

As part of my doctoral research, I focus on the problem of excessive short-term orientation in the implementation of public policies. In the context of this growing problem, exacerbated, among other things, by changes in the dynamics of public debate (such as the influence of social media), we are witnessing a paradox of contemporary politics. Despite greater awareness of long-term challenges, such as climate change and the development of new technologies, it remains extremely difficult for decision-makers to implement a long-term agenda effectively. This is determined by many objective factors, such as cognitive uncertainty about the future, the ethical dimensions of prioritising and redistributing limited resources, and term limits.

These observations prompted me to examine more closely the institutional mechanisms that could support long-term thinking in politics. I am preparing a doctoral thesis examining the time orientation in the decision-making pro-

cesses of the legislative branch in Poland against the background of institutional solutions in other countries, such as Finland. The main research thesis points to the lack of coherent institutional instruments supporting a long-term orientation in the Polish legislature. The study combines theoretical and empirical analyses, using a literature review and case studies, focusing on identifying the institutional, procedural and political conditions that influence the time orientation of decision-makers. The findings of the study will potentially allow for the development of a set of recommendations for institutional changes and opportunities to use digital technologies to support a long-term orientation in public policy-making.

However, the problem of short-termism in politics is not a new phenomenon

– similar challenges have arisen in the past, albeit in different historical contexts. The story of Hugues-Félicité Robert de Lamennais illustrates a universal problem faced by all those who try to think long-term in uncertain times. The Overton window describes the range of ideas that are socially acceptable at a given moment, where what was once ‘unthinkable’ can gradually become “popular” and ‘politically possible’ (Overton, 1990). At the beginning of the 19th century, ideas such as freedom of the press and the separation of church and state were radical and unacceptable to the Church, falling outside the Overton window. Influenced by events in Belgium and France and observing the growing importance of liberalism, Lamennais began to shift the Overton window, trying to make liberal Catholicism acceptable.

Reflecting on the Long Term in Political Processes

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Through books and newspapers, especially *L'Avenir*, he laid the foundations for what had been 'unimaginable' just a moment before. However, the Vatican decided that he had moved the window too far and too fast. Pope Gregory XVI's 1832 encyclical 'Mirari vos' did not deny that the world was changing, but proclaimed that the Church should follow its own path, not succumbing to trends, but noticing certain signs of the times. For Lamennais, and for society as a whole, the future was like a great fog, difficult to predict clearly, covering many possible scenarios. We live in similar conditions today, where the socio-political order is being rethought and we are unsure of what lies ahead. This illustration helped me to better understand the complexity of the topic of long-termism and the cognitive difficulty of identifying the signs of the times today.

In response to these challenges of uncertainty about the future, contemporary schools of thought have developed that attempt to find a systematic approach to thinking about long-term challenges. Contemporary discourse on long-term management is being developed by, among others, longtermism, which has an intellectual influence on the Silicon Valley environment (Strachan, 2024). This school of thought, although very heterogeneous, represented by thinkers such as Nick Bostrom and William MacAskill, focuses on maximising the well-being of future generations through utilitarian calculations. This new powerful trend raises many doubts regarding their anthropological approach. However, Oxford University researchers associated with longtermism, Tyler John and William MacAskill, propose specific institutional solutions to reduce the short-term perspective of state management, making a valuable contribution to thinking about a new perspective on the future of the political order. They point to well-designed research institutions dealing with the future, citizens' assemblies on long-term challenges, and statements on the impact on posterity as part of legislative impact assessments (Tyler, MacAskill, 2021). These are currently hypothetical, but there are many mechanisms in contemporary political systems that support a long-term perspective in public policy. An example is Finland, where there is a legal obligation for the government to periodically produce a special report

on the country's current challenges related to future trends, which is presented to parliament. The Finnish parliament's Committee for the Future has a special mandate to review this report and verify the government's long-term actions.

All these solutions, although promising, carry the risk of transforming democratic governance into a technocratic management system. Digital technologies are an apt and complex example. In his essay on technology, Martin Heidegger warned that the greatest threat is not technology itself, but the fact that we do not notice how it influences our thinking. Technology shows us the world in a utilitarian way, as a set of resources to be exploited. When this way of looking at things becomes dominant, other approaches – artistic or philosophical – disappear, and people begin to be treated as part of this resource, losing their independence and agency (Heidegger, 1977). This perspective has many implications for the future of our society. However, it cannot be denied that technological development also offers significant opportunities to support decision-making processes. However, as Gorwa, Binns and Katzenbach (2020) point out, knowledge alone is not enough to create policy. They point to the serious risk of depoliticisation, i.e. the removal of disputes over values, interests or different visions of the common good from public debate. As decisions are increasingly made on the basis of algorithmic recommendations, the burden shifts from political debate itself to its complete absence.

In the face of these techno-utilitarian threats, it becomes particularly important to seek alternative concepts of development that do not reduce human beings to functions or resources. Particularly inspiring in the context of seeking an alternative to the long-termism popular in Silicon Valley is the integral approach to development represented by Father Louis-Joseph Lebreton (1947). As he himself wrote: "The common good is therefore above all the common good of persons who transcend the created common good. The spiritual common good is closely linked to the temporal common good, which it conditions and ensures. The entire temporal common good is permeated with spirituality, truth, loyalty, sacrifice, courage and honour; if these intellectual and moral virtues weaken among the elites and the nation, it collapses."

The contrast between an integral and a reductionist approach to human beings becomes particularly evident when we analyse contemporary long-term governance practices, which often focus on individual aspects of human existence. There is a need to find solutions that take into account the human being as a whole, with their material, cultural, ethical and spiritual reality, especially in the creation of public policies oriented towards the long term, rather than quick results, which are often exclusively material. For human beings are not merely material beings, but complex creatures requiring an integral approach that respects all dimensions of their existence. Only such an approach can constitute a real alternative to techno-utilitarian visions of the future and ensure authentic development oriented towards the common good and human dignity.

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