Jewish-Christian dialogue has been thriving in the last few decades, gaining both public and scholarly attention. In most cases, this dialogue has taken place between representatives of more open flanks of Christianity and Judaism, involving participants with a “liberal” religious attitude. This has meant that both parties are united by a similar political and cultural vision that transcends the differences between them. Dialogue seems to be an outcome of the weakening of radical voices, who allegedly have a hostile approach to relations with another religion, and a result of the growth of moderate religious approaches, which enables rational and pragmatic inter-faith discussions. Jewish-Christian dialogue, in other words, is judged to be a phenomenon pertaining to the secular/liberal setting of the post-war Western world, and is carried out using a modernized and moderated universal religious language.

However, this common understanding of the nature and scope of Jewish-Christian dialogue is limited in two respects. First, it does not cover the entire range of dialogical phenomena. As the studies discussed at the workshop suggest, several dialogical initiatives do not adhere to liberal criteria, which assume a rational agreement about the place of religious commitment and its contribution to a diverse society. In fact, one can find dialogical inclinations in surprisingly illiberal settings. Second, the liberal narrative of the Jewish-Christian dialogue focuses mainly on the geographical and political settings of Europe and North America; it omits other types of dialogue that stem from other landscapes and their unique concerns. These non-western initiatives are grounded on alternative religious grammars and are oriented towards different sets of political agendas, which often explicitly reject the liberal program.

In order to overcome a narrow approach to religious dialogue, our workshop focuses on two topics. First, an empirical examination of a variety of projects that have been performed in contexts that are normally not deemed amenable to the dialogical logic (narrowly understood). Shedding light on such initiatives, often neglected by the liberal framework of dialogue, contributes to the understanding of the diversity of Jewish-Christian dialogue. Second, a critical inquiry into the variety of dialogical initiatives enables us to interrogate the logic behind the very concept of dialogue itself. The workshop attempts to formulate a grammar suitable for the dialogical variety, and to think in a new way with a theoretical language befitting this multiplicity, even including phenomena that until now have been only narrowly understood through the liberal grammar of dialogue.