Aleksander Noworól
Jagiellonian University

Cultural Aspects of Multilevel Territorial Management – Poland

1. Introduction

In the course of the last 20 years comprehensive changes and important reforms have taken place within the Polish system of government at all levels: local, regional, national and supranational. The aim of this paper is to contribute to an understanding of the influence of cultural factors on the contemporary management of territorial organizations (or territorial units). The challenges posed by globalization, affecting all managerial levels, and, furthermore, Poland's accession to the European Union, force its public administration to overcome certain weaknesses crippling its potential. This paper presents the cultural nature of the conditionings of these restrictive elements.

2. Managerial context

The theme of the paper can be considered in several, different contexts. The first one is managerial. An analysis of the managerial activity of the public administration should reflect the organizational aspect of governance. So, the author uses the notion of a **territorial organization** for territorial units, taking into consideration three aspects of their nature. Territorial organizations can be defined on the basis of three main determining conditions:
- The area of activity – a territorial organization is a unit of land where public administration is executed (spatial and legal condition),
- The set of people making up a territorial organization consists of a community of citizens living within the territory (social and political condition),
- The formal basis of activities of the territorial community is structured by mutual relationships resulting from legal acts determining the development and current running of public affairs (economic and managerial condition).

Taking this definition into consideration, we can give an overview of the **territorial management -** or the management of territorial organizations - as:

• directing (steering) the inner and outer territorial organization's systems,
• leading the territorial organization's structures (administrative subunits and offices),
• achieving goals, reflecting public interests, which are mainly referred to as environmental, social and economic aspects of development and/or just running territorial units.

Political authority should thus be considered to reside within the managing entity of the territorial organization. It is thus impossible to distinguish certain aspects of territorial management from those of territorial governance. Much has been written about the characteristics of the territorial management. In his previous papers the author described certain crucial elements of this administrative branch of the public management [cf. Noworól 2003, 2007]. The author presented a territorial management model and identified styles of the territorial management and the nature of structures used in public governance processes. In brief, we can distinguish styles and organization structure types, which can be recognized as lying between the extreme forms:

– according to a (vertical) direction of steering/management, we can identify extreme styles:
  • an **autocratic** approach (top down), characteristic of a totalitarian state, and
  • a consultation / **participatory** approach (bottom up) – characteristic of a democratic state;
– according to a (horizontal) dimension of directing/management, we can identify extreme styles:
  • a narrow approach, **following regulations**, and
  • a **strategic management approach**;
– according to the degree of public knowledge, we can identify extreme styles:
  • a **system of coteries**, accompanied by propaganda, and
  • **transparency** leading to accountable society;
– according to attitudes of public officers we can identify extreme styles/ attitudes:
  • **bureaucracy**, and
  • **public service**;
  • according to the supply system of steering/management, we can identify extreme attitudes:
– an attitude oriented to a centralized system based on **taxes and the budget**, and
• an attitude oriented to a **decentralized** and more economic system of financing, accepting purchase of services;

– according to people's participation in the territorial management, we can identify extreme attitudes:
  • silent and **anonymous attendance**, and
  • **public participation** in communities' lives;
– according to finance management structures, we can identify:
  • **budgetary units**, and
  • polycentric, **disaggregated** legal and social **entities** providing services and assuring quality of life.

The above mentioned system of arrangement of territorial management conditionings discloses many imperfections in the Polish public administration performance. However, the aim of this paper is not to analyze these phenomena. We will rather focus on the roots of the deficiencies described in other papers. [Cf. Agh 2010; Noworól 2008]

3. Urban challenge context

The contemporary world is undergoing enormous and rapid changes. One can observe these changes in the economy, in the environment and the climate and lastly – in the social and cultural behavior. Two fundamental processes, globalization and competitiveness, have the biggest impact on territorial organizations. The point is that globalization and the shift towards knowledge-based economy have had diverse effects on territorial competitiveness (called glocalization). Competitiveness forces territories to contribute to the creation of economic activities, and to attract people and capital in a competitive environment. According to M. Sudarskis [2010], the metropolitan challenges of today can be arranged as follows:
– globalization as an economic challenge,
– sustainability as an environmental challenge,
– cohesion as political, social and cultural challenges.

So, priority fields for public intervention include such areas as: the control of urban development and urban regeneration, mobility and transport, resources for production, influencing the labor market, technology and financing, and finally, governance as an effective and democratic process. Contemporary challenges in the territorial management require a new governance approach, taking into consideration:
– participation in decision making processes,
– higher quality of public and social services,
– transparent information policies, and coherent political visions and strategies.

We can also observe a new generation of global problems. Global security, ecological efficiency, reduction or even disappearance of agricultural land, cultural mutation (from a closed to an open world) and ageing of the population

– are all becoming determinants of new international policies that must be considered by governments [based on Sudarskis M., 2010]. The main challenge for the public administration is the great shift from Weber's hierarchic bureaucracy to public governance, dealing with networks of public bodies, nongovernmental organizations and businesses. They all are active internationally and affect one another in different connected or unconnected fields.

4. International management context – multi-level governance

Poland is a member state of the European Union. This is an important feature and a determinant factor for the territorial management at all governance levels within the country. K. Szczerski emphasizes that multi-level governance implies changing relationships between many actors, operating at different levels of political systems and in different sectors: public, social and private. [2005, p. 12] According to A. Agh "The global crisis has strengthened the pressure for public-administration reforms in the EU, above all in East-Central Europe (ECE), and beyond." [Agh 2010, p. 9] This author notes the types of challenges in the EU. In the first place, at the EU27 level "there is the need to create new transnational regulatory institutions at the top as "metagovernance" and to introduce new common policies that radically transform the horizontal and vertical institutional relationships in order to overcome the institutional crisis..." [2010, p. 9] A. Agh observes a "deepening" of the process, i.e. the extension of multi-level governance and the multi-actor participative democracy have to be continued, since the transnational institutions have to be more balanced with the structures of the meso-governments. The multi-level governance structures (basically the meso-governments) are still weak in the new member states. So, democratic institution-building has to be completed in the new member states on the meso- and micro-levels as well. Besides, the new member states have to catch up with the latest developments in the old member states as well as on the EU level. A. Agh calls it "structural adjustment". A. Agh defines **three partnership triangles in the EU**. The first partnership **macro-triangle** is between: the EU transnational institutions, the nation-state institutions and the sub-national actors and agencies. In this macro-triangle, the nation state intermediates between the EU and regional levels and transmits the Europeanization effect top-down to the national and sub-national actors, and it represents their national-local interests bottom up (vertical). The second partnership **meso-triangle** appears at the member state level between the nation state, the social actors horizontally and the territorial actors vertically. In this meso-triangle, both the social and the territorial policy communities have their action fields. The third partnership micro-triangle(s) are at the sub-national level of these social and territorial actors, and they have:
– both horizontal and vertical, or
– both policy (sectorial) and territorial dimensions.

These micro-triangles have a plurality of distinct policy networks or communities, in which the state-administration units or special state agencies are engaged in an active co-operation with the local - social, business, civil and territorial - non-state actors. **The introduction and extension of multi-level governance structures cause a participatory revolution**. [Agh 2010, pp. 19–21] This has particular significance for Poland as one of the new member states. A. Agh maintains that "the multi-actor democracy is largely missing or hardly developed in those states. The social and territorial actors are weak, their competences are limited, and their role in the decision-making system is restricted. EU membership has meant tremendous pressure for them in this respect, first of all not in the political dimension, but much more in practical dimensions of the cohesion policy for an urgent capacity-building." [2010, p. 20] Even if we can observe that there are changes caused by constitutional arrangements in the second partnership triangle, the subnational institutions are still weak. In consequence "the third partnership triangles, the horizontal policy networks and/or communities at the regional level are hopelessly missing or weak, so is the system of their vertical network governance that incorporates the subregional territorial and social actors." [2010, p. 20]

A. Agh's concept of multi-level governance reflects organizational conditionings of public, private and non-governmental entities within the European Union. This perspective is extremely important in Poland, because of the important development stimulus resulting from the EU cohesion policy. However, there are some other important factors influencing international management. Let us not forget about the activities of transnational corporations – their influence is sometimes exaggerated, but it is still very important [cf.: Guedes, Faria 2007].

5. Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

In order to understand the constraints and the weaknesses of public administration in Poland, we can refer to Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions concept. At this point characteristics are worth mentioning . G. Hofstede created his own indexes of organizational culture. His so-called Value Survey Module is designed for measuring culture-determined differences between matched samples of respondents from different countries and regions. It consists of 20 content questions and 6 demographic questions. At his international website, G. Hofstede presents a description of the indexes as well as scores calculated for more than 70 countries.

The Hofstede indexes are:
– "Power Distance Index (PDI) that is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (such as the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality (more versus less), but defined from below, not from above. It suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders. …

– Individualism (IDV) versus its opposite, collectivism, that is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. On the individualist side we find societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family. On the collectivist side, we find societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (…) which continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. The word 'collectivism' in this sense has no political meaning…

– Masculinity (MAS) versus its opposite, femininity, refers to the distribution of roles between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society, for which a range of solutions is found. … The assertive pole has been called 'masculine' and the modest, caring pole 'feminine'. The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men's values and women's values.

– Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity; it ultimately refers to man's search for Truth. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, different from usual. Uncertainty avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations by strict laws and rules, safety and security measures, and on the philosophical and religious level by a belief in the absolute Truth; (…) The opposite type, uncertainty accepting cultures, are more tolerant of opinions different from what they are used to; they try to have as few rules as possible, and on the philosophical and religious level they are relativist and allow many currents to flow side by side.

– Long-Term Orientation (LTO) versus short-term orientation: this fifth dimension was found in a study among students in 23 countries around the world, using a questionnaire designed by Chinese scholars. It can be said to deal with the Virtue regardless of the Truth. Values associated with Long Term Orientation are thrift and perseverance; values associated with Short Term Orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's 'face'." [Hofstede 2010]

This short summary of G. Hofstede's concept is the basis for further analyses carried out by the author of this paper. Thus, let us compare scores attributed in Hofstede's researches to Poland and some chosen countries.[1] The choice was made basing on:

---

[1] It is worth noting that for Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Russia – the values were estimated by the G. Hofstede research group (and not measured).

– geographical proximity to Poland – items 2–5, and
– the highest level of the Human Development Index 2010, according to UNDP [2010] – items 6-9.

The list of scores is presented in the table below.

Table 1. Comparison of G. Hofstede indexes attributed to Poland and chosen countries

	Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
1.	Poland *	68	60	64	**93**	32
2.	Germany	35	67	**66**	65	31
3.	Czech Republic	57	58	57	74	13
4.	Slovakia *	**104**	52	**110**	51	**38**
5.	Russia *	93	39	36	**95**	
6.	Norway	31	69	8	50	20
7.	Australia	36	**90**	61	51	31
8.	New Zealand	22	79	58	49	30
9.	United States	40	**91**	62	46	29

Estimated values
Highest scores - bolded
[Source: Hofstede G., 2010]

The interpretation of the table above allows us to discover multiple relationships, mostly being the domain of political sciences. In the context of this paper, it is important to note that Poland is characterized by its:
– very high Uncertainty Avoidance Index – only Russia presents a slightly higher score, and
– relatively high Power Distance Index – especially if compared with indexes of countries representing a very high level of human development.

In the opinion of the author, these features are the predominant factors influencing the situation in the Polish public administration. This issue is described below.

6. Cultural aspects of Polish public administration

In order to understand the cultural context of the public administration in Poland, we should refer to researches and diagnoses concerning social capital in the country. According to F. Fukuyama "Social capital is an instantiated informal norm that promotes co-operation between individuals. In the economic sphere it reduces transaction costs and in the political sphere it promotes the kind of associational life which is necessary for the success of limited government and modern democracy." [Fukuyama 2001, p. 7] The influence of social capital on public affairs is enormous. According to F. Sabatini "Social networks can … be considered as a powerful mean to foster the diffusion of information and knowledge, lowering uncertainty and transaction costs." [Sabatini 2005, p. 162] It is worth recalling F. Fukuyama's important observation "Social capital is what permits individuals to band together to defend their interests and organize to support collective needs; authoritarian governance, on the other hand, thrives on social atomization." [Fukuyama F., 2002, p. 26]. The social capital conditions the basic confidence of the population in public services and in public administration offices.

Polish researchers have expressed their concern about the low level of the social capital in Poland. J. Czapiński even emphasizes that Poland does not meet the criteria of the civil society, taking into consideration measures related to the social capital. That author quotes the European Social Survey of 2006 and 2008, which placed Poland as last but one among European Union Countries with respect to the general confidence of the population.[2] [Czapiński, Panek 2009, p. 275] J. Czapinski notes that Poles live in a country of more and more efficient individuals and – at the same time – with a permanently inefficient community. [2009, p. 282]

All the above mentioned reflections concerning the position of Poland – taking into account G. Hofstede indexes and measures of readiness to build a civil society – allow us to analyze the weaknesses crippling the potential of the Polish public administration. An analysis is presented in Table 2, making use of the classification system outlined above, distinguishing styles and organization structures of territorial management. The table compares:
– styles and structures:
  • representing a bureaucratic and a hierarchical model of territorial management[3] – column 2,
  • characterizing a multi-level governance model of territorial management, more developed and applicable to a society of networks – column 3

with

---

[2]   This phenomenon was measured by an indicator showing the percentage of the population aged 16 years old and above who trust other people.
[3]   Based mostly on M. Weber's ideas.

– cultural aspects crippling the managerial capacity of the Polish public administration – column 4.

Table 2. Cultural aspects and conditionings limiting Polish public administration potential

Styles / Structures	Bureaucracy / Hierarchy	Multilevel Governance	Cultural Aspects Crippling Management Capacity in PL
1	2	3	4
Direction of steering/ management	Totalitarianism / autocracy	Democracy / state of law	**- High PDI & UAI Hofstede Indexes (attitude of people)** **- Low Social Capital**
Range of steering/ management	Narrow, following regulations	Strategic management	**- High PDI & UAI Hofstede Indexes (attitude of managers / leaders)**
Degree of public knowledge	System of coteries	Transparency – Society of accountability	**- High PDI & UAI Hofstede Indexes (attitude of managers / leaders)**
Attitudes of public servants	Bureaucracy	Public service	**- High PDI Hofstede Index (attitude of public officers)**
Supply of steering/ management system	Centralized [based on budget] financing	Decentralized [efficient] financing	**- High UAI Hofstede Index (attitude of people)** **- Low Social Capital**
Attendance in territorial management	Anonymous attendance	Public participation	**- High PDI Hofstede Index (attitude of people)** **- Low Social Capital**
Structures of finance management	Budgetary units	Disaggregated networks / Private-public participation	**- High UAI Hofstede Index (attitude of managers / leaders)**

Source: own study.

The diagnoses, presented in column 4 of Table 2, reveal cultural obstacles indicated in the process of the transition from a style or a type of structure listed in column 2 to a style or a type of structure listed in column 3. Thus,

we can observe how certain cultural patterns, sometimes of an archetypical nature, limit public administration abilities. We can say that Table 2 shows how in Poland "the snake is eating its own tail". This means that indirectly people cripple themselves. Cultural determinants, resulting from "Uncertainty Avoidance" limit people's readiness to change social habits. The deepening of the public sector transformation in Poland is conditioned by the common acceptance of such managerial patterns or practices as: public participation, transparency and confidence in the environment of networked, multi-level, public or private organizations.

7. Conclusions

Contemporary challenges in the territorial management force us to take into consideration a networked, multi-level organizational environment. Within the European Union, the multi-actor participative democracy requires adoption of new territorial management styles, which are at the same time compatible with meta-, meso- and micro-levels of differentiated and multicultural political and social entities. During the transition from a bureaucratic administration to "open" public governance, social and cultural obstacles (styles, structures) which cripple management efficiency must be overcome. This phenomenon is extremely important in Poland, where certain cultural factors that are unfavorable to deep social transformation have been identified.

In general, we have to note that cultural aspects determining social capital and, especially, public confidence, are essential for building multilevel territorial management capability. These cultural patterns must be seriously considered in the process of identifying a managerial paradigm in order to:
– understand the world,
– imagine the future,
– set rules for governing a contemporary, democratic and complex society.

Such a paradigm requires a comprehensive public debate that should be undertaken in Poland during the next decades.

Abstract

In the course of the last 20 years, comprehensive changes and important reforms have taken place within the Polish system of government, at all levels: local, regional, national and supranational. The aim of this paper is to contribute to an understanding of the influence of cultural factors on the contemporary management of territorial organizations (or territorial units). The challenges posed by globalization, affecting all managerial levels, and Poland's accession to the European Union force the Polish public administration to overcome certain weaknesses crippling its potential. The paper presents the cultural nature of the conditionings of these restrictive factors. The author notes that the deepening of the public sector transformation in Poland is conditioned by common acceptance of such managerial patterns or practices as: public participation,

transparency and confidence in the environment of networked, multi-level, public or private organizations. Thus, the identified cultural constraints must be seriously considered in the process of setting rules for governing a contemporary, democratic and complex society.

References

Agh, A., 2010. Europeanization and Democratization in ECE: Towards Multi-Level and Multi-Actor Governance. *The NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy*, Vol. III, No. 1, pp. 9–32.

Czapiński, J., Panek, T. (eds.), 2009. *Diagnoza społeczna 2009. Warunki i jakość życia Polaków*. Warszawa: Rada Monitoringu Społecznego.

Fukuyama, F., 2001. Social capital, civil society and development. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 7–20.

Fukuyama, F., 2002. Social Capital and Development: The Coming Agenda, *SAIS Review,* Vol. XXII, No. 1, Winter–Spring.

Guedes, A.L., Faria, A., 2007. Globalization and International Management: In Search of an Interdisciplinary Approach. *Brazilian Administration Review*, Vol. 4, No. 2, art. 2, pp. 20–39.

Hofstede, G., *Geert Hofstede™ Cultural Dimensions*, http://www.geert-hofstede.com/geert_hofstede_resources.shtml [read: Nov. 26, 2010].

United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 2010*, http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/?loc=interstitialskip [read: Dec. 07, 2010].

Noworól, A., (ed.), Dąbrowska, K., Sobolewski, A., 2003. *Podstawy zarządzania w administracji publicznej*. Szczecin: Wyższa Szkoła Administracji Publicznej w Szczecinie.

Noworól, A., 2007. *Planowanie rozwoju terytorialnego w skali regionalnej i lokalnej*. Kraków: WUJ.

Noworól, A., 2008. Bariery rozwoju lokalnego w Polsce [in:] *Współpraca dla rozwoju.* Szczecin: Wyższa Szkoła Administracji Publicznej w Szczecinie, pp. 2137.

Sabatini, F., 2005. The empirics of social capital and economic development: a critical perspective [in:] Osborne, M, Sankey, K., Wilson, B. (eds.), *Researching Social Capital, Lifelong Learning Regions and the management of place: an international perspective*. Routledge, London and New York, pp. 155–193.

Sudarskis, M., 2010. *Metropolis now,* INTA International Symposium on Urbanism: *Cities in Metropolitan Regions, Gedafe 2010,* http://www.ciudadesenregionesmetropolitanas.com/download/Sudarkis-metropolis.pdf [read: Nov. 26, 2010].

Szczerski, K., 2005. *Administracja publiczna w modelu zarządzania wielopasmowego. Wyzwania dla rozszerzonej Unii Europejskiej – przypadek Polski*. Warszawa: Centrum Europejskie Natolin.