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Values of Good, Truth, and Love in Participatory Budgeting in Poland¹

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Abstract: Literature suggests that government instruments, rooted in the traditional modernist representative democracy, do not effectively protect the common good due to the moral hazard problem, and as a solution, it proposes citizen participation. However, just like over the last century public administration experienced a smooth and almost invisible passage from modernist instruments – informed by Aristotle – to postmodernist ones with a Marxist background, participative governance serves to replace the universal values of Latin (Western) civilisation by the ideas of neo-Marxist new ethics. This is the case of participatory budgeting that cannot effectively enhance financial accountability for the protection of the common good because it infringes on the value of truth. What is worse, by “*the liberation from freedom*” that it proposes is detrimental to the common good. The solution seems to lie in philosophy, that is the love of wisdom, and in true love.

Keywords: participatory budgeting, axiology, Poland, public values, local government

1. INTRODUCTION

Whereas objective truth is the highest value of methodology, the serious threat to discovering the truth about public administration lies in ignoring its philosophical grounds.² This is because the philosophy is inseparable from the ethics, rooted in antiquity,³ and from the axiology.⁴ Even if values and ideas are invisible at first glance,

they penetrate public administration. “There is no more important topic in public administration and policy than public values”⁵ because “what is essential is invisible to the eye”.⁶ As history demonstrates, “a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism”.⁷ Democracy retains its substantive meaning as long as it ensures citizens’ participation in making political choices and it guarantees them the possibility to hold those who govern accountable. Thus a true democracy cannot encourage the formation of narrow ruling groups usurping the power for their interests or ideological ends, it needs to respect the correct notion of a human being instead. Bypassing natural law and legitimised decision-making bodies, the democratically elected German parliament gave Adolf Hitler the plenary power enabling him to invade Europe and exterminate millions of human beings.⁸

Public values determine the true aim of all instruments of public administration, whereas legal norms are only a technical tool of its implementation. Ignoring the philosophical grounds of governance instruments covers the postmodernist dangers of the participative reinvention movement that “have overwhelmed the rational-consistent-enlightenment or modern aspect”⁹ because the ethical grounds “are not mainstream public administration, nor even political science.

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But neither of those traditions can explain the demise of the *demos*”, where *demos* means “the fear or expectation of political philosophers from Aristotle to John Adams, and Madison to Marx, that the underprivileged in a democracy would use their political power to balance, if not confiscate and redistribute, the wealth of the few”.¹⁰ The smooth passage from the modernist values of government informed by Aristotle to the postmodernist ideas of governance with a Marxist background has profoundly modified public administration, even if apparently nothing has changed.

On the one hand, as Aristotle (384-322 BC) was in search of absolutely fair public administration protecting the *common good* almost 2,500 years ago,¹¹ scholars and practitioners are also currently in search of *common decency*, requiring a revisit of public values.¹² In Aristotle’s concept, humans are happy when they protect common interests because they follow their nature and they respect the natural law that is independent of, and existed before, the positive law adopted by authorised state bodies.¹³ Democracy has its justification in the vision of a man capable of taking independent decisions on ethical issues, being responsible for the community’s common good, and therefore having the right to participate in the exercise of power.¹⁴ These Greek philosophical grounds are consistent with the Christian ethics coming from God, the Creator of the world, love, and thus absolutely respecting humans’ free will. Humans’ freedom stems from their supernatural and inalienable dignity, enabling them to search the truth and to turn towards the good. It serves their self-development, as humans are responsible for their fate and the world. To protect the common good, Christian ethics invariably have four postulates: life-long monogamous marriage, pressure for the abolition of slavery, the abolition of revenge which is entrusted to a public judicatory, and the Church’s independence of the State.¹⁵ As natural law requires legal protection, the ancient Romans, from 449 BC to AD 529, developed Roman law, being the first extensive, written order of positive law. Roman lawyers believed that only law consistent with a universal sense of justice can be socially accepted and thus effective. These

three pillars, i.e. Greek philosophy, Christian ethics and Roman law, opened the floodgates of Latin (Western) civilisation, originating in Europe then transferred to the Americas and Australia.¹⁶ Latin civilisation distinguished itself with an unusual intensity of activities, innovations as well as economic and demographic growth. It resulted in an extension of civil liberties and the development of political systems based on rule of law and protection of the common good.¹⁷ The values of Latin civilisation have become the cradle of modern democracy and modern public administration, leading Europe and the United States to the top of power.

On the other hand, philosophical currents seek to annihilate Latin civilisation, to replace universal values with new ideas, to reinvent the notion of the common good. This movement started with German philosophers and communists, Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), and their critical theories about society, economics and politics holding that human societies develop through class conflict. They negated the existence of the omnipresent, the unchangeable, thus an absolute God having a spiritual nature who, after the original sin, seeks reconciliation with human beings, having a spiritual nature as well. Instead, they introduced the notion of matter, having a dialectical nature, thus changeable in the process of evolution, seeking reconciliation with itself, to achieve self-awareness and spirituality. The problem is that they were not able to define the matter, the crucial term for the theoretical cohesion. As for the Marxists, the Absolute does not exist so His universal values cannot exist.¹⁸ Not recognising the need for a connection between law and morality, they deny the concept of natural law, adopting legal positivism as a pillar of the legal doctrine regulating public administration.¹⁹

In Central and Eastern Europe, the classic Marxists, starting from a Russian politician, Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924), tried to destroy the economic system believing it would trigger the desired changes in culture²⁰ and the annihilation of the values of Latin civilisation.²¹ Using the pretext of protesting against the exploitation of capitalism,

they strove for a total criticism of law, morality and religion.²² One of the consequences is that “the totalitarian regime instilled an understanding in people that public property is nobody’s and ‘to take your share’ is not immoral”.²³ Hence, in Poland, under Soviet influence from World War II to 1989, Marxism was built mainly by methods of economic upheaval and open fights with the Catholic Church. These attempts proved ineffective as Poles were attached to traditional Christian values.²⁴ The persecution of the Church behind the Iron Curtain only increased Catholic anti-communism, supported by the Vatican and the United States.²⁵ Also, the culture, children’s upbringing, and education encouraging self-development and rational thinking contributed to the failure of the Marxist revolution.²⁶

In Western Europe, the communists’ attempts to take the political power by military force failed, initially as a result of World War I (1914–1918), and ultimately the Polish-Soviet War in 1920. Then the Western Marxists, in particular A. Gramsci and G. Lukacs, understood that the only effective option for the Marxist revolution is to start it directly from the annihilation of Christian values, the reconstruction of culture, the changes in human consciousness.²⁷ Hence, in 1924 within the University in Frankfurt am Main they established the Social Research Institute. Its leading representatives emigrated to the United States when Hitler came to power. Here they created the critical theory – being the philosophical grounds of postmodernism²⁸ – of cultural Marxism, called also neo-Marxism or the new-left, and its new, global ethics.²⁹ Paradoxically, for a century, the Iron Curtain of the Berlin Wall protected Poland from cultural Marxism, being much more effective in destroying the values of Latin civilisation than classical Marxism. Thus, even if the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 marked the end of the division between East and West, it was not “the end of the ideology”³⁰ but rather “*the liberation from freedom*”,³¹ or even “the end of history”, brought about by liberal democracy and the market economy.³² The effectiveness of neo-Marxism in modifying the way people think is based on a method developed by a Chinese general and philosopher S. Tzu (544–496

B.C.), who found that “fighting on a battlefield is the most primitive way of making war. There is no art higher than to destroy your enemy without a fight – by subverting anything of value in the enemy’s country”.³³ A political victory requires the consistent destruction of the values of a country until the attacked society no longer considers the enemy as the enemy any more, and fully accepts the new axiological system, civilisation and aspirations. In this way, the neo-Marxist ideology has been implemented all over the world in four stages of subversion, i.e. demoralisation, destabilisation, crisis, and normalisation,³⁴ as the former agent of the Soviet secret police force described it in his *Love Letter to America*. Since 1989, public administration in Poland has been under the influence of postmodernism, the same as other countries once forming the Latin civilisation. As a consequence, Europe is post-Christian, except for Poland that still appears as a country having the social and cultural foundations sufficient to prevent the final collapse of Western civilisation,³⁵ similarly to the United States, where there is still place for religion.³⁶

Starting from the philosophical passage within public administration from Aristotle to Marx, the article discusses the postmodernist new ethics of participation in the theory of governance and the practice of participatory budgeting (PB) in Poland.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: NEW ETHICS OF FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN PARTICIPATION

In the Polish context, the first article of the Constitution of 2 April 1997 states that the Republic of Poland is the common good of all citizens. Protecting this constitutional value requires the financial policy, understood as the conscious and intentional activity of persons and institutions involved in setting and implementing specific goals through financial means and specific actions.³⁷

Thus, public financial funds and their appropriate spending serve to protect the common good (Polish Constitutional Court, SK 36/07, III.4), requiring coordinated, reasonable politics.³⁸

The people's rules, in the classical form, consist of electing citizens' representatives to make public decisions. However, a problem arises as citizens' participation is mainly limited to voting. Using de Tocqueville's (2010) words, "each individual endures being bound, because he sees that it is not a man or a class, but the people itself that holds the end of the chain. In this system, the citizens emerge for a moment from dependency in order to indicate their master, and return to it". The illusory contacts between citizens and politicians, the separation of ownership and control, result in the principal-agent problem.³⁹ The politicians chosen by the citizens do not always protect the common good because they realise their private interests, e.g. keeping power or obtaining financial benefits, thus the principal's moral hazard problem appears.⁴⁰ As a consequence, infringements on the universal values of honesty and decency result in an ineffective result of vertical accountability of politicians for the protection of the common good. To resolve these deficits of axiological democracy, S. Arnstein (1969) proposes the participation of "the governed in their government", arguing that citizens climbing the eight ladder rungs of participation can gain control over public decisions. B. Damgaard and J. M. Lewis (2014) proposed using Arnstein's steps to build five levels of participation in accountability that increase citizens' awareness and control. Leading to joint ownership would overcome the moral hazard problem. The participation is the core of multi-stakeholder governance.⁴¹ However, shaping accountability for the protection of the common good via instruments of governance requires respect for the universal value of truth, since if the latter is infringed, the participants stay on the first rung of participation in accountability ladders, i.e. manipulation.⁴²

The analysis of the philosophical and axiological grounds of governance, having a postmodernist nature,⁴³ entitles us to assume that its instru-

ments infringe on the value of truth. This is because the governance is rooted in critical theory,⁴⁴ the theory of permanent negation of existing culture and fundamental values, total destruction being its main goal.⁴⁵ It is a "practical philosophy" incorporating accidental sub-theories, without any program, not subject to any verification.⁴⁶ Interestingly, the authors of the "Dialectic of Enlightenment",⁴⁷ an ideological pillar of critical theory, have rewritten – actually faked – its original content because they deleted all the fragments and terms that could even suggest a relation with Marxist ideology, e.g. they replaced the term "revolution" with "democracy".⁴⁸ The critical theory starts from Marxism, considering a human being as an unreasonable, thoughtless creature, as having nothing spiritual. Only the matter can achieve spirituality, provided that the lower level of matter will be destroyed in the process of evolutionary advance.⁴⁹ Hence, the individuals themselves should strive for self-destruction, and hence T. Adorno tried to convince that the source of all evil, especially of fascism and racism, is a loving, Christian, patriotic and pro-capitalist family.⁵⁰

The neo-Marxism reasoning of dialectical materialism uses governance to implement the new ethics claiming that nothing has an absolute, unchangeable nature, "the truth and the reality have no stable and objective content – that in fact, they do not exist".⁵¹ Negating the existence of the universal values of objective truth and good, cultural Marxists also negate the existence of humans' free will and their right to choose between good or evil. They claim that individuals' good can be realised without reference to their responsibility which they exercise in the face of good or evil.⁵² They replaced the universal values with apparent freedom, implying the obligation to be tolerant of any kind of world view, denying, in reality, the right to be intolerant to attitudes that, even subjectively, are wrong.⁵³ This is "the dictatorship of relativism that does not recognise anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one's own ego and desires".⁵⁴ Plato already noticed that some values should be constant in a democracy.⁵⁵ Otherwise, what would be the con-

sequences of voting for the correctness of medical diagnoses, the interpretation of history, or the legalisation of morally negative actions, e.g. theft?⁵⁶ The problem becomes more serious when a narrow group of people appropriates the right to decide about it, or even about the person who should become a mayor or a president. After all, would it still be a democracy?

As the aim of destroying the values of Western civilisation is impossible to achieve by the will of the well-educated, rationally thinking majority expressed by representative democracy instruments, the principle of partnership displaces the principle of democratic representation. To implement its ideas, the new ethics – bypassing legitimate authorities – transfers power to the representatives of civil society and the experts of international organisations.⁵⁷ “Participatory democracy and good governance are not integrated into a representative democracy. Treated as its complements, they run in parallel, uncontrolled by traditional processes”.⁵⁸ This is the reason why “deepening legitimation deficits of representative government create opportunities for legitimacy-enhancing forms of citizen participation, but so far, the effect of participation on legitimacy is unclear”.⁵⁹ Postmodernist new ethics treat the participants of governance as instruments, as tools to implement its ideas aimed at global revolution and destruction;⁶⁰ afterwards, they can be physically, psychically and spiritually destroyed. This is probably one of the reasons why, using an emotional tone but with reasonable concern for the future of public administration, Ch. Fox (1996) calls for profound and practical philosophical reflection.

PB, originating from the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, implemented there by the left-wing Working Party, is the most widespread instrument of governance in the world based on participation in deciding on financial matters. B. Wampler (2008) defines PB as a year-long decision-making process through which residents negotiate among themselves and with civil servants in organised meetings and then vote over the allocation of local spending. The decisions taken in such a way

are generally incorporated into the city’s budgets. The literature suggests that PB can imply the emergence of a new form of financial accountability, cutting across vertical, horizontal and societal accountability, each associated with three types of budgetary control – administrative, legislative and societal.⁶¹ In reality, no country seems to have all of them in place.⁶² Moreover, “while PB does offer new opportunities for participation and decision-making, it continues to bear the risk that authority will be concentrated in the mayor’s office, which has the potential to undercut efforts to establish a system of checks and balances”.⁶³

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: RESEARCH QUESTION, METHODS, AND HYPOTHESIS

As it follows from the theoretical framework, scholars try to find evidence that governance can be effective in shaping financial accountability. What would be the consequences of finding evidence that PB, the most commonly used governance instrument of financial policy, is a sort of inferior “do-it-yourself” tool, detrimental to the common good, being the central value of democracy in its substantive meaning? Thinking positively, it would a great opportunity for public administration scholars and practitioners to think together about the mechanisms protecting democracy against itself.

The research covers PB of three Polish cities. Poland is a country where PB has quantitatively developed on the widest scale among all European countries⁶⁴ and has the least undermined axiological foundations of Latin civilisation of all European countries,⁶⁵ thus Poles, attached to these values, are supposed to be sensitive to their infringements. In Poland, three different PB models have evolved, each case represents one of them (cf. table 1) and has the longest experience within each model.

Table 1. Characteristic of PB in three Polish cities

City	Sopot	Dąbrowa Górnicza	Gdańsk
PB model	Plebiscite PB model	Deliberative PB model	Citizens' panel PB model
PB edition analysed in the research	2020	2020	2017, the last one took place then
Population in 2020	36,046	120,259	466,631
Local government position according to population in 2020	147	30	6
Year of first PB	2011	2015	2016
Foreign PB prototype	Does not exist	Brazilian	Australian/Irish
Essential stages of PB model	Residents submit PB proposal in writing. Civil servants make a preliminary verification of the proposal. Residents choose the PB projects without discussion, by voting	Residents and civil servants prepare a needs diagnosis of 35 city districts. Residents submit the proposal in writing, next they choose PB projects at district discussion forums	Mayor proposes the panel's topic. A representative group of residents listens to the speeches of experts invited by the organisers, they discuss and propose the final recommendations
Percentage of city budget allocated to PB	1%	0.7%	The amount was not determined in advance, impossible to calculate <i>a posteriori</i>
Minimum age for participation in PB	16 years	no age restriction	18 years
PP participants	4,844 residents, willing to vote	784 residents, willing to take part in discussion meeting	56 residents, selected in a representative manner, took part in the citizens' panels
Number of selected projects/recommendations	17 projects	107 projects	49 recommendations
Examples of PB projects/recommendations	Astronomical observatory, playgrounds, medical ambulance, plants and flowers, city defibrillators, devices for recycling plastic bottles, ski routes in municipal forests	Pavements and road renovations, parking, playgrounds, lightening, planting plants and flowers, books for libraries	Anti-discrimination training based on gender and sexual orientation in schools and offices of public administration, municipal website for submitting citizens' petitions

Source: author's own research and editing

In terms of the methods, desk research (i.e. the literature review, the central and local PB legal regulations, the municipal websites, the radio broadcasts on the right and left of the political spectrum) preceded the semi-structured interviews. To get as near to the full picture of PB reality as possible,

the research results originate from three principal PB groups of actors, i.e. civil servants, municipal councillors, and residents participating in PB, from each analysed city. Nine interviews in total, lasting between 1 and 2 hours, were conducted. Their transcript numbers 80,000 words.

The research aims to verify the following hypothesis: *PB, being the instrument of postmodernist governance, cannot effectively enhance financial accountability for the protection of the common good because it infringes on the value of truth.* This general hypothesis is verified via three specific hypotheses, each of them corresponding to one PB model.

4. RESULTS: LACK OF FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PROTECTION OF THE COMMON GOOD IN THREE PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING MODELS IN POLAND

H₁: The plebiscite PB model cannot effectively enhance financial accountability for the protection of the common good because it infringes on the value of truth

The story of PB in Poland starts in Sopot, the smallest of three major cities forming the metropolitan area of Tricity, located in a row on the coast of the Baltic Sea. The city mayor accepted the PB idea, introduced by a scholar in political science, but he implemented it in a form unknown elsewhere before. Due to the lack of any form of discussion (cf. table), it resembles the vote in the Eurovision Song Contest... serving to implement an accidental set of projects. What is worse, the fact of the residents voting on PB projects, costing 1% of the city budget, does not influence the remaining 99% of public expenditure. Simultaneously, PB has become an instrument helping to ignore the needs of residents, as when they come to the city hall and ask the civil servants to implement a public task, e.g. renovate a pavement, they hear there is not enough money in this year's city budget, but they can submit a PB project instead.

An analysis of the PB projects proves that residents often do not have a proper moral attitude

to co-decide. Submitting their projects and voting, they try to find the answer to the question "How can I benefit from the PB?". It results in the financing of playgrounds or specialised sports activities. Other PB projects, even if objectively beautiful, such as magnolia tree seedlings or rose bushes, are far from the top priorities of residents' needs. Some PB projects are even destructive for the essence of representative democracy, e.g. the mobile application that allows text messages to be sent to local councillors on how they should lean in every municipal vote.

The voting procedure has a highly informal character. Apart from the online voting, residents can put a downloaded ballot into one of the municipal boxes. Unfortunately, this results in a spectrum of unfair behaviour. The residents supporting a project – e.g. a car park next to the company where they work – rewarded those who "sold" their vote with a can of juice or a mug with a company logo. Moreover, some school principals organised a competition gathering as many ballots as possible from family members or strangers supporting a PB project important for the school, i.e. the playground. In such a "competition", the best classes won cinema tickets, or the best pupils got very good civic grades. Considering this, and the fact the attendance in Sopot is 16.5%, PB does not lead to representative decisions.

Even assuming that the residents had a moral attitude that could counterbalance the agents' moral hazard problem, this would not be sufficient to protect the common good as PB enables civil servants to oppose the residents' will by infringing on the value of truth. Firstly, at the preliminary verification stage of the PB projects, civil servants have the right to take into account not only the criteria of compliance with the law, spatial development and long-term plans, but also the principles of social coexistence. This very fuzzy concept enables projects to be eliminated that the mayor or a civil servant legally can, but personally do not want to, put to the residents' vote, e.g. installation of boards informing about air pollution levels. Secondly, doubts arise at the voting stage, as residents cannot verify if there has been an error

in the counting. Thirdly, at the preparation and implementation stages of the city budget, the residents do not have any legal guarantees their decisions are respected. Despite the existence of PB, the mayor still has the exclusive right and legal responsibility to develop the budget bill and to execute it, and the municipal councillors to vote on it.

H₂: The deliberative PB model cannot effectively enhance financial accountability for the protection of the common good because it infringes on the value of truth

Seeing the illusion of the participation of the plebiscite PB model, in 2015 the city of Dąbrowa Górnicza implemented the deliberative PB model. However, it is also ineffective in determining the truth about the common good because it does not eliminate the problems of the symbolic amount of PB funds and the lack of legal protection given to residents' will. The main difference between the two models lies in the way decisions are made (cf. table). However, replacing voting by discussion still does not guarantee the representativeness of the decisions, as the residents participating in the PB deliberative model do not constitute the representative group for their district. For example, in a district inhabited by 10,000 people, 20 residents willing to come decide about all the PB funds. Within such a group, determining the truth about the common good is impossible in practice for two reasons. Firstly, a significant number of residents – unwilling to take part in the discussion – just want to finance the projects meeting their interests, e.g. a shed for the rubbish bins next to the block of flats where they live. Even if most district forums end with a compromise, this is because the moderators insist on this too much. Secondly, the deliberative PB model does not offer mechanisms that provide protection from the overrepresentation of a group interested in realising a particular project. A social activist and a local councillor of a leftist party admitted in the interview: “I am not afraid to say this publicly. I won every vote because I found an effective method. At the time of the vote I take 5 days leave, and from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm I go around the district from door to door promoting my project, and I win every time. De-

spite my private local interest, I try to be a person responsible for the whole community as well...”.

H₃: The citizens' panels PB model cannot effectively enhance financial accountability for the protection of the common good because it infringes on the value of truth

Using the argument of resolving the problem of the unrepresentativeness of the two previous PB models, the city of Gdańsk introduced the citizens' panel PB model to discuss narrowly selected topics of the city's financial policy. Formally, this PB model comprises two stages, yet the first one, collecting the opinions of interested residents via email does not exist, since for three PBs only one resident sent their opinion. The PB thus consists of citizens' panels comprising a more or less representative group of residents in terms of age, sex, and education. Even if the recommendations are not legally binding, the mayor promised to realise those supported by at least 80% of the participants.

The last PB that took place (2017) concerned supporting civic activity and the equal treatment of women, men and LGBT people. This was the arbitrary choice of the mayor of Gdańsk and his closest collaborators, made without any social consultations. This topic implies the false assumption that the common good in Poland includes the fully legal and equal treatment of LGBT people. It became more evident when the panel's steering committee – comprising civil servants, scholar-social activists and local councillors – arbitrarily prevented the representative of the “Mummy and Daddy” foundation from delivering speeches to the panellists, arguing that the foundation published a report presenting the results of scientific research on the situation of children raised in LGBT relationships. Moreover, as the citizens' panels give PB participants the right to ask for expert opinions on any related topic to gain the necessary knowledge to decide, the residents asked for a presentation on the Church's point of view. As a result, the panel's steering committee arbitrarily chose a priest of the Methodological and Evangelical Church to talk about “the Christian perspective

on the issue of equal treatment of men and women and LGBT persons". The problem is that the Church represented by the speaker, according to official statistics, has 0.1% of believers in Poland, whereas the Roman Catholic Church has 91.9% of believers. The expert presented a one-sided perspective of the Methodological and Evangelical Church, where the women of LGBT orientation are ordained priests and bishops, unlike the Catholic Church, and avoided answering questions crucial for panellists regarding the Christian perspective on issues of LGBT persons.

Moreover, the panellists were not informed at all about the topic of the citizen's panel beforehand. Hence, some of them resigned just before the panel started, after seeing the topic on the contract regulating the remuneration for participating in the PB.

5. DISCUSSION: INSTRUMENTAL USES AND ETHICAL ABUSES

Although Arnstein's assumption that citizens' participation can be helpful in solving the moral hazard problem of a representative democracy, it requires a moral or at least a decent attitude from all of the governance participants. Otherwise, giving residents the right to co-decide on the allocation of public funds only implies a change in the group of people who try to pursue their private interest through public funds. The attempt to resolve the problem of representative democracy via governance, without solving the real source of the problem – with axiological roots – is like attempting to treat the plague with cholera, while simply antibiotics are needed. The attempts to remedy socialism's deficits with more socialism turned out to be ineffective – similarly, remedying democracy's deficits by implementing more democracy won't be effective if universal values are infringed. Democracy is a method that is neither good nor bad. Its effects are good if they lead to the protection of the common good. While participation is glorified as "hope", almost a "pearl" of democracy,⁶⁶ it is similar to something round,

rather "a bomb with a delayed timer". There are three reasons for this.

Firstly, the postmodernist PB uses residents as instruments to create the illusion of participation, leading, in fact, to "*liberation* from freedom". The residents feel obliged to appreciate the narrow forms of participation that enslaved them. In the case of the plebiscite and deliberative models, this is because PB funds, constituting 1% of the city's budget, provided civil servants with a pretext to stop fulfilling the true needs of residents. Civil servants try to convince that, even if the amount of PB funds is not impressive, they analyse all the residents' proposals, and this sometimes inspires the local authorities to finance certain tasks from the city budget, protecting the common good in this way. However, neither the extent of this impact nor the motivation for such expenditure is clear. In practice, the moral hazard can be even more serious than within the representative democracy because PB projects provide concrete information about citizens' unfulfilled financial needs. Its simple sociological analysis can be a source of precious information about the promises that are effective in gaining electoral support. In the case of the citizens' panel model, the residents – treated as instruments to support the claims of ideological minorities – gain the right to co-decide only within the narrowly defined topic, having false axiological assumptions about the notion of the common good. The residents want to be involved in governance because they believe that devoting their time they could do something good for their community, but they do not realise that they are a cog in a larger machine, and they did not receive the manual.

Secondly, the postmodernist PB uses the residents as instruments to limit the legitimate powers of public local authorities, both mayors and local councillors, and in this way to negate the fundamental value of the representative democracy, as the critical theory of permanent negation claims. The new ethics try to convince residents that they have the right to participate in the city's budget preparation process without bearing any legal responsibility or having political or moral accounta-

bility. This is because, despite the existence of PB, the mayor is still responsible before the financial control authorities and the courts for preparing and implementing a city budget, and the local councillors in turn for voting on it. As a result, the residents participating in PB operate within the budgetary competences of the representative democracy bodies, who are forced by participative pressure to take the responsibility and accountability for the residents' decisions. Who would be legally responsible or morally accountable if the local authorities accepted – under participative pressure – to allocate 20% of the city budget to PB, then the residents decided to spend all this money on flowers, and as a result there was not enough money to finance education or social care? The protection of the common good in the city's financial policy requires not only a decent moral attitude but also professional practical skills, based on knowledge. Acquiring it is time-consuming and requires painstaking intellectual work, while own weaknesses and laziness need to be overcome. The residents do not acquire the professional knowledge by reading leaflets, participating in educational or discussion meetings, and looking at colourful PowerPoint presentations. Despite this, the mayors and local councillors who do not support the ideas of new ethics feel moral pressure to implement PB, and are unable to successfully defend their point of view due to the expectancy of being politically correct. Mayors implement PB because they feel the citizens' pressure, enhanced by unaccountable social activists and inspired by unaccountable international organisations, having in their postmodernist "credo" the slogans of participation, equality, or even democracy, not rooted in the values of good and truth.

Thirdly, postmodernist PB uses residents as instruments to exact financing from the city budget, expenditure contrary to the values shared by society's majority. This is because the citizens' panels imply the arbitrariness of the topic choice and the experts, being the main source of professional knowledge for unprofessionally prepared residents. The governance does give some protection from such thinly disguised totalitarianism. The representative method of the panellists' selection,

emphasised as the advantage of the citizens' panel PB model, is only a cover for decisional arbitrariness. This is because the value of participation rooted in critical theory, assuming that everything is changeable, can negate any other value in the name of illusory freedom. Who will protect, once impenetrable, the boundaries of citizens' rights if the point of reference to natural law does not change? Who will protect women or LGBT persons when a group of social activists, forgetting that every human being has the inalienable dignity and the right to live, uses the citizens' panel to ask, for example, about the cheapest ways to kill women or LGBT persons? It sounds like a science fiction story, but citizens' panels at the national level in Ireland, 78% Catholic believers, astonishingly recommended the repeal of a constitutional prohibition on killing unborn children.⁶⁷ Accepting the philosophical grounds contrary to the pillars of Latin civilisation, there are no obstacles to asking via citizens' panels: "What are the humanitarian ways of killing people who do not belong to the Nordic, black or white race, who are over 50 years old, or... ill with the coronavirus?" *Déjà vu?* Unfortunately, yes... When those wanting to protect the groups destined to be exterminated, and who are not involved in the citizens' panel topic, are deprived of the right to talk, all that remains is to provide information, using appropriately selected experts, about methods of killing that do not cause pain... and via "democratic" governance, we will return to the darkest pages of world history, as S. Tzu (1963) wanted.

Polish literature suggests strengthening the moral motivation to take care of the common good of the entire human species, using the legal norms, as described by the psychological theory of law.⁶⁸ The lectures of its founder, the father of the sociology of law, L. Petrażycki (1867-1931), were of interest not only to students but also to professors. He postulated implementing the "politics of law", leading to doing good things by practical pan-human love.⁶⁹ No matter how weird it sounds, he treated the ideal of love set for legal provisions, regulating public administration instruments for example, as the final goal, whereas its achievement requires constant work on the content of the law.

Petrażycki's understanding of love is coherent with God's love in the Christian sense, described by the Latin term "Caritas". It means participation in God's perfect way of being, truly wanting the good of others, not expecting anything in return, absolutely respecting the human freedom to choose or reject what is good. In Christianity, love is not the sentimental feeling but the attitude of heart that requires sacrificing some part of yourself to another person, disposing of self-interested egocentrism. This is a case when a volunteer, not expecting anything in return, offers his time to take care of a hospice patient, and by so doing discourages him from demanding the right to be killed via euthanasia. Obviously, this love cannot result from the codes of ethics – ineffective in practice – proposed for politicians, civil servants, or citizens co-deciding on public things, but this morality is the exact opposite of the postmodernist new ethics placing "pleasure above love, health, and well-being above the sacredness of life (...), immanence above transcendence, a man above God, the *world* above *heaven*".⁷⁰

Love in a Christian sense requires respecting the inherent dignity of every individual life, no matter their gender, background or race. This is why the Catholic Church has always opposed slavery or the killing of malformed children, as accepted by Plato or Aristotle, who have not yet known God's love. Knowing, but forgetting, that the decision-making bodies in Hitler's Germany, Soviet Russia, and other communist regimes killed tens of millions of human lives in the 20th century in the name of building a new world of socialism, using the class struggle as the pretext, as in the words of Lenin, killing political opponents is natural because "you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs". In the 21st century, neo-Marxists continue the same axiological revolution, this time via "democratic" governance. They are currently using the pretext of the struggle of minorities, who are useful as instruments, at this particular time of evolution. Their ultimate destination – having nothing spiritual – is to be forgotten and

annihilated, in the euthanasia process for example, since, according to dialectical materialism, only the matter, whatever it is, selfishly seeking to reconcile with itself, has a chance to achieve spirituality.

6. CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS RESTORING THE SUBSTANTIVE ESSENCE OF DEMOCRACY – CAN WE STILL TAKE "THE TIME MACHINE"?

Returning to philosophy, a word originating from the Greek "love of wisdom", the article concludes that PB in Poland does not protect the universal values of good and truth, giving residents an apparent sense of agency instead, whereas the real but unaccountable decision-making centres progressively replace these universal values with detrimental ideas of new ethics. Hopefully, the practical philosophical analysis is the future of public administration, free of ideologies introduced deceptively. Scholars abuse the term "democracy" when they use it in the context of instruments serving to destroy its true essence, whereas "public administration must be a key factor in any effort to rediscover substantive democracy".⁷¹

Last but not least, the most viewed Polish TEDx (ideas worth spreading) speaker, J. Walkiewicz (2009) said that: "Professionalism is not a matter of coincidence. Passion leads to professionalism, professionalism results in quality, and quality is luxury in the contemporary world". Aligning this phrase with the content of the article, we can say that "professionalism in public administration is not a matter of coincidence. Public values lead to professionalism, professionalism results in quality, and quality is luxury in the contemporary world protecting the common good".

Notes

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