

Integr Psych Behav (2013) 47:265–283
DOI 10.1007/s12124-012-9226-7

REGULAR ARTICLE

Duemmler, Kerstin; Nagel, Alexander-Kenneth: Governing Religious Diversity: Top-down and bottom-up initiatives in Germany and Switzerland

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Published online: 28 December 2012

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Abstract In recent years religious pluralization has become a significant policy issue in Western societies as a result of a new awareness of religion and of religious minorities articulating themselves and becoming more visible. The article explores the variety of social and political reactions to religious diversity in urban areas and in doing so it brings together theoretical concepts of political and cultural sociology. The notion of diversity governance as joint endeavour of state and societal actors managing societies is linked to the notion of boundary work as interplay of state and/or societal actors maintaining or modifying boundaries between religious traditions. Based on two case studies the article illustrates two idealtypical settings of diversity governance: The first case from the German Ruhr Area stands for a bottom-up approach which is based on civic self-organization of interreligious activities whereas the second case from the Swiss canton of Lucerne exhibits a model of top-down governance based on state interventions in religious instruction at schools. Drawing on semi-structured interviews and participant observation the authors show how different governance settings shape the construction and blurring of boundaries in the religious field. Both approaches operate differently when incorporating religious diversity and rendering former homogenous notions of we-groups more heterogeneous. Despite of the approaches initial aim of inclusion, patterns of exclusion are equally reproduced since the idea of ‘legitimate religion’ rooted in Christian majority culture is present.

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Keywords Religious diversity · Diversity governance · Boundary work · Bottom-up · Top-down

Introduction

During the last decades European societies have faced a considerable increase of religious diversity. The reasons are manifold and include processes of labour and refugee migration as well as missionary activities and religious entrepreneurship after the fall of the Iron Curtain. As a matter of fact, Europe has never been homogeneous in religious terms although well known rhetorics suggest a “Christian occident”. What is characteristic for the recent development, however, is that actual religious pluralization goes along with a growing awareness for religious boundaries since diversity has become increasingly visible as religious minority groups have left their marginal locations in the industrial zones and aspire to establish themselves in both central and representative religious buildings.

Such claims making has made religious diversity a public—and political—issue. Our goal in this article is to explore the variety of social and political reactions to religious diversity in urban areas. For this aim, we consider two case studies which idealtypically represent two settings of religious diversity governance: The first case refers to diversity governance on the level of civil society which has brought about a variety of formats of interreligious encounter. Following Wilke’s notion of a “dialogue from below” (ibid. 2009: 15) we call these civic responses to religious diversity bottom-up governance. In contrast, the second case represents a setting of—what we call—top-down governance of religious diversity. Here, public authorities have launched an own initiative to enhance interreligious understanding by introducing mandatory religious education in schools (teaching *about* religion instead of teaching *in* religion).

In the further course of this article we will elaborate a conceptual approach to diversity governance which combines a political sociology perspective on governance as a hybrid effort of managing modern societies with a cultural sociology notion of religious boundary work. In the second section, we will contextualize the two cases and outline our research design and methods. In the third section we will illustrate and substantiate our distinction between top-down and bottom-up initiatives of diversity governance with case studies on two urban settings, the German Ruhr-Area and the Swiss canton of Lucerne. In the fifth and last section, we go for a comparative conclusion and relate our evidence to the conceptual discussion.

Conceptualizing Reactions to Religious Diversity: Governance and Boundary Work Perspectives

The governance of religious diversity has mainly been analysed in terms of neo-institutionalism or regime theory (Bramadat 2009: 6–9; König 2009: 310–315). By and large, these approaches have focused on macro determinants of diversity governance, such as national political or legal regimes regulating the relationship between religion(s) and the state. While national endeavours, such as the German Islam

Conference appear to be on the rise, both the occurrence and the governance of religious diversity has proved to be more of a local challenge (del Mar Griera and Forteza 2011). Hence, we aim at operationalizing the macro perspective of national diversity governance on the meso-level of its actual implementation in local urban settings. In doing so, we combine concepts of political and cultural sociology, i.e. we draw from a broad notion of governance as a joint endeavour of state and societal actors in order to investigate diversity governance as a hybrid setting between top-down strategies put forward by public authorities on the one hand, and bottom-up strategies emerging from civil society on the other. At the same time, we will explore how the governance of religious diversity is related to religious boundary work, and how different strategies and initiatives shape the construction, maintenance and modification of religious boundaries.

Our notion of governance is rooted in political sociology which has come to challenge the paradigm of a monolithic (nation) state regulating or steering a monolithic society. Authors, such as Mayntz and Scharpf have shown that processes of social differentiation have brought about a pluralization of both the subject and the object of political intervention (1995). As a consequence, governance has become a collaborative endeavour of state and societal actors. Bureaucratic hierarchies, it is held, are on decline whereas new social forms of decision making, such as policy networks, are on the rise (Kenis and Schneider 1991), the state itself is said to be no longer monocratic, but organizational (Laumann and Knoke 1987). It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse the utopian spirit which some of these theories of political change breathe. In normative terms, the collaboration between state and societal actors may either be celebrated for its sense of democracy and participation or criticized as a colonization of the public sphere by vested interest. Interestingly, this discussion has also shaped previous studies of interreligious initiatives: While Teczan (2006: 28–29) has taken a critical perspective on interreligious dialogue as an ambivalent vehicle of migration politics in multicultural societies, Klinkhammer et al. (2011: 26–27) have argued that the participation of state actors may also lead to an overall empowerment of interreligious initiatives. In contrast, we will not go for an evaluative approach in this paper, but focus on a systematic description of different configuration of state and societal actors in the field of religious diversity governance. Moreover, we will address the question how such governance constellations contribute to drawing, transgressing or maintaining boundaries within the religious field.

Scholars in the field of *boundary work* have been interested in how social actors categorize and evaluate (among others religious) groups and practices, how these distinctions shape their mental orientations and actions so that boundaries between groups are established and maintained (Pachucki et al. 2007). From an ontological point of view, we can distinguish between symbolic and social boundaries (Lamont and Molnar 2002). Symbolic boundaries are principles of classification struggled for and negotiated by social actors. They generate feelings of membership and legitimate inequalities between prestigious ingroups and unprestigious outgroups. Hence, they are a tool through which social actors can acquire social status and defend interests. Social boundaries, on the contrary, are manifested inequalities visible in an unequal access to or a distribution of resources and opportunities (ibid: 168). Since this study is not interested in religious diversity governance as an abstract regime but as a

concrete joint endeavour of social actors, we focus on the negotiation of symbolic boundaries between religious groups.

The scientific discussion on religious boundaries has mainly centred on the particularities of religious compared to ethnic boundaries and the mechanisms through which the former are maintained (Ruane and Todd 2010). Although it is obvious that religious and ethnic categories or identities cannot be fully disentangled; the logic of ethnic and religious boundary construction, however, can be differentiated analytically. Barth (1969) or Weber (2005 [1922]) characterized an ethnic boundary as the (subjectively) held believe in a common ancestry, history or culture. Mitchell (2006) identified in her research on Northern Ireland elements that can be mobilised to establish religious boundaries: Theological beliefs, moral religious orientations, institutional anchors of religion and religious community rituals may produce certainty about similarities within a particular group and feelings of superiority. The four elements may inform assumptions about religious others as different and less worthwhile. In this paper we will focus our analysis on religious boundary work.

When we speak about the governance of religious diversity, we assume that there are boundaries (and hierarchies) between different religious groups. Hence, in the empirical part of our study we will pay particular attention to religious boundary dynamics resulting out of the encounters and negotiations of state and societal actors. In this regard, a central issue of boundary negotiations is the legitimacy of religious groups to become partners to the state or to other religious groups (Zolberg and Woon 1999; Alba 2005). There is an amount of literature classifying different patterns of boundary dynamics (Wimmer 2008). When it comes to the negotiation of religious boundaries the pattern of *boundary blurring* appears to be particularly important: Blurring refers to the dissolution of formerly “bright” boundaries which used to be characterized by unambiguous distinct notion of which religious tradition belongs to “our” society and which does not (Alba 2005: 15). Therefore, boundary blurring implies that religious elements from others, e.g. immigrant groups, are incorporated so that the boundary is becoming ambiguous and less exclusive (Zolberg and Woon 1999; Alba 2005). This could be the case if new religious traditions are integrated in a school curriculum, but also if religious minorities engage in interreligious dialog, community building, prayers, rituals, services or other events.

The important questions for our purpose are: What kinds of religious boundaries are blurred or drawn rather bright in religious governance initiatives? What kinds of groups are included or excluded resp. recognized or not recognized? What elements of religious boundaries (theological believes, moral orientations, institutional anchors, community rituals) are concerned when boundaries are negotiated?

Investigating Diversity Governance: A Dual Case Study Approach

Our research design relies on two case studies representing two different settings of diversity governance. The first case study about interreligious activities in the German Ruhr-Area stands for what we call the bottom up governance of religious diversity, i.e. interreligious initiatives coming up from the very grassroots of civil society. The second case study, in contrast, represents a setting of top-down

governance as it investigates the implementation of an interreligious curriculum in public schools in the Swiss canton Lucerne. Following our conceptual endeavor to connect an analysis of diversity governance to mechanisms of boundary work, both case studies examine the interplay of state or societal actors when it comes to the construction or blurring of boundaries between different religious traditions.

It should be noted, that the selection of case studies as to the bottom-up and top-down nature of diversity governance was driven by comparative considerations only. We do on no account want to suggest that governance from below is in any way characteristic of the Ruhr Area or Germany while Lucerne or Switzerland is marked by a general paradigm of diversity governance from above. As a matter of fact, there has been a debate about interreligious instruction in German school as well as civic interreligious activism in Switzerland. Hence, we aim at comparing two social settings of religious governance rather than two local contexts. In the following, we will nevertheless provide some background information about the two cases and outline the migration history, patterns of religious diversity and its visibility as well as regimes of religious governance.

Lucerne is a German speaking canton in central Switzerland of roughly 377.600 inhabitants (LUSTAT 2010). With its historic city centre in the capital, the lake and the proximity to the Alps, Lucerne is an important international tourist destination. Historically, the canton was Catholic (98 % in 1860) and only at the end of the 19th century a greater number of Protestants from other Swiss regions (e.g. Bern) settled to Lucerne (Betschart 2008). Religious diversity was an issue at this time since Lucerne played a leading role when Switzerland faced a heavy struggle (*Kulturkampf*) between liberal (mainly Protestants) and conservative forces (mainly Catholics) over the role of religion in Swiss society (e.g. legislation, government). Yet, the war¹ was won by the Protestants for whom it was now easier to build places of worship in Lucerne. In 1853, their congregation was equally recognized under public law and since 1970 the autonomy of both churches has been respected by the canton (*kantonale Landeskirchen*) (Betschart 2008).

After WWII, Lucerne (and Switzerland as a whole) has been characterized by a high inflow of immigrants due to guest worker programs with Italy, Spain, the former Yugoslavia, and Portugal. They were mostly Catholics, too, however, since the 1990s religious diversity has risen in particular due to asylum seeking of Muslims (from the former Yugoslavia, Turkey, and North Africa) and Hindus (from Sri Lanka) as well as increasing family reunification. In 2000, there were still more Catholics (71 %) than Protestants (12 %) and Nondenominationalists (10 %) according to federal statistics but 7 % of the resident population had another religion (Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Orthodox, and other Christians) with Muslims (mainly Sunni) in front (3.8 %) (Bovay 2004).

During the guest worker program immigrants were allowed to work only for a limited number of months per year and had to return to their home country during the other months. The main aim of this policy was to prevent permanent settlement since

¹ This led to the modern Swiss state in 1848 with state neutrality towards religion inscribed in the constitution (Pfäff-Czarnecka 2009). Nevertheless, Switzerland does not know a strict separation between the church and the state, decisive on this issue are cantonal arrangements (altogether 26) (Cattacin et al. 2003).

immigrants were simply perceived as low-cost labour force. It was also a political reaction to a growing fear of a so called ‘over-foreignisation’ among the Swiss population. Moreover, immigrants had to work at least 10 (later 4) years in Switzerland to receive a permanent residency or to be allowed to reunify their family (Piguet 2006). Therefore, the establishment of places of worship had not become an issue until the 1990s, when this rotation system was abandoned, and such buildings were mostly to be found in industrial zones. During the last decade, however, religious diversity has become more visible. An example is the 2009 inaugurated mosque in the suburb Emmenbrücke for which an old representative cinema was refurbished.

With a population of more than five million people living on less than 4.500 km² the *Ruhr-Area* is the biggest metropolitan area in Germany and among the five biggest agglomerations in Europe. In the 18th century the Ruhr-Area developed into an important center of the German coal, steel and arms industry. After the industrial infrastructure had been almost completely destroyed during the Second World War, it was rebuilt in the 50s and 60s in the course of the so called German economic miracle (“Wirtschaftswunder”). In the course of its changeful conjunctures the Ruhr Area has seen two major waves of immigration: In the second half of the 19th century some 500.000 immigrants came from central Poland (Catholics) and the northern Polish region Masuria (Protestants) made their contribution to the confessional pluralization of the region (Jähnichen 2007). After the Second World War bilateral recruitment agreements were signed between Germany and Mediterranean states, such as Italy (1955), Greece (1960), as well as Turkey (1961) and Morocco (1963). As a consequence, religious diversity was no longer a matter of Christian denominations only, but the setting had become multi-religious with Sunni and Alevi Islam entering the stage. Besides from labor migrants, refugees and asylum seekers from Sri Lanka (Hindus) and Iran (Shiites or Bahai) have further added to the religious and cultural diversity of the Ruhr-Area (Krech 2008).

Even though the recruitment of labor migrants was a major national policy issue, it was a matter of economic rather than cultural policy. The immigrants were treated as human capital and perceived their stay in Germany in instrumental terms as a short episode to grant them with enough capital in order to start an own business in their countries of origin. In the beginning, the economic purpose came to dominate all other aspects of their life and religion only played a marginal role. In the later years, however, after the hope for imminent return to the home countries had expired and the German diaspora had become a place not only of work, but also of family life, immigrants started to build religious institutions. As long as Muslim prayer rooms and Hindu temples were built at the periphery, in suburbs or industrial zones, they did not receive much political attention. As soon as representative religious buildings were planned, however, such as the Merkez-Mosque in Duisburg, the DiTiB Central Mosque in Cologne or the Sri Kamadchi Ampal Temple in Hamm, religious diversity has become visible—and a subject of local governance.

With regard to religious governance regimes, the Swiss canton Lucerne and the German metropolitan Ruhr-Area are characterized by similar institutionalized state-church relations. The established religious traditions benefit from support (e.g. via taxes) and privileges (e.g. religious instructions in schools) as bodies governed by public law (*Körperschaften öffentlichen Rechtes*). The recognition of other religious

communities is complicated by the fact that they do not fulfill the necessary requirements (e.g. duration, size, and affirmation of constitutional legality) (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2009: 232) and are only recognized as private-legal associations (*privatrechtliche Vereine*).² In terms of social boundaries, we therefore can assume a well institutionalised bright boundary between the Christian mainline churches and smaller Christian and Nonchristian denominations which do not enjoy the same privileges (Alba 2005).

For the Lucerne case, data was gathered within a wider project focusing on ethnic and religious boundary work among young people in schools.³ The evidence presented here draws from data collected within an academic upper secondary school (called LU_A) and a secondary school providing apprenticeships in health care professions (LU_B). The schools were selected as they introduced religion as a mandatory subject. Data was derived from a four months ethnographic study during which we conducted participant observation in one class per school, interviews with students, teachers and directors, and collected documents. In both classes, the majority was Catholic although one or two students were Muslims. In LU_A, there were also two non-denominational and one member of an evangelical free church. Altogether, we draw here on observations during lessons and pauses, school curricula and course scripts, informal discussions and seven semi-structured interviews with teachers and directors. The data was analysed transversal since no major differences appeared between schools, classes and teachers.

The Ruhr Area case study draws from data collected in the junior research group “Networking Religion” which analyzes the civic potentials of religious migrant communities in Germany.⁴ In a subproject on “Interreligious Activities and Religious Encounter in the Ruhr-Area” we have performed participant observation in 25 interreligious events and conducted 19 in-depth interviews with religious organizers in order to learn more about their motivation and the rationales of different formats of organized religious encounter.⁵ While earlier studies have focused on interreligious initiatives dedicated to Christian-Muslim-dialogue (Klinkhammer et al. 2011), we decided to employ a broader notion of interreligious activities as our main unit of analysis, i.e. clear-cut and mostly issue-specific single events. Moreover, we tried to go beyond the (more or less) hidden Abrahamic agenda of interreligious dialogue and purposefully included contested (Bahai), polytheistic (Hinduism) and non-theistic traditions (Buddhism) in our sample.

In both cases, the data was transcribed and analysed following a grounded theory coding procedure (Strauss and Corbin 1996). We aimed at discovering

² Judaism is an exception and recognized under public law in Germany and parts of Switzerland (e.g. Zurich).

³ The project (entitled ‘Religion and Ethnicity: What identities, practices, and boundaries?—a study with young people’) was directed by Prof. Janine Dahinden (University of Neuchâtel) and funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) within the research program 58 ‘Religion, state and society’. The relevant data here was collected by Kerstin Duemmler and Joanna Menet.

⁴ The Junior Research Group “Networking Religion” started in autumn 2009 and is funded by the Ministry of Innovation, Science and Research of North Rhine-Westphalia. Comprising of a post-doctoral group leader and six doctoral students the group uses a network analytical approach to investigate how religious migrant communities establish networks of support within and how they are embedded in local communities.

⁵ This subproject is conducted by Alexander K. Nagel and assisted by Mehmet Kalender, who conducted the in-depth interviews.

strategies among state and societal actors negotiating religious boundaries. Departing from the guiding distinction between bright and blurred boundaries theoretical codes were developed out of the data (open coding) which later on resulted in more abstract concepts (axial coding) selectively verified in the data (selective coding).

Case Study 1: Interreligious Activities in the German Ruhr Area: A Bottom-Up Approach to the Governance of Religious Diversity

In this case study we will explore and systematize the variety of, what we call, the bottom-up governance of religious diversity and distinguish between five types of institutionalized interreligious encounter, namely neighborhood initiatives, prayers for peace, dialogue meetings, school services, and special events. The focus will be on the observable interaction and performance of the participants in these activities rather than on individual rationales and sense-making. Table 1 provides a brief overview.

Interreligious neighborhood initiatives are dense local networks of both religious representatives and laics which aim at fostering religious understanding and promoting community cohesion in a given neighborhood. Unlike many other events, these initiatives can look back to a longer history of intercultural collaboration and focus on community organizing in general rather than religious exchange in a narrow sense. Due to the local proximity and common history, participants in neighborhood initiatives know each other personally. Religious and confessional diversity tends to be

Table 1 Variety of the bottom-up initiatives to governance of religious diversity

| Format | State participation | Religious diversity | Societal participation | Characteristics |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Neighborhood Initiative | no | High (confessional) | Established and non-denominational churches | small, local, participants know each other personally |
| Dialogue | no | Medium (Abrahamic) | Established religious associations, counter movements | Rather small, familiar atmosphere, theological profile |
| Prayers for Peace | Yes: opening (mayor), venues, sponsorship | High | Established religious associations and minority traditions Artists | large, religious performance (lection & prayer) sequential and together |
| School Services | Yes: schooldays, school venues | Rather low (Christian and Muslim) | Established religious associations | Schools in social hotspots with a high share of immigrants; service is prepared in class |
| Festivals | Yes: local authorities (mayor, chief of police) | Rather high | Established religious associations Media | Religious difference is constitutive, but addressed implicitly |

higher than in other activities (e.g. dialogue meetings and school services) since neighborhood initiatives address all religious communities in the quarter. In our sample, a neighborhood initiative was the only format of religious encounter which included smaller Christian denominations, such as the New Apostolic and the Old Catholic Church.⁶ In terms of governance, interreligious neighborhood initiatives represent a localized grassroots approach to religious diversity “in the quarter”. Hence, they do usually not involve state actors, but are carried and administered by the established churches. Besides from their general focus on community cohesion, the initiatives in our sample had a clearly religious framework, i.e. they gathered in religious premises and applied bright boundaries between religious and non-religious people. A good example for such boundary work as well as the work of neighborhood initiatives in general is an initiative in Bottrop, which planned a community event about “daring trust”.⁷ During a preparatory meeting a debate arose about the “imputation” that religion undermined social peace. One participant held: “in this respect we kind of have a common enemy, I mean counterpart, namely all those who do not believe at all”. Here, a bright boundary is drawn between non-believers on the one hand, who try to discredit religion, and believers on the other hand who are characterized by a common monotheistic vision. In a boundary perspective, the bright boundary between Christianity and immigrant religions is being blurred by reference to a common neighborhood. At the same time, a new sharp boundary is created between religious and nonreligious actors within the neighborhood.

The format of *interreligious dialogue* refers to discussion circles which meet on a regular basis to discuss theological or social ethical issues. The social structure of dialogue groups is marked by a hard core of activists, mostly religious specialists (clerics or teachers) who have known each other for a long time and often maintain an almost familiar relationship, and a loose periphery of casual visitors, i.e. people with issue-specific interests. Our sample of dialogue meetings covers a thematic range from theological matters, such as “the character of Joseph” or “strong women in the world religions” to more general ethical questions, such as “social human rights” or “How can we care for our elderly?”. Religious diversity in dialogue groups is rather moderate and clearly centered around an Abrahamic consensus of Judaism, Christianity and Islam as the major world religions.⁸ Similar to neighborhood initiatives dialogue meetings do usually not involve state actors and are held in religious premises (often alternating between the participating mosques, synagogues and churches). Due to the controversial nature of some topics and the format itself dialogue meetings may attract a variety of societal stakeholders, such as members or sympathizers of political counter movements. The characteristic ambivalence

⁶ In the Ruhr-Area these groups are underrepresented in interreligious activities for two reasons: First, as noted by a New Apostolic representative, there may be inner resistance against religious collaboration beyond ecumenism, sometimes even to the point of resentments against Islam. Second, the equal participation of all Christian denominations would be at odds with the general mode of representation: one representative for one faith-tradition.

⁷ The group comprises pastors of the two established churches, an Imam of the nearby DITIB-mosque and members of several smaller Christian denominations.

⁸ The participation of Bahai (there are some active communities in the Ruhr-Area) remains contested: while the Bahai regard themselves as the youngest child of the Abrahamic family (marked by universal monotheism and strong ethics of solidarity), some Muslim representatives feel uncomfortable with acknowledging Bahai as a genuine Abrahamic tradition.

between controversy and harmony can be illustrated by a dialogue meeting on Sharia law in a mosque in Bochum. After a lively discussion which touched usual stereotypes of Islam regarding gender roles and compatibility with modern democracy one participant (a well-known agent provocateur) shouted: “To be sure, you should be allowed to burn a Quran in a democratic society”. In fact, he was referring to the American pastor Terry Jones, who had announced to burn a Quran to decry the alleged evils of Islam. Although no kind of consensus or reconciliation could be reached during the meeting, the moderators deemed it a particular success. In a ceremonial concluding remark they interpreted antipathy and emotional eruption as evidence for “authentic encounter” in contrast to a mere “courtesy dialogue”. From a boundary perspective, interreligious dialogue events remain somewhat ambivalent: on the one hand, they presume bright boundaries between religious traditions and rather aim at elaborating, understanding and accepting these boundaries that at blurring or transgressing them. On the other hand, boundaries are being blurred as the discussion tends to focus on theological similarities rather than differences.

Interreligious Prayers for Peace are joint worship events which involve lections and liturgical elements from several religious traditions. Typically, these prayers rely on sequential contributions by single religious representatives and result in a common prayer for unanimity and understanding. In contrast to the aforementioned formats, prayers for peace do not rely on cognitive interreligious exchange, but on joint religious experience and ritual performance. Similar to neighborhood initiatives they address a wide variety of religious minorities and are characterized by a high degree of diversity. In our sample, peace prayers were the only interreligious activity which explicitly included polytheistic and non-theistic traditions. In comparison to the previous formats, interreligious prayers had much more participants (between 30 and 100), most of whom were not acquainted with each other. As far as the governance of religious diversity is concerned, peace prayers offer a number of opportunities for state actors to become involved: One interreligious prayer in our sample was organized in cooperation between the city of Dortmund and the Dortmunder Islamseminar, a renowned local dialogue initiative. It took place in the town hall of Dortmund and was opened by the mayor who used the opportunity to celebrate the achievements of his government with regard to integration and social cohesion. The example shows how bottom-up approaches to religious diversity come to be supported—and appropriated—by public actors. This synergetic mode of diversity governance is based on the reciprocal exchange of symbolical capital between state actors and civil society: official accreditation (and concrete support, such as premises or organization) is converted into political legitimacy. The diverse setting of interreligious peace prayers entails practical problems with regard to the timeslots and order of different religious traditions. A common solution is to “sort” religions according to their alleged age. For instance, an interreligious prayer in Witten which involved a variety of both Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic traditions relied on the following “historical” order: Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Bahai. As a matter of fact, the historical approach is an attempt to deal with religious diversity and implicit or outspoken claims of superiority in a neutral and objective way. At the same time it poses another question: what is the appropriate age for a legitimate religious tradition? While Bahai have come to be widely acknowledged as the youngest child within the Abrahamic family,

no peace prayer (and certainly none of the other formats) has ever involved “new” religious movements, such as Jehovahs Witnesses, Mormons and the like.⁹ From a boundary perspective, interreligious prayers clearly aim at blurring religious boundaries. Even though bright boundaries are drawn in the sequential order of clear-cut religious traditions, they are evoked in order to be blurred in the final joint religious performance.

Similar to peace prayers, *interreligious school services* are multi-religious worship sessions held at state run or religious schools to acclaim students’ successful graduation or their transition to a secondary school. These services are typically offered at schools in districts with a high share of immigrants and address both pupils and their families. In our sample they involved religious representatives from both Christian confessions and an imam of the Turkish Islamic Union (DITIB), the biggest Muslim association in Germany. The overall interreligious setting is marked by a liturgical framework strongly inspired by the (Protestant) Christian tradition and includes short lections and prayers from each faith tradition as well as songs and sketches which have been prepared in class. In terms of governance, interreligious school prayers involve teachers as state actors and religious representatives as societal actors who engage in an interesting division of labor: while the religious representatives conduct the service itself, teachers try to maintain order among the pupils. Moreover, school prayers are held during schooldays and in school venues (e.g. in an assembly hall or a courtyard). In terms of boundary work, interreligious schools services resemble joint prayers for peace as they seek to blur religious boundaries and emphasize the common—public—ground for religious celebration.

Finally, *Interreligious Festivals* refer to single events based on a programmatic notion of religious diversity or encounter, such as an interreligious tournament or party. For instance, our sample includes a soccer tournament between Christian and Muslim clerics, supervised by a Jewish referee. Such events are built on a rationale of virtually playing with religious boundaries. They may combine different logics of the previous formats, e.g. the interreligious soccer tournament involved an interreligious quiz for children as well as Muslim and Jewish youth groups performing traditional dances. In contrast to other formats, interreligious festivals are characterized by a large number of participants and high fluctuation; they do usually not include liturgical acts, such as prayer or worship and lack a clear-cut distinction between religious and cultural boundaries. Due to this hybrid nature and their overall visibility, interreligious festivals may attract political and administrative actors as well as public media. The above mentioned tournament was moderated by a local radio station and comprised short addresses of the mayor as well as the chief of police both of whom invoked an idea of sportive and intercultural fairness. At a first glance, interreligious festivals resemble neighborhood initiatives in the attempt to blur religious boundaries with reference to another social category, i.e. a joint sports event. At a second glance, however, in the case of the interreligious soccer game the composition of teams is not mixed or blurred at all, but reflects and consolidates a bright boundary between Muslim, Christians and Jews.

Altogether, the case of interreligious activities in the Ruhr Area has shown the variety of civic bottom-up governance of religious diversity. These approaches differ

⁹ See also del MarGriera and Forteza (2001: 122).

significantly with regard to their embeddedness in institutional frameworks, be they governmental or clerical, and the participation of state actors. Moreover, they dwell on different logics of boundary work reaching from the polishing of existing bright boundaries between religious traditions (in the case of some dialogue meetings) to their performative blurring and transgression in a unanimous prayer or ritual. Despite these differences, all formats of interreligious activities relied on a prominent mutual notion of boundaries as a central source of collective sense making. While the supremacy of religious boundaries (interreligious or religious vs. secular) does not come as a surprise, the purposeful reference to a local (in the case of neighbourhood initiatives) or ludic community (in the case of interreligious festivals) is remarkable.

Case Study 2: Religious Education in Schools: A Top-Down Initiative for the Governance of Religious Diversity in the Swiss Canton Lucerne

The following case study examines how schools in the Swiss canton Lucerne are dealing with religious diversity. We will show first why and how the top-down initiative on behalf of the canton to enhance interreligious understanding and dialog has emerged and then illustrate its actual implementation in public schools. Here, we ask by what principles the teachers work was guided and how these principles were implemented in daily school life.

During the 20th century religious education in schools was traditionally established in most of the Swiss cantons¹⁰ as a subject separated along denominational lines. In general, only formally recognized congregations (the Catholic and Protestant Church) have been officially authorised to provide instruction, while other religions lacked recognition by the cantonal constitution and the school law.¹¹ Since denominational religious education has been optional, following the declaration of religious freedom in the Swiss federal constitution (article 15), non-Christians and children whose parents were not willing to participate could absent themselves from this Church based religious education.¹²

During the last decade it has become widespread in Switzerland that cantonal educational departments organise additional religious education for all students. These initiatives were triggered by religious pluralization as a consequence of labour and refugee migration (Jödicke and Rota 2010). Another motivation for the educational departments to react was the increasing marginalisation of the religious instruction offered by the established churches, since fewer and fewer students attended these courses and the subject has been relegated to the fringe of the general school curriculum (ibid.). In 2006, primary and academic upper secondary schools as well as some secondary schools providing apprenticeships started to organise mandatory religious education. As a matter of fact, these newly introduced subjects pursue

¹⁰ The French-speaking cantons Neuchâtel and Geneva are exceptions. They institutionalised a stricter separation between the state and the church even before the *Kulturkampf* during the 19th century.

¹¹ Islamic education is provided in two municipalities who have participated in a pilot project (Scherl-Hüsler 2003). In addition, the government of Lucerne is currently working on the basic law in order to officially recognise Islam as a religious congregation.

¹² No substitute lesson was provided as it has been often the case for Germany introducing lessons in ethics.

educational objectives of the state. In contrast to earlier models of religious instruction which had aimed at the encouragement to believe and practice religion the new model is to convey knowledge about religions and religious issues in order to promote tolerance and respect (also called in school ‘universal ethical values’) towards religious diversity.

Since the case study was conducted in two schools of the canton Lucerne, we will focus closely on how religious education had been implemented in daily school life. In LU_A, students had to attend religious education one lesson a week for 4 years. The courses dealt with what the school curriculum called the five ‘world-religions’ (Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism), ‘religious sects’,¹³ non-religious worldviews, and criticism of religion. In LU_B, the five ‘world-religions’ were part of a unit which students had to attend on three half-days. The unit focused on religious practice and rituals (e.g. regarding birth, death, and prayer). The course also provided information about attitudes (e.g. towards illness, western medicine, personal hygiene, the relationship between men and women) that were supposed to be typical of each religion and relevant for health care professionals. In this regard, the curriculum introduced a distinction between universal and particular ethics. Western medicine, for instance, was seen as a universal benchmark and it was questioned whether particular religious groups agree with that or not. Moreover, various practices were a priori presented as a private and individual affair (e.g. hygiene, dealing with illness), however in this regard, members of Non-Christian religions are presented as following moral religious orientations. In this way, a boundary between ‘mainstream’ and ‘divergent’ religious groups already comes into being.

However, both schools followed the aim to enhance students’ ability to deal with religious plurality and to take part in interreligious dialog. Accordingly, the curriculum of the school LU_A declared:

In a pluralistic society, students are confronted with a diversity of world-views and sense-making of the self. In order to realign in such a society, they have to get themselves an overview about the most important world-views. [...] Students are supposed to show an interest in people with another worldview or religion and to be able to understand them. They should be open to seek a dialogue with people having other opinions.

Hence, public schools were regarded as important institutions to ensure social cohesion by promoting appropriate competencies to deal with religious diversity. In terms of boundaries, it appears that state actors promoted a blurring of the established religious boundaries (Zolberg and Woon 1999: 9) by integrating immigrant religions and secular worldviews within the school curriculum.

But how did this boundary blurring take place in daily school life? When teaching their students an appropriate attitude and behaviour, the teachers followed two principles both of which were part of the curriculum. First, while disseminating knowledge about religions, they *avoided and actively countered a homogenous*

¹³ Teachers used the term ‘religious sect’ without specifying what congregations are concerned with this categorization; however, negative aspects of religion (e.g. social pressure) were projected. We use this term here as an ‘emic’ category that marks a bright boundary between new religious movements (e.g. Jehovah’s Witnesses) and established dominant religions.

perspective on religious groups by putting emphasis on *intrareligious diversity*. Second, in order to encourage tolerance and respect towards religious diversity the teachers tried to convey *facts instead of giving moral judgments* about religion(s). Now, how have these principles actually been expressed in daily school life?

With regard to the first principle (intrareligious diversity), the curriculum of school LU_A determined that teachers would have to distinguish between liberal, conservative and orthodox Jews as well as to distinguish between Sunnis and Shiites within Islam instead of categorising all Jews or Moslem in one homogenous group. In the other school (LU_B), a script was given to the students at the very beginning in order to inform them about the main characteristics of the five ‘world-religions’. At the same time, however, the teacher pointed out that devotees of particular religions might live their religion in different ways and as a consequence, students should learn to differentiate within religious groups. During the course, the teacher emphasized:

There are many people not living religion the way it has been described in your script. There are for instance orthodox Jews. They are conservative and this is noticeable by the clothes they wear. However, this is not the case for everybody. All human beings live religion in a different way and do not necessarily adhere strictly to religious prescriptions.

This differentiated view guided also the teachers’ attitude and behaviour towards particular students in the class. When discussing Islam, the teacher in LU_B asked Kumrije, a young Muslim woman, how important Islam was in her life, if she had learned something about her religion during childhood and if she still practiced religion. This moment was for Kumrije an opportunity to present herself to her class as an individualised Muslim: She stated that she did not adhere strictly to Islamic prescriptions although she had practiced religion since childhood. This positioning was possible because the teacher encouraged a heterogeneous perspective on Islam.

The second principle (avoidance of moral judgments) manifested itself when Dorina, a Catholic young woman in LU_B, reported that a patient in the retirement home in which she worked refused to take drugs. According to Dorina, the patient had a ‘strange religion’, ‘strange people’ visited her and she was apparently a member of a ‘religious sect’. Dorina was unsure about the type of congregation, but sure about the negative impact on the patients’ life. In this situation, the teacher reminded her of not being authorised to judge the patients’ lifestyle although she could feel embarrassed. In the other class (LU_A), the teacher took an even more active role in preventing moral judgments, particularly against Islam. She reported that she had read passages of the Qur’an with students in order to counter the widely-held belief that Muslim women were oppressed by Islam. She had also conveyed to her students that Islamic law is often misused by elites in politically instable countries. Thus, Islam could not be judged as misogyny.

Interestingly, both teachers did not always fully adhere to the two principles. Several contradictions regarding the principles could be observed when analysing the teachers’ attitudes and behaviours more closely. With regard to new religious movements, both teachers took up a more critical stance compared to their standpoints towards the five ‘world-religions’. When Dorina told the class about the patient belonging to a ‘religious sect’ the teacher admitted that religion can

sometimes put social pressure on people and would then turn into something negative. Similarly, the teacher from school LU_A explained during the interview that ‘religious sects’ might exploit human needs for social affiliation:

There is the current social phenomenon that people feel lonely. And there are many young people looking for an access to groups. Here, religious sects try to get involved. They make promises, and neglect them, until people have sucked in. They abuse the human need for attachment and sympathy.

As a consequence, negative religious experiences that people can make were mainly associated with ‘religious sects’. They appeared in a bad light whereas religious majority groups were completely left out from the discussion about religious abuse. Thus, the principle not to judge other religious traditions was neglected when it came to new religious movements. They were named ‘religious sects’ when so called universal ethics (e.g. western medicine or individual freedom) were supposed to be threatened.

Furthermore, the script given to students in school LU_B did not treat and evaluate non-Christian religions similarly to Christianity. The relationship between men and women, for instance, was a topic discussed only with regard to Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Judaism. There were also made moral judgements, such as “Gender equality is, despite ambitions, not yet achieved in Hinduism.” Although the script affirmed that there was heterogeneity within these religious groups, non-Christian religions appeared nonetheless not to be committed to gender equality. In other words, the principle not to judge religious others was suspended when it came to gender equality issues, particularly among non-Christian religions (see for similar results also Dahinden et al. 2011). In contrast, the script about Christianity suggested that gender equality is not (anymore) a problem since the relationship between men and women was not treated at all.

Another principle to which the teachers did not manage to adhere consistently was doing justice to intrareligious diversity. As teachers tried to familiarise students with the particularities of the five ‘world-religions’ and to enhance interreligious dialog, they tended to address some students as representatives or experts of their religion who should provide information for the class. These students were ascribed and reduced to their religious background without really granting them religious individuality. In LU_B, students were for instance asked to compile religious rituals typical of ‘their religion’. In the other class, the teacher commented to a Muslim student (Aziz) in private that he might have difficulties to understand Karl Marx criticism of religion compared to the non-Muslim students as they had been socialised within this ideology. Aziz told us afterwards that this comment was irritating to him because he did understand Marx. Hence, we can conclude that teachers do not fully manage to be neutral, but classify students in light of their religious background: In terms of boundary work, they continuously construct and maintain sharp religious boundaries between students even if differences did not exist.

To sum up, the top-down-initiative on behalf of the state pursued to improve students’ ability for interreligious dialog. Teachers implemented two principles aimed at blurring bright boundaries between the different religious and secular traditions present in Lucerne: (1) avoid judgments and (2) emphasise intrareligious diversity.

However, when it came to religious sects and gender equality issues among non-Christians, the teachers made judgments. And as they had to teach the particularities of religious groups, they did not manage to adhere consistently to intrareligious diversity. The schools attitudes towards religious diversity reflect an inherent dualism due to their reference to universal ethics. They are torn between fostering tolerance and neutrality and, judging those who are supposed not to comply with these ethics. Hence, the boundaries between different religious/secular groups were not always blurred but sometimes designed bright with Christianity as most legitimized religion.

Conclusion

Altogether, our findings underline that it is fruitful to complement analyses of religious diversity governance on a macro-level with a meso-level approach to the actual implementation of governance initiatives in public institutions like schools, or more informal public settings like local neighbourhoods. Such an approach does justice to the emerging criticism that the governance of religious diversity cannot be fully understood by classifying national regimes and policies (König 2009). To address this desideratum, we have examined two different settings of diversity governance and explored how they are put into effect in daily encounters and practice.

Our analysis indicates that state actors pursue diversity governance initiatives as far as issues of social cohesion are concerned (Wicker 2009). It did not come as a surprise that public authorities acquired a strong role in the Lucerne case, which after all was sampled to represent a top-down strategy of diversity governance. At the same time the case study showed that even in a bureaucratic setting, such as public schools, general policies have to be translated into curricular and, above all, didactic action, which implies some considerable degrees of freedom in interpreting and appropriating policy initiatives. Vice versa, the case of the German Ruhr Area was to represent the variety of bottom-up initiatives of diversity governance in a local environment. Hence, we expected little or no participation of state actors whatsoever and were all the more surprised to learn that public authorities have a significant role to play in some interreligious activities. It remains for future (longitudinal) research to examine if religious diversity is just a transient fashion of integration politics or whether there is a comprehensive trend of governments appropriating civic initiatives of diversity government.

In terms of boundary work, both the top-down initiative in Lucerne and the bottom-up initiatives in the Ruhr Area aimed at blurring bright boundaries and hierarchies between the locally established and privileged religious congregations and newly arrived religious immigrant groups. As a matter of fact, however, the initiatives operated in their own way when incorporating formerly perceived ‘alien’ differences and rendering mainstream religious identities porous. The top-down state initiative in Lucerne blurred the formerly bright boundary (Alba 2005: 15) by giving religious and secular minorities an *equal institutional anchor* within the educational system and by integrating the diffusion of knowledge about these groups within the regular school curriculum. The schools took a neutral stance towards religion and avoided judgements of moral inferiority/superiority to counter social privileges and

hierarchies between religious communities. An important strategy to blur boundaries was also to emphasize intrareligious group differences (e.g. within Islam, Judaism) and thus to profoundly questioning sharp differences between religious traditions.

At the same time, the bottom-up initiatives in the Ruhr Area applied completely different approaches to blur religious boundaries: Some engaged in interreligious *community building* and overlaid religious differences with other forms of collective identity (local neighbourhood, sports team). Others relied on the performance of common *religious rituals* (e.g. peace prayers, rites de passage in schools) which included—and combined—elements of different religious traditions. Last, but not least, a third sort of interreligious activities involved the discussion of common *theological and ethical questions* which are supposed to be relevant for different religions. Altogether, our results are in line with an earlier contribution by Mitchell (2006), who has shown that these dimensions—institutional anchors, community building and rituals, theological ideologies and ethical values—are important aspects to construct bright boundaries between religious traditions. Our study underlines that these dimensions are equally important to render religious boundaries porous.

Finally, a social science perspective to the governance of religious diversity should account for matters of *inclusion and exclusion*. As a matter of fact, none of the initiatives we examined reflected the whole range of religious diversity in the given area. In the Lucerne case, we observed that new religious movements (in this local context called ‘sects’), immigrant religions (e.g. Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism) and atheists were sometimes not accredited a fully legitimate status within the school system. Although the state initiative aimed at preventing such exclusion, the teachers implementing the initiative in daily practice left a christo- or ethnocentric footprint at several occasions, particularly when it came to gender equality issues. In the Ruhr-Area case, some formats of interreligious encounter blurred religious boundaries by the constructing a new bright boundary against atheists (called ‘non believers’). In addition, many interreligious activities came to be dominated by Christian actors, terms and liturgy. Last, but not least, new religious movements such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and smaller denominations, such as the Bahai, were frequently excluded as their claim to be ‘proper religions’ was disputed by some of the established partners.

As a conclusion we can maintain that there appears to be a rising number—and variety—of initiatives to the governance of religious diversity, which are driven by public authorities as well as civil society and apt to blur formerly bright boundaries and hierarchies between religious traditions, albeit with varying strategies. Despite of their initial aim to create a level playing field, however, many of these initiatives reproduce a pattern of social exclusion which is guided by a strong notion of a ‘legitimate’ religion and rooted in the Christian majority culture. One reason for the persisting prevalence of exclusion is that the initiatives do not profoundly question the historical, political, cultural and social background of religious diversity governance itself. A thorough re-organisation would imply challenging the supremacy of Christian culture as well as the prominence of western medicine. Yet, various stakeholders do not blur these religious boundaries since boundaries are also a medium to acquire social status and maintain unequal power relations.

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