (non-) religious absolute majority, and that the population (still) belongs to a

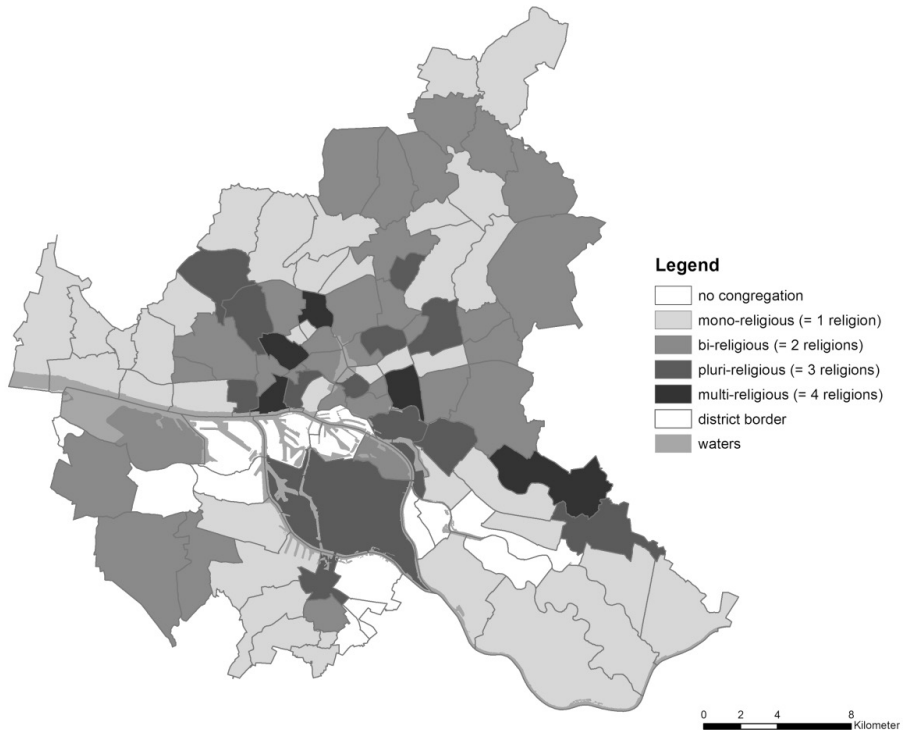


Figure 1: Diversity of congregations in urban districts of Hamburg (N = 547)
 Own figure. The map shows the diversity of the 547 identified congregations in the urban districts of Hamburg, measured by the number of religions – from the spectrum of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Alevism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Baha’ism – that are represented in each district by at least one congregation. While the light grey coloured districts are mono-religious, i. e. the located congregations all belong to the same religion and generally to Christianity, the grey and dark grey districts are diverse and either bi-, pluri- or multi-religious, i. e. the congregations located here belong to two, three or four different religions. The darker the colour of the district the more religions are represented there by congregations. In the uncoloured districts, no congregations were found, either because these are waterfront or otherwise uninhabited areas or because former congregations have merged. However, religious life can still take place in these areas, as in the ‘Ecumenical Forum’, an association of 17 different Christian churches situated in the new upcoming district HafenCity.

substantial extent to the two great Christian churches and increasingly to other religions, while the proportion of the population without religious affiliation continues to grow.

This religious diversity is also reflected at the congregation level. More than 100 different religious communities were already identified in Hamburg in the 1990s and documented along with their individual congregations (Grünberg, Slabaugh, Meister-Karanikas, 1995). In recent decades, however, religious pluralisation has

clearly increased, especially in the Muslim and Buddhist but also in the Christian spectrum outside the Protestant and Catholic churches, and we find many districts with congregations of different religions, as shown in figure 1.

2.2 Hamburg as ‘capital of interreligious dialogue’

Hamburg is not only religiously diverse in reality, but also understands itself to be the ‘capital of interreligious dialogue’, an estimation which is particularly supported by those engaged in the endeavour and which is readily promoted by the media.² While this is a self-conception which cannot be verified here, it does correspond with many events and developments that together bear witness to a diversity-open context in Hamburg which can only be sketched in the following.

Of particular interest are the so called ‘Hamburg Contracts’, concluded in 2012, in which the Hamburg Senate granted legal and in particular symbolic recognition to the Muslim and Alevi communities (Haddad, 2017; Körs, 2015). The contracts go back to a six-year negotiation process and were also supported by the Protestant and Catholic Church as well as the Jewish community, and were thus even interpreted as the ‘successful result of interreligious dialogue’ (by the Bishop of the Protestant Church, Spiegel, 30 April 2013). The political relevance of religious diversity is also visible in the current coalition agreement, which for the first time contains a separate section on ‘Dialogue with the Religious Communities’ and in which Hamburg is described as ‘an open city of interreligious dialogue’ (SPD Hamburg, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2015, p. 99). This political structure corresponds with a political culture among the population of Hamburg characterised by a comparatively high acceptance of religious diversity and, in particular, of positive attitudes towards Muslims (Dragolov, Ignácz, Delhey & Boehnke, 2014; Foroutan et al., 2014).

While this relates to recent developments, interreligious dialogue in Hamburg already enjoys a long tradition. Here the so called Hamburg model of ‘Religious education for all’, which is unique in Germany insofar as pupils are taught in classes of mixed confession and religious affiliation (rather than in separate classes), is of particularly high importance, and has led to an intensive exchange between religious communities including the Protestant and Catholic churches, the Jewish, Muslim, Alevi, and Buddhist communities (and later the Hindu and Baha’i communities) from as early as the 1990s (Weisse & Doedens, 2000). This early and, for the time unusual, instance on including non-Christian religions in providing religious education in pub-

2 For example, Hamburg was referred to as the ‘capital of interreligious dialogue’ as early as 2009 by the former Bishop of the Protestant Church visiting the Centrum-Mosque on the occasion of the city Shura Council’s tenth anniversary (Hamburger Abendblatt, 23 July 2009) as well as more recently both by the chair of the Shura Council himself and by the representative of the Tibetan Centre during a meeting of representatives from five religious communities occasioned by the Paris terrorist attacks (Die Welt, 19 January 2015).

lic schools forms an important basis for the relations between religious communities, the government and authorities.³ Furthermore, in 2000 high-ranking representatives of these communities founded the ‘Interreligious Forum Hamburg’, creating a forum where they meet regularly and use their communicative and symbolic potential ‘for tolerance and the peaceful coexistence of all groups in this society’ (Petersen, 2002, p. 28). In 2014, the ‘Secular Forum Hamburg’ was founded, in which seven organisations joined together to represent secular humanists positions of non-religious groups, and to promote tolerance and non-violence between people, cultures, ideologies and religions.⁴ In addition to the religious and secular communities and political actors, the Academy of World Religions of the University of Hamburg is another central player in the interreligious dialogue in Hamburg. It was founded in 2010 as an academic institution devoted to interreligious dialogue in research, teaching and practice (Weisse, 2009). As one of its central areas of responsibility is teacher training for “Religious education for all” it was involved from very early on in the aforementioned networks, and also in the implementation of the ‘Hamburg Contracts’, which provide for a reordering of religious education. Though this outline is limited to a few key aspects of the development of interreligious dialogue in Hamburg, it nonetheless indicates the strong presence that it has throughout the city.⁵

2.3 Hamburg and its experiences with fundamentalism

However, Hamburg has also had numerous experiences with religious fundamentalism. This goes back in particular to the 9/11 attacks in New York in 2001 when Hamburg, as the city where the attacks were planned, became known through the media for the ‘Hamburg terror cell’. This reputation may have gradually disappeared from the public consciousness, particularly through the impact of many later acts of Islamist terrorism in other cities that has revealed the global scope of the threat. Nevertheless, as Manfred Murck, the former head of the Hamburg Constitutional Protection (‘Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz’) states, 9/11 represents a watershed in the awareness of the threat: ‘I believe that September 11th will always be connected with Hamburg’, and he also sees ‘a particular responsibility to remain alert’ (Frankfurter Rundschau, 31 August 2011).

In fact, Islamist terrorism and extremist political Salafism are considered as the greatest challenges currently facing Hamburg (Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg, 2016).

3 In Germany, religious education in public schools is guaranteed by Article 7 Paragraph 3 of the Basic Law and is taught ‘in accordance with the principles of the religious communities’.

4 Retrieved April 11, 2017 from <http://www.sf-hh.org/home/index.php>

5 At the same time, this also raises questions which need more reflection but must be left unconsidered here, such as the representation of the persons and organisations involved, the non-participation of religious communities and in particular of many Christian faiths, or how non-religious worldviews are dealt with.

Recent years have seen the closure of the Taiba-Mosque in St. Georg in 2010, the former gathering place of the 9/11 attackers which had been under observation since then as a ‘symbolic location for jihadists from all over Germany’ and a ‘centre of radicalisation’ (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 10 August 2010). Salafist Islamists strengthened their propaganda strategies and also tried to reach non-Muslims by publicly distributing copies of the Qur’an throughout the city on several occasions (*Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg*, 2016, p. 41). In 2013, extremist Islamist youths in several schools in the east of the city raised concerns and triggered public debate (*Landesinstitut Lehrerbildung und Schulentwicklung*, 2013). Such events show the limits of interreligious dialogue and can counteract it, but in practice they have contributed to its strengthening and development in Hamburg, as was the case in many other places especially after the attacks of 9/11 (Halafoff, 2013, p. 2).⁶

To sum up, therefore, the building of interreligious relations between congregations which form the focus of our study, takes place (or not) within the configuration of a (still) Christian and mainly Protestant, religiously diverse and secular society; a policy of integration based on the cooperation of the government and religious communities; a history of varied interreligious activities and networks supported by numerous actors; cultural openness among the population; countervailing forces such as the presence of fundamentalist groups; and the fact that, within the confines of a city state, all of this occurs in relative proximity. This context is taken into account in the following, both for the establishment of hypotheses as well as for the interpretation of the results.

3. Theoretical considerations, research status, and hypotheses

In this section, the central issues of this contribution – the extent to which interreligious relations between congregations are actually present and the degree to which they are influenced by religious affiliation, beliefs, and social integration – are to be looked into both theoretically and against the background of the research status. For this purpose, studies from the German context are referred to as far as possible; however since research into congregations is comparatively limited, studies from other countries, especially from the USA, have also been considered.⁷ From these, four hypotheses for examination are derived, one regarding distribution and three regarding statistical relationships.

6 See also the article by Husebø and Johannessen in this volume who also find an increase in interreligious activities after the terrorist attacks in Oslo in 2011.

7 Since theories of secularisation and de-institutionalisation dominated the field for decades, German sociology of religion has primarily dealt either with the great trends of religious developments in a macro-perspective or with individual religiosity in a micro-perspective. In contrast, the meso-level of social forms of religion, including congregations, has been little considered for a long time, but has recently gained in importance (for an overview of research on congregations in Germany see Körs, 2018a).

3.1 Interreligious relations

A religious community emerges specifically through the shared creed of a group, as distinct from others, and is therefore, with regard to its core function, oriented towards practising the shared faith in community. Thus, the available empirical studies on the Protestant Church in Germany demonstrate that 39 and 23 percent respectively of the Protestant congregations hold interreligious contacts with Muslim or Jewish congregations, if they exist in the local environment (Rebenstorf, Ahrens & Wegner, 2015, p. 62) and, furthermore, that interreligious contacts hold a rather low place in the list of expectations, both of members of the Protestant Church and of those without a denomination (Huber, Friedrich & Steinacker, 2006, p. 457). In contrast, a representative study for Muslim congregations in Germany shows that more than three quarters of congregations (77%) have some cooperation with churches or other congregations, leaving it to the interviewees themselves to determine what constituted such cooperation (Halm et al., 2012, p. 113) so that even some contacts geared towards the everyday world (e. g. neighbourhood contacts) or contacts related to a specific occasion (e. g. neighbourhood festival) might have been included. However, institutionalised forms of cooperation seem to be more infrequent. Thus about one third of the congregations in a nationwide survey of local Muslim congregations in Sweden (n = 105, out of 147 identified congregations) state that ‘congregation representatives participate in some joint organ for cooperation and better understanding among different religions’ (34%), with a substantial 87 percent stating that, in principle, they would be open to it (Borell & Gerdner, 2013, p. 564). Here it already becomes clear that interreligious relations are not equally distributed among the communities but influenced by religious factors (see below) as well as other conditions. Among these are also contextual factors, such as the simple fact that interreligious relations first of all demand the local representation of religious communities of different faiths and in that regard there is an enormous difference between rural and urban areas (Rebenstorf et al., 2015, p. 61). Therefore, particularly in congregations in cities with a high diversity there is also a stronger ‘concern for bridging differences’, while this is hardly or to a much lesser extent a topic in congregations in culturally rather uniform cities (Ammerman, 2005, p. 130). Against the background of the Hamburg context and its characteristics described in section 2 it seems to be plausible to assume that this considerably promotes local interreligious relations, leading to the following hypothesis:

H1: The majority of the congregations have interreligious relations, especially in the form of contacts and, to a lesser extent, in the form of networks.

3.2 Interreligious relations and religious affiliation

As has already been noted above, interreligious relations in Muslim congregations in Germany are clearly more widespread than in Protestant congregations. This is sup-

ported and can be generalised through further empirical investigations indicating that non-Christian congregations in particular are often engaged in interreligious relations. In her sociological analysis of 549 (out of 300,000) American congregations, Nancy T. Ammerman (2005, p. 130) points out: ‘Clearly, congregations outside the Christian tradition have carried the major responsibility for maintaining communication across religious lines.’ This, on the one hand, has its reason in mathematical reality, and in the fact that minorities have statistically better chances to get in contact with majorities than vice versa. On the other hand, it is also rooted in cultural reality and the fact that the bridging function of interreligious relations is not only in the interest of minorities, but that they themselves are first of all expected to promote their integration which is why the burden for bridging tends to fall on them (Ammerman, 2005, p. 111). This imbalance also corresponds with findings at the individual level: ‘Among different religious affiliations, religious others [i. e. not Protestants, Catholics or Jews, AK] and those without affiliation are the most likely to have interreligious friendships’ (Scheitle & Smith, 2011, p. 420).

Nonetheless, on the contrary, the National Congregations Study Switzerland, based on a representative survey of 1,040 (out of 5,734) congregations, found that the officially recognised Christian congregations show a higher level of interreligious engagement than the non-recognised Christian as well as the non-Christian congregations. The measurement here, however, was the celebration of religious festivities together with other traditions and was accordingly interpreted as a willingness to dialogue (Stolz, Chaves, Monnot & Amiotte-Suchet, 2011, p. 42). Such ‘structural asymmetries’ (Klinkhammer et al., 2011, p. 367) were even noted for interreligious dialogue initiatives in Germany, in so far as the impulses to found such initiatives proceed most strongly from the churches and there are clearly more Christians than Muslims among the participants (Klinkhammer et al., 2011, pp. 44–45, 56–57).

Therefore it seems plausible to assume that interreligious engagement which aims at promoting mutual understanding, such as, for example, the shared participation in religious ceremonies or dialogue circles, may proceed more strongly from the Christian majority (which cannot be examined here) while, conversely, interreligious relations without this requirement are cultivated primarily by non-Christian congregations which are in a minority situation. Religious affiliation would therefore be significant in so far as it reflects the social position of the community in the religious field and in society, and interreligious relations would be a medium for their integration in that sense. It is therefore assumed:

H2: Non-Christian congregations are more likely to have interreligious relations than Christian congregations.

3.3 Interreligious relations and religious beliefs

Interreligious relations are also considered to be an issue of religious beliefs which 'provide a moral framework from which to interpret events and evaluate others' (Merino, 2010, p. 234) and thus shape views towards other religious traditions and make ties more or less likely to form. It seems important to notice, as Tuntiya (2005, p. 167) points out, that religious beliefs and religious affiliation correlate but are two 'distinct dimensions of religiosity' (Steenland et al., 2000, p. 296, quoted according to Tuntiya, 2005), referring to the finding that religious affiliation does not play a significant role in shaping intolerant responses to unpopular groups but that belief in the literal truth of the Bible serves as a much better predictor of intolerance (Tuntiya, 2005, p. 168). Pointing in the same direction, Doktor (2002, p. 561) concludes from a representative sample within the project 'New Religious Movements in Poland' that it is not general religiosity, that is whether one is a (practicing) believer or a non-believer, that influences hostility, but '(r)eligious particularism and authoritarianism, as opposed to general religiosity, have a significant influence on hostility' towards controversial religious groups. This indicates that religious beliefs influence attitudes, and presumably also behaviour, towards the (religiously) Other, but that these cannot be concluded from religious affiliations or religiosity per se and must rather be examined separately.

In doing so, the claim to truth is considered decisive for attitudes opposed to religious diversity and presumably, in connection with this, to interreligious relations. Referring to the 'tripolar typology' developed in theological debates (Schmidt-Leukel, 2005), we can differentiate whether either only one's own religion is considered true; whether one's own religion is considered superior but truth is at least partly attributed to other religions as well; or whether all religions are considered equivalent in terms of their claim to truth. That this 'exclusivism-inclusivism-pluralism typology' has become the prevailing intellectual framework for countless academic debates, especially in theology is, according to McCarthy (2007, p. 29), due to the fact that it not only is a structuring instrument but also a 'subtly normative framework. That is, what was presented as an organizing typology appeared to serve as an evolutionary scheme of inexorable progress' assuming that exclusivism is incompatible with interreligious relations which rather require some form of the pluralistic position.

This scheme has also been adapted for empirical research, and in fact a number of studies point in this direction. Using a subsample of the National Congregations Study in the United States and analyzing the hyperlinks of 231 congregational websites as a measure of social and symbolic boundaries, Scheitle (2005, p. 18) argues that theologically conservative congregations with more exclusivist beliefs limit interaction with competing groups and verifies that they do include fewer religious groups within their boundaries. On the individual level, numerous studies proved that theological exclusivism is associated with negative attitudes and prejudices towards others and reduces contacts with non-group members: Smith (2007, p. 349), drawing on data from the 2000 Religion and Politics Survey, found that Americans who favour

religious congregations at local level forming alliances among different religions are more inclusive and pluralistically oriented whereas people who oppose such alliances among different religions are more religiously exclusive. Merino (2010, p. 239) showed that American ‘individuals with exclusive theological beliefs have less contact with non-Christians’. Furthermore, ‘(t)heological exclusivism is very strongly associated with more negative views of religious diversity and decreased willingness to include non-Christians in community religious life’ (Merino, 2010, p. 243). For the European context, a representative study of the populations in Germany, Denmark, France, Netherlands, and Portugal reveals a fairly consistent and highly significant negative relationship across all these countries between religious dogmatism, that is the belief that there is only one true religion, and attitudes towards Muslims (Pollack, 2014, p. 52). Similarly, a representative study on religion and group-focused enmity in Europe shows that the belief that one’s own religion is the only true one is most strongly correlated with intolerance towards Jews and Muslims as well as other groups (Küpper & Zick, 2010, p. 44; see also Küpper & Zick, 2014, p. 160).

Seemingly, both theoretical arguments and empirical evidence are striking in the association which they reveal between exclusivism and avoidance of interreligious relations and, accordingly, between pluralism and the support of interreligious relations. It is therefore assumed:

H3: Congregations in which a religiously dogmatic attitude is represented are less likely to have interreligious relations than congregations in which a religiously pluralistic attitude to other religions is represented.

3.4 Interreligious relations and social integration

It has been assumed above that primarily non-Christian congregations are striving for interreligious relations because of their minority situation and their efforts to integrate. In this sense, interreligious relations would be a resource resulting from interaction. This corresponds to the basic idea of social capital (Putnam, 2000), which claims that the concrete experience of connections with each other and social networks can create a sense of belonging which helps to build communities and contributes to shared values within society as a whole. From this perspective, interreligious relations in the form of contacts and networks can be understood as bridge-building social capital, which makes it possible to participate in the religious field and in society. With regard to the question of how this comes about, one can draw upon social network theory (Stegbauer, 2008) which shifts the focus from actor-centered perspectives and their characteristics to social relations as the central explanatory variable. From this perspective interreligious relations would build upon already existing social relations, and the assumption is:

H4: Socially well integrated congregations are more likely to have interreligious relations than socially less integrated congregations.

4. Method and data basis

4.1 Sample

The data underlying this study was generated in a survey of congregations in 2013. To that end, a database of congregations in Hamburg was compiled using the above-quoted lexicon (Grünberg et al., 1995), address lists provided by umbrella organisations, extensive internet research, and the ‘snow ball’ method. All congregations first received a short letter and a telephone call requesting their participation in the study. Since social relations often come with positive connotations and in order to avoid the ‘effect of social desirability’ as well as the effect that those without interreligious contacts do not feel addressed, the letter did not specifically mention interreligious relations but only referred to a survey of religious diversity in Hamburg in general terms. The survey consisted of computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) of the leader or primary person responsible for the congregation, building on the key informant methodology (Frenk, Anderson, Chaves & Martin, 2011).

Here a congregation is defined as a group of people who belong to a shared religion – from the spectrum of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Alevism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Baha’ism – and who regularly gather in a real place in Hamburg to practice this religion together. This understanding corresponds with the congregational studies in the USA: ‘Congregations – in the usual sense of the term – are places where ordinary people gather (...). If congregations do nothing else, they provide a way for people to worship’ (Ammerman, 2009, pp. 564–565).⁸ In addition to having a religious purpose and a real place, there was the requirement for the congregation to assign itself to one of the aforementioned religions. Thus, the present study concentrates precisely on such major religions. Other existing groups (from the spectrum of esoterism, Masonic Lodges, new religious movements, Scientology and others), which are religious or spiritual in their own self-understanding and are potentially relevant for interreligious understanding (Beyer, 2014, p. 59) were not included in the survey and cannot be considered here.

As presented in table 1, a total of 608 congregations were researched and included in the list in the run-up to the survey. This unadjusted address list was reduced in the phase of first phone contacts to 547 (population I). There were then 84 congregations whose existence was assumed but with whom no contact could be made for the reasons outlined in the list, meaning that, out of this population I, 463 congregations could be reached by phone during field time (population II). In the census, a total of 350 congregations were in fact surveyed, thus reaching a participation rate of 64 or

8 Or as Chaves (2004, pp. 1–2) formulates more precisely: ‘By “congregation” I mean a social institution in which individuals who are not all religious specialists gather in physical proximity to one another, frequently and at regularly scheduled intervals, for activities and events with explicitly religious content and purpose, and in which there is continuity over time and in the individuals who gather, the location of the gathering, and the nature of the activities and events at each gathering’.

Table 1: Response rate and reasons for failure

	Total	%	%	%
	Quantity	Address	Popula-	Popula-
		List	tion I	tion II
Congregations in address list	608	100.0		
not a congregation (but an umbrella organi- sation, cultural association etc.)	13	2.1		
congregation no longer existing	17	2.8		
twice registered congregation	17	2.8		
congregation outside Hamburg	14	2.3		
∑ data cleansing	61	10.0		
Population I	547	90.0	100.0	
without contact information	12	2.0	2.2	
without phone number	20	3.3	3.7	
wrong phone/fax number	23	3.8	4.2	
nobody reached	14	2.3	2.6	
only voice mail reached	15	2.5	2.6	
∑ failure without contact to the congregation	84	13.8	15.4	
Population II	463	76.2	86.7	100.0
<i>Phone Contact comes about but ...</i>				
target person not reached during field time	37	6.1	6.8	8.0
interview not carried out for reasons of time	7	1.2	1.3	1.5
interview not carried out for reasons of language	15	2.5	2.7	3.2
interview not carried out for other reasons	24	4.0	4.4	5.2
interview interrupted for reasons of time	1	0.2	0.2	0.2
interview interrupted for other reasons	1	0.2	0.2	0.2
refusal for reasons of time	4	0.7	0.7	0.9
refusal for reasons of contents	2	0.3	0.4	0.4
refusal for other reasons or without reason	18	3.0	3.3	3.9
refusal because it was a phone interview	4	0.7	0.7	0.9
∑ failures with contact to the congregation	113	18.6	20.7	24.4
Conducted interviews and response rate	350	57.6	64.0	75.6

76 percent, which is to be considered rather high for telephone surveys. The failures are rarely due to explicit refusals but, for the most part, rather to the non-accessibility of the target person. In addition, language barriers did not play any significant role. The survey was conducted only in the German language based on clarification by pre-contacting the umbrella organisations. The religious composition of the sample matches that of the population, which suggests that it can be considered representative of Hamburg's congregations (table 2).

Table 2: Response rate according to religious tradition

Congregations affiliated to ...	population I N=547		population II N=463		conducted interviews n=350	
	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%
Christianity	415	75.9	352	76.0	266	76.0
thereof ...						
Protestant	127	23.2	125	27.0	101	28.9
Catholic	43	7.9	38	8.2	24	6.9
Other Christian denominations	245	44.8	189	40.8	141	40.3
Islam	64	11.7	53	11.4	43	12.3
Buddhism	46	8.4	41	8.9	25	7.1
Judaism	3	0.5	2	0.4	2	0.6
Hinduism	5	0.9	3	0.6	3	0.9
Alevism	4	0.7	3	0.6	3	0.9
Sikhism	3	0.5	2	0.4	1	0.3
Baha'ism	7	1.3	7	1.5	7	2.0

For data analysis and sufficient case numbers, the congregations were categorised per their religious affiliation into six groups, namely, Protestant, Catholic, congregations of other Christian denominations, Muslim, Buddhist and congregations of other non-Christian religions (i. e. Judaism, Alevism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Baha'ism).

4.2 Dependent variables: interreligious contacts and networks

In order to measure the interreligious relations the respondents were asked, on the one hand, whether and, if so, how often their congregation had had contacts with congregations of different religions over the past 12 months. The question was posed separately for all the religions included⁹ and the seven possible variables were grouped according to whether contacts were reported with at least one such community, or not. The yes/no variable thus generated distinguishing congregations with and without interreligious contacts is viewed here as a dependent dichotomous variable. To include more institutionalised forms of interreligious relations, the respondents were also asked, on the other hand, whether the congregation had participated regularly in

9 When the answer was 'yes' and it was said for example that one's own Muslim congregation had had contact with Protestant congregations, a set of questions about the number of congregations, contact frequency, the participants (leadership and/or community) and the content of the contact was asked, followed by an overall assessment of all interreligious contacts. The results of these questions provide more detailed information on the quantity and quality of the contacts and are given in part in section 5, but are mainly left unconsidered in this contribution.

a network or circle including different religions over the past 12 months.¹⁰ This yes/no question was included as a second dichotomous dependent variable.

4.3 Independent variables: religious affiliation, religious beliefs and social integration

According to the theoretical consideration the extent to which religious and/or social aspects are relevant for the building of interreligious relations between congregations is to be considered. While social integration was surveyed using factual items, religious beliefs were measured using attitude questions. In the latter case, the interviewed congregations' leaders spoke for themselves, and their own attitudes need not match those of the congregations' members. Nonetheless, the attitudes of its leadership are assumed to be reflected in the actions of a congregation and thus serve as a viable indicator, since they especially shape its external relations.

Religious affiliation

Religious affiliation was determined through the question 'To what religion does your congregation belong?', and an assignment to one of the eight mentioned religions was possible. This question was asked at the onset of the interviews and it was compulsory to answer it, i. e. if, according to the self-perception, the interviewee was not associated with a congregation and/or if this could not be assigned to one of the eight religions then the case was not included in the target group and the interview was ended. Since it emerged in the pre-tests that either the concept of a 'congregation' or the concept of a 'religion' was not always considered applicable, it was explained on demand that 'congregation' could also mean community, group, association for collective practice of faith by their members, and that the term 'religion' also includes religious world-views, persuasions, traditions, or teachings. For further differentiation, this was followed by a question about the denomination or persuasion of tradition.

Religious beliefs

The construct of 'religious beliefs' was operationalised first of all through the variable of truth claims. For our survey, we distinguish four types of viewing religion and its truth: exclusivist, inclusivist, pluralistic, and dialogical. The exclusivist view of religion assumes that truth can only exist in one religion, which is therefore superior to all others, and was measured by the statement: 'Truth only exists in a single religion'.

¹⁰ If this was affirmed, questions about the name or designation of the network, its content, activities etc., and the participants were triggered.

An inclusivist position, by contrast, admits to truth being present in other religions, but regards its own as superior: 'Truth exists in many religions, but one religion is superior to the others in its truth'. Both perspectives are characterised by the assumption that one's own religion is considered superior and can therefore be understood as a mono-religious understanding of religion. A pluralistic stance regards all religions as equally valid, a position that was expressed in the statement: 'Truth exists in many religions, and all religions are equal in this regard'. To this classic triad (see section 3.3) we added a fourth position that holds that truth can only be approached in an exchange between the religions, hence: 'Truth goes beyond all religions, but we can approach it through discussion between them'. This interreligious or dialogical position may be related to other positions and does not necessarily mean that all religions must be regarded as equally valid, but considers interreligious exchanges positively and integrates plurality into the process of approaching the truth (see also Ziebertz & Kay, 2006, p. 51). The four statements given here were read to respondents with the request: 'Please tell me which one you personally most agree with'.

The concept of 'religious beliefs', on the other hand, was operationalised by the variable of the understanding of mission, which can also influence the external relations of congregations. Mission understood and practised as a form of religious communication aiming to actively advertise one's own religion and proselytise among the adherents of others appears to be in conceptional opposition to interreligious relations. However, mission understood as a dialogical form of communication that encounters individuals in their everyday lives, living their faith and thus providing the impetus to reflect on religious questions, can, in turn, foster interreligious relations between congregations.¹¹ Against this backdrop, the understanding of mission here was operationalised as a 'convincing imperative' ('you should advertise your own religion to convince others of it') as opposed to a 'dialogical imperative' ('you should talk about your own religion and exchange views without seeking to convince others'). Where neither imperative is followed and religious exchange is regarded instead either as unnecessary or even undesirable, this is operationalised as a third position: 'There is no point having an exchange about religions because everyone has their own religious views.' To group the congregations with regard to this point, respondents were again asked to indicate which of the three statements they most agreed with.

In addition religious attitudes were surveyed with two items for which agreement or rejection were requested on a 4-point scale (from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'). On the one hand, the argument that one's own faith becomes weakened through interreligious relations was surveyed with the item 'One's own faith can be weakened by contacts with congregations of other religions'; on the other hand,

11 The concept of mission is primarily terminus technicus for the spread of the Christian faith, but it can also be applied to other religions. The relationship between mission and dialogue, which was of interest here, became the object of theological discussion, beginning with the Second Vatican Council, and gained new relevance in debates on the pluralistic theory of religion (Krämer, 2012; Lienemann-Perrin, 2007).

the argument of there being too great a difference was surveyed with the item ‘The religious views of congregations from different religions are so diverging that contact is fundamentally difficult’.

Social integration

The indicator used to survey the social integration of the congregations was the frequency of their interaction with social actors outside the sphere of religious communities. We listed ten institutions from the fields of politics and government, cultural life, social policy, education, business, administration and leisure, asking whether the congregation had been in contact with them over the past 12 months and, if so, how frequently they had been (on a 5-point scale from ‘very rarely’ to ‘very frequently’). In addition, we posed the open question of whether there were any institutions other than those named with which the community was in contact. Thus, contacts with a total of 11 institutions could be recorded. For a multivariate analysis, the separate items were combined into a mean index of ‘social integration’ (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.897).

5. Results of analyses: associations between interreligious relations and religious affiliation, religious beliefs, and social integration

We will now present the findings of the empirical analyses, beginning with the distribution of the dependent and independent variables and their bivariate associations. This is followed by a multivariate test of the associations proposed in the hypotheses.

5.1 Univariate analyses

In total, 46.4 percent of the congregations report interreligious contact while 53.6 percent report no such contacts. In addition, we find that most congregations with interreligious contacts are in touch with congregations of one other religion (24.6%), while only 12 percent respectively 9.7 percent report contacts with two or more other religions. Interreligious contact to most congregations thus means crossing the divide to one other faith, with only a small minority being active in multi-religious relations. Only a small minority of congregations – 16.8 percent – also reports involvement in interreligious networks. With these results, the first hypothesis that the majority of congregations has interreligious relations is only slightly missed, and it is true that these are primarily interreligious contacts, whereas networks are much less frequent.

Regarding truth claims, 38.5 percent of respondents agreed with a dialogical understanding of truth. This is a significantly larger share than the exclusivist

(18.6%), inclusivist (17.5%) and pluralistic (17.8%) stances which are distributed roughly equally. A minority of 7.7 percent of respondents agreed with none of the options surveyed. Combining the four positions into a dichotomy of mono-religious (exclusivist and inclusivist) vs plural (dialogical and pluralistic) stances, the plural view is dominant, accounting for 56.3 percent of the congregations. Regarding the understanding of mission, roughly a third of congregations (32%) state that mission should be conducted with the goal of converting adherents of other religions, while almost two thirds (63.7%) find that mission should be conducted as dialogue. Only a small minority of 2.3 percent view exchange between religions as unnecessary while just 2 percent cannot agree with any of the statements proposed. With this distribution of one third/two thirds, a dialogical understanding of mission is clearly dominant in the congregations. The view that interreligious relations could weaken one's own faith is considered as not applicable at all by more than three quarters of the congregations whose leaders 'strongly disagree' (77.9%) and is shared by only 5.4 percent who '(strongly) agree'. The view that interreligious relations are fundamentally difficult because of diverging religious attitudes is shared, after all, by somewhat less than half of the congregations whose leaders '(strongly) agree' (45.5%).

Regarding social integration, we find that the surveyed congregations are, on average, in contact with 5.5 institutions from different social sectors. Roughly half of the congregations report contacts with between six and eight (23.2%) or nine to eleven (26%) different institutions, indicating a relatively high degree of social integration. A further quarter reports contacts to between three and five institutions (23.8%), which can be interpreted as a medium level of integration. The remaining fourth consists of poorly integrated congregations reporting contacts with just one or two institutions (18.9%) and isolated ones reporting no contacts at all (8%). More than two-thirds of the congregations surveyed are (at least 'very rarely') in contact with schools (67.3%), more than one-third of them 'frequently' or 'very frequently' (35.2%). The only institutions that even more congregations (69.7%) are in contact with are public authorities, though the intensity reported here is somewhat lower. Over half of the congregations surveyed report contacts with cultural institutions (56.3%) and the police (56.1%) and roughly half with neighbourhood organisations (50.7%), civic associations (50.4%) and educational institutions other than schools (50.1%). Slightly less than half report contacts with businesses (46.1%) and political parties (46.2%). Contacts with sports clubs are far less prevalent, reported by only a third of congregations (33.2%). Beyond this, 27 percent of congregations also report contacts with institutions not listed in our survey, with social care predominating.¹²

12 The most frequently named were hospitals, retirement homes and other caregiving institutions, children's and youth activities, a broad spectrum of social service providers, volunteer organisations (e.g. fire brigades), clubs (e.g. singing clubs, cultural associations or rifle clubs) and occasionally environmental and animal welfare organisations, charitable foundations, sailors' aid associations, labour unions, media organisations, prisons and the military.

5.2 Bivariate analyses

Hypothesis 2 assumed that interreligious relations would primarily be found among non-Christian congregations. As figure 2 shows this is confirmed inasmuch as Muslim congregations and congregations of other non-Christian religions clearly tend to be more often involved in interreligious contacts and networks when compared to Protestant and Catholic congregations. However, this is not the case for Buddhist congregations, which are underrepresented in interreligious relations, and applies even less to Christian congregations beyond the two main established churches, who show the lowest level of interreligious relations.

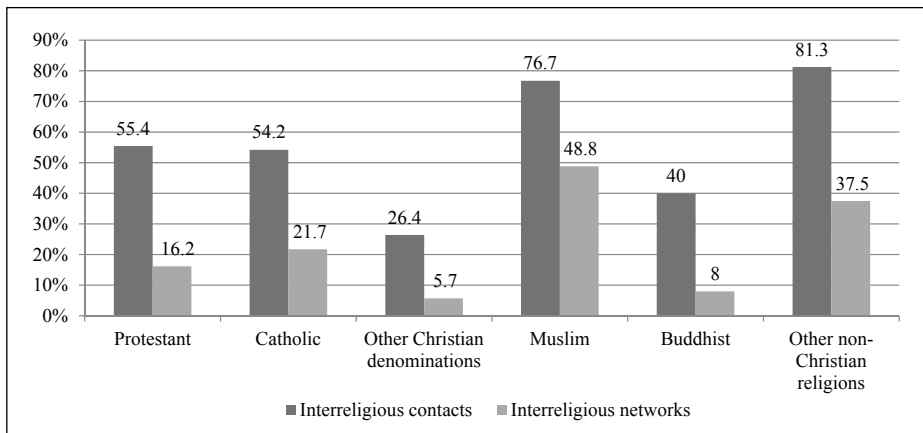


Figure 2: Interreligious contacts and networks, according to religious affiliation

Figure 3 shows the relation between interreligious contacts and the religious beliefs of the surveyed congregations. We find, according to hypothesis 3, that those congregations whose representatives have an exclusivist stance have the fewest interreligious relations, though one third of them still report some. The highest level of interreligious relations is found among congregations whose representatives support a pluralistic stance, while those supporting inclusivistic or dialogical positions are at a similar level to each other. However, a statistically significant association between both interreligious contacts and networks and the truth claim can only be noted when differentiating between an exclusivist versus a non-exclusivist (i. e. inclusivistic or pluralistic or dialogical) attitude so that this dichotomised variable is included into the multivariate analysis.

Furthermore, a significant association can be found between interreligious relations and the understanding of mission, with contacts being more likely in congregations who understand mission as a dialogical process. We also find that the view that the contact with congregations of other religions weakens one's own faith impairs interreligious contacts; and the view that such contact is fundamentally difficult because religious views are too diverging impairs both interreligious contacts and participation in interreligious networks.

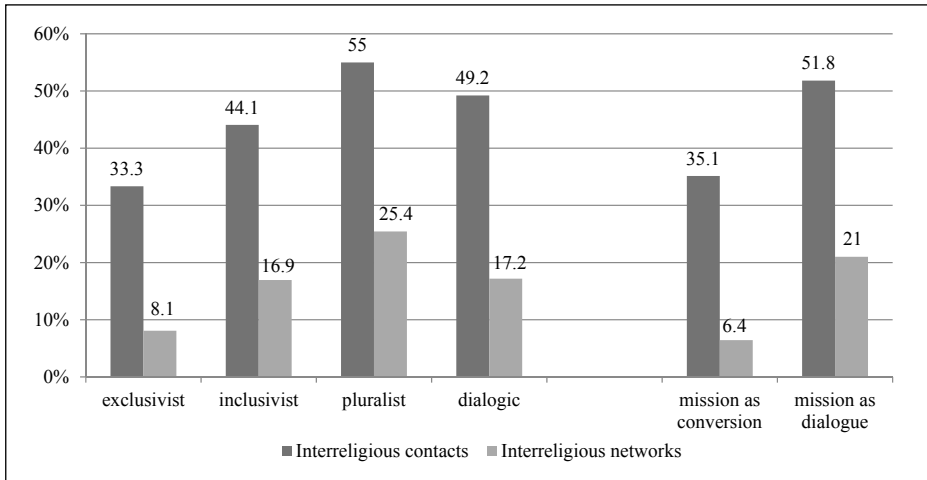


Figure 3: Interreligious contacts and networks, according to religious beliefs

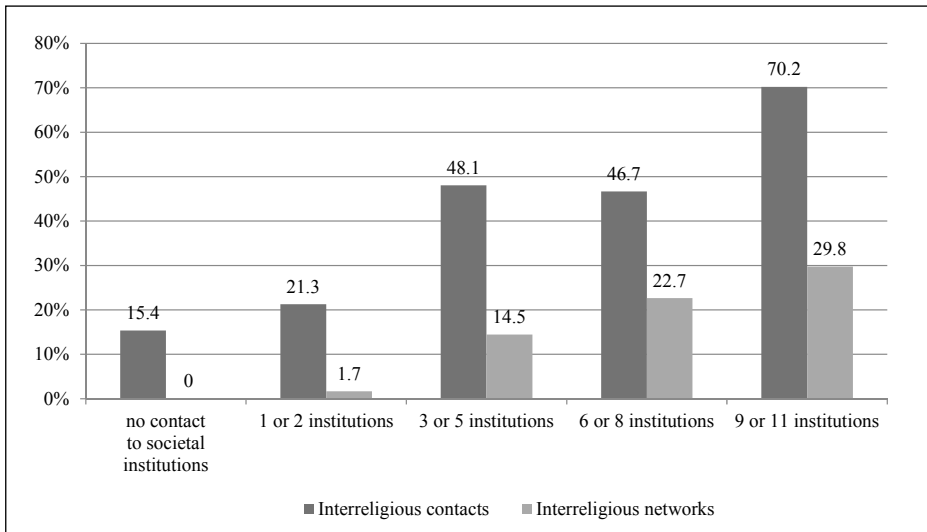


Figure 4: Interreligious contacts and networks, according to societal contacts

As assumed in hypothesis 4, we also find a significant and almost linear correlation between interreligious contacts and networks and social contacts: the more social relations exist, the more likely the congregation is also to have interreligious ones (figure 4). Thus the bivariate consideration demonstrates that all the included variables influence the interreligious relations of congregations to some extent. With this, the question arises as to which associations remain stable even when the variables are examined at the same time, and this is addressed in the following multivariate analysis.

Multivariate analyses

The extent to which the interreligious contacts and networks of the congregations are influenced by the included predictors described above is examined in two logistical regression analyses.

Table 3: Odd ratios for logistic regression: interreligious relations predicted by indicators of religious affiliation, religious beliefs, and societal integration

Interreligious relations 1 = interreligious relations with at least one congregation of different religion 0 = no interreligious relations	Interreligious contacts	Interreligious networks
Religion (ref.: Protestant)		
Catholic	3.263	4.089*
Other Christian denominations	.811	1.811
Islam	4.345**	8.163***
Buddhism	2.684	2.033
Other non-Christian religions	15.086**	12.060**
Exclusivist truth claim (ref.: tolerant: inclusivist/pluralistic/dialogical)	.776	1.236
Convincing missionary claim (ref.: dialogical)	1.215	1.767
Religious beliefs are too different 4-point scale, 1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree	1.093	1.108
Weakening of one's own faith 4-point scale, 1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree	.518*	.721
Societal contacts Scale from 0 = no societal contacts to 11 = contacts to institutions from 11 different societal fields	1.302***	1.350**
N	264	263
R-square according to Nagelkerke	.341	.298

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 3 shows that interreligious relations are entered into more by non-Christian congregations, that is, by Muslim congregations and especially by those of the other non-Christian religions, and that Catholic congregations are more likely to be involved in interreligious networks than Protestant congregations. While this connection between religious affiliation and interreligious relations, as assumed in hypothesis 2, proves stable, this does not apply to religious beliefs in the multivariate consideration. Hypothesis 3 that religiously more open congregations (i. e. with an inclusivist, pluralistic or dialogical stance towards other religions) have more interreligious relations than congregations with a religiously dogmatic attitude (i. e. with an exclusivist stance towards others religions) can therefore not be confirmed, neither for interreligious contacts nor for networks. Similarly, the view that the differences

between religions prevent interreligious contacts has no significant effect on actual interreligious relations. Only where the view is expressed that interreligious relations weaken one's own faith (which is rarely the case, see results above) does this have a weak negative association with interreligious contacts. However, we find a second stable and highly significant association between interreligious relations of congregations and their societal contacts: Socially well-integrated congregations are more likely to have interreligious relations, both contacts and networks, than socially less well-integrated congregations. Overall, there is no fundamental difference between interreligious contacts and networks, which are basically influenced by the same included predictors. However, the explanatory power of the predictors for interreligious contacts is, at 34.1 percent, higher than for interreligious networks at 29.8 percent. Religious affiliation and social integration are thus relevant factors for the explanation of the interreligious relations of the congregations which, at the same time, are also determined by further influencing factors which have yet to be explored.

6. Conclusions and discussion

The study shows that interreligious relations between congregations are neither omnipresent as an automatic outcome of religious diversity nor are they a marginal phenomenon. Looking at the data, the slight majority of congregations do not have any interreligious relations at all and those who do mainly cross the boundary only to one single other religion. Given that Hamburg is a religiously highly diverse city and that interreligious dialogue enjoys a high profile in politics and at a city-wide institutional level (see section 2) this may be disenchanting at first sight. In fact, interactions in the religious field seem to organise themselves following the homophily principle, as the tendency to form connections with others who are similar, and interreligious relations are not at the forefront of activities.¹³ However, taking into account that congregations are first formed to practice one's own religion and that the establishment of interreligious relations might not be seen as one of the core competences of congregations, interreligious relations are still a widespread and relevant phenomenon in the religious field and for its transformation in the course of pluralisation and secularisation.

In this context, there are significant differences among the congregations of the different religious traditions as assumed in hypothesis 2. It is especially striking that the congregations of non-Christian religions, with the exception of Buddhist congregations, clearly maintain interreligious contacts more frequently than Christian congregations. This particularly applies when compared with the Christian congregations

13 As shown elsewhere (Körs, 2018b), the comparison with *intra*religious contacts – that is, contacts between congregations of the same religion – reveals that 75% are in contact with congregations of *other* persuasions (for example Protestant with Catholic congregations) and almost all congregations (95%) have contacts with congregations of the *same* persuasion (for example Sunni congregations among themselves). Moreover, *intra*religious contacts are also judged more positively than interreligious relations.

beyond the Protestant and Catholic churches, which are by far the least interreligiously active. The trend to similar findings is also revealed in other studies (Rebenstorf et al., 2015, p. 62; Halm et al., 2012, p. 113; Ammerman, 2005, p. 130). This imbalance can be explained by the fact that minorities, in principle, have statistically better chances of building interreligious relations with the majority than vice versa. Since, however, the minority congregations behave quite differently here, there must be other reasons for especially the Muslim and other non-Christian congregations to prove themselves interreligiously active. An obvious reason is that Muslims – unlike many of the Christian minority denominations and the Buddhist congregations who are hardly perceived as conflictual in this country – top the scale of perceived threats in the population due to their assumed potential for conflict (Pickel, 2015, pp. 26–32), which confronts them with high normative expectations. For Muslim congregations in particular, their own integration and legitimation could therefore be an important motivation for interreligious relations, which can thus also be interpreted as an ‘integration performance’. This supports the seemingly paradoxical assumption that social observation and the discourse of endangering (‘Gefährdungsdiskurs’) is conducive to interreligious relations, rather than leading to closure and ‘parallel societies’, as is also shown by a comparative study of different migrant congregations (Nagel, 2015, p. 255; Suder, 2015, p. 183). However, it would certainly be oversimplistic to attribute the strong interreligious engagement solely to the external pressure. Nor could this argument equally explain the interreligious commitment of the Alevis and other non-Christian congregations, which exceeds even that of the Muslims, while their adherents find a much higher acceptance in the population (Pickel, 2015, pp. 28–32). In fact, the Muslim congregations in Hamburg already organised themselves early on and committed themselves to social engagement long before the ‘Hamburg Contracts’ (Spielhaus, 2011), something which also applies for the Alevis (Sökefeld, 2003) and other non-Christian congregations (see also section 2). While, conversely, the lower interreligious engagement of the Buddhist congregations might also be due to organisational factors such as their comparatively small size and personal resources, the Christian congregations beyond the two great churches constitute a considerable proportion of the religious field, but remain rather self-centered in their activities (Körs, 2018b), which corresponds with their low interreligious engagement. Finally, it is important to note that the congregations of the two established Protestant and Catholic churches largely maintain interreligious contacts, even though comparatively less. This is remarkable insofar as it is an indication that – as Stolz and Monnot (2017) find in their study relating to the Weberian/Bourdieuian field theory – established congregations do not limit contact with non-established newcomers in order to prevent them from participating in the established groups’ privileges. Instead, they are more likely to engage in interreligious activities and thus ‘clearly seek to use inclusive rather than exclusive means in order to further their strategic interests’, which is one of the reasons for their interreligious activities (Stolz & Monnot, 2017). In this perspective, interreligious relations may not only be an instrument of the minorities for their positioning (see above), but may also be used by the established main churches in order

to preserve their privileges by including non-established groups in the religious field. However, our study suggests that this struggle emanates more from the Muslim and non-Christian congregations, since these are the most active in terms of interreligious relations.

While religious affiliation is therefore significant and, as assumed, also indicates social position, religious beliefs turned out not to be essential for interreligious relations. This is remarkable, and requires further explanation, since it contradicts previous research and hypothesis 3 that truth claims and the understanding of mission are relevant for interreligious relations. Before this, however, let us look at the religious beliefs represented by the congregations. The survey shows that a pluralistic stance on religious truth claims was professed by the majority of 56 percent of leaders, and that 64 percent of them support a dialogical understanding of mission. Conversely, exclusivist understandings of religious truth are held by a minority of 18 percent of the congregations' leaders. This broadly matches the findings of surveys of attitudes in the German population (see Pollack & Müller, 2013, p. 13; Pickel, 2013, pp. 34–35) and also among young people (Ziebertz, 2006, p. 73). It is still a notable finding given that our survey targeted leaders of congregations who may be presumed to be 'religious experts' and who can be assumed to strongly identify with their respective religion. This obviously does not lead to the belief in the superiority of one's own religion, but instead the study indicates a widespread plurality-open attitude among congregations' leaders in general congruence with the population.¹⁴ This may also be connected with the Hamburg context, which is at the same time Protestant, religiously diverse and secular, and in which interreligious dialogue has grown over decades, is very present, and enjoys broad support in society (see section 2). Nevertheless, exclusivist positions are not the preserve of a few outliers across the religions, but in our study concentrate in Christian congregations outside of the two main established churches (44%) and in Muslim congregations (22%).¹⁵ These two minority groups within the Christian and Muslim spectrum in particular require us to engage with the question of how religious exclusivism can be addressed in a more differentiated manner and be distinguished from fundamentalism and extremism (Pratt, 2013; Streib & Klein, 2014). This is important, because not every type of exclusivism is equally problematic but rather connected with other attitudes such as, for example,

14 This differs from a study from the USA which showed that, with regard to the theological orientations of congregations' leaders, '(o)nly 9% of congregations describe themselves as theologically liberal', which 'does not provide an accurate reflection of the prevalence of religiously liberal ideas among Americans', as demonstrated by a population survey showing that only '12% of Americans say that there is truth in only one religion' (Chaves, Anderson & Byasse, 2009, p. 13).

15 This matches the findings of the Religionsmonitor survey, which found that for the German population the statement 'All religions have a true core' is rejected by significant minorities among Muslims (32%) as well as Evangelicals and Pentecostals (30%). These groups also more frequently agree with the exclusivist statement that only their own religion is right (Pickel, 2013, pp. 33–34).

a pronounced mission claim. According to our study, this combination applies to 14.7 percent of the congregations, and the belief in the superiority of one's own religion and the missionary claim to convince others are significantly related, but cannot be equated. Also, exclusivity cannot be regarded as a counterpart to reflexivity in the sense of reflection and speech about religious questions (Meulemann, 2014, p. 83). Rather, as Trinitapoli shows in her study on exclusivism among U.S. adolescents (2007, p. 476), precisely exclusivist positions are reflected in the face of their contradiction to a plural society and are modified in order not to be perceived as intolerant so that 'the cultural mores of pluralism and tolerance may have done more to erode the *possibility* of expressing exclusivist religious beliefs freely than the possibility of *holding* such beliefs'.

Moreover, with regard to practical consequences, in our study exclusivist views turned out to be rather insignificant for interreligious relations. The bivariate analysis showed that those congregations where an exclusivist attitude is represented have less interreligious relations than all others. The association, however, is not stable, and disappears in the multivariate analysis. One possible explanation is presented by McCarthy (2007) in her study 'Interfaith Encounters in America'. She finds that there are reasons, such as the achievement of a particular social aim or the improvement of relations with the wider society which, if they are strong enough, can also motivate those groups disdaining pluralistic views to join or even initiate interreligious relations, and she therefore claims that 'there are important countercurrents in this pattern' (McCarthy, 2007, p. 199).¹⁶ This seems plausible even for the present study since we find a stable positive connection between interreligious relations and relations with the societal environment: The more congregations have social contacts, the more likely they are to be involved in interreligious contacts and networks. However, even if exclusivist attitudes only exist to a limited extent and do not necessarily have to lead to demarcations in the practical realm it would be misleading to interpret this as evidence of their general harmlessness. Rather, they continue to be a challenge in an increasingly plural society, as many studies show (see section 3.3), and call for further empirical research, especially concerning Muslim and non-mainstream Christian groups (see also Koopmans, 2015; Pollack, Müller, Rosta & Dieler, 2016).

This goes beyond the present study, which, like all studies, has some limitations that point to future research needs. Firstly, since the data are cross-sectional, the analysis could determine factors that influence interreligious relations under the control of other factors, but the direction of the association could not be clearly established, so whether social integration promotes interreligious relations, or vice versa, integration in the religious field also makes social relations more likely. Secondly, despite the interreligious comparative approach, it is difficult to make statements on the particular religious minority congregations from Judaism, Alevism, Baha'ism, Hinduism, Sikhism, which had to be summarised here because of the small cell sizes. Thirdly,

16 See also the contribution by Julia Igrave on interreligious activities in three London boroughs.

it will be important for empirical social science research, including quantitative and qualitative approaches, to reach a better understanding of exclusivist attitudes in terms of their determinants, characteristics and practical consequences, which may in turn also stimulate theological discussion on the justification of relationships between the religions (Amirpur et al., 2016).

With regard to the central question of how far and under what conditions congregations respond to religious diversity by entering into interreligious relations we can draw the following conclusions from our study: Interreligious relations are a relevant form of social action for congregations who can thus cross boundaries between different religions and influence changes in the religious field in the course of the increasing pluralisation and secularisation. The building of interreligious relations is influenced by religious affiliation and social integration, which can overlay religious beliefs. The religious affiliation of the congregation was interpreted in this study as a reference to their own position in the religious field and in society. However, there are, in addition, significant differences between the congregations of the various religions with regard, for example, to their organisation, social structure, and activities (Körs, 2018b) which can be assumed to influence their interreligious relations (Nagel, 2015). These remain to be investigated, as does the assumed influence of the particular urban context, which appears plausible for the case of Hamburg studied here but requires further comparative studies.

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