



*The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library*

**This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.**

**Help ensure our sustainability.**

**Give to AgEcon Search**

AgEcon Search

<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>

[aesearch@umn.edu](mailto:aesearch@umn.edu)

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

*No endorsement of AgEcon Search or its fundraising activities by the author(s) of the following work or their employer(s) is intended or implied.*

# RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMPETITIVENESS IN THE NORTHERN GREAT PLAIN AND THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Andrea Emese Matkó<sup>1</sup> & Prof. Dr. Csaba Berde<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Debrecen, Faculty of Engineering Department of Technology Management and Entrepreneurship

<sup>2</sup>University of Debrecen, Centre of Agricultural Science Department of Leadership Science andim@eng.unideb.hu

**Abstract:** One of the five basic factors in the Lengyel-type pyramid model – institutions and social capital – is essential in the economic growth of the region. Economic success however, does not only depend on participants in the economy, but on social factors such as the roles played by local authorities, including their functions, operation and organisational culture, all of which are crucial factors.

Based on the results obtained regarding organisational culture it can be stated that performance orientation, dominant motivation based on calculated risk, forward planning and regular feedback are expected values at local authorities in all three counties. All local authorities emphasise the importance of the need for forecasting. Respondents find it important that organisations encourage and reward individual action and contributions as expected values. The degree of human orientation expected by local authorities reflects the fact that respect for colleagues and attention to their well-being should be at the highest level. Reinforcing these organisational culture values (dimensions) is the basis for the efficient and successful operation of organisations (local authorities).

The study examines the organisational culture of local authorities in the Northern Great Plain, looking for any relationships it might have with the competitiveness of the region. This study is an element of the wider research into organisational culture. We used the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness) survey, which had been successfully applied in the research programme *In Competition with the World* at the Corvinus University of Budapest. Koopman, Den Hartog, Konrad et al. (1999) examined the culture variables of 21 European countries in organisations. Based on Hungarian and international literature it can be stated that a similar survey of local authorities has not yet been conducted.

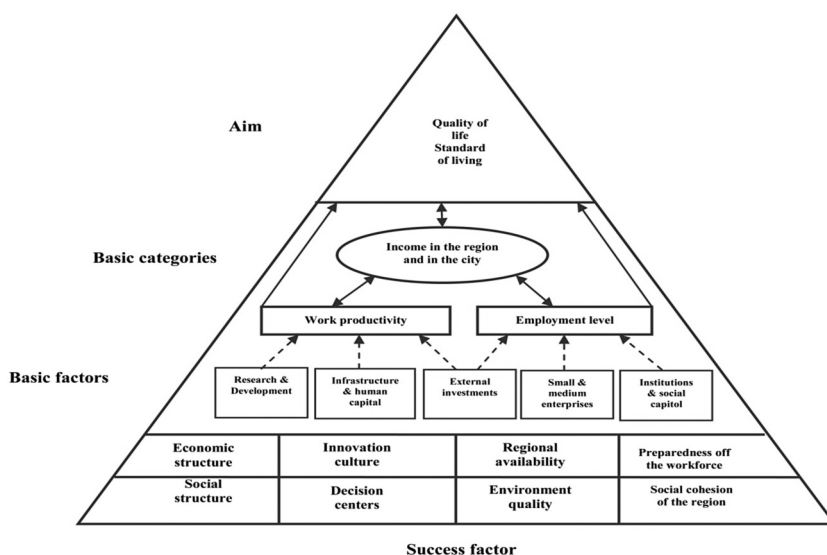
**Keywords:** competitiveness, organisational culture, local authorities

## Introduction

The North Great Plain region is the only region with an increasing population but still with one of the most disadvantaged economic and infrastructural conditions in Hungary; therefore improving its competitiveness is essential.

During our research we assumed that the quality of governance i.e. the organisational culture of local authorities plays a decisive role in enhancing the competitiveness of the region.

Imre Lengyel created the pyramid model in 2003 to model the competitiveness of regions. He separated the measurement of competitiveness and factors influencing competitiveness. He used three economic categories to measure competitiveness, with indicators determining the competitiveness of the region.



**Figure 1:** Pyramid-type model by Lengyel  
(Source: Lengyel, 2003)

Lengyel classified factors affecting competitiveness into two main categories: basic factors and success factors. Basic factors are those that could be consciously developed to improve the competitiveness of the region, while success factors are those that indirectly influence basic factors. One of the 5 basic factors of the model – *institutions and social capital* – is fundamental in the economic growth of the regions. Economic success however, does not only depend on economic participants but is also determined by such social factors as the quality of local authorities. The presence of companies with decision competency is also important from among the 8 success factors, in addition to government and official centres i.e. administrative and other institutional functions. Possible influencing factors determining the competitiveness of the region can be deduced from the analysis of the Lengyel-type pyramid. The model of our research objectives is illustrated in Figure 2.

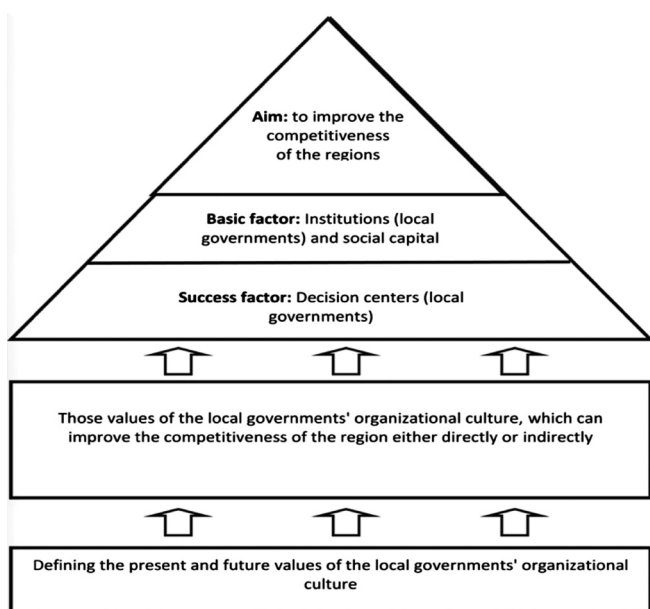


Figure 2: Research model

Source: based on the dimensions of Lengyel's model (2003)

## Northern Great Plain region

The North Great Plain region, hereinafter the Region, is located in the north-eastern part of Hungary, sharing a border with Slovakia, the Ukraine and Romania. Its total area is 17,729 km<sup>2</sup>, and it makes up 19.1% of the country and has 15.3% of the population, i.e. 1.56 million people live here (HCSO, 2009). Table 1. clearly illustrates that it is the second largest and most populous region in the country.

The Region is made up of Hajdú-Bihar, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok counties. The geographical profile of the Region is dominated by the Great Hungarian Plain; agriculture therefore plays a significant role in the life of the Region, contributing 11% to the GDP value of the region, which is twice the national average (HCSO, 2009).

The migration loss of the Northern Great Plain Region is the highest among the planning-statistical regions, namely because migration is very intensive from the village areas to the more urbanised areas. Migrants are much younger in age than the national average but life expectancy at birth is almost 6 months less than the national average (HCSO, 2008). There were 25 children (aged 0–18) for every 100 adults (aged 18–65) in Hungary in 2005 according to the annual release of the HCSO, while there were 28 children for every 100 adults

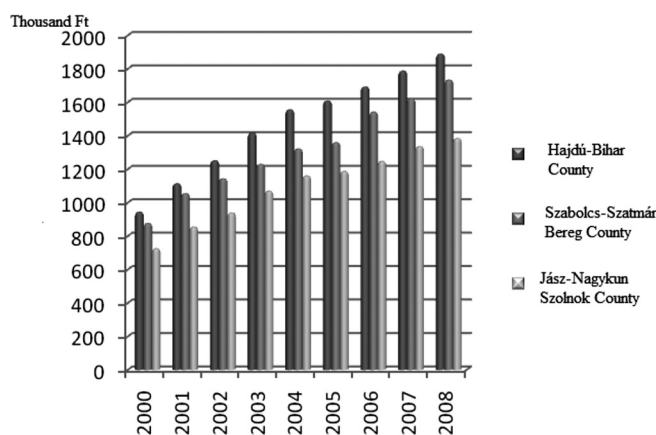


Figure 3: Gross domestic product per capita 2000–2008  
(Source: TÁMOP, regional survey, 2011)

Table 1: Characteristics of the regions in figures

Regionm	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population	Population density (capita/km <sup>2</sup> )	Counties of the region
Northern Hungary	13,433	1,209,142	90.0	Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Heves, Nógrád
<b>Northern Great Plain</b>	<b>17,729</b>	<b>1,492,502</b>	<b>84.2</b>	<b>Hajdú-Bihar, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg</b>
Southern Great Plain	18,337	1,318,214	71.9	Bács-Kiskun, Békés, Csongrád
Central Hungary	6,916	2,951,436	426.8	Pest County and the capital Budapest
Central Transdanubia	11,116	1,098,654	98.8	Komárom-Esztergom, Fejér, Veszprém
Western Transdanubia	11,328	996,390	88.0	Győr-Moson-Sopron, Vas, Zala
Southern Transdanubia	11,169	947,986	66.9	Baranya, Somogy, Tolna

(Source: HCSO, 2008)

in the Region, and the absolute number of children was the highest after Central Hungary (Budapest and Pest County) in 2005 (407,763, and 273,873 children) (HCSO TSTAR, 2011). The domestic product per capita shows the economic situation of the region, illustrated in Figure 3.

The domestic product per capita is highest in Hajdú-Bihar County, and lowest in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County where this value was 27% lower than in Hajdú-Bihar County in 2008. This also proves the widening economic gap. (TÁMOP, regional survey, 2011)

Table 2: Number of enterprises in the region in 2008

Regions	Small enterprise	Medium size enterprise	Large enterprise	Total
Central Hungary	275,034	2,208	427	277,669
Central Transdanubia	70,814	461	127	71,402
Western Transdanubia	68,845	505	108	69,455
Southern Transdanubia	59,395	385	43	59,823
Northern Hungary	60,599	415	76	61,090
<b>Northern Great Plain</b>	<b>80,477</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>81,169</b>
Southern Great Plain	80,118	580	84	80,782
<b>Total</b>	<b>695,279</b>	<b>5,157</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>701,390</b>

(Source: HCSO TSTAR, 2011)

The economic performance of regions is influenced by the size and development of the system of economic organisation. One of the quantitative indicators of the system is the number of enterprises operating in the region (Table 2). The table clearly shows that in 2008 close to 15% of enterprises operating in Hungary were located in the Region. Business activity shows significant differences between smaller regions. Values higher than the regional average were only present in those small regions which included county towns. More than half of the registered enterprises are concentrated in these small regions. The two ends of the scale in terms of business activity are represented by the small regions of Nyíregyháza and Hajdúhadház. The number of registered enterprises per thousand people in the former is three times that of the latter. 35% of registered enterprises in the Northern Great Plain Region were founded as joint companies. The distribution of businesses according to sectors – almost identical to the national situation – shows that 14% of companies are in the construction industry. However, those in agriculture had a 12% share, which is 5% higher than the national average (HCSO, 2008).

Only 44.1% of the population capable of work can be considered as economically active in the Region compared to the national figure of 53.5%. The employment structure of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County shows a highly unfavourable picture, as people living in small villages in outlying areas are struggling with long term unemployment problems (ÉAR SP: 2007–2013, 2011). The primary reason for unemployment in many areas is not the change in economic structure but the limited opportunities for commuting and therefore the loss of workplaces for people who reside in these areas but work in other locations. The number of pensioners can be regarded as average; however, this is the result of two different counter-balancing effects. One is the low ratio of elderly pensioners due to the relatively young age of the population; the other is the number of disabled pensioners which is the highest here (ÉAR SP: 2007–2013, 2011).

Low employment and high unemployment can affect the income of residents. Considering data for 2007, income per individual tax payer is about 15% lower than that of the national average. The disadvantage of the Northern Great Plain is more remarkable considering the tax base per permanent resident, which makes up three-quarters of the national average with a high degree of deviation according to region. The relative disadvantage of the Northern Great Plain compared to the data for 2001 and the difference among the areas of the region has reduced somewhat (highlighted data of ÉAK, 2008).

The unemployment rate in the Region increased sharply from 9.2% in 2000 to 14.5% in 2010. The unemployment rate in Szabolcs-

Szatmár-Bereg County reached 18.4%, which was the highest among the counties of the Region (Figure 4).

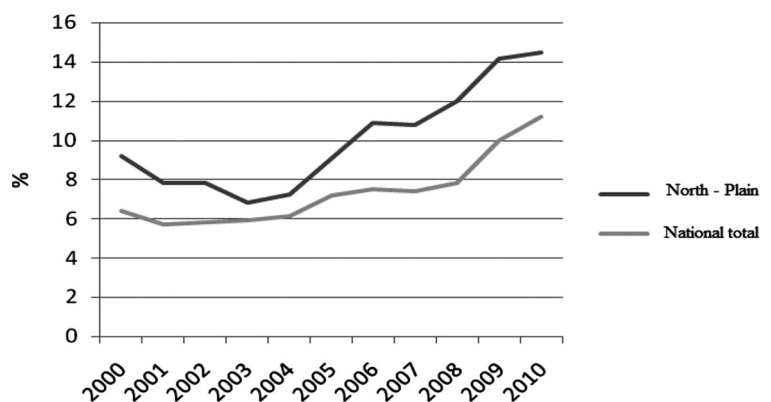


Figure 4: Rate of unemployment in the Northern Great Plain region between 2000 and 2010

(Source: National Employment Service)

### Hajdú-Bihar County

The county is located in the centre of the Region; the county seat is Debrecen, which is the cultural and economic centre of the region. Hajdú-Bihar, considering both its size and population, is the fourth largest county in the country. The present day Hajdú-Bihar County was formed relatively recently, as its current administrative framework was created during the county settlement of 1950.

The county is made up of three different geographical units with different geographical and historical development: Debrecen, Hajdúság and Bihar. The religious affiliation of the population shows a varied picture due to this different historical development. The life of the county's residents was primarily influenced by the presence of the Protestant church. This was also reinforced by the fact that the Protestant leadership of towns in the Hajdúság banned the settlement of Catholics living under Turkish subjection until the decree by Maria Theresa, and their disused churches were taken over by Protestant congregations.



The autonomy of the municipalities and the Calvinist faith were inseparable, not only here but also in the Kunság, the reason for this being that the social and economic ideology of Calvinism was better suited to the autonomous population which had just started its civic development at this time (Szakály, 1995; Beluszky, 2001). The Baptist denomination has expanded significantly in the recent period, and there are others which have been a part of the Region's history, although they represent smaller groups, such as the Jewish community and evangelicals.

Farms are typical of the Hajdúság: primarily in Hajdúböszörmény and Hajdúnánás, but their traces can be identified in the settlement structure of Debrecen, too. This settlement pattern developed in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and became common by the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The use of areas under farmland changed in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century due to the spread of the farmstead settlement-farmland system. Barns operating as farms moved to farmsteads, so their functions ceased to exist. Houses were built on farms and civic farmers relocated here to larger estates and the typical country town settlement structure (houses in closed lines in parallel with the axis of the street) was established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Beluszky, 2001).

Debrecen itself followed a unique path: it was the richest of the country towns in the 16–17<sup>th</sup> centuries; its borders and outer areas were predominantly pasture (primarily the Hortobágy), so large-scale animal husbandry provided the foundation for agricultural production here. The city was led by merchants and retailers. The economic importance of Debrecen was also supported by its ideal location, as it is located on the border of Nyírség, Hajdúság and Hortobágy, in the so-called *pantry of the Nyírség*, which was spared from floods and had a commercial activity expanding to distant regions (Frisnyák, 1995).

Regarding Debrecen, it is also important to mention that although it is called *the capital of Hajdúság*, it was never a Hajdú-town and it is not located in the Hajdúság, but rather on the border. Its economic importance grew further after Trianon, as Oradea became part of Romania. Prior to this however, Debrecen had not really been able to develop, given the overpowering economic and cultural advantage of Oradea. A university was founded in the city in 1912, strengthening its role as a cultural centre within the Region (Frisnyák, 1995).

The Bihar part of the present day Hajdú-Bihar County is made up of Nagy-Sárrét. The Sárrét areas (Kis- and Nagy-Sárrét), although they are plain type areas, are not considered part of the Plains in the locals' *mental map* (the map imagined by people living here, which is not necessarily the same as those created by cartographers) according to Beluszky (2001). A parallel can be drawn with areas such as Bodrogekő, Tiszahát in Bereg, Szatmár, Rétköz, Taktaköz, Érmellék, or even a larger part of the Nyírség (especially prior to the rehabilitation), but also Sárköz in Tolna – which is in the Transdanubian part of the Plains – as they were left out of the region's wider development termed the (development) *path of the Plains* by István Márkus (Márkus, 1986). Country towns were not established here and the structure of large villages remained, which is typical, for

example, in the Hajdúság, leaving the isolated nature and relatively low population of villages unaffected. These areas were isolated from each other by muddy meadows, swamps, marshlands, dead channels and brooks where there were – and still are – floodplains covered with water for most of the year.

Cattle were also kept outdoors during the winter in the Sárrét areas, but the Turkish invaders were unable to enforce their power in areas protected by swamps, and the marshland provided a refuge for locals. Most villages in the Sárrét were unharmed during the Turkish era, nor did villages become lost and deserted, as large empty areas and the hydrographic features of the landscape would not have made this possible either. Homesteads were only established around settlements that received large estates following the drainage of the marshlands and could consequently acquire the typical characteristics of the country towns of the Great Plains (such as Berettyóújfalu, Biharnagybajom, Földes, Komádi, Püspökladány) (Frisnyák, 1995).

Geographical differences increased in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and affected the economy as well: agricultural co-operatives became widespread and the estate structure of country towns was taken over by large co-operatives (e.g. the Vörös Csillag – *Red Star* – Co-operative in Nádudvar). Co-operatives in the Bihari areas however, were smaller and were not established in some areas due to the resistance of farmers (Beluszky, 2001).

To sum up, Hajdú-Bihar County is made up of many geographical and cultural landscape units, including the Nyírség in the north of the county and the geographically attached Hajdúság, Hortobágy, and Nagy-Sárrét in the southern area of the county and part of the Kis-Sárrét and Kőrös-area. The geographical difference is present in the settlement structure and the differences in farming as well: large estates in the north but small, proportionate properties, and villages with small populations in the southern areas of the county. Industry is typically concentrated in Debrecen and dates back to the early modern period in this region, which was further strengthened by the years of socialist planning (Frisnyák, 1995). Hajdú-Bihar County is the centre of the Northern Great Plain Region considering its population and economy. Debrecen is dominant as it is the economic and cultural centre of not only the Northern Great Plain region but the entire area east of the river Tisza. The nature of the settlements of the county adapt to the small geographical regions: in the dry but expansive Hajdúság, small towns and large villages, with large populations in the Hajdú-Bihar part of the Nyírség, while in the Sárrét the settlements are small with fragmented estates. This difference has widened since the 1950's when large agricultural cooperatives were established in the north along with smaller ones in the south, while some were left out of this process.

### ***Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County***

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg is the most eastern county of Hungary with its county seat in Nyíregyháza. Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg occupies 6.4% of the country making it the

sixth largest county. The county became a border county as a result of major historic and political decisions. The area is bordered by three countries – Romania in the east, the Ukraine in the north-east and Slovakia in the north. The county occupies the most eastern part of the Hungarian Plain and it is not a unified area from a geographical point of view.

The past of the county dates back to prehistoric periods, when settlement also began in these areas. The natural environment at that time was characterised by large forests and water, with marshlands, swamps and islands with the typical fauna of these areas (Frisnyák, 1995). Parts of three historical counties made up the backbone of the present day county during the foundation of the state and were significantly expanded. It was often disturbed by wars (involving the Pechenegs, Cumans, Mongols and Turks) and also suffered greatly during the World Wars. Civic development began among a population living in poor conditions and oppressed by internal conflicts and wars. It is important to mention the families which came from different national groups such as the Lónyay, Báthori, Kállay, and Várdai. The Bathorys provided princes for Transylvania several times, but the Kállay family also frequently played a role in shaping national politics.

The current area of the county took shape in 1930, when Szabolcs, Ung, Szatmár, Bereg and Ugocsa counties were unified and certain parts of the county were attached to Szabolcs-Szatmár, or as it is presently called, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, from former administrative areas (HCSO, 2009b).

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg is in the best situation compared to other counties of the region regarding its natural population development (ÉAR SP: 2007–2013, 2011). Natural population growth in this area always exceeded mortality and the national average. Children make up 21% of the population, the working-age population 62% while those over the age of 60 represent 17%. Kisvárdá-Záhony, Nyírbátor and Tiszavasvár are microregions with a younger than average population.

The majority of the county is made up of small areas that were almost completely inaccessible floodlands prior to the Tisza-regulation and the drainage of expansive swamps (primarily the Ecsed-swamp). Although settlements in this region escaped the Turkish invasion, they suffered a great deal of damage. Country towns were not established here and there are no homesteads, but the settlement network is denser than in the Hajdúság, or Kis- and Nagykunság, with an intact traditional settlement structure and rural conditions (Beluszky, 2001).

Szabolcs had been part of the historical county until the 1870's, although it is true that it had already been an autonomous area from 1669. The Hajdú-district, made up of the so-called *old Hajdú towns* including (Hajdú)Böszörmény, (Hajdú)Nánás, (Hajdú)Szoboszló, (Hajdú)Hadház, (Hajdú)Dorog and Vámospércs (which belonged to Bihar historical county) followed a unique development course from the end of the Middle Ages but especially during the Turkish wars compared to other parts of the county. Areas

bounded by the Tisza and its tributaries, especially Rétköz, are very similar to the Sárrett both regarding fauna and settlement structure. The village structure is made up of small- and moderately large villages, the ratio of homesteads and outer areas is insignificant, most of the population living on fields were cottagers, and feudal ties were maintained longer than in the country town region. Ibrány and Nagyhalász are the two settlements in the county that received large estates following the drainage of land, similarly to Komád or Püspökladány, so their population could also grow (Beluszky, 2001).

Szabolcs was one of the counties that remained intact in Hungary following the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 while two-fifths of Szatmár and only one-sixth of Bereg County was left as part of the country. Those areas of the two historical counties which were not surrendered and remained within the borders of the country had identical features regarding their geographical, settlement geography and ethnic conditions to the historical county of Szabolcs, so there were not many significant changes. Both the population of Nyírség and the Szatmár-Bereg plains still reside here in settlements with a size ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 inhabitants, although in smaller numbers than between the two World Wars (Frisnyák, 1995). The process of establishing cooperatives was more successful in the more densely populated areas of the Nyírség, but less successful in less densely populated and hydrologically divided areas of Szatmár and Bereg.

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County has good geographical conditions as it borders three neighbouring countries; its infrastructure however is less developed despite the significant development of recent years, which also limits labour market opportunities. It has the densest settlement network within the Northern Great Plain Region and is middle-ranking regarding its population, which means that medium- and small-sized settlements dominate in the county, especially in the Rétközben and the Szatmár-Beregi plains.

### *Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County*

The county is located in the centre of Eastern-Hungary divided by the Tisza river, with a county seat in Szolnok. The surface of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County is a perfect plain and its climate has extreme features. Compared to the two above mentioned counties Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok can be regarded as an unequivocally *plain* county, at least considering its settlement structure and farming, unlike Hajdú-Bihar or Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg with areas (primarily *meadows*) where the plain type farming and settlement structure is less typical (Beluszky, 2001).

The history of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County can be divided into two main periods. From 895, for about a thousand years, different and changing management units were present which sometimes operated in parallel or overlapped each other due to unique historical circumstances. Finally in 1876, with the establishment of

Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County, the framework was created which still exists today without major modifications. Szolnok County was established during the second half of Saint Stephen's reign (between 1018 and 1038). It was divided into two large, unattached, areas in the 13<sup>th</sup> century; a Tisza- and a Transylvanian part. The devastation by the Mongols affected the regional units of the county differently. Many people were able to find refuge in the swamps of the Tisza, Zagyva and Körös; however the population of Jászság and Nagykunság was almost entirely wiped out. The largest county settlement was Mezőtúr, with about 2500–2700 residents, followed by Szolnok, Tiszavarsány, Jászberény and Fegyvernek. Buda was split into three parts with the Turkish occupation in 1541. The county, along with a third of the Hungarian state, came under Turkish rule. Szolnok was occupied by the Imperial army in the autumn of 1685, Turkish rule ceased and missing elements of the county system were gradually reorganised. Heves and Külső-Szolnok were attached to the district of Pest in 1785 along with the district of Jászkun. The Tisza district was separated from Heves County on January 21st 1850 and was awarded commissioner status; then, a year later it was organised into a county with the districts of Szolnok and Törökszentmiklós. Szolnok became a county seat and a city with an organised council.

Nagykunság and the Jászság functioned as a district within Jászkun. The reform of civil administration was implemented in several stages following the political conciliation. The Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok historical county was established with the unification of Jászság, Nagykunság, and the vicinity of the Tisza below Tiszasüly, and Tiszaderzs in Heves County and Jánoshida in Pest County followed in the XXXIII rearrangement of 1876 by the municipality. The county assembly led by the lord lieutenant, Miklós Kiss, declared the establishment of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County at the Scheftsik Garden on September 4<sup>th</sup> 1876.

Currently, there are 78 settlements in the county with 20 enjoying city status. The population of the county has been decreasing continuously since 1980, which can be explained by a high mortality and low birth rate.

The population of the county has an ageing demographic structure (with 22.5% over 60, and 15.5% under 14), and the ageing index has increased from 88% to 107.1%. Settlements with a young age structure are located in the central part of the county and the Nagykunság. The proportion of the Roma ethnic groups is 8% of the total population (HCSO TSTAR, 2010).

The main regions of the county are Nagykunság, Felső-Kiskunság and Jászság which are primarily folklore and historic type regions. Geographically it belongs to the Central-Tisza Region (Nagykunság), the North Great Plain alluvial fan-plain (Jászság) and the Hátság between the Danube and Tisza (Felső-Kiskunság) (Beluszky, 2001).

The distinction of historic-folklore areas is difficult, with vague and uncertain borders, and the basis of their identities has primarily been determined by religious beliefs: the Kuns are Protestant and the Jász people are Catholic. The Kuns and Jász people settled in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, their settlement being

significantly larger than present day Kis- and Nagykunság. Their integration into the country (feudal ownership, dependancy conditions, adoption of Christianity) however, was problematic and lasted until the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but this newly formed and fragile feudal structure was destroyed by the Turkish wars (Beluszky, 2001).

The Jász people and Kuns practiced grazing management in animal husbandry and lived in a loose clan structure. Livestock was always kept outdoors in the fields, and the pastures, full of constantly moving large herds of cattle, could not be incorporated into the traditional feudal property structure, which was established within a century of the founding of the state in Transdanubia, and so communities took control of their animals. As there was no need to cultivate pastures and because guarding and shepherding livestock (primarily cows and sheep) could not be performed continuously, the farm work was organised by the community itself. Consequently, country towns became the typical settlements of the county with several thousand inhabitants especially in the Kunság area.

Inhabitants of the Kis- and Nagykunság lived almost entirely in country towns following the Turkish wars and on closely connected homesteads from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Six settlements (Karcag, Madaras, Kunhegyes, Kisújszállás, Túrkeve, Kunszentmárton) were rebuilt, along with the villages in the close vicinity. Settlement structure was dense in the smaller Jászság, typically with large villages; only Jászberény, (Jász)Apáti and (Jász)Árokszállás became country towns, but farming in Jászság villages was similar to country towns (Beluszky, 2001).

The tax census on households in 1720 revealed that Jászberény was the third largest city in the Plains preceded only by Debrecen and Kecskemét (with 644 households). Jászapáti ranked in the top twenty (placed 19<sup>th</sup>), Jászárokszállás 29<sup>th</sup>, Mezőtúr 22<sup>nd</sup>, Poroszló 23<sup>rd</sup>, Tiszafüred 26<sup>th</sup> and Karcag 30<sup>th</sup> among the settlements of the Nagykunság. Szolnok only 101<sup>st</sup> at this time (Beluszky, 2001). These data clearly show that country towns and villages with similar settlement structures and large population size are typical settlement types of present day Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, possessing a relatively strong autonomy. The foundations of the independence and the strong, partly ethnic-religious identity in the county are rooted here. Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok could be regarded as the most geographically unified county from a settlement point of view in the Northern Great Plain region and even in the entire Plains. The country town tradition and a relatively low-density settlement network resulted in a strong awareness of identity.

Local authorities do not present a unified picture regarding population size, nor in terms of geographical location, having typical county characteristics.

## Research method

Culture research, which is part of this study, was carried out at local authorities of the Northern Great Plain Region with the application of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Survey based research was carried out as a quantitative method, using the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness) survey. Originally, the GLOBE survey was applied in the framework of an international research project into management organisations in over 60 countries. The GLOBE survey was first used to examine local authorities in this study. The survey contains 265 questions, classified into seven groups. The first group covers current organisational culture, the second is about leadership behaviour, the third desired organisational culture, the fourth also covers leadership behaviour, the fifth is about the current- and the sixth the desired social culture, and the seventh question block contains demographic questions. The evaluation of the survey is done on a seven-point Likert-scale, which provides an opportunity for respondents to give a nuanced opinion, but it is still focused enough to make a real choice. Each respondent has to give an opinion about a statement in the organisational and social culture block according to the extent to which they agree.

Questionnaires in this research were completed by the middle managers of local authorities in the Northern Great Plain Region. The total sample included 193 middle managers, with the participation of 24 local authorities in Hajdú-Bihar, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok counties. The study focused on research into organisational culture dimensions at local authorities.

## Organisational culture surveys at local authorities

Table 3. shows how the counties examined assess the current situation of the organisation. Opinions differed widely in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok as average points were below sample averages, so the specific characteristic was more typical in their case than in the other two counties. People in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok are pushier, loyalty to the group is important to the leaders, more female leaders would increase efficiency and people do not talk about disagreements.

Table 4. was designed to examine current differences among local authorities according to counties.

The presence of prudence and planning or the fact that people are impudent, tough, aggressive and dominant are relatively less typical at organisations in Hajdú-Bihar. A relatively larger proportion of leaders are female, and they develop relatively better than men.

**Table 3:** Observed values of the organisational culture of local authorities according to counties

Question	County			Total
	Hajdú-Bihar	Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	
People are impudent	4.79	4.68	<b>3.60</b>	4.48
Loyalty to the group is important to the leader	3.60	3.53	<b>3.04</b>	3.45
People care about each other	3.37	3.72	<b>3.04</b>	3.39
Group members are proud of the results of their leaders	3.35	3.55	<b>2.89</b>	3.30
The reward system maximizes interests	4.03	4.30	<b>3.78</b>	4.05
Innovation aimed at improving performance is well rewarded	4.53	4.98	<b>3.64</b>	4.45
Leaders increase their social distance	4.23	4.55	<b>3.78</b>	4.21
Group cohesion is more important than self-interest	3.79	3.91	<b>3.00</b>	3.64
More female leaders would increase efficiency	4.14	4.26	<b>3.67</b>	4.06
People do not talk about disagreements	4.48	4.23	<b>3.62</b>	4.21

(Source: own survey)

**Table 4:** Differences among the values of the organisational culture of local authorities according to counties

Main component	County			Significance
	Hajdú-Bihar	Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	
Prudence, planning, objectives	<b>0.229</b>	0.162	-0.664	0.000
Dominance, impudence	<b>0.214</b>	0.115	-0.603	0.000
Development of men-women	<b>0.181</b>	-0.070	-0.271	0.035
Consistency, loyalty	0.078	0.111	-0.321	0.050
Reward system	-0.008	<b>0.227</b>	-0.267	0.050
Pride, work performance	0.033	-0.252	<b>0.232</b>	0.050

(Source: own survey)

People in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok are relatively less proud to work there and physically demanding tasks are not always done by men; however, prudence, planning, impudence, aggression and dominance along with loyalty and consistency are also present. A lower proportion of leaders are women, men develop better and the basis of reward is not only efficient performance. The basis of the reward system is primarily the efficient performance in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, and prudence, planning, impudence, aggression and dominance are relatively less typical, similarly to Hajdú-Bihar County.

In our opinion, these results can be explained by historic, economic and cultural differences among the specific counties, which are primarily now present in economic differences.

Future development of organisational affairs is shown in Table 5. This shows different features in specific counties.



**Table 5:** Evaluation of expected results of local authority organisational culture

Question (essentially)	County			Total
	Hajdú-Bihar	Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	
Performance incentives are applied	<b>2.06</b>	2.51	2.11	2.20
The basis of rewards is efficient performance	<b>1.65</b>	1.94	2.07	1.83
Leaders are proud of members' results	<b>1.90</b>	2.34	2.29	2.12
The basis of influence is ability	<b>1.99</b>	2.47	2.07	2.14
People care about each other	2.37	<b>2.23</b>	2.47	2.35
Expectations and rules are clearly defined	2.11	<b>1.91</b>	2.38	2.11
Meetings are planned 2 weeks prior	2.48	2.08	<b>1.98</b>	2.25
The path to success is planning	2.05	2.32	<b>1.84</b>	2.08
Planning for the future is an accepted norm	2.38	2.53	<b>2.04</b>	2.34
Physical work is carried out by men	2.23	2.26	<b>1.91</b>	2.17
More leaders would improve efficiency	4.06	4.09	<b>3.22</b>	3.87

(Source: own survey)

Employees of organisations in Hajdú-Bihar would like ability to be the basis for future influence, loyalty to group should be more important to leaders and leaders should be prouder of members' results. This derives from the fact that a strong noble hierarchy was typical in this county in local administration until the Second World War.

Employees in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg would aspire to have more care for people, to have clear expectations and guidelines and to achieve group cohesion over self-interest. The historic-economic explanation is the different estate structure of settlements, which is strengthened by the fact that three historical counties (Szabolcs, Szatmár and Bereg) with different economic traditions were unified into one local administration unit following the Second World War.

Forward planning should be typical for the organisation in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, demanding work should be done

by men and more leading women could increase efficiency. The explanation for this lies in the traditional patriarchal views in the region, which requires a separation of male and female roles, but at the same time acknowledges that female leaders have increasingly efficient roles in certain areas.

The evaluation of the main components enables us to form an idea about the future assessment of the organisation. Table 6. illustrates the future situation of organisational affairs according to counties.

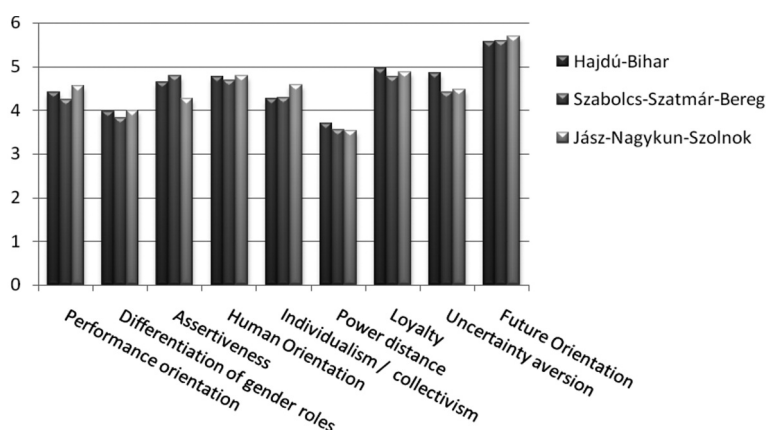
Respondents in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok counties believe that not only should efficient work provide the basis for rewards but people should also care more for each other, should be receptive to others and failure by men should be considered worse and men should develop better than women. The explanation lies in the surviving patriarchal order and the fragmented small estate system in both counties. The opposite is true in Hajdú-Bihar, although its historic background shares many similarities with the

two other counties. Hajdú-Bihar is the centre of the region from a cultural point of view and its approach in this regard is more marked than the other two counties. Leaders in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg believe that people should be less concerned about the current crisis, the reward system should maximise mutual interests, unconditional obedience should be less of an expectation and fewer female leaders would increase efficiency. People in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok have opposing views, while respondents gave points in accordance with the sample average. Respondents in Hajdú-Bihar believe that people should be relatively less impudent, while in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok the opposite view is held. This could be due to the competitive situation of the two economically disadvantaged counties. Rank and position should have less privileges according to leaders in Hajdú-Bihar and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties and in cases of disagreement it is relatively less important whether employees comply. Respondents in all counties agreed that important decisions should be made by leaders but a relatively higher average score was given for this question in Hajdú-Bihar County, which implies that this is less important for them. Rank and position should have less privileges in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok and important decisions should be made by leaders. This originates from the patriarchal social structure. Dominance should be less of an objective in Hajdú-Bihar; better performance should encouraged while detailed instructions are relatively less important compared to the method by which objectives are achieved. Contrary to this, respondents in the other two counties believe that the leader should be a man

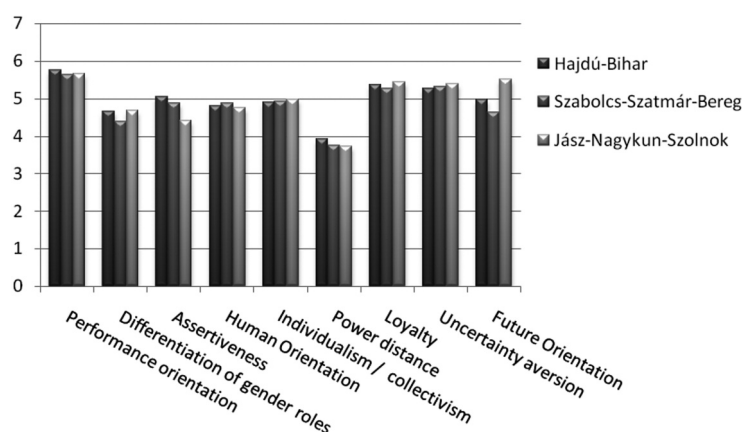
**Table 6:** Desirable directions of local authority organisational cultures

Main component	County			Significance
	Hajdú-Bihar	Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	
Human care, achieved results	-0.211	<b>0.157</b>	<b>0.266</b>	0.013
Reward system and efficiency	-0.061	<b>0.298</b>	-0.293	0.009
Human impudence, aggression	<b>0.183</b>	0.076	-0.438	0.002
Rank and position, leadership decisions	<b>0.108</b>	<b>0.101</b>	-0.296	0.050
Male-female difference and dominance	<b>0.214</b>	-0.205	-0.177	0.018
Assessment of the organisation, errors	<b>0.230</b>	-0.216	-0.165	0.011

(The positive value indicates that the factor should be less typical.) (Source: own survey)



**Figure 5:** Observed values of local authority organisational culture for specific counties  
(Source: own survey)



**Figure 6:** Variables of expected culture at the organisational level according to counties  
(Source: own survey)

and people should strive for dominance and should give detailed instructions for achieving objectives. Opinions differ about the evaluation of the organisation as well. Respondents believe that people should be more concerned about how others judge the organisation and should be less permissive regarding people's faults.

The observed values of the organisational culture (Figure 5) in the three counties emphasise their future orientation.

The reason for this lies in the current economic situation and the increasingly competitive sector. The power distance and avoidance of uncertainty is of low value. There is also loyalty and human orientation in the organisation at present. The future cannot be planned without team work and cooperation. The significance of impudence lies in future orientation and the definition of objectives in general; assertiveness is unavoidable in the case of an organisation that concentrates on the future and seeks its opportunities there.

Performance orientation and assertiveness, as well as power distance are desired in the the future in Hajdú-Bihar County (Figure ). Respondents would like to strengthen human orientation in relative terms in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg. Compared to the other two counties respondents in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok are inclined to want more differentiation between gender roles, individualism/collectivism, loyalty, avoidance of uncertainty and future orientation, along with performance orientation.

## References

- Beluszky P. (2001):** A Nagyalföld történeti földrajza. Dialóg Campus Kiadó, Budapest – Pécs, 2011 (ISBN 963 9123 52 8)
- Frisnyák S. (1995):** Magyarország történeti földrajza. Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest, 1995 (ISBN 963 18 6784 6)
- Koopman, P. L. – Den Hartog, D. N. – Konrad, E. et al. (1999):** National Culture and Leadership Profiles in Europe: Some Results from the GLOBE Study, in: European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology 8/4, 503-520. (ISSN 1464-0643)
- Lengyel I. (2003):** Verseny és területi fejlődés. JATEPress, Szeged
- Márkus I. (1986):** Az „alföldi út” és elakadása. In: Valóság, 24. évf., 1986/4, 30-58 old ISSN: 0324-7228
- Szakály F. (1995):** Reformáció és mezőváros. Tanulmányok a korai magyar polgárosodás kérdéséhez. Balassi Kiadó, Budapest ISBN: 963-506-042-4