

Reviews. Reports

Recenzje. Sprawozdania

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Review of: Maria Marczevska-Rytko, Dorota Maj (eds.),
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The publication *Political Participation*, prepared by the editorial duo – Professor Maria Marczevska-Rytko and Doctor Dorota Maj – was launched to readers in 2020. It is the result of a scientific conference entitled “Political Participation in the Modern World”, organized by the Department of Political Movements (now Department of Political Movements and Ethnic Research), which took place on May 8–9, 2019 at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism (UMCS). The above event gathered over 50 scientific researchers from many Polish academic centers who attempted to answer the question about the meaning, role and place of political participation in Poland and in the world by diagnosing its conditions, concepts, potential directions and new forms, also experiences related to it and the image of political participation in the media space.

Political participation is an inherent feature of democracy, and the understanding of the mechanisms of participation becomes the basis for understanding contemporary democracy – as we can find in the introduction to the publication. One should agree with this statement, taking into account that in line with the challenges of the modern world, broadly understood civic participation is the basis for the construction and development of a modern civic state. It determines the shape of the relationship between society and the authorities, local governments, social and non-governmental institutions, social movements, churches and other subjects of social and political life. Research conducted for over more than decades indicates that political participation

is a multidimensional process that includes numerous forms of involvement that go beyond formal legal procedures. In the introduction opening the volume, the editors analyzed the scientific involvement of citizens in decision-making processes, referring to the approaches to political participation proposed by Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie, Lester W. Milbrath, Henry Brady and to five modules of political participation distinguished by Jan Teorell, Mariano Torcal and José Ramón Montero – voting, party activity, contacting, consumer participation, protest activity. Indicating the presented definitions and modules of participation, the Editors explain the difference between civic participation and political participation based on the classification developed by Joakim Ekman and Erik Amnå.

The publication was created as a result of the cooperation of the Authors of the articles on comprehensive research experiences related to the issues of political participation, which translated into such an ambitious goal of the publication as the assessment of experiences related to political participation, as well as the diagnosis of its potential development opportunities in the contemporary world and in Poland.

The structure of the book is compact, clear and logical. The publication takes the reader on a cognitive journey through three parts. The first one provides knowledge about the theory and concept of political participation, the second one introduces selected examples of political participation in the contemporary world, and the third one presents the issues of political participation in Poland.

PART I: THEORIES AND CONCEPTS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The first part, called *Theories and Concepts of Political Participation*, consists of nine scientific articles. The authors' considerations focus on using new technologies and the possibilities of social media to manipulate public debate, the role of social media in the context of citizen and political participation, as well as the main obstacles to the creation of social capital by social media.

The chapter opens with articles by Leszek Porębski, Adrian Madej and Zuzanna Halina Sielska, whose considerations focus on the issue of using the specific possibilities of new technologies and the abilities of social media in the public debate. The authors emphasize that the weakened criticism of information becomes one of the main sources of reducing the rationality of political decisions, including election decisions. Political participation is dominated by emotions, very often negative ones. The intensive process of technicization of decision-making and the growing political homogenization lead to the exclusion of those social groups which do not feel represented by any political representatives or authorities. Participation in creating, reviewing and retweeting political information on social media is perceived as being politically involved in the cybersociety. Information and communication technologies (ICT), such as the Internet and social media, have redefined the concepts of society, state and democracy.

Considerations of Piotr Kimla, Anna Citkowska-Kimla and Adam Kądziała show the evolution, as a result of which citizens' participation has become a dogma of contemporary thinking about democracy. At the same time, it seems justified to point to the dangers of uncritical approach to the citizens' participation in political decisions. Looking at the process of voters' activation, the role of pro-turnout campaigns was emphasized (apart from legal and institutional solutions). The aim of these campaigns is to encourage people entitled to vote to take part in elections, and to provide information on the place, time and manner of voting. Among the institutions facilitating electoral participation, we can also find a two-day vote, postal voting, remote voting with the use of the Internet, i.e. i-voting, and controversial but undoubtedly contributing to the increase in voter turnout, the so-called compulsory voting.

In the first part, readers can also acquire the knowledge about the concepts of political participation provided in papal teaching – Benedict XVI and John Paul II, as part of the articles contributed by Janusz Węgrzecki and Sylwia Góra.

PART II: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD – SELECTED EXAMPLES

In the second part of the book, *Political Participation in the Contemporary World – Selected Examples*, ten authors consider the specificity of citizens' political activity in the political systems of various parts of the world, from Latin America to the European continent, in particular in the Scandinavian and Baltic countries, the Federal Republic of Germany, Scotland, Romania and in Ukraine.

Marta Kania presented one of the most important instruments of contemporary participation policy in Latin America, i.e. the right to prior consultation (in Spanish *consulta previa*). The right to prior consultation, participation, and free and informed consent is intended to ensure that indigenous peoples participate in all processes in which the state makes decisions that may affect their quality of life, development, and biological and cultural integrity.

The next articles concern political participation in the EU countries. Elżbieta Kuźelewska discussed the elections of representatives to the European Parliament and the referendum as a form of political participation in the EU, showing that the possibility of direct election is a phenomenon on a global scale. No plenary body of any international organization is elected in general election. Andrzej Kubka presented the specificity of perceiving political participation in the Scandinavian countries and explained the persistence of this relatively high level of political participation of citizens. The Author attempts to recognize this phenomenon on the basis of the typology of political mobilization factors well-established in Scandinavia. In particular, he pays attention to the structural and institutional factors.

Martin Wycisk presents the results of research on the activity of youth organizations in the Federal Republic of Germany as one of the forms of political participation,

by comparing the number of followers of German youth organizations' profiles in social media – Facebook and Twitter – and research on the presence of active or former members of German party youth in the narrowest party's decision-making circles. Reading Bernadetta Nitschke-Szram's article, the reader explores the genesis and evolution of East German civic movements and their impact on the pluralisation of the former GDR's party system. Marcin Pomarański looks for the answer to the question about the nature and goals of separatist movements' political participation in the 21st century and briefly characterizes contemporary Scottish separatism. Dorota Maj draws the reader's attention to political participation in the Baltic region – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, analyzing three institutions of political participation: parliamentary elections, presidential elections and elections to the European Parliament. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have a long tradition in terms of the institution of formal political participation, the main principles of which were formed in the interwar period and then during the functioning of the communist system. Małgorzata Podolak analyzes the 2018 referendum vote in Romania, the subject of which was "defense of the family". She makes the statement that countries of Central and Eastern Europe do not yet deal with the so-called civil society, which manifests itself in low voter turnout.

The last article by Rafał Kęsek leads the reader to Ukraine, which is not a member of the European community. The author describes the current situation of internally displaced people in Ukraine, and analyzes both formal and political factors conditioning the restriction of electoral rights and determining the scope of political participation of people with the IDP (internally displaced person) status.

PART III: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN CONTEMPORARY POLAND – SELECTED EXAMPLES

Readers discover the experience of political participation in Poland, both in a formal and practical dimension, in thirteen articles in the third part entitled *Political Participation in Contemporary Poland – Selected Examples*. The authors present the results of research conducted in the field of political science on the institutions of political participation in Poland, social expectations towards the political elite, especially in the context of the political activity and passivity of the young generation of Poles.

What is of importance for the development of participation are issues related to social awareness of engaging in decision-making processes, but also the development of technology, which we observe today. The emergence of new information and communication tools, supporting citizens in their daily functioning, is the next stage in the development of active cooperation of various social groups in public space. Progressing digitization brings facilities that increase, *inter alia*, the possibilities of communication among the society, as well as communication at the level of authority – citizens.

Marta Seredyńska considers whether e-participation in Poland is a challenge or an improvement. Marcin Rachwał presents to the reader the functioning of conventional political participation in Poland at the national level on the basis of such institutions as elections, referendums, and people's initiative. From the beginning of the fundamental stage of the systemic transformation, i.e. from 1989, a low level of political participation of Polish citizens has been noticeable. Elections and referenda turnout is one of the lowest among European countries. In order to find out about social expectations for the institution of political participation, the electorate's perceptions of democracy and electoral teams, voters' characteristics, as well as the legal and systemic restrictions on citizens' participation in political participation, one should read the articles by Paweł Skorut and Agnieszka Zaręba. The 2019 elections to the European Parliament also did not enjoy a high turnout, despite high support for the European Union. The analysis of the changes that took place in relation to the previous elections to the European Parliament in 2004, 2009 and 2014 was undertaken by Maria Marczevska-Rytka. The author used two models: Second-Order Election (SOE) and Europe Salience (ES).

Traditional forms of political participation largely determine the shape, condition and the future of democracy and the security of the state, which should be excluded from political disputes and become the subject of a cross-party agreement. It should be taken into account the young generation aspiring to subjective participation, which is often characterized by a crisis of the sense of duty towards the community. The mechanisms of passivity and the conditions for the participation of the young generation from the perspective of Polish experiences are presented by Robert Zapart. The examples of active manifestations of political participation, especially among young people, seem to be a counterbalance to passivity. Arkadiusz Suszek discusses the protests in defense of the judiciary that took place in Poland in July 2017, and the extent to which they influenced political decisions of a systemic nature. Jan Ryszard Sielezin talks about the scale, message and organizational activity of the Silesian Autonomy Movement and the Committee for Democracy's Defense. Kamila Oktawia Piskorz presents the results of research on the manifestations of political activity undertaken by adult students of Lublin high schools. Krystyna Gomółka and Izabela Borucińska show civic participation of young people in the opinion of institutions in Polish communes: Elbląg, Gdynia, Dzierżoń, Iława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie on the example of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project.

The important voice in political decision-making and work on legal acts' draft (through public consultations) is one of the entities that are often overlooked in analyzes, i.e. the business sphere. The article written by Mateusz Nowak prompts a deeper reflection on taking into account the citizens' opinions on changes in legislation. This issue is discussed by Wojciech Mincewicz on the example of the institution of public hearing in Poland, which is associated with a multitude of normative solutions, which makes the institution itself difficult to read for the average citizen. It is worth emphasizing that Poland is one of the few countries where public hearing

regulations are included in the Act (usually this issue is regulated by acts of a lower level). The Church also plays the important role as an actor on the social and political scene. The image of the Church as a political actor is the result of media studies and political science analyzes in this area, as well as analyzes of official messages from the church institution, in particular documents and messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference (KEP) and representative statements of the hierarchs. In the article closing the last part of the book, Rafał Leśniczak systematizes the research work to date on the image of the hierarchical Church in the face of political changes in Poland over the 30-year period.

SUMMARY

In all articles composing the publication, the Authors deal with the current issues from the point of view of the civil society's development. After reading the book, the reader will be enriched with knowledge about many aspects of political participation. For those who wish to discover the secrets of this issue, the Editors have prepared an extensive bibliography and a personal index to facilitate the search. It should be emphasized the high quality of the editorial and publishing side as well as the perfect fit of the publication into the current of research conducted in accordance with the methodology of political science within social sciences. To summarise the review, it should be stated that the publication edited by Dorota Maj and Maria Marczevska-Rytko is an important item in the scientific bibliography and contributes to the development of political science. The publication also has a didactic value for academic teachers and students interested in the subject of political participation, direct and electronic democracy.