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**Book Review:** Diana Neaga, *Gender and Citizenship in Romania. Between formal and substantial, normal and normative*, Iași: Polirom, 2013

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Asked if for women is harder to do politics, one of the female respondents answered: “Yes because ... not necessarily for being a woman [...] but a woman also has children to raise, to educate, to take to nursery or school, to have them vaccinated, and then to take them back from nursery, from school. A man has no time for that (*meaning that this is not part of his responsibilities*). And even if he assumes such responsibility, well, he is “just a man”, (even if he is) not a great politician, and he only goes to party meetings, he doesn’t hurry to get home, to get home to help the little one with his homework, he goes for a beer after the party meeting or to watch football.”<sup>1</sup> This is an excerpt from one of the 96 interviews that author Diana Neaga conducted in her research in the area of Hunedoara, Romania, on which she bases her analysis of women’s life in Romania, as presented in the book. It is a fragment that reflects the gendered experience of citizenship in Romania and the differences in perspective between women and men about housework, roles and engagement into public and political environments.

Diana Neaga’s work was published in the collection “Gender Studies” of *Polirom Publishing House*, one of the few collections in Romania dedicated exclusively to gender studies. This collection includes over 20 titles, mainly by Romanian feminist authors.

The book *Gender and Citizenship in Romania* has two clearly divided parts: a theoretical part about how citizenship is treated and interpreted in the relevant socio-political studies, and an empirical part, derived from her field research within the project entitled *The Everyday Experience of Women’s Emancipation in the U.S. and Romania in the Twentieth Century and Beyond: A Transnational Study*, funded by IREX, Washington, in 2009, and coordinated by Maria Bucur and Mihaela Miroiu. The book is largely based on the author’s PhD dissertation in the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration (NSPSPA) from Bucharest.

In the first part of the book we have the opportunity to find out how citizenship is generally interpreted and analyzed. Neaga presents several definitions of citizenship as formulated by various authors. She explains how past and present relationships between individuals and the political communities to which they belong are understood, and she summarizes the political community typologies related to

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1 Interview 30, L.P., Hunedoara, 47 years, p. 290

citizenship (she made a brief history of the polis, religious communities, nation and national citizenship). She moves on examining the inclusion-exclusion relationships involved by citizenship, and she finally presents several approaches to citizenship rights and obligations rising from the status of member in a political community. The reader has the opportunity to learn about the main theories of citizenship; three of them are classical – the liberal, communitarian and republican – and two new approaches - cosmopolitan and multicultural citizenship, and European citizenship. Her inclusion of the European citizenship amongst other theories is interesting, as this is a concept on the supranational collective identity construction; rather an extension to a larger vision of national citizenship than a distinct form of interpretation of citizenship. But what Neaga is trying to emphasize is precisely the complexity of this new political community called the European Union, which raises questions about sovereignty, and about the relationships between nation-states and the EU on one hand and national citizens - EU relation on the other.

The next step of the analysis is the introduction of the *gender* variable, with all its meanings in connection to citizenship, preceded by a useful clarification of the concepts of *feminism*, *gender*, *patriarchy*, *sexism*, *autonomy*. This helps both less and more knowledgeable readers in the area of gender study issues to review these concepts and plunge into the complexity of the research in the second part of the book. Throughout the book, Neaga carefully highlights the conceptual and methodological delimitations that she assumes in the research. She insists on her choice of constructivist methodology to show that she tracks how individuals, particularly women, in their interactions, influence the structures that are shaping their behavior (in this case, the structures are patriarchy, communism, and transition). She also seeks to distinguish between formal and substantial citizenship, between the normative and effective differences. Formal citizenship represents a formal guarantee of rights and freedoms, while substantial citizenship refers to how citizenship works in everyday life.

The second part of the book unfolds an analysis on women's lived citizenship, based on the qualitative research conducted in Hunedoara County, covering both urban areas in the cities of Hunedoara, Deva, Simeria and rural areas in the village of Sâncrai. The interviews she conducted and quoted in the book to support her arguments enable the author to screen aspects of citizenship, as experienced by those women, through their participation in private spaces and in the civic and political life of the community to which they belong. She does this by taking into account several constraining key structures: patriarchy (male dominance over women and children in the family and society), the totalitarian regime before 1989 and its transition effects (post-communism). Women's citizenship is analyzed in terms of how they participate in different environments and areas. Among these spheres of participation she tackles the following: women's participation in domestic work compared to men's; secondly, women's participation in paid work and the meanings attached to it; thirdly, their civic participation (involvement in community neighborhoods and friendship networks, in religious communities, and in various organizations); and finally, their political participation through vote and involvement

in specific political activities. What is empirically predictable and confirmed by the research are the findings showing that women carry the burden of domestic work and participate civically and politically less than men. This aspect is reflected in all its complexity in this part of the book, which combines fragments of interviews, some of them very expressive, followed by the reflections and conclusions that the author draws by applying the theoretical framework exposed in the first part of the book.

Moreover, the author knows how to extract surprising perspectives from the research conducted. For instance, she notes that the occasional housework participation of men is overrated, since their lack of input is the rule, not the exception. In response, women treat this situation with irony, to reduce their dissonance about the normality of patriarchal relations. Although she focuses on women's participation and gender relations in private and public spheres, her analysis also touches on spheres of community life that could foster civic spirit, but fail to do so - for example, the author notes the inability of the Orthodox Church to create a space that encourages the manifestation of civic and social activities, and also the cleavage between politicians and voters.

Apart from the gender dimension which is the basic pillar on which Diana Neaga based her research on citizenship, there are two other criteria that she constantly takes into account when analyzing the interviews: *age* (which is relevant to an analysis of how women relate to citizenship lived under communism) and the *urban-rural residence* (which is relevant mostly to an analysis of how women relate to paid work). However, some elements have been missed out from the research in the second part of the book, and these are significantly relevant criteria. The first is *ethnicity*, and it would be important to learn how Roma women relate to citizenship as members of a marginalized minority group. The second is *migration*, in terms of the experience of both the immigrant Romanian women abroad (who occasionally return to visit Hunedoara, during holidays), and immigrant women in Romania living in areas where the research was undertaken. Field research limits within the larger project were probably the reason why these issues couldn't be taken into consideration, but such aspects could just as well be the core of the author's future study.

