1. Introduction

On 8 July 2013, Pope Francis visited the island of Lampedusa. It was a highly mediatised trip, and it was clearly designed to produce images of the new pope as humble and close to the vulnerable and the poor. As a sign of repentance and mourning, the pope threw flowers into the sea and wore violet for the mass he celebrated on the island (cf. Vatican Radio 2013a). He invoked the stories of Cain and Abel and of the Massacre of the Innocent in order to condemn what he called the “globalization of indifference” and to demand a more fraternal and human way of treating the refugees and migrants who cross the Mediterranean Sea in search for a better life. The reference to the Old and the New Testament, the “liturgy of repentance” (Vatican Radio 2013a), the white wreath of flowers were part of a strong religious symbolism invoked to draw attention to an inhumane situation of suffering and death.

The pope, of course, had his own agenda when travelling to Lampedusa, and the impact his visit there had and will have on the plight of the many people who risk the dangerous crossing of the Mediterranean must not be overestimated. Nevertheless, the pope’s visit to the European “island of shame” produced images not only useful for his own propaganda, but also for groups and individuals who advocate for a more humane treatment of migrants to the EU – especially, of course, for Catholic organisations, but also for others, such as the UNHCR.

This is but one example how religion can be used to frame essentially political issues as religious ones or to use religion to legitimate a political debate about a certain issue. The way Pope Francis portrayed the situation of the Mediterranean “boat people” made it a matter of universal justice and humanity rather than one of cool realpolitik.

Can migrants themselves also mobilise religion as a symbolic resource for political purposes at a local level and in a less mediatised way? Research on religion and the political mobilisation of migrants or their descendants in Europe often focuses on political Islam, on the compatibility of Islam and democracy as well as on the governance of increasing religious pluralism.¹ Most importantly, as Steven

¹ See, among many others, Minkenberg (2007), Soper/Fetzer (2007), Koenig (2005), Kastoryano (2003; 2004), Zolberg/Woon (1999); for prominent work on political Islam in Germany, see, also among many others, Schiffauer (2000), Heitmeyer et al. (1997).
Pfaff and Anthony Gill highlight, “[i]n the wake of recent terrorist attacks, scholars and the media have focused attention on Islamic extremism as a threat to pluralist democracies […]”. However, “[…] little work has been done to understand the conventional political engagement among the vast majority of Muslims” (Pfaff/Gill 2006: 803-4). What is more, if the political engagement of Muslims other than religious extremism has not been covered enough, migrant and minority religions other than Islam have received even less scholarly attention, especially when it comes to analysing the relationship between the religious and the political². In addition, it rarely focuses on the framing strategies migrants develop in order to mobilise for their causes.

In general, “researchers are only beginning to analyse how religion may influence political behavior and integration” (Pfaff/Gill 2006: 804), and social scientists still know little about religion as a factor influencing the political involvement of migrants and minorities in Europe.

Against this background, this paper focuses on the more specific question whether migrants can draw on their religion as a framing resource for political mobilisation. In contrast to most research on migrant religion and political involvement, this article does not concentrate on Muslims, but on Christians. It is based on broader empirical research on the political and religious involvement of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa in Berlin (and Paris) that I carried out for my PhD thesis. The original empirical material consists mainly of 43 interviews, participant observation and membership lists.

The paper proceeds as follows: In a first step, some theoretical elements will further contextualise the question raised. Secondly, two framing strategies that African Christian leaders in Berlin have developed will be analysed. The first of these strategies is one that tries to strike a balance between religion and politics, between internally and externally relevant symbols. In contrast, the second one is more focused on internal communication. In a third step these strategies will be linked to the creation religion-based political alliances and networks. A short (preliminary) conclusion closes the paper.

² One of the few exceptions to this is a study presented by Nina Eggert and Marco Giugni (2011) which focuses on the impact religion has on the political participation and protest activities of Christian and Muslim migrants in European urban contexts. Drawing on data on Christian and Muslim migrants in Barcelona, London, Milan, and Zurich, the authors find that religion may influence the political participation of migrants, but under certain circumstances only. Eggert and Giugni come to the conclusion that religion matters for migrant political participation and protest only in the case of Muslim migrants: “Specifically, they [the results of their binomial logistic regressions; MS] suggest, first, that religion plays a role for Muslim migrants but not for Christian migrants […]” (Eggert/Giugni 2011: 231). In addition, according to the authors, the impact of religion on migrant political participation is mediated by the citizenship model of the respective country and by participation in religious associations (Eggert/Giugni 2011: 231-232). In a nutshell, their results suggest that “religion does play a role in explaining the political participation of migrants but only in culturally pluralist contexts and only through religious associations” (Eggert/Giugni 2011: 232). The authors of this study also note that “the observed impact of membership in religious organizations both on general political participation and on protest activities by Muslim migrants in London and Barcelona remains, even when we control for the effect of overall organizational membership” (Eggert/Giugni 2011: 233). It is thus the membership and participation in explicitly religious associations which matters for the political engagement of Muslim migrants in these cities rather than their being members of any kind of civic association as such, as theories of social capital or approaches which stress the importance of associations for developing civic skills might suggest.
2. Theoretical considerations

In social movement theory, one of the major paradigms for a long time has been, and still is, resource mobilisation theory (RMT). RMT posits that the success of collective mobilisation depends on the material and immaterial resources that social movement organisations (SMO) can mobilise (cf. McCarthy/Zald 1977). So-called social movement entrepreneurs (SME) draw on these resources in order to mobilise and lead others; their strategic action and resource mobilisation is crucial for the movement (cf. McCarthy/Zald 1977; Neveu 2005).

In contrast, critics of the resource mobilisation theory as well as authors who are in favour of a renewal and enlargement of this theory introduce Goffman’s framing approach. Adepts of this theory argue that mobilisation depends to a great extent on the framing of issues and actions by the social movement entrepreneurs, i.e. by the way in which meaning is constructed and used. The focus then is less on (material) resources, but on these meanings which individuals and groups accord to objects, and to issues of discontent as well as to their group-belonging (Benford 1997). Like the adepts of the resource mobilisation theory, proponents of this approach adopt a micro-perspective. Yet, theirs is not an organisational or supply-side model of social mobilisation, but much more a social-psychological perspective (cf. Noakes/Johnston 2005). Nevertheless, as Noakes and Johnston point out, framing approaches, too, pay attention to the strategies of social movement entrepreneurs as their role “in the construction of collective action frames is crucial” (cf. Noakes/Johnston 2005: 7).

It is likely that framing issues that are important to them as legitimate issues on the general political agenda, and portraying themselves as legitimate political actors is more difficult for migrants than for many other social groups. Not only do they often share the difficulties many marginalised social groups have, such as having to get active without access to many material resources. They also have to work against the often widespread perception that they as “newcomers” cannot be legitimate political actors. Accordingly, the strategic construction and use of frames are likely to be even more important for migrants than for others.

Nevertheless, why should help migrants to construct mobilising frames, other than through famous advocates of their cause such as the pope? Historical examples give us a first hint that minorities and migrants may be able to draw on their religion as a symbolic and an organisational resource for their political mobilisation and protest. One of the most emblematic examples for religion as a resource for the mobilisation of a minority of course is the civil rights movement in the USA. Not only did the Black Church support the struggle of Black Americans and hence offered an organisational framework to build on, leaders like Martin Luther King also used religion as a symbolic system to frame the movement’s aims.

In more theoretical terms, religion may be an organisational resource and, as a symbolic system (cf. Geertz 1983; 1973), the source of identities and frames which can contribute to political involvement. What is most interesting here is, of course, the symbolic dimension of religion rather than the organisational one.
In the case of migrants (and their descendants), religion, just like ethnicity, can be the source of interpretations and identifications which create feelings of belonging, of inclusion or exclusion, in short: of both personal and social identities. Religion as a comprehensive symbolic system is likely to offer even more elements to draw on for individual and collective identities than ethnicity and to play a role for the political involvement of migrants.

To be sure, this is not to say that everyone identifies with a particular religion or that, to most people, their faith is relevant on an everyday basis. Yet, at least for active practitioners of a religion - religious leaders and active participants of a religious congregation, for instance - it is sensible to assume that their religious identity is of importance for their everyday lives, for their understanding of the world and of their place in the world. Religion may reinforce their national or ethnic identity or their identity as migrants, if they share the same faith with most of their co-nationals or co-ethnics or if their religious community in their country of residence is made up predominantly of migrants. Their religious identity may also be even more important to them than their ethnic or national belonging or their identification with the migrant situation or population. At the same time, religious identities may, of course, be in conflict with other potential elements of personal and social identities and migrants may have to decide whether their being a religious person is more important than their nationality, language, gender etc.

In any case, it is likely that the effects religious identity has on the political involvement of migrants are similar to those ethnic identity may have. It may be the foundation or a reinforcement of solidarities, and it may lead to the participation in particular organisations. Also, religious identities may be a reason to get involved politically, for example because a person deems certain policies as incompatible with their faith, or because theirs is a minority religion in their country of residence and they mobilise for equal rights.

Solidarity based on a “minority identity” - be it chosen or ascribed - of course, is of the utmost importance especially for the political participation of migrants and minorities. As Dawson shows, it is still more rational for African Americans to vote according to what he calls a “Black utility heuristic” than based on a class-based utility heuristic (Dawson 1994). It is even more important for the collective mobilisation of migrants and minorities because it can at least partly counter-balance the structural disadvantages that these groups face.

At the same time, political mobilisation in the name of a particular religious identity as well as the politicisation of religion are more likely to occur in the case of migrant religion because migrants are more likely to have to get involved politically in order to reach the recognition of their religion by the state or similar religious political goals because they are more likely than the majority to belong to a minority religion. At least in most European contexts, especially Muslims are often in the position that they need to campaign for the adaptation of more or less established models of state-church relations so as to include Islam as a religion with equal status.
Most importantly for the present argument, religion, or to put it more precisely, entire theologies as well as individual religious texts, stories, and metaphors and other symbolic elements offer a wealth of possibilities to frame political actions, and goals, but, of course, also political quiescence. These may be mobilised strategically just as other resources, too. Religion then can be described as a symbolic resource which can be mobilised strategically by social movement entrepreneurs, for example, in order to legitimise their actions or to motivate others to get involved.

As Noakes and Johnston note, “all social movements must ‘break the frames’ of quiescence and acceptance of the status quo that characterizes everyday life” (Noakes/Johnston 2005: 7). Religion may offer the cultural fabric needed for the construction of interpretations of events and issues which leaders can use to overcome the voicelessness of migrants by “breaking” overcome frames. For instance, it can offer legitimacy as well as examples for collective struggle or justifications for calls for solidarity.

Furthermore, as Wood (1994; 1999) demonstrates, religion as a symbolic system can contribute to the continuity, persistence and success of political activism. For instance, in a comparison of three congregations in the U.S., he finds that “liturgical experience” and “religious symbolism” decisively shape the success or failure of the political mobilisation of these congregations (Wood 1994: 397). Referring back to Swidler, Wood argues that religion may provide the members of a congregation with a “‘tool kit’ of cultural resources for political action” which will shape their political involvement (Wood 1994: 398). The author goes as far as to argue that this has direct consequences for their political success:

I investigate how mobilization of these cultural resources influences the character of the resulting politics, and argue that certain kinds of religious practice structure participants’ political engagement in ways more likely to lead to long-term political success (Wood 1994: 398)

While Wood seems to overestimate the influence of internal cultural factors shaping the success or failure of political activities of a religious congregation and to underestimate the importance of material resources and especially of external factors, he certainly makes a relevant point. Not only may activists draw on religious organisations for more or less material resources or on religious symbols for legitimacy, but sets of beliefs, liturgy and other elements of religious practice can shape the way individuals approach politics and their collective actions.

The following sub-section will present and discuss two major strategies that have been developed by Christian migrants from sub-Saharan Africa in order to see whether religion can provide the cultural fabric for their political involvement. It shows that one of them connects well with master frames already present within the non-migrant population, especially within parts of mainstream churches and among leftist and liberal parts of the migrant and non-migrant secular population. The other one, in contrast, is rather distant from mainstream discourses, and less successful in mobilising (non-migrant) supporters, and resources, but it helps create internal unity against racism and post-colonial hierarchies and as an important outlet for attitudes off the mainstream makes indirectly supports the first strategy.
3. African Christians in Berlin: two contrasting strategies of religious framing

Migrants from sub-Saharan Africa in Germany constitute a rather under-researched part of the population, and a particularly precarious and marginalised one (cf. Baraulina et al. 2008; Benndorf 2008). Their situation gives many reasons for collective action and protest, and at the same time makes it hard to overcome the barriers for political involvement. Alternative resources and strategic framing are hence likely to be all the more important.

In Berlin, migrants from sub-Saharan Africa have organised collectively since at least the 1980s. Unsurprisingly, there are more than 250 organisations set up or run by sub-Saharan African migrants. About fifty to sixty of these organisations are Christian churchers or Christian religious organisations. One to two organisations are Muslim organisations, and more than two hundred are not religious. The majority of the latter are ethnic, country-oriented or hometown associations. The second largest group of the secular organisations consists of cultural associations, followed by a smaller number of women’s or refugees’ self-help or pressure groups, and more political associations such as the “Committee for an African Monument in Berlin” or the “Oury Jalloh Initiative”. Within a local section of the Social-Democratic Party (SPD) in one of the Berlin districts, there also is a working-group which was set up by migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. Last but not least, there are several media projects or small media enterprises, which concentrate on migrants from sub-Saharan Africa in Germany and on improving the image of the African continent in German public opinion.

Both secular and Christian leaders have initiated the creation of overarching structures, federations or networks at the local and the European level: the secular “Afrika-Rat” (Africa Council) and the “Council of Christian Churches of an African Approach in Europe” (CCCAAE) and the “Rat afrikanischer Christen in Berlin und Brandenburg” (Council of African Christians in Berlin and Brandenburg; RaCiBB). The present section focuses on the two major Christian umbrella organisations and their framing strategies. In a first step, it shows how African Christian leaders construct frames that adhere to master frames already present in the general imagery of the wider society. In a second step, the framing strategy of a smaller network – made up mainly by members of the two major ones – will be discussed, in order to demonstrate how religious frames can also be inaccessible for the mainstream, but still comforting and empowering for a minority. This framing strategy is not (necessarily) intended

---

3 Calculation by the author, based on the Berlin City Council’s official register of associations (2010), Internet search as well as information provided by several umbrella organisations. As far as methodologically possible, not including organisations set up solely by members of the non-migrant population in order to support migrants in Berlin or Germany or to send aid to African countries.

4 The Komitee für ein afrikanisches Denkmal in Berlin (KADIB) for the remembrance of the African victims of colonialism, slavery, and racist violence.

5 The Initiative Oury Jalloh is one of the most political and also one of the most prominent African migrant associations in Berlin. Oury Jalloh, a refugee from Sierra Leone, died in 2005 because of a fire in his cell at a police station in Dessau. Until today, the exact circumstances of his death have not been illuminated completely. The Initiative Oury Jalloh campaigns for a comprehensive elucidation of the circumstances Jalloh’s death in police custody, and raises serious allegations against German police and the Courts (Initiative Oury Jalloh 2012).
to mobilise people for protest, but to protect them from a racist environment and to – merely symbolically – reverse colonial hierarchies.

a. The first frame: united in Jesus, united against racism and exclusion

The first frame is constructed mainly by activists of two Christian ecumenical networks set up by migrants from sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s and the early 2000s respectively. The Council of Christian Churches of an African Approach in Europe (CCCAAE) and the “Rat afrikanischer Christen in Berlin und Brandenburg” (RaCiBB) both aim generally at advancing the recognition of African churches of all kinds in Europe and at improving the situation of (sub-Saharan) African migrants. In Berlin, they basically include the same actors, but while the RaCiBB is a local structure⁶, the CCCAAE has members from all over Europe⁷. They share office space and other infrastructure, and cooperate closely.

For these organisations, frames must serve three main goals. On the one hand, it is necessary for them to frame political issues as relevant for them as religious actors. They need to ensure that issues are perceived as legitimately “their” issues – both internally and in interaction with external actors. Also, they have to convey to their members that they keep the balance between political, social and religious issues. On the other hand, they need to develop strategies which mobilise their member churches and as many individual church members as possible and which help integrate the Christian milieu into the broader movement of African migrants in Berlin. They hence need to make sure that church leaders and church members participate or agree to the participation of their congregation in a mainly secular movement and that this movement’s leaders also speak in their name. Last but not least, the RaCiBB and the CCCAAE need to develop frames that are accessible also for non-Christian activists or non-African Christians in order to be included into secular movement structures and to receive support from (parts of) the wider Christian community.

In the CCCAAE’s and the RaCiBB’s leaders’ discourse, the political aspirations of the two federations become apparent. Firstly, whereas they are very different in terms of their denominations, their member churches are united in their anti-colonial stance. As African Christians, they may refer positively to the spread of the gospel in Africa by the colonialists. But they are very clear in their condemnation of the denigration and alienation of Africans during and after European colonisation, of

---

⁶ Both the CCCAAE and the RaCiBB are religious and political organisation at the same time. The RaCiBB was founded to bring together and give a voice to African Christians in the Berlin-Brandenburg region. Although it mainly is an umbrella organisation of churches, individuals can also join, because it understands itself explicitly as an organisation representing African Christians - whether they are members of a church or not, and whether their church is a member of the RaCiBB or not. According to one of its representatives, there are about forty member churches, but the core of activists consists of about ten people (Int8).

⁷ According to the World Council of Churches, of which the CCCAAE is a member, the CCCAAE had 118 members in 2006: eight from France, thirteen from the United Kingdom, eighteen from Switzerland, and seventy-nine from Germany.
the continued exploitation of the African continent as well as of the marginalisation of African migrants in Europe.\textsuperscript{8}

For instance, although it would have been easier for the CCCAAE as a European federation and as a member of the World Council of Churches to set up their headquarters in Geneva, because they could have had office space there for free. However, the central office is located in Berlin because of the symbolic historical significance of the city: at the so-called Congo Conference of 1884/85 in Berlin, the colonial powers divided the African continent among themselves - a division which still has great impact on many African countries, on their national borders, on internal conflicts, access to resources and transportation infrastructure like railways and ports etc.. For the CCCAAE, setting up headquarters in Berlin hence was a symbol for their anti-colonial stance, and a politically, rather than a spiritually or financially motivated decision. The following quote from an interview with John, one of the CCCAAE’s leaders, summarises this nicely:

John: […] Berlin ist historisch für Afrika, und die Einheit der Afrikaner soll von hier ausgehen. Und das war mein Plädoyer, dass Berlin als Hauptsitz dann für diese// dass, wo wir geteilt worden waren, soll dann der Ort sein, der gleiche Ort sein, wo wir die Ei// die Versöhnung und Einigung dann irgendwo (bezeii// berufen?) konnten und sollen. Und das Argument wurde dann k// äh (.) von allen akzeptiert. Dann haben wir den// das Büro hierher verlegt (Int18).\textsuperscript{9}

Secondly, the anti-colonial position of the RaCiBB and the CCCAAE goes along with their anti-racist standpoint and with a position on “integration” that does not necessarily correspond to the dominant German discourse on the subject.

While open racism and especially racist violent attacks on the one hand are difficult to eradicate, they can be easily denounced, because they are not ambiguous. Both secular and Christian migrant and non-migrant organisations raise these issues and protest against them. Yet, more subtle forms of depreciation, exotism and racist paternalism are harder to decry, since they are more easily disguised or are part of a person’s attitudes only unconsciously. It is therefore also more difficult to counter these forms of disrespect and to avoid “free riders” or spoilers who, for instance, take advantage of patronising offers of participation, even if this comes at the price of undermining the group’s position. The framing strategy of leaders hence is even more important here, as it first needs to unmask the subtlety and the perfidy of “benevolent” racism before they can counter it.

Two examples from Berlin illustrate this most clearly. As, Franck, the director of an African migrant TV station in Berlin and member of the Afrika-Rat pointed out (Int20), and several other

\textsuperscript{8} It is interesting to note that the foundation both of the CCCAAE and of the RaCiBB was initiated and encouraged by German Christians, but that the two organisations have emancipated from “European tutelage”. Nevertheless, and despite the large number of member churches located in Germany, at the time of the interview, the CCCAAE was debating whether they should move elsewhere because they found it too difficult to achieve their goals in Germany (Int18).

\textsuperscript{9} J: Berlin is historical for Africa, and we want the unity of Africans to start from here. And this was my plea, that Berlin would be the headquarters for this// that the place in which we had been divided should then be the place, the same place, where we could and should (find?) uni// reconciliation and unity. And this argument was then accepted by everyone. Then we have moved the// the office here.
interlocutors confirmed (Int14; Int19), secular cultural and media associations in Berlin are often asked in a patronising and sometimes racist fashion to participate in “projects” set up by members of the non-migrant population in order to add “a bit of colour” to their own projects or events. Since there is no common awareness of the damaging potential it may have, if Black migrants agree to make a project “multicultural” or even “colourful” without being allowed to make any real contribution, there is much room for free riders. Franck expresses this problem and his frustration with it:


Franck’s exasperation exemplarily reveals two issues: Firstly, even within “progressive” milieus, a paternalist attitude towards blacks or Africans seems to be widespread. It is not necessary to consider them partners on an equal level, as long as they can be “added” to projects set up by members of the non-migrant and/or white population to demonstrate one’s closeness to the African community or one’s progressive, anti-racist position. Secondly, the Black community in Berlin apparently is not (yet) united and firm enough in order to withstand this kind of “offer”. As a consequence, spoilers can take advantage of others’ struggle against these attitudes and hence undermine it.

Similarly, within their religious milieu, Christians from sub-Saharan Africa encounter comparable paternalistic or racist attitudes. For instance, as Peter Sorie Mansaray from the RaCiBB explains, African Christians often feel belittled by German congregations who invite them once a year to play the drums, dance and sing at special “multicultural” events, but do not take them seriously otherwise. However, in contrast to their secular counterpart (the Afrika-Rat) the Christian federations have found ways to fight this kind of attitudes. Their unifying structures also help them to reduce the

---

10 F: No, for this I really don’t need to act like this or like that. The Blacks here in Berlin, it’s no different from, er, France or England. In England they have managed to do what we in Berlin have not been able to do. These, they have raised their voice. There, they are fully// er, when they go out and speak, they are listened to. Not here. We-we are too few. We have very little force. Especially because we always fight one another, (.) you see? And, er::; someone calls me and says: “Well, Franck, er, (. ) for my project I need a dancer.” (. ) I say: “You need a dancer, why?”; and he says: “Yes:: I have done a Proka project and so on, for Africa”; and I say: “So, are you an African?”, he says: “No.” - “And where do you come from?” And he says: “Yes, I’m German, I’ve been doing this for a long time.” I say: “And now you need an African, otherwise your project is not a project?” (laughs) You understand? I tell him: “I’m sorry, something like this is not for me, because I want that you speak to me before so that I know exactly what this is about.” But he says: “Franck, it’s alright.” He hangs up and calls someone else, and he says: “Well, I do it, I give you 50 euro.” - “Yes, that’s OK!”
danger of spoilers or free riders, as Franck described them, who take advantage of somebody else’s “no”. Peter Sorie Mansaray, for example, sees it as one of the RaCiBB’s great achievements that their answer to this kind of attitude nowadays is a firm one. Because they stood their ground, the non-migrant German congregations now seem to value their opinions and contributions more than before:

Peter Sorie Mansaray: Und wir haben auch bei Veranstaltungen gesagt, wir wollen auch mitgestalten und nicht wenn man schon alles gemacht hat und dann fragt man uns, ob wir äh was beitragen können, ein bisschen für Farbe zu sorgen, das machen wir nicht mit. Äh wir können auch mehr machen, als nur trommeln und Popo wackeln (Int8).  


Religion here on the one hand serves as a symbolic resource for insisting on equality: “ecumenical” is translated as “equal partners” - if non-migrant congregations want to celebrate “ecumenical” services with (usually not Lutheran) African congregations, if they want an African choir, African food and colourful dresses at their events, they need to accept that African Christians want to and are also able to be included in the conceptual and theological preparation of the respective event. On the other hand, unity within the religious federation helps reduce the destructive potential of spoilers and free riders or for dealing with European superiority and dominance by questioning the old hierarchies. The religious federations seem to ensure a degree of social control and unity that the secular Afrika-Rat cannot provide (yet).

Closely related to the issue field of racism and paternalism is, of course, that of “integration”. In our first encounter, George, a Pentecostal pastor originally from Ghana and one of the RaCiBB’s founders, almost immediately turned to the subject of “integration” although I had not mentioned it or any related term (such as assimilation). It was important to him to make sure I understood that integration could never be one-sided. Instead, it always had to be accomplished by both the “autochthonous” part of the society and migrants (Int3). Similarly, Peter Arthur, also from Ghana and pastor of another Pentecostal congregation in Berlin, explains that there cannot be “integration” if German society is not willing to accept migrants or persons of migrant descent in leading positions in politics and in the media

---

11 PSM: And we already said to some events [when they got an invitation to participate; MS], we want to be involved in the organisation, and not// when everything has already been done and then they ask us, whether we, er, could contribute anything to add a bit of colour, we don’t do that. Er, we, too, can do more than play the drums and shake our hips.

12 PSM: Well, er, these are a bit harsh words, but I think th// we should not somehow brush the words under the carpets to// otherwise, there can be no change. Yes, and sometimes we have really said very hard and clear: People, this is not possible. It’s not just about we bring some African food and then this means things are already ecumenical and so forth. No, no, we want also be part of the planning process and (. ) we also want to have our elements in the church service, in this ecumenical business. Yes, and I think we got the message across. Yes, across. We are now taken seriously, you see!
as well as in the police, as clerks in banks and in other publicly visible and (more or less) well respected jobs. If Germans are not ready to accept this kind of transformation and show more openness towards migrants and their descendants, he warns, there will always be the danger of disenchantment, reclusion and even terrorist attacks (Int1).

Framed in religious terms, the ideal of integration processes under the conditions of equality and respect are described as the “Daniel effect” by the Christian federations’ leaders. In their discourse, the biblical figure Daniel represents the idea of the immigrant. The Daniel effect then stands for a two-sided process in which the migrant becomes part of the receiving society both through his willingness to learn and through the openness of the autochthonous society. Daniel is successful because he wants to be so, but also because there is no glass ceiling which keeps the newcomer at the margins of society forever (Int18). The Daniel effect, however, does not describe the actual situation of migrants (from sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere) in Germany, but something that has to be struggled for: Today, “der Migrant bleibt immer der Migra-Migrant in Deutschland”, a migrant always stays a migrant in Germany (Int18).

The two Christian federations hence frame their major political issues as relevant both to (African) migrants and to Christians. Except for the decision to set up headquarters in Berlin rather than in Geneva, their strategy builds on secular arguments framed by religious symbols and values (“ecumenical”, “equality”, “Daniel effect”). Concerning the CCCAAE’s settlement in Berlin, they did not use religious symbols to frame anti-colonialism and the remembrance of the victims of European imperialism, but explicitly argued for a publicly visible symbolic political move by their religious organisation as a political actor. In order to be able to take decisions like this one, to avoid free riders as described by the head of the secular African migrant TV station Franck, and especially in order to be taken seriously by external actors, it is most important for the two Christian federations to achieve unity among African Christians.

There is, of course, a great variety of denominations and theological and liturgical preferences within the African Christian population in Berlin. Also, these migrants come from a multitude of countries and thus have to deal with a great cultural and linguistic diversity, and differing (transnational) political interests.

Generally, for the CCCAAE, their shared religion is a means to overcome linguistic and cultural differences between African migrants in Europe and to struggle together for recognition. It is thus also a means to overcome the historical divide that is the heritage of the partition of the African continent by the European colonial powers (Int18). In their rhetoric, “Jesus” as the most important shared reference is the key to unity. If they cannot agree upon strategies to struggle against racism and marginalisation as Africans or as blacks, they should still be able to agree upon the belief in Jesus as their Saviour. And this spiritual unity is then presented as a common ground from which to start also political action. This can be seen very clearly in quote from an interview with John from the CCCAAE, who first explains that African migrants are able to make important contributions to European societies, and that they want
to be more than cheap labour (Int18). He then outlines how spiritual unity can create the political unity necessary to escape from a situation of marginalisation, and to fight the devaluation of their capacities:

John: Ja, und die Ziele ist, dass wir als Afrikaner nicht nur billige Kräfte sein sollen in Europa.

Miriam: Arbeitskräfte?

J: Ja, Arbeitskräfte, weil wir haben so viele Intellektuelle in Europa, das sind nur// viele, die hier studiert haben, sind eigentlich nur Tellerwäschere oder, ähm, ja, Taxifahrer oder irgendwas, ja, Zimmermädchen, ja, gut, Zimmermänner oder so Zimmermädchen, wie man das nennt (both laugh), ja. Und was können wir mit unsere Bildung, die wir in Europa be-äh-bekommen haben, tun? So das ist ein Grund, uns dann das Gefühl zu geben, wir sind wertvoll in Europa. Wir können auch was, ja, äh was wir mitgebracht haben, auch zeigen, aber da brauchen wir einen Konsens. Die Afrikaner müssen sich erstmal, ja, zusammenen und Ideen und Strategien entwickeln. Äh, da die Vielfalt in der Kultur so gravierend ist bei den Afrikanern, deshalb denken wir spirituell. Das ist ein bisschen einfacher, zusammen zu kommen und Christus als unseren einzigen Heiland anzuerkennen und das konnte den// endlich der Weg zur Einheit der Afrikaner gekommen (.). Und Christus ist für uns alle, für Afrikaner ist eigentlich der A und O, ja. So da wir ja Christen sind, haben wir dann erstmal Christus nach vorne gestellt und dadurch konnten wir auch zusammen kommen. Und das ist diese Lehre, dass Christen zu der Einheit der Menschen// durch Christus, der Sanctus hat uns geholfen zusammen zu kommen, mh (Int18).13

John’s description clearly shows once again the political idea behind the federations: they are a means to overcome the prevailing image of African inferiority and to perceive themselves and be perceived by the non-migrant population as valuable and equal participants in European societies, because as religious organisations they can provide the unity of Africans that otherwise is hard to come by.

To be sure, despite the religious framing of the issues the two federations raise, not all of the African churches in Berlin share their political approach. Especially some of the African Pentecostal pastors are suspicious because they fear a potential loss of influence and control over their churches through the creation of a supra-structure and too great a politicisation of their religion. In answer to them, “Jesus” is described as radical and political in his criticism of his time. Just like the reference to the biblical figure Daniel justifies the criticism of “integration” discourses from a Christian standpoint, reference to “Jesus” legitimises the political strategies of the African Christian federations. The

---

13 J: Yes, and the goal is that we Africans are not just cheap forces in Europe.

M: Labour force?

J: Yes, labour force, because we have got so many intellectuals in Europe, they are just// many who went to university here are in fact just dishwashers or, er, yes, taxi drivers or something, yes, chambermaids, yes, good, chamber men or so chambermaids, however you call this (both laugh [John actually uses the term “Zimmermänner” (carpenters) as male equivalent to “Zimmermädchen” (chambermaids)]), yes. And what can we do with our education, which we have received in Europe? So this is a reason to give us the feeling, we are of value in Europe. We can do something, too, er, what we have brought with us, we can show this, too, but we need consensus. First of all, Africans need to, yes, come together and must develop ideas and strategies. Er, the diversity in the culture is so serious with us Africans, this is why we think spiritually. This is a bit easier to come together and to recognize Christ as our sole Saviour, and this could // finally, the way to unity for Africans has come (.). And Christ is for us all, for Africans, in fact, he is the alpha and omega, yes. So since we are Christians, we have put Christ forward, and this is how we could also come together. And this is this lesson, that Christians can [contribute to?] the unity of human beings// through Christ, the Sanctus, has helped us come together.
following passage from an interview with a representative of the RaCiBB illustrates very well the competition and struggles for legitimacy and recognition within the umbrella organisations, as well as the most important framing strategy against discord and disunity:

Peter Sorie Mansaray: [...] Wir sagen: Nee, nee, hier ist ein Gebiet für alle. Wir haben das nicht zu beurteilen, wer Pastor ist oder wer nicht, wer Christ ist oder nicht, solange man unser Ziele unterstützen will, bitte schön, warum denn nicht? Und die nennen (uns dann?) zu politisch, ja?

Miriam: Ok.

PSM: Ja, zu politisch.

M: Wer sagt das?

PSM: Viele andere. Die *Pentecostals.*

M: Ok.


This and the previous passages from the interviews with leaders of the RaCiBB and the CCCAAE hence also show that religious symbols are an important framing resource in order to reach their political goal of unity. “Jesus” in their argumentation becomes the means to overcome this diversity and to unite first spiritually, than politically. However, “Jesus” as a spiritual “rallying point” and as legitimation for political demands and actions is not only an instrument to achieve what otherwise is not possible: (sub-Saharan) African migrants speaking with one voice and with a common goal. It is also an important element of their major frame which connects African cultural diversity, political and linguistic differences inherited from colonial times, their marginalised position as black migrants in a society which perceives itself as “white” and ethnically “homogeneous” with Christian theology. Without explicitly acknowledging it, the two major Christian federations hence stand in the tradition of several movements’ framing strategies that are accessible also for non-migrants and/or non-Christians.

---

14 Obviously, the African Christian congregations in Berlin diverge in theological aspects as well as in their religious activities, according to the religious tendency they belong to and to their individual leaders. For instance, when asked what was central to the faith as their church professed it, the answers of the interlocutors reached from faith, because “faith is everything” (Int10), to the experience that they had been saved by Jesus Christ (Int25) and the attachment to Jesus Christ as well as the Eucharist (Int27) and, finally, to “building bridges” (Int1). Especially the Pentecostals differ from the others in their way of interpreting the bible.

15 PSM: [...] We say: no, no, this is a space for everyone. We don’t have to judge who is a pastor and who is not, who is a Christian and who is not, as long as they want to support our goals, you know, why not after all? And (then?) they (us?) call us too political, yes?

M: OK.

PSM.: Yes, too political.

M: Who says that?

PSM: Many others. The Pentecostals.

M: OK.

PSM: Where we also// Peter Arthur is also our vice-president, a Pentecostal pastor, and he is a bit// there are other who think he is// er, we are too political. Er, Christians should not become politically active, and so forth. And we say: Come on, Jesus was political, too. This is my understand// he was a revolutionary.
First of all, we find a similar use of Christian symbols in the civil rights movement’s frames, e.g. in Martin Luther King’s rhetoric we find, and even in popular songs of the time, religion and the struggle against racism and oppression are linked.\(^\text{16}\) And as Aldon D. Morris pointed out in his influential book on the movement, both Christian institutions and the Christian religion as a symbolic system played an important role even before the actual civil rights movement:

A number of writers have noted the central role that black religious institutions played in slave revolts. John Hope Franklin, in *From Slavery to Freedom*, wrote, ‘In most states Negro preachers were outlawed between 1830 and 1835. It was believed that too many of the conspiracies had been planned in religious gatherings’ (Morris 1984: 291).

Dr. DuBois, that most sensitive analyst of the black experience, wrote in *The Philadelphia Negro*, first published in 1899, that ‘all movements for social betterment are apt to centre in the churches… the race problem in all its phases is continually being discussed, and, indeed, from this forum many a youth goes forth inspired to work’ (Morris 1984: 293).

The two federations hence can build on a frame that has a very long tradition, and also has been popularised far beyond the actual movement and/or the African American community. What is more, in their reference to Jesus as a “radical”, as a “revolutionary”, the RaGiBB and the CCCAAE also open up opportunities to connect with their arguments for left-wing or liberal Christians within the major German churches, because their framing strategy is close to that of adepts of Latin American Liberation Theology, which has been quite popular among liberal Christians in Germany. The two federations hence construct a frame whose symbols are accessible also for non-migrant and even for secular organisations and individuals. This is crucial as they thus integrate thousands of migrants into the broader movement of Africans in Berlin (and Germany) and to receive support from established Christian institutions.

b. The second frame: Reverse mission as a reversal of colonial and post-colonial (development aid) hierarchies

There are, however, also other frames present within the African Christian network in Berlin. This section will show that religion may not only serve as a symbolic resource when leaders seek to rally support for mobilisation that goes beyond the symbolic realm, but also for purely symbolic acts that still have a political dimension.

While the Christian religion certainly is a missionary religion in general, proselytization, of course, takes different forms and does not have the same importance to all Christian currents and sometimes not even to each congregation of the same religious strand. Among the African churches in Berlin, for instance, especially some of the Pentecostal churches see themselves as missionary churches.

\(^{16}\) See, for example, Paul Simon’s “A church is burning”, which tells the story of an arson attack on an African American congregation’s church (“where just hours before, voices were singing and hands were beating and saying, ‘I won’t be a slave anymore’”) by members of the Ku Klux Klan (“three hooded men”). The church is burnt down, but the song’s refrain then goes: “You can burn down my churches but I shall be free.” (cf. http://www.simonandgarfunkel.com/us/music/old-friends/church-burning-live; last accessed: 25/08/13).
- maybe not exclusively as such, but to a great extent. In their rhetoric, missionary fervour, their views of European colonialism and the Christianisation of Africa as well as a feeling of African religious superiority often tend to fuse. As will be shown in more detail in the following, this leads to a discursive reversal of the old colonial hierarchies between Africans and Europeans, most clearly discernable in the evangelical and Pentecostal Christians’ descriptions of the specificities of their religion and their missionary activities.

For William, for instance, a pastor of a small Pentecostal church, mission is at the centre of his life and his church, because in his opinion, the Christian religion is the only way to a better world. While his church is also politically active in that it maintains close contacts to the local administration and, for example, encourages its members to get involved for improving the situation in their neighbourhoods, the pastor’s central idea is that social and political change will be achieved through mission:

William: [...] I was in Texas last Ja// this January. And it was a conference to help, er, prie// er, pastors to plant churches, establish more churches. Not just in their own church, where they’re living, but to help also to spread the gospel. And we have to spread the gospel. Mankind// you look at the present time, we are now// we have terrorism in the name of religion. And, er, I’m happy to hear that we have not had a Christian terrorist. I mean, er, Christian principles helps er-er, peace, where the// helps for that peace. It helps. So we have to help also for that Christian, er, churches, and, er, plant churches all over the world (Int17).

William: Oh, well, the most important contact here in Berlin// Well, we are here to worship God, to serve him, to honor him and to be strong in this world, to make people Disciples of Christ. But like I told you also, ehm, we are here// Christ came for the world, he came that the world be a better place. If everybody would hear Jesus Christ and follow his principles and, er, his way of life, I think it could be a wonderful word (Int17).

Since the Christian religion is the only way to make the world a better place, William goes as far as to legitimise colonialism because of European proselytisation. He probably would not go as far as to say that everything the colonisers did was good, but in his view it still was a fortunate development that those who, according to him, were the first to fully endorse the gospel, subjected the world to their rule and brought the Christian religion to other continents:

William: We are lucky that Europeans, I would say, were the people who// the first people who collectively (,), er, embraced the gospel and they-and:: they verbreitet it, preached it. The Europeans (?) came to Africa and India. The British// through the British domination of the world, they carried the Bible, the missionaries spread around. That’s how the gospel went all over the world. It was through the Europeans, actually. (Int17)

Regardless of the violence that European imperialism brought over the world, the subjugated peoples must still count themselves lucky, since they were delivered from what William considers to be pointless idolatry (Int17). Nowadays, African missionaries like him bring these spiritual goods back to Europe.
A similar rhetoric can be found in Joshua’s account; his approach is an even more clear-cut example of reverse mission and of the belief in a spiritual responsibility African Christians have towards Europe. In his opinion, the seeds German missionaries planted in Africa during colonial times yield so much fruit that God wants some of it to be brought back to Germany:

Joshua: Ah, okay. Da-das, was ich sagen wollte, wenn (ich?)// okay, das ist es, ich sag es kurz. Wenn ich möchte, dass ähm wahrscheinlich die deutsche Gesellschaft die afrikanischen Gruppen, besonders die religiösen// ich weiß, inzwischen gibt es auch wahrscheinlich auch, ähm, Asiatis-Asiaten, gibt auch südamerikanisch, aber die afrikan// dass die Deutschen es so ansehen, dass genauso wie die damals (.) als Missionäre nach Afrika gingen// ich denke, heutzutage sind die Früchte von damals, von den Deutschen, die sind so viele in Afrika, dass es könnte sein, dass der liebe Gott diese Früchte, die dann von dem (Land?), von den Deutschen (fragend) hm, die dann zurück nach Deutschland bringen, damit das, was vergessen worden ist und diese Generation wieder auf() erfrischt wird (Int10). 17

Once again, the missionaries, and thus implicitly European imperialist expansion, are depicted in a positive light, or at least some of the consequences of colonialism are seen as so good that they have to be kept alive and spread. And results need to be returned to where they came from as the religious fervour has disappeared there: “für die heutige de/ / Generation, deutsche Generation, für die ist Religion nichts, das ist abstrakt. Ähm, oder das ist, ähm, nicht mehr lebensrelevant” (Int10). 18

At the same time as Joshua highlights the supposedly positive effects of colonial mission, he thus also awards Africans the status of someone who is in possession of something that Europeans do not have. Africans then can share with Europeans and give to them. This is a role in which Africa and African migrants are rarely depicted in the media or in the majority’s imaginary. Joshua describes himself just like European missionaries or, nowadays, like European development aid workers are often perceived or perceive themselves: as someone who sacrificed a career in their country which would have yielded much more money and prestige in order to stay overseas and give people there what they need urgently. Although, just like William, Joshua apparently praises the Europeans, who first brought Christianity to the world, he then reverses the roles and subtly states the Africans’ superiority in terms of faith.

The same reversal of the hierarchy between missionary and “missionised” is expressed by Charles, who also is a Pentecostal pastor:


---

17 J: Er, OK. What I wanted to say when (I?)// OK, this is it, I say it quickly. When I want that, er, probably German society [consider?] the African groups, the religious ones in particular// I know, by now there are probably also, er, Asians, there are also thos from South America, but the African// that Germans think of it in this way, that just as, back then, missionaries went to Africa// I think, the present represents the fruits of back then, of the Germans, there are so many of them in Africa, so that it could be the case that God [has made that?] these fruits, which have then been brought from this (country?), from the Germans (in a questioning tone), er, which are then brought back to Germany, so that what has been forgotten and this generation can be refreshed.

18 “For the current Gei// generation, German generation, for them religion is nothing, this is abstract. Er, or it is, er, no longer relevant for their lives.”
die Botschaft, ähm, akzeptiert, an-angenommen, akzeptiert. Und nun sehen wir die Deutsche und die, äh, die Deutsche, ähm, meisten (so sind?), als ob Gott ist nicht mehr. Und viele gehen nicht mehr zur Kirche. (...) (So, ?) wir wissen, Gottes Wort hat Kraft und, äh, und, ähm-äh-ähm, Gottes Wort, ähm, ist eine sp// äh, spirituelle Ernährung. (...) [...] Und wir-wir sind// es ist unsere Aufgabe, noch mal diese, ähm, geistliche, ähm-ähm, Nährung, oder diese geistliche Bewegung// Gott hat uns befohlen, in diesem Land, in Deutschland hierherzuzubringen (Int26).

In this pastor’s explanation, the same inversion of the “spiritual” hierarchy is present as in the previous excerpts. Charles argues that the missionaries brought the gospel to Africa, and Africans now have to bring back the “spiritual nourishment” to Germany.

In these Pentecostal pastors’ accounts, those who formerly brought the light to the world are now in need of spiritual humanitarian and development aid: God orders African Christians to bring spiritual food to Europeans, Charles claims - a motive very similar to those put forward by so many European missionaries and aid workers from Europe. Without open criticism of colonialism or the practices of today’s aid industry, or of the persistent dependence of the African continent, these missionaries’ frame their religious activities in a way that reverses the hierarchy between Europeans and Africans, between Whites and Blacks, native Germans and immigrants. For once, the dominated are superior, for once it is not them who are in need and receive alms. In this reversed logic, for once, transmission of aid takes a South-North route instead of the other way around.

Due to this reversal of hierarchies and to the clearly proselytising approach, the Pentecostals’ framing strategy is not based on openness and accessibility in the same way as the two major federations’ strategy. Rather, it aims at bolstering their followers’ African identity and self-esteem on the one hand, and at legitimising their missionary activities on the other hand. This last element of course creates opportunities to connect with non-migrant proselytising Christian organisations. Yet in contrast to the two major federations’ strategy, this is not a strategy which aims at mobilising African Christians for collective action and to connect with secular or non-migrant supporters of their political cause. Nevertheless, it still has a political dimension as it (implicitly or explicitly) challenges the dominant discourses and hierarchies.

19 Charles: For we think that God has brought us here to Germany for a certain purpose. (...) For, er, the er-er-et// in the last years, in the, er, seventies, et// er, eighties// in the eighteenth century, missionaries have come to Africa. They have converted us. And, er, we have accepted the message, adopted it, accepted it. And now we see that the Germans and the, er, the Germans, er, most (are like?), as if God was no longer there. And many don’t go to church anymore. (...) (So, ?) we know that the word of God has force and, er, and, er-er-er, the word of God, er, is a sp// er, spiritual nourishment. (...) [...] And we-we are// it is our duty to [bring?] again this, er, religious, er-er, nourishment, or this religious movement// God has ordered us to bring this to this country, to Germany.
4. Co-membership networks as an indicator for internal unity and successful coalition-building

Having briefly discussed the major framing strategies that African Christian leaders in Berlin have developed, it is interesting to take a quick look at the success these leaders have in integrating religious migrants into the wider African or black movement in the city. In order to do so, I will give a very short overview over a part of the network analysis from my thesis. It is, of course impossible to include the complete analysis in this paper. Instead, four selected network representation will be discussed here briefly in order to illustrate the overarching organisational structures that migrants from sub-Saharan Africa have been able to create.

The first network is a two-mode network of secular and Christian African migrant organisations in Berlin who are members of the CCCAAE, the RaCiBB and/or the Afrika-Rat. In the second graph, the co-membership of the same religious and secular African migrant organisations in the same African federations and in a small federation of African Pentecostal pastors (APPA) is displayed. The first of these two network representations indicates, firstly, that while almost all African churches in Berlin are integrated into the network via the two Christian federations, the secular Afrika-Rat integrates only about one fifth of the almost two hundred secular associations. It furthermore demonstrates that the members of the two Christian federations are linked to the secular movement, because the RaCiBB itself is a member of the Afrika-Rat and hence links all its members to the secular federation (for methodological reasons, this tie is not visible in the second graph). The second graph shows very clearly that ties within the Christian network component are stronger than ties within the secular component. They are particularly strong between Pentecostal churches.

The third and fourth graph resemble the first two, but for the inclusion of membership in non-African overarching structures. They show very clearly how successful the Christian movement entrepreneurs have been in reaching out to non-African organisations, too. The fourth graph also demonstrates that co-membership ties between Christian African and non-African organisations are stronger than the co-membership ties of their secular counterparts.

In short, the framing strategies of the RaCiBB and the CCCAAE can be considered successful at least in so far as they are able to create the unity they aim for. Also, they are able to connect their followers to the wider secular movement and hence to integrate several thousand migrants who might otherwise be rather distant from this movement. The Pentecostals are able to create even stronger ties within the network, because they have their own network. As is unsurprising given the Pentecostal

---

20 It is also not within the scope of this paper to present the methodology and the network data in detail. Also, differences between the Pentecostal missionary churches and others are not displayed here. If you would like to know more about them, please do not hesitate to bring it up during the discussion of the paper. Thank you.
21 I.e. the network displayed is a one-mode network of organisations who share membership in at least one umbrella organisation or federation.
22 Please note that the non-African members of the non-African federations and other overarching structures are not displayed here, because the graphs would be illegible otherwise.
pastors’ discourse, this network is not meant to get involved politically. Its members are, however, connected to both the more political Christian federations and to the secular, political Afrika-Rat.

What is more, the African Christian leaders’ strategy to tap repertoires of interpretation that are not limited to the African community, but on structures of abeyance that are present in a large part of the Christian population in Germany has proven rather successful (fourth graph).
African associations: membership in African umbrella organisations.

Blue circles: secular organisations
Blue square: secular federation (Afrika-Rat)
Red circles: Christian organisations
Red squares: Christian federations (RaCiBB, CCCAE, APPA)

Grey: tie strength = 1
Green: tie strength = 2
Blue: tie strength = 3
Red: tie strength = 4
Black: tie strength = 5
5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to analyse religious framing strategies that migrants from sub-Saharan Africa develop in order to mobilise for and to legitimise political action or political standpoints on issues that concern African migrants in Berlin. It has been shown that two main strategies can be distinguished: one that aims at public visibility, collective mobilisation and cooperation with other actors and another one which is meant to protect migrants from the denigration they experience as visible minority by symbolically reversing colonial hierarchies and to legitimise Christian proselytization.

As John A. Noakes note,

frame entrepreneurs must be attuned both to the systems of meaning that make sense of the world for their adherents and potential recruits and to the social and political context in which the frame is being constructed” (Noakes 2005: 92).

Clearly, the leaders of the two major Christian federations as social movement entrepreneurs follow a framing strategy which mobilises symbols familiar to their constituents as well as to autochthonous Christians. They try to keep the balance between politics and spirituality as well as between criticism of and closeness to the wider Christian community in Berlin. As the network analysis demonstrates, this strategy is rather successful.

Firstly, the Christian social movement entrepreneurs are more successful in ensuring almost universal membership of African Christian organisations in their federations than the secular Afrika-Rat is in including secular migrant organisations. They can thus claim to represent several thousand migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and the entirety of African Christians in Berlin, which gives their leaders a greater capacity to act (Hardin) and reduces the risk of spoilers. As the RaCiBB belongs to the Afrika-Rat they additionally can represent African Christians within the broader African movement in Berlin and influence the movement’s agenda.

Secondly, they are more successful than their secular counterpart in establishing strong ties with non-African overarching structures which provide access to important resources such as cheap office space, discursive support for their issues etc. Also, the Christian federations hence reach a broad audience among Christian’s in Berlin and beyond.

However, the CCCAAE’s and the RaCiBB’s strategy comes at the price of moderation, both in religious and in political terms. Due to the strong presence of rather conservative and/or Pentecostal Christians in their network, they cannot go as far as the Afrika-Rat in their political positioning. At the same time, they cannot be too radical in their spirituality in order not to put off or discourage their secular or moderately religious partners. In order for their balancing strategy to be effective individual Christian social movement entrepreneurs who link the two major federations to their secular and liberal Christian partners on the one hand and to the conservative missionary milieu on the other hand. In the present case, Peter Arthur and his pastor colleague George, for instance, can be considered as central actors who bridge the gap and “translate” the federations’ frames for the less political Pentecostal milieu. They hence help integrate a part of the African population, which otherwise would not have found itself
represented by the federations. John and also others in contrast ensure that there is a link to the secular movement organisations – John even used to be the president of the *Afrika-Rat*.

In contrast, the second framing strategy that could be observed among African Christian leaders is not attuned to an internal and an external audience in the same way. Rather, it is very much designed for internal mobilisation for religious missionary activities – hence for apolitical action – and, less explicitly, for the bolstering the self-esteem of African migrants in a hostile environment. As the respective leaders, however, belong to the two major federations, their rhetoric can be considered an important outlet for more conservative and mission-oriented attitudes among African Christians in Berlin which makes possible to reach almost complete unity and strongly increases the capacity to act also of the more moderate leaders of the Christian federations. Last but not least, this second framing strategy opens up opportunities for cooperation with similarly mission-oriented and very conservative autochthonous Protestant organisations and networks – and these organisations and federations often have resources at their disposal that are also interesting for the two major African Christian umbrella organisations.

In more general terms, this paper has demonstrated at the example of African Christians in Berlin that religion can help migrants to frame issues such as racism or exclusion in a way that is both accessible to a large number of migrants and to others. It hence has contributed to our knowledge of how religion can facility the creation of overarching structures and increase the capacity to act of social movement entrepreneurs. While it could maybe add some elements to our understanding of “how religion may influence political behavior and integration” (Pfaff/Gill 2006: 804) and maybe even some more eclectic elements to answering the question “how religious organizations favour political participation” (Eggert/Giugni 2011: 237), further research will be needed to establish whether any of the present findings may be generalised.
References


Internet sources: