

Mullard, Maurice: *The Politics of Globalisation and Polarisation*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar 2006. ISBN: 978-1-84542-779-5; 232 S.

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As a unique historical process, globalization attracts and receives immense scientific and political attention. Scholars from different disciplines are taking part in the ongoing research on globalisation to explain, interpret and historicize this process. Maurice Mullard's „Politics of Globalization and Polarisation“ is another provoking contribution to this field. Mullard, with a solid background of social policy, politics and economics, seeks to explore the political implications of globalization by establishing connections between citizenship, democracy and globalization.

As a start off the author gives a definition of globalization, identifies the driving forces behind it by mapping out its winners and losers as well, emphasizes the need to revisit citizenship and democracy and describes the challenge of addressing the social and political inequalities, which are emerging in and through processes of globalization. The book is organized in nine chapters, preceded by a well-written preface that presents the main arguments, purpose and hypothesis of the book in a concise manner. Despite of certain repetitions and overlaps in regard to the themes considered, the book deals with a wide range of issues linked with the discussion of politics of globalisation such as democracy, models of citizenship, empowerment, policy rhetoric and political realities. Additionally, a number of case studies are presented to illustrate and substantiate the main claims and arguments.

In order to make the crucial connection, which is the central theme of the book – namely between citizenship, democracy and globalization – the author explores each of these elements. He develops his argument by discussing some of the most prominent conceptions of globalization. These conceptions present globalization as being shaped and conceptualised within the specific discourse of market liberalism and defined by globalised financial flows, liberalised financial markets and international financial institutions

such as the World Bank and the IMF (p. xiv). Furthermore, globalisation today is often defined as an inevitable and exogenous variable, which is beyond the control by the people – this conception implicitly denies that globalization is shaped by political choices (p. 16). Conceiving globalization in this manner through the lenses of market liberalism, Mullard argues, results in the advocacy of „anti-politics“, which promotes disengagement, depoliticisation and the retreat to the „private“ (p. xiii).

Challenging this perspective on globalization the author develops his argument to reconnect citizenship, democracy and globalization. One of his main concerns is to demonstrate, that globalisation is neither exogenous nor inevitable (pp. vi and 111) and that governments are not prisoners of globalisation (pp. 91f.), but on the contrary can intervene into these processes with political decisions. The author further argues, that globalisation is a social construct, neither given, nor static; it is defined and shaped by specific economic interests and political decisions (p. 22). Globalisation, according to Mullard, involves political decisions and cannot be „neutral and immutable“ (ibid). He consequently places particular emphasis on the „politics of globalization“, which is connected with the question of who benefits from it. Mullard, therefore, highlights the crucial role of social policy and the government, which could still make a difference especially in responding to growing income inequalities – which he claims to be a major aspect of the current economic globalization (pp. 40f.). He argues for a politicization of globalization and points to the necessity of government intervention in order to cope with its challenges, especially with those linked to the retreat of citizens from public spaces and the disavowal of responsibility by political elites (p. 110). Although the author recognizes the unfolding of earlier forms of globalisation in previous eras – hinting e.g. to the Marxist notion of „universal interdependence of nations; both in material as well as intellectual production“ (p. 1) – he claims the contemporary processes to be distinct. Mullard implicitly locates the beginning of this new era in the context of the decline of Keynesian economic policies and the simultaneous ascension

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of market liberalism in the 1980s (pp. 66f.). Focusing on the global level, he includes into the history of contemporary globalisation a wide range of actors who are not necessarily separated by national boundaries, but rather linked by economic and political flows.

Obviously Mullard does not advocate a reversal of globalisation as he admits that these processes can bring about positive effects for large parts of the world's societies. But since contemporary globalization seems to be profoundly shaped and defined by neoliberal ideals, it creates a landscape of income inequalities and social exclusion (p. 98). Therefore, the author seems to agree with those who advocate an „ethical globalization“ which integrates notions and values of democracy, ecology and justice. In his economic analysis Mullard nostalgically praises the era of Keynesianism, which he identifies as „the guiding principles of the Golden Age“ (p. x). The author's Keynesian perspective is also reflected in his proclamation that globalisation needs government intervention at the global, national and local level to ensure social inclusion and political participation (p. 98). When discussing the political dimensions of globalisation in different parts of the world Mullard advocates the ideals of the „global citizen“ and a „globalized democracy“. Thus his approach privileges the global level of action and analysis rather than the national one. Particularly interesting is Mullard's mapping out of winners and loser of globalization. By including an assessment of its impacts within advanced economies, his approach differentiates an interpretation that usually identifies winners and losers along the North-South divide. His efforts to include alternatives and remedies to the current challenges of globalization turn his analysis into a form of constructive engagement, which goes beyond mere criticism.

Mullard's analysis is a challenging contribution. However, it suffers from a certain redundancy when themes or topics are repeated without even a change of wording. Although the author prominently emphasises the need to redefine current forms of globalisations, the reader is left without a thorough discussion on how to negotiate this reshaping. He rather highlights the resistance to it, which at

the same time is still unspecified in terms of forms and content. Most grammatical mistakes can be overlooked, others for example the false use of the term „General Council“ (p. 111) with reference to the UN General Assembly hinder the understanding as it is not clear whether the General Assembly or the Security Council is meant. Nevertheless the book is inspiring. Though most of the concepts presented by the author are well known, the numerous empirical facts presented broaden the knowledge about processes of globalisation particularly in terms of its political dimension. In general, Mullard has written a book that turns out to be both a valuable contribution to the ongoing research and a rich source of information for the general public. With its text book-quality it will be of use for students studying globalisation, democracy and citizenship.

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