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DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF POPULIST CURRENT

Gabriela NEMȚOI[1]

Abstract

The phrase "deliberative democracy" is attributed to the author Joseph Bessett, who in the article Democracy the majority principle in republican government, published in 1980, argued about a new form of democracy in contradiction with classical democracy, about deliberative democracy as an authentic alternative to traditional forms. In this respect, it is admitted that the political decisions cannot be legitimized without an early negotiation dialogue [1: 1].

The rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe is a justification for the democratic crisis, a failure of representative politics after 1989. A negative effect of the populist current was also seen in Romania, Hungary or Poland. In this sense, applying a reorientation to a policy based on a deliberate democratic culture with populist influences was considered to be a solution that would justify the interference between populism and a deliberative democracy.

The participation in the vote of the citizens of Eastern Europe who initially see in the left parties the popular interest is radically changing in the present, towards the right parties that no longer identify with pure right principles. Furthermore, moving populism from the left foot to the right foot does not require sacrifice. In the end, it all comes down to changing symbols, changing vocabulary but within the same type of policy based on a common way of thinking both left and right. The distinction between the two is greatly minimized. The transitional period in which the executives put pressure on the law institutions and themselves with a rather weak identity, on the press, on the media, allowed a reassessment of the transient moments, the populist discourse having the capacity to capture democracy of a populist state [2:132]. *The diagnosis of the causes of the increase of populism was based on two major pillars, one being the failure of the national institutions located in the space of national constitutions and the second is the influence of the international institutions of the EU and of the Council of Europe that do not wish to sanction the fall towards populism* [3:219].

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I. INTRODUCTION

The formula of deliberative democracy lies above the democratic ideal that had been understood in terms of a multitude of voting and representation methods. The essence of democracy is reduced to a procedure of deliberation and negotiation and not to voting, aggregation of interests, constitutional rights and principles or self-government.

Deliberative democracy must be understood by approaching a long series of negotiations between the various political groups existing in the society, provisionally concluded by temporary vote only for a legislative cycle. What makes the democratic process in the deliberative model cynical and irrational is precisely the ideological appeal of the representatives of the groups that impose themselves through population discourses without having any constructive meaning for the people.

The prevailing idea regarding this phenomenon is based on the fact that the analysis of the rise of populism in Eastern Europe from a pathological point of view, is identified by outlining a democratic crisis that leads to the erosion of the rule of law, but also to the diminution of democratic guarantees.

The question that arises can be summed up by Jan-Werner Mueller's statement [4:72], "democracy as a whole should change", but what is the meaning of the new democracy?

In a broad view, we must accept the fact that there is a large gap between Western democracies that have developed over time and have strengthened under the aegis of alternative representative forms and constitutional democracies in Eastern Europe that have developed in the long run in a time compression in which the left ideologies have succeeded from time to time with the main right-wing alternates, both individualized by the populism of the leaders. Further to this phenomenon was added the accession to the European Union, in which radical populists are either in power or close to power. It has been shown that the populist movement space is amplified by the limits of contemporary democracy, the effects of

globalization, the crisis of parties and traditional forms of political participation, absenteeism or electoral volatility.

Due to the consolidation of the EU which has the power to manage through various commissions legal regulations for thousands of citizens, we can say that we are facing an inflationary democracy. The population no longer has that aggressive part of recognizing its availability regarding participatory representation.

Thus the classic reproach of arrogant and unrepresentative governance, in the service of specific interests, is the foundation of a challenge of populism in Europe.

The connection between the population and the political in order to access and develop representative democracy, in its (neo) liberal form, is null [5: 488-518].

And this fact is given by the absence of a clear alternative to the existing parties, whose rivalry camouflages the real agreement regarding the political directions. The differentiation of the left-wing right is no longer demonstrated by radical measures or diametrically opposed principles but by the ecstasy of the candidate's speech, the rhetoric or incisiveness of the attack on the other candidate. The involvement of citizens and the exploitation of decision-making is an adage given by the candidate's popularity and not by the measures [6], he would propose in order to advance a deliberative democracy.

We can see in this sense that if democracy in its classical conception represents the will of the people, populism as a social phenomenon is identified on its needs and problems.

In this regard, we emphasize that the exercises of micro-deliberation give citizens new competences in their capacity as decision-makers who participate in solving and applying viable measures that can often overcome the political impact [7], [8].

II. THE CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY IN THE POPULIST TURN

The populist liberal transformation in Eastern Europe was primarily due to the retreat of democracy within the post-communist states, the establishment of state institutions that exercise their powers quite timidly in the sense that they temper the constitutionalist excesses of the liberals quite hard, the existence of a weakly developed civil society in the sense that it has minimal participation in political life because it does not trust the democracy of the state institutions [9].

In this respect, we emphasize that in Eastern Europe the number of participants in the elections in the former communist states was small compared to the states with a long democracy in Western Europe, also joining a political party is an aspect that designates a vague participation of the population in political life. Another context that influenced the expansion of a populist democracy is represented by ethnic nationalism, which never left and which after the fall of communism became more legitimate. In Eastern Europe, the tandem of populism and nationalism "has the potential to produce powerful myths that can host societies that become parasites through modernization itself [9: 265]".

Acknowledging the idea of Parvu C.A, we affirm that ethnic nationalism operates on populist expressions, and this is quite conclusive in Hungary, Poland or Romania. The fact that the political discourse regardless of the political colour or the direction of the right or left party, is sustained on the constructive genesis of the popular idea, demonstrates the connection between populism and nationalism.

Another factor that has aggravated the current populism is the economic crisis that was triggered by the fall of the communist system, the democratic implementation of the capitalist market and the expansion of the private sector failed in many eastern countries. The specialized literature has shown that the weaker the economic performance of the country, the more citizens are willing to vote the candidate with a higher popular perspective even if his argument does not find his material support.

Another element that led to the beginning of a crisis of democracy and the expansion of the populist current is the EU's own subordination to the accession states. Here we can recall that the democratic crisis cumulatively compensates for two variants, one refers to the people of Central and Eastern Europe who denied the activity of the representative institutions, trying to replace them with the voice of the "people" and the second one was based on removing the populist control over institutions and eliminating pluralism. [10:71]

Thus we are faced with a double crisis, a crisis generated by the representation technique and a constitutional crisis.

The crisis of representation in Eastern Europe is manifested by corroding the political spectrum and minimizing the opposition.

Paul Taggart underlined the idea of fundamental perception of the population vis-à-vis representative politics, a perception that seeks to replace it with alternatives of direct democracy or even authoritarianism. [10:74]

The studies of some scientists have determined a connection between the connection between populism and the crisis of the political class. The post-accession policy of Eastern Europe revealed that the citizens

of these countries were enriched by the "behaviour of the improvised political class that has governed since 1990" [11: 12]; thus, it was stated that the lack of accountability, the politicians, distorted the opinion of the voters for which they were engaged in finding new alternatives through which to regain their initial capacities as representatives. In this sense, it is necessary that "voters should resort to new alternatives [which] will be frequently populist by a certain band that justify this lack of responsibility and who claim that they can offer a different brand of politicians and politicians." [11: 13].

III. POSITIVISM AND THE LIMITS OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY IN POPULIST CONTEXTS

Returning to deliberative democracy, we argue that citizens' options are built and modified during populist negotiations between voters and candidates.

This time the rhetoric involves two aspects of speech and listening, essential phenomena, which must be led by real and viable arguments.

In this context, the exercise of conviction is mandatory, the assertion that the participants in the deliberative exercises are able to go beyond the limits of their own interest and to approach motivated conceptions about the necessary good, is well known.

We can say that deliberation is "a specific decision-making device that can guide participants to common interests through high quality debates" [12: 515].

The consecrated benefits of deliberative democracy are based on the increased legitimacy of the assembly of decisions and the reshaping of concepts and can only be achieved in a setting that aims at the collective good. The consecration of the common good is a collective exercise of deliberation and, as a result, deliberative democracy provides "a normative report of the bases of democratic legitimacy [13: 214].

The deliberative focus of the Democrats on the process - the decision-making *mode* - is, structured by the concern and the need for participation - when making decisions.

A metamorphosis in the deliberative sense can be an essential fact in terms of popular democracy.

The fact that citizens must play important roles in key moments, demonstrates that "the deliberative moments are themselves performances and symbols, communicating something important about citizens' status, the correct procedure, about "how we do things" [14: 92-103].

The idea of deliberation gives the representative system a freedom of expression, it is the citizen who imposes himself by vote.

Populism must be regarded as "a disease of democracy" [15: 6], a deviation from democracy, it is the one by which the followers of deliberative democracy distance themselves from the essence of the democratic concept.

The pluralism of divergent interests even of the people that the representative leaders claim to support, disappears. The dividing lines between "we", those who represent the "people" formed by a homogeneous body of miraculous beings and those who betrayed the people are those that support the populist discourse. As we mentioned before, populism insists on the will of the majority in a democracy, completely forgetting the other pillar of democracy, pluralism and the rights of minorities.

As we mentioned earlier, in some situations, accepting the idea that citizens have the opportunity to meet and negotiate on critical issues could be realized as a possible progress, even if the direct impact on the deliberation will not be seen immediately.

According to Donatella della Porta's support, the deliberative exercises are constituted in lasting and efficient connections that strengthen the connection between institutions and citizens.

In Central and Eastern Europe, participatory democracy develops its competences, which demonstrates that the phenomenon of deliberation is accepted even evaluated in practice, the processes of constitutional reform.

In this sense we remember the negotiating dialogue applied in the cities of Romania and Poland through which the participatory budgetary editing was pursued [16][2]. Before the application of this process, the allocation and local administration of the community funds was experienced in a reasonably deliberative way [17: 164].

Another example regarding the deliberative participation is the establishment of constitutional forums through which each citizen can deliberately participate with opinions and suggestions in the eventual constitutional changes.

The 2013 forum was created with the purpose of implementing a necessary dialogue, through which the citizen can access the exposition of

[2] See, for example, the participatory budgeting initiatives in progress in Cluj-Napoca, Romania: ⟨bugetareparticipativa.ro/, visited on September 4, 2019 and emulated in other Romanian cities. See also Kamrowska-Zaluska, D., "Participatory budget in Poland - lack of connection in the process of urban regeneration", 161 Procedia Engineering (2016)

his own opinion regarding the political activity. However, although the initiative of these dialogues was based on finding the pulse of civic opinion, this opinion did not find a tool to implement it in the political life, the citizen's opinion, remained a project without a practice.

However, although we must admit that democratic relaxation and more formal collaboration have been attempted, attempts at participatory and even deliberative legitimation have not really gone beyond being a form of "constituting the majority population of the constitution" [18: 437].

The question that arises is whether deliberative democracy is in the avatar of the populist current?

The connection of the populist current which is a symptom of the decay of a reference social order that marks the break between the elites and the rest of the population and democracy is not affected by a negative spectrum.

As a result, populism is not undemocratic, as it has been wrongly stated, but it comes to point out that social order, even though it claims to be democratic, has ceased *de facto* to be a democracy.

The eloquent argument is first and foremost the low voter turnout, which shows that the majority of the population has come to refuse to play a role in the democratic game.

However, the positive aspect in the interplay between deliberative democracy and political populism is that connected people can create an idyllic image of all governance issues.

IV CONCLUSION

Through this article we have followed the connection that is made between the exercise of a deliberative democracy and the current of populism in Central and Eastern Europe [19], in the context in which countries such as Hungary, Poland or Romania continue to be stigmatized by managing non-performing, limited institutions, by emphasizing corruption, by the existence of a major absenteeism in the public life, by the alternation of political parties in the life of the state government that has no performances, etc.

The call for a demagogic populism is not a solution for deliberative democracy.

However, the terminological consecration of populism as a social and political phenomenon cannot be dissociated from the deliberative democracy with which it is in an indissoluble connection. It is to be appreciated and noted that the deliberative democracies over time have

approached innovative techniques and methods, in order to argue that deliberation in the real world is necessary, a controversial world between the object of the powerful and the demands of the population.

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