



# Rationalities of dialogue

Current Sociology

60(3) 382–398

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DOI: 10.1177/0011392111426190

csi.sagepub.com



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## Abstract

This article addresses debates on the notion of interreligious dialogue that have recently determined the public discourse on Islam in Germany. Focusing on political rationalities that configure dialogue as a governmental practice to regulate Islam in the public sphere, the author looks at ways in which these rationalities are reformulated, changed or questioned in different discursive fields. Practices that shape the public role of Muslims in Germany are not limited to institutionalized frames, but are permanently rearticulated in multiple settings and diverse, often conflicting discourses. By expanding the scope of interreligious dialogue, the author's main intention is to demonstrate how political rationalities are reformulated and rearticulated in a relationship with each other that may be complementary, parallel or contradictory, but which is in any case productive and proliferative, shaping a 'topology of power'.

## Keywords

Governmentality, interreligious dialogue, Islam in the public sphere, Muslims in Germany, political rationalities

## A topology of interreligious dialogue

In recent years, dialogue with Muslims has become a much-vaunted means of advancing integration, tolerance and peaceful coexistence between social groups. In this article, I focus on different ways in which the notion of dialogue has recently been used and contested as a governmental practice to regulate Islam in Germany, not only in an institutionalized frame set by the state or churches, but also as a discursive frame expanding largely into public debates on questions of the aesthetic, economic, moral and civic impact of religion in secular public spheres. Through this proliferation of the meaning of dialogue as a means to regulate Islam in Germany beyond institutions, any clear distinctions

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between the concepts of interreligious and intercultural, public and private, religious and secular have been blurred, turning the very conceptions of these notions into contested objects to be defined. Such processes of definition are inscribed in political rationalities that finally determine issues, objectives, forms and subject positions of public debate. The ways in which these elements are configured, not once and for all, but repeatedly and in different sites, constitute a topology of power constellations.

Here, I attempt to adopt a topological analysis of recent discussions around the notion of dialogue, looking at the ways in which single elements are rearticulated, questioned and transformed within and across different debates. The configuration of elements is determined by political rationalities, or the modes of thinking that animate discursive practices and the way public issues become problematized. Following Rose and Miller (1992), political rationalities address the proper distribution of tasks, aims and objects of different types of authorities, they account for subjects to be governed, and articulate a distinct idiom for rendering reality amenable to political deliberation. They 'are morally coloured, grounded upon knowledge, and made thinkable through language' (Rose and Miller, 1992: 179). Rationalities of dialogue thus describe the political and moral legitimizations through which the objects, aims and processes of dialogue, the positioning of interlocutors towards each other and the practice of communication are constituted in the first place.

Rather than restricting interreligious dialogue merely to institutionalized forms of conversation between the state and Muslims or Christians and Muslims, we should extend it to a variety of discourses, such as those of integration, security, economics, art and morality. From this perspective, interreligious dialogue appears as an assembly of correlational elements, which can be subjected to 'topological' analysis in the way Stephen J Collier (2009) describes in his understanding of Foucault's later lectures:

... a 'topological' analysis of power that examines how existing techniques and technologies of power are redeployed and recombined in diverse assemblies of biopolitical government. ... A topological analysis focuses on the broad configurational principles through which new formations of government are assembled, without implying that they arise from some inner necessity or coherence. (Collier, 2009: 79–80)

With this in mind, I would now like to consider the configurational principles that bind disparate debates about interreligious dialogue as a means to regulate the relationship between Muslims and German society. I draw on three debates, focusing on the way they adopt and transform rationalities of tolerance and community: the shift in the stance of the Protestant Church in Germany towards interreligious dialogue; the debate surrounding Navid Kermani's remarks about the cross at the time he was due to receive the Cultural Award dedicated to interreligious dialogue from the State of Hesse (2009); and the debate on Muslim immigrants presented by Thilo Sarrazin in his controversial book *Deutschland schafft sich ab* ('Germany is Destroying Itself' – 2010). Using selected examples of public debates around the notion of dialogue, I hope to demonstrate how different forms of political subject formation take shape and coexist within a heterogeneous set of power relations that determine the public role of Islam in Germany today.

In her reading of Althusser and Foucault, Judith Butler (1997) underlines the subject's incoherence and its incomplete character that is brought into being through the performative effect of interpellation. A subject is never fixed in one place, it rather becomes the occasion for reiteration; it remains a subject only through its rearticulation of itself as a subject. In Butler's reading of Foucault, power does 'not only consist in the reiterated elaboration of norms or interpellating demands, but is formative or productive, malleable, multiple, proliferative, and conflictual' (Butler, 1997: 99). For Butler, this necessary iterability of a subject contains the possibility of subversion – of 'a re-embodying of the subjectivating norm that can redirect its normativity' (Butler, 1997: 99). With regard to interreligious dialogue I intend to argue, with this aspect of the constant rearticulation of the subject as a subject, that public encounters tagged interreligious dialogue are exposed moments of this performative reiteration when invoked and imagined entities constitute themselves as 'Muslims', 'Christians' and 'Germans'.

In relation to this dimension of performativity, I focus on political rationalities which structure and delineate such moments of dialogue, interpellation and positioning. The relationship with Muslims in Germany is determined and repeatedly challenged and reformulated within a process occurring in different places. A topological approach to dialogue offers a perspective that can counter the risk of certain relationships and constellations becoming fixed and naturalized. Instead, it flags up changes and contradictions, dynamics and tendencies able to address individual phenomena as elements in a complex whole.

The concept of dialogue tends to use normative assumptions to describe inequalities and asymmetries. That is, dialogue is often interpreted as a free exchange between partners meeting 'as equals', implying associated notions of knowledge transfer and insight, of questioning one's own prejudices, resolving conflicts and establishing consensus. From a governmental perspective, dialogue rather occurs as practice deriving from specific problematizations, and creates its own subjects, aims, objects and norms. Interreligious dialogue requires Muslims, the state and the churches or other religious communities to position themselves towards each other as interlocutors, to designate their own identity and to redefine the distance between themselves and the other over and over again. But dialogue also becomes institutionalized and expands as an instrument of power to the extent that it materializes as a public forum for these positions.

I understand dialogue to be part of governmental policy to form and regulate Muslims as a governable religious minority to the extent that it mediates between the action of a government and the action of individuals and groups. Dialogue does not impose the state's interests onto its citizens but it addresses individuals as citizens with particular social responsibilities. I consider dialogue to be a practice that constitutes a variety of sites beyond a state's institutions where heterogeneous forms of knowledge, normalization processes and moral and legal aspirations materialize.

From a governmental perspective, interreligious or intercultural dialogue has hitherto primarily been considered in the context of the German Islam Conference.<sup>1</sup> Analyses of this dialogue forum initiated by the state have focused, following Nikolas Rose (2000), on the 'rationality of community' that produces Muslims as a group that is to be governed and governable (Tezcan, 2006). The Islam Conference has also been analysed, drawing on Wendy Brown (2006), as a process of regulation and normalization which produces

Muslim subjects as objects of tolerance (Amir-Moazami, 2009). For Frank Peter (2010), the Islam Conference figures as one site where the rationality of tolerance creates a space which lies outside but is always sensitively tuned to the formal legal realm. In the field of integration policy, this rationality results in declaring Muslims the object of state tolerance, attaching conditions to their being accepted and thus creating links between processes of recognition, normalization, attribution of difference and marginalization.

Moving on from these studies, I propose extending the focus to the state as a central agent in the dialogue with Muslims and examining the effectiveness and transformation of political rationalities in other configurations of dialogue. By extending the spaces and agents of dialogue, the latter no longer appears as a set framework for analysis that allows the description of polarizations and asymmetries in the dialogue relationship, but as a dynamic ensemble of disparate elements which are constantly reforming in flexible constellations. Concrete dialogue initiatives can be understood as governmental technologies which take on their own specific character with regard to the political rationalities employed.

## Transformation in interreligious dialogue

First, I would like to take a closer look at the most recent position adopted by the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* (the Protestant Church in Germany – EKD), and notably its booklet *Klarheit und gute Nachbarschaft* ('Clarity and Good Neighbourliness'), which was issued as a guideline to congregations in 2006. Rather than commenting on local initiatives for interreligious dialogue, I examine how the leadership of the EKD combines theological considerations with state interests and a secularized Christian lifestyle, how it justifies its privileged position with respect to Muslims and how it derives its notions of interreligious (Christian–Muslim) dialogue from that. Here it quickly becomes apparent how central aspects of interreligious dialogue are formulated in relation to the discourse of integration.

Parallel to debates about multiculturalism, there has been discussion within the Churches over the past 10–20 years about religious pluralism, with increasing attention paid to difference. Friedman Eissler (2009) describes this transformation in the understanding of interreligious dialogue since the 1990s as an 'identity turn'. Compared to earlier 'ideological aspirations that harmonize and level', he argues, one's own religious identity, its representation in discourse and its function in dialogue move into the foreground (Eissler, 2009: 25–26): 'the pluralist situation of religions and world views is reflected in a manner whereby one's own perspectivity and positionality are constructively, consciously and confidently brought into the play of forces in the market of religious possibilities' (Eissler, 2009: 44).

By adopting this approach on interreligious dialogue, the Church is taking up and complementing the central aims of the German Islam Conference that was initiated by the state. In the EKD discourse it becomes clear that normalization mechanisms are directed towards the civil, secularized public sphere, while clear demarcations are sought on theological issues. Tolerance, as the stated objective of interreligious dialogue, is used by the Church to position themselves as a distinct religious community and from this position – as a professed partner to the state – to make demands of Muslims. In this

context, tolerance implies recognizing one another as different and simultaneously formulating a joint basis for action, which the EKD sees as a universalized notion of citizenship and general humanism.

This emphasis on 'awareness of identity' can be found explicitly in key EKD texts. The theological guidelines published in 2003 on 'Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions' (*Christlicher Glaube und nichtchristliche Religionen. Theologische Leitlinien*), for example, state that an indispensable prerequisite for dialogue is to 'begin with the unique nature and characteristic profile of the religion in question and not with the construct of a general theoretical concept of religion' (EKD Texte 77, 2003: 1–2). The EKD's second booklet on the dialogue between Christians and Muslims in Germany, *Klarheit und gute Nachbarschaft*, published in November 2006, likewise bears the hallmark of this new emphasis on difference. This combines with an attitude of expectation and suspicion towards Muslims, and the Preface by the chair of the EKD Council, Bishop Dr Wolfgang Huber, formulates it in programmatic terms:

The title of this guidance, 'Clarity and Good Neighbourliness', is carefully chosen. It assumes respect for the faith and convictions of Muslims. But convictions, even convictions of faith, cannot justify denying respect to others, questioning fundamental human rights or demanding respect for one's own faith by means of intimidation, threats or violence. Respect for the faith of others includes posing critical questions as well as being prepared to face such critical questions oneself. (EKD Texte 86, 2006: 9)

The structure of argument in this booklet begins with a theological substantiation of fundamental differences in faith, notions of God and certainties of truth between Islam and Christianity, reflecting on the relationship between dialogue, bearing witness and mission. It then formulates the negotiation of problems of coexistence within the living environment as the essential task of interreligious dialogue. Thus social responsibility is not justified on the basis of sharing articles of faith which bind people together, but rather as a part of the Christian mission which rests on democratic, constitutional principles. Accordingly, the booklet states:

Deriving from its self-understanding and its Biblical and Reformation traditions, the Protestant Church is concerned to relate its belief in God become Jesus Christ to the questions, problems and challenges which confront people today. It seeks precisely to unfold the significance and indispensability of the Christian faith in offering guidance for life under the conditions of a 21st-century Western society. (EKD Texte 86, 2006: 26)

Stating that the shared foundation for coexistence in religious plurality is the legal order of the state (EKD Texte 86, 2006: 12), the booklet addresses issues of social policy in its largest sections, basically in order to determine the relationship between Islam and the constitutional order in Germany. The chapter on 'Muslims in democracy – Hotspots of social integration' examines aspects of religions in a secular constitutional state (democratic principles and Islam; religious freedom and religious conversion); aspects of human rights and Islam (sharia, minority rights, the role of women, etc.); of violence justified by religion and the duty to live in peace; and finally issues of integration (immigration, multiculturalism, societal dialogue). The chapter on 'Muslim life in

Germany – Hotspots of practical coexistence’ then raises a whole series of everyday issues, such as married and family life, gender roles, raising children, Islamic religious education, teachers wearing headscarves, building mosques, etc.

An extension of religious discourse is taking place here, encompassing problems of religious policy and a series of questions regarding personal life choices, all mediated via interreligious dialogue and implicating the (Protestant) Church more rigorously into a policy of biopolitical normalization which denominates the limits of religious citizenship in Germany. This means that there are not only thematic parallels with the Islam Conference, which first convened in September of that same year (2006), but also similarities in the manner in which differences are primarily constructed as deficiencies in relation to the group’s own expectations.

Dialogue thus understood, which on the religious level postulates the existence of irreconcilable central differences, on the societal level anatomizes Islam as a problem factor and merely on the individual level makes allowance for equality (specifically in relation to the rights and responsibilities of citizens), ties in smoothly with the interests of the state. What is being justified here is tolerance towards Muslims, but not a contractually founded, cooperative relationship such as the Churches maintain with the German state.<sup>2</sup> Muslim identity is constructed in contrast and inadequacy to the legal and civic order of Germany, whereas Christianity is identified with the civil basis of the German constitutional order.

In response to ‘Clarity and Good Neighbourliness’, the Coordinating Council of Muslims in Germany (KRM)<sup>3</sup> founded in 2007 (during the Islam Conference) issued a statement. This takes issue with each of the key points in the booklet. It argues in particular that isolated cases are repeatedly used in order to exploit existing prejudices and clichés about Muslims and thereby portray the Church in a more favourable light. The emphasis on ‘mission’, which the booklet equates with dialogue, ultimately denies others partnership on an equal footing and perceives them as ‘mere objects of regulation and supervision’ (KRM, 2007: 8). For the most part, the KRM’s response to the EKD’s guidelines remains defensive and criticizes the position of weakness to which they assign Muslims, although without managing to overcome it. Without further elaborating on the KRM’s response, I simply want to draw attention to processes of subjectivation under concepts of tolerance that Christians as well as Muslims undertake the moment they enter the discursive frame of dialogue.

Just as the rationality of tolerance, which comes into play both in the German Islam Conference and in the positioning of the (Protestant) Church, places these two dialogue initiatives in a complementary, mutually reinforcing relationship, so too the rationality of ‘community’ is central to both fields and demonstrates similar, mutually enhancing effects.

In the context of the Islam Conference, this rationality is already apparent in its motto: ‘Muslims in Germany – German Muslims’. Thus the conference plays a part in transforming a scattered, loose association of Muslim people into a clearly demarcated community which participates in public affairs as a part of society. Superseding religious, social and political differences, Muslims can thus be addressed as a calculable entity.

The aspect of expertise is pivotal here. In the context of 'government by community', dialogue initiatives primarily establish the partners involved in the exchange as experts who mediate between particular concerns and state interests. For Rose and Miller (1992), experts specifically assume the task of mediating between sociopolitical interests and problems of everyday life. On the one hand they would ally themselves with political authorities, translating political concerns into the vocabulary of management, social science, psychology and so on. On the other hand, they would seek to form alliances with individuals, translating their daily worries into a political language (Rose and Miller, 1992: 188). By mediating between the interests of government and the individualized practice of life choices, such expertise plays a decisive role in enabling and legitimizing government as leadership and guidance.

The Islam Conference and the EKD's position on Christian–Muslim dialogue constitute complex sites which incorporate expertise, dialogue experts, institutions and modes of knowledge. Both proliferate an idea of community that identifies Muslims as a social group to be governed. In a similar manner, both initiatives also define and rearticulate specific problem factors which set Muslims apart from the constitutional and civic order and therefore legitimize discourses and practices of guidance and tolerance as well as suspicion and control.

## Picture views

A totally different form of interreligious dialogue occurs in personal encounters with cultural artefacts from another religion. Here I explore an example of such an encounter, which can be studied in the context of interreligious dialogue combining aesthetic, theological and political dimensions. It is the controversy surrounding an essay published by Navid Kermani, known in Germany primarily as an author and newspaper essayist, in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* on 14 March 2009. This text prompted Church representatives to refuse a joint award of the cultural prize granted by the German State of Hesse. In 2009 this award was supposed to go to selected representatives of the religious communities – including Navid Kermani as a Muslim – for their efforts at interreligious dialogue.

In his essay, Kermani narrates his personal encounter with a baroque painting by Guido Reni portraying the Crucifixion scene. The text segues into a reflection on the cross where rejection blends with fascination. Kermani begins by rejecting the theology of the cross as 'blasphemy and idolatry', and these were to become the keywords quoted by the two Christians nominated for the Cultural Award, Cardinal Karl Lehmann and Peter Steinacker, in explaining their refusal to accept the honour jointly. In Kermani's comments on the cross they saw a fundamental and unforgivable attack on the central symbol of the Christian faith, irreconcilable with interreligious dialogue. It was not until six months later, following negotiations, that the award ceremony was able to go ahead with all its designated laureates: Cardinal Karl Lehmann (Bishop of Mainz), Peter Steinacker (former Superintendent of the Church in Hessen-Nassau), Salomon Korn (Vice-President of the Central Council of Jews) and Navid Kermani.<sup>4</sup>

In the German newspapers, reactions to the rejection of the award by Lehmann and Steinacker were mostly uncomprehending and critical of the Church. Many



commentators referred to the dual message in Kermani's article that had been ignored by the Christian representatives. Gustav Seibt, for example, writing in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, pointed out the dual nature of Kermani's response to the painting, the clear rejection of the cross occurring during the contemplation of a painting where a Muslim is remarkably 'drawn into the theology of the cross almost in violation of his own convictions'. All of Kermani's texts on Catholic baroque paintings, writes Seibt, 'enact this moment between alienation and rapture, the art-induced transition into a world of emotion and belief that only moments ago was closed off' (Seibt, 2009).

There are, indeed, different messages to be read in Kermani's text. On the one hand, he justifies his rejection of the cross as a symbol that is not theologically acceptable to him:

Basically I respond negatively to crosses. Not that I have less respect for people who pray to the cross than I do for other people who pray. It is not a reproach. It is a refusal. It is precisely because I take its meaning seriously that I roundly reject it. Apart from that, I find the hypostatization of pain barbaric, hostile to the body, an ingratitude towards creation, in which we rejoice, which we are supposed to enjoy, so that we may recognize the Creator. . . . The Qur'an says that another was crucified, that Jesus escaped. For myself I formulate my rejection of the theology of the cross in more drastic terms: blasphemy and idolatry. (Kermani, 2009)

Then, mediated by the painting, Kermani develops a completely different view of the cross:

And now I was sitting in front of the altarpiece by Guido Reni in the church of San Lorenzo in Lucina and found the sight of it so entrancing, so full of grace, that I could have just stayed there forever. For the first time I thought: I – not just 'one' – I could believe in a cross. Reni does not glorify the pain, which he does not show. He succeeds in doing what other depictions of Jesus lay claim to: he converts the suffering from the physical to the metaphysical. . . . Jesus does not suffer, as Christian ideology has it, to absolve God, Jesus accuses: Not why have you forsaken me, no, why have you forsaken us? (Kermani, 2009)

In an EKD publication, Michael Nüchtern (2010) emphasizes how the real principle of interreligious dialogue lies in perceiving both messages – certainty of one's own truth and the greatest possible respect for the other – and that this only succeeds if both messages are communicated and heard (Nüchtern, 2010: 102). Nüchtern points out that it is precisely in criticizing the position on Kermani's text adopted by the two Church representatives that 'a plea develops for a style of interreligious dialogue that does not conceal differences and includes the depiction of one's own tenets', and this actually tallies with the EKD's recent stance (Nüchtern, 2010: 106).

Nüchtern goes a step further, however, by taking the aesthetic dimension of Kermani's text into account, which leads him to another perspective, not least on interreligious dialogue. In this second stage, Nüchtern interprets the text in terms of its own genre. He emphasizes the narrative structure of the article, written in a tradition which recounts a completely unexpected, but incisive encounter. Central to this is the moment of epiphany, highlighting a sharp contrast between value judgements before and after the encounter. An example of this genre is the story of Moses and the burning bush, in



which God reveals his intentions to the prophet. Although no such design is announced in Kermani's tale, Nüchtern maintains that it describes an unexpected encounter with art which unintentionally provokes a new insight into the cross. The genre also features a drastic contrast between an old and a new perspective, in Kermani's text his juxtaposition of attitudes towards the cross: initially he sees 'blasphemy and idolatry' in the symbol, but a moment later the sight of it is 'so entrancing, so full of grace, that I could have just stayed there forever'.

For Nüchtern, the second message of the text lies in this undogmatic, personal appropriation of the central Christian symbol in the context of individual religiosity. In his view, this opens up a sincere interreligious dialogue that does not exclude key faith texts and symbols: 'The second message is not an assurance of respect and esteem for the other religion; it is about appropriating the other and fascination. The second message of the Kermani text is, so to speak, the discovery of a second message in the cross' (Nüchtern, 2010: 107).

Nüchtern, like most press commentators on the Kulturpreis controversy, turns Kermani's text into a positive example of interreligious dialogue that follows the logic of plurality and personal free choice in the 'market of religious possibilities'. Beyond the EKD's stance towards dialogue with Muslims, Nüchtern's interpretation of Kermani's text suggests that interreligious dialogue is not only a face-to-face encounter with the official teachings of religious communities, but also an individual appropriation of these religions. While official dialogue initiatives like the Islam Conference or the EKD's position towards Christian-Muslim dialogue have already widely expanded the reach of interreligious dialogue into fields of family life, morality and education, the emphasis of Kermani's double message clearly shifts the concept of religion to one of personal belief and aesthetic experience. It sustains the idea of an individualized, secular religion that is less a question of dogma than of choice, a single autonomous appropriation and critical revaluation of religious belief. In contrast, the Church representatives read Kermani's text as a defamation of the central Christian symbol, and so they began by interpreting his reflections on the cross as an affront to religious dogma, and therefore irreconcilable with interreligious dialogue. However, the prevailing view in public debate about Kermani's essay saw the encounter with art as a privileged site for dialogue, mediating religion as a matter of aesthetic experience and personal appropriation. This latter understanding fosters an idea of religious pluralism that is not grounded in the legal order, but rather in a differentiation between the aesthetic and the political sphere. Religious pluralism is positively evaluated as the diversity of individual beliefs and cultural expressions, but without affecting the political sphere or the state's role in setting forth binding norms and values. Hence, even if this conception of religious plurality implies equality for personal beliefs and lifestyles in the aesthetic realm, the rationality of tolerance, as a complement to the legal order, is not questioned in governing the role Islam can play in the political sphere.

Looking at the EKD's position on Christian-Muslim dialogue and the debate about Kermani's 'picture view', we can differentiate two notions of interreligious dialogue: one based on a concept of religion as a central element in the constitution of civil norms and values where Islam is subjected to the logic of tolerance; the other where religion is a question of personal choice and individual belief that sits comfortably with religious

pluralism without affecting the political normative order. These different notions of interreligious dialogue involve different conceptions of the public realm and how it constitutes religious subjects. However, these two notions can associate with one another as long as these different conceptions of the public and the religious subject can coexist without conflict. The reactions to Kermani's text by representatives of the Church have nevertheless demonstrated that this distinction between religious plurality based on personal beliefs and a political sphere founded on religious values is precarious and contested.

### **Germany is destroying itself [*Deutschland schafft sich ab*]**

The idea of religious plurality was one of the factors that prompted Berlin's former Senator for Finance Thilo Sarrazin<sup>5</sup> to draw up his doomsday scenario for Germany, which describes a Germany inhabited in the foreseeable future by a majority of immigrants from Turkish and Arab backgrounds. After some demographic and socioeconomic forecasting, the final chapter in his controversial book *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (2010) conjures up a 'nightmare' vision where, at the end of the 21st century, the great German cathedrals, threatened with decay like churches, palaces and museums all over the country, are granted on 'permanent loan' to the Islamic community for future use as mosques. In return, Muslims will take responsibility for preserving these listed buildings, but will obtain the right to dismantle or cover up crosses if they offended the religious feelings of the faithful (Sarrazin, 2010: 402).

This expression of cultural pessimism, building on a fear that in another hundred years Muslims could turn the famous cathedrals of Cologne and Mainz into mosques, certainly does not feature as part of dialogue between the religions. I would, nevertheless, like to connect Sarrazin's line of argument to these reflections on dialogue in order to show how his critique contributes a different conception of the role Muslims play in contemporary Germany by shifting the issue from religion to socioeconomic risk management. Sarrazin's widely discussed publication clearly marks a rupture in current political discourse on Islam, but, as I argue, it also picks up and reformulates political rationalities that are inscribed in secular forms of government.

Thilo Sarrazin's book, which went into its 14th edition 10 weeks after publication and has sold over a million copies, paints a scenario of doom for Germany's social welfare state. The author develops his scenario on the back of demographic trends and a sociocultural hierarchy forming along essentialist lines: the German population is shrinking and ageing, while the proportion of socially vulnerable people and immigrants is steadily rising. 'In addition to the sheer decrease in population, Germany's future is above all jeopardized by the steady increase in people who are less stable, less intelligent and less hard-working' (Sarrazin, 2010: 11). Over 400 pages and more, the book draws on a range of social statistics and economic and demographic calculations to elaborate a differentiated formation of social hierarchy in German society based on a range of criteria such as provenance, class, family structure, health, education and diet. Not only ethnic and religious groups, but also (for example) single parents and East Germans are posited as specific groups within a social hierarchy that places Muslim immigrants, or Turks and Arabs, at the bottom.

This differentiated categorization, embracing as broad a spectrum as possible of material life factors, reflects what Nikolas Rose has called a post-social form of governance, where governing is no longer based on the principle of security and well-being for the social whole, but on fragmented sections of society. In the wake of this new form of government, Rose maintains, the differences between those who are integrated and those who are marginalized are recoded. The integrated ones dispose of sufficient financial, educational and moral resources to assume the role of active and responsible citizens in various social contexts. The marginalized ones, on the other hand, are those whose membership of these recognized cultural communities has been refuted. Either they are incapable of responsibility for their own lives and therefore of being integrated into any collective, or else they are regarded as members of an 'anti-community' whose lifestyle and morals are perceived as incompatible with the political system (Rose, 2000: 94–95).

The position assigned to Muslims in Sarrazin's book is ambivalent: as members of marginalized social groups they can be subjected to discipline and coercion; as individuals they can be guided in taking responsibility for a successful life as German citizens; but as members of a religious community they have no place in the public sphere of the national community. This ambivalence links up with an inconsistency in Sarrazin's intervention. Contradicting the logic of social differentiation as a guide to individual behaviour, another line of argumentation is equally present throughout Sarrazin's book, which is haunted by a strong state and the idea of a homogeneous German population. Remembering Sarrazin's nightmare vision of cathedrals being appropriated as mosques, it emerges from this perspective that the presence of Muslims poses a threat to the national community once their religion changes the public sphere that has been presented as a culturally shaped, homogeneous entity. The presence of Muslims in Germany, then, neither will be tolerated in a position subordinated to the public role of the Christian Churches, nor should it be defined as a question of personal belief and lifestyle shaping a plural public culture. For Sarrazin, any aspiration to integrate Islam into the public sphere is nothing short of frightening. It follows that Muslim immigrants are external to the public culture as long as they fail to adapt to German customs and habits by eventually becoming Germans:

It is important to me that Europe preserves its cultural identity as a European land of Western civilization and that Germany preserves its cultural identity as a land whose language is German, a country in Europe, united with its French, Dutch, Danish, Polish and other neighbours, but maintaining its own German traditions. This Europe of mother countries is secular, democratic and respectful of human rights. Where immigration does occur, the immigrants should fit this profile, or at least adapt in the course of integration. . . . I do not want the land of my children and grandchildren to be predominantly Muslim, with Turkish and Arabic spoken in large chunks of it, women wearing headscarves and daily rhythms patterned by the call of the muezzin. (Sarrazin, 2010: 308)

There is no need to ask under what conditions Islam might be compatible with German culture: from Sarrazin's angle Muslims can never be recognized as (German) Muslims. This concept of integration as assimilation again establishes a clear boundary between inside and outside, between belonging and not belonging. It is targeted against the German policy of tolerance, multiculturalism and dialogue, which is based on the

affirmation that Islam and Muslims are part of Germany. The book leads to a number of demands, primarily for limits on immigration, and especially an end to immigration into welfare systems. Sarrazin also calls for immigration to be geared to the German labour market, for an education offensive among immigrants living in Germany and for rules which force them to learn the German language.

The book and the debate that ensued mark a break with discourse and policy that sees Germany as a nation of immigration and Muslims as part of it. The justifiable claim that Sarrazin's positions are racist has been prompted by the way he combines social statistics with spurious hypotheses on congenital intelligence within racializing categories. But even more relevant, from the perspective of governmental rationalities, is the way this new kind of expertise and risk management merges with a particular idea of a national community. Sarrazin's intervention opposes current forms of government that include and reflect religious and moral power. Against discourses of tolerance, dialogue and pluralism, which ascribe religion a public role, the secular public space constructed in Sarrazin's book is neither neutral nor empty, but filled with a specific cultural narrative about Germany. Above all, the book is a call to forge a national community and protect it from internal threats. Sarrazin is appealing to a community of Germans, generating as he does so a particular idea of what it means to be German. He takes his point of reference from the early 1950s and from the Federal Republic, i.e. West Germany. That was not only the period when the welfare state was consolidated, but above all a time pervaded by the spirit of postwar reconstruction and the 'economic miracle'. Sarrazin, himself a child of that era, adopts an approach to writing history that makes a clean break after the Second World War and the Holocaust and generalizes from this successful western bourgeois democracy to create a German chronicle which has no fractures:

The Federal Republic of the early 1950s was a very modern state. Two lost world wars had resulted in disastrous consequences: institutions had been destroyed, traditions undermined and the population reshuffled after fleeing or being driven out of their homes. And yet the specific German strengths – a high standard of scholarship, education and training, a productive economy and a skilled bureaucracy – had astonishingly been barely dented by the disaster of war and destruction of the infrastructure. The members of the governing classes and bureaucracy had been willing assistants to the Nazi dictatorship in 90 percent of cases; however, this in no way impaired their efficiency during reconstruction. Traditional German diligence and a fondness for tinkering and improving things remained completely unbroken by catastrophe, and if anything were stimulated by the opportunity to rebuild. (Sarrazin, 2010: 13)

These lines from Sarrazin show how his narrative of a distinct German culture combines references to a common past into a shared responsibility for opposing war and, above all, strong confidence in the country's economic force. Among many other memories, the role of religion in historical formations of the German nation is suppressed or incorporated into a specific secular narrative. While Christianity has merged into the cultural heritage, Islam remains alien to this secular conception of the national community.

This nostalgic view on Germany, combined with a general fear of Islam, is present throughout Sarrazin's book. Between a mystified past/present and a dramatized present/future, Sarrazin adopts contradictory positions. On the one hand, he appeals to politicians to gear immigration and integration rigorously to liberal, market-economy criteria, but

on the other hand he clings to a culturally homogeneous image of Germany, implying that he is dispensing altogether with politics as a democratic approach to handling societal changes. Sarrazin's nostalgic view, which guides his diagnosis and visions, betrays an anxiousness to preserve idealized conditions long since past. Yet, it is important to note that this position is not merely reductive and historically wrong, but that it generates a subjectivating discourse on liberal and secular citizenship. The wide support for Sarrazin's book suggests that his construction of a national community, threatened by uncontrolled immigration, a policy of multiculturalism and a growing power of Islam to transform the public space, appeals to identification from several different social angles. In his book, Sarrazin proposes not a clear neoliberal programme, but a contradictory discourse that oscillates between a post-social risk management perspective and a conservatively Social Democrat position. While the first perspective addresses individual responsibility and self-governance, the second clings to a culture of homogeneous secularity with the middle-class nuclear family as the reproductive basis for the national community. This pendulous movement between neoliberal and conservative ideals paradoxically links post-social fragmentations and hierarchies with the imagination of a solidly united national community.

## Conclusions

By considering these disparate examples in relation to political rationalities of dialogue, I have sought to demonstrate that the process by which Muslims are subjected as a social constituency to be governed in Germany is continually questioned and rearticulated within heterogeneous practices. For the Protestant Church, interreligious dialogue had been used as an instrument not only to strengthen the public role of religion, but also to reaffirm its privileged position in Germany and identify Islam in deficiency to that position. This form of Christian-Muslim dialogue has, parallel to the state-initiated Islam Conference, served to constitute a religious Muslim community that can be subjected to practices of tolerance, guidance and control. In reaction to Navid Kermani's essay on a baroque Crucifixion painting, the object and reach of interreligious dialogue have been negotiated, thus shifting the conception of interreligious dialogue from an emphasis on religious dogma and authority towards individual belief and personal appropriation. The idea that religion is internally experienced and appropriated underpins secular dispositions and allows the aesthetic to be differentiated from the political, relegating religious practices to the realm of aesthetic experience. Here, the policy of tolerance becomes suspended, but it remains unquestioned in the regulation of political claims. For Thilo Sarrazin, finally, interreligious dialogue has symbolized the failed policy of multiculturalism and tolerance. In his view, Muslims, seen as a religious group, are alien and hence pose a threat to the national community. Any attempt to regulate the role and place of Islam in Germany through dialogue is consequently part of the problem. But Sarrazin's intervention replaces the issue of defining the role of Islam in Germany with a problematic of economic productivity and cultural reproduction, which, on the one hand, includes Muslims into post-social forms of governance, but on the other hand, excludes them from representations of the national community.

Each of these examples shows how different positions on interreligious dialogue involve specific conceptions of religion, the public and political sphere, and the religious and secular subject. I have attempted to demonstrate how these conceptions are contested and rearticulated throughout and across the debates described. Interreligious dialogue, here, was not seen as a given frame for free communication, but as an assemblage of elements that are constantly reconfigured and shaped as political rationalities are adapted, reappropriated, reinvented or replaced in the course of discursive practices in different areas. I have taken as my starting point the notion of a 'topology of power' in order to account for the coexistence and correlation of diverse and divergent practices. Governmental policies do not constitute one coherent frame, but are adjustable to different contexts, as well as to critique and challenge. Practices that constitute Muslims as social constituencies to be governed are equally multiple, creating more sites where religious and secular subjectivities are performed.

Exploring these examples for their political rationalities, my aim was to extend the analysis of governmental practices beyond institutionalized settings. The German Islam Conference as a state-initiated project to regulate public forms of religion is not the only or the most privileged site for governing Islam in Germany. Rather, the role and place for religious traditions in the national public sphere and the conceptions that underlie them are continually questioned, replaced or rearticulated in a variety of places. By unfolding this 'topological' perspective, I suggest that, rather than merely criticizing the normative outcomes of governmental practices, we need to understand and question the shaping of political rationalities and the ways in which heterogeneous practices are put into effect, borrowing, amending and recombining single elements, so that subjectivities are not so much imposed on Muslims as performed in a variety of conflicting and stabilizing ways.

### Funding

During the writing of this study I was generously supported by a PhD grant from the doctoral programme 'Lebenswissen und Lebensformen' at the Potsdam University and the Viadrina University of Frankfurt/Oder.

### Acknowledgements

I am particularly grateful to Frank Peter for his comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this article. My thanks also go to Katherine Vanovitch, Schirin Amir-Moazami and the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

### Notes

1. The German Islam Conference was set up by Wolfgang Schäuble, then German Home Secretary, in September 2006 and initially constituted for three years as a forum for dialogue between representatives of the state and Muslims. There were four thematic working groups: (1) German social order and consensus on values, (2) religious issues and the German Constitution, (3) bridge-building through business and the media, (4) security and Islamism, where invited experts discussed predetermined topics. Results were presented at an annual plenary with 15 participants from each side.
2. In Germany the relationship between religious communities and the state is characterized by a cooperative partnership whose basic structures express this cooperation between the



Church and the state. The state vouchsafes and promotes the autonomy and civil society role of the religious communities in accordance with the 'principle of respectful non-identification' (Bielefeldt, 2003).

3. The Koordinierungsrat der Muslime in Deutschland was founded on 11 April 2007 during the second meeting of the Islamkonferenz by the four largest Muslim umbrella organizations in Germany: Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland (ZMD), Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion (DITIB), Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (IRD) and Verband der Islamischen Kulturzentren (VIKZ). The KRM is not a registered association (i.e. not a legal entity), but is based on a common agenda. Creating the KRM was intended to lay the legal and organizational groundwork for recognizing Islam in Germany within the framework of the customary state agreement, but that has not yet happened.
4. Before Kermani was nominated, the award was intended on the Muslim side for Fuat Sezgin, Professor Emeritus for the History of the Natural Sciences, and inter alia founder and director of the Institute for the History of the Arab-Islamic Sciences. He, however, turned it down due to the simultaneous nomination of Salomon Korn, as the latter had sought to justify Israel's 'war' in Gaza.
5. Sarrazin has a degree in economics and belongs to the Social Democratic Party; from 2002 to 2009 he was Berlin's Finance Senator and from 2009 until autumn 2010 he served on the board of the Deutsche Bundesbank, Germany's central bank.

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### Author biography

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### Résumé

Cet article traite des débats sur la notion de dialogue interreligieux qui ont récemment structuré le discours public sur l'islam en Allemagne. En me concentrant sur les rationalités politiques qui configurent le dialogue comme une pratique gouvernementale pour réguler l'islam dans la sphère publique, j'exposerai ici les manières dont ces rationalités sont reformulées, changées ou remises en question dans différents champs discursifs. Les pratiques qui influencent le rôle public des musulmans en Allemagne ne sont pas limitées aux cadres institutionnels, mais sont en permanence réarticulées dans de multiples lieux et dans des discours divers, souvent contradictoires. En étendant le champ du dialogue interreligieux, mon but premier est de montrer comment les rationalités politiques sont reformulées et réarticulées en relation les unes avec les autres, qui peuvent être complémentaires, parallèles ou contradictoires, mais qui sont en tout cas productives et prolifératives, créant une « topologie du pouvoir ».

### Mots-clés

dialogue interreligieux, rationalités politiques, gouvernementalité, musulmans en Allemagne, islam dans la sphère publique

### Resumen

Este artículo trata de los debates sobre la noción de diálogo interreligioso que han determinado recientemente el discurso público sobre el islam en Alemania. Centrándome

en las racionalidades políticas que configuran el diálogo como una práctica gubernamental para regular el islam en la esfera pública, estudiaré maneras en las que estas racionalidades son formuladas, cambiadas o cuestionadas en diferentes campos discursivos. Las prácticas que dan forma al papel público de los musulmanes en Alemania no se limitan a marcos institucionalizados, sino que son permanentemente rearticuladas en múltiples escenarios y discursos diversos, a menudo opuestos. Ampliando el campo del diálogo interreligioso, mi intención principal es demostrar cómo son reformuladas y rearticuladas en una relación mutua que puede ser complementaria, paralela o contradictoria, pero es en cualquier caso productiva y proliferativa dando forma a la “topología del poder”.

**Palabras clave**

diálogo interreligioso, racionalidades políticas, gubernamentalidad, musulmanes en Alemania, Islam en la esfera pública.