
Book Reviews

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1 The Sociology of Globalization (2nd edition)

by: Luke Martell

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The election of new president in the USA, Donald Trump, ignited an old debate, which was dormant in public opinion of most capitalist societies, regarding the effects and opportunities of globalisation for lay-citizens as well as the centre-periphery dependency. Without any consensus to date, detractors and supporters of globalisation historically interrogated not only on the causes of human inequalities but also to what extent, it produces more tolerable and open cultures. In his flammant book, Luke Martell argues convincingly that the notion of culture is vital to understand the roots of globalisation though social scientists should pay attention to its economic effects in under-developing economies.

The present book, which is entitled *The Sociology of Globalization*, is formed in 12 well-written chapters which may be very well read separately but are orchestrated within a common-thread argument. Among social sciences, as Martell adheres, sociology seems to be the discipline that has made most progress in the study of phenomenon over the last years. Over years, specialists focused on its economic nature but for Martell this was a clear caveat. Far from being an economic phenomenon exclusively, globalisation alternates a socio-political background with the encounter of cultures. The main thesis of this book can be decoded in the following axiom:

“Culture has heavily shaped globalization, and globalization has a lot to do with the trans-nationalization and intermingling of cultures and local cultural responses to global cultures.” [Martell, (2017), p.4]

For those who had never read this book, one might organise the review in three main themes: *the hybridisation of culture, the rise of the dichotomy between migration-mobilities and problems of social democracy.*

In this first chapter, Martel discusses critically the epistemological borders of globalisation, internationalisation and free trade, toying with the idea that in history there were ancient forms of globalisation. The discrepancy given between ‘transformationalists’ and sceptics is open to date, but while the former allude to a climate of negotiation to agree consensus in regards to universal values as democracy, human rights, or trade, the latter defines ‘globalisation’ as an instrument that combines interests of many nations, corporations and activists. It is tempting to confirm that far from disappearance, the global order places the nation-state pitted against other states to

monopolise the produced wealth. The second chapter, complementarily, offers an historical insight and an in-depth analysis of the different stage of globalisation in the threshold of time. Paradoxically, though nation-state played a crucial role in configuring the first steps of liberal market in former centuries, it undermined its legitimacy once modern capitalism emerged. This does not mean nation-state is gone but it acts in another new role. Third and fourth chapters explore adamantly the contradictions of capitalism, where poor nations still are facing serious problems to improve their current living conditions. Basically, here two important assumptions should be done. On one hand, though economy is not the touchstone of globalisation, it plays a leading role orchestrating a new labour organisation that creates a gap between have and have-nots. On another, globalisation though it is very important seems not to be limited to developed-nations. It is important not to lose the sight that some global cities as Bombay, Buenos Aires or Sao Paulo correspond to developing countries.

To what extent, following Martell's definition, mobilities go beyond connection and consumption, rather, mobile globalisation, denotes regular system and intersections which forges interdependency among involved parts. There are not reasons to assume that the present stage of hybridisation, which is proper of global capitalism, extends to vast territories dominating the entire world. Instead, our British sociologist suggests the opposite, globalisation shows contradictory evidence and effects, which are conducive to accelerate further material asymmetries between a nomad elite with good taste and technical training, concerned by cultural consumption and the exploited and relegated work-force which is debarred from the global benefits. The fifth and sixth chapters dissect carefully the immediate effects of mass-migration accelerating what pragmatists dubbed as 'the clash of cultures'. As Martell contends, one of the most polemic aspects of globalisation seems to be that while the circulation of goods is encouraged by privileged rich stage, migrants are considered as 'undesired guests'. The question whether globalisation opens the doors towards more open atmosphere, where the alterity is respected, in other circumstances, some counter-forces as xenophobia, ethnic supremacism, nativism and any other sign of intolerance surface. With this in mind, political agenda of Western governments included the problem of migration without any practical result to date.

The seventh and eighth chapters shed light on the rise of a 'global economy' which poses the challenges to what extent, under-developed economies would reach a matured stage of production that helps in poverty relief. A discussion of this calibre rests on two academic poles. While neo-Marxists hold the hypothesis that beyond globalisation neoliberalism prevails, which means a reinforcement of material inequalities, others right-wing scholars understand that globalisation would be used as a platform to reduce poverty worldwide. Hence, globalisation takes different shapes and forms depending on the socio-economic background of nations. Some countries showed different levels of inequalities, which do not limit to economy. Serious cultural differences in health system or even education are key factors that explains why some nations fail in adopting *global westernisation*, where others are success.

Last but not least, the rest of the book interrogates readers on the possibility we are witnessing the end of nation-state. Over recent decades, many scholars kept sceptic respecting to the benefits of globalisation, and of course their position was based not only on the lack of clear outcomes in local economies, but also by the rise of anti-capitalism movements, to say, many of them spreading from the heart of European cultures. A lot of criticism has been directed against supporter of globalisation, because of its impossibility

to regulate and better pauperisation. This suggests one of the ethical dilemmas that trumpeted conservatives in their addresses. To wit, globalisation triggers a new international organisation of labour that demanded in classic industrial nations the systematic destruction of jobs, in order for capital owners to invest in lower cost developing economies. Since the conditions of investment has been radically changed towards more global horizons, many rank-and-file workers impoverished over the last decades. The confrontation between the USA and China, a point very well exploited by Donald Trump's radical thinking, situates as an interesting point of convergence which still remains open. To here, I worked hard to review the book as objective as possible. Those readers who read this book will appreciate a robust argument, which is the result of a vast experience in globalisation issues. However, books should be evaluated with strengths and weaknesses.

As the best of my knowledge as writer, the present work shows some problems of dispersion that very well would lead readers to misunderstandings, sometimes discussing various themes at the same time. Of course, to my end is what makes of Martell's argument erudite and pungent. Some complex issues cannot be singled out. Martell innovatively solves the problem by introducing a concluding section in each chapter that synthesises the main reviewed concepts and ideas.

As a strength, Martell reminds how globalisation is not exhausted in the economic factor as originally academicians precluded, rather it expands to the formation of capitalist cultures. Originally oriented to bringing down established myths, Martell explains with accuracy that the interplay between rich and poor nations is far from being solved. Many developing cultures are paved to receive international investments but this does not mean further jobs or better conditions of work. The financial flows are orchestrated to move freely, whereas the same does not happen with lay-people, for example, when Mexican migrants struggle to enter in the USA. This interesting topic reveals on of the main ethical paradoxes of Trump's elections, which can be replicated in other countries as Argentina, Peru or Brazil. Businessmen who historically enriched through the exploitation of workers in Third World, now blame migrants for the situation or stock and market crisis occurred after 2008. Scapegoating seems to be associated to the failure of globalisation to make of this world a better place. To cut the long story short, not only Martell's research is one of the best books I read in the sociology of globalisation, but also it propones an epistemology of globalisation which merits to be continued.

2 Minority Rules: Electoral Systems, Decentralization and Ethno-regional Party Success
by: David Lublin
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Today's world is characterised by the rise of an irrational violence that traverses cultures and borders of many nations. The problem of alterity corresponds with an ethical crisis is facing Western civilisation, in which case, the election of current President

Donald Trump evinces. Developed-nations, which over the recent years were situated as exemplary space of multiculturalism, progress and tolerance, sets the pace to unemployment a long-lasting economic crisis, which leads very well towards ethnocentrism and racism. In this mayhem, this book *Minority Rules*, which is authored by well-read expert, David Lublin, interrogates on the interplay of ethnicities and ethno-regional parties in the different electoral systems. Although the specialised literature in politics has reached consensus respecting to the theory of cleavages or the ethnical conflicts, less attention is given to how democracy harmonises the different ethnic groups in a way that allows further decentralisation. In this vein, the present book adamantly discusses not only the limitations of political science to understand inter-ethnic conflict, but also reminds the importance of democracy to solve discrepancies and disputes otherwise would be aggravated.

Additionally, this book is based on a rich platform where author examines the parliamentary system of more than 70 nations. His thesis is that democracy poses not only the challenge of dialogue between ethno-regional parties to take part in the majoritarian systems, but also the interaction between politics with regional cultures. Though each chapter can be read indistinctively, the book is formed in three significant parts. The first theorises how ethnical parties react to different types of systems, as majoritarian or bipartisan systems (chapters 1 and 2), proportionalism (chapter 3) and other classifications (chapter 4). Though originally placed to confront with already existent studies, these chapters are combining a rich platform of dataset with a theoretical discussion which explains how ethno-regional groups are determined in view of geographical groups. Particularly, this section dissects the barriers put by electoral system to protect the interests of elite, but at the same time, it reveals how some minorities are successfully taking office in developed countries. Doubtless, this supports the belief that democracy facilitates the renovation of political parties, which leads to more instable but opening new emergent forms of governance. Rather, the second section which is drawn by chapters 5, 6 and 7, gauges the effects of imposed regulations and bans that help ethnic minorities to enter in politics.

As the previous argument given, author says that the imposition of higher threshold requirements *on established regional parties* connotes serious problems to galvanise the inter-ethnic violence. It is tempting to say that Lublin's research rests not only in a vast experience as politicians and political scientist, something which is very hard to achieve, but also in a plenty of study-cases that centre on different types of democracies worldwide. From Argentina to Japan, the chapters integrating this fascinating book bespeak that democracy should not be considered as an idealised institution, but what is more important, democracy takes different shapes depending on many factors and its adaptancy to socio-economic background.

Last but not last, the third section interrogates on the direct aftermaths of decentralisation, which means the possibility of getting further autonomy from central administration, in ethno-regional landscapes. Far from evincing, as some voices preclude, that the process of decentralisation reinforces the ethno-regional parties, as the cases of Spain and Italy suggest, Lublin acknowledges that less probabilities to get autonomy have found if ethnoterritorial parties take further power than central administration. This means that decentralisation does not become in further ethno-regional commitment beyond the borders of ethnoterritory. Those groups which are pressed to compete in national elections not only are relegated as bit-players, but also are not accompanied by the entire electoral population. Instead, though evidence is not conclusive it is important

not to lose the sight that decentralisation-related programs fail to stimulate the participation of ethnic minorities in democracy, but it undermines the territorial conflicts when they arise. In this respect, such a moot-point exhibits a fertile ground to be investigated in next approaches and future research. Particularly, this happens because democracy facilitates the arrival of individual members of ethnic minorities to non-ethnic parties which govern the national electorship. This represents not only the case of Barack Obama in the USA, but also Justin Trudeau, who is the son of a French-speaking father, in Canada and so forth.

Those readers that get this book will find, the same I did, that in some cases, Lublin has some conceptual limitations at time of defining the slippery borders of ethnicity. Though he finally associates ethnicity to language affiliation this aspects remains open in his discussion. Particularly, since the term seems to be sometimes treacherous, as Lublin puts it, serious doubts surface to what extent the construction of 'ethno-regional' party. Still furthermore there is no methodological argumentation that sheds light on this sense. The author, instead, attempts to resolve M. Duverger's model which holds the thesis that bipartisan systems are prone to prevent the rise of ethnical minorities to politics. Though this happens, Lublin says, some minorities successfully overcome the imposed political boundaries in order for their representation to be enhanced.

Quite aside from this, David Lublin offers a titanic effort to pile an in-depth analysis of almost hundred electoral systems, which are helpful to expand the current understanding of how minorities act and react in the democratic game. This is a must-read book, which merits not only the attention of academy, in my personal case it represents one of the best books I have ever read in political science.