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# Women and Citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe

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# Introduction

Joanna Regulska, Jasmina Lukić and Darja Zaviršek

Feminist theorists' interest in debates on citizenship is not a recent development; citizenship was "probably the most important single issue to have shaped feminist thought" (Baumeister 2000, 49). The positioning of citizenship discourses within feminist debates has, however, differed over time. Critical attention has been given to reexamining liberal models of citizenship (Lister 2003; Mouffe 1993; Pateman 1988; 1989; Squires 2004; Voet 1998). Feminist theorists have also significantly contributed to the deconstructing and rejecting of the formal universalistic concept of citizenship (Ilić 2001; Lister 2003; Voet 1998). In particular, they have been critical of neoliberal models, where liberal claims for universal rights have been questioned. As Hobson and Lister argue, "to ignore the different needs, claims and situations, the subjectivities and identities of citizens, is to perpetuate exclusionary processes embedded in false universalism" (2002, 47). Feminist scholars have also challenged the socialist models that claimed to liberate women, but in reality only eliminated their subordination theoretically (Ashwin 2000; Funk and Muller 1993; Jancar Webster 1990). As socialist ideology and practices became more rooted, women and men became increasingly subjugated to the aims of the communist state (Ilić 2001; Stites 1978).

The present volume builds upon these debates by placing women's agency at the center of the analysis, and by specifically focusing on the countries of central and east Europe [CEE], thus locating the discussion of women's citizenship practices within the specific context of the post-1989 transformation and its gendered impacts. We are interested in understanding how different forces, generated by recent transformations, instigate women to act and react, in response to political, social, economic, environmental, and cultural opportunities and challenges. We ask how women's agency translates into citizenship practices under the conditions of transformation. How do women accumulate resources, gain access to the political process, confront and challenge state practices, and gain social visibility? How is women's agency shaped not only by material conditions, but also is a result of different experiences and political, cultural, and personal dynamics? How is the process of claiming citizenship conditioned by the local and national contexts, as well as the exposure to global and transnational influences?

Such an approach suggests three important dimensions of the ways through which the notion of citizenship is understood in this volume. First, emphasis is put

on the active notion of citizenship. Secondly, the multi-layered conception of citizenship is acknowledged and thirdly, the impact of the transformation period and its locational specificity is recognized as a framing force. We will briefly discuss each of these dimensions and conclude with an outline of the chapters.

### **Active Citizenship**

The concept of active citizenship fundamentally implies that women actively engage in the public sphere. For Voet, this implies not only "being active in the decision making process," but "also of having a political subjectivity, knowing how to play political roles, and being capable of political judgment" (1998, 131, 137). Thus, citizenship becomes linked with certain obligations and requirements. Scholars have long argued that these requirements have been understood too narrowly as only participation in the paid workforce, thereby ignoring a number of the caring and civic contributions that women make on behalf of their families and the communities in which they live (Hobson and Lister 2003; Machado and Vilroxx 2001). In this context, women's participation in political processes was ignored. Although it is not always the case that all citizens participate in decision-making, full citizenship for everybody is an ideal worth pursuing.

Active citizenship is related to the concept of human agency. People have to be able to claim their agency in order to claim their citizenship:

To act as a citizen requires first a sense of agency, the belief that one *can* act; acting as a citizen, especially collectively, in turn fosters that sense of agency. Thus, agency is not simply about the capacity to choose and act but it is also about a *conscious* capacity, which is important to the individual's self-identity (Lister 2003, 38, emphasis added).

Agency, however, does not operate in a vacuum; rather it is located in a dialectic relationship with social structures and is embedded in social relations (Lister 2003). It also does not act on its own; it can only be enacted when individuals or groups become actively engaged with these structures. Such an act therefore represents a response to specific contexts within which individuals or groups operate and live. Consequently, the "conscious capacity" to act takes place in relation to women's social situations (Goddard 2000). For Dissanayake, this represents a form of resistance that emerges out of the interplay of multiple subjects' positions – in this context the agency of citizens is placed within the larger set of social, cultural, and economic forces, while also accounting for personal desires and interests, where intentionality is recognizable. But McNay warns us that we have to depart from what she calls the "negative understanding of subject formation" paradigm, and recognize the process of the formation of agency as a productive and creative process through which "individuals may respond in unanticipated and innovative ways which may hinder, reinforce, or catalyze social change" (McNay 2000, 4). Since individuals and

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groups do not operate in a vacuum, the role of institutional mechanisms has to be acknowledged, because it is through them that agency gains power and definition. As our contributors point out, through such interactions, claiming agency is then the political process of subject formation and becoming a citizen.

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For many, the arena of civil society provided the space where such a process of subject formation could take place. After 1989, and the creation of civil societies based on democratic practices, the opening of political spaces in civil society was seen as a possibility for the introduction of a new citizenship model (Cohen and Arato 1992). This new understanding of citizenship implied "the active exercise of the responsibilities, including economic self-reliance and political participation.... [and] a dismantling of the 'passive' citizenship associated with the postwar, so-called "statist period" (Schild 1998, 94). Women's responses to the post-1989 neoliberal and free market practices, were to engage in building "alternative spaces" of actions through their involvement in and development of non-governmental organizations [NGOs], where citizenship could be practised beyond the state and market (Fuszara 2001; Lang 1997; Milić 2004; Regulaska 2002; Završek 1999). These formal and informal groups, associations, and networks, began to address the immediate needs of the individuals, families, and communities that the new state regimes wanted to restrict or were no longer interested in/or capable of providing for. Many women's and feminist groups then engaged in delivering services that the state often perceived as too costly (such as the (re)training of unemployed women) or too controversial (such as a provision of services to homeless people, AIDS victims, drug users, victims of violence, or people with varying degrees of abilities) (Funk 2004; Hemment 2004).

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This process of engagement was not restricted by national state borders, as women began to mobilize across geographical scale, locally as well as transnationally (Einhorn 2003; Jacquette 2003; Jaggar 2005; Regulaska 2001). By crossing borders, women and feminist activists accessed new legal, political, and human resources. They also enhanced their skills and knowledge, built new transnational networks, and carried their actions beyond nation-state boundaries. The emergence of NGOs in the post-1989 political landscape was significant because it permitted women to formulate different strategies of survival, engagement, and resistance by opening up new possibilities for women to practise active citizenship in spaces that were outside state structures, but at the same time still controlled by its institutions (Hement 2004).

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Despite their unquestionable accomplishments, women's and feminist NGOs struggled with limited finances, no access to political processes, and the frequent lack of recognition of their voices. In fact, NGOs behaved like the former socialist opposition, functioning parallel to the post-socialist state and free market. While they had the potential to expand the narrow notion of politics, they were relegated to the margins. For women in central and east Europe, Jalušič argues, the notion of civil society was "an important, if not the only" hope for change. However, she also points out that the redefinition of citizenship was only temporary as "we witnessed active citizenship being withered away" (1998, 5; 7). The limited possibility for the

reconceptualization of what is meant by political and how politics is practiced by citizens was caused, in Jalušič's view by:

...the fact that politics was understood in a narrow institutional sense, and that agency in transitional societies was predominantly prescribed as the activity of a professional, political, and economic elite, which was, from the very beginning, formed by men, [as a result] women had almost no real chance of entering this professional sphere of public engagement (Jalušič 1998, 6).

One of the critical products of the post-1989 changes in the region was the (re)creation of new public private divisions, where public signified a space of action and visibility for men, and private was a space ruled by social constraints and even greater patriarchy for women. This outcome subsequently became an object of women's active mobilizations and resistances, a point that is addressed by our contributors.

Feminist scholars have also argued that the emphasis on civil society and, in particular, on NGOs, has been problematic (Jacquette 2003; Jaggar 2005). Some believe that "grassroots participation and local activism cannot alone solve the problem of political exclusion" (Skjeie and Siim 2000, 353). Others assert that civil society does not exist independently from the state and market, and that the exclusive focus on civil society, in fact, may have inadvertently restricted women's opportunities to shape the contours of citizenship, constrained women's political space, and marginalized feminist voices (Jaggar 2005; Silliman 1999; see also Einhorn 2001). Yet, these new possibilities for engagement signified the recognition of women as flexible and active citizens, who were simultaneously engaged in multiple sites in order to facilitate the mobilization of resources, mount new actions, and address specific needs.

### **Multilayered Citizenship**

The acknowledgment of the varying degrees of women's agency and the diversity of subjects' positions draws attention to a "multi-layered" notion of citizenship and gender-pluralist citizens (Hobson and Lister 2002; Yuval-Davis 1999). These approaches attempt to recognize the multiplicity of contexts within which citizenship is claimed and the multiple identities of its claimants. Thus, citizenship is understood "as a more total relationship, inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices, and a sense of belonging" (Werbner and Yuval-Davis 1999, 4). The notion of a gender-pluralist citizen reinforces the assertion that it is because citizens occupy different positions and belong to diverse communities that they are able to claim their multiple identities. Such recognition of the plurality of identities challenges gender being privileged as the sole dimension along which citizenship is shaped and demands that different markings such as age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, class, or level of physical and/or mental abilities are also included. The recognition of

the multiple subjectivities of citizens implies an understanding that social agents are formed through different subject positions. It also acknowledges the shift away from a simplified and often essentialized understanding of difference as being centered in the opposition between men and women, towards the more diversified and complex understanding of difference seen in relational terms.

Contributors to this volume recognize that the horizontal understanding of difference is key to the acknowledgment of a dynamic and fluid notion of citizenship practices. Such an approach also focuses our attention on the respatialization of power relations between and among individuals, groups, and institutions located across varying geographical scales (local, national, regional, and/or supranational). In that sense, any attempt to conceptualize a "women-friendly citizenship" accommodates differences between women themselves and recognizes the diversity of the locales within which women live, work, and act; citizenship must be understood as an "action practised by people of a certain identity in a specifiable locale" (Jones 1994, 260). As some contributors point out, this redefined citizenship is connected "with people's sense that they are members of a specific community and polity, and have a say in what leaders of that community do and say" (Yuval-Davis 2000, 172).

The reconceptualization of the notion of citizenship evokes another set of questions related to the notion of rights. In general, access to certain rights, guaranteed by the law, has often been understood to be of primary importance for citizenship. Those rights have predominantly been discussed as individual rights, which is in accordance with a social-liberal tradition that understands citizenship primarily as a relationship between the citizen and the state. Rights discourse has been important in constructing a legal set of norms that allow women and other social groups to claim norms and standards that are available to others, but denied to them (Schneider 1991). Feminist scholars and activists have repeatedly pointed out the empowering effects of rights for many women, and their positive impact on women's political mobilization and collective actions. This is especially the case when discriminatory labor practices are challenged or when a case of violence against women is prosecuted (Bunch, et al 2001; NEWW 2005; STOPVAW 2003; Yuval-Davis 1999). At the same time, rights discourse has been criticized for its false universalism and for not recognizing that being a citizen, in plural democracies, means that "the resources and powers that implement and embed the very concept of citizenship are neither equally nor fairly distributed" (Machado and Vilroks 2001, 149). Such inequalities not only translate into different levels of access to resources, they also shape the process through which individual and collective identities are constructed (Melucci 2001). The numerous barriers and obstacles that women continue to face often result in conditions under which they are simultaneously included because they are citizens (through the right to vote or receiving social services); at the same time that they are excluded because they are women; thereby placing them on the margins and rendering them invisible. Benhabib points to the dialectic of rights and identities, by arguing that, "the meanings of rights claims are altered when exercised by subjects whose legal and political agency had not been foreseen or normatively anticipated in

the initial formulations of rights" (2004, 169). Such confrontations, for her, result in contestations that bring "new modes of political agency and interaction" (Benhabib 2004, 169).

Becoming a citizen is both a matter of having access to resources and the means by which to engage in civil actions, and of participating in political processes. However, because resources and possibilities for social participation are unequally shared and distributed, scholars have called for a "renewed commitment to redistributive politics" and the creation of "new forms of representation and social participation" (Jacquette 2003, 332; Machado and Vilrocx 2001, 155). For Machado and Vilrocx, this is a matter of moving beyond the rhetoric of "equal opportunity for all," towards the notion of "equal participation for all" (2001, 155). By focusing on the concept of participation, they argue that "a broader notion of citizenship – 'active citizenship' (as opposed to the more legalistic approach to citizenship)" is then developed. In that sense, as several contributors have pointed out, citizens' participation is critical to counter social exclusion and inequality; however, in order to be able to fulfill that promise, participation has to be expanded beyond the sphere of work and include participation in society at large. Participation also must be understood beyond the right to vote, which is obvious given the fact that in former socialist states, some of which granted women the right to vote as early as 1917, women's equality in political, social, and private spheres never increased. In that sense, "participation and active citizenship are seen as major tools to be used against inequality and exclusion, maximizing people's involvement in their local communities" (Machado and Vilrocx 2001, 157).

Indeed one of the shifts in rights practices after 1989 was the possibility for an active as opposed to a passive claiming of citizenship rights, as was the case under communism. Yet, while the shift from the right to participate to the actual utilization of this right opens up opportunities for an active formation of citizenship practice, authors in this volume point out how, for many, social and economic transformations foreclosed access to such possibilities.

### **Women's Citizenship in Times of Transformation**

The recent transformations, in central and east Europe, demand the rethinking of how the identities and subjectivities of citizens are constructed and articulated during times of rapid political and social changes. As discussed by the contributors, four sets of forces seem of particular significance in shaping the notion of citizenship in the post-socialist state: 1) the collapse of communism; 2) the emergence of neo-liberalism, 3) the resurgence of nationalism and fundamentalism and the creation of non-citizens, and 4) the "European" expansion to the east.

The fact that transformation was not always easy or unproblematic for women has already been observed and discussed by women's and feminist scholarship (see Einhorn 1993; Funk and Muller 1993; Gal and Kligman 2000; Jähnert et al. 2001;

Titkow, Budrowska, and Duch 2003). The decades of socialist, political, and civil restrictions and oppressions, and top-down control of every sphere of daily life, were also decades of widely accessible social and economic benefits that visibly implicated women's positions and status as citizens (Fodor 2004). The liberal notion of ensuring basic rights resonated well with the newly accepted focus on individual freedoms and the market economy. Paradoxically, although 1989 marked the gain of civil and political rights for some, for many it also demarcated the beginning of an erosion of their social and economic rights. Thus, ethnic groups (both old and new), asylum seekers, workers employed under slavery conditions, and/or female sex workers were often denied their basic rights and relegated to the margins of their societies.

In reality, post-1989 states have engaged in an open repositioning, where some groups such as children, the elderly, the sick, women, or people with different degrees of abilities, who had previously been provided with fiscal and service support through state institutions, began to see a rapid erosion of their resources and rights (Hemment 2004). Meanwhile, groups such as private owners, who had formerly been forbidden and located on the margins, gained status, privileges, and access to political processes. In some countries, processes of de-nationalization created, overnight, new economic elites; the "new rich" was comprised of both individuals and special interest groups (such as the Catholic Church who became the biggest private landowner in Slovenia and Poland). This reallocation of state regime interests and its redistribution of resources, which was often further supported by the strengthening of nationalistic, pro-family, and patriarchal values, created new liberal citizen-subjects (Holc 2004). The changed cultural dynamics, which emphasized morality, resulted in new political and social responses on the part of the state and its institutions, and the new crafting of practices of what it means to be a citizen.

While post-socialist states were willing to acknowledge some women's interests, many states have in fact actively restricted women's social, economic, or reproductive rights, or have continued to deny political rights to some groups of women (Bridger 1999; Einhorn and Sever 2003; Fuszara 2003; Jalušič 1998). Thus, as the contributors to this volume stress, the invisibility of women with physical or sensory impairment and their lack of recognition as rightful citizens, as well as issues such as the state's reluctance to address questions of food security and safety, have translated into exclusionary practices whereby some women cannot fully participate as citizens because their rights are restricted, or because they do not possess them at all (the right to choose, the right to vote). In the end, states' practices, whether passively or actively anti-women, often translated into the regimes' persistent refusals to consider women's interests.

The events of 1989 and 1990 were also expected to bring unity to a Europe that had been divided for decades. The reterritorialization of what was to become the "united Europe" brought hope that new centers of power, beyond the nation-state, would be introduced. Given the European Union [EU] policy's commitment to gender equality, this was a promise of new standards and norms, and therefore it offered possibilities for the enhancement of civil, social, and economic rights for women in

future member states. Although these hopes for greater gender equality did result in greater political mobilization on the part of some women and women's groups, these hopes never fully materialized (Regulska and Grabowska forthcoming). At the same time, not only have the divisions between "east" and "west" persisted, they have also been reproduced and reinforced. The expansion of the EU has led to new categorizations of central and east European countries into "possible," "doubtful," or "excluded," a division through which west European countries can "preserve for as long as possible the advantages of a division of labor between newly developed zones, and to push the difficulties of a new definition of European identity outside of the frames of thought and action" (Balibar 2004, 167). While questions of economy, competition, and profits had an overriding role in the reconfiguration of the new European divisions, they were not the only relevant ones. The perception of how "west" Europe continued to view the "east" was equally critical. Consequently, while some nations were ready to be partially integrated, "some peoples (always that a bit farther to the East), whether by nature or by history, [were] not 'mature' enough for democracy" (Balibar 2004, 169; see also Funk 2004).

The new division of Europe, which Balibar termed "a cold war after the Cold War" has had profound gender implications (Balibar 2004, 167). First of all, while some women became members of the EU and, at least in theory, could benefit from the strengthening of *de jure* civil, social, and economic rights, others still remain in the "waiting room," and may never experience these rights. Secondly, it is not clear if the promises of new gender-friendly policies and practices will indeed be carried out, and therefore whether they will shape new conditions for women claiming citizenship. The evidence gathered so far, has called these changes into question (Karat 2003; Regulska 2002; Roth 2004). Thirdly, as the EU continues to privilege its economic goals, where women's needs are of interest only as long as they reinforce economic effectiveness, efficiency, and profitability, those who are not recognized as "productive" contributors, are left on the margins, beyond the reach of these promises. There is however, already a noticeable advancement as a result of the European Union eastern enlargement, and that is a more forceful grassroots political subjecthood formation. The increased transnational activities of women's and feminist groups have undeniably resulted in the greater involvement of NGOs in cross-European political activism, nevertheless whether these changes will have the opportunity to translate into new citizenship practices, still remains to be seen (Regulska and Grabowska, forthcoming).

The varying impacts of the European integration, so far, have resulted in women's experiences becoming more diversified. Thus, as our contributors argue, Romanian and Latvian women may have dissimilar priorities and needs, not only because of the great diversity of their own positionalities, but also due to the fact that the transformation took different trajectories in Romania and Latvia. Each country now finds itself at a different stage of transforming its internal institutional policy-making systems, and its external linkages. Therefore, it is not only the class-gender-race-nation matrix, but also the different stages of the transformation processes with their unique

social, economic, and political contexts, that mold gendered citizenship's norms and practices. The acknowledgment of this diversity confirms the need to develop a conceptual apparatus that is able to address the multiplicity of the particular positions of women within the diverse contexts of transformation, and construct different intersectional points that take into account already existing categories, while bringing them together to work in different relations. How then do different women across the region craft their citizenship practices under these new conditions?

### **About the Book**

This collection, written by sixteen contributors who represent the multilayered identities of different locations spanning across central, eastern, and western Europe, and the United States, attempts to unpack the complexities of women's citizenship practices. The authors examine past legacies and present conditions, in order to show how, through their experiences, women in central and east European countries are constructing new notions of active citizenship. The subject of this volume is how women's agency, as citizens, is implicated by their multilayered positionalities during times of transformations.

The volume puts emphasis on the diversity of situations in which women have found themselves throughout the region, as a result of the multipositionality of their experiences, agendas, and struggles to assert their citizenship, and as generated by the different forms that the transformation took. The authors discuss the ways in which women, as citizens, are treated in the new, post-socialist realities, and what political strategies they use to address these new circumstances. They also reflect upon the situation of women under past regimes, in order to acknowledge the critical role that socialism played in shaping the present context.

While, both the collective and individual cases acknowledge citizens' agency, the different sites at which the actual engagement takes place points to a variety of circumstances and possibilities for active involvement. In this volume, the authors recognize the diversity of the sites of engagement, calling attention to public political institutions at the national level, local environmental organizations, street protests, local and/or transnational NGOs, and literary texts. This multiplicity of sites is often repeatedly reinforced as citizens' move between them to maximize their intended outcomes and confront the obstacles that they encounter. Not only do these locations vary across geographical scales from local, national, to transnational, they also engage the diverse actors and structures of the state, family, or civil society.

The emphasis on women's agency in this volume has its historical grounding: within the context of the new social reality, women expected to gain a redefined citizenship, which they believed would be brought by the changes they had so strongly supported while living in and opposing the previous regimes. In that sense, the authors include both historical and contemporary perspectives. They draw upon the legacies of the socialist past, and map some highly characteristic points in the gen-

dered transformation processes of the 1990s and early years of the 21st century. As the authors point out, many aspects of the institutional and legal framework already have been subject to major changes, yet, the social reality and the gender relations that generated them still have not advanced substantially. Thus, the case studies presented here, each in their own way, point to the core of the social discrimination between genders, as it is being re-produced once again in the new social realities of post-socialist countries.

The book is divided into three sections: *Regimes*, *Agency*, and *Transnational Dialogue*. The final chapter of this volume places empirical discussions of women's citizenship, in central and east Europe, within the larger context of neo-liberal discourses and unfulfilled promises.

### *Regimes*

Part One, *Regimes*, examines the roles that diverse regimes such as patriarchy, gender, and the state have played in the past, and how they are presently exercised – in molding the positionality of women citizens. The authors show how traditional patriarchy and the communist system mutually reinforced each other, enabling the surveillance of women, both from a collective point of view (i.e. by the state) and an individual one (at the level of family and home). They assert that, despite the dramatic regime changes, women have continued to confront the challenges brought by neo-liberal discourses and the market economy.

The section begins with a chapter by Enikő Magyari-Vincze who demonstrates how socialism was not able to liberate women from traditional patriarchy; instead, it prolonged the patriarchal gender regime under the hegemony of a paternalistic state. Through the analysis of Romanian gender and state regimes, she demonstrates how, despite awarding women a multitude of rights; the party-state system emptied the power and meaning of these rights (e.g. the right to vote became a formal ritual of expressing loyalty). Women's citizenship was constructed in a way that victimized women by means of severe pro-natalist and anti-abortion policies, and by their representation as desexualized workers. Małgorzata Fuszara and Eleonora Zielińska, continue examining the role of state, and how it constructs the meaning of citizenship for women by focusing on Poland's legal framework and its recent changes. They stress the limits of a one-dimensional approach for achieving gender equality. Their analysis warns us not to assume that changes in the legal framework are sufficient enough to eliminate women's discrimination. They show how *de jure* changes, such as those brought by the EU accession pressures, were insufficient in altering the gender matrix in state institutions, the Polish parliament, and other major decision-making bodies. They argue that little progress is possible without the active engagement of women's and feminist groups, as well as Polish politicians greater political will and further education about gender issues.

Salvatore A. Engel-Di Mauro turns our attention to economic citizenship and its gendered practices in the rural Hungarian town of Ormánság. He examines the sig-

nificance of the androcentric socialist state in establishing and reinforcing gendered political differentiations through economic policies, and shows how women became constructed as citizens through their status as laborers. In the post-socialist period, a rapid decrease of welfare resources (such as childcare grants), and an increase in women's unemployment, has dismantled women's economic independence and weakened the economic subjecthood that they had previously gained during the socialist period (even though women were still unequal to men). In the following chapter by Jacqueline Heinen, the sexualized notion of citizenship is traced. She argues that the current democratic dynamics, which stress individual and personal autonomy, do not have equal value for men and women in CEE countries. Despite it being criticized for its limited applicability beyond western Europe, Heinen proposes the use of T.H. Marshall's rights framework to unpack the meanings of citizenship for women in the region. By focusing on employment, reproductive rights, and political representation, Heinen demonstrates that women lack full citizenship rights, and reveals how communist policies masked gender inequalities.

The final contribution to this section, by Irina Novikova, takes yet another perspective on how national state and supranational institutions of the European Union use gender equality policy mechanisms, such as gender mainstreaming [GM], and by doing so shape the meaning of being a citizen. She evaluates the results of the gender mainstreaming process during the crucial decade for the Latvian society between Latvia's Letter of Intent to join the EU in 1993, and its membership, in 2004. Novikova shows how outside political pressures and the need to fulfill the EU entry requirements created a pro-GM institutional climate. However, she also points to the significant ambiguities of partially fulfilled promises, and the problems that remain to be solved, both on the part of women themselves as well as on the part of state institutions.

### *Agency*

Part Two, *Agency*, affirms the power of women, both individually and collectively, by showing the diverse strategies through which women map their agendas and shape citizenship practices. Some authors remind us that even if, and when, women exercise their political subjecthood, they often remain marginalized, their voices spoken but ignored. Nevertheless, such engagement is their responsibility, and by exercising it, women's agency is claimed and active citizenship asserted.

Ann Graham and Joanna Regulska's contribution opens this section with the exploration of the degree to which women who are engaged in NGOs, in Poland and Ukraine, define their work as "political." Their study reveals how, for women in both countries, NGOs represent new entry points to active citizenship, and how these interventions are shaped by particular notions of political culture in each country. The authors point out that, while Ukrainian and Polish women subscribe to a different understanding of the "political," in both countries women who participated in the project believed in their own political efficacy. How such political subjecthood is shaped through resistance and political activism, is presented by Marina Blagojević,

who examines the gender dimensions and "genderness" of the 1996/1997 citizens' and students' protests against the Milošević regime in Belgrade, Serbia. She explores the protests at two levels: empirically, by analyzing the level of participation, behavior, attitudes, and political representation; and qualitatively by examining their cultural/symbolic representation. She shows how women still remained marginalized from public representation and higher-level decision-making despite their active participation and strong feminist presence during the protests. Blagojević places the protests within the context of the women's movement in Belgrade, in order to examine their mutual influences and interdependence in the process of building civil society.

Anne C. Bellows analyzes the political work of the Polish Ecological Club-Gliwice [PEC-Gliwice] in southwest Poland. By showing how the production of contaminated food violates citizens' human rights, she makes visible the groups that are most vulnerable (young children, pregnant and lactating women, and persons with impaired health, especially the elderly). Although not a feminist organization, the PEC-Gliwice consists mostly of women, who see their work as a form of political activism. Women's work regarding healthy food and a non-polluted environment is not accidental, she argues, rather it stems from traditional gender roles; these practical experiences translate into the praxis of political work and alternative policies. Darja Zaviršek's contribution, addresses another form of women's resistance. She concentrates her focus on women with physical and sensory impairments, intellectual disabilities, and mental health crises. Such women, she argues, have in many respects, remained invisible citizens during the turbulent feminist movement, as well as during the political changes in post-communist countries. Zaviršek shows how sharing the experiences of abuse and violence through "memory work," enables women to become human agents and claim their everyday citizenship rights.

Daša Duhaček's article concludes this section by exploring the notion of responsibility that women have, as political subjects. She provides an analysis of the women's civil society movement in Belgrade during the wars of the 1990s, and shows the necessity for self-reflection and resistance to the totalitarian regime of Milošević in Serbia. Using the political theory of Hannah Arendt, she examines the position of women who have been issuing public calls for responsibility within the political space. One such group, "Women in Black," declared their disloyalty to the governing structure and, through the very act of asking their government for accountability, demonstrated their active citizenship. Although, the state attempted to deny this group active political participation, the groups' activities and written texts successfully reached and addressed the public.

### *Transnational Dialogues*

Part Three, *Transnational Dialogues*, brings together feminist voices that, while separated by geographic distance, speak to issues that connect across borders and boundaries. The authors take a broader look at the character of central and east

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European feminist practices and analyze the forces that produce them. While some contributors attempt to interpret the women's movement and women's activism from a collective perspective, others point to the importance of individual responses and personal agency for the recognition and promotion of women's rights.

To examine the intertwined relations between the politics of identification and citizenship rights, Jasmina Lukić offers a close reading of writings by Croatian/Dutch/European author, Dubravka Ugrešić; particularly Ugrešić's resistance to various forms of state, cultural, and political nationalism. Ugrešić's (anti)political essays bring into focus the intellectuals' political responsibility during times of the totalizing state ideology of nationalism. Becoming a social outcast in Croatia because of her writings, and with her own citizenship rights in jeopardy, Ugrešić opted for a voluntary exile and became a Dutch citizen. This change, Lukić argues, shaped Ugrešić writings and influenced her strategies of identification. Nanette Funk takes a different approach and confronts a set of criticisms that have been launched against women's and feminist NGOs in the region of east and central Europe and the former Soviet Union. Using both theoretical arguments and a wide variety of evidence from NGOs' work in the region, Funk dismisses most 'Imperialist Critics', by arguing that it is through NGOs that many women in the region managed to become active agents in the transformation of state and social policies, as well as defenders of women's and human rights. She asserts that the support that they receive from western funding neither excludes nor denies their highly important and positive impact on the promotion of women's rights.

The chapter by Kornelia Slavova brings into focus the relevance of Third World feminist critiques of western feminist thought, for central and east Europe feminisms. She argues that the emergence of CEE feminisms, located in different spatio-temporalities, have produced disrupting effects on some of the "grand narratives" of western feminism. She points to CEE and Third World feminists' similarly ambiguous attitudes towards, and often rejection of, western feminist theories and practices. In her opinion, through the regional histories and women's pseudo-emancipation at the hand of the communist state, CEE feminists have added culturally specific dimensions to their feminist agendas. Similar cross-regional and transnational tensions are also echoed in the writing of Ann Snitow, whose chapter concludes this section. Snitow presents an analysis of the complex relationship between central and east European feminisms, which are rejected and demonized in the region; and western feminisms which, in the post-1989 context, are also looked down upon. She sees both feminisms as currently "homeless"; a condition with potentially positive, as well as negative consequences. She cautions that feminists can make the mistake of using the category of gender to displace equally important sources of oppression such as class, race, and ethnicity. She also warns against abandoning the feminist project – west or east – because of its growing pains or the inequalities it sometimes embodies.

The volume concludes by stressing the fact that despite old and new challenges many women in central and east Europe successfully claim their agency and en-

gage in political organizing. Yet, the revisiting of Lenin's "women's question", with lingering issues such as equal pay for equal work, the equal division of household burdens, and participation in politics and public life, demonstrates that neither states governed by the neo-liberal elites, nor those with Christian conservative, or left leaning governments, have made any significant steps towards gender equality and an empowered notion of women's citizenship. To the contrary, the revitalized masculinity and patriarchalization of everyday life in central and east Europe points to the decline of women's citizenship rights. It can be argued that, for most women, at the end of the first fifteen years of the post-socialist era, the expectation that democracy will bring gender equality still remains an unfulfilled vision and an everyday struggle.

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