Editorial

Conclusion

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Vertovec (2007) coined the concept of superdiversity, focusing on the multiple variables required to analyze the social status and everyday lives of migrants in Britain. Social scientists have extended this term to those societies characterized by a high level of immigration coming from all over the world. According to Becci et al. (2016), religion was not initially considered a relevant variable. Scholars have changed this approach to include religion only over recent years.

The empirical research and the case studies we collected in this special issue provide evidence of the fruitfulness of the concept of religious superdiversity (Levitt 2007; Kivisto 2014; Stolz and Monnot 2018). First, it is a useful methodological tool. Secondly, it opens new theoretical perspectives, which can dismantle stereotypes that circulate in contemporary society.

In summary, the main trends that the authors outline in their respective articles are as follows:

(a) Religious diversity concerns not only the various systems of believing and belonging which coexist and compete in a given society, affected by migrants' flow, but also the internal differences of ethnicity, language, juridical customs, gender variables, latent or manifest theological cleavages, and different ideological orientations, which emerge in each system;

(b) Religious diversity, at the same time, represents a more appropriate narrative than the descriptive and socio-graphic concept of multiculturalism (Kymlicka 1995), and that actually implies a reification of the identity of immutable religious communities;

(c) Religious diversity represents a social laboratory in which we can observe the struggle for recognition (Honneth 1996) by various socio-religious actors who claim a legal status or equal treatment by the state in comparison with the majority religion;

(d) Religious diversity, therefore, denotes a new type of symbolic conflict in contemporary societies that overlaps with and sometimes mystifies much more concrete economic, political, and social conflicts;

(e) Religious diversity is a descriptive term, whereas pluralism refers to a normative approach to the phenomenon; it is the methodological tool recommended by Beckford (2000) to separate fact and value or, in Habermas (1996), fact and norms;

(f) Religious diversity works as an empirical test for many traditional concepts such as tolerance, civil religion, democracy, secular state, and, of course, pluralism;

(g) Last but not least, the symbolic boundaries of the diverse religions which share the same potentially sacred territory are more porous; this could encourage exchange, conversion, border-crossing movements, and, conversely, defense attitudes, mental closure, fundamentalist tendencies, and so on.

Taken together, the contributions to this special issue on religious diversity provide an ideal type, in Weberian terms, that we can construct and manage cautiously to analyze the multiple modern and traditional forms of believing and belonging that coexist in the same society.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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