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The cultural dimensions and differences inside the Visegrad Group

Abstract: The paper focuses on differences between Visegrad group countries' culture based on cultural dimensions presented by Geert Hofstede, Shalom H. Schwartz, Roland Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker. The aim of the paper is to present Visegrad countries as different cultures in spite of their common communistic history and membership in the territory of Eastern-Central Europe. The text comes into existence as a result of the belief that the knowledge of one another may not only have a positive impact by facilitating the communication between citizens in Visegrad countries but also promote knowledge about cultures.

Keywords: intercultural dimensions, diversity, Visegrad countries

Two years ago I conducted a workshop with intercultural competence with very interesting people – county artists, the mayor and officials. One of the participants recounted a story and asked questions. She was a Polish choreographer and a director of a folk dance group. She traveled a lot with her group. She met with different cultures and people and she was not interested in cultural studies. Her focus was on her performances and her group's aims and as a result she met a lot of difficulties. At one point she went also on tour to Hungary. She was completely sure of the positive results of the tour and that everything would be ok, but it turned out otherwise, Her dancers encountered communication problems with Hungarian dancers. It was difficult for her to understand why? – “Both Poles and Hungarians are Slavic people. Everybody emphasized the brotherhood among Poles and Hungarians. Why was it so difficult for my people and the Hungarian dancers to have fun together? – She asked me. I heard very similar situation about Czechs and Slovaks. Quite often, the habits of Visegrad countries are perceived to resemble to each other.

This region is in fact understudied due to its social past. Researchers called citizens of these countries *Homo Sovieticus*. They lived behind the *Iron Curtain* and according to Howard J.

Wiarda¹⁴⁵ (2002) the barrier was “a cultural wall (...) and a socio-psychological wall as well as an economic and strategy one”. Miroslava Marody¹⁴⁶ claims the morality of *homo sovieticus* was undermined by the totalitarian system which made that he/she was full of helplessness with weakened individual responsibility. Piotr Sztompka¹⁴⁷ (2000) called this kind of personality “civilizational incompetence” and he characterizes it by using the qualifications such as lack of the emergence of citizenship, opportunism, blind compliance, reluctance to take decisions, avoidance of personal responsibility and he writes about a syndrome by “prolonged infantilism matched by state paternalism”. Scientists have also written about the deficit of democratic ideas in the *homo sovieticus*’ countries. Furthermore, they believed that it has changed after 2004 when Visegrad countries entered the European Union. It resulted in gradual opening and democratization of these countries. Post-Soviet countries were perceived as individual countries rather than as union of countries. From this point forward, scientists began to talk about the cultural differences between Czechs, Slovaks, Poles and Hungarians. Prior to this the Visegrad region was excluded in the most important research on intercultural differences such as Geert Hofstede’s¹⁴⁸ seminal work (1980) or in Simcha Ronen and Oded Shenkar¹⁴⁹ comparative study of 25 countries, because it remained behind the Iron Curtain. First of all, the conducting of research in this area was limited and the secondly it was perceived that all Soviet countries was in fact similar. It seemed there were no differences between them. More importantly, this point of view was expressed not only by people coming from Western Europe, but by people within Visegrad countries.

The Visegrad countries were also perceived as one Eastern-Central European culture. The term Eastern Europe, as Larry Wolf¹⁵⁰ shows, was introduced in 17th and 18th century and it meant countries underneath Russian hegemonic policies. Poland belonged to Eastern Europe. However, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic belonged to Central Europe. Czesław

¹⁴⁵ H. J. Wiarda, *Defining the borders of the new Europe*, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2393/its_4_164/ai_87025776, 10 April 2010.

¹⁴⁶ M. Marody, “Building a competitive society: challenges for social policy”, in: *Towards a Competitive Society in Central and Eastern Europe: Social Dimensions*, Finland, Vienna 1992.

¹⁴⁷ P. Sztompka, *Civilisation competence: a prerequisite of post-communist transition*, <http://www.friends-partners.org/newfriends/audem/audem92/Sztompka.html>, 12 August 2014.

¹⁴⁸ G. Hofstede, *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*, London 1990; G. Hofstede, *Cultures’ consequences: International differences in work-related values*, Beverly Hills, 1980; S.H. Schwartz, “Beyond Individualism-Collectivism: New cultural dimensions of values”, in: *Individualism and collectivism: Theory, method and applications*, London 1994.

¹⁴⁹¹⁴⁹ S. Ronen, O. Shenkar, *Clustering countries on attitudinal dimensions: a review and synthesis*, “Academy of Management Review”, 10 (3) 1985.

¹⁵⁰ L. Wolf, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford 1994.

Miłosz¹⁵¹ defined Central Europe (which, according to him, included Baltic States) as an entity between the Soviet Union and Germany. He thus reemerged the idea of Central Europe. Central Europe was perceived as a zone between East and West characterized by common culture and tradition. Central Europe suffered under Soviet totalitarianism and seemed to be deprived of democratic traditions.

The aforementioned facts point at similarities within the cultural framework of Visegrad countries. The term East-Central-Soviet Europe is treated as a cliché and it is used in various times and various places. Meanwhile, research on differences between cultures was conducted. It focused on the postmodern idea to deemphasize similarities but instead focus on and accept existing differences, because in essence it's the differences that are the most important, because they cause diversity. This approach focuses on the idea of cultural relativism - that is, the cognitive attitude which assumes knowledge and understanding of other cultures by their relevant categories and values. This strategy involves the suspension of judgment of another culture according to their own criteria of native culture. Milton J. Bennet writes about ethnorelativism which is in opposition to ethnocentrism. Ethnorelativism means "the experience of one's own beliefs and behaviors as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities"¹⁵². According to Bennet, the major change in the quality of the experience which he calls the move from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism is linked with the fact people become more inter-culturally competent. "The more ethnorelative worldviews – as Bennet underlines – are ways of seeking cultural difference, either by accepting its importance, by adapting perspective to take it into account, or by integrating the whole concept into definition of identity"¹⁵³. They gain intercultural competence thanks to research, increased knowledge and awareness about cultural diversity.

Modernistic theories were seen as the last cause of perceiving Post-Soviet countries as well as European countries as similar. Roland Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker in their paper *Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values* underline: "Modernisation theorists from Karl Marx to Daniel Bell have argued that economic development brings pervasive cultural changes. But other, from Max Weber to Samuel Huntington, has claimed that cultural values are on enduring and autonomous influence on

¹⁵¹ C. Miłosz, *The Budapest Round-Table*, "Cross Currents" 1991, p. 18.

¹⁵² Milton J. Bennett, *Becoming Interculturally Competent*, in: J. S. Wurzel (ed.) *Towards multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education*, ed. by, Newton 1988, p. 62.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

society”¹⁵⁴. In addition they claim: “Well into the twentieth century, modernization was widely viewed as a uniquely Western process that non-Western societies could follow only in so far as they abandoned their traditional cultures and assimilated technologically and morally ‘superior’ Western ways”¹⁵⁵. Then it turned out that the idea of moving toward a uniform, MacWorld is partly an illusion. Three theories compete with each other: theory of globalization, theory of multicultural and trans-culture. All of them illustrate the importance of knowledge about cultural similarities and differences.

Many scientists like Hofstede, Edward T. Hall, Richard R. Gestald, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner have examined the differences between national cultures and their influence on the communication, relation between culture, attitude of tolerance and solidarity. As Peter B. Smith, Mark F. Peterson and Shalom H. Schwartz underline in their text *Cultural Values, Sources of Guidance, and their Relevance to Managerial Behaviour: A 47-Naion Study*: “Some theorists conceptualize culture as defined by shared meanings assigned by culture members to things and persons around them. This type of definition would include Hofstede’s much-cited phrase, the ‘collective programming of the mind’. Others assert that culture entails not just shared interpretations of behaviors but also actual differences in behavior. For instance, Herskovits favored the much broader conceptualized captured by the phrase “‘the man-made part of the environment’. The attraction of values as the basis for conceptualizing culture is that they can be expressed in a de-contextualized manner”¹⁵⁶. According to Frank Bradley¹⁵⁷ the most influencing factors are: cultural variability, cultural hostility, cultural heterogeneity and cultural interdependence. He suggests these factors influence perception of foreigners and their perception of different cultures as well as communication process. Thanks to the research on Central Europe, Visegrad countries are no longer being perceived as one unison and common cultural mass. The research reflects on the idea of the heterogeneity of Visegrad cultures. For example, the Visegrad countries were omitted by the research conducted by Peter Joseph Foley¹⁵⁸ and Ashleigh Merritt¹⁵⁹. In

¹⁵⁴ R. Inglehart, W. E. Baker *Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values*, “American Sociological Review” vo. 65, February (2000), p. 19.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Peter B. Smith, Mark F. Peterson and Shalom H. Schwartz in their text titled *Cultural Values, Sources of Guidance, and their Relevance to Managerial Behaviour: A 47-Naion Study*, “Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology” 33 (2002), p. 189, compare to: G. Hofstede, *Cultures ...*; G. Hofstede, *Cultures’ consequences....*; M.J. Herskovits, *Man and his work: The science of cultural anthropology*, New York 1948.

¹⁵⁷ F. Bradley, *International marketing strategy*, New York 1991.

¹⁵⁸ P. J. Foley, *An examination of the dimensions of cross-cultural differences in work-related attitudes*, Georgia 1992.

certain Visegrad countries, there was research conducted by Felix C. Brodbeck¹⁶⁰ (Poland, the Czech Republic), The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies (Poland), Peter B. Smith and Matthew Ferris Peterson¹⁶¹ (Poland, Hungary) and Lena Zander¹⁶². Roland Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker¹⁶³, Shalom H. Swartz¹⁶⁴, Peter B. Smith¹⁶⁵ and those who continued the research conducted by Geert Hofstede were all interested in all four Visegrad countries; the last one being the most famous.

Geert Hofstede – a Dutch social psychologist – created the so-called cultural dimensions or cultural scales in order to describe the differences between the cultures within Europe. He assumes that people distinguish themselves from each other as a result of cultural programming, and that this is the cause of all the misunderstandings, problems and sometimes mutual dislike. According to him the cultural programming depends on the group of cultural socialization or indoctrination. He claims national differences between representatives of nations can be reduced to differences in the collective cultural programming. Most importantly, he explicated the difference between society or cultural groups rather than individual person¹⁶⁶. The comparison of national cultures was made possible in part due to these dimensions. Shalom H. Schwartz, a Hebrew psychologist, writes in his article *A theory of Cultural Values and Some Implications for Work* “cultural values represent the implicitly or explicitly shared abstract ideas about what is good, right and desirable in society”. And then he underlines: “National boundaries do not necessarily correspond to the boundaries of organically developed, relatively homogeneous societies with a shared culture. But there are strong forces towards integration that can produce substantial sharing culture in nations that have existed for some time”¹⁶⁷. In particular, according to Hofstede, the cultural programming refers to four dimensions: power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity,

¹⁵⁹ A. Merritt, *Culture in the Cockpit: Do Hofstede's Dimensions Replicate?*, “Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology” 31 (2000).

¹⁶⁰ F.C. Brodbeck, *et al. Cultural variation of leadership prototypes across 22 European countries*, “Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology” 73(1) (2000).

¹⁶¹ P. B. Smith, M. F. Peterson, *Beyond Value Comparisons: Sources Used to Give Meaning to Management Work Events in Twenty-Nine Countries*, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Academy of Management, Vancouver, Canada, August 1995.

¹⁶² L. Zander, *Communication & country clusters – A study of language & leadership preferences*, “International Studies in Management and Organization” 35(1) (2005).

¹⁶³ R. Inglehart, W. E. Baker, *Modernization ...*

¹⁶⁴ Shalom H. Schwartz, *A Theory of Cultural Values and Some Implications for Work*, “Applied Psychology”, 48(1) (1999).

¹⁶⁵ Peter B. Smith, Mark F. Peterson and Shalom H. Schwartz, *Cultural values...*

¹⁶⁶ G. Hofstede, *Cultures and ...*; G. Hofstede, *Cultures's consequences...*; Shalom H. Schwartz, *Beyond Individualism-Collectivism...*

¹⁶⁷ Shalom H. Schwartz, *A Theory of ...*; compare to: G. Hofstede, *Cultures and ...*

and uncertainty avoidance. In 1991 Hofstede's student, Mochael Bond, added the fifth dimension, the so-called Confucian dynamism: **Long-Term Orientation and in 2010 Michael Minkov** generated the last dimension and changed the fifth dimension into **Pragmatic versus Normative**.

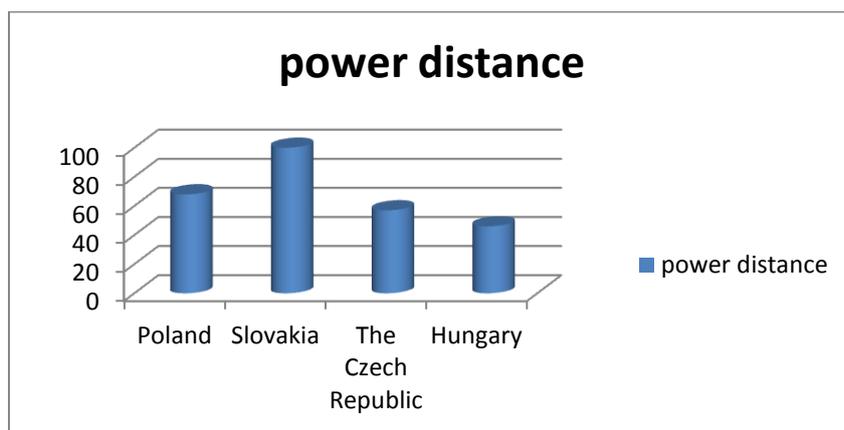
Hofstede believes that knowledge of these dimensions leads to understanding the differences between cultures and allows to effective communications between representatives of different national cultures. This knowledge enables intercultural cooperation. Nowadays it also provides an opportunity to understand the unity of multiplicity or plurality of unity. The four basic dimensions proposed by Hofstede are the same as the four fundamental and universal problems identified by two Americans in 1969, a sociologist Alex Inkeles and psychologist Daniel Levinson: relationship to authority; the concept of the individual in the relationship between the individual and society as well as the relationship between man and woman; and the way of resolving conflicts, including the control of aggression and expressing feelings. Hofstede believes that cultural dimensions are determined by social change. The first two cultural dimensions described by Dutch psychologist - power distance and individualism - collectivism - are associated with European culture, while another two - the masculinity-femininity and uncertainty avoidance - are the challenges of globalization and changes in the organization of social life.

Power distance, as a first dimension, deals with inequality of individuals in their societies. "This dimension expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally"¹⁶⁸. Society representing large power distance is a society in which people feel as subordinate and dependent upon authority, and their relationship with superiors is characterized by uncertainty and lack of freedom. On the other hand, the public with small power distance is characterized by their development regardless of positions, an attitude of dialogue and openness, equal treatment. It should be noted however, that these are extreme examples. Schwartz underlines that all societies that guarantee responsible behavior will preserve the social fabric. People must be inclined to consider the welfare of others, coordinate with them, and thereby manage the unavoidable social interdependencies. The polar resolution of this issue uses power differences, relying on hierarchical systems. (...) People are socialized and sanctioned to comply with the obligations and rules attached to their roles. The value type expressive of this view is Hierarchy. (...) An

¹⁶⁸ <http://geert-hofstede.com/dimensions.html>, 18 August 2014.

alternative solution to the problem of responsible social behavior is to induce societal members to recognize on another as moral equals who share basic interests as human beings. People are socialized to internalize a commitment to voluntary cooperation with others and to feel concerns for everyone's welfare. The value type expressive of this solution is egalitarianism"¹⁶⁹. According to Hofstede research Visegrad countries represent more of lower hierarchical culture with a high or medium power distance.

Poland is a hierarchical society (68). Poles accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has their own place. Similar the Czech Republic has measures high in this respect (57). That means that Czech society is also a hierarchical society. Hungarians and Slovaks on the other hand, are completely different. The Hungarian score is low (46) – it means they are independent, they believe in equal rights and the hierarchy is only for convenience. The most hierarchical country with a high power distance is Slovakia. It is the highest end of the dimension. It means some people have more power than others and that its socially accepted and even expected.

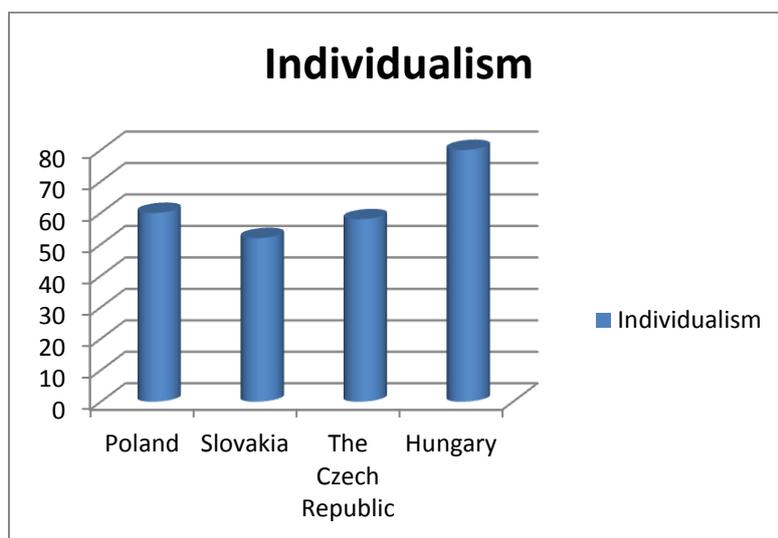


In the case of three countries from Visegrad Group individualism accompanies high power distance what is extremely rare. Most often individualism remains in opposition to high power distance. The second dimension, individualism-collectivism, is “the degree of interdependency a society maintains among its members”¹⁷⁰. This dimension is also called by researchers, individualism-communalism, independence-interdependence, autonomy-relatedness, separateness-interdependence. Schwartz claims this dimension always can be defined as a nature if the relation between the individual and the group. He uses the terminology conservatism-intellectual autonomy/affective autonomy. “The opposite pole of

¹⁶⁹ Shalom H. Schwartz, *A Theory of ...* p. 27-28.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

this dimension – he underlines – describes cultures in which the person is viewed as an autonomous, bounded entity who finds meaning in his or her own uniqueness, who seeks to express his or her own internal attributes (...) and is encouraged to do so. (...) It is possible to distinguish conceptually between to this new Autonomy; the first refers to ideas and through, the second to feeling and emotions”¹⁷¹. Schwartz claims that every East European country is a conservative country. That means their citizens consider the following elements as very important: family security, respect for tradition, social order, clean, moderate honor, elders, national security, reciprocation of favors, self-discipline, devotion, obedience, wisdom, protecting public image, politeness, forgiveness. Meanwhile according to Hofstede dimension East European countries are diverse and they describe these countries as being characterized by an individualist culture. Researchers from Hofstede’s team claims Poles care primarily about themselves and their families. This contradiction makes that relationships intense and delicate at the same time - people who are higher in the hierarchy must pretend that everyone is important and that they strive for personal contact with everyone. Polish society scored 60 points. “There is a high preference for loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves. In individualistic societies offence causes guilt and a loss of self-esteem”¹⁷². Very similar to Poles are Czechs (58). Hungarians comprise a more individualistic society (80). In the middle of this dimensions and thus it points to not clear preference are Slovaks (52).



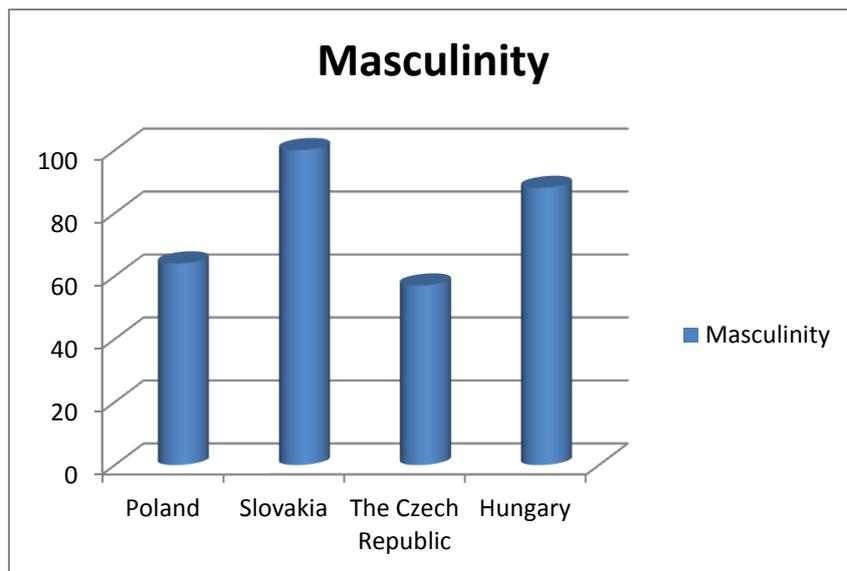
¹⁷¹ Shalom H. Schwartz, *A Theory of ...*, p. 27.

¹⁷² <http://geert-hofstede.com/dimensions.html>, 18 August 2014.

The division between individualistic and collectivistic cultures describes the relationship between individuals. Individualistic cultures are typical in Europe (United Kingdom, Netherlands, but also Australia, USA), in which the ties between individuals are loose and everyone cares primarily about themselves and their families. This culture is characterized by low context communication - and therefore all information must be accurately expressed, explained and reflected -, a high level of self-awareness, a sense of guilt associated violations of social situations and self-respect defined from the individualistic point of view. Meanwhile, collectivist culture (mainly a non-European cultures, such as China, Japan, but also Brazil, Mexico) is characterized by a society in which people belong to groups providing them with care, protection, understanding without words – many issues that do not require additional clarification are expressed using the information inherent in the person and the environment (high communication context). This culture is one of loyalty, willingness to sacrifice for the group, feeling shame and loss of face not only for their transgressions, but also for other members of the group.

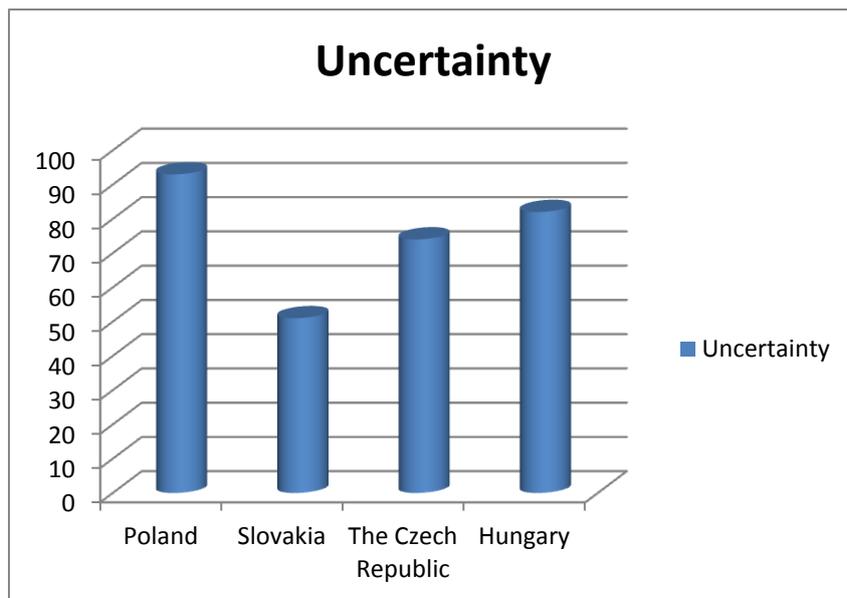
The third dimension described by Hofstede is femininity - masculinity. Masculinity is a feature of societies in which social roles based on gender are stereotypically defined. Masculine society is a society in which "hard" values both among women and men predominate; the main features are attitude to competition, assertiveness, ambition. Femininity is a society in which social gender roles intertwine, that is, both men and women are expected to possess modesty, humility, sensitivity and concern for quality of life. All four Visegrad countries masculine countries, but Slovakia is a particularly masculine society (100) – high success oriented and driven. In Slovakia, the status of being respected is very important. They pay attention to various symbols of status such as cars, houses, brand-name clothes etc. Another strong masculine country, although less than Slovakia, is Hungary (88). People in this country live in order to work; and “competition and performance and conflicts are resolved by fighting them out”¹⁷³. Similarly Poland is a masculine society - subordinates expect an employee to be determined and resolute and care about equality, competitiveness and productivity. Conflicts are unwelcome and people avoid them. A far less masculine society is the Czech Republic (57).

¹⁷³ Ibid.



The last dimension described by Hofstede – uncertainty avoidance - measures the position of citizens in the case of new, unknown or uncertain situations. It describes the ways to cope with difficult situations and measures anxiety, stress and the need for a sense of predictability. Cultures with a higher level of uncertainty are cultures of expression which in contrast to peaceful cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, allow for an open display of emotion, and as a result stress is not muffled and it gives vent to the negative emotion. Poland is characterized by strong emotional need for rules and rigid codes. It has a very high preference of avoiding uncertainty (93). In Poland time is money, there is no tolerance for unorthodox behavior and ideas, security is an important element in individual motivation, people have an inner urge to be busy and work hard, precision and punctuality are the norm, and innovative may be resisted¹⁷⁴. Also Hungary (82) and the Czech Republic have a high preference of avoiding uncertainty (74). Slovakia shows no clear preference (51).

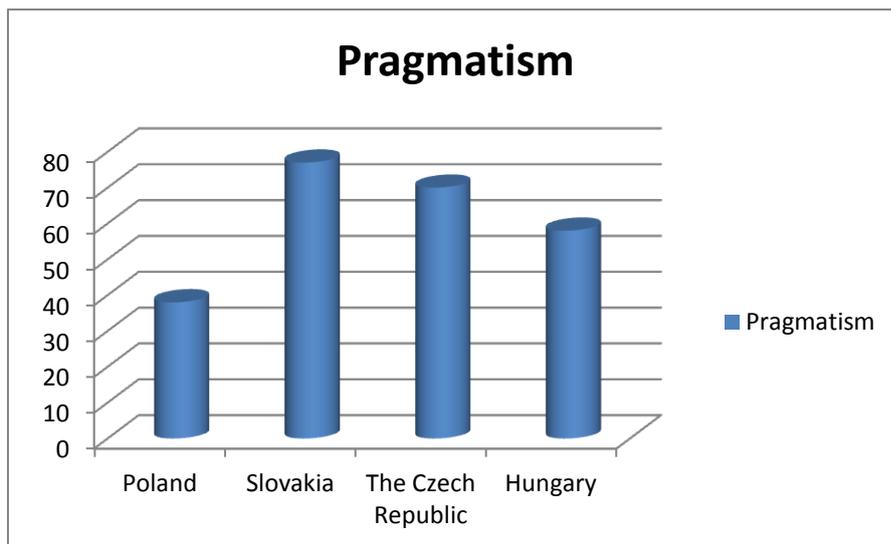
¹⁷⁴ Ibid.



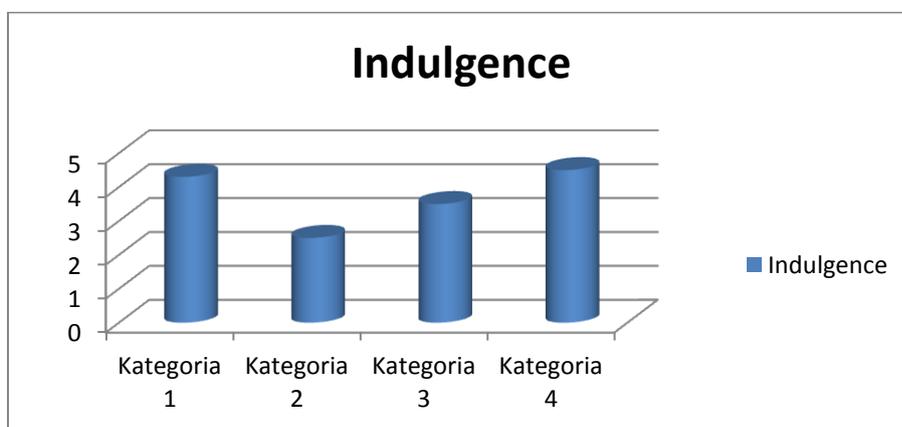
There are also two dimensions in the Hofstede research which allow describing and differentiating the culture of Visegrad countries. Pragmatism is a dimension which describes “how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future”¹⁷⁵. It divides cultures into normative cultures (low score) which prefer to maintain time-honored traditions, and norms, while pragmatic cultures (high score) encourage thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future. Poland (38) represents a normative culture. Truth and tradition are important and people are normative in their thinking, focusing on achieving quick results. Slovakia is opposite to Poland (77) and it is a pragmatic society. People believe that truth depends on a given situation, time and place as well as point of view. They conform and adapt to contemporary times and changing the tradition. They have a strong propensity to save and invest, and persevere in achieving results¹⁷⁶. Similar to Slovakia, the Czech Republic (70) is also a pragmatic society. Hungary (58) has a pragmatic orientation but this orientation is not strong.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.



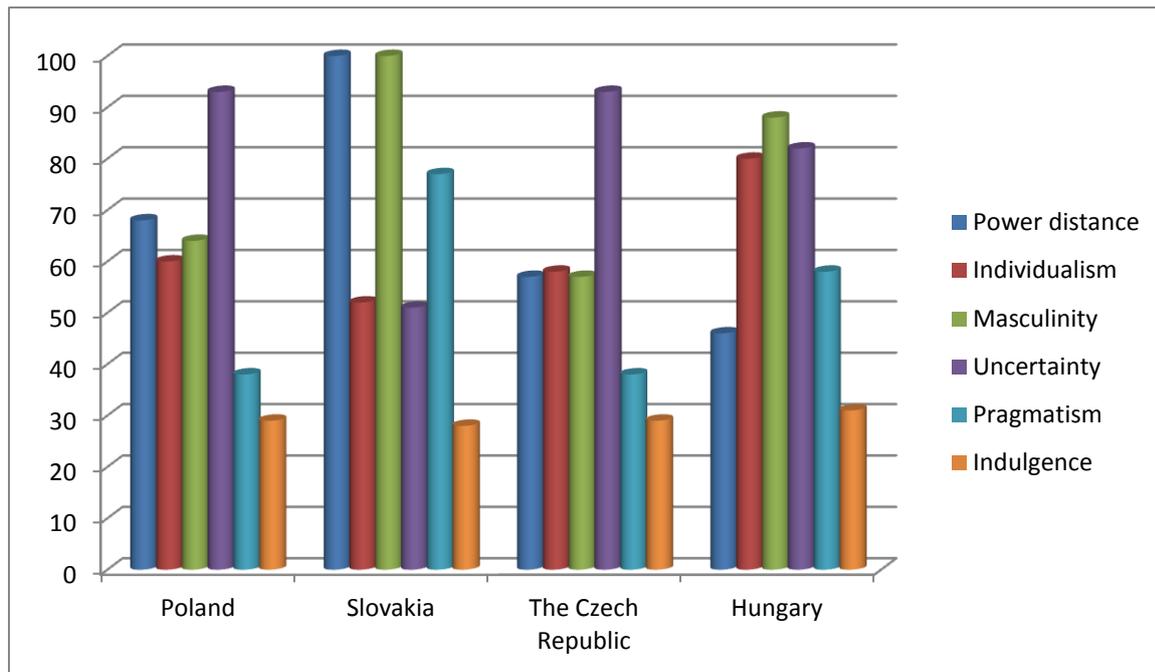
Indulgence, as the last dimension, “is defined at extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses”¹⁷⁷. According to this dimension cultures are divided into indulgence culture with relatively weak control and restraint with relatively strong control. Polish (29) culture is a restraint culture. Poles do not put much emphasis on leisure time and control the gratification of their desires. Slovakia also scores low (28), as does Czech Republic (29) and Hungary (31). Their actions are restrained by social norms and perceive indulging themselves as somewhat wrong¹⁷⁸.



Using the cultural dimension by Hofstede and his students are able to show the differences inside the Visegrad countries. Some parameters are similar but majority differ from each other. The chart below illustrates the differences.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.



Schwartz adds one more distinction among cultures. This dimension confronts societies in the framework of “the relation of humankind to the natural and social world. One response is actively to master and change the world, to assert control, assimilate it to ours, and exploit it in order to further personal or group interests. The value type expressive of this orientation is mastery: A cultural emphasis on getting ahead through active self-assertion”¹⁷⁹. In opposite to mastery there is harmony: “a cultural emphasis on fitting harmoniously into the environment”¹⁸⁰. According to Hebrew psychologist all Visegrad countries are characterized by harmony, which means unity with nature, protecting environment and beauty are important for their citizens.

Meanwhile, Inglehart and Baker notices not only the political history influences culture but also religion and economic development. “Communist regimes made major efforts to eradicate traditional values, and they seem to have had some success. But historically Roman Catholic societies proved relatively resistant to secularization, even after controlling the effects of economic development and Communist rule”¹⁸¹. They use two dimensions which reflect cross-national polarization between traditional versus secular-rational orientation toward authority; and survival versus self-expression value¹⁸². They claim: “the full range of ‘traditions’ is diverse, a mainstream version of preindustrial society having a number of

¹⁷⁹ Shalom H. Schwartz, *Beyond Individualism-Collectivism* , p. 28.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.,

¹⁸¹ R. Inglehart, W. E. Baker, *Modernization* , p. 38.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 23.

common characteristics can be identified. All of the preindustrial societies for which we have data show relative low level of tolerance (...); tend to emphasize male dominance in economic and political life, defense to parental authority”¹⁸³. And then they underline: “The former Communist societies also rank relatively high on this secularization dimension, despite varying degrees of industrialization”¹⁸⁴. They believe a heritage of communist rule has an impact on interpersonal behavior and values such as trust, for example. But also very important in cultural distinguish is religion. It is specifically visible on the example of Poland. Poland lies on the boundaries between historically communist countries and historically Catholic countries. Agnieszka Kościńska notices: “Poland is a predominately Roman Catholic country. According to Church data about 95% of citizens have been baptized. Although it does not mean that all baptized ones are engaged in regular religious practice, the dominant position of Catholicism in the country is unquestionable. In spite of the secular character of the Polish state, the church has a significant influence in the country. Thus, the Church is visible in the public sphere. (...) The Church and various Catholic associations also have considerable influence on the legislative process. (...) The influence of the Church is conditioned historically; the Church played an extremely important role in the Polish struggle for independence (...) during the Communist rule after the Second World War. After the downfall of Communism in 1989 the Church supported the new governing elite with its symbolic power”¹⁸⁵. Catholic Church is, according to Inglehart and Baker, a prototype of hierarchical, centrally controlled institution. While “protestant churches are relatively decentralized and more open to local control. The contrast between local control and domination by a remote hierarchy has important long-term consequences for interpersonal trust. Hungary are interesting country in this field. In Hungary there is no official religion and the law guarantees freedom of religious. More than a half of citizens (especially residents of west and north part of country) are Roman Catholic, but there is also a lot of Protestant churches. Similar situation is in Slovakia. Just as Hungary, Slovakia is characterized by position between Roman Catholic and Protestant Church. More than a half of Slovaks are followers of the Roman Catholic Church (62%), but there is also a lot of people who are Protestants and belong to Greek Catholic Church. Also more than 13 percent declare to be atheistic. While The Czech Republic is historically a Roman Catholic country but currently it

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁸⁵ A. Kościńska, *New Religious Movements and the State in Poland, w: Social and Cultural Diversity in Central and Easter Europe: Old factors and New Prague*, 2005; <http://www.mkc.cz/uploaded/download/Bulletin%20Social%20and%20Cultural%20Diversity.pdf>, 21 May 2014, p. 21.

is one of the most atheistic countries in the world. “Protestant societies rank higher on the survival/self expression dimension than do all of the historically Roman Catholic societies – write American professors – regardless of the extent to which their labor forces are engaged in the service sector”¹⁸⁶. And they add that the Catholic societies of Eastern Europe constitute a distinct sub-cluster of the Catholic world-midway between the West European Catholic societies and the Orthodox societies.

The second factor of cultural diversity is, according to Inglehart and Baker the pace and the way of economic development.” They noticed that ex-Communist societies fall into two groups – those that experienced economic and social collapse, and those that made a successful transition to market economies”¹⁸⁷. According to their research, two of four Visegrad countries illustrate positive growth rates: Poland and Hungary.

Researchers such as Hofstede, Hall, Trompenaars Hampden-Turner attempt to describe and demonstrate the differences between cultures, believing that the knowledge can facilitate international communication. Some researchers still try to describe Eastern European countries as countries characterized by similar culture. Gyula Bakacsi, Takács Sándor, Karácsonyi András and Imrek Viktor in their article *Eastern Europe cluster: tradition and transition* characterize Eastern Europe as countries which prefer “autonomy (utilitarian involvement) vs. loyal involvement and hierarchy (conservatism) vs. equality (egalitarian commitment). Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars found eastern European countries (...Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland...) to be particularistic, medium to high individualistic, mostly specific, ascribed (non-achievement oriented), outer directed, and synchronous (polychronic). (...) Summarizing the eastern European cluster, its societal culture is highly group oriented and dominated by hierarchical managerial practices (...) All the religious tradition in the region (...) suggest uncertainty avoidance. (...) eastern European cultures are also considered as collectivistic societies. The collectivistic ideology, the religious roots and the common sense all promote this view.”¹⁸⁸. Meanwhile the detailed description of every country from Visegrad group presents the differences between each country. And just the knowledge alone about the difference makes it possible to correct communication. The foregoing analysis shows that cross-national cultural variation is closely associated with a society’s level of economic development, religion as well as cultural heritage and so-called collective

¹⁸⁶ R. Inglehart, W. E. Baker, *Modernization ...*, p. 31.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁸⁸ Gyula B., Takács S., Karácsonyi A., Imrek V., *Eastern Europe cluster: tradition and transition*, “Journal of World Business 37 (2002), p. 69, 75, 79.

programming of the mind. It seems that behaviors are always enacted within a defined context and this context will help to define one of various possible meanings to those who are active in that context”¹⁸⁹. All divisions of culture in fact can be reduced to similar aspects and are involved in three components, which Hofstede describes as symbols – that means gestures, codes, vocabulary, nomenclature, ways of greeting and conversation; rituals and values. Knowledge about cultural differences allows for effective intercultural relations and leads to cultural awareness and cross cultural sensitivity¹⁹⁰. Meanwhile ignorance leads to culture shock¹⁹¹ caused by contact with another, unknown culture and its manifestations. Such cultural shock can result in creating distance between foreign cultures and even can promote isolation. Peter B. Smith, Mark F. Peterson and Shalom H. Schwartz add more consequences of knowing and understanding the differences between cultures: “Country-level dimensions of cultural values are frequently employed in management programs concerning cultural awareness. (...) At the same time, recent critics have argued that culture-level characterizations are a distraction from the more important goal of understanding individual-level variability in behavior”¹⁹². He underlines how important is cultural-level guidance in any type of multinational enterprise, in planning and conduct of international joint venture partnership and multicultural teams.

The last comment is especially important from the point of view of the participant of my workshops. She understands the importance of knowing the culture within which is necessary to work with. It is important to know how to give command, work in groups as well as individually, focus on group or individuals, providing or not providing all details to responders or not, what subjects are delicate during a chat, in what way to spend leisure time, in which way to talk about future, or how to inform about uncertainty etc. These factors and many others have a direct impact on effective cooperation. The participants understand that every tourney should be precede by studying the culture first, even when the tourney is from one Visegrad country to another one, from ex-communistic, ex-soviet country to another one, from Poland to Hungary. Cultural difference still plays a very important role. The knowledge of one another may not only impact positively by facilitating the communication between citizens in Visegrad countries but also promote knowledge about cultures.

¹⁸⁹ P. B. Smith, M.F. Peterson, S. H. Schwartz, *Cultural Values ...*, p. 189.

¹⁹⁰ G. Bateson, *Umysł i przyroda: jedność konieczna*, Translated by A. Tanalska-Dulęba, Warszawa 1996.

¹⁹¹ K. Oberg, *Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments*, “Practical Anthropology” 7 (1960), http://agem-ethnomedizin.de/download/cu29_2-3_2006_S_142-146_Repr_Oberg.pdf, 15 April 2013.

¹⁹² P. B. Smith, M.F. Peterson, S. H. Schwartz, *Cultural Values ...*, p. 205.

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