

## SOCIAL POTENTIAL OF MODERN ORGANIZATIONS IN POLAND – A FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGE

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**Purpose:** The article attempts to identify the socio-cultural and economic causes of the phenomenon of organisational withdrawal in Poland in a historical perspective.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The analysis is based on found empirical research put in perspective.

**Findings:** The phenomenon of organisational disengagement seems to be the result of a lack of resolve in choosing the logic of organisational life (Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian/Alpine logics). The above situation generates a disorganisation of organisational identity - the attitude towards the company.

**Research limitations/implications:** Co-creating the external environment of the organization significantly affects the real shape of employee attitudes. Every organization creates an informal structure, because very often its participants face unforeseen situations for which there are no procedures defining how to proceed. What's more - people want to control their environment, not just be subjected to control. Informal ties are a natural consequence of the desire for subjectivity in an organization.

**Practical implications:** In Polish conditions, the theoreticians and practitioners of management science should focus their attention on the real - transferred from the organisation's environment – foundations of organisational culture.

**Social implications:** The analysis presented shows the importance of the social dimension of an organisation's functioning and the impact of the external environment on its functioning.

**Originality/value:** The author highlights the importance of changing attitudes towards the workplace and identifies their causes.

**Keywords:** organization, the logic of organisational life, anomie, organisational withdrawal.

**Category of the paper:** Research paper, Viewpoint.

### 1. Introduction

When analyzing organizational behavior – including cotrproductive behavior – in the conditions of Polish economic reality, it is necessary, in my opinion, to take into account the process of social, cultural and economic change initiated in the 1990s. This process, which is in fact a continuous change and a kind of social experiment, continues to this day.

I assume that in the sociological, economic, management and quality sciences perspective it is a state of social anomie generating counterproductive behavior. Co-creating the external environment of the organization significantly affects the real shape of employee attitudes. The observed social experiment had its origins in the indecision about the shape of the dominant logic of management in Poland. It is a choice between the Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian-Alpine perspective of economic activity and the social definition of the enterprise as a workplace, as illustrated in the following tables:

**Table 1.**

*Dominant investment resources vs. management logic*

<b>Scandinavian-Alpine logic (investment resources)</b>	<b>Anglo-American logic (investment resources)</b>
Banking system	Exchange system

Source: Own compilation based on (Szomburg 1993, p. 7-8).

**Table 2.**

*Enterprise characteristics vs. management logic*

<b>Scandinavian-Alpine logic (investment resources)</b>	<b>Anglo-American logic (investment resources)</b>
An enterprise is a place where many needs (e.g., security, belonging, work ethos) are fulfilled.	Enterprise is treated in terms of a "commodity". It is the place where meritocratic needs are realized.
Companies merge or buy each other's shares to spread risks or financial burdens (social market economy).	Violent corporate takeovers or spin-offs. The possibility of rapid changes in significant blockholders.
Managers devote themselves entirely to management.	Managers are forced to watch changes in the capital markets.

Source: Own compilation based on (Szomburg, 1993, pp. 7-8).

The paradigm of economism (economics dissected from its social and cultural context) adopted at the time led to a situation in which economics, striving for a scientific ideal, limited itself to analyzing how people use money. The question for what purpose they do it and what motivations drive them in scientific discourse has been marginalized. Similarly, in the sciences that address the issue of managing the social potential of organizations. In this case, it is, to say the least, incomprehensible if we consider the research conducted at the Hawthorne Plant owned by the Western Electric corporation in 1924-1932, which was supervised by Elton Mayo, among others. At that time, it was found that there was a strong influence of group norms on the individual behavior of employees, which gave rise to the "human relations" school (Szmataka, 1989):

- Groups with an informal structure are formed in the various departments.
- These groups, through a system of norms developed by their participants, exert strong pressure on them.

Defined standards:

- You should not produce too much. If you do, you are a "norm breaker" – a rate-buster.
- You should not produce too little. If you do, you will be called a "blinker" – a chiseler.

- You should not say anything to your superior that may harm a colleague. If you do this, you are a "traitor" – a squeler.
- Do not demonstrate your position in the hierarchy. If you are a superior, do not act defiantly (shorten the distance).

Every organization creates an informal structure, because very often its participants face unforeseen situations for which there are no procedures defining how to proceed. What's more – people want to control their environment, not just be subjected to control. Informal ties are a natural consequence of the desire for subjectivity in an organization. I assume that a sense of subjectivity combines a sense of control over reality and a sense of integration with reality, while causality is a conscious activity oriented toward achieving a specific goal (Beskid et al., 1995). According to Zbigniew Zaborowski, subjectivity manifested by exercising power and maintaining control can be divided into three levels (Zaborowski, 1991):

1. Informational subjectivity – one's own (subjective) way of receiving and interpreting information about oneself and the surrounding world.
2. Pragmatic subjectivity – spontaneous search for effective ways to act and their practical implementation.
3. Axiological subjectivity – activity resulting from certain values and views according to which a person acts.

The field of economics is defined by a paradigm of efficiency and productivity achieved through defined organizational roles, the principle of competence and hierarchy. Today's broadly defined culture emphasizes a holistic view of social actors with particular emphasis on the need for self-realization. However, organization is a process of logic of integration and conflict at the same time. The notion of organizational structure, itself assuming order and rationality, distorts the actual arrangement of forces and dependencies. The logic of industrial society is at odds with the cultural demand for self-realization. The dilemma of choosing between the requirement for formalization and the progressive individualization of the needs of the organization's external environment also concerns the issue of the subjective treatment of subordinates. From the point of view of the organization's social potential, it is a matter of harmonizing the possibility of demonstrating competence in the shortest possible time with the use of facade elements: decoration, the scenic part of the means of expression, as a factor of social stability, and the personal facade - those means of expression that are related to the performer of the role himself (Goffman, 1981). Organizational roles effectively project definitions of situations while influencing the way a given state of affairs is understood by making it possible to organize and coordinate actions, as well as to give up claims to be someone else (Goffman 1981). Expansive career paths, or strictly normatively defined patterns of action, serve this purpose). The identification methods used in this case are part of a psychological contract containing a set of unwritten expectations of the employee on the one hand, and on the other hand of the organization specifying three types of issues (Strategor, 1999):

1. Mutual claims based on the idea of interdependence (work, facilitating relationships with others, support, protection, psychological stability, information, education - loyalty and commitment).
2. Mutual learning (creating opportunities for development).
3. Mutual control.

According to Michel Crozier and Erhard Friedberg organizational behavior often deviates from formally defined organizational roles (Crozier, Friedberg, 1994). In other words:

1. The organizational situation does not completely limit the freedom of organizational participants. Having a certain margin of freedom, they have the opportunity to negotiate.
2. The participants of the organization have a certain amount of power, so their behavior should be considered, as the result of a rational strategy leading to the best use of their power to negotiate the most profitable terms of participation.
3. Action strategies contain two opposing but complementary dimensions: the offensive dimension – the constant effort to reduce the action of the freedom of others; the defensive dimension – to avoid reducing one's own freedom.

## **2. The social context of counterproductive behavior in the organization**

In the context of analyzing counterproductive organizational behavior, it is necessary, as indicated above, to take into account the role and importance of attitudes and behaviors "brought" by employees from the so-called external environment of the organization into its system of functioning. This is related to the issue of the organization's culture. It can be understood as (Konecki, Tobera, 2002):

- independent variable – an external factor that directly influences and determines labor and managerial behavior in a country;
- dependent variable – an element of the organization that depends on the existence of other organizational elements (e.g., property rights, transaction costs and the activity of the entrepreneur or organizational leaders oriented towards creating positive attitudes to work or building an organizational strategy in which, for example, the company's mission is defined influencing the values and norms recognized throughout the organization);
- as an autonomous entity – not determined by the culture found in the environment of the country and other factors of the internal environment of the organization independent of it (a form of expression and manifestation of human consciousness – the organization is "culture").

Taking into account the cultural paradigm, I assume that the culture of an organization is derived from the independent variable and the dependent variable. They are autonomous but complementary. I consider the characteristics of the external environment and the type of organization to be the primary determinants of organizational culture. I treat the features of organizational culture as derivatives of the values that co-create the organization's environment. Thus, its participants correspond more to the model of "sociological man" (*homo sociologicus*), rather than "economic man" (*homo oeconomicus*). This "socially rooted" man in his actions is based on values rather than interests.

The concept of social anomie, which co-creates the context of counterproductive behavior in organizations, has its intellectual origins in the analysis of the destruction of the axionormative order at the end of the 19th century - a discussion of the social, political and economic consequences of the above phenomenon. The phenomenon of anomie is now considered in terms of objective states of society and subjective states of individual consciousness. For Emil Durkheim, anomie is a state "(...) in which the normative system loses coherence and turns into chaos. Signposts of action - goals and means - become vague, ambiguous. People lose their sense of what is good and what is bad, what is worthy and what is unworthy, what should be pursued and what should be avoided, what methods are allowed and what are forbidden. Disorganization of normative culture means disorientation of members of the collective"(Sztompka, 2002, p. 275). Robert K. Merton redefined the concept of anomie by linking it to an emphasis on two elements of social and cultural structure (Merton, 1982):

- culturally defined intentions or interests taking the form of sanctioned goals for "all or variously positioned members of society",
- customarily or legally sanctioned ways of achieving these goals.

According to Merton, cultural goals and the institutionalized norms that shape the spectrum of dominant behavior need not be closely related because the cultural pressure for certain goals can change. In other words - the desire to achieve a culturally sanctioned goal can become independent of the institutionalized methods of aiming at it. Possible strategies of action are: conformism: acceptance of goals and institutionalized means; innovation: acceptance of goals while rejecting means to reach them; ritualism: rejection of goals and acceptance of means; disengagement: negation of goals and means; rebellion: rejection of goals and means and proposal of their alternatives. In a situation of radical reconstruction of the socio-economic order, the existing system of values is eroded, therefore the phenomenon of employee anomie – intentional and systematic behavior that causes widely defined losses for the organization – is growing. These are (Kowalewski, Moczydlowska, 2020):

- theft and destruction of the organization's property,
- falsification of documentation,
- cheating and using violence against co-workers,
- aggressive and potentially dangerous behavior,

- nepotism,
- misappropriation of the achievements of other employees,
- disclosure of organizational secrets,
- pretending to work,
- leaving the workplace without permission from superiors,
- taking care of private matters while working,
- prolonging breaks, arriving late and leaving work early,
- drinking alcohol and using psychoactive substances,
- simulating illness.

At this point, it is worth noting that the concept of labor anomie in relation to counterproductive behavior is beginning to lose semantic precision. We distinguish five types of counterproductive behavior (Turek, 2012):

- abuses against co-workers,
- theft,
- production deviation,
- organizational sabotage,
- withdrawal.

Attempts to identify differences between anomie and counterproductive behavior are, in my opinion, devoid of substantive justification. Already the state of anomie (a person in a situation of temptation and/or humiliation), whether in the sense of Emil Durkheim or Robert K. Merton, generates the need to build a peculiar system of rationalization of actions taken. Due to the multiplicity of theoretical conceptualizations of pathology and dysfunction in organizations present in the literature, I will skip the related scientific discourse. This would exceed the capacity of the volume of this analysis, so I will focus my attention on the phenomenon of organizational withdrawal similar to the so-called quiet quitting (lack of emotional involvement in work). It is similar to one of Robert K. Merton's proposed survival strategies – the negation of ends and means.

### **3. Organizational withdrawal – diagnosis**

Behaviors inherent in organizational withdrawal are (Filas, <https://zawodowysos.pl/zachowania-kontrproduktywne-w-organizacji/>):

1. Intentional tardiness.
2. Reducing work time.
3. Extending breaks.
4. Leaving the workstation.

5. Intentionally performing work more slowly.
6. Taking undue days off.
7. Simulating illness.
8. Surfing the Internet during working hours.

I assume that counterproductive behaviors can be legal (e.g., taking care of personal matters during work time) and illegal (e.g., drinking alcohol in the workplace) (Bowling, Gruys, 2010). Their differentiation is also determined by the nature of their association with work (e.g., slower performance of job duties or use of violence against co-workers).

The distinction indicated has serious implications in the area of organizational behavior. This is because the inherent legitimacy of withdrawal makes it possible to survive in an organization, and taken as an inferential indicator, it exposes the weakness of the incentive systems used and forces us to ask the basic question: how do we perceive our workplace? This seems to be one of the consequences of the indecision cited at the beginning of the analysis regarding the choice of the dominant logic of management and its corresponding "organizational architecture". Conducted in September 2022 by ARC Rynek i Opinia on behalf of Pracuj.pl, the study "Work in times of change" (<https://media.pracuj.pl/215457-zaangazowani-ale-nie-zmotywowani-polacy-w-pracy>) addressed, among other things, the phenomenon of quiet quitting. The survey "Work in times of change" was conducted in September 2022 by ARC Rynek i Opinia on behalf of Pracuj.pl. Measured using the CAWI method, it was conducted on a sample of 2110 Poles, representative of the working population aged 18-65 in terms of gender, age and size of place of residence. Changes in attitudes toward work, according to which an employee gives up ambitions beyond his or her basic duties – disagreement with engaging in new tasks, working overtime and lowering ambitions for career advancement. Involvement in current duties was declared by 79% of respondents. Only 39% of working respondents were convinced that in their work, the extra commitment pays off for the employee. 54% of Poles spend an average of 8 hours a day at work. 8 out of 10 respondents are engaged in their work tasks. 37% of respondents said they focus only on formal duties. Poles perceive themselves as reliable professionals, although for some this is not matched by a readiness to carry out additional tasks - to go beyond the rigid framework of the daily schedule. Only 4 out of 10 respondents were of the opinion that in their place of employment an above-normal commitment to work pays off for the employee. A large percentage of those exemplifying work responsibilities were not fully convinced of the real impact of such an attitude on an employee's salary. Reluctance to perform tasks beyond the assigned ones was more often shown by blue-collar workers (48%) than office workers (34%). This is likely to be the result of the specifics of the work of both groups (the stereotypical perception of blue-collar workers as more vulnerable to unfair employer practices). The most frequently cited reasons for declaring a change of workplace were the desire for higher wages (57%) and the lack of development/promotion opportunities (30%). Interestingly, the feeling of appreciation in one's current place of employment was declared by only 48% of respondents, while 53% said they

felt such appreciation of their job duties from family and friends. The lack of support from the employer in the fight against the effects of inflation was indicated by 76%. The situation at workplaces was assessed positively by 49% of respondents, while 37% chose the answer: neither good nor bad. 73% were not worried about losing their current job although a quarter (23%) reckoned with such a possibility (CBOS Research Announcement, No. 150/2022).

The research results presented above indirectly or directly point to a kind of "intra-organizational rationality" oriented to the withdrawal strategy. According to Robert K. Merton, people who use this type of adaptation remain in society but "do not belong" to it. They have internalized goals (emotionally charged and highly valued) but in their view the available institutional means do not lead to their achievement. It can be hypothesized that in organizations we face a similar phenomenon. Living simultaneously in the organization and "next to it". It is worth noting that the social consequences of labor anomie are reinforced by the management methods and techniques commonly used, which I call the organizational paradox. Here is an illustration of it (Deal, Kennedy, 2000):

Culture of negation – the organization as a mechanism for balancing the interests of employees and management is replaced by the dominance of shareholder power - the belief that the obligations of employers and employees are reciprocal disappears.

Culture of fear – the impassable contractual boundary between workplace and family ceases to exist - it was also a kind of guarantee of employment and pay. The gradual deprivation of this guarantee is causing chaos for many individual biographies.

A culture of cynicism – the linking of managers' income levels to the potential growth of the shares of managed companies is causing the previous commonality of the goals of superiors with those of employees to disappear.

A culture of mistrust – the sense of threat of losing one's job causes a reluctance to share knowledge and to inform superiors of one's ideas.

Culture of anomie – changes in management methods and techniques generate the absence of any cultural order. This forces acceptance of tried-and-true symbols, rituals and values, which contradicts the expected goal of the change.

It poses a serious challenge to theorists and practitioners of organizational life. All the more so because the form of this counterproductive behavior is, as has been emphasized, legal.

#### **4. Summary**

The common denominator of the organizational perspectives described by Gareth Morgan (1997) is their metaphorical nature. This leads to certain consequences: on the one hand, the use of metaphor is the result of a way of thinking and a way of seeing that permeates our proper understanding of the world in general. Thus, metaphor influences scientific interests,



the language we use, the way we think and how we externalize ourselves in our daily lives. But on the other hand, metaphors have an important cognitive function - they enable us to perceive the object of study from a particular perspective. Although always one-sided, but allowing to reduce the complexity of organizational processes (Pawnik, 2007). My take on the Polish reality of worker anomie would be the metaphor of "organization as a game". Withdrawal, i.e. being in the organization and at the same time "next to it," constitutes counterproductive legal behavior. Minimizing their scope therefore appears to be far more difficult than creating regulations to reduce the other forms of pathology and organizational dysfunction described in detail in the literature. It leaves open the question of the meaning of the workplace in the conditions of the Polish socio-economic system. It also changes the perspective of the search for methods and techniques for internalizing the "desired organizational culture".

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