The Christian-Jewish dialogue has been thriving in the last few decades, gaining both public and scholarly attention. This dialogue has mostly been between representatives of more open flanks of the two faiths, involving participants whose religious attitude would typically be termed “liberal”. The use of this label implies that both parties are united by a similar political and cultural vision that transcends the differences between them. The dialogue seems to be an outcome of the weakening of radical voices, who are allegedly hostile to relations with other religion, and to the growth of moderate religious approaches that enable rational and pragmatic inter-faith discussions. The Jewish-Christian dialogue, in other words, is viewed as a phenomenon rooted in the secular/liberal setting of the post-war Western world and is conducted in a modernized and moderated universal religious language.

However, this common understanding of the nature and scope of the 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 that assume a rational agreement about the place of religious commitment and its contribution to a diverse society. In fact, one can find inclinations towards dialogue 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, omitting other types of dialogue that stem from other landscapes and reflect their unique concerns. These non-western initiatives are based on alternative religious grammars and are oriented towards different sets of political agendas, ones which often explicitly reject the liberal programme.

Our workshop seeks to broaden approaches to religious dialogue by focusing on two topics. First, we will examine empirically a variety of projects taking place in contexts that are normally considered incompatible with the dialogical logic (narrowly understood). The mere act of shedding light on such initiatives, often neglected by the liberal framework of dialogue, helps us to understand the varied nature of the Christian-Jewish dialogue. Second, we will critically explore the variety of dialogical initiatives so that we can interrogate the logic behind the very concept of dialogue itself. The workshop attempts to formulate a grammar suitable for this dialogical diversity, and, using a theoretical language that reflects this multiplicity, to rethink even those phenomena that up until now have been understood narrowly through the liberal grammar of dialogue.