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Introduction

Understanding the Interreligious Dialogue (IRD) Movement

**1 Introduction: Refocusing the Perspective on
IRD**

The last two decades have seen a dynamic increase in the number of activities that are explicitly linked to the notion of interreligious dialogue (IRD). All over the world, empirical research projects underline the establishment of highly complex local scenes of these types of initiatives.¹ Especially at the national level, it is possible to identify a significant increase in dialogue organizations – either based upon state initiatives or the input of religious authorities.² And in the course of these developments, interreligious dialogue has become a significant topic on the international political agenda, too. It is no longer restricted to some experts of religiously affiliated non-governmental organizations (NGOs). IRD has also been put on the agenda of heads of state, as well as intergovernmental organizations.³

1 Jürgen Micksch and Ingrid Hoensch Hoensch, *Miteinander vor Ort: kommunale Islamforen* (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2011); Council of Europe, ed., *Gods in the City: Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue at Local Level* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2007).

2 Delphine Dussert-Galinat, *Le Dialogue Interreligieux: Entre Discours Officiels et Initiatives Locales* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013); Gritt Klinkhammer, *Interreligiöse und interkulturelle Dialoge mit MuslimInnen in Deutschland: Eine Quantitative und Qualitative Studie* (Bremen / Wiesbaden: VS-Verlag, 2011); Ina Merdjanova and Patrice Brodeur, *Religion as a Conversation Starter: Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans* (London Gordonsville: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011).

3 Katherine Marshall, *Global Institutions of Religion: Ancient Movers, Modern Shakers* (London / New York: Routledge, 2013); Karsten Lehmann, “Construction of the Concept of Religion in the United Nations’ General Assembly: From Human Rights to Dialogue and Harmony,” in *Handbook of the Changing World Language Map*, eds. Stanley D. Brunn and Roland Kehrein, (Basel, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2018): 1–16; Karsten Lehmann, “Interreligious Dialogue (IRD) in international politics: From the Margins of the religious Field to the Center of Civil Society,” in *The Routledge International Handbook of Religion in Global Society*, eds. Jayeel. S. Cornelio, François Gauthier, Tuomas Martikainen and Linda Woodhead, (Abingdon: Routledge, in print).

These developments form the basis of a growing corpus of research-literature that focuses on two main areas: First, present-day researchers are dealing with the overall development of what is frequently described as the *Interreligious Dialogue Movement*. To name but two classic examples: In 1996, Jean-Claude Basset published the most inclusive history of IRD that gives a detailed description of more than 100 years of diverse dialogue initiatives and organizations with a particular focus on their conceptual developments.⁴ On the other side of the spectrum, Catherine Cornille has recently published the first conclusive handbook in the field that combines focal points of conceptual discussions with case studies on the history of dialogue activities between different religious traditions.⁵

Second, two decades of research have produced a fascinating set of analyses on the abstract concept of IRD. They document the different usages of the notion of IRD in a detailed manner and explain their philosophical and theological foundations all over the world. In the opening remarks to her *Companion to inter-religious dialogue*, Catherine Cornille sums up the hypothesis that stands behind most of those analyses:

Since the middle of the twentieth century, the notion of dialogue has become increasingly common in describing or prescribing the proper relationship between religions. Rather than competing with one another over territories, converts, or claims, religions have generally come to adopt a more conciliatory and constructive attitude towards one another, collaborating in social projects and exchanging views on common religious questions.⁶

These two areas of present-day research form, however, only half of the story: Present-day research is missing a systematic look at the very reasons, why IRD has become such a significant phenomenon and how it has been implemented in different social settings: What are those active in IRD actually doing? Are there groups and individuals that are systematically excluded from IRD activities? What socio-political motives underlie day-to-day IRD activities? What happens inside the organizations that form the centre of most IRD activities? To what

⁴ Jean-Claude Basset, *Le Dialogue Interreligieux: Chance ou Déchéance de la Foi* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1996). See also: Paul Hedges, *Contemporary Muslim-Christian Encounters: Developments, Diversity, and Dialogues* (London / New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2015).

⁵ Catherine Cornille, ed., *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2013). Another classical introduction to the field: Martin Forward, *Inter-Religious Dialogue: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001).

⁶ Catherine Cornille, ed., *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), xii.

extent are they able to implement the general ideals of IRD into their concrete activities? What can we learn from success and failure in the field of IRD?

In sum, these questions indicate an area we have but anecdotal knowledge about. So far, researchers have primarily taken the self-presentations of IRD-practitioners at face value. They have tried to systematize their perceptions of what IRD has to do in a normative way. They have only insufficiently tried to look at IRD as a socio-cultural phenomenon that has to be analysed empirically and might help to understand the role of religion in present-day societies.

This is exactly the objective that stands at the centre of the present book. It wants to understand the socio-cultural place of IRD activities. In this sense, the present publication aims to be ‘talking dialogue’. It is targeting the concrete day-to-day activities that form the global field of IRD. Consequently, the book puts the emphasis on two aspects of IRD activities:

- First, the book focuses on those organizations that stand at the centre of the modern history of multilateral IRD⁷ and have shaped the respective activities on an international level.
- Second, it zooms in on concrete episodes in the founding periods of those organizations that underline the successes, as well as failures that have shaped those organizations.

Before further embarking onto this journey, there is, however, a need to clarify two central categories that stand at the centre of the analyses that form the following eleven chapters.

2 Central Categories: IRD Activities and IRD Movement

The following categorical reflections are based upon a rather abstract consideration: in a Weberian sense, every strand of empirical research starts from a number of conceptualizations that are directly taken from the field – in our case the

⁷ This book focuses on multilateral IRD organizations, except in one case that is initially bilateral (i.e. Christian-Jewish) because that story is seminal to how the World Council of Churches came to develop its own multilateral and many bilateral IRD activities. Contributions to the international IRD movement can also include other examples of bilateral organizations, such as the International Council of Christians and Jews (whose roots go back to 1928) and The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought based in Jordan since 1980, which began regular Muslim-Christian dialogue activities from 1984 onwards.

field of IRD.⁸ The most significant of those assumptions is the conviction that there actually is a concrete socio-cultural activity called interreligious dialogue that is distinct from other day-to-day activities such as inter- or intra-religious dispute, conflict-mediation or political discussion.

Accordingly, all the analyses published in this book start from the self-perception of the people active in IRD, in as far as there are people and organizations that self-identify as doing dialogue. In addition, however, the analyses also take into consideration that the self-descriptions do not necessarily coincide with the perceptions of other parties in the field. Activities that are described as interreligious dialogue can e. g. also, be perceived as attempts of proselytization or a mere camouflage of political activities.⁹ This also has to be taken into consideration, if one wants to better understand the very phenomena in question.

On this basis, two further assumptions need clarification. The first of these assumptions is linked to the question of how to conceptualize the notion of IRD activities on the level of social activity. What characterizes interreligious dialogue activities – e. g. as opposed to the concept of IRD in philosophical or theological terms? Second, to what extent does it make sense to link the ideal of IRD to a specific social form – i. e. an IRD movement? The next paragraphs elaborate on these two questions respectively.

2.1 IRD Activities as a Socio-Cultural Phenomenon

Even the most basic, introductory works on interreligious dialogue make it very clear that this notion is a complex one. Authors such as Leonard Swidler, Diana Eck, or Marcus Braybrooke have repeatedly made the point that – on the one hand – the concept of dialogue looks back upon a long history that dates at least back to ancient philosophy.¹⁰ On the other hand, their analyses highlight

8 Max Weber, “Die ‚Objektivität‘ Sozialwissenschaftlicher und Sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis,” in *Schriften zur Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. Michael Sukale (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1991, first: 1904): 21–101; Nicholas Gane, *Max Weber and Postmodern Theory: Rationalization Versus Re-Enchantment* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire New York: Palgrave, 2002); Basit B. Koshul, *The Post-modern Significance of Max Weber’s Legacy: Disenchancing Deisenchantment* (New York / Basingstoke: Springer, 2015).

9 Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Timothy Fitzgerald, *Religion and Politics in International Relations: The Modern Myth* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011).

10 Diana L. Eck, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003); Leonard J. Swidler, *Dialogue for Interreligious Study: Strategies for the Transformation of Culture-Shaping Institutions* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Marcus Bray-

that the concept of IRD is a rather recent one that has a wide range of different equivalents in different languages.¹¹

As far as the present argument is concerned, it is interesting to see that most of these reflections on the concept of IRD argue from philosophical or theological backgrounds and focus on the relationship between different worldviews. In her article on IRD in the international handbook *Understanding interreligious relations*, Marianne Moyaert captures these discussions very clearly in the following way:

Dialogue is connected deep down with the search for truth and a striving for wisdom. It excludes fanaticism. A fanatic is a person who, convinced that he is absolutely right, locks himself up in his own position and refuses any critical testing or challenge. Dialogue presupposes precisely the engagement of people with critical minds, who question the obvious and also allow others to challenge them.¹²

During the last few years, this almost exclusively conceptual approach has been put under scrutiny. An increasing amount of literature focuses on IRD activities and questions any immediate nexus between concept and activity. To highlight two dimensions of these discussions: first, the analysis of IRD has been integrated into the more general research on concrete (historic and present day) encounters between individuals or groups of individuals from different religious traditions. It has become very clear that IRD has to be seen as one option of interreligious encounters.¹³ Second, there is a rapidly emerging strand of re-

brooke, *Widening Vision: The World Congress of Faiths and the Growing Interfaith Movement* (Oxford: LuLu, 2013).

11 In Spanish e.g. the following words are used: for interreligious dialogue, *Diálogo interreligioso*; for interfaith dialogue, *Diálogo interconfesional*; for dialogue between religions, *Diálogo entre religiones*. In Chinese one finds the following equivalents for interreligious dialogue: 宗教對話 跨宗教對話 宗教間對話. In Russian, one would use for interreligious dialogue, *межрелигиозный диалог*; for inter-confessional dialogue, *межконфессиональный диалог*; and for dialogue among religions, *диалог между религиями*. Carmen Toth-Pickel and Jana Vobecká, *Peace Mapping Programme: IRD Directory Report*: <http://peacemap.kaiciid.org/downloads/IRD-Directory-Report.pdf> (accessed: 24.5.2020).

12 Marianna Moyaert, “Interreligious Dialogue,” in *Understanding Interreligious Relations*, eds. David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt and David Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 193–217, here: 206.

13 Julia Igrave, Thorsten Knauth, Anna Körs, Dörthe Vieregge and Marie von der Lippe, eds., *Religion and Dialogue in the City: Case Studies on Interreligious Encounter in Urban Community and Education* (Münster New York: Waxmann, 2018); Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Johan Elverskog, *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania

search that focuses on the concrete role of IRD in political processes. This shows that IRD is more than just a theological enterprise; it has a strong socio-political agenda.¹⁴

When considered together, these more recent strands of research open a perspective that moves away from the purely conceptual (and frequently anecdotal) towards a more descriptive (and certainly empirical) approach to IRD. They show the increasing diversity of dialogue practices in the field and the need to have a look at the manifold dimensions of IRD beyond the conceptual level of pamphlets and official speeches. Contributing to this emerging corpus of literature, the present book is not the place to argue for one or the other concept of dialogue. Rather, it takes the existing concepts of IRD as a starting point to analyse IRD activities as socio-cultural phenomena.

This particular focus on concrete IRD activities directly leads to the next question: To what extent does it make sense to talk about *one* interreligious dialogue movement? If so, such a movement would be formed based on what kind(s) of dialogical practices?

2.2 Focus on the Interreligious Dialogue Movement

This question actually addresses what seems to be one of the most fundamental convictions in IRD research. As soon as one has a closer look at the classical analyses of the history of IRD activities, there seems to be a two-fold consensus: first, the long history of IRD gained new momentum in the late 19th and early 20th century; second, the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions is the starting point of an IRD movement that serves as the social body of IRD today. Analyses, such as the studies of Dorothea Lüddeckens and Richard H. Seager, identify the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions as the single most important foundational

Press, 2013); Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

14 Mar Griera and Alexander-Kenneth Nagel, "Interreligious Relations and Governance of Religion in Europe: Introduction," *Social Compass* 65 (2018): 301–11; Magdalena Nordin, "Secularization, Religious Plurality and Position: Local Inter-Religious Cooperation in Contemporary Sweden," *Social Compass* 64 (2017): 388–403; Mar Griera, "Public Policies, Interfaith Associations and Religious Minorities: A New Policy Paradigm? Evidence from the Case of Barcelona," *Social Compass* 59 (2012): 570–587; Tania Wettach-Zeitl, *Ethnopolitische Konflikte und Interreligiöser Dialog: Die Effektivität Interreligiöser Konfliktmediationsprojekte Analysiert am Beispiel der World Conference on Religion and Peace Initiative in Bosnien-Herzegowina* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007); Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Emily Welty and Amal I. Khoury, *Unity in Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007).

event in the more recent history of IRD; they see it as the starting point for almost all the activities that are taking place today.¹⁵

In this context, the concept of an interreligious dialogue movement exists as one of these widely used categories without a clear-cut definition. Of course, it would be naïve to look for one commonly accepted definition of the IRD movement. Nevertheless, it is necessary to get a better idea of what an IRD movement might formally look like in order to assess e.g. the structures and/or the impact of IRD activities. To answer this question, it is helpful to refer to the sociological literature that conceptualizes social movements as a particular social form – be it in the field of politics, economy, or religion. In the words of the Canadian scholar of religions Peter Beyer, they

are much more structured around particular issues and particular elements that inform them and far less on the basis of a distinction between members and non-members. [...] They] are adaptable to almost all purposes, are relatively easily generated, and can come and go individually without the society being changed in any fundamental way.¹⁶

In other words: In putting forth the concept of the interreligious dialogue *movement*, one argues that it is possible to identify a rather open group of people that are centring their activities on what they perceive to be the very idea of IRD. From this point of view, IRD activities are neither limited to specific organizations nor specific individuals. Rather, they have been, and are undertaken, by manifold different actors that – despite their different agendas, resources and world-views – wish to put IRD into practice.

The present book sets out to see to what an extent it makes sense to use the category of the IRD movement to describe the developments in this field. Consequently, the following considerations begin with the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions and continue with the analysis of further milestone events of international IRD activities. In line with the focus on concrete activities, the following case analyses will, however, take the notion of the interreligious dialogue movement primarily as a heuristic starting point for further reflection.

On this basis – to cut a long story short – the contributions in this book put forward three major hypotheses:

¹⁵ Dorothea Lüddeckens, *Das Weltparlament der Religionen von 1893: Strukturen Interreligiöser Begegnung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin / New York: W. de Gruyter, 2002); Richard H. Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter, Chicago, 1893* (Bloomington: Indianapolis, 1995).

¹⁶ Peter Beyer, *Religions in Global Society* (London / New York: Routledge, 2006).

1. First, the following analyses support the idea of an IRD movement as a very loose socio-cultural entity. All case studies underline the significance of the first 1893 World's Parliament of Religions as a symbolic point of reference for the work in the field IRD and show how different IRD initiatives were referring to each other.
2. Along those lines, the analyses identify a trend among IRD actors towards public activism that began in the late 1960s. – From the 1960s onwards, almost all the protagonists in the case analyses have become public figures and were actually trying to put religion back onto the public agenda.
3. In parallel, the analyses identify a trend towards formal religious representation in IRD activities. In the beginning, IRD was primarily linked to what can be described as religious *virtuosi*. IRD was primarily based upon the religious beliefs of individuals. Since the 1980s it has been increasingly embraced by major protagonists inside religious organizations.

Before further advancing the respective discussions, let's have a closer look at the research process that forms the basis of the analyses included in this book.

3 The Research Process

Following the previous lines of thought, the project invited an international group of young scholars to work in the archives of several international organizations that are widely perceived as central to the field of IRD. The research group represented an interesting variety of academic, regional, cultural and religious backgrounds. The young researchers came from Argentina, Australia, Austria, France, Germany, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, the USA, and Venezuela. At the time of the project, their academic training included: Religious and Cultural Studies, Comparative Religion, Social and Cultural Anthropology, Islamic Studies, Divinity, and Language in Culture. Additionally, their archival work took place on three continents: North America, Europe and Asia.

The results of these diverse analyses very much depend upon the selection procedures that led to the identification of the concrete organizations, as well as the material that is used to address the above questions. Therefore, it is inevitable to describe this process in greater detail.

3.1 The Organizations Included in the Chapter of this Book

As already made clear, the analyses for each chapter of this book started from the observation that IRD activities are undertaken by a wide range of individuals and organizations. There is multi-fold evidence for IRD activities on the local, national and international level. As soon as one focuses on the great strands of the history of international IRD activities, it becomes, however, surprisingly clear that this history is dominated by a rather small number of organizations that can be described as central in as far as they align with three criteria:

- First, they are interreligious (as opposed to e.g. intra-religious or bilateral or multi-religious) – in terms of their over-all set-up as well as their concrete activities;
- Second, they either pioneered local efforts at establishing international IRD activities or worked from the beginning internationally to establish an IRD organization;
- Third, they are willing and able to provide access to their internal discussions during the process of formation – as opposed to *ex-post* interpretations of those processes.

The main chapters of the present book, therefore, focus on this type of organizations and aim to cover the best known among them, with one exception: The World Council of Churches' Committee on the Church and the Jewish People. While this case was bilateral in nature initially, it was the root of WCC's later creation in 1971 of its Sub-Unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (DFI), thus its inclusion in this book. In chronological order of their foundation dates, this translates into the analyses of main events in the early history of the following organizations (or: as e.g. in the case of the World's Parliament of Religions and the World Conference on Religion and Peace – events that formed the basis for the establishment of organizations, soon thereafter or much later):

- World's Parliament of Religions
- Religiöser Menschheitsbund
- World Congress of Faiths
- WCC-Committee on the Church and the Jewish People
- Temple of Understanding
- International Association for Religious Freedom
- World Conference on Religion and Peace
- Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions
- Oxford International Interfaith Centre
- United Religions Initiative
- Universal Peace Federation

The decision to focus on these organizations does not at all imply that only the organizations included in this volume are of central significance to interreligious dialogue internationally. First, it goes without saying that organizations with an international scope form but a very small part of IRD activities today. There is an increasing trend among IRD researchers to focus on the more national or even local histories of IRD and these analyses show that IRD activities take very different shapes in different countries.¹⁷ So far, our knowledge about the alternative, national IRD histories is still very limited and there is a need for further research to tell these histories in a more systematic way.¹⁸

Second, the exclusion of intra-religious dialogues (e.g. ecumenical activities) as well as bi- or tri- or multi-lateral religious dialogues (e.g. ‘Abrahamic’ activities) is not supposed to devalue the activities in those fields. It is interesting to see that the exclusive focus on international interreligious activities has, for example, led to the exclusion of a number of activities in the African, Arab, and Asian world, leading to a bias towards European and North American activities. It asks for further additional research to explain this development. At this state, we are only in a position to name this as a consequence of the present selection of data.

Finally, practical reasons made it sometimes impossible to include a specific organization in the project. In most of the cases, this was the direct consequence of the decision to base the analyses on concrete IRD activities from a historical perspective. For such an analysis, it is necessary to have access to at least one of two different sets of data on the foundation of the organizations in question – archive materials or individual experts. If an organization was not in the position to provide access to either the one or the other, it had to be excluded from the analyses. In other words: for the sake of comparison, a few of the most interesting IRD organizations had to be excluded from the present analyses.¹⁹

To put it more positively: The present volume sees itself as a first attempt in the analysis of IRD activities that focuses on central events in the history of IRD organizations with a worldwide scope. Accordingly, it hopes that there will be

17 See for example: Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria: The Challenges of Inclusive Cultural and Religious Pluralism* (London / New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion in the Dialogue Debate: From Intolerance to Coexistence* (Frankfurt am Main: LIT-Verlag, 2010).

18 See: Anna Halafoff, *The Multifaith Movement: Global Risks and Cosmopolitan Solutions* (New York: 2013).

19 The most obvious example is the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue; while it was very supportive of this research project, the general regulations of the Vatican Archives restricted its access during the time period of this research.

further research that can help to expand this strand of analysis. This leads directly to the question of the practical research processes that form the basis of the following analyses:

3.2 Perspectives and Sources

The proposed focus on the socio-cultural understanding of concrete activities – rather than conceptual reflections – presents the analyses with a new set of sources. It draws the attention away from general statements or declarations of intention towards the analysis of source-materials that document down-to-earth activities – e.g. the discussions that lead towards those statements or the processes that made interreligious encounters possible in the first place. As far as the present-day activities are concerned, this type of information is primarily accessible via participant observation or expert interviews in the field.²⁰ In the context of a historical analysis of past activities (and this will be the primary focus in each one of the following chapters), they are mostly documented in archives that conserve the day-to-day activities of the people working in an organization.²¹

The analyses that are collected in the present volume each used at least one of these different avenues to collect the data that form the basis of the interpretations. In most cases, this approach led to the discovery or unveiling of new sources for the understanding of IRD activities. Indeed, almost all the analyses in the book are based upon sources that have never been touched before (at times, literally so!). In this sense, they are not only approaching a new set of questions, they rather offer genuinely new insights into the history of IRD activities.

Methodologically speaking, this research approach (as well as the usage of new archival sources) translated into a qualitative design that is strongly informed by constructivism:²² First, the analyses are largely based upon the inductive analysis of the existing material (rather than a deductive approach). The researchers started with a review of data in the archives to identify the most

20 Stefan Kurth and Karsten Lehmann, eds., *Religionen erforschen: Kulturwissenschaftliche Methoden in der Religionsforschung* (Wiesbaden: Springer-Verlag, 2011).

21 Alexis E. Ramsey, Wendy B. Sharer, Barbara L'Eplattenier and Lisa S. Mastrangelo, eds., *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition* (Southern Illinois: SIU Press, 2010); Ernst Opgenoorth and Günther Schulz, *Einführung in das Studium der Neueren Geschichte* (Paderborn / München / Wien / Zürich: UTB, 2010).

22 Reiner Keller, *Doing Discourse Research: An Introduction for Social Scientists* (Los Angeles / London / New Delhi: Sage, 2013).

interesting episodes. Second, the analyses focused upon the empirical constructions of the IRD activities that are documented in the data. They have not started from a predefined concept of IRD but rather tried to better understand the perceptions of the actors inside the IRD organizations being studied.

Therefore, a number of different sources in the archives were combined and analyzed systematically. The reviewed material contained papers, books, and videos from the IRD encounters, letters, photos, handwritten pieces, formal and informal interviews and the original Minutes of diverse gatherings. The researchers worked through the numerous data and material in the archives and conducted informal and in-depth interviews. After this process was completed, the young scholars used a wide range of methods (from document analyses to ethnographic techniques) to identify important aspects inside their respective organizations that could be compared and contrasted with the others present in this volume.

All of this translated into a five-step process whose results stand at the centre of all the analyses that make up the following chapters.

3.3 A Five-step Process

(1) The whole project started with an initial workshop that took place in March 2014. This is when the researchers first met each other and heard about the aims and goals of this research project. Since the group was heterogeneous – in terms of their cultural, religious and academic backgrounds – an intercultural and interreligious exchange about IRD from different points of view took place. The outcome of this process was not only the clarification of the research topic, aim and methods, but also the very constructive group dynamics among the participants who benefitted from mutual advice and exchange.

(2) On this basis, the participants surveyed – as a second step – the existing literature on the organizations that had previously been identified by the lead researcher. In most cases, this task was rather disappointing because the academic literature on these central international IRD organizations remains scant – with the exception of the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions. The students therefore frequently had to combine this literature review on the organizations with the examination and analysis of both, primary and secondary bibliographical sources.

(3) In a third step, the researchers worked for two months (summer 2014) in the archives and/or headquarters of the organizations they each chose to focus on. There, the students: (a) got an overview of the archive material in existence and met with experts in the field; (b) identified a very concrete episode they per-

ceived as central for the establishment of the organization in question; and, (c) collected the main available documents on that episode needed for their subsequent analyses.

(4) The fourth step was the sharing of each researcher's first results during a second workshop that was a cooperation with *Casa Arabe* in Cordoba, Spain and took place in October 2014. At the centre of this workshop stood the attempt to see the concrete episodes of the organizations in the wider context of the history of IRD activities in general and to hold an information exchange on the concrete activities as reflected in each archive. The experiences of the participants were varied and ranged from work with well-organized data and material under observation to preoccupation with the organization without any formal archive, catalogues, or categorized material but with live and active members to interview.

(5) These discussions initially formed the basis of a set of posters that were presented and discussed at the 'Dialogue beyond Dialogue' Conference (November 2014) showing the products of the archival research. Three months later, the research results finally were shaped in the form of the articles that have now been finally collected in this volume.

This overall process is reflected not only in the structure of every single chapter but also in the overall structure of the present book.

4 The structure of the book

As indicated above, this book focuses on a relatively small group of organizations that focus on IRD and can be perceived as particularly central to the worldwide field of IRD – either concerning their pioneering role in bringing together actors from different religious traditions or with regard to the spatial scope of their activities.

Along those lines, the book follows a chronological structure that focuses on core episodes of the early history of the organizations in question. These episodes were analysed, first, with regard to the rational or the concrete activities that took place inside the organizations and second regarding their role in the field of IRD. This two-fold interpretation is also reflected in the titles of the different articles:

Part 1: First Attempts at Developing Interreligious Dialogue 'from the Margins'

1. A Symbol for Interreligious Dialogue: The Beginning of the Modern Interreligious Dialogue Movement (The World's Parliament of Religions / 1893)

2. Vision, Ambition, and Failure: Adolf Allwohn's practical take on Implementing an early Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue Organization (Religiöser Menschheitsbund / 1921–1923)
3. Mysticism meets Inception: Interreligious Dialogue emerging in Great Britain (World Congress of Faiths / 1933–1950)
4. Transformation from 'Mission' to 'Dialogue': The World Council of Churches' Engagement with Jewish People (WCC-Committee on the Church and the Jewish People / 1920s-1970s)

Part 2: Towards an Increased Activism in Civil Society

5. At the Grassroots of interreligious Dialogue Activities: Founding a 'Spiritual UN' (Temple of Understanding / 1968–1972)
6. An Encounter with Change: Opening Perspectives Beyond Europe and the US (The International Association for Religious Freedom / 1969–1975)
7. When Fear becomes Peace: Transforming Interreligious Dialogue into a Social Movement (World Conference on Religion and Peace / 1970–1973)

Part 3: Towards an increasing Support by Religious Hierarchies

8. From a Historical Event to a Modern Institution: Interreligious Dialogue and Global 'Critical Issues' (Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions / 1989–1993)
9. A Centre for Cooperation: Uniting Interreligious Dialogue Efforts (Oxford International Interfaith Centre / 1993–2017)
10. Search for Inclusive Language: A New Stage of Awareness Inside the Interreligious Dialogue Movement (United Religions Initiative / 2000–2006)
11. Implementing Interreligious Dialogue: A Solution for International Challenges? (Universal Peace Federation / 2005–2009)

The general results of these analyses are summarized in an additional and final chapter, entitled "Final Remarks: Insights into the Field of Interreligious Dialogue". This chapter first elaborates further on the two central trends that are shaping the field of IRD until today – the trend towards increasing 'public activism' and the trend towards 'formal representation'. On this basis, it formulates five suggestions to the field.

5 Acknowledgements

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