

## PARTICIPATION AND NORMS OF GOOD CITIZENSHIP: A discussion on Romania and youth

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### **Abstract**

Norms of citizenship describe how individuals understand their connection to community and to the broader political context. They are part of the attitudinal drives for participation and activism. Likewise, the attachment to various images of good citizenship may be linked to individuals' life experiences and reinforced by the actual practice of citizenship. This paper provides an exploratory research of norms of citizenship in Romania, asking whether age influences the way people understand good citizenship. Age is found to be a much weaker predictor than the actual habits of participation and the attitudinal backgrounds of individuals. The commitment to different images of good citizenship is best predicted by *attitudinal factors*, specifically the perceived efficacy of unconventional/conventional forms of participation.

**Key words:** citizenship, norms of good citizenship, youth, participation, Romania

Recent political developments from Romania provided a number of occasions when groups consisting mostly of young people got mobilized and became vocal towards different aspects of politics or reacted collectively to specific political decisions. Most recent such events have been the so-called "ctrl-alt-delete" protests<sup>1</sup> from November 2015, a label alluding to protesters' demands for the renewal of political leadership and of the general manner in which politics is practiced. A few years back (2013), the controversy around the exploitation of Rosia Montana gold resources spurred protests in several major cities of Romania, with young people in the front lines of events; earlier, in 2012, other waves of protest reflected widespread discontent towards a range of perceived dysfunctions (Burean & Badescu 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.euronews.com/nocomment/2015/11/05/romania-ctrl-alt-del-protest/>

Periodic participation in protests provides a partial picture of citizens' politically motivated involvement, specifically, the contentious side of it. At the same time, it does reaffirm the interest around the activism of youth and the way young people think of themselves as citizens. To the extent that participation is rooted in people's orientations towards their role as citizens, the discussion can be carried in terms of norms of citizenship, understood as "a shared set of expectations about the citizen's role in politics" (Dalton 2008, 78).

Citizenship is important. It represents a "fundamental identity that helps situate the individual in society" (Conover et al. 1991, 805). As such, citizenship encapsulates two important relationships: that 'between the individual and the other members of his/her society' and that 'between the individual and his/her institutions of government' (Denters et al 2007, 90). Citizenship involves dynamism, both in how people understand its meanings and in how they practice it. These meanings and practices are fluid and responsive to changes in the political context and may adjust during individuals' lifespan.

The relevance of examining youth's understanding of citizenship may be approached by acknowledging that: (1) young people's understandings of what is expected from them as members of the society is likely to reflect on the future outlook of civic and participatory practices at societal level; (2) youth in post-communist contexts are exposed to complex and at times conflicting discourses about the meanings and practices of citizenship (participatory visions encouraged by democratic institutions and school socialization merged with mixed standpoints of families mostly socialized in non-democratic circumstances).

This paper discusses the effect of age on people's orientations towards community and civic involvement. The first sections approach participation, activism and the importance of focusing on youth as a particularly relevant group of citizens, as well as recent theoretical and empirical work on norms of citizenship. The second part of the paper turns the attention towards Romania. It first reviews recent empirical work on Romanian youth. Subsequently, it uses survey data to advance an exploratory examination of activism, participation, norms of citizenship and their relationship with age.

## Participation, engagement and youth

Civic and political engagement cover numerous forms of participation in public life, which may be 'highly political, entirely nonpolitical and anything in between' (Fiorina 2002, 515, quoted by Jenkins et al. 2003, 1). Often, there is a blurred demarcation between participation that is openly political in nature and forms of involvement with prevailing civic components. For example, political participation has been defined as "...activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action - either directly by affecting the making of or the implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those selections" (Verba, Scholzman & Brady 1995, 38). This broad definition may include a diverse range of activities that place citizens in multiple civic roles, beyond that of a mere voter. Furthermore, the literature accommodates a frequent, albeit challenged demarcation between conventional and unconventional forms of participation (Uslaner 2004; Van Deth 2001). Conventional participation includes "contacting politicians and government officials, party membership and work for political parties and all activities directly related to the electoral process such as voting or campaigning", whereas unconventional participation accommodates "boycotting, signing petitions, attending (un)lawful demonstrations, occupying buildings, political violence" (Barnes & Kaase 1979, as referred to in Linssen et al 2011, 4-5). The reason why this separation of participation forms is sometimes questioned is the increasing occurrence of demonstrations and other forms of contention that suggest such activities are no longer out of the ordinary and ought, therefore, to be included in the repertoire of conventional participation (Dalton 2008; Stolle & Hooghe 2011).

Surely, not all forms of participation have the overt purpose to impact political decisions; not everything that citizens do or are expected to do is straightforwardly political. Many forms of participation are more visibly oriented towards community and less towards the political system. Yet together, these participatory activities contribute to the integration of individuals in the society and make the everyday substance of citizenship. Benefits of civic engagement assumed to extrapolate from the individual to community and society are higher levels of trust, more tolerance and a stronger sense of political efficacy, to name just a few (Theiss-Morse & Hibbing 2005). A dense associational life and broad membership signal the development of a vibrant civil society; sustained electoral participation and

additional forms of political engagement are often used as evidence of a functional democracy in which people feel motivated to participate and the institutional arrangement enjoys legitimacy. For this reason, momentous shrinkages of participation levels, whether in turnout for elections or in other forms of civic involvement are sometimes interpreted as detrimental for a healthy democratic environment.

Within this general framework, part of the discussion specifically concerns the youth, its activism (or indifference), as well as the alleged descending trends in youth participation (Dalton 2008; Stoker 2006). Regarding youth, dominant paths of research focus on three broad categories of participation: “involvement in institutional policies (election campaigns and membership); protest activities (demonstrations and new social movements); and civic engagement (associational life, community participation, voluntary work)” Kovacheva (2005, 24).

The effect of age on participation is commonly approached in two types of explanations: those that focus on lifecycle and those that emphasize the generational effects on participation (Quintelier 2007). Life cycle centered explanations acknowledge that “the nature of responsibilities and experiences varies over an individual’s lifetime” (O’Neill 2007, 2). In this vein, it seems natural to expect that young people possess less resources and less practical experience in the realm of civic and political participation, which may hinder an dynamic engagement. Generational change is also important in terms of prevailing orientations and behaviors that mark different cohorts. Some explanations place the focus on the prevalence, among the young generations, of post materialist values that emphasize concern for quality of life and environmental issues (Inglehart 1997). These value orientations are expected to motivate new, less conventional forms of participation, “more issue-specific, ad hoc and campaign-like political action” (EACEA 2014, 4), or “community actions, political consumerism, new social movements” (Quintelier 2007, 3). Expected differences at the level of behavior are paralleled by attitudinal ones. Dalton (2005, 146) argues that “the young are now more likely to display lower levels of political trust and greater cynicism towards politicians and political institutions.”

Recent assessments of youth participation in Europe argue that “young people are critical, rather than apathetic” (EACEA 2013, 162), in other words dissatisfied with the existing political offer, and not reluctant to participation and involvement as such. Still in the context of Europe,

survey data collected by Eurobarometer (2012) show that young people are more attracted to “new forms of political participation” and do not always choose to get involved in the forms of participation they themselves assess to be most effective (EACEA 2014). Thus, “despite their low electoral participation, a relatively large proportion of young respondents stated that voting is an effective way of influencing decision-making” (EACEA 2014, 18).

Further accounts distinguish between patterns of participation of youth from consolidated and new democracies respectively. Along these lines, Kovacheva (2000) argues that participation of youth from post-communist societies could be approached by considering the multiple influences that shape their civic and political involvement. These influences include values and practices inherited from the communist past, still apparent at societal level; Western models of participation and involvement to which youth get increasingly exposed; youth’s position within the changing social and economic contexts of these societies, which is likely to impact on their resources and choices of participation.

### **Participation and norms of citizenship**

Norms of citizenship are part of the values-laden foundations that ground engagement and participation. According to Dalton (2008, 83), norms of citizenship ‘indicate what the individual feels is expected of the good citizen.’ Citizenship norms stipulate the grounds for how individuals regard relations with other members of society and with the institutions of government (Denters et al 2007). Moreover, norms of citizenship “provide reasons why citizens behave in specific ways” (van Deth 2007, 403), thus being strongly connected to participation.

On the one hand, commitment to specific citizenship norms may be approached in terms of attitudes conducive to specific patterns of civic and political participation (Zukin et al 2006). On the other hand, they may be approached as an outcome of political socialization generated by a multitude of socialization agents, among which family and school/education play notable roles (Pasek et al 2008, Verba et al 1995, Verba et al 2005). Along these lines, schools’ contribution in fostering civic education and education for democratic citizenship may be considered as particularly relevant (Fesnic 2015, Pantea 2014).

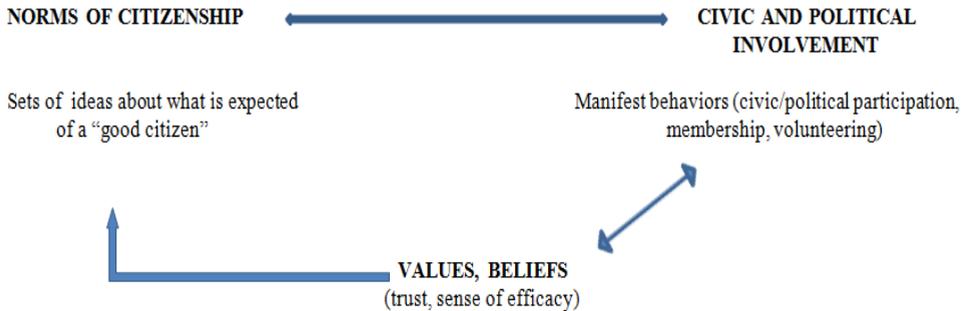
Studies that approach the construction of citizenship norms cover contextual factors as well as individual-level attributes. Coffe and van der Lippe (2010) examined good citizenship norms in four post-communist countries from Central Eastern Europe, arguing that country-specific prevailing understandings of citizenship reflect different national experiences during the communist period. They compared the prevalence of “duty-citizenship” and “engaged citizenship” in Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovenia. Their explanatory analysis using the two citizenship components as dependent variables suggests a great deal of variability in how images of good citizenship are built, in each country, by attributes like social and institutional trust.

Zmerli (2010) and Van Deth (2007) find four prevailing dimensions of citizenship located in the theorization of democratic citizenship: participation, autonomy, social order/law obeying, and social citizenship/solidarity. Each of these dimensions accommodates beliefs, values and behaviors that define individuals’ place in their communities. Deters et al (2007) found differences in how citizens from Eastern and Western Europe envision citizenship. With citizenship norms grouped in three broad categories, ‘solidarity’, ‘critical and deliberative principles’ and ‘law-abidingness’, the authors show that citizens from Eastern European countries prioritized law-abidingness over deliberative principles, whereas their Western counterparts were more inclined to attach deliberative meanings to good citizenship. In the aforementioned research, Romanian respondents were found to score very high on the ‘law-abidingness’ component, registering the highest values for this dimension among the 13 countries in the study.

Trust is an important resource that brings people together, facilitates cooperation and collective action. Of particular relevance is social (generalized) trust, placed in unknown people, a type of trust “not limited to a comparative narrow circle” (Zmerli & Newton 2013, 69). The link between civic engagement and trust is underlined by the approaches of social capital, with the important observation that the directionality of the relationship is an open question (Uslaner & Brown 2003; Sonderskov 2011). Both scenarios are highly plausible: more trusting people get involved publicly or, in contrast, involvement and membership foster social trust of active individuals (Stolle 1998). Zmerli (2010) finds social trust to be a strong predictor of norms of social citizenship, autonomy and participation, thus supporting the argument that trustful individuals are more likely to endorse visions of citizenship that emphasize activities oriented towards or

involving common action and purposes. The diagram below summarizes the previous discussion on the construction and likely impact of citizenship norms.

**Figure1. Norms of citizenship: a theoretical synthesis.**



When the discussion on participation and citizenship is focused on generational changes or specific patterns of youth participation, the matter becomes more intricate. Reacting to positions that lament over the seemingly declining participation of younger generations, Dalton (2008) recommends a shift in the research from highlighting the difference between past and current patterns of civic and political behavior to searching for the current meanings associated to citizenship by the young generations.

### **Previous research on Romanian youth**

Tufis (2014, 304) notes that in Romania „participation of any kind is at rather low levels” and relates this fact to citizens’ low levels of trust and tolerance, the general lack of a „culture of participation”, as well as to the insufficient/ineffective access points to the political system. The way in which the political system is assessed by citizens, from the point of view of its accessibility, can be meaningful in terms of perceived political efficacy. This has been defined as “the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e., that it is worthwhile performing one’s civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change” (Campbell, Gurin & Miller 1954, 187).

As far as young people are concerned, recent survey data show that Romanian university students are more participatory than the general population, while being, at the same time, less engaged than young people from other countries (Burean & Bădescu 2014). A study on Romanian youth 15-29 years old shows a prevailing trend towards disillusionment regarding the political sphere, consistent with self-declared low interest in politics and rejection of conventional types of political participation in favor of more contentious forms of involvement (Sandu et al 2014). The same study arrives at conclusions consistent with the political socialization literature, which postulates meaningful associations between young people's political opinions, those of their parents and the frequency of discussions on political issues in the family context.

Recent inquiries show that, in terms of volunteering, Romanians perform rather modestly: 9, 5% in 1999, 8% in 2002, 5, 8% in 2007, and 12, 8% in 2008 (GHK 2010). Data from the 2008 European Values Survey showed that for the age group 18-30, the percentage of volunteers was 14, 6%, with most volunteering performed in environment and animal rights associations, organizations focused on education, art and music and in religious organizations (GHK 2010, 5). A 2007 survey found that about 80% of the Romanian volunteers were of ages 19 to 35, with high levels of education or still enrolled as students.<sup>2</sup> Rigman (2010, 163) observes that volunteers differ from the general population in several important ways related to interest for public matters, 'their sense of empowerment and the levels of interpersonal trust.' However, the author notes the difficulty – common to many assessments of the relationship between engagement and values/orientations – to separate the self-selection bias from an actual impact of volunteering on civic skills.

Studies that specifically address young Romanians' understandings of citizenship are rather scarce. Comsa (2010) analyzes the virtues of citizenship among adolescents (survey on students from grades 8 to 12), revealing a social and a political dimension of citizenship norms. Placed in relation with varying degrees of involvement, the analysis generated a typology consisting of four categories of citizenship norms: the "uninvolved citizen" (endorsed by 39% of the young respondents), the "social citizen" (25%), the "political citizen" (16%) and the "good citizen" (high involvement, of either social or political nature: 20%). The study by

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<sup>2</sup> Survey conducted by Pro Vobis National Volunteer Center (Volunteering in Romania – the State of the Field). For a detailed description, see Rigman, 2010;

IMAS/Militia Spirituala (2011), on a different age group (18-29) found that the prevailing meanings associated by respondents to good citizenship (survey, open-ended questions) are: obeying the laws, respecting the others and being honest and fair. On pre-established items that describe citizenship norms, the analysis revealed three dimensions: a political dimension, a community-oriented pillar and a component centered on the observance of social norms.

### **An exploratory analysis of citizenship norms in the Romanian context**

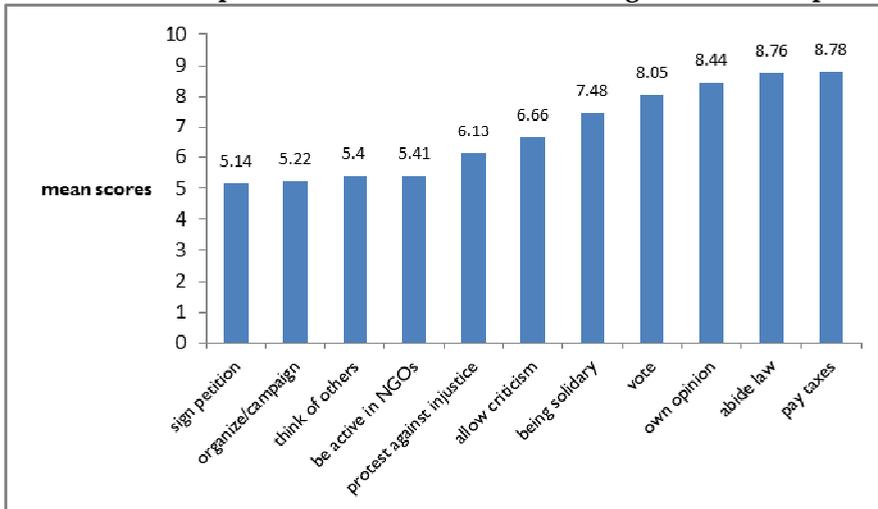
The data used in this paper have been collected in 2012 from a survey of 1100 respondents, representative for the Romanian adult population.<sup>3</sup> The items covered - among other topics - issues related to forms of civic and political participation, membership in associations and volunteering, attitudes towards protest and citizens' assessment of means available for influencing public decisions. This survey data is particularly useful because it includes a set of questions about people's understandings of good citizenship, a topic examined with relative scarcity in the Romanian context. The operationalization of good citizenship followed, to a large extent, the approach consecrated by the Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy survey. Each of the eleven items could receive a score from 0 to 10. A '0' score means that the respective item is given no importance at all in a definition of good citizenship. A '10' score means that the item is valued as a very important element of good citizenship.

About half of respondents scored as 'very important' paying one's taxes and observing all laws and regulations. Over 40% considered voting in elections as very important, as well as forming one's own opinion. Among the items that received fewest high scores we find the empathetic (altruistic) orientation, the involvement in voluntary organizations and writing petitions to public authorities. **Figure 2** clarifies the prioritization of citizenship norms by showing the mean scores for each item.

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<sup>3</sup> Data collected in 2012 in a research by Centrul de Resurse pentru Participare Publica (CeRe) and Centrul pentru Studiul Democratiei, Babes Bolyai University (CSD).

Figure2. Perceived importance of actions that describe 'good citizenship'



The age group 18-35 displays statistically significant differences from the rest of respondents along three of the items above described. They are more inclined to value being active in NGOs and organizing campaigns to support certain causes than the rest of the respondents. At the same time, they value to a less extent - within the imagery of good citizenship - the importance of observing laws and regulations. Factor analysis performed on the eleven items included in the measurement of good citizenship revealed two distinct components, shown in Table 1. The two factors extracted (Eigen value >1) explain, together, 59.4% from the variation of the variables.

Table1. Two components of good citizenship

How important is in your opinion...?	Component	
	1	2
Being solidary with people worse off than yourself	,392	,553
Voting in elections	,145	,733
Paying all your taxes	,028	,886
Forming your own opinion, independently of others	,277	,612
Always respecting laws and regulations	,109	,838
Being active in voluntary organizations	,753	,194
Thinking of others more than to yourself	,642	,230

Accepting criticism of your opinions	,492	,303
Writing petitions to authorities to speed problem solving	,840	,075
Organizing campaigns, actions to support a cause	,873	,092
Protesting against unjust facts in your community	,812	,132

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

KMO value: 0.862

The first component brings together six items that describe a proactive understanding of citizenship. The items that best correlate with the vision of proactive citizenship are organization of campaigns in support of a cause, petitioning and protesting against unjust occurrences in one's community. Activity in NGOs also records a high score, with smaller values for items about accepting criticism and about thinking of others. For this factor, the value of Cronbach Alpha is 0,860.

The second factor includes items related to somewhat diverse aspects of citizenship: a duty-based envisioning of citizenship (voting, paying taxes and always respecting the law); the issue of autonomy (opinion forming) and solidarity with those in a less advantaged position. The factor correlates most strongly with paying one's taxes and adherence to law abidingness. Though it may seem that the five items in this factor pertain to disparate pictures of citizenship, they may be in fact accommodated into a unitary vision of a citizen aware of her duties, concerned about the others, while keen on building one's own opinion. The test of internal consistency (Cronbach Alpha for items subsumed by the duty-based vision of citizenship is 0.796) confirms the ability of these items to speak for one latent substratum of citizenship). This factor will further be labelled as 'traditional citizenship.'

Consistent with the argument that young people are more likely to be attracted to less conventional forms of participation, we expect to find the same predispositions at the level of conceptualizations of good citizenship. Therefore, the expectation is that younger people would lean towards the proactive version of citizenship, whereas older people would value to a greater extent the second vision on citizenship. In a first step, bivariate analysis confirms these expectations, showing moderate, yet statistically significant, relationships between age and the two sets of civic norms, in the expected direction. (Age x Proactive citizenship: - ,121\*\*; Age x

Traditional citizenship: ,114\*\*; Pearson coefficients, correlations significant at 0.01 level). A multivariate analysis is later performed, to see whether age retains its effect when additional relevant predictors are taken into consideration.

The descriptive analysis reveals additional interesting facts. For example, respondents have been asked about how much they would like to live in a society in which the emphasis is placed on: (1) hard work; (2) people's mutual responsibility to one another; (3) respect for rules; (4) people's freedom to do whatever they want to; (5) citizens' political involvement; (6) the possibility to accomplish something in life; (7) a justice system people can rely on; (8) rewards granted according to merits. By and large, respondents are inclined to prefer a society where merits are recognized, the justice system is reliable, people have a real possibility to accomplish something in life and working hard is the norm. However, the second least valued feature of an "ideal" society is citizens' involvement in politics.<sup>4</sup> This comparatively modest valorization of citizens' political involvement bears no association with respondents' age.

Further results are revealed by the type of activities in which respondents reported they engaged in the past year, broke down by age group.

**Table2. Forms of participation by age group**

<i>In the past 12 months, did you...</i>	18-35	36-50	51-65	>65	all
Contact an MP	0,6	<b>4,7</b>	3,4	0,9	2,4
Contact an NGO	5,9	<b>8,4</b>	2,3	2,3	4,5
Contact a public clerk	19,1	<b>25,6</b>	23,7	17,2	21,5
Get involved in a political party	5	<b>9,8</b>	4,9	2,8	5,5
Get involved in a trade union	2,8	<b>12,6</b>	5,7	0,9	5,3
Work in an NGO	5	<b>6</b>	2,6	1,4	3,7
Wear electoral symbols/badges	5	<b>10,2</b>	2,6	2,8	4,8
Sign petitions	7,8	<b>14,4</b>	6,6	2,8	7,7

<sup>4</sup> On the basis of mean scores for the items included in the operationalization of the 'good society' (0 = "I wouldn't like that at all" ... 10 = "I would like that very much").

<i>In the past 12 months, did you...</i>	18-35	36-50	51-65	>65	all
Attend public demonstration	6,9	<b>14</b>	5,4	3,3	7,1
Attend a strike	3,8	<b>7,9</b>	5,4	1,4	4,6
Boycott certain products	8,8	<b>11,6</b>	4,9	0,5	6,5
Intentionally buy certain products	7,8	<b>11,6</b>	3,7	1,4	6
Donate money	37,8	<b>51,2</b>	44	44,2	43,6
Contact media/appear in media	4,4	<b>5,1</b>	2,3	2,3	3,5
Contact courts	8,4	<b>13,5</b>	8,9	5,6	9
Take part in spontaneous protests	5,9	<b>10,7</b>	4,6	2,3	5,7
Take part in public meetings	8,1	<b>11,6</b>	4,6	4,2	6,9
Abstain from voting	<b>10,6</b>	7,9	7,7	4,2	7,9
Do any other activities	<b>3,1</b>	1,9	0,6	0,9	1,6

*Note: Values in cells are percentages of those saying "yes"; in bold, highest values for each form of participation, by age group*

For specific types of participation, the category 18-35 surpasses the subsequent age groups solely in terms of abstaining from voting in elections or referenda. Perhaps most revealing is that the age group most active in almost all types of participation is that of respondents aged 36-50. The explanation lies, conceivably, in the agglomeration, within this age group of people with more resources, active on the labor market yet still with enough time and appetite for civic or public involvement.

When emphasis is placed on the scope, rather than on type of participation, one can look at number of affiliations and organizations for which respondents volunteer, and the number of activities in which people say they engaged in the preceding year. Each of these measures show a negative and statistically significant correlation with age, although of modest intensities, suggesting that younger people are somewhat more participatory, volunteer more and are members of more organizations than older individuals (Age x Membership scope: -0,082\*\*; Age x Activism

scope: -0,084\*\*; Age x Volunteering scope: -0,063\*\*; Pearson coefficients, correlations significant at 0.01 level).

The mixed impressions about solid differences between younger and older population is suggested also by responses related to perceived efficacy of means to influence public decisions, by age category (Table 3). Respondents have been asked about the weight attached to actions generally believed to grant citizens the power to influence decisions in a society (on a 0 to 10 scale, where 10 means “very effective”). These actions are: being active in a political party; working or volunteering for an NGO; voting in elections; personally contacting politicians; contacting media; boycotting products; attending public demonstrations and attending spontaneous protests.

**Table3. Perceived effectiveness of civic and political actions by age groups**

How effective do you think is	Age groups				
	18-35	36-50	51-65	65+	All
Being active in a political party	5.12	5.32	5.16	<b>5.54</b>	5,26
Volunteering for an NGO	<b>5.22</b>	5.00	4.59	4.84	4,91
Voting in elections	7.43	7.33	7.85	<b>7.94</b>	7,64
Contacting politicians	4.41	4.08	4.38	<b>5.08</b>	4,46
Drawing attention to mass media	5.19	<b>5.41</b>	5.00	5.09	5,16
Boycotting products	<b>4.14</b>	4.11	4.00	3.94	4.05
Taking part in public demonstrations	4.68	<b>4.93</b>	4.81	4.92	4.82
Taking part in spontaneous protests	4.64	4.67	4.50	<b>4.77</b>	4.62

*Note: Values in cells are mean scores. In bold, highest values for each action by age group; in italics, highest value within each age group (the action perceived as most effective by a specific age category)*

The distribution of mean scores is fairly similar, with respondents 18-35 showing less than impressive differences from the remaining age

categories. Voting is the activity perceived as most effective across all age categories. There is, however, one aspect along which 18-35 respondents significantly differ from respondents ages 36+: the perceived effectiveness of working or being active in an NGO as a way of influencing public decisions.

The commitment to the two types of citizenship above discussed (proactive citizenship and traditional citizenship) has been further examined through multivariate analysis. The independent variables assumed as relevant predictors have been grouped in three thematic sets: (1) *Socio-demographic attributes*: respondents' age; gender; education; income; marital status (recoded as dichotomous, with married respondents and those living in cohabitation placed within the same category); (2) *Values and beliefs*: perceived efficacy of conventional forms of participation (includes perceived efficacy of: being active in a political party, volunteering for an NGO, voting, contacting politicians; contacting mass media); perceived efficacy of non-conventional forms of participation (includes perceived efficacy of: boycotting, attending public demonstrations, attending spontaneous protests); social trust; (3) *Amplitude of participation*: scope of membership (number of affiliations declared by respondents); scope of participation (number of actions performed during the past year; see Table 2 for details); scope of volunteering (number of organizations for which respondents said they volunteered in the past year).

**Table4. Explanatory models for Proactive citizenship**

Independent Variables	Model 1 (Beta)	Model 2 (Beta)	Model 3 (Beta)
<b>Socio-demographics</b>			
Age	-.089*	-.053	-.048
Gender	.042	.006	-.003
Education	.094*	.059	.038
Income	.003	-.032	-.037
Marital status	.026	-.032	-.048
<b>Values and beliefs</b>			
Perceived efficacy of conventional participation		.185***	.190***
Perceived efficacy of unconventional participation		.353***	.329***
Social trust		.019	.012

<b>Engagement and participation</b>			
Membership scope			-.017
Participation scope			<b>.104**</b>
Volunteering scope			.062
<i>R Sq.</i>	<b>.024</b>	<b>.266</b>	<b>.280</b>

Note: statistically significant coefficients in bold. \*:  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p < 0.001$

**Table5. Explanatory models for traditional citizenship**

Independent Variables	Model 1 (Beta)	Model 2 (Beta)	Model 3 (Beta)
<b>Socio-demographics</b>			
Age	<b>.110**</b>	<b>.078*</b>	<b>.072*</b>
Gender	-.028	-.003	.003
Education	.069	.019	.028
Income	.008	-.006	-.005
Marital status	.037	.042	.035
<b>Values and beliefs</b>			
Efficacy of conventional participation		<b>.469***</b>	<b>.460***</b>
Efficacy of unconventional participation		<b>-.201***</b>	<b>-.183***</b>
Social trust		.005	.019
<b>Engagement and participation</b>			
Membership scope			.070
Participation scope			-.043
Volunteering scope			<b>-.157**</b>
<i>R Sq.</i>	<b>.017</b>	<b>.135</b>	<b>.151</b>

Note: statistically significant coefficients in bold. \*:  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p < 0.001$

The tables above show that socio-demographic attributes alone have a modest explanatory power for both types of citizenship commitment. However, as expected based on the existing research, age has a negative (albeit weak) effect on proactive citizenship, suggesting that it is rather the young who are more prone to hold norms of an active engaged citizenship. Education also has a weak and positive effect on proactive citizenship

norms and no influence on traditional citizenship. Older respondents are more likely to be committed to traditional norms of citizenship. The predictive power for both types of citizenship norms improves when models are supplemented with predictors related to values and beliefs. Regarding the norms of proactive citizenship, perceived efficacy of unconventional forms of participation is shown to have the strongest positive impact. Age is no longer a significant predictor of proactive citizenship, once additional factors are taken into consideration, and the same goes for the entire set of socio-demographic variables. Traditional citizenship is best predicted by perceived efficacy of conventional forms of action, with age holding a moderate and positive effect. Social trust has no significant impact on either type of citizenship norms. The third model adds information about respondents' actual engagement and participation. The data suggests that having participated in more forms of action increases the likelihood of being committed to norms of proactive citizenship. However, all other things equal, the strongest predictor of *norms of proactive citizenship* is the perceived efficacy of unconventional forms of participation. Interestingly, the scope of volunteering is found to have a negative impact on holding traditional citizenship norms. While the effect of age is still positive and statistically significant, it is the conviction that conventional forms of participation are effective for influencing decisions that most strongly drives the commitment to *traditional norms of citizenship*.

## Conclusions

The concern around citizens' activism in general and on that of youth in particular is rooted in the largely accepted conviction that an active citizenry is beneficial for a functioning democracy. Citizens' involvement may generate numerous benefits at community and societal levels, by fostering civic skills and sustaining an active citizenship; in turn, an active citizenry may encourage a healthy democratic environment, responsive to institutional performance and prepared to react to its possible faults (Putnam 1995, Skocpol and Fiorina 2004). Civic actions are important in the overall participatory climate of a democracy. As Jenkins et al (2003, 2) argue, "work in the civic world provides training in skills critical for helping an individual navigate in the political world."

The focus of this paper was on norms of citizenship and participation, with particular emphasis on the impact of age on the commitment to different images of the good citizen. By and large, the ways in which people think of themselves as good citizens is important from the point of view of the relationship between values and attitudes on the one hand and manifest civic and political behaviors on the other hand. Young people's imagery on good citizenship is all the more relevant as it may offer a glimpse into the future outlook of civic and political involvement.

On data collected from Romanian respondents, age was found to be negatively associated with the scope of participation, membership and volunteering, suggesting that as people grow older, they are slightly less inclined to be engaged in multiple forms of civic and political participation. At the same time, the youngest group of the population (18-35) is, for the most part, exceeded by the successive age category (36-50) in terms of percentage of those who recently took part in specific forms of participation. The notable exception, where the younger respondents proved to be more active is that of abstaining from voting. This finding is in line with life-cycle approaches that expect participation to be linked to having more resources and more experience in the realm of public affairs. Young people are similar to the general population in that they perceive voting in elections as the most effective means to influence public decisions. The youngest of the respondents (18-35) do differ in that they value to a higher extent being active in NGOs, as an effective means to influence public decisions.

Regarding citizenship norms, the analysis of data revealed two distinct components, labelled as proactive and traditional citizenship respectively. As anticipated, on the basis of previous relevant studies, it is rather the young who are more attached to the norms of proactive citizenship (most strongly related to organizing campaigns and causes to support a cause, writing petitions and protesting against unjust facts in the local communities). This finding is consistent with approaches that emphasize the generational effects, translated in a shift of preferences towards unconventional forms of participation, some of which may be of contentious kind. However, as further analyses suggest, age is a much weaker predictor than the actual habits of participation and the attitudinal backgrounds of individuals. In fact, in the suggested models, the commitment to both types of citizenship is best predicted by *attitudinal factors*, specifically the perceived efficacy of unconventional/conventional forms of participation. From the point of view of social learning, the

analyses in this paper underline the importance of political socialization. What people learn to be effective in influencing the public decisions may meaningfully shape their ideas about citizenship and, accordingly, about what is expected from them as members of communities and of society.

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