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Abstract

While, in Europe, religion is often seen as an obstacle to the democratic participation of migrants, this dissertation asks about religion as a structural and symbolic resource for collective mobilisation and individual political participation of immigrants. The deliberately interdisciplinary study brings together approaches of migration and urban studies, comparative political science and the sociology of religion which are most often used in isolation from each other, and it also breaks new ground on a methodological level. The research develops a twofold comparative approach: It examines the religious and political involvement of non-religious, Muslim and Christian migrants from sub-Saharan Africa in France and Germany. The main result of the thesis is that migrants actually can use their religion as a resource for political participation and mobilisation – but Christians much more than Muslims, and more so in Berlin than in Paris. The research shows that, in Berlin, African Muslims are hardly organized, while the Christian networks are very dense - even more so than those of the secular organisations - and offer access to relatively many resources. Individually, African Muslims are not politically active *as Muslims*. They do not use their religion to legitimize political issues claims or activities or to mobilise supporters. Although they are much more numerous than in Berlin, African Muslims are hardly visible as Muslims in Paris as well. Unlike widespread assumptions and prejudice suggest, it is thus precisely not the African Muslim community who use their religion as a political resource. On the contrary, regardless of the national context, it seems almost impossible for Muslims from sub-Saharan Africa in Europe to use their religion to engage in politics. By contrast, the Christian religion provides structural and symbolic resources for political mobilisation, both for religious and secular goals. Whether, and with respect to which goals, these resources come into play and - emancipation of African migrants as a particularly marginalized minority or mission and re-Christianization of politics - will depend in part on the respective variation of Christianity, and in part on the national context and, in particular, its interpretation by the migrants.