

## BOOK REVIEW

**Adrian Hatos (2013). Community participation in Romania. Urban collective action in post-socialist Romania, Romania, Iași: European. Institute (212 pages)**

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This book addresses actual problems of Romanian society, namely the resources and obstacles of community participation seen as the capacity of individuals to contribute in producing public collective goods. The author uses as a unit of analysis a slightly different context of participation. While the classical context is represented by non-governmental organizations, Adrian Hatos is looking at a particular form - people living in apartments in blocks built before 1990.

The book is structured in seven general chapters, the first two analysing the key concepts, while the following four present research findings regarding different aspects of community participation in urban Romania. The final chapter synthesizes the main findings and offers concrete solutions for improving involvement in collective problem solving.

The conceptualization of community participation is extensive, linking theoretical approaches from sociology, political science, psychology, and economy. As presented in the first chapter *Participation*, the main theoretical frame used in analysis of participation is represented by the collective action theories. From this point of view, community participation is seen as a solution to overcome social dilemmas in production of collective goods in residential areas. Consequently, one may look at all the factors that stimulate or, on the contrary, hinder participation: group heterogeneity, selective incentives, critical mass, social learning, efficiency of contribution, group identity, social capital, psychological factors, culture, networks, and social norms. The second theoretical chapter, *Citizen participation and development in Romania*, reflects briefly some of the findings of Romanian studies in this area. As most of these are grounded in the liberal theories of civil society, the author argues for the limits of such approach.

The consequent chapters focus on different aspects of community participation as derived from rich empirical analysis. The extensive data used in these chapters are both qualitative and quantitative, from narratives to network analysis, collected by the author in a long time frame (2004 - 2007) in Oradea, Romania.

The first section *Discourses of community activist*, refers to motivations and self-explanations regarding peoples involvement on the community. Talking to leaders, activists and passive members of communities, the main conclusion is that participation is based on network belonging and a positive attitude towards

involvement. Previous participation, even in communist organization, has a facilitator role for current participation.

The second empirical chapter, as stated in the title, refers to *Individual factors of community participation*. The main factors proven to promote participation are: age, resources (both material and informational), social capital, attachment to the community, perceived efficiency.

The fifth chapter, third research based section, deals with *Social networks in apartment blocks*, based on network analysis conducted in 21 blocks from Oradea. The main finding is that centrality in a network is highly correlated with participation or having an active role in community mobilization. Socioeconomic characteristics and prestige of a household reflect centrality in the network complementing previous results regarding individual determinants of participation.

The sixth chapter synthesizes the main research finding, adding measures of bridging and bonding social capital or trust. In the multilevel model of participation explanatory factors are: at the level of the blocks the percentage of Hungarians, and at individual and household level: trust in neighbours, instrumental social capital, leadership experience in the family, higher education (negative influence), age and number of household members.

The concluding chapter, *Synthesis of results*, summarizes the main theoretical and empirical conclusions, emphasising some generic discussion in this field: the generic activism, distinction between bridging and bonding, symbolic community capital, or the impact of mezo and macro phenomena. The author offers also practical recommendations meant to strengthen communities' capacity to collective production of public goods.

This book is addressed to a large audience: students, experts and practitioners in fields related to citizen involvement in production of public goods. The extensive and comprehensive conceptualization of participation makes this book a reference point for anyone exploring this study field. The research chapters enrich the knowledge of community participation phenomena, providing key answers to core questions related to the determinants of participation in urban Romania.