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Contemporary leaders and leadership : new challenges for women

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Contemporary Leaders and Leadership. New Challenges for Women

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ABSTRACT

It is often emphasized in literature dealing with the subject that civic engagement in local affairs is a development factor and advantage in the modern world, even if this is difficult to prove empirically and unequivocally. Civic engagement includes active participation of citizens in of the local community by acknowledging the capacity of influence on local affairs and representation by local leaders.

When evaluating the achievements of the last quarter-century of Polish democracy (including local democracy), one should also consider the past and present role of women in building a civic society and participatory democracy. This problem has also been addressed in the article, prepared by means of a critical analysis of literature, desk and web research, in order to answer the following questions:

- What is the contemporary meaning of leadership?
 - Who is a leader and what traits make someone likely to become a leader?
 - What are the characteristic traits of management by women?
 - How are women engaged in Polish (national and local) politics?
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Introduction

Literature on the subject emphasizes the growing importance of the human factor, in its widest sense, in development processes (including leadership, local leaders, social and intellectual capital). It is a commonly held view that citizens' involvement in local issues, including a more in-depth form of participation in the local community life (understood as the acknowledgement of the causal force and influence on community matters) represented by local leaders, is emerging as a key present-day factor in the development and in gaining advantages, though not easily proven empirically or unequivocally.

The year 2014¹ in Poland saw the country looking back on the achievements of 25 years of Polish democracy, including that on the local level; it also invited reflection on the previous and present role of women in building a civil society and participatory democracy.

Based on such assumptions, this article addresses the following research questions:

- What is our understanding of leadership in contemporary times?
- Who is a leader (male or female) and what qualities make a person a leader?
- What are the characteristics of typical feminine management?
- What is the part played by women in politics (local and central) in Poland really like?

¹ The paper was published in July 2014.

Leadership – a contemporary approach

The concept of leadership is noted for its ambiguity; it operates at the interface of different scientific fields (from the management by political sciences, psychology, sociology and anthropology to theology) and has various definitions depending on the perspective adopted: leadership can be seen through the person of a leader, through results, as a formal position or as a process [Ciuk 2012, 430]. Scientific discussion on the subject of leadership goes back no earlier than the 20th century and originated in developed countries, particularly in the USA. At an early stage, the primary focus was on a set of personal attributes which, when identified, create a universal personality model of effective leadership (concepts of personality); later, the behaviour of leaders was studied in their environment (concepts of behavioural styles); finally, theories were formulated which depicted leadership in terms of the style of management tailored to a particular situation (situational concepts). Historically, leadership has been construed as primarily a masculine domain, and many leadership theories have focused on the desirability of stereotype masculine leadership qualities [Eagly, Carli 2003].

According to studies in the 1990s the underlying factor of leadership is the relationship between the leader and his or her followers (active partners in the interaction) resulting in an agreed change [Kuraszko 2014, 431-432; Ciuk 2012]. Extensive and far-reaching changes in business organization which commenced at the beginning of the 21st century (flattening, outsourcing, networking) add credibility to this approach to leadership.

Today, leadership is perceived as the ability to lead smaller or larger groups of followers [Koźmiński, Jemielniak 2012, 20]. In general, leadership can be regarded as a process of intentional exertion of influence on others. Several types of leadership can be distinguished (in chronological order: from the oldest to the latest concepts) depending on the nature of the influence exerted on the “audience”:

- transactional leadership (leader’s influence comes from his or her role in a quasi-economic exchange),
- servant leadership (the leader leads others because he wants to help them in their holistic development),
- transformational leadership (leader’s charisma inspires the followers to enter into emotional involvement),
- authentic leadership (a real leader encourages authenticity in his or her followers, thus fostering mutual trust and openness),
- transcendental leadership (a transcendental leader infects his or her followers with a sense of mission – this is a leader who makes leaders),
- relational leadership (leadership is interpreted in the light of the result of social interaction and can emerge anywhere).²

Therefore, in the new paradigms of development and management, leadership is interpreted as a “relationship of influence” viewed from the perspective of supporters. In this

² A special type of relational leadership is distributed leadership whereby anybody can take the lead who, in a particular situation and depending on the needs, assumes responsibility and control over the course of action [see E. Jastrzębska 2014, pp. 230-240].

context, a leader's social competences come to the fore as those enabling him or her to forge positive relations within their environment. As Ole Fogh Kirkeby puts it, "*The leader...depends upon dialogue, teaching, request, appeal, commitment, empathy, the possibility of identifying oneself with him, understanding, reciprocity, and solidarity*" [Gasparski 2014, 45].

If we define leadership not as a process of influencing people but the ability to unlock their potential to act and pursue their goals, then the leader can be identified as a person who galvanizes others into action. Still, it should be noted that not every leader has the attributes of an authority figure.

Male/female leaders and a feminine style of management

A leader is a person who inspires, persuades, motivates, and influences others as well as forging the way forward for changes. Local leaders, whose influence on development is evident locally in municipalities or communities, are:

- well-known authority figures who are opinion leaders for the local community [Krukowska-Szopa, Ruszlewicz 1998, 41]
- people who know how to be effective; focus on goals; inspire others to take new action; are able to formulate changes and persuade others of the changes [Poradnik lidera 2012, 4].

As regards leaders and leadership, so far, literature on the subject has mainly explored and analysed the business domain [cf: Majewska-Opiełka 2008, Mrówka 2010, *Harvard Business Review Polska* (117)2012] and seldom in the context of local government [*Przywódstwo lokalne a kształtowanie demokracji partycypacyjnej* 2008]. However, the analysis of leader activity in business and politics (including local government), has failed to specifically include the context of gender. Literature on the subject indicates that a local leader with leadership qualities (regardless of the sex) should above all display the following qualities :

- self-esteem (as they are aware of their strengths and how to use them) and competence,
- an enquiring mind (he or she needs to be able to listen to people, especially those from outside their immediate environment),
- creativity, understood as the ability to look beyond established patterns or frameworks, the so-called "standing out",
- communication skills, that is, always being open to discussions and negotiations, even those involving the most challenging issues; importantly, the communication must be understood by the recipients and adapted to them as an individual,
- strong character (not only know the right action to take, but also to take that action), self-awareness and common sense,
- ability to communicate ideas and persuade others to follow them,
- intuition, which is as important as other features,
- charisma, which makes others identify with the leader and want to follow him or her (although recent literature shows that charisma is not an indispensable quality and is inferior in importance to, e.g. an ability to collaborate).

This article in particular emphasises the division into formal and informal leaders in the context of leadership. Formal leaders are, in a sense, nominated; they are the official administrators associated with the political and self-government area of activity. Informal leaders emerge in the socio-cultural sphere, are involved in social activities, charity work and as volunteers. Importantly, in each unit of local self-government specific types of leaders emerge, determined by the local conditions [Legutko-Kobus 2011, 127-129]. For the large part, formal and informal leaders should cooperate and complement one another in their competence and the ability to influence their followers.

Whereas in the past, leaders based their authority mainly on their access to political, economic, or military power, in post-industrial societies it is far more common for leaders to share and establish many collaborative relationships. Present leaders strengthen their position through relational and authentic leadership, which need not be based on formal structures. Still, more and more frequently, followers of formal leaders require that their action be ethical, i.e. beneficial to the people and at the same time not harmful to others or to the environment, both socio-economic and natural [Szczupaczyński 2013, 156]. In developing a relationship of influence, which allows the pursuit of a shared vision or task, reliance is increasingly placed on social skills and so-called soft management which is associated with the feminine style of management (not only by women). Many authors construe men and women as quite different from each other in their leadership style, with men relying on a somewhat antiquated leadership style that no longer fits in with the needs of most contemporary organizations. So the increase in female leaders has been accompanied by changes in theories and practices of leadership [Eagly, Carli 2003].

As can be seen in literature, women, because of their psychological make-up, incline towards democratic management because they concentrate on:

- partnership, cooperation and interpersonal communication,
- establishing harmonious, durable and deep-rooted relationships,
- attaching less attention to the position in the hierarchy, domination and competition in favour of teamwork,
- seeking compromise rather than confrontation, flexibility, openness to change,
- intuition and empathy,
- taking care of the employees and their development, looking on them as individuals having the right to a private life.

Moreover, women generally think in broad terms about the organization as a whole and strive to maintain a positive atmosphere; they are more ethical and prudent in decision-making, more sensitive to social issues, more willing to undertake pro-social activities and are better organized [Lisowska 2009, 109-118]. Women are considered more sensitive to the so-called social issues, on the one hand, and, on the other, possess the skills needed to handle such problems effectively, to the extent that modern characterizations of effective leadership are more in line with the female gender role. Therefore, they are commonly believed to be able to enjoy a greater say in the decision-making process regarding the shape of the world. For, at present, there is no effective way to prevent and resolve the most burning global issues

without cooperation based on trust and diversity. That is why the question of why so few women take part in decisions on the future of both the world and local communities needs to be explored. It seems that the reasons lie in the context of culture and civilization. A. H. Eagly and L. L. Carli [2007] describe the situation which women leaders face as a labyrinth. Passage through a labyrinth is not simple or direct, but requires persistence and awareness of one's progress.

Contemporary gender inequalities

Unfortunately, the statement in one of the first UNDP reports, "Poverty has a woman's face", still holds true, as out of 1.3 billion people living in poverty today 70% are women [Pabijanek 2012, 11]. This effort on the part of the United Nations triggered a serious international debate on the situation of women, which led to the adoption of the Millennium Declaration of the United Nations in 2000 defining, among others, the Millennium Development Goals. Goal No. 3 is about promoting gender equality and empowering women (by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015). It was assumed that without real gender equality no other goals would be achieved, in particular in countering poverty and in access to education.

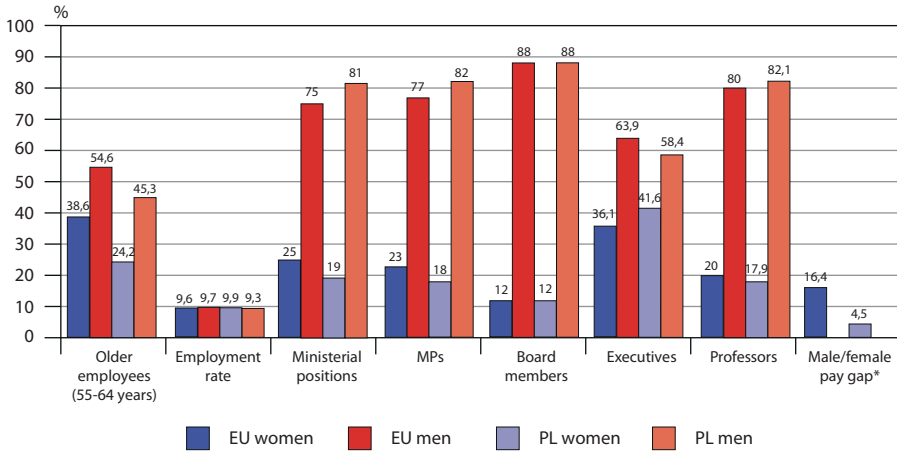
It should be pointed out that in legal terms the EU has long secured gender equality in national legislation of the member states; however, the aim now is to guarantee real equality, since the equality indices demonstrate (e.g. the EU Gender Equality Index) that major disparities in the treatment of women and men still exist across the individual member states [Gender Equality Index. Report, 2013] – Fig. 1.

According to UN reports and research, in the 21st century, women continue to be discriminated against: individually, institutionally in a systemic manner, and not only in business but also in other areas of life. In Poland the basic problems of gender inequality have also remained unresolved (e.g. no amendment to the gender parity law, the gender pay gap). This state of affairs stems both from a sharp ideological controversy, the caricaturing of the "gender ideology" and the lack of courage and reluctance on the part of politicians. As a result, Poland has failed to accede to half of the international agreements protecting human rights (71 conventions in total), including such fundamental documents as the Council of Europe's Bioethics Convention or Protocol No. 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights [Siedlecka 2014].

In combating discrimination against women, their unique role in development processes is highlighted. Today, women account for more than half of the market, shaping it to a large extent by their purchasing power. Women take the vast majority of consumer decisions, 83% of all purchasing decisions in the United States and 80% of purchasing decisions regarding consumer goods in the UK [Wittenberg-Cox, Maitland 2010, 100-101].

Studies also show that gender diversity is an advantage, and that there is a link between female participation in the management board and the company's good economic standing,

Fig. 1. Selected indicators concerning gender inequality in the EU in 2010 (in %)



* The average difference between the hourly pay for men and women before tax across all sectors of the economy.

Source: own study based on Gender Equality Index. Poland, <http://eige.europa.eu/content/gender-equality-index/#/country/PL>. Last accessed: 5 April 2014; Kobiety na stanowiskach kierowniczych w krajach UE w latach 2009-2011, http://rynekpracy.pl/artukul.php/typ.1/kategoria_glowna.75/wpis.471#wykres3. Last accessed: 5 April 2014; Progress on equality between women and men in 2011. A Europe 2020 initiative. EU 2012, pp. 5, 10, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/progress_on_equality_between_women_and_men_in_2011.pdf. Last accessed: 5 April 2014; She Figures 2012. Gender in Research and Innovation. Statistics and Indicators. EU 2013, p. 90, http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/she-figures-2012_en.pdf. Last accessed: 5 April 2014; Szkoły wyższe i ich finanse w 2010 r. GUS. Warszawa 2011, p. 308; Unemployment statistics, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics. Last accessed: 5 April 2014.

which is attributed to the feminine style of management. An example of this is Norway, which introduced a mandatory 40% quota in the management and supervisory boards of publicly listed companies. After a few years, it proved successful. A study by McKinsey & Company showed that Norwegian companies with a higher participation of women in governance (the condition is that there must be at least three women on the board) report better long-term results by about 40-50% owing to a more favourable working environment, the quality of leadership and a vision of growth [Zechariasz 2013]. In addition, research carried out by Goldman Sachs points out that gender equality in the labour market is likely to increase the GDP by 9% in the United States, by about 13% in the Eurozone and by 16% in Japan [Wittenberg-Cox, Maitland 2010, 53].

The results of scientific research urged the European Parliament in November 2014 to back the European Commission's directive providing that by 2020 women must represent 40% of the composition of the supervisory boards of publicly listed EU companies that employ more than 250 people and report a turnover of more than EUR 50 million [*Rysa na europejskim szklanym suficie* 2013].

Female leaders in politics and action

International, national and local politics have been a predominantly male domain. Today,³ 19 women hold top offices in world politics, including 7 in the European area (Lithuania, Latvia, Switzerland, Slovenia, Denmark, Norway, and Germany). A small proportion of women among the heads of state is noticeable in the membership of the Council of Women World Leaders, an organization established in 1996 and comprising 45 (almost all) female PMs and presidents (the only Pole among them is former PM, Hanna Suchocka) [Liswood 2012, 106-107].

When looking back on the 25 years of socio-economic transformation in Poland, it is worth contemplating women's roles in yesterday's and today's political life. Currently, it is emphasized that every level of governance, which is becoming increasingly fragmented and dispersed, needs equal participation of women and men; this is true not only of business or expert groups but also of politics. How far as a country we are from meeting this recommendation is evident from several collections of data:⁴

- the Polish political scene of the last 25 years has seen only one female PM: Hanna Suchocka from the Democratic Union (in office from 10 July 1992 to 18 October 1993),
- two women ran for Polish presidency, neither succeeded: Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz (1995) and Henryka Bochniarz (2005),
- in individual governments, the proportion of female ministers has varied (up to 2005, there had usually been one woman in the government, with the exception of Jan Olszewski's and Jerzy Buzek's cabinets, there were no women in the first, and three women in the latter),
- since 2005, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz's term of office, female participation in the successive cabinets has remained stable at 20%. Currently, there are four women in Donald Tusk's cabinet (one as deputy PM), which represents 21% of the entire government.
- Also the figures for the Sejm and the Senate reveal an increase in the number of women: there are 110 women MPs in the present term of office (112 at the beginning of the term), which accounts for 25% of all MPs (most of them, in the Civic Platform party – 72, i.e. 35% of the club); by contrast, there were only 67 women in the previous term 2007-2011, i.e. 15% of the MPs. 13 women sit in the Senate, which is 13% of all senators; there were seven female senators in the former term 2007-2011 (7%),
- four women hold office as regional governor (Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Łódzkie, Podkarpackie, Świętokrzyskie), while there is only one female marshal (Lubuskie), the top office in the regional self-government.

The analysis of female participation in politics would not be complete without examining the level in local self-governments. Research published by the Institute of Public Affairs

³ Status on 15 July 2014.

⁴ Based on: *Kobiety na polskiej scenie politycznej* 2012; data of the National Electoral Commission (<http://pkw.gov.pl/wyniki-wyborow-i-referendow/wybory-i-referenda.html>); data of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister (<https://www.premier.gov.pl/ludzie.html>); official website of the Sejm (*lower House of Parliament*) (<http://www.sejm.gov.pl/Sejm7.nsf/poslowie.xsp?type=N>), official website of the Senate (*Upper House of Parliament*) (<http://www.senat.gov.pl/>).

Table 1. Female participation in local authorities: municipal and district councils and regional assemblies

Year of local elections		2002	2006	2010
Percentage of women elected to:	municipal council	18	21	24
	district council	16	16	18
	regional assembly	14	17	22

Source: National Electoral Commission Data (<http://pkw.gov.pl/wyniki-wyborow-i-referendow/wybory-i-referenda.html>). Last accessed: 10 July 2014.

shows that female activity in local politics has been increasingly visible, which can be seen in the number of female candidates elected to local councils (in 2002, female candidates accounted for about 25% of all candidates while in 2010 for over 30%) and the elected councillors (Table 1).

Despite the earlier disadvantageous situation in terms of women’s participation in municipal councils throughout Poland, after the 2010 local elections, the councils in 93 municipalities were actually “feminized” (the majority of elected councillors were women). Women councillors dominate municipal councils in the Lubuskie, Dolnośląskie, Zachodniopomorskie regions, while the lowest number of women in local governments is reported in Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie, Wielkopolskie [*Kobiety na polskiej scenie politycznej* 2012, 20-23].

As can be seen in the figures in Table 1, an increase in the proportion of women in municipal and district councils and regional assemblies is observable, yet small (the smallest in district councils – only by 2 pp). The situation is similar among municipal and district heads and city mayors: after the 2010 elections, only 9% of them were women (an increase by 1 pp since 2006 and by 2 pp since 2002).

The picture of female activity in politics would not be complete without mentioning informal leaders. Their activity is particularly visible in rural areas. Relevant data shows that there is a rising number of female village leaders (i.e. directly elected representatives of the local community); there is also a revival of Farmers’ Wives’ Associations. A 2005 report, *Nowe szanse na polskiej wsi* [New Opportunities in the Polish Rural Areas] states that in the countryside, “women plan and administer, men have nothing else to do but implement their plans.”

Informal female activity manifests itself in a variety of ways, one of them being the Congress of Women established in 2009 as a civil movement set up around the organization of the First Congress of Women. Since 2010, the Congress of Women has been operating as an association; its activity is best illustrated by:

- the Shadow Cabinet formed in 2011 by the most active Congress members as a “constructive proposal for the acting and successive governments.” It monitors politicians’ activities and draws their attention to issues which have been ignored or neglected, not only important for women but for the quality of life in Poland in general. The Shadow

Table 2. Central themes of the Congresses of Women

Year	Congress theme
2009	20 Years of Transformation 1989 – 2009
2010	Time for Elections! Time for Women! Time for Solidarity!
2011	<i>Europe Is a Woman!</i>
2012	<i>Activity, Entrepreneurship, Independence</i>
2013	<i>Partnership-Solidarity-Diversity</i>
2014	<i>Community, Equality, Responsibility</i>

Source: Based on: http://www.kongreskobiet.pl/pl-PL/text/kongresy_kobiet/regionalne_kongresy_kobiet. Last accessed: 20 July 2014.

Cabinet is headed by PM Danuta Hübner, and Małgorzata Fuszara,⁵ the Minister for Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination, has been nominated as a new government plenipotentiary for equal treatment,

- Congresses of Women – the sixth congress was held this year. Leaders and activists attended all previous congresses which were held on different themes (Table 2), including the promotion of female participation in the 2010 local elections.

The phenomenon of the Congress of Women has developed into regional congresses held since 2009 (the first regional congress was hosted by Elbląg and then by other regional capitals: Poznań, Kraków, Lublin, Szczecin, as well as smaller cities, such as Koszalin, Cieszyn, Piła, Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Wałbrzych. The 2013 congress was held in London, UK).

Conclusion

According to research, there are increasingly more female leaders, both formal and informal, although the pace of change is far from satisfactory. Because of the crisis of individual leadership and public trust in political leaders, we look for, and single out, authentic and relational leaders as well as those open to communication and capable of initiating cooperation. As this study demonstrates, contemporary challenges can be handled by the soft management approach and a greater female presence in politics and business. Poland is among the countries with an incomplete quota system, effective since the parliamentary elections of 2011 and assuming at least 35% of female participation on electoral lists, therefore we are far from meeting the requirements ensuring full feminine participation in political activity. The target recommended quota is 50%, coupled with the idea of alternate arrangement of candidates' names in the lists. Such solutions are endorsed by the Congress of Women and Polish voters in general. UN reports show that the achievement of the so-called "critical mass", i.e.

⁵ *Gabinet Cieni*, www.kongreskobiet.pl/pl-PL/text/O_nas/Gabinet_Cieni. Last accessed: 5 June 2014.

a 30% of feminine participation in governing bodies, is what individual groups (women, in this case) actually expect. Yet, it is not only revised legislation that should prompt female involvement in politics; there is also a pressing need for change in the mentality of both female candidates and female voters.

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Współcześni przywódcy i liderzy, czyli nowe wyzwania dla kobiet**STRESZCZENIE**

W literaturze przedmiotu podkreśla się, że zaangażowanie obywatelskie w sprawy lokalne, w tym mocniejsza forma uczestnictwa obywateli w życiu społeczności lokalnej (rozumiane jako uznanie mocy sprawczej i wpływu na sprawy wspólnoty), reprezentowana przez lokalnych liderów, staje się nowoczesnym czynnikiem rozwoju i budowania przewag, choć trudno to jednoznacznie, empirycznie udowodnić.

Dokonując podsumowań osiągnięć 25 lat polskiej demokracji (w tym lokalnej), warto także zastanowić się, jaka była i jaka jest rola kobiet w budowaniu społeczeństwa obywatelskiego i demokracji partycypacyjnej. Podejmując tą problematykę, z wykorzystaniem metod: krytycznej analizy literatury przedmiotu, analizy desk i web research, w niniejszym artykule poszukiwano odpowiedzi na następujące pytania badawcze:

- jak współcześnie rozumiane jest przywództwo?
 - kim jest lider (liderka) i jakie cechy predestynują do bycia liderem?
 - czym się charakteryzuje kobiecy styl zarządzania?
 - jakie jest zaangażowanie kobiet w Polsce w politykę (centralną i lokalną)?
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