

THE VALUES, FROM A GLOBAL TO A LOCAL DIMENSION*

Dorina Țicu[†]

Abstract

The values are individual or collective views that have a decisive role for any society because they influence the actions, creating a behavior and some attitudes close to stereotypes. Every society has a certain axiological set which is both the result of a global process and a regional or a local one. This article aims to operationalize the theory of Geert Hofstede's values on its five dimensions (Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus. Femininity, Long Term versus Short Term Orientation) and to find a axiological line from a local dimension.

Keywords: values, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity, long term orientation

* This work was supported by the the European Social Fund in Romania, under the responsibility of the Managing Authority for the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013 [grant POSDRU/CPP 107/DMI 1.5/S/78342].

[†]Dorina Țicu, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences within „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iași, Romania; contact: ticudorina@yahoo.com

1. Introduction. The values: shaping the discursive universe

In any society there is a specific set of values that give a specific line to that human group those members take it. Moreover, in each individual or human group there are certain values that determine a certain type of behavior.

In the literature, the values are defined in different ways. "Values are conceptions, explicit or implicit, distinctive for an individual or for a group, on what is desirable, which influences the selection of modes, means and goals of action available" (Parsons, Shils, 2001). There are "a ultimate mobile of individuals and of communities actions, as defining elements for society. From here the path to identify them manifestations, both through the behavior and especially through the attitudes, the attitudes being the direct expression of the values "(Parsons, 1937).

The study of values is closely related to the specific culture of a people. Almond and Verba define culture as "a set of norms and values that prevail for a nation at a time" (Almond, Verba, 1996). An integrated and constructive study in this area should take into account the analytical levels: the personal, group level and organizational level (all levels being interrelated and conditioned from the cultural environment and not only) (Robbins, 2003). Hofstede places the values in the center of culture (Hofstede, 2001), and Adrian-Paul Iliescu proposes a study reporting on the political ideologies (Iliescu, 2003).

The values analysis brings a series of dilemmas such as: values are universal or particular? Are they the same for different cultures or civilizations, or, more precisely, all cultures go through the same stages of evolution of values? Parsons sustains the "general adaptability" (Parsons, 1937) of the society, the implications going to follow the same patterns of cultural evolution (in this case from traditionalism to modernity) in all human societies.

What is the relationship between culture and values? From another perspective, Hofstede (Hofstede, 2001), Schwartz (Schwartz, 1999), Inglehart (Inglehart, 2001), influential contemporary authors of the study of values, consider the values as the core of culture. The anthropology brings a different approach, emphasizing rather the role of symbols, rituals and rules as defining elements of culture. Whatever is the point of view, the relationship between values and the other elements of culture is extremely tight. Dominant values are translated into the rules that define institutions and the functioning of the society as a whole.

The value could be defined as an intrinsic and essential feature of articles, facts and principles. Values are relative to how we define social needs and general principles that structures social life. They depend on individuals' representations about the needs they have, about the objects and about the purposes of human existence. Values are conceptions of what is desirable. They are not directly observable, involving cognitive, evaluative and affective elements, are relatively stable over time, determine the behaviors and the attitudes and are determined by other values, are determined and determine the characteristics of the social environment.

The present study provides a research conducted by Hofstede operationalization of values in different countries and proposes an approach applied to the local level, in the end trying to observe if the local values vein was modified in relation to the scores that Hofstede has measured in his study.

2. The values and cultural dimensions in Hofstede's theory

Hofstede's theory (2001, 1991, 1980) places the values at the center of culture underlying their universality, though applicability to any society. He identifies five orientations of universal comparable value:

Power Distance – this dimension is a measure of a society's representations of inequality; cultures with low Power Distance are characterized by actions towards legitimating power and a permanent need to publicly debate on the sources of power; in contrast, societies with high Power Distance develop centralized hierarchical structures; the values attached to low Power Distance societies are equality, freedom of action, low degrees of discrimination, democratic government, free market economy;

Individualism vs. Collectivism – proposes an orientation from individual to society; in the individualist societies everyone is responsible for their own welfare, whereas the collectivist societies focus on defining the individuals according to their belonging / integration within a reference group; the values attached to the individualist societies suppose: promoting the individual, free initiative that means maximizing one's own welfare, inequality regarding personal income, building an educational system based on creativity and on the capacity of adapting to unpredicted situations, minimal state intervention in the economic activity;

Masculinity vs. Femininity – this dimension relates to gender inequality; "masculine" societies view men and women as performing different roles with attached attributions being clearly delineated by specific contexts, such as the family, the labor market, etc.; also these societies highly value assertiveness; the "feminine" societies suppose a higher degree of tolerance concerning gender and, simultaneously, a lesser degree of discrimination based on age, sex, religion, etc.;

Uncertainty Avoidance – involves people orientation towards risk taking; risks accepting societies present a reduced tolerance to uncertainty, react emotionally, are normative; among the main values of risks avoiding societies are planning of economic activities and a high degree of intolerance towards the different opinion trends; it can be pointed out that, in linking Uncertainty Avoidance to Individualism-Collectivism, the extended family, exhibiting high degrees of risk avoidance, is the central element of the collectivistic societies, while high degrees of relationship diversity, centered on the individual, is typical for individualistic societies; and

Long Term Orientation vs. Short Term Orientation (Confucian Dynamism) – Hofstede considered that the dimension represents the features of Virtue regardless of Truth; typical values associated to Long Term Orientation are thrift, perseverance, having a sense of shame and ordering relationships by status, whereas typical values for Short Term Orientation express an inclination for personal stability, respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, protecting one's 'face', and reciprocation of greetings, favors, and gifts.

Comparing Hofstede's theory to the kind of Popper's society "open" or "closed" (Popper, 2005), an open society will be characterized by an approach to power, by a high degree of risk acceptance (taking risk), by a high degree of

individualism of its members. These are societies that are characterized by masculinity and which are long term orientated.

All these dimensions characterize, on the other hand, democratic societies in comparison with less democratic ones. This is named by Adrian Paul Iliescu the left and right ideological theory (Iliescu, 2003). Right could be identified with the idea of democracy and liberalism and the left with the idea of collectivism and a society with a lower degree of democratization. Of course, placing the theory in the field of ideologies is not easy process because these ideologies found so-called an ideological compromise beyond the traditional ideological variants: liberalism with social influences (in twentieth century) on the right line, or social-democracy which incorporates principles at least from an economic right on the left line.

3. From the global dimension of the Hofstede values

According to the studies conducted by Hofstede it is a value orientation at national, regional and global level, the author identifying both a number of valuable individual features at the state level, but also a number of features common to several countries. (See **Table 1**).

Table 1. The position of the countries based on the five cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede

	Power Distance	Individualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty Avoidance	Long-Term Orientation
Austria	11	55	79	70	
Belgium	65	75	54	94	
Bulgaria	70	30	40	85	
Czech Republic	57	58	57	74	13
France	68	71	43	86	
Germany	35	67	66	65	31
Grece	60	35	57	112	
Hungary	46	80	88	82	50
Italy	50	76	70	75	
Netherlands	38	80	14	53	44
Poland	68	60	64	93	32
Portugal	63	27	31	104	
Romania	90	30	42	90	
Spain	57	51	42	86	
U.K.	35	89	66	35	25

*Table.1 captures some of the results reported by Hofstede (2001). Data are available at:http://www.geerthofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php?culture1=72&culture2=33#compare

The values for Romania indicate an increased acceptance of social hierarchy, a relatively low risk propensity, a tendency to femininity rather than to masculinity, a relatively high level of collectivism.

From there, the theory developed by Hofstede supports two basic assumptions. Stability in time of the values (values do not change over time as a cultural given) is one of the two fundamental sentences, which offers a methodological validation of the scale proposed by Hofstede. The author believes that institutions, as products of dominant values systems, contribute to the stability of values and of cultures. The systems consisting of values-culture-institutions tend to be self-regulating to a certain equilibrium level (Hofstede, 2001). The changes come from outside society, being catalyzed by trade, conquest, political or economic domination, technological innovation. Technological change can happen also within the culture, being dependent on open to innovation of that culture. One society already open to technological innovation will be little affected by it. Hence the alleged stability of the national culture and values, at least in western societies. It follows that for most societies, the change can only come from outside the country, making it difficult to produce, supporting again the stability of values and of national culture.

The second assumption is Hofstede's postulation of the relative homogeneity of the societies so that culture can be equated with the nation and the results of analysis on any nation group offers the same picture about the culture of that society. Change can not occur unless there is a positive freedom in the form of actions aimed at personal and interpersonal development within the group from each individual belongs. These study will attempt to prove Hofstede's theory applied to a local dimension to see if there is any axiological correlation between national and local level.

4. Methodological issues

This study aims to operationalize the Hofstede's five dimensions theory and apply it locally to try (with methodological limits) to determine if there are changes in attitude and behavior at the local level after ten years from the application of Hofstede's theory.

The study was based on a survey that has operationalized the five dimensions: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Long Term vs. Short Term Orientation (see Table 2).

Table 2: The operationalised dimensions

	Question
Approach to power	Competition among members of a group is beneficial.
	All my family members are equal.
	If I propose myself something, I can take it out.
Power Distance	I call quite often to local authorities to solve my problems.
	Most older people are right.
	Those who hold power are privileged.
Individualism	I adapt easily to new, unexpected situations.
	"I'll sleep as I lie."
Collectivism	The school must learn how to practice a profession best.
	I like to learn as much from others.
Masculinity	In a family, men provides mainly financial support.
	Only some people have the strength to succeed.
Femininity	Anyone can do politics.
	In general, I do not mind talking about sex.
Taking risk	When people are wrong in life, it's because of decisions they have taken.
	I like to get involved in different activities.
	I have enough time for personal life.
Uncertainty Avoidance	I like to work with more people.
	I rarely assume a risk when I'm carrying out an activity.
	I'm worried about my future of my family.
Long Term Orientation	There are no good decisions or bad, just problems that need to be solved.
	I plan strictly the money I earn depending on expenses.
Short Term Orientation	I respect the opinions of others.
	When I get involved in an action, I plan in place the steps that I will follow.

We realized then the average scores obtained on each dimension separately and the results were positioned on a scale of 1 to 100.

The sample consists on 92 respondents of which 44.6% are male and 55.4% are female, over 90% are Christian Orthodox, 27.2% are aged up to 20 years, 53, 3% are aged between 20 and 25 years, 6.5% from 26 to 30 years, 3.3% between 31 and 35 years, 1.1% between 36 and 40 years, and 8.7% over 40 years. 80.4% are unmarried, 41.3% come from families with four members, 28.3% from families with three members, 16.3% from families with more than five members and 10.9% from families with two members. 80.4% come from urban areas, 83.7% have finished high school, 77.2% are students, followed by teachers (5.4%) and engineers (4.3%). 48.9% have incomes up to 1,000 RON, 15.2% have incomes between 1000 and 2000 ron, and 7.6% over 2000 ron.

The study has a prescriptive character, taking the limits related to the sample size and degree of representativeness.

5. Results

Percentages obtained by each dimension are presented as follows.

The power distance dimension, approach to power has obtained 82.9% of positive responses, 17% - negative, power distance, 57, 6% - positive, 42.4% - negative.

Individualism vs. collectivism has obtained from individualism, 91.81% positive responses, 8.1% negative and collectivism 82.65% positive responses, 17.3% negative responses.

Masculinity was positively valued from 40.2% of respondents, and negative from 59.8% and 54.9% of responses where from femininity and 45.1% against feminity.

Taking Risks has 69.5% positive procent, 30.4% - negative and uncertainty avoidance - 66.6% positive procent and 33.3% - negative.

The fifth dimension, long term orientation vs. short term orientation received 54.3% percent for short term orientation and 45.6% - percent negative, while 78.7% - positive percent were for short term orientation and 22.8% were - negative percentage. (see **Table 3**).

Table 3: The percentages obtained in the first part of the analysis

		Yes	No	AVERAGE YES	AVERAGE NO
APPROACH VS. DISTANCE POWER	Approach to Power	85,9	14,1	82,9	17
		71,7	28,3		
		91,3	8,7		
	Distance Power	76,1	23,9	57,6	42,4
		79,3	20,7		
		17,4	82,6		
INDIVIDUALISM VS. COLECTIVISM	Individualism	94,6	5,4	91,8	8,1
		89,1	10,9		
	Collectivism	70,7	29,3	82,6	17,3

		94,6	5,4		
MACULINITY VS. FEMINITY	Maculinity	30,4	69,6	40,2	59,8
		50	50		
	Feminity	27,2	72,8	54,8	45,1
		82,6	17,4		
TAKING RISK VS. UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE	Taking Risk	66,3	33,7	69,5	30,4
		78,3	21,7		
		64,1	35,9		
	Uncertainty Avoidance	84,8	15,2	66,6	33,3
		75	25		
		94,6	5,4		
LONG TERM ORIENTAION VS. SHORT TERM ORIENTATION	Long term orientation	50	50	54,3	45,6
		58,7	41,3		
	Short term orientation	87	13	78,7	22,8
		67,4	32,6		

Continuing analytical approach, the average scores appear as follows on each dimension separately.

Power Distance. On this dimension, the average scores is: 62.5% of respondents value the approach to power, and 37.3% go on the power distance.

Individualism Vs. Collectivism. Of all respondents, 54.5% supported dimensions of individualism and 45.3% the collectivism.

Maculinity vs. Feminity. 42.6% of respondents gave an average response orient to masculinity and 57.3% femininity.

Taking risk has 51,4% and uncertainty avoidance 48,5%.

For Short Term orientation vs. Long Term Orientation dimension, 62.1% of respondents stated that there is guidance for short term, and 38.5% for a long term orientation (see **Figure 1**).

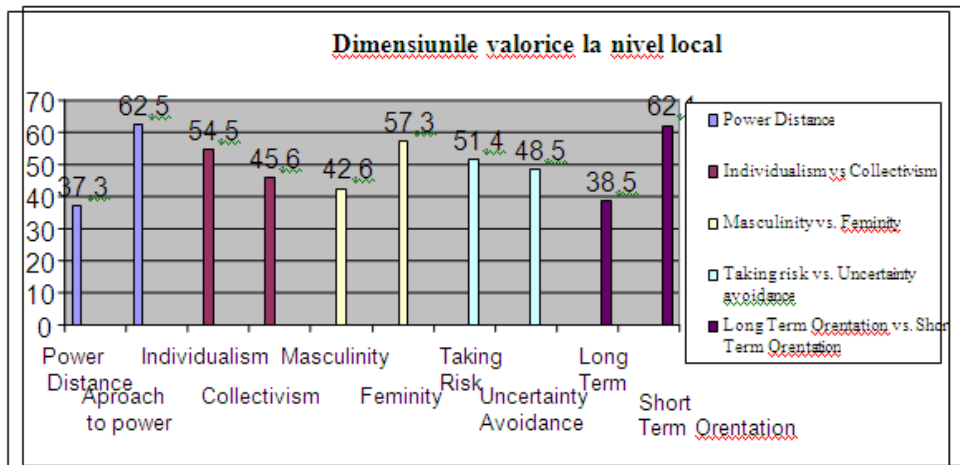


Figure 1: The values at the local level

From the average scores obtained, we can say that at the local level, power distance has an average of 37 units, individualism - 54, masculinity - 42, Uncertainty avoidance - 48 and long term orientation - 38.

The results are modified from those obtained in 2001 by Hofstede on the case of Romania (see **Figure 2**).

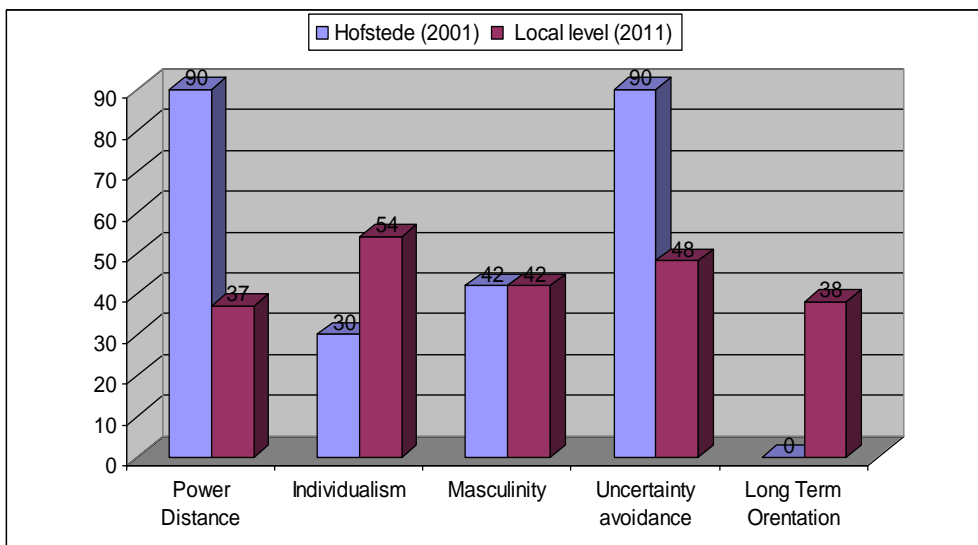


Figure 2: The values-from the Hostede' results to the local level

While at national level, power distance was receiving the score of 90, at local level receives 37. If individualism received 30 to national level and at the local level 54.

If uncertainty avoidance had 90 units at national level, at the local level receives 40 and the dimension of long term orientation has 38 units locally while,

nationally, Hofstede did not have an score for this dimension in 2001. Regarding masculinity, the scores are equal: 42.

Conclusions

The Operationalisation of Hofstede's theory and its application locally exposed a number of changes. We might conclude that the power distance is reduced, the degree of individualism is the same, the degree of masculinity in the society remains at least the same level, uncertainty avoidance has not the same high scores and the long term orientation. Also, all the five dimensions can be identified at the local level.

Given that all these features (approach to power, individualism, masculinity, taking risk, long term orientation) are characteristics of the societies with a higher degree of democratization and, from this point of view, we might say that the values dynamic may highlight this. The dimensions scores obtained at least at the local level differ from those obtained by Hofstede on line of a process oriented to the democratic values.

In conclusion, the applicability of Hofstede's theory becomes an approach which transcends time limits and can provide highly indicators (with appropriate methodologies) for analyzing the process of democratization from a axiological line.

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