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ENERGETICS IN AGRICULTURE: CULTURAL PATTERN AS A STUMBLING BLOCK OR TAILWIND

ENERGETIKA U POLJOPRIVREDI: KULTURNI OBRAZAC KAO KAMEN SPOTICANJA ILI VETAR U LEĐA

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ABSTRACT

Observed in the last decade, Serbia cannot boast a high level of competitiveness, whereby the determined values of the innovation and business sophistication factors indicate that Serbia, in this subindex of competitiveness, noticeably lags behind even the EU countries with the lowest values of this indicator. Holding the attitude that sustainable development is a synergistic effect and a common denominator of energetics, agriculture and ecology, and the state of resources related to energetics and agriculture in Serbia is noticeably better than their effectiveness, culture will be introduced into the development equation, whereby the reasons for this situation will be seen through the prism of the prevailing cultural pattern of Serbia. Competitiveness, as a key assumption for improving the well-being of any country and considering the way of its improvement, is the main goal of this work.

Keywords: *cultural pattern, energetics in agriculture, competitiveness, effectiveness*

REZIME

Konkurentnost je ključna pretpostavka povećanja blagostanja bilo koje zemlje. Srbija se, posmatrano poslednjih desetak godin, ne može pohvaliti visokim nivoom konkurentnosti. Ono što posebno zabrinjava je da se na vrhu liste predloga Svetskog ekonomskog foruma (WEF) za unapređenje konkurentnosti Srbije nalaze inovacije, naglašavajući da vrednosti faktora inovativnosti i poslovne sofisticiranosti ukazuju da Srbija u ovom subindeksu konkurentnosti zaostaje čak i u odnosu na zemlje EU koje ostvaruju najniže vrednosti ovog indikatora. Zastupajući stav da je održivi razvoj sinergetski efekat i zajednički imenitelj energetike, poljoprivrede i ekologije, da je stanje resursa vezanih za energetiku i poljoprivredu u Srbiji bolje od njihove efektivnosti, pa samim tim i efektivnosti koju bi mogla da dostigne,u razvojnu jednačinu će biti uvedena kultura, pri čemu će razlozi ovakvog stanja stvari biti sagledani kroz optiku vladajućeg kulturnog obrasca Srbije. Kulturni obraci koji karakterišu srpsku kulturu su: visoka distanca moći, visoko izbegavanje neizvesnosti, kolektivizam, ženske vrednosti i kratkoročna perspektiva. Kakve implikacije izazivaju ovakve osobenosti srpskog kulturnog obrasca? Koje negativne aspekte imaju na razvoj i njegove efekte. Da li određene dimenzije kulture mogu da potpomognu razvojne potencijale? Ovo su samo neka od pitanja kojima je neophodna stručna rasprava.

Ključne reči: *kulturni obrazac, energetika u poljoprivredi, konkurentnost, efektivnost*

INTRODUCTION

In complex and change-prone modern business conditions, the struggle for existence requires increasingly more authentic and innovative ways of achieving competitiveness. The word development, regardless of the context in which it is used, always implies a favorable change, a step from simple to complex, from inferior to superior, from worse to better.

Scientific observation is always polemical. It is noticeable that different scientific disciplines are constantly advice-exchanging. It happens whether it is about the fields of study "that have traditionally been parts of humanities, such as the study of human language (linguistics) and human psyche (psychology)", which increasingly relies on mathematics (Babić, 2017); whether it is about the perceiving economic growth which is interpreted by the law of thermodynamics – entropy (Georgescu-Roegen, 1971); or searching for the causes of (un)success of business alliances by entering the field of fluid mechanics (Nikolić et al., 2016).

Competitiveness is a key assumption of improving the well-being of any country. Observed in the last decade, Serbia cannot boast a high level of competitiveness. The situation has become more complex by the transition process which affects great institutional discontinuity and thus „the unsatisfactory state of institutions in Serbia". The transition should primarily be seen as „social transformation" which would always presuppose a transition from a lower to a higher development level. However, the transition in Serbia is generally understood as "a new cloak on an old garment", without changes in the very fabric of individual and social being" (Matejić, 2009).

In the Report of the World Economic Forum (WEF), the values of the innovation and business sophistication factors for Serbia are especially worrying, showing that Serbia, in this subindex of competitiveness, lags behind even the EU countries with the lowest values of this indicator.

It can be often heard that „we do everything we need to, the best we know, but success does not come to the expected extent..." This issue seems to elude expert analysis, given that the results are neither at the expectation level nor the level of invested efforts. It is an indisputable fact that there is concern about this situation, and numerous authors make certain diagnoses, structure certain strategies and offer certain development models. But something is missing. Some models have many advantages, but also the same disadvantage the other models dealing with the issue of (sustainable) development suffer from. This paper relies on the statement that „the model with no place for culture is empty" (Douglas & Ney, 2003). Holding the attitude that sustainable development is a synergistic

effect and a common denominator of energetics, agriculture and ecology, culture, ie. cultural pattern, will be introduced into the development equation.

Given that the state of resources related to energetics and agriculture in Serbia is noticeably better than their effectiveness, this state of affairs will be seen through the prism of the prevailing cultural pattern of Serbia. What are the implications underlying such characteristics of the Serbian cultural pattern? What negative aspects do they have regarding development and its effects? What dimensions can be a tailwind for development? These are some questions that need expert discussion.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The paper aims, by pointing out specifics of national culture and explaining its five cultural dimensions created by the Duch author Hofstede, to help understand the influence of national culture in terms of solving the basic development problems of a particular society. Discovering this influence in the context of sustainable development as a field of synergistic actions of energetics, agriculture and ecology is achieved primarily by collecting, studying, analyzing and systematizing available literature, expert papers, theoretical approaches, etc.

In response to increasingly fierce competition, there is a growing need for creative solutions and continuous innovation. Given that agriculture is viewed in the context of sustainable development, it is assigned an important role in environmental protection, with a significant place belonging to energetics, ie. renewable energy sources. The increasing importance of agriculture as an energy source is becoming more noticeable. In the analysis of economic performances of national economies, the concept of competitiveness is used, where the Global Competitiveness Index, due to the integration of a large number of components, is most in use.

The research focus of this paper is Serbia and the analysis of the value dimensions of Serbian national culture. Using a comparative research method, the research focus includes the value dimensions of the national culture of Denmark, which is, according to the values of the Global Competitiveness Index, among the best-ranked countries on the list of the World Economic Forum (WEF). What makes Denmark worth considering is the idea of constant progress in every sense, from innovation, through sustainability and equality, to trust and openness. What makes it exceptional is its aspiration to create a "green" and sustainable society that is supposed to draw all its energy from renewable energy sources by 2050. Without such a comparative analysis, it is not possible to notice cultural-universal and cultural-specific contents of different cultures and their significance. An additional goal is to analyze the cultural dimensions to point out the importance of an interdisciplinary and systemic approach, necessary in a time fraught with numerous dilemmas and unresolved issues of sustainable development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

National culture represents "mental programming": a pattern of thinking, feelings and ways of acting that every person acquires in early childhood and then applies throughout their lifetime (*Hofstede, 2001*). The search for understanding the cultural matrix also explains the view that such a matrix „affects behavior, opinion and feelings of all or most members of a national collective", whereby the cultural pattern represents „the way people, during development, adopt certain culturally specific behaviors, beliefs, attitudes toward the self and others" (*Benedict, 1935; Nikolić & Miladinović, 2012*). The above mentioned supports the thesis of the interdependence of culture, people and their behavior.

The behavior of individuals, groups, peoples can be explained, among all, by the peculiarities of the prevailing cultural pattern. Based on research conducted in the 1970s and 1980s, Hofstede (2010), who sees culture as a multidimensional concept, created the basic dimensions by which it is possible to distinguish national cultures: Power Distance (PDI), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), Individualism/Collectivism (IDV), Masculinity/Femininity (MAS) and the fifth dimension, introduced in 1987, Long-Term/Short-Term orientation in time (LTO). The author was primarily interested in the differences in attitudes, opinions, values, beliefs and perceptions of people who originated from different national cultures. In the context of this paper, it is extremely important to understand that these dimensions (*Hofstede, 2003*) can serve as a good framework for categorizing national cultures and their levels of resistance to change. The cultures that show the strongest resistance to change are characterized by a high index of power distance, a low index of individualism and a high index of risk and uncertainty avoidance. The cluster of countries that show the strongest resistance to change includes the former Yugoslavia and, according to the later research (*Hofstede, 2010*), like the system of connected vessels, the mentioned characteristics have been retained by the states that emerged from the disintegration of the former common state. Differences between national cultures have a significant impact on "the model of economic development, and even on overall social relations" (*Mojić, 2009*).

The power distance refers to "the degree to which less powerful members of organizations and institutions in a country accept the fact that power is distributed unequally" (*Hofstede, 2001*). High power distance is associated with unequal distribution of power in society as well as in organizations and is considered as a normal, natural, efficient and the only sustainable state that neither should be nor can be changed. Low power distance assumes that equal power distribution in society is good and desirable.

Uncertainty avoidance refers to "the degree to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous and unknown situations" (*Hofstede, 2001*), showing how the society copes with the fundamental problem of attitudes toward change, ambiguity and uncertainty. National cultures with a high level of uncertainty avoidance are characterized by a very low propensity for change, fear of the unknown, as well as a low tolerance for any differences. This all causes the existence of a large number of formal rules, all in order to ensure greater stability and predictability (*Šapić, 2009*).

Individualism, as a response to the fundamental problem of the relationship between an individual and a collective, refers to "societies in which ties between individuals are 'loose'. (...) Collectivism refers to societies in which people are integrated from birth into strong, cohesive groups that protect people throughout their lives in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (*Hofstede, 2001*). Individualism is related to the belief of individuals that only they are responsible for their own destiny and the collective has no obligations to them. Collectivism implies that the destiny of each individual is the responsibility of the collective to which they belong, and expects the collective to care for them, whether it is a family, a company, or a society as a whole.

The dimension that represents the fundamental problem of gender relations refers to Femininity/Masculinity national cultures. "Feminine" cultures are characterized by prevailing

values such as interpersonal relationships, quality of life, balance, harmony and care. These are so-called "being" cultures in which the value of people is proven by their very existence and a role in the social network. The cultures where so-called "masculine" values are prevailing, emphasize action, achievement, results, determination and aggression. These are so-called "doing" cultures in which one's value is proven by results and actions (*Petković et al., 2008*).

Long-term/short-term orientation in time is a dimension of culture that essentially emphasizes the attitude of the members of society toward investing in the future, planning and long-term thinking. This dimension of culture refers to the degree to which culture encourages its members to accept delayed gratification of their material, social and emotional needs (*Hofstede, 2001*). If it is a society with a short-term orientation in time, that society shows preferences toward achieving short-term goals. A society that prefers a long-term perspective places importance on long-term plans and strategic goals.

In the cultures with a high power distance, the organizational structures will tend to centralize. In the societies with a low power distance, considerably greater decentralization is noticeable than in the societies characterized by a high distance power. Low values of power distance are characteristic of the cultures that emphasize equality. The cultures with low uncertainty avoidance show high tolerance for change, risk and uncertainty. Such societies are facing change.

Communication strategies are highly important (Orboi Dora Manuela et al., 2017), both in the business and private spheres. In countries characterized by a high level of uncertainty avoidance, communication is highly formalized, numerous rules and procedures are adopted, which emphasize the importance of respect. Verbal communication and the contents of business meetings are documented in writing (*Dragin, 2015*). These are "anxious cultures" that try to be expressive in communication. People from countries with high uncertainty avoidance "present themselves as busy, fussy, emotional and aggressive" (*Hofstede, 2005*). Low-context cultures practice direct and simple information and insist on direct answers and clear and precise messages. A written agreement is required, which is considered final and legally binding (*Dobrijević, 2011; Hercigonja, 2017*). High-context cultures are more capable of communicating, require a lot of additional information so that messages or situations can be properly understood, and the negotiation process is much longer than in low-context cultures. In collectivist cultures, such as Serbian, high-context communication is prevailing, while in individualistic cultures low-context communication is prevailing.

The cultures in which the indexes of power distance and uncertainty avoidance are low, and the index of individualism is high, show openness and readiness for change; it could be said that high levels of uncertainty avoidance and power distance increase resistance to change, while a high level of individualism encourages change.

The research (*Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, 2005*) indicates that Serbian national culture has a unique combination of high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, high collectivism and feminine values, short-term orientation in time.

The Danish cultural pattern is a unique combination of low power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, individualism, feminine values and long-term orientation in time. Comparing the characteristics of Danish and Serbian cultural patterns, it is not difficult to see significant differences in cultural dimensions. The only common cultural specific of Serbia and Denmark belongs to the so-called feminine cultures, where the value of feminine culture in Denmark is much more emphasized than in Serbia.

The World Economic Forum has been publishing Global Competitiveness Reports since 1979, and since 2005 it has based its analysis on the Global Competitiveness Index (*WEF (1), 2008-2009, p.3*). The updated version of the index was published in 2007 and did not change significantly until 2018 (Table 1, Table 2). In that period, the Global Competitiveness Reports referred to 133 out of 148 countries of the world and the values of the Global Competitiveness Index ranged from 1 to 7, with 1 representing the lowest and 7 the highest competitiveness. The Global Competitiveness Index distinguished 12 pillars of competitiveness (institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labor market efficiency, financial market development, technological literacy, market size, business sophistication and innovation) which were monitored based on 114 indicators and organized into three subindexes (Basic Factors, Efficiency Factors, Innovation and Sophistication Factors). The subindexes were given different weights in the calculation of the overall index depending on the development of the economy and based on the level of gross domestic product per capita (WEF (2), 2016-2017, p.4).

Table 1. The scores of the Global Competitiveness Index and Subindex for Serbia (2008-2017)

Country: Serbia	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**
Global Competitiveness Index										
Score	3.90	3.77	3.84	3.88	3.87	3.77	3.90	3.89	3.97	4.14
Rank	85	93	96	95	95	101	94	94	90	78
Subindex: Basic requirements										
Score	4.15	3.90	4.15	4.28	4.15	3.96	4.10	4.15	4.33	4.54
Rank	88	97	93	88	95	106	101	96	87	74
Subindex: Efficiency enhancers										
Score	3.82	3.77	3.75	3.73	3.83	3.78	3.50	3.85	3.85	3.92
Rank	78	86	93	90	88	92	80	83	90	82
Subindex: Innovation and sophistication factors										
Score	3.30	3.21	3.04	2.99	2.96	3.01	3.05	3.02	3.10	3.31
Rank	91	94	107	118	124	125	121	125	120	104

Source: WEF (3). (2008-2017). Global Competitiveness Report. Geneva: World Economic Forum

Table 2. The scores of the Global Competitiveness Index and Subindex for Denmark (2008-2017)

Country: Denmark	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**
Global Competitiveness Index										
Score	5.58	5.46	5.32	5.40	5.25	5.18	5.29	5.33	5.35	5.39
Rank	3	5	9	8	12	15	13	12	12	12
Subindex: Basic requirements										
Score	6.14	5.98	5.86	5.86	5.68	5.55	5.85	5.91	5.85	5.90
Rank	4	4	7	8	16	21	13	12	13	13
Subindex: Efficiency enhancers										
Score	5.49	5.36	5.20	5.27	5.15	5.05	5.11	5.15	5.19	5.26
Rank	3	6	9	9	15	16	17	16	17	15
Subindex: Innovation and sophistication factors										
Score	5.37	5.28	5.15	5.31	5.24	5.14	5.19	5.25	5.27	5.28
Rank	7	7	9	8	12	11	9	10	10	11

Source: WEF (3). (2008-2017). Global Competitiveness Report. Geneva: World Economic Forum

The reports for 2018 showed the rank values of the global competitiveness index (Table 3), but also the Pillars of Competitiveness presented with four categories (supportive environment, human capital, market, innovation ecosystem). Relating to the topic of this paper, the values of the innovation ecosystem category for Serbia (Table 4) and Denmark (Table 5) are very informative.

Table 3. The scores of the Global Competitiveness Index for Serbia and Denmark (2018-2019)

Global Competitiveness Index	**2018**	**2019**
Country: Serbia		
Score	60.9	60.9
Rank	65	72
Country: Denmark		
Score	80.6	81.2
Rank	10	10

Source: WEF (4). (2018-2019). Global Competitiveness Report. Geneva: World Economic Forum

Table 4. The scores of the Innovation Ecosystem Category for Serbia (2018-2019)

Country: Serbia	**2018**	**2019**
Category: Innovation Ecosystem		
1) Business dynamism		
Score	60.9	63.1
Rank	59	54
2) Innovation capability		
Score	39.7	40.2
Rank	56	59

Source: WEF (4). (2018-2019). Global Competitiveness Report. Geneva: World Economic Forum

Table 5. The scores of the Innovation Ecosystem Category for Denmark (2018-2019)

Country: Denmark	**2018**	**2019**
Category: Innovation Ecosystem		
1) Business dynamism		
Score	79.1	80
Rank	6	3
2) Innovation capability		
Score	75.4	76.2
Rank	12	11

Source: WEF (4). (2018-2019). Global Competitiveness Report. Geneva: World Economic Forum

Since 2011, the indicator Agriculture policy costs (Table 6) has been included in the reports, and in 2019 the indicator Renewable energy regulation (Table 7) was included.

Table 6. The scores of the Agriculture policy costs Indicator for Serbia and Denmark (2011-2017)

Indicator: Agriculture policy costs	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**
Country: Serbia							
Score	3.4	3.3	3.2	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.9
Rank	112	119	130	128	132	132	130
Country: Denmark							
Score	3.9	3.9	3.9	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.6
Rank	61	73	61	34	32	34	21

Source: WEF(3). (2011-2017). Global Competitiveness Report. Geneva: World Economic Forum

Table 7. The scores of the Renewable energy regulation Indicator for Serbia and Denmark (2019)

Indicator: Renewable energy regulation (2019)	**Country: Serbia**	**Country: Denmark**
Score	52.9	79.3
Rank	65	16

Source: WEF(4). (2019). Global Competitiveness Report. Geneva: World Economic Forum

Most of the indicators used to evaluate the success of Serbian agriculture, published by the Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Serbia, are far from the results immanent to successful agriculture. Neither the growth rate, nor foreign trade, nor productivity, nor participation in GDP is in favour of domestic agriculture (*http://voice.org.rs/2019*). During 2018. 7% less irrigation was carried out in Serbia than in 2017. Labor productivity measured by total production per active farmer in Serbia lags significantly behind the developed countries and the countries in transition. Without more detailed observations, we will cite the statement of the agrarian analyst Stanković that „modest growth rates of agricultural production that Serbia achieved in the previous period at the global level only the poorest countries in the sub-Saharan region have“ (*http://voice.org.rs/2019*).

The balance between nature conservation and agricultural land preservation has been a high priority on Denmark's agenda for several decades. The development and implementation of economic growth and environmental policies in Denmark have for many years been focused on the synergy of environmental protection and economic development. The transition to renewable energy sources has been in process for many years and according to the data for the period from 2000 to 2018, the share of energy produced from renewable sources has increased from 8% to 28%. Energy efficiency is set high and, in line with it, the total energy consumption in Denmark fell by 9% despite the fact that the economic growth was 30% in the same period. According to the Environmental Management Index for 2018, Denmark is in third place, which is a goal difficult to achieve for many countries (*Hougor, 2018*).

The compared statistical values of the Global Competitiveness Index of Serbia and Denmark indicated important and stimulating differences. The average value of the Global Index Competitiveness, for the ten-year observed period (2008 – 2017), is 3.89 for Serbia and 5.36 for Denmark. The average value of the efficiency subindex is 3.78 for Serbia and 5.22 for Denmark. The average value of the innovation and sophistication subindex is 3.10 for Serbia and 5.25 for Denmark. The ability to innovate, within the innovation ecosystem as one of the pillars of competitiveness (introduced in the Report for 2018), is 39.95 for Serbia and 75,80 for Denmark. The Agriculture policy costs indicator is 3.07 for Serbia and 4.16 for Denmark. The Renewable energy regulation indicator is 52.9 for Serbia, while the value for Denmark is as high as 79.3.

A brief overview of the development specifics of Serbia and Denmark points out the need to consider the specifics of the cultural patterns of Serbia and Denmark. It is necessary to draw conclusions and lessons from differences and possible similarities.

The good news is: "Culture is not something that is passively received, it is much more precise to say that culture is something that is actively appropriated" (*Faye, 2002*). Culture and society are constantly changing due to the creative and innovative power of their members. What can we do? Given that "national culture is an important situational factor" (*Mojić, 2010*), it is important

to see the specifics of the cultural pattern of Serbia, analyze them and determine specific activities (*Mujičić et al., 2007*).

Given that the prevailing cultural patterns of a nation evolve independently very slowly, "a great national affair is urgent. The first (...) is related to education and educational work on changing these dimensions; the second, without which significant changes are unlikely to take place, is related to responsible social and political efforts to compensate for the deficit" (*Matejić, 2009*), produced by the prevailing cultural model".

CONCLUSION

In order to respond to the increasingly complex challenges Serbian agriculture and the economy as a whole facing, understanding and improving competitiveness is an important and priority goal. Given that "everything that is measurable should be measured", the Report of the World Economic Forum is an important roadmap toward the development goal.

The values of the Global Competitiveness Index, the subindexes of efficiency, innovation and sophistication, the ability to innovate within the innovation ecosystem as one of the pillars of competitiveness, Agriculture policy costs and Renewable energy regulation indicators are just some of the indicators on which Serbia and Denmark can be compared. There are many indicators that enable comparison of these two countries, but the specified values are indicative enough to point out that the success of the Danish economy is not accidental, and warning enough for Serbia to point out that its work on changes must be wiser, more innovative, faster and more effective to build a society that meets changes, not avoiding them.

Knowing a national culture provides insight into the broader picture in which the sources of (un)success of the state, region, economy and business can be seen. The prevailing cultural pattern of Serbia, especially the influence of high power distance, high level of uncertainty avoidance and short-term orientation in time, impede long-term planning, readiness for change, expression of innovation as a process that turns creative ideas into the economy, representing a difficult stumbling block in its development path. On the other hand, the dimensions of the Danish cultural pattern represent a strong tailwind for its economic development, creating a wide room for maneuver to achieve prestigious development goals. There are more and more people who recognize the power of "cultural weaving", without mystifying but valuing the messages and lessons it can provide.

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