

BOOK REVIEW/ COMPTE RENDU

Kivisto, Peter. *Religion and Immigration: Migrant Faiths in North America and Western Europe*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2014. 211 p, \$24.95 paper (9780745641706)

R*eligion and Immigration* by Peter Kivisto is an investigation into the significance of religion in the lives of immigrants in Western Europe and North America, the role of religion in newcomers' adaptations in the receiving country and the maintenance of their identities over time. The major purpose of the book is to explore the "challenges of religious diversity" (10). The author analyzes the difficulty of the transition of ethnic identity by immigrants to a new environment. He also examines hostile reactions of the receiving society regarding newcomers whose ethnic and religious otherness make them "stand out from the larger national culture" (6).

Relying on existing literature on the religion of immigrants, Kivisto combines the conceptual frameworks of immigration process researchers and sociology of religion. Regarding religion and migration, Kivisto finds a deep division between Europe and North America because of demographic, cultural and institutional differences. For instance, he emphasizes that in North America religion is viewed as "a major facilitator of integration", a "bridge" to inclusion, while in Western Europe religious affiliation is considered a "barrier" to inclusion, an "impediment to incorporation into the social mainstream" (22). This is explained in terms of differences in political and religious history: as European countries have had state churches, since its establishment the USA has been known for religious pluralism. Nevertheless, Kivisto demonstrates that there do exist some "similar processes of immigrant religious adjustment" (24): religion helps to overcome "disorienting, alienating experience" of immigration (54); facilitates incorporation in the receiving society; provides with "needed social services and achieving employment success" (58).

Besides a rich description of religious diversity in Western society, the author highlights topical issues connected with contemporary migration processes across European and the North American landscapes. One of the most contentious points in migration studies at present is increasing anti-Islam sentiment in Western society. Using

the Swiss minaret referendum as an example, Kivisto represents the fears by non-Muslim Europeans of Muslim immigrants as irrational. Though Muslims represent only 5% of the population and there are only four minarets [a tower or turret attached to a mosque and used to call people to prayer (it is not practiced in the Western world because of noise restrictions)] in Switzerland, 57.5 % voters favored a ban on minarets. According to Kivisto, one of the main sources of fear “disproportionate to the actual threat of jihadist violence” (10) is the demonized coverage of Islam by Western mass media and right-wing politicians’ presentation of Islam as “a threat to national identity” (134). As a result, the minarets have become the “symbols of Islamic power” in the consciousness of Europeans susceptible to anti-Muslim ideology.

Kivisto also highlights “the mutual reinforcement of ethnic and religious identities” (47) in the process of immigrants’ integration into the receiving society. Thus, for instance, relying on the work of Carl Bankston III and Min Zhou, he demonstrates that Vietnamese 1.5 and second-generation adolescents in New Orleans find their ethnic Catholic congregations to be “a major source for defining themselves in ethnic terms” (47) and for the facilitation of fitting into the societal mainstream. At the same time Kivisto offers samples of delinking religion from national identity. In contrast to Hindu Indians in the United States, who recognize the strong ties between Hinduism and Indian national identity and who are often sympathetic to different political movements in their home country, Indian Muslims define “the religious aspect of their identity as tied to worldwide Muslim community” (49), which is explained by the fact that Islam is a global religion.

Therefore, because of the close link between Hinduism and the nation of India, it is not accidental that “a significant segment of the Indian diasporic community” (128) in the USA supports the Hindutva nationalistic movement and legitimizes the violence against its enemies – Muslims. Kivisto refers to this case as an example of “a dark side of religious transnationalism” (128). A detailed typology of immigrants’ religious transnationalism is explored in the chapter *Immigrants and Transnational Religious Networks*. These groups are characterized by their desire both to “establish new social relations in the receiving country” and maintain “ties to their country of origin” (100).

Overall *Religion and Immigration* is well written and will be of interest to scholars studying religion in the contemporary Western

world. It will also be useful to wider audiences, especially those who wish to comprehend current issues related to migration, religion, and ethnicity. Drawing widely from different disciplinary sources and theoretical perspectives, Kivisto explores the relationship between diverse phenomena, including: immigration and religion, ethnicity, gender, language, transnationalism, secularization, and globalization. He investigates diverse religious landscapes of the Western world, from Chinese Evangelicals and Scandinavian Lutherans to Hindu nationalists and Muslim Brotherhood supporters.

The book has some limits. Not all of the topics covered are explored in equal depth. For instance, referring to Dutch sociologist Paul Scheffer, Kivisto asserts that the instantiation of pillarization policies in the Netherlands resembles “a house of cards” because Islam “has not liberalized” and “resists the idea that religion and politics are separate spheres” (147). The reality seems to be considerably more complex. Besides the fact that pillarization (the institutionalized tradition of vertical division of society) lost its significance in the 1960s as a result of secularization and other social processes, in the late 1970s the Government of the Netherlands refused to create new pillars for newcomers to encourage migrants to participate actively in Dutch society.

In sum, Kivisto offers an optimistic conclusion. Referring to research of immigrants by historian John Bodnar and social psychologist Kay Deaux, he argues that the vast majority of immigrants on both sides of the Atlantic are prepared to be transformed to include themselves into the life of their new country (173-174). At the same time he reminds us by the words of Paul Scheffer that the process of integration is a two-way street, that “the receiving society has to be prepared to embrace the newcomers and to adjust in some ways to their presence” (147). The words of a Lebanese-born Muslim artist, as cited in Kivisto’s conclusion, summarize the appeal of this book to overcome existing biases and find a path to peaceful coexistence: “I believe we of the different religions have the same humanity and believe in the same God...I think at this moment in our history it is so important to make some new path[s] to be nearer and closer to each other” (172).

University of Ottawa

Maria Alekseevskaja

Maria Alekseevskaja is a PhD student in Sociology at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, the University of Ottawa. Her research interests are

closely connected with the study of the relations between religion and Canadian society. She is interested in the neo-Calvinist movement which appeared in the Netherlands at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and in the second part of the last century was developed in Canadian scene. She is researching the role of neo-Calvinistic ideas in public debates over contemporary issues and also the social and cultural impact of different groups of immigrants, including the Dutch, in Canada.

alekseevskayam@gmail.com