

Book Review: Remaking Citizenship in Multi-Cultural Europe: Women's Movements, Gender and Diversity

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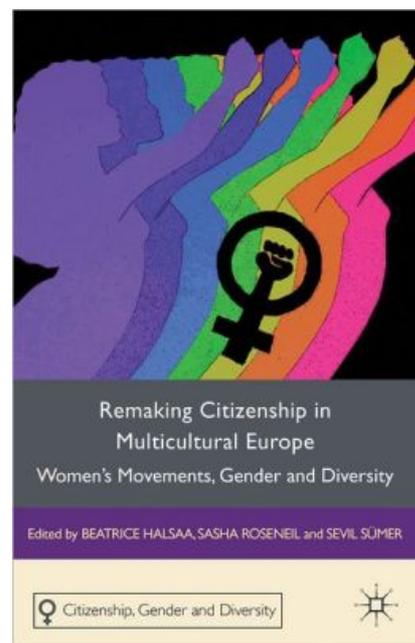
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*This book aims to offer a ground-breaking analysis of how women's movements have been remaking citizenship in multicultural Europe. Presenting the findings of a large scale cross-national feminist research project, the authors discuss the differences women's movements and feminism have made to experiences and practices of citizenship, and how we might assess the state of citizenship in contemporary Europe from the perspective of minority women. Reviewed by **Keerty Nakray**.*

Remaking Citizenship in Multi-Cultural Europe: Women's Movements, Gender and Diversity. Edited by Beatrice Halsaa, Sasha Roseneil and Sevil Sümer. Palgrave Macmillan. August 2012.

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This edited volume successfully encapsulates the debates on various dimensions of citizenship in contemporary European society. The chapters – edited by Professor at the University of Oslo [Beatrice Halsaa](#), Birkbeck Professor [Sasha Roseneil](#), and University of Bergen researcher Sevil Sümer – are based on empirical research findings from [FEMCIT](#): a multi-disciplinary, cross-national research project led by several European universities. It undertakes the onerous task of revisiting the concept of citizenship in the context of juxtaposing imperatives that include rapid “Europeanization” and establishment of European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights, the institutionalisation of gender equality in the transnational laws and policies, the global financial crisis, the war on terror, and the changing demographic and economic landscape – specifically related to the ageing population and a marked increase in the influx of immigrants from developing economies.



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The concept of citizenship initially developed by T.H. Marshall principally implied that citizens should enjoy a specific set of rights from a nation state, and that in return it was expected that individual citizens would be willing to take on certain duties (see [Understanding Social Citizenship: Themes and Perspectives for Policy and Practice](#)). It is largely a qualitative concept foregrounded in the capitalist mode of development which requires that citizens enjoy a certain set of civil, legal, and social rights to ensure that their right to private property is protected, contracts are respected, and law and order is maintained for the effective functioning of the economy. Social rights are a distinctive feature of capitalist societies as not everyone benefits from capitalism equally; therefore it is necessary to ensure social rights through welfare and social security policies.

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Remaking Citizenship in Multi-Cultural Europe acknowledges the growth in feminist critique of Marshall's citizenship and seeks a further departure from his primary contention of “full membership of the community”. As the authors highlight “citizenship should also be considerate of “the absence of rights, the derogation of responsibility and the lack of capacity to exercise responsibility and agency, legal non-personhood, non-participation and exclusion and subjective experiences of outsider-status and non-belonging” (p.3).

These debates are lucidly elaborated in Chapter 4, titled “Remaking Economic Citizenship in Multi-Cultural Europe: Women’s Movement Claims and the ‘Commodification of Elderly Care’”, written by Nicky Le Feuvre, Rune Ervik, Anna Krajewska and Milka Metso. The chapter explores the concept of economic citizenship in relation to the increasing use of immigrant workers undertaking elderly care to address the vacuum created by the increasing number of women in the paid workforce in Europe. The greater inclusion of women in the workforce is a direct result of explicit endorsement by various transnational organisations to ensure the use of skilled force within the nations to address the needs of the knowledge economy, changing demographic dynamics, and also promote women’s empowerment. As the authors explain, “due to structural changes in the regulation of European labour markets since the 1970s, women are now increasingly expected to work continuously throughout their adult lives, despite the fact that many of them are being ushered into jobs that fail to provide the rights, resources and recognition that were part and parcel of the historically situated masculine “economic citizenship package” (p 92). The authors examine the differential implications of economic citizenship acquired through formal and paid work for women, discussing how the route of economic citizenship differs for white and immigrant women. The situation for female migrants is also often more precarious than for male migrants due to the apparent cultural contradictions in their gender roles in their home and host countries. As the authors point out further, “these tensions are exacerbated by the discrimination that migrants and minoritized groups face in employment and which leads to their limited access only to the least desirable segments of the labour market” (p86).

This point resonates with historical shifts in feminist debates around being more inclusive of non-middle-class and non-white women’s experiences. Women’s economic inclusion within labour markets plays out differently. “Right to work” policy discourses mandate almost all women to work despite the commitments to familial care. Women employed in the formal labour market are still likely to be better protected, compared to immigrant women who might still face precarious employment situations.

The chapter authored by Line Nyhagen Predelli, Beatrice Halsaa and Cecilie Thun, titled “‘Citizenship Is Not a Word I Use’: How Women’s Movement Activists Understand Citizenship” brings forward the poignant issue of the disconnect between academic discourses on citizenship and activist struggles for women’s rights. Citizenship remains a difficult concept within academic feminist thinking, and it struggles to generate an overarching framework for articulating strategies for women’s inclusion in society. The current theoretical framework around inclusive citizenship has not translated itself into practical knowledge that could facilitate the everyday struggles of feminists in society. The authors found that activists prefer women’s rights or the human rights frameworks, or gender equality or social justice frameworks, as tools to articulate their aspirations for substantive equality. In face-to-face interviews with 30 women’s movement activists, one interviewee succinctly highlighted that “citizenship is not a word I use... But as a feminist doing the work I do, it wouldn’t be the language I would use. It is a secondary concern to me as a way forward” (p. 201). This certainly highlights the need for further engagement and communication between the two of the most pivotal and indispensable agencies of the feminist movement.

For patriarchal structures to be adequately challenged, there is a need for the coming together of the various intellectual and practical processes of women’s empowerment. This is particularly pertinent as the global financial crisis has further deepened women’s social exclusion and undermined the women’s movement. The two chapters discussed here provide a purview of the contradictions that challenge the women’s movement. Most importantly, the struggle to transcend the barriers between episteme and praxis remains paramount. Transcending boundaries could serve as a stepping stone for recognition and inclusion of diversity of thoughts, processes and outcomes that could form the basis for inclusive citizenship and transformation.

Keerty Nakray is currently an Assistant Professor and Assistant Director of the Centre for Women, Law and Social Change at the Jindal Global Law School, New Delhi, India. She completed her PhD in Sociology and Social Policy from Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland. Prior to that she studied for a MPhil in Planning and Development at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, and a Masters in Social Work (Mumbai) and BA Sociology (Honours) from St Xavier's College, Mumbai. She is currently researching on gender based violence, child abuse, health care insurance, public health policies and budgets. She has a keen interest in social science research methods and ethics. [Read more reviews by Keerty.](#)