The Christian-Jewish 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 receptive factions of both Christianity and Judaism, and involved participants who have a religious attitude typically termed “liberal,” in the sense 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 marginalization of radical voices, who allegedly regard relations with another religion with hostility as well as to the growth of moderate religious approaches that enable rational and pragmatic inter-faith discussions. Jewish-Christian dialogue, in other words, is judged to be a phenomenon of the secular/liberal setting of the postwar Western world and is carried out through the means of 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 possible dialogues. As the studies discussed at the workshop suggest, several dialogues 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 dialogue in surprisingly illiberal settings. Second, the liberal narrative of the Jewish-Christian dialogue functions mainly within the geographical and political settings of Europe and North America; it omits other types of dialogue that stem from other political landscapes and their unique concerns. These non-western initiatives are grounded on alternative religious grammars oriented towards other political agendas, which often explicitly reject the liberal program.

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