

Editorial

There is no such thing as a little democracy.

Uki Maroshek-Klarman

“A nation is democratic to the extent that its citizens are involved,” as Roger Hart, one of the leading figures in the field of social participation of children, emphasizes. Therefore, the participation of all groups in social life, without discrimination or exclusion, appears to be an important if not the basic measure of democracy. However, it requires opportunities created by the external system on the one hand, as well as, on the other hand, social involvement on the part of individuals and groups who feel the need to influence the surrounding reality and the conditions of their functioning, who voice their opinions and assessments, and who create solutions concerning their own as well as social problems – in other words, take matters in their own hands.

The issue of participation in social life has always been a key concern of social sciences. It is a constantly topical issue, accompanying social reflection since antiquity, when man began to be considered a social being; therefore, in the present volume of “Pedagogika Społeczna” [Social Pedagogy], the topic of social participation returns like a boomerang, surrounded by its inseparable companions – the categories of citizenship and democracy. All of them are today, in the light of current phenomena and social events, as well as trends occurring around the world, be that Europe or Poland, concepts of particular semantic and social sensitivity. All of them are the content of social and political appeals and calls in the face of the criticism of their current image and level.

The topics of democracy, citizenship, and participation are addressed by social sciences and humanities as the context of the lives of individuals and

groups; however, above all, they are recognized as the values and principles of social life. In this light they are viewed also by social pedagogy – as the context of the functioning and as values whose actualization in individual and social life is desirable and even necessary. Besides, this actualization is treated by social pedagogy as the fulfillment of its mission, as a contemporary imperative of action and transformation of social reality... in the name of the ideal, as Helena Radlińska would say – the ideal that civil society is.

These categories of citizenship, participation, and democracy are addressed both in the form of theoretical reflections, and with practical and behavioral orientation, presenting the ways and possibilities of their actualization or development in social life. It is in this spirit of theoretical and practical duality, or actually “multiplicity” of the perspectives of discourse that we are offering this volume to the Readers. On the one hand, it contains articles firmly embedded in theoretical discourse on citizenship, democracy, and participation (by Ewa Bielska, Uki Maroshek-Klarman); on the other hand, there are also pedagogical appeals on the issues of the development of democracy and active citizenship and participation of young people (by Tadeusz Pilch or Jonathan Levy), as well as reflections on the development of the participation of young people leading to social involvement or improved civic competences (by Ewa Jarosz, Eliška Urbanowa, and Kamila Słupska). Another group of articles (by Dagmara Dobosz, Marcin Gierczyk, Ewa Jarosz, Bohdan Skrzypczak, and Jola Muszyńska) reveal also interesting methodological and research dimensions of the categories of participation, identity, and civic and communal activity.

Democratic society is based on the common understanding that everyone has an equal right to freedom. The aim of democratic principles and institutions is for the law to be reflected in reality, in social practice. However, the principles of democracy – participation in the decision-making process, equality before the law, the validity of the constitution, freedom of speech, expression of views – as such do not guarantee the right to equality and participation to all citizens. Institutions appointed to act for democracy often fail to comply with or understand these principles; this is when distortions that have little to do with democracy occur – these appear especially if the citizens neither fully understand nor call for their right to freedom, as well as do not use their civil rights. Therefore, discourse on democracy and education for democracy are of essential or even fundamental importance in a democratic country, protecting from abuse, discrimination, and exclusion.

Ewa Jarosz