A N D R E A   B I E L E R

Moments of Religious Co-production in a Super-Diverse Community in Germany

An Ethnographic Reconstruction of an Interreligious Prayer for Peace

Katharina Heyden and David Nirenberg propose understanding interreligious co-production among the Abrahamic traditions as 'the ongoing dynamics of forming, re-forming, and transforming the three religious traditions in their manifold sectarian forms through mutual interaction in thinking and (sometimes) living with and against each other'.[1] They emphasize that co-production does not necessarily mean collaboration among Jewish, Muslim, and Christian authors in an irenic sense, in which partners interact to reach a common goal, nor does it require symmetrical relationships between participants. In this vein, mutual agency is also not a requirement. Co-production can occur by means of competition or in contexts of conflict that are hostile to or distorting of the other. Accordingly, 'religious co-production itself has always been deeply ambivalent, equally capable of producing exclusion and inclusion, extermination and co-existence'.[2]

Co-production can have an imaginative quality that does not depend on synchronicity or the simultaneous presence of all three religions, since it can also encompass thinking about the other with different degrees of knowledge of the other traditions, languages etc. It can be a productive force insofar as new historical hermeneutics emerge in which a perceived past, present, and future assist in interpreting the impact 'the other religion', and its leaders or adherents, have on one's own religion. Heyden and Nirenberg highlight that none of the historical co-productions that are reconstructed by means of

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1 Heyden and Nirenberg, 'Co-produced Religions'.
2 Heyden and Nirenberg, 'Co-produced Religions'.

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textual analysis or archaeological work should be considered in a positivist, teleological, or essentialist framework.[3]

Co-production as a heuristic concept can be useful for an ethnographer of religion or a theologian interested in the phenomena of interreligious encounters. This is the case despite the difference in the disciplines and their diverse methodologies. I interpret the concept of religious co-production as an approach that examines the interactivity between religious actors and the dynamics such interactions produce with regard to the reconstruction of one's own multifaceted and fluid religious tradition. I also appreciate the emphasis on imaginative processes that are at work in such encounters. These processes are fuelled by assumptions about the other in terms of persons, texts, and traditions. Such imaginings also refer to one's own religious tradition and how one positions oneself in it. Religious imaginaries regarding difference and consensus appear to be crucial in interreligious encounters. They imply the circulation of normativities that rub up against or amplify each other. This also includes imaginings of the divine and of the narratives of religious revelation. Claims about exclusive and final revelations are expressed in these normativities and, in the face or in the absence of the other, they might be slightly reframed. Also, ritual practices might shift in the presence of other religious traditions. Furthermore, I appreciate the idea of potentialities being activated in historical sources. This suggests thinking of texts as multi-layered fields of knowledge, in which certain aspects might be latent in the background, while other aspects are foregrounded. From an ethnographic perspective, I see this activation occurring in the ways in which people practice their religion.

Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives in Ethnographic Work

Ethnographers immerse themselves in the synchronic dimension of events, in religious practice in a particular moment in time, at a particular place.[4] Yet we also have an interest in diachronic perspectives, for the following three reasons: engaging diachronic perspectives helps us analyse practices of traditioning; it assists in contextualizing certain events, reflections, and encounters within a larger historic framework; finally, it pushes us to reflect critically on the fact that ethnographic work itself produces an archive.

First, understanding processes of traditioning and memorializing helps us to illuminate the deeper grammar of particular events. These events have historical dimensions even if an actor claims to invent a new tradition. Traditioning might include the goal of preserving the past through the construction of a history of decay, focusing on what went constantly wrong,

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3 Heyden and Nirenberg, 'Co-produced Religions'.

4 For further reflection on a fruitful cooperation between Practical Theology and Church History see Westphal and others, 'Geschichtswissenschaft — Kirchengeschichte — Praktische Theologie', pp. 159–66. Regarding the question of what it means to engage practices through a historic lens, see Füssel, 'Praktiken historisieren', pp. 267–88.

as well as a call to return to some sort of uncorrupted origin. It might also adopt the goal of innovation or disruption. When analysing processes of traditioning, we focus on how the reference to the past is constructed, and how it is memorialized. Oftentimes, there are particular imperatives at work, especially when dealing with a violent past, as to how said past should be remembered. As an ethnographer of religion, I follow the suggestion of the sociologist Jeffrey Olick, who proposes a process-relational approach to the study of processes of memorialization.[5] He tries hereby to find a third possibility between the alternatives of an essentialist approach and a radical constructivist approach. Neither mimetic directness nor an understanding of the past as a homogeneous unit are sufficient options.

> A process-relational approach, conversely, focuses on collective remember-ing as a thoroughly interactive phenomenon, in which the connections between the present and the past are constantly negotiated. It can be understood as a field in which official and vernacular memory is navigated […]. Collective memory thus becomes a contested terrain that produces multiple streams of remembering. It is important to recognize that the field in which collective remembering happens is, in many contexts, not a peaceful and homogenous space. It is rather highly disputed. […]. The field of collective memory is contested and fluid. Stories emerge that have been suppressed or forgotten; marginalized groups articulate their perspectives on which remnants from the past need to be foregrounded.[6]

Each of the dimensions of traditioning have an impact on how certain texts are understood in a particular moment of religious co-production, how rituals are performed, and how the larger framework of interaction is perceived. The ethnographic analysis of the circulation of religious, moral, and political normativities in moments of religious co-production is deepened by a historical engagement with the evoked traditions.

Second, diachronic perspectives are also of interest for illuminating the larger context of the researched events. In order to access such perspectives, it is helpful to draw on unpublished documents of individuals, communities, and networks if they are accessible. We must also study the work of historio-graphers who work on local or global histories. Interreligious ritual practices, for instance, might have occurred before in a given place or context, perhaps being performed every year going back many years. Religious actors may rely on this tradition in critical or affirming ways, as they plan subsequent events. We may also see that some events have an afterlife in certain communities. On many occasions, communal narratives of origin are recalled: for instance, narratives of how Muslims, Christians, and Jews began co-operating, or how

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5 Olick, *The Politics of Regret*, p. 89.
6 Bieler, 'Remembering Violence', pp. 40–60, 45–46.

a conflict unfolded over time. Furthermore, political actors may call on an imagined past related to religious diversity in super-diverse environments for the sake of facilitating political governance. For instance, they might recall stories of conflict and emphasize the necessity of recognizing multireligious realities.

Third, ethnographic work reflects a diachronic perspective in the chosen methodological style. During the course of a research project, ethnographers produce myriad observation protocols and reflective memos from events and conversations. Interviews are transcribed and prepared for data analysis and interpretation. Ethnographic work is characterized by an itinerant, repetitive style. Ethnographers immerse themselves in particular settings, sometimes for several years, utilizing tools of participatory observation. By repeatedly returning to certain events, ethnographers are able to reconstruct diachronic perspectives by focusing on repeated acts. Such repetitions occur, for example, as sacred scriptures are enacted in a chain of recitation throughout the years and prayers are spoken communally and separately in the context of ritual practice. Ethnographers observe that normativities and religious convictions are embedded in such practices, that they find a gestalt that can be reshaped and transformed within an event or over time.

Sensitizing Concepts for Ethnographic and Historiographic Work

Co-production offers a sensitizing concept for studying moments of religious activity in historic terms. In the following section, I briefly introduce the concept of *doing conviviality*, which is used in an ethnographic research project that I oversee at the University of Basel which focuses on diverse, intercultural Christian congregations in Europe (Figure 5.1).[7] This project is also interested in the interreligious zones of contact that emerge from such communities. These contact zones have different qualities. They are visible to the public eye or can exist in more intimate spheres, as in interreligious friendships or family relations. They develop between teenagers who share the same migrant background; for instance, Christian and Muslim second-generation youth whose parents migrated from Ghana to Germany tend to have an interest in exchange. They develop between women of different religious traditions who share all the hardships of asylum-seeking and fighting for a safe residential status. Interreligious contact zones might be used for political purposes, when actors from different religions strive for the same goal. Conviviality, too, can serve as a sensitizing concept and can be understood as a particular form of co-production. By way of defining conviviality, 'we ask how interactive

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7 For further information on the project, see https://theologie.unibas.ch/de/projekt-conviviality-in-motion/ [accessed 19 December 2023].
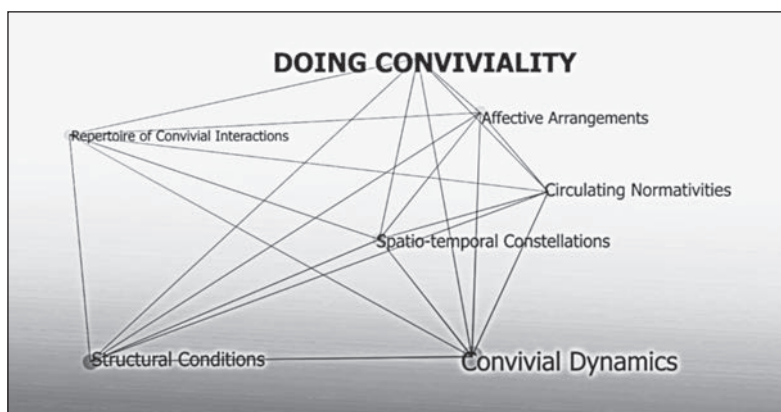
Figure 5.1. Model: Doing Conviviality. © Ralf Bieler and Andrea Bieler.

practices are embedded in particular social and affective dynamics and shaped by structural forces that influence individual and communal encounters'.[8] The concept can assist researchers in sharpening their attentiveness in the field and in paying attention to facts that did not previously come into focus. It can be included in conversations about the concept of religious co-production that are interested in the interactive dimensions of religious exchange.[9]

For the development of a heuristic framework the research team suggests distinguishing six dimensions of conviviality:

> We begin with sketching out the repertoire of convivial interactions that encompasses the range of qualities that characterize encounters as well as the media that facilitate them. Second, we focus on circulating normativities. Third, we suggest paying attention to the dynamics that animate such interactive practices. I name just three here: the dynamics of boundary-making and belonging, the dynamics of doing and undoing conviviality, and the messiness and potentiality of conviviality. Fourth, we take into account the spatio-temporal constellations in which these interactions are situated. Fifth, we seek to approach the affective environments, by which we mean not so much the feelings of individuals but rather the affectivity that arises between actors and within groups that are embedded in spatial contexts. Finally, structural conditions penetrate convivial processes. These are revealed in conflicts around access to economic and political resources. They are also reflected in precarious living conditions, such as one's residency status, or in systemic issues, e.g. the racialization of Islam.[10]

8   Bieler, 'Conviviality in Contexts of Religious Plurality'.
9   For the development of the concept, and of the visual model, Bieler, 'Conviviality in Contexts of Religious Plurality'.
10 Bieler, 'Conviviality in Contexts of Religious Plurality'.

Case Study: Interreligious Prayer for Peace on Good Friday in 2022 in Hamburg, Germany[11]

In the following section, I introduce a case study that can be understood as a moment of religious co-production. I will sketch out the context, followed by a description of the ritual event and an analysis of how co-production can be understood within it.

Context

Since 2007, the Lutheran congregation St Georg-Borgfelde with its African Centre, the Zentrum Moschee (central mosque), and the Roman Catholic Domgemeinde celebrate an interreligious peace prayer on Good Friday. Studying the websites of the Lutheran church and the mosque offers an opportunity to learn more about the efforts these communities make in presenting themselves to the public. The Roman Catholic Domgemeinde does not refer to any interreligious activities on its website. The Lutheran congregation and the Zentrum Moschee emphasize their openness to dialogue and interreligious cooperation. Both have a strong focus on developing a presence as organizations that strive for peace in the city by addressing crucial social and political problems. They strive for shared visibility with regard to their public, collaborative projects. The Lutheran Church mentions on its website, under the rubric *Christian Muslim Dialogue*, a variety of annual activities, among which the interreligious prayer for peace is listed.[12] The church articulates its intention as follows:

> For many years, there have existed loose connections between St Georg-Borgfelde and a number of mosques in St Georg and Borgfelde. Especially significant is the connection between members of the Zentrum Moschee in the Böckmannstrasse. Our spiritual conviviality is based on a trust that grew out of manifold shared practical experiences while jointly addressing challenges posed by secular issues. Accordingly, the congregations encounter each other not only with regard to questions raised by the urban polity but also at the centres of our faith, as we share in liturgical celebrations as well as theological exchange.[13]

The Zentrum Moschee, which has a Turkish background, was instrumental in the founding of the alliance of sixteen mosques in Northern Germany

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11   The following case study draws on ethnographic protocols that Claudia Hoffmann produced. I thank her for sharing the material with me. See also Hoffmann, 'Celebrations Connecting Religions'. In this chapter Hoffmann describes multiple interreligious rituals; she also refers briefly to the prayer for peace discussed in this section.

12   https://www.stgeorg-borgfelde.de/stadtteil/interreligioese-arbeit [accessed 23 January 2025].

13   https://www.stgeorg-borgfelde.de/im_stadtteil/christlich-muslimischer_dialog [accessed 19 December 2023]. All translations of website content by Andrea Bieler (AB).

(Bündnis der Islamischen Gemeinden in Norddeutschland). The alliance emphasizes their openness: the mosque is open to everyone who wishes to learn more about Islam, they offer daily tours, and they provide opportunities for dialogue. This network has a strong focus on portraying their mosques as part of the democratic society of Germany. On its website the alliance positions itself strongly against Islamicist extremism. Several projects are especially presented in this light: *Think Social Now 2.0*, which focuses on strengthening media competency regarding Islamic extremism in the internet; *Kamil*, which addresses experiences of young people with regard to racism; and, finally, the project *Al Wasat*, an educational network that strengthens efforts in schools and other educational settings to prevent radicalization, especially of Muslim youth.[14] The public presentation, via the website of the alliance, portrays their mosques as spaces not only of worship but also for social engagement, religious education, and dialogue as well as emphasizing their active participation in different parts of society. One incident should be mentioned, however: in 2006, the bookshop attached to the Zentrum Moschee sold videos for children and youth that had antisemitic content. The leadership of the mosque apologized for this incident and asserted that they were not aware of the content and that it was absolutely not their intention to disseminate videos with antisemitic content.[15]

Both the Protestant church and the mosque see themselves as actors in the public sphere and seek to contribute to peace in the city. As one of the Lutheran ministers explains, this openness has a religious dimension, since it is grounded in the recognition of a shared path toward the reign of God: 'God's mission is not owned exclusively by Christians, but it is rather owned by God. God lures us as dispersed siblings of creation back into a united and productive diversity'.[16] And the imam of the Zentrum Moschee adds: 'This is a great opportunity for approaching each other also in the religious sphere'.[17]

The Ritual Event

On 15 April 2022, the following actors were present at the Good Friday prayer for peace: two of the regular minister and the minister-in-training for the Lutheran Church in St Georg-Borgfelde, the imam from the Zentrum Moschee, the chairman of the Al Manar Foundation for Islamic Education and Culture, a visiting imam from Egypt, a representative from the Roman

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14 See https://big-nord.de/ [accessed 19 December 2023].

15 Behörde für Inneres und Sport, Antisemitische Hetzvideos bei der 'Islamischen Gemein-schaft Milli Görüs', 13 June 2006, https://web.archive.org/web/20190502155430/https://www.hamburg.de/innenbehoerde/archiv/232516/hetzvideos-igmg-artikel/ [accessed 30 January 2025].

16 Soltau, *Gemeinsam beten. Interreligiöse Kreuzwegandacht?*, https://www.ndr.de/kultur/sendungen/freitagsforum/Gemeinsam-beten-Interreligioese-Kreuzwegandacht-,soltaukreuzwegandacht100.html [accessed 20 December 2023].

17 Soltau, *Gemeinsam beten. Interreligiöse Kreuzwegandacht?*.

Figure 5.2. The leaders of the interreligious prayer for peace.
Photo © Evangelisch-lutherische Kirchengemeinde St Georg-Borgfelde.

Figure 5.3. Leaders and participants standing in a circle.
Photo © Evangelisch-lutherische Kirchengemeinde St Georg-Borgfelde.

Catholic Domgemeinde, a woman who attends the Tibetan Buddhist Centre in Hamburg and three confirmands from the Lutheran church (Figure 5.2). Between 2007 and 2022, the Good Friday prayer for peace was exclusively a Christian-Muslim ritual. In 2022, the organizers expanded the circle of ritual leaders by inviting a representative from the Tibetan Buddhist centre. The current minister mentioned that a rabbi had also been invited in 2022, but had declined the invitation because it was Pesach (Passover).

The communal prayer ritual takes place outdoors, in front of the Lutheran church in Hamburg-Borgfelde. The ritual leaders and about sixty participants gather in two semi-circles around a 'Kreuzigungsgruppe', a group of statues, which depict the crucifixions of Jesus and the two criminals (Matthew 27. 38; Mark 15. 27; Luke 23. 32–33) (Figure 5.3).[18]

A bulletin for the peace prayer is handed out to the participants.[19] It describes the purpose of the gathering as well as the order of service. The bulletin also informs participants of some aspects of the historical background of the event. First, the following interpretation of the location is offered: the statues remind us to work non-violently towards the transformation of suffering in the world. In addition, two aspects of the event are emphasized: the ecumenical nature of this Good Friday gathering throughout the centuries. Also, the interreligious nature of the gathering is highlighted: on the day of the crucifixion of Jesus, the suffering and death of people in the present day are very close to us.

The ritual is structured by brief interludes of a trombone player who plays pieces from the Christian tradition, namely from Preu, Bach, Telemann, and Mahler. Four times, the three confirmands from the Lutheran church call out the motto of this year's peace prayer, which is taken from Jesus's words in Luke 23. 34: 'Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing'.

The initiator of this peace prayer is the Lutheran congregation, who invited the imam, the chairman, and the representatives from the Tibetan centre and the Roman Catholic church. The presence of all four clergy of the Lutheran church emphasizes the significance of their role in the event.

The female minister frames the ritual with her words of welcome, in which she offers her interpretation of the event. She begins with the greeting 'peace be with you' in German and Arabic: 'Friede sei mit euch, Salam a leikum'. She emphasizes that since 24 February 2022, we are all in urgent need of peace, as this date marks the start of the recent war in Ukraine. She shares her perspective as a Christian: the death of Jesus offers a particular outlook on the world. Jesus believed in a merciful God. He called him Abba. For Christians, Jesus is a human being and at the same time the son of God. He asked his

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18 Hoffmann, Observation Protocol, 15 April 2022.
19 Claudia Hoffmann was able to collect the bulletin as well as the given statements in written form. It became part of our archive of unpublished documents. The following references and quotes derive from these documents, translations AB.

father for forgiveness. She wonders: how does forgiveness work currently in our world? She introduces all the religious leaders present, mentioning their names and functions, emphasizing that Friday is a special day of the week for the Muslim sisters and brothers among them.

A woman from the Catholic Domgemeinde reads excerpts from the passion story, recounting Jesus's death and the days leading up to it, according to the Gospel of Luke 23. 26–30, 33–40, 44–46, which contains again Jesus's petition for forgiveness. She also reads the passage that depicts the crucifixion of Jesus. The reader does not mention the Christian tradition of blaming the Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus. Throughout the entire ritual, none of the Christian participants speak about the strong anti-Jewish tradition of Good Friday in its music as well as in its hostile interpretations of the passion stories. In combination with the absence of Jewish participants, the ritual has the potential to unintentionally exclude the Jews from these peace-making efforts.

From then on, the topic of this year's peace prayer becomes the focus and the verse about forgiveness sets the tone. It is repeated and amplified by the three confirmands. It also becomes a point of reference for one of the Muslim speakers, who stresses the importance of forgiveness in our world. Neither of the Muslim speakers mention the fact that the Qu'ran tells a different story about the death of Jesus.

The imam of the Zentrum Moschee begins his speech by quoting from the first part of the Gospel of Luke in order to set a context for the saying: 'Oh Allah, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing'. He states:

> This sentence is not foreign to a Muslim. Similar to what happened to the prophet Jesus — Allah's peace be upon him — happened to the prophet Muhammed — Allah's peace be upon him. In Mecca, he did not find a fruitful ground for his message. He and his followers were exposed to reprisals. As he left Mecca he was searching for consolation and human help from the inhabitants of Taaif, a city seventy kilometers southeast of Mecca. Yet instead of being consoled and helped he was met with the rage and criticism of the inhabitants. Although they did not know him, they threw stones at him. Blood burst from his entire body and from his face. And he spoke: '*Allah forgive them for they do not know what they are doing*'.

After situating this saying, the imam moves on to explain that prophets are human beings who are guided and accompanied by Allah. As perfect human beings, they represent the human ideal and in that sense they are our role models. We are called to shape our personal character, our lives, and our societies according to them.

He continues by picking up the topic of forgiveness in the Qu'ran, Sura 2. 19, and states:

> And they ask you what you should donate? Speak: Forgiveness is the highest donation. The person who acts according to this divine principle will be successful in this life and in the afterlife. Jesus and Muhammed — Allah's

peace be upon on them — Jesus and Muhammed are brothers, since they are *Messengers*. Their message won over the message of the tyrants since they both practiced forgiveness.

Then he addresses the entire audience: 'And what about us? Can we honestly say we follow the example of Muhammed and Jesus, when we divide refugees between those who are wanted and those who are unwanted?' The imam concludes that we all have to work on our ability to love and forgive.

He finishes with a prayer for the refugees within and outside of Syria and Ukraine: 'Help us as citizens of Hamburg, that we may learn to act mercifully. Help us that we may transform our city into the capital of dialogue and peace'.

Two more speeches are given. The minister-in-training talks about her inner confusion at the fact that, after two months of news about the war in Ukraine, she feels only numbness. The minister of the African Centre strongly emphasizes how racism is revealed during the war against Ukraine, when people were prevented from fleeing Ukraine due to the colour of their skin. He summons the idea that we as the human race are indivisible. Then, the representative from the Buddhist Centre offers her words for peace, which are bookended by musical interludes.

Finally, the programme bulletin states that the chairperson of the Al Manar Foundation for Islamic Education and Culture, who is connected to the Muhajirin Mosque, will say a concluding prayer. He begins by reminding everyone that God/Allah calls us to sustain creation.

He quotes from Sura 7. 56: 'Do not spread corruption on the earth after it has been set in order. And call upon Him in hope and fear. Indeed, Allah's mercy is always close to the doer of good'. He recites this passage in Arabic. Then he makes his point: 'This is not a shared prayer, since despite all the agreement on many topics, Christianity and Islam remain two different religions'. He frames this event as a shared Friedensandacht (meditation), a remembrance of the shared message, morals, and ethics of all religions.

He continues:

> Like two adult siblings we can sit together regularly at the same table, although we have different occupations, different households and different opinions on a variety of things. Yet we are not here to polarize and to highlight differences. We are not here to polarize with regard to religion or politics. Let us put our differences aside and let us remember that we are all responsible for maintaining the integrity of creation.

Then, he refers to Sura 3. 110, stating that we are called to serve justice and to reject injustice. He urges everyone not to distinguish in discriminatory ways between refugees from Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine. He shares the story of two Tunisian students from the Ukrainian city of Charkiv. Although their papers were flawless, the bureaucrats in the city of Schwerin in Germany tried to deport them as soon as possible. He emphasizes that this kind of injustice is a scandal, yet it happens every day.

Contrary to his earlier statement, the chairman of the Al Manar Foundation concludes with a prayer. He chooses a Du'a prayer, which is a more flexible supplicatory prayer that can be spoken in every place and at every time and in every language. This prayer practice turns the entire world, and thus every town, into a Ma'bed, a place where Allah can be worshipped.[20] It does not follow fixed rules and is thus suitable for the interreligious context described.

After the Du'a prayer, the Lutheran minister gets up and says a final prayer. She invites everyone to join in the (Christian) 'Lord's Prayer'. Men take off their hats and participants bow their heads. The minister lifts up her arms and offers the final blessing. After the conclusion of the final trombone piece, the minister invites everyone to a concert in the church. The concert provides a space to commemorate the hour of Jesus's death.

Participants of the prayer service disappear in various directions. Some enter the Lutheran church. Muslim participants hasten away to Friday Prayer at their respective mosques.

Analysis of the Co-produced Prayer for Peace

In the following analysis, I focus on three things that the sensitizing model, outlined above, proposes: spatio-temporal constellations of religious co-production, aspects of boundary work, and the reframing of normativities.

Religious Normativities Reframed

Two normative questions are negotiated implicitly in the peace prayer ritual described above: should people of different faiths pray together? Are Christians and Muslims allowed to take part in an interreligious prayer for peace on Good Friday? I will deal with the first question in the section that analyses boundary work, since this is how ethnography addresses questions like this.[21]

It is interesting to notice that the peace prayer is situated on Good Friday. On this day, Christians commemorate the death of Jesus not just as a historic event. They seek rather to articulate the impact and efficacy of the crucifixion for the individual believer, the church, and the world. Thus, Good Friday implies a *pro nobis* or *pro me* grammar that is explicated in various ways. It may also imply a figure of Judaism as *contra nobis* or *contra me*: an important aspect of co-production that I cannot adequately address here, but which should not be forgotten.

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20 See Alboga, 'Was bedeutet Beten in meiner religiösen Tradition?', pp. 41–49.

21 Claudia Hoffmann focuses on the question of praying together in interreligious settings; see Hoffmann, 'Celebrations Connecting Religions'. See further on the matter of interreligious rituals and of praying together Moyaert and Geldhof, eds, *Ritual Participation and Interreligious Dialogue*; Müller, *Religionsumspannende Gebete*; Brendle, ed., *Gemeinsam beten? Interreligiöse Feiern mit anderen Religionen*; Amaladoss, 'Inter-Religious Worship', pp. 87–98; Ritter, *Nebeneinander oder miteinander vor dem einen Gott?*.

In the Christian tradition, Jesus's violent death on the cross has been narrated in multiple ways. Beginning in the New Testament, with different emphases in the four Gospels, and with varying interpretations from the Pauline letters to the Epistle to the Hebrews, authors circumambulate the meaning of the cross. Throughout the centuries we see many attempts to make meaning out of this violent death within Christian theologies and liturgical practices. These range from Trinitarian ponderings, sacrificial understandings, atonement theologies, liberationist interpretations, up to recent trauma-hermeneutical approaches. In many of these theological interpretations, Christians seek to understand Jesus's suffering and death in light of the resurrection narrative. How Christians understand death and resurrection and their interdependence is articulated in different ways. The necessity of the event of the cross, as well as its impact as revealing or sacrificial, is debated. Accordingly, we might conclude that there is no one answer that has become normative; yet there exists intense debate about the meaning of Jesus's death. Throughout the centuries Christian Anti-Judaism has been a part of many of these theological interpretations. Anti-Jewish attitudes are also reflected in the passion music, e.g. how Luke 23. 21 is depicted in works of Bach and Schütz.

All of these interpretations can potentially be reactivated in the encounter with persons from other religions and/or in the context of a shared practice.

Islamic interpretations of the death of Jesus also vary slightly. Most disagree strongly that Jesus died on the cross. According to the Qur'an, Jesus was not crucified, but ascended to Allah (Sura 4. 157–58). It appears to be impossible in the Muslim imagination to think that a prophet sent by God could die as a martyr. The larger context of the Qu'ranic passage (4. 153–56) contains an accusation against the Jewish people to the effect that they repeatedly broke the original covenant of humankind with God (mîthâq) that Moses made on their behalf. The people of Moses are portrayed as continually denying the signs of God (al-kufr bi-l-ayât). Part of this denial is the assertion that the people of Moses killed Jesus. Jacqueline Chabbi suggests that it is inconceivable that Jews at the time of Muhammed claimed the death of Jesus as their own responsibility. She interprets this passage rather as a soliloquy that became an example of anti-Jewish rhetoric in the Qu'ran.[22] The death of Jesus is thus a disputed topic between Muslims and Christians. Traditionally, it is connected to anti-Jewish polemics in both religions. In historical terms, debates about how to interpret the death of Jesus can be understood as contributing to a broader, co-produced tradition of anti-Judaism.

How then is Good Friday reframed in a way that it is appropriate for all participants to join? The Jewish community is not present and does not participate in the conversation. The Christian reader and the Christian

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22 Chabbi, *Sura 4 Verse 157–58*; Chabbi and Römer, *Dieu de la Bible, Dieu du Coran*. See for different interpretations of the qur'anic verse al-Nisa 4. 157: O'Brien, *The Qur'an and the Cross*; Oakes, *The Cross of Christ*.

speakers leave out the biblical details about the shouting crowd demanding the crucifixion of Jesus (Luke 23. 21).

The Muslim actors choose different paths. The imam of the Zentrum Moschee quotes from the Gospel of Luke 26. 32–34. The passage describes the crucifixion by quoting Jesus as saying: 'Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing'. He thus refers to the perspective of the Gospel without referencing the different depiction we find in the Qu'ran. The imam chooses to focus on the topic of forgiveness and the similarities he sees between Jesus and Mohammed as prophets. The chairman of the Al Manar Foundation adopts a different strategy. In his speech he does not mention the context of Good Friday and the passion narrative. He frames the event as a reminder that God/Allah demands that we preserve his creation. We see here a creative ritual resistance to the Christian framing of the event that enables participation by formulating a common ground when it comes to the ethical and political challenges that all who are present can share.

One of the (former) ministers of the Lutheran church explains in an interview that it is necessary to let go of the sacrificial interpretation of Jesus's death. He explains that the Muslim partners in the event understand and respect that, for Christians, God's solidarity with those who are suffering is made visible on Good Friday, and that this pertains to Jesus and all the others who have been killed on the cross. I assume by the latter that he refers to the unjust suffering of all people. Christians believe that God does not abandon those who are in anguish, even in death. In this case, Muslims and Christians stand side by side facing the suffering of people from different faith communities and cultural traditions. In this interpretation, we can observe that the range of interpretations of the crucifixion of Jesus is minimized by focusing on the cross as an inclusive, trans-temporal symbol for the suffering of all people.

Against the background of this interpretation a reframing for the Christian actors occurs. It is not divine forgiveness through the death of Jesus that is amplified but rather human forgiveness extended among people of different faiths. According to the logic of the ritual, this understanding of human forgiveness is the basis for the interreligious peace prayer on Good Friday. The ritual embraces the call for peace to all who are gathered and to people who are affected by violent conflicts around the globe. A consequence of this widening of the horizon of meaning-making is the articulation of shared political commitments and moral values even if the ethical reasoning or the theological deliberation is supported by different religious sources and traditions. This is something in which all participants in the ritual can join. We see this operating in the peace prayer since the majority of the speakers challenge the problematic patterns by which different groups of refugees are distinguished and treated unequally. By emphasizing this pattern, the Christian and Muslim speakers highlight the power of racism operating in migration politics in Germany, especially as it affects residential status among immigrants.

By backgrounding the sacrificial meaning of the cross and foregrounding divine solidarity with all who suffer, Good Friday is transformed into a trans-

temporal symbol for God's solidarity with human suffering. By opening up the interpretation in this way, Muslim partners can participate, since common ground has been established. The described ritual strategies of backgrounding and foregrounding, as well as amplifying and resisting, make the participation of Muslim actors possible in a ritual that is fundamentally situated within the Christian tradition.

Spatio-Temporal Constellations

Religious co-productions are always embedded in spatio-temporal constellations. Space and time can be understood in multifaceted ways. Space implies the *physicality of a place* in which communities convene, in its architecture, or — as in our case study — in how a public plaza is designed and inserted into an environment, including its surrounding buildings. The architecture of a public place encompasses affordances; these imply possibilities for people to convene and to experience the environment with regard to sense perception and bodily movement. In addition, public spaces are structured by artefacts, making them appear closed or inviting. The pathways and buildings that surround them give them a particular character. In our case study, the plaza in which the peace prayer ritual was held is structured by two features that give it a special character. First, viewed from the inside of the nearby Lutheran church, the plaza is an open space that one enters upon leaving the building. Not far from the visible church there is a rather invisible, yet well-attended, mosque in a commercial building. In the middle of the plaza exists the mentioned ensemble of statues that depict the crucifixion of Christ. In the fifteenth century, the statues were placed at this spot. They marked the final station of the Good Friday Procession that Christians have performed throughout the centuries in the city of Hamburg. At that time, the statues were situated outside of the city walls, close to a hospice for people suffering from leprosy. In that sense, it had a close connection to the Christian high holiday of Good Friday. In 1938, the Nazis removed the statues. In 2004, the planned return of a replica created a controversy and sparked debate. Even one of the Lutheran ministers was not sure if it was appropriate that sculptures with such strong Christian content should re-enter the public sphere. After all, St Georg and Borgfelde had turned into super-diverse neighbourhoods that were inhabited by people of various religious traditions, or of no religious traditions. Against this background, the minister understood the church as only one actor among many and the Christian tradition as no longer the dominant religious culture. The minister wondered if it would be more fitting to place a piece of art at the centre of the plaza, which would be more accessible to people of various religious traditions and walks of life. While the discussions where ongoing, the doubtful minister was convinced by Muslim voices, who opined that placing the statues on the plaza was appropriate, since religion also belongs in the public sphere. Here we see how the entanglement of spatial and temporal facets became a matter of religious co-production.

The second feature of the physical space is its transient character. Throughout the week, the outdoor plaza is used by many different people who pass by and alternately greet or ignore each other. It is a space of thin conviviality.[23] With the peace prayer, the ritual leaders as well as participants seek to create a dense moment of attentiveness and focus. For this purpose, microphones and loudspeakers are used. Yet the outdoor setting did not allow for deep attentiveness. Some people were still coming and going and others seemed to stop by accidentally. Despite these difficulties, inherent in such a transient outdoor space, it seems to be a fitting setting for interreligious peace prayer, since matters of war and peace need to be articulated in public and should be easily accessible. Furthermore, being outdoors highlights the fact that, nowadays, St Georg and Borgfelde are intense multireligious environments. One imam mentioned that fourteen mosques exist in the neighbourhood.

Another thing needs to be stressed with regard to the spatio-temporal constellations of religious co-production: the physicality of space offers possibilities for what the sociologist Martina Löw calls 'spacing'.[24] Spacing refers to interactions between people and between actors and artefacts that transform physical places into social spaces. These social spaces hold the potential for moments of religious co-production to unfold or to be hindered. In our case study, the ritual leaders and the participants formed a circle within and around the public plaza. Embodying a community by forming a circle suggests a low hierarchy and a sense of momentary togetherness between participants and clergy. Yet this impression stands in tension with the empty spaces created by such a circle, forming a distance between leaders and participants.

The temporal dimension of the event is expressed in its diachronic and synchronic qualities. With regard to the *Kreuzigungsgruppe* (the sculptures), a narrative is infused in the ritual setting that relies on a diachronic construction: for a long time, there existed a Christian Good Friday tradition where people gathered outdoors to contemplate the shared sufferings that burdened the communities, such as, historically, the leprosy of those at the nearby hospice. This tradition reaches back to the fifteenth century and was expanded into an interreligious framework in 2007. Until 2022, it was a Christian-Muslim prayer service, and in 2022, for the first time, a representative from the Tibetan Buddhist centre was invited, as was the rabbi who was unable to attend because of the clash with Pesach. The absence of Jewish participation throughout the years is striking. This, then, is a ritual of religious co-production that has occurred in the absence of representatives from the third of the three Abrahamic faiths. In a way, the absence of Jewish participants leaves these peace prayers incomplete. At the same time, it might be difficult to address this incompleteness given the respective religious calendars at play.

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23 Heil, 'Conviviality', pp. 315–24.
24 Löw, *The Sociology of Space*, pp. 134–36.

From a historical perspective, anti-Jewish attitudes acted out by Christians were especially pronounced on Good Friday. This holiday had been especially rife through the centuries with anti-Jewish tropes such as the promulgation of ritual murder legends and religiously grounded conspiracy theories that flourish to this day. For many Christians this was the day 'when Jews murdered their saviour Jesus Christ'.

In 2022, another temporal framing is very much foregrounded: all speakers mention the day of 24 February as the beginning of the Russian invasion into Ukraine. In German political debates, the beginning of this war was dubbed the turn of an era (*Zeitenwende*). At that time, Germany and various European countries opened their borders for refugees from the Ukraine, offering them a special protection status, particularly children and women who had to flee from war zones. This date has a contested quality as well, since most speakers highlight the unequal treatment of refugees from Ukraine compared with those from Afghanistan and Syria.

Understanding moments of religious co-production in empirical research occurs in spatio-temporal constellations through the interweaving of diachronic and synchronic perspectives and through ritualizing and narrating commonality. In such contexts, noting and assessing differences is crucial.

Boundary Work

A classical topic of sociological research is the question of how boundaries between individuals and social groups are produced in interactive processes. From the multitude of theories, I choose three approaches. First, Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár offer a reflection on the distinction and entanglement of symbolic and social boundaries:

> [s]ymbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space […] [s]ocial boundaries are objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities.[25]

The symbolic and the social domain of boundary work are co-dependent, and often entangled. Both forms can powerfully shape social relationships. Symbolic boundaries have a strong impact on the creation or dissolution of social boundaries.

The second approach, by Richard Alba, offers a typology of strategies for boundary work and subsequent characteristics of these boundaries.[26] Alba speaks of boundary crossing when an individual or group moves from their former context to a new group context while the boundary itself does not

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25 Lamont and Molnár, 'The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences', p. 168.
26 Alba, 'Bright vs. Blurred Boundaries', pp. 20–49.

change. Boundary blurring means that 'the social profile of a boundary has become less distinct: the clarity of the social distinction involved has become clouded'.[27] Boundary shifting refers to 'the relocation of a boundary so that populations once situated on one side are now included on the other: former outsiders are thereby transformed into insiders'.[28]

As a third approach, Alexander-Kenneth Nagel addresses the question of 'how do we actually know that we are dealing with a boundary?'[29] He names several indicators that are helpful for ethnographic analysis:

> First, and perhaps most well-known from social psychology, boundary making can be observed in the semantic positioning of groups via personal and demonstrative pronouns. Whereas the distinction between 'us' and 'them' constitutes the basic formula of all in-group-outgroup processes, demonstrative pronouns can be used to indicate social distance. […].
>
> A second (and related) type of boundary making are speech-acts of demarcation or transgression. Speech-acts of demarcation may include claims to speak in the name of a religious tradition ('I as Christian/Muslim believe'), declarations of distinction ('X is different from Y') or general affirmations of difference, i.e. dialogue as a tool of cultivating variation rather than levelling religious differences ('in the face of God we are equal'). In contrast, speech-acts of transgression are of declarations of unity which blur traditional religious boundaries. It is crucial to both of these speech-acts that they do not seek to convince or reason, but manifest or overcome symbolic boundaries in a declaratory apodictic style.
>
> A third type of boundary making are — what I call — boundary interventions. Whereas speech-acts create or transgress symbolic boundaries in an explicit and deliberate way, boundary interventions render implicit social and symbolic boundaries visible. Typical examples include superiority claims ('Islam is the ethical perfection of all world religions') or incidents of embarrassment. […]
>
> A fourth (and more material) manifestation of boundaries are written documents, such as guest and participant lists. […]
>
> Another dimension are temporal material manifestations of boundaries, be it by liturgical (or folkloristic) garments, spatial arrangements, the order of appearance or other forms of performative appropriation of physical space […].[30]

Theoretical approaches to boundary work offer productive lenses for studying interactions between actors of various religious traditions when one is interested

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27   Alba, 'Bright vs. Blurred Boundaries', p. 23.
28   Alba, 'Bright vs. Blurred Boundaries', p. 23.
29   Nagel, 'Interreligious Activities'.
30   Nagel, 'Interreligious Activities'.

in developing a praxeological approach to religious co-production.[31] I will conclude my analysis of the interreligious prayer for peace by hinting at some strategies of boundary work that were crucial for this event.

Speech acts of demarcation were used frequently in our case study: 'We as Christians', 'we as Muslims', 'we who seek peace', 'we who fail to seek justice', 'We as citizens of Hamburg'. These demarcations serve different purposes as they seek to demarcate between different identities. Their being stated creates a space for the possibility of meeting and being together despite differences. When a shared interest or commitment is evoked, as in 'we who seek peace', the invisible other, who wages war, is evoked too. This 'we' produces an inside and an outside: the peace lovers are inside (the group, the ritual), and those who wage war belong to the distant outsiders. This drawing of a boundary does not leave room for ambiguity. Yet statements that call up the shared human condition and refer to failure or vulnerability open spaces for collective experiences of ambiguity.

Speech acts of transgression that lift up a sense of shared humanity, of community, or of common social and political commitments create a 'We' that can be experienced as powerful in the moment at which it is declared. This pertains also to religious content such as when similarities between the prophets Muhammed and Jesus are named, or when creation is evoked as a shared, fragile space that is threatened. When connectedness is experienced in this way, religious difference does not have to appear as a harsh and divisive demarcation. Rather, such boundaries can be experienced as porous and flexible.

We might interpret the proposition 'This is not a prayer' as an intervention which opens up the space for further boundary work. Unintentionally, it may have created embarrassment for some participants, since this event, after all, was framed as a prayer. The person who created this minor disruption with his remark used the opportunity to reflect on the dynamics of togetherness and difference.

We can also observe what Nagel calls 'temporal manifestations of boundaries',[32] as some of the ritual experts in our case study wore liturgical garments that distinguished them from the 'ordinary' participants and marked differences within and among the various religious traditions. The two Lutheran ministers wore black gowns, and one of them added a purple stole. The imam of the Zentrum Moschee wore a huge white hat and a black caftan with red and yellow embroidery at the fringes.

The dynamics of boundary work, even within the same ritual, can be experienced as intense and changing. These dynamics reflect the relational

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31   See e.g. Moyaert, 'Infelicitous Inter-Ritual Hospitality', pp. 324–42; Nagel, 'Relational Diversity', pp. 227–41; Nagel, 'Enacting Diversity', pp. 111–27; Nagel, 'Crossing the Lines?', pp. 103–16; Jørgensen, 'Reframing Interfaith Boundary Crossing and Maintenance', pp. 28–47; Klinkhammer, 'Der Interreligiöse Dialog als Boundary Work', pp. 78–102.

32   Nagel, 'Interreligious Activities'.

efforts that flows into an event in which the ritual leaders represent not just themselves but the religious communities they belong to, and even, on a more abstract level, 'their own religion'. It also indicates that even such an orderly appearing event has its chaotic threads and surprising moments. This analysis has shown that ritual in particular has the power to create fuzzy contact zones in which people from different religious traditions encounter each and act together ritually in ways that have the potential to transform the image of or relations with the other, even if major theological disagreements are not there resolved.

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