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MUNICIPAL HOUSING STOCK MANAGEMENT IN POLAND FROM A PUBLIC MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This paper identifies the management of municipal housing stock as an area of public management in an urban municipality, taking into account the legal, institutional and market conditions in Poland. In order to achieve this aim, the author examined relevant literature and pertinent legislation and employed an analysis of source (organizational) documentation on the management of municipal housing stock in provincial capital cities. The paper begins by discussing the essence, distinctive characteristics and concepts of public management as a sub-discipline of management sciences. Subsequently, it outlines the specificity of public management in a municipality as a local government unit. Against this background, the author goes on to identify the management of municipal housing stock from the standpoint of public management in an urban municipality by formulating its definition in a broad and narrow sense, followed by a synthetic characterization of this management in a functional and institutional approach, considering its basic organizational models. The research demonstrated that the management of municipal housing stock is subject to progressive marketization and tends to be shaped by such public management mechanisms as hierarchy, market and network. These mechanisms cause this management to operate in practice in a hybrid system.

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1. Introduction

Throughout the 1990s, municipalities in Poland took over public housing stock from the State Treasury, with all the problematic issues involved in their maintenance and management. At the same time, municipalities were delegated the responsibility to pursue independent housing policies locally within the framework of the uniform market regulations enacted at the state level. The essential task of local self-governance would thus be to create conditions in which the housing needs of the population may be met; in particular, this included - in specific cases - provision of social and replacement housing for low-income persons and other socially vulnerable members of local communities. These changes were accompanied by extensive privatization of municipal dwellings as well as organizational transformation of the entities involved in municipal housing management. In addition, the property management system, which was implemented at the time, allowed for the management of municipal housing stock to be entrusted to private property managers.

Over time, the external environment of the municipal housing stock (MHS) also witnessed changes (development of real estate markets, changes in the provision of utility services and contracting out of building works, etc.). Empirical research and observations warrant the conclusion that the transformations that occurred, and the actions taken in the field of MHS management have proven ineffectual given their main objective: to meet the housing needs of those who are eligible for public

housing assistance. This is evidenced by substantial quantitative and qualitative deficits in municipal stock, their deteriorating condition and usability, increasing rent arrears and prolonged waiting periods for municipal dwellings. In addition, many authors emphasize that management services provided by municipal organizational units with respect to MHS have been below par in terms of efficiency and quality, as well as highlight the ad hoc nature of the restructuring measures taken for these units, which have so far failed to create real competition in local housing markets. These problems and deficits imply the need to transform the traditional administration of MHS towards their active management, which consequently necessitates a more profound examination of the issue from the standpoint of public management as a sub-discipline of management sciences.

The aim of this study is to identify the management of municipal housing stock as an area of public management in an urban municipality, taking into account the legal, institutional and market conditions in Poland. The subject of the study is confined to the management of MHS held by urban municipalities due to the fact that the issues in the management of such assets in this country are mainly concentrated in urban areas. The work is conceptual and problem-oriented, as it systematizes principal concepts, functions and structures of municipal housing stock management in the context of managing a municipality as an attributively construed public organization. In order to achieve the above aim, the study relies on an analysis of relevant literature and pertinent legislation, which is supplemented by the analysis of source (organizational) documentation concerning MHS management in 16 provincial capital cities in Poland. As such, this work contributes to reducing the research gap resulting from the fact that previous research on the management of public real estate resources, including municipal housing stock, has not adequately integrate scholarly achievement of public management, whereby it did little to solve problems in this respect (Marona, 2018).

2. The essence, distinctive characteristics and concepts of public management

Public management has evolved in response to the challenges brought about by the reform processes in public administration since greater attention was paid to the economic aspects of spending public funds, improvement of public service quality and ensuring increased efficiency in the operations of public organizations (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000; Ishihara, 2022). This represents a combination of the normative approach, which is characteristic of traditional public administration, and the instrumental mindset attributed to general management (Perry& Kraemer, 1983, p. X). The essence of public management is often elucidated through the juxtaposition of the concept with public administration: the science of the legal and legal-organizational aspects involved in the functioning of the executive apparatus of public authority. On these grounds, Sudoł and Kożuch (2010, p. 390) argue that the term "management" is a broader concept than "administration", given that "public administration focuses on the implementation of political directives and procedures in the execution of the tasks of the government and local self-governance", whereas public management is oriented towards the efficiency of the organizations within its scope of interest. Administration - spanning the provision of services defined by regulations and instructions - is subordinated to the requirements of the law, which implies a certain passivity, but does not preclude performing duties with due diligence. It is categorized as an auxiliary function in an organization (Zieleniewski, 1969), albeit indispensable for its existence and operation (Markowski, 1999, p. 19). Management in public organizations, on the other hand, "does not only mean the activities stipulated by law but also a certain degree of autonomy of the manager, involvement in the formulation and pursuit of the organization's goals, allowing for certain risks in decision-making processes and responsibility in the organizational sense, as opposed to penal liability exclusively" (Kożuch, 2005). When considering the essence of public management, it is underlined that it is linked to politics, law and civil society and that it is primarily governed by the logic of public choice relating to transparent and socially just redistribution of public goods and services. In other words, it is characteristic of such management that it takes into account the economic, social and political efficiency of the choices made in the public sector (Kożuch, 2004).

In the literature, public management is a relatively new and ambiguous concept (Szumowski, 2014), situated at the intersection of management sciences and administrative sciences, as well as a subject of interest in other sciences (such as, e.g., law, economics, political science, sociology). In Poland, public management may be interpreted variedly (Kożuch, 2004, p. 74) as: (1) the activities of public service providers and elected politicians, (2) a range of management activities mandated to public executive

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authority structures and the processes carried out by such authorities, (3) the management of public organizations or a system of public organizations, (4) as a sub-discipline of management sciences. From the standpoint of management sciences, particular importance is attached to the latter two notions of public management. Thus, public management is understood primarily as the management of public organizations, whereby the latter is taken to denote "a complex entirety which possesses the characteristics of all organizations, distinguished by a particular system of objectives and values, whose primary function (mission) is to satisfy collective public needs by means of public goods and services" (Kożuch, 2004, p. 87). It should be underlined that, when employed with respect to individual public organizations (such as a hospital or a school), public management does not raise doubt among researchers, as it falls within the scope of the current management sciences Sudoł and Kożuch (2010, p. 385). On the other hand, the inclusion of public organizations, which occasionally constitute complex supra-local systems (such as an entire state or province) in the purview of public management (management science), "is no longer that apparent" (Lichtarski & Bąk-Grabowska, 2017, p. 10). Regardless of associations with other sciences, public management is now a sub-discipline of management sciences, distinguished by its objective specificity, as attested by the leading studies by Cyfertetal. (2014, pp. 37-49) and Sudoł (2014, pp. 11-35). Within public management as a sub-discipline of management sciences, the inquiry focuses on the organization and management processes in public organizations and in those civic equivalents which pursue goals coinciding with the objectives of public organizations. These processes are examined in terms of regularities and sources of efficiency in organizations (both in individual units or their internal parts, as well as in groups of multiple entities) geared towards the realization of the public interest (Sudoł & Kożuch, 2010). The principles and regularities which are valid in general management do apply within public management, but their application in public organizations requires allowances to be made for the specificity of such organizations. A number of researchers put public management on par with general management, considering the scope of activities, and approach it as an information and decision-making process carried out at various levels of the organizational structure of the state as a whole, including local governance units as well (Gliński et al., 1996, p. 170). Others highlight the distinctive features of public management, which, according to Kuźnik (2005, p. 71) for instance, include the intervention of a public authority in the operation of an entity to exercise management, which includes the administration (regulating current affairs) and execution of ownership-related obligations (acquisition and disposal of essential assets), the allocation of the public funds available to the public authority, as well as monitoring and evaluation of how an entity functions.

Public management may be understood as a set of public sector management concepts (models) that have developed as a result of the many inefficiencies diagnosed in traditional public administration (based on the model of an ideal bureaucracy), including New Public Management and participatory or interactive public management (Public Governance). The concept of New Public Management (NPM) introduces a managerial approach to public sector management and, essentially, it adapts management methods and techniques employed in the private sector to the management of public organizations. Notably, it involves changing the focus of public organizations from outlays and procedures to achieving results, management decentralization, as well as the adoption of a strategic orientation and the use of market instruments and mechanisms. The NPM concept also places emphasis on increased discipline and economy regarding the use of resources (Hood, 1991, pp. 4 5) and entails a shift in the role of public authorities, which should transition from being a provider of public goods and services to their regulator, organizer and controller (Lissowski, 2010). This managerial model of public management is intended to ensure the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of public organizations, improved quality of provided services, as well as their better alignment with social needs (Zalewski, 2005). As a concept deriving from the critique of NPM, Public Governance (PG) adopts certain elements of the former, but it envisions the function of managing complex communities as the coordination of the actions of entities from different sectors (Izdebski, 2007). While NPM attaches considerable attention to measuring outcomes, PG is "more concerned with how different organizations interact to achieve higher levels of desired outcomes for the citizens and stakeholders" (Lissowski, 2010). One of the crucial premises of the PG is the interactive mode of governance, which consists of joint decision-making between public administration and the various stakeholders. It is assumed that, in order to operate effectively and efficiently, public organizations must

interact with external actors by coordinating activities in horizontal networks of multiple autonomous entities. The task of public organizations - the steering centers of the networks - is to stimulate the processes of defining and formulating such rules which enable the participants of the network to satisfy their needs and realize their interests (Hausner, 2008, p. 406), simultaneously achieving the objectives in the public interest. It should be noted that the evolution of the above public management concepts does not require complete rejection of one model and its replacement by another, but consists of a gradual transition from the previous model to its successor while retaining the elements of the former so as to eliminate its weaknesses and imperfections (Reiter & Klenk, 2019). Hence, in practice, elements of these models overlap or co-occur, with the result that public management is shaped by three mechanisms: hierarchy, market and network. It should be underlined that each of these mechanisms assigns a different role in management processes to public, private and social entities as well as citizens.

3. Specificity of public management in a municipality as a local government unit

Local government units occupy a particularly important place in the public sector in Poland, as their principal function is to act to meet the needs of citizens as residents of a given territory (Kożuch, 2004, p. 113). First and foremost, this applies to municipalities established under law to carry out an essential part of the public tasks which meet the collective needs of the local communities. Broadly speaking, a municipality is an association of inhabitants of a specific area. According to management sciences, a municipality constitutes an organization in the attributive sense, as it is defined "as a special kind of relationship of the parts with respect to one another and their aggregate whole, in which the parts contribute to the success of the whole and the whole contributes to the success of the parts" (Gitling, 2013, p. 14). Taken as an entirety, a municipality is characterized by its specific objectives of action, complex and purposefully ordered structure, as well as distinctive objectives relative to its surroundings, to which it remains linked at all times. What fundamentally distinguishes a municipality from the entire socio-economic system is the purpose of its functioning, i.e. the pursuit of the public interest on a local scale (Marona, 2018, p. 85). For this reason, a municipality is recognized as a public organization. Moreover, it is conceived as a specific system whose primary purpose is to meet the needs of the persons residing within its boundaries. This notion is supported by the fact that there are a number of organizational units operating within the municipality whose functions, albeit diverse, combine to make up the objectives adopted for the municipality as a whole (Kozina & Nalepka, 1995, p. 54). The systemic approach draws on a broader perception of the municipality in public management, in which it is conceptualized as a network of public units functioning in a specific territory. Engaging with one another, the units co-contribute to the achievement of a common goal while interacting with external entities whose goals are not necessarily mutually compatible and may be at odds with the goal of the municipality as a whole. However, this does not affect the manner in which the municipality is perceived as a subject of public management, as the resulting network - as a hybrid form of an organization - remains under the control of the municipal authorities while the subordinate public entities are still responsible for achieving the common goal. In addition, "for an entirety to be considered an organization, it is not a prerequisite that all its parts (...) must contribute to the success of the whole" (Zieleniewski, 1969, p. 275). Furthermore, certain scholars underscore the municipality as a territorial organization, the attributes of which - apart from its resident population and its own territory - include legal personality, democratically elected authorities, its own budget and assets as management tools, as well as public tasks carried out by the political authority and public administration (Noworól, 2013, p. 58).

Taken broadly, municipal management comprises the totality of complex processes informed by local policies, in the course of which "municipal bodies and administration exert influence on the object of management in such a manner that its actions (behavior) are geared towards achieving the objectives it has been set, i.e. remains in line with the objectives adopted by the subject of management. The object of management may include such persons, organizations and things which are implicated in the planning and delivery of public tasks but which, unlike organizations, are not necessarily subordinate to the managing entity" (Wojciechowski, 2012, p. 15). Influential processes are aligned to enable effective use of resources available in the municipality (its own and those of its surroundings) in order to achieve the fundamental goal of its functioning, i.e. the realization of public interests, which presupposes ongoing and

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uninterrupted satisfaction of the collective needs of the community by performing locally important public tasks. The resources in question include not only human resources (administrative personnel) available to the municipal organization but also economic resources, such as financial means (budget) and material assets (property), which amounts to a material foundation (instruments) by means of which the objectives and the public tasks of the municipality can be accomplished. It is widely accepted that, for social and economic reasons (the finiteness of wealth), a municipality should manage all of its available resources rationally in the interest of the self-governing community. With regard to material assets, this means, in particular, that municipal bodies and administrations must exercise due diligence to ensure their effective and efficient utilization (Dolewka, 2013, p. 41). The complexity of municipal management is due to the diversity of tasks and self-governance structures, not to mention the broad range of actors participating in such processes, which include: municipal bodies, the municipal office, municipal organizational units and the general population of the municipality. According to Wojciechowski (2012, p. 16), municipal management is typified by the following: it represents a typical information and decision-making process, involves characteristics of managerial and teamwork, constitutes a system of regulatory activities in line with the adopted objectives, and it is also a coordination process, in the course of which the activities of various persons, institutions and economic entities are harmonized. The author adds that such management should not be considered only as a separate process (or processes) but also as an activity linked to the environment, which has a greater or lesser impact on the former.

Municipal management is oriented towards the performance of public tasks of its own, as defined in the Act on Municipal Self-Government[1] (Act, 1990) and in other enactments, the purpose of which is the ongoing and uninterrupted fulfillment of the collective needs of the population by providing universally accessible services. Hence, the delivery of public tasks by a municipality is seen in conjunction with providing public services, while the management of service provision processes is the fundamental domain of municipal management. Public services are intended to advance the public interest, which in itself is conceived as serving higher goals that a given community recognizes as the most important (Kożuch & Kożuch, 2011, p. 53) and/or to ensure users access to goods which are crucial given their key needs. Public services in municipal management are classified into administrative, social and technical services (Wańkowicz, 2004, pp. 61-66). Administrative services consist of the conduct of administrative procedures (such as data registration, issuing documents, permits, licenses, decisions, etc.), whereby they may function independently or as a component in another category of services. Social services involve the utilization of the social infrastructure spanning sectors such as health, education, social assistance and welfare, housing, culture, physical culture and recreation, as well as public security. In contrast, technical services presuppose exploitation of the technical infrastructure, including public transport, water supply and sanitation, waste management, maintenance of cleanliness and order, cemeteries, energy supply and public greenery.

The specificity of municipal management, including management of the processes of providing public services, entails the issue of municipal autonomy with respect to its organizational and management capacity. With regard to the first, one needs to consider the right of a municipality to establish its own bodies, structures and organizational units, including the right to determine the structure and rules of the municipal office, as well as the competence to appoint persons to positions within its structure (Filipiak-Dylewska, 2002, p. 120). The autonomy of management involves questions about the right of a municipality to decide how its resources may be allocated, including the purpose and utilization of material assets; another problem is the municipality's right to choose the forms and modes of providing public services, which offers an opportunity to opt for different management concepts, methods and techniques (Flieger, 2016, p. 8). In extreme cases, public services in municipal management can either be provided directly by the municipality's own organizational units (administrative model) or thoroughly privatized (market model). To a varying degree, Polish municipalities have adopted a mixed paradigm referred to as a market-regulatory model (Wojciechowski, 2012; Dolewka, 2013) or an administrative-market model (Zalewski, 2005), in which public services are provided in cooperation with various external entities (private, social or public) on a contractual basis. The implementation of mixed strategies to provide public services with at least one feature of a market mechanism is known as the

[1] Cf. Art. 7(1) Act of 8 March 1990 *on Municipal Self-Government* (Act, 1990).

marketization of public services: a technique of introducing changes aimed at implementing the tenets of public management (Kożuch & Kożuch, 2011, p. 49). The specificity of municipal management is further evinced in the presence of two spheres, i.e. the management of a bureaucratic office, where elements of authoritarian style predominate, and the management of a territorial entity, which displays elements of the participatory style (Kożuch et al., 2016, p. 36). Given that the performance of public tasks in municipalities is only subject to the assessment of purposiveness and legal compliance (Kachniarz, 2012, p. 219), their delivery in practice is primarily informed by procedures and adherence to the law. Hence, the management style of the municipality is dominated by an administration which, devoid of the active aspects of management, is limited to sustaining its existence.

Taking "all public matters of local importance not reserved to other entities" into consideration, municipal management goes well beyond the scope of its own, statutorily defined tasks. In fact, it encompasses the totality of management activities undertaken by municipal management entities to promote local development with a view to improving the quality of life of the inhabitants of the self-governing community. In this context, the most important areas of municipal management include (Zawicki et al., 2004): strategic management, financial management, human resource management, public service management, stakeholder relations management, as well as stimulating economic development, program and project management and the organization and efficient operation of the municipal office. However, it should be underlined that managing a municipality is geared primarily toward meeting the essential social needs of its residents; hence its "economic objectives should give way to socially-oriented objectives" (Wojciechowski, 2012, p. 235). At the same time, however, since municipalities as "public organizations function within a market economy, the economic aspect of their activities must be taken into account but cannot dominate" (Sudoł & Kożuch, 2010, p. 393). Encompassing "all public affairs", municipal management is inherently general. Specifically targeted management concerns particular areas of municipal management, such as the management of public housing services, which directly entails the management of municipal housing stock (MHS).

4. Identifying the management of municipal housing stock as an area of public management

In a market economy, the primary mechanism enabling the housing needs of the population to be met is the housing market. However, the nature of this market makes it highly imperfect where the needs of low-income households are concerned. Hence, although the market mechanism is a requisite condition, it is insufficient with respect to the housing needs of households whose income prevents them from accessing housing as it is routinely practiced in that market (Majchrzak, 2005, p. 230). Given the vital role of housing in the life of every human being, the regulatory function of the state is inevitably supplemented by the prerogatives of public authorities to intervene in those segments of the market where - due to social and economic circumstances - reliance on market mechanisms alone will never be adequate. Locally, public intervention in the housing domain is effected by the municipality, whose own tasks include creating conditions in which the housing needs of the self-governing community can be met; in particular, this involves providing - in the instances specified in the Act on the Protection of Tenants' Rights[2](Act, 2001) - residential premises within the framework of social tenancy and replacement housing, as well as addressing the housing needs of low-income households. These tasks belong to one of the spheres of municipal activity known as housing governance, the main purpose of which is to meet the housing needs of the local authority community in an ongoing and uninterrupted manner through housing policy and the provision of municipal housing services as public services of a social nature. These services span services rendered individually to eligible persons to meet their basic housing needs. They essentially consist of providing communal dwellings on a rental basis from the municipal housing stock[3] (MHS), which is part of the

[2] Cf. Art. 4(1) and (2) Act of 21 June 2001 *on the Protection of Tenants' Rights, Municipal Housing Stock and Amendments to the Civil Code* (Act, 2001).

[3]Pursuant to Art. 2(1)(10) Act of 21 June 2001 *on the Protection of Tenants' Rights*...(Act, 2001) municipal housing stock (MHS) denotes premises intended to meet housing needs, held in property by the municipality or by single-person municipal companies to which the municipality has entrusted the implementation of its own task of satisfying housing needs of the self-governing community, with the exception of social housing associations (called TBS), as well as premises in the sole possession of such entities, as well as residential premises designated in the articles of association

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public housing stock held in ownership by the municipality. MHS is approached as the "proper object of housing governance" exercised by the municipality (Kosiński, 2014) and the primary instrument by means of which the tasks and objectives in this area of municipal activity can be carried out and accomplished. It should be emphasized that the provision of housing units from the MHS is inextricably linked to a range of management decisions and measures concerning, for example, the use, maintaining and financing of such housing stock, which translates into its being managed on behalf of the municipality.

In the broad sense, *the management of municipal housing stock can be defined as a complex process directed by the housing policy of the municipality, in the course of which the subject of management influences the object of management with a view to effective and efficient use of such housing stock to achieve the essential objectives that concern the full realization of the municipality's own tasks with regard to the ongoing and uninterrupted satisfaction of the housing needs of the local community*. The above subject of management comprises municipal bodies, the executive bodies in particular, as well as the municipality's administrative entities established to handle housing management within the scope of their managerial competence. In contrast, the objects of MHS management include personnel in the organized structures (organizational units) of the municipality, as well as the remaining tangible (e.g. financial) and intangible (e.g. information) assets in the municipal housing management domain, which are utilized by people to carry out the tasks and, ultimately, achieve the pre-determined goals. MHS management is anything but straightforward owing to the general complexity factors in municipal management, which are even further compounded by the particular setting of such management practice. This is due to the fact that certain services within the framework of MHS management are provided by municipal entities which operate outside the domain of municipal housing governance (e.g. water supply, heating supply, etc.), while others are rendered by external (market) entities in the private or social sector (e.g. cleaning services, maintenance, repairs, renovations, etc.). In addition, the circumstances which make that management a complex matter derive from the unique (hybrid) structure of the MHS following the privatization of municipal housing (Muczyński & Goraj, 2021, p. 362). Consequently, two segments emerged in the MHS structure, with the first segment (S1) comprising municipal housing units (dwellings) in properties (buildings) that are exclusively owned by the municipality. In this segment, municipal entities may make thoroughly autonomous decisions as part of housing stock management processes, subject to the limitations arising from generally applicable laws and the guidelines laid down in local enactments. The second segment (S2) of the MHS consists of municipal dwellings in the properties owned by Homeowners Associations (HOAs) in which the municipality participates. In this segment, municipal entities are obliged to cooperate with other members of HOAs in the management of jointly owned (common) properties, and their influence on the decisions made in individual HOAs is contingent on the size of the municipality's share in the common property. It should be noted that the S1 segment functions within the public finance system, while the S2 segment is involved in the private finance system (Muczyński, 2020, p. 6). In contrast, MHS management, in the narrow sense, is construed as object-oriented management, focusing on particular municipal or common properties, in which one makes decisions and undertakes managerial activities, which are typical of property management[4].

According to the proposed definition, MHS management corresponds to the resource-based interpretation of management (e.g. Bryson et al., 2007; Lockett et al., 2009, Barney et al, 2021; Davis & DeWitt, 2021) while incorporating the classical understanding of the concept by Sudoł (2012, p. 31); it is thus presumed to be a process of heading a team of people (steering activity), which proceeds in the municipality as a public organization, with the aim of achieving pre-determined goals. However, taking a different standpoint, MHS management may also be interpreted as an information and decision-making process (e.g. Krzyżanowski, 1994; Czermiński, 2002, Citroen, 2011; George & Desmidt, 2018) carried out at different levels of the organizational structure of a municipal organization, which includes the acquisition, processing and transfer of information to facilitate decisions by the relevant decision-making entities. In other words, MHS management is a sequence of

established by special-purpose vehicles., referred to in Art. 7 Act of 20 June 2017 on the National Property Stock (Act, 2017).

[4]the statutory definition of property management in Poland is presented in Art. 184b Act of 21 August 1997 *on Real Estate Management* (Act, 1997).

information and decision-making processes integrating management aspects of public, social and private organizations with the specificity of housing asset management. The spatial distribution of this stock on the municipal territory makes MHS management amenable to being aided by new information technologies, including SDSS and GIS (Dawidowicz et al., 2019; Muczyński et al., 2022). The above definition coincides with the previously formulated definition of *social housing management* as "*the set of all activities to produce and allocate housing services from the existing social housing stock*" (Priemus et al., 1999) and "*the management of organizations and people to deliver services to customers*" (Walker, 2000).

In the functional approach, MHS management is described as a process consisting of interrelated, repetitive series of management actions referred to as management functions, which involve planning, organizing, motivating and controlling (Nalepka, 2006, p. 22). MHS management functions regulate the actual functional processes of a municipal organization (material functions) with respect to the broadly understood usage of MHS, which, briefly speaking, may include such groups of activities (processes) as acquiring objects (buildings and premises) to the MHS, the use, maintenance and improvement of such housing stock, as well as its disposal. Acquisition of property to the MHS may be effected through municipal investments such as the purchase or construction of a new property, alternatively, the reconstruction of existing real estate by means of various financing modalities. Use includes, in particular, the use of the stock held and deriving benefits from such assets. Use enables the municipality to obtain revenue from rents on municipal property and other sources (outdoor advertising, use of car parks, garages, etc.). The maintenance of the MHS results from the municipality's obligations as the proprietor to operate the buildings and premises in the MHS and to ensure their adequate technical condition, usability and functionality through regular maintenance and running repairs. This entails costs incurred by the municipality to operate and provide technical maintenance of the MHS. Improvement with regard to these assets includes measures to ameliorate their condition (by means of repairs and modernization), which contribute to the increased quality of the housing services provided. Disposal of the MHS spans making premises (dwellings) in the stock available to eligible users under tenancy, exchange and reclaim following the expiry of tenancy rights, discontinuing use of municipal property due to wearing out, as well as selling premises from the stock in line with the municipality's privatization policy. It enables the municipality to gain capital income from the sale of the municipal property on top of current revenue. It should be emphasized that due to the network nature of MHS management, one of its highly relevant functions is coordinating the activities of external organizations, which are formally autonomous but functionally interdependent with those municipal units which deliver the tasks and achieve the objectives of such management.

In the institutional approach, MHS management involves designated personnel of the municipal organization in a particular arrangement of managerial and functional positions, which makes up the MHS management system, encompassing all levels of hierarchy within the municipality construed as a public organization. The MHS management system, by virtue of exerting an effect on its subordinate executive system - delegated to carry out the material functions with respect to the stock concerned - increases efficiency and effectiveness of task performance and improves the quality of the housing services proved by the municipality. The MHS management system is a multi-tier framework which is capable of adopting various organizational systems (models) in practice. By analogy with management in business organizations, three hierarchical levels of the system can be distinguished: strategic, tactical and operational. At the strategic level, decisions of the corresponding rank are made about MHS management goals, directions and strategies; simultaneously, the principles and instruments for their implementation are defined as well. Here, decision-making remains within the purview of the governing and executive bodies of the municipality, whereas principal management instruments include the long-term MHS management programs as well as the rules of renting and sale of municipal premises, which are adopted through resolutions of the municipal council and ordinances of the mayors of respective municipalities. In addition to decision-making, advisory and auxiliary-service functions are performed at this level (Muczyński, 2022). The main functions at the tactical level of the MHS management system include implementation and coordination of detailed policies (e.g. concerning rents, renovation, privatization, tenant relocation, etc.) as well as strategic plans; however, the tactical echelon is also responsible for organizing housing stock management

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processes on the operational level, it supervises and controls delivery of related tasks, as well as represents the municipality as a co-owner in HOAs with municipal participation. Tactical MHS management generally relies on specialized officers, departments or divisions at the municipal office (and also occasionally on separate budgetary units or self-government budgetary establishments of the municipality) designated to implement municipal housing policy and carry out municipal property management (disposal); these cooperate with other structures within the office or municipal organizational units responsible for finance, investments, social policy and other public affairs related to municipal housing. It should be added that by integrating actions at the strategic and operational levels, tactical management plays an essential role in sustaining the internal cohesion of the MHS management system. At the operational level, MHS management encompasses decisions and managerial measures as part of managing municipal and common properties. Here, the chief focus is on the formal, technical, exploitative and financial handling of municipal or common properties according to the guidelines set out in the relevant programs, statutes, regulations and agreements which have been adopted at higher tiers of MHS management. It should be added that the notion of the administration of municipal premises within the MHS management system in question refers to the handling of these premises to the extent arising from the municipality's fulfillment of its obligations as a social landlord. Thus construed, administration may fall within the scope of property management services, but it may also constitute a separate service (Tertelis, 2009), which is generally the case in housing properties belonging to HOAs in which a municipality participates but which are managed by non-municipal property managers.

The hierarchical arrangement outlined above entails three basic organizational systems (models) of MHS management, which include (Nalepka, 2008, p. 6): the direct system, in which operational management functions are performed by authorized employees of the municipal office, the indirect system, where said functions are carried out by municipal organizational units (budgetary units and establishments or municipal companies), and the contracting system, which consists in entrusting management services of properties included in the MHS by means of agreements to autonomous external organizations, including private entities engaging in property management. Outsourcing property management services to external entities as part of the contract system is decidedly much less frequent than having specific work performed within the MHS management structure (such as cleaning, maintenance, and repairs, for instance). Furthermore, it should be emphasized that service outsourcing in MHS management is generally confined to services provided at the operational level, whereas both strategic or tactical decisions and actions are taken directly by the municipality and its subordinate administrative structure or by HOAs. This is in line with the argument of numerous outsourcing researchers, who recommend that strategic areas of asset management remain with particular organizations. The analysis of practical solutions in 16 provincial cities was made on the basis of such source documents as long-term MHS management programs, as well as the statutes and organizational regulations of the entities managing this stock in surveyed cities. This analysis showed that the indirect system is prevalent in the S1 segment of MHS (exclusive municipal property), while in the S2 segment (HOAs with municipal shares), one sees the predominance of the contracting system with diverse participation of municipal companies as property managers.

Conclusions

1. Municipal housing stock constitutes material resources that qualify as distinct due to their object-functional specificity; they are held in ownership by the municipality as a public organization and represent in Poland an essential instrument by means of which it accomplishes its own tasks with respect to fulfilling housing needs of the local community, low-income households in particular. Alternatively, these tasks may be accomplished by taking advantage of third-party housing resources (subletting premises from private or cooperative stock), which is facilitated by the establishment in Poland of new institutions known as social lettings agencies.
2. The municipal housing services, which consist in providing access to MHS, fall into the category of public services of a social nature. They comprise a range of services rendered individually to persons who meet the established criteria in order to satisfy their housing needs. Such services also include certain administrative services (e.g. housing allowances). Furthermore, municipal housing services involve a number of technical utility services (such as water supply, sewage disposal, energy supply, etc.) and other municipal tasks, such

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as: shaping spatial order, real estate governance (disposing), and environmental and natural conservation.

3. MHS management in the broad sense according to the proposed definition meets the three criteria which identify the concept of management according to Sudoł (2014, pp. 14-15): (1) it concerns the team activity of people, (2) it is a process taking place in a municipality as a public organization, and (3) the municipal bodies which manage the organization through the exercise of managerial functions, have an impact on the operation and development of both the organization as a whole and of the housing governance domain within the municipality in which this management is carried out. The direct object of the managerial influence is therefore not the tangible objects that make up this housing stock, but the organized activities of people related to the purposeful usage of these objects, including their acquisition, use, maintenance, and improvement, as well as their disposal.
4. Given the specificity of MHS, which constitutes a part of public housing stock, as well as the obligatory, repetitive and permanent nature of the public tasks (services) delivered using such housing assets, MHS management may be legitimately identified as a separated area (and simultaneously as an integral part) of public management in the urban municipality as a public organization approached in attributive terms. By aiming to achieve the municipality's public objectives in the area of municipal housing, management decisions and pertinent actions contribute to the success of the municipality as a whole. At the same time, the municipality as a whole promotes the achievement of detailed goals pursued in this area. This area is particularly important in Poland's urban municipalities, where there is a concentration of housing needs of low-income households and other public housing tasks.
5. With reference to the categorization model for sub-disciplines in management sciences advanced by the team headed by Cyfert (2014, pp. 37-49), the identified area of MHS management may be classified in terms of theoretical deliberations and empirical inquiry as sub-discipline fourteen (within the practical stream and functional level of management), i.e. financial management in the thematic area relating to the management of property or fixed assets. This area also extends to other functionally oriented sub-disciplines, such as human resource management, service management, or production and technology management. In addition, the MHS management area overlaps with certain thematic areas within operational management sub-disciplines, notably management decision-making support, process management, as well as knowledge and information management.
6. MHS management features elements of administration concerned with legal aspects and management focused on the recipients of public services. The elements of active MHS management derive from the municipality's freedom to choose the forms and modes of providing public services by means of such stock, which directly impacts the efficiency and effectiveness of undertaken actions. Furthermore, such management integrates the management of the municipal office and the territorial unit where the stock is located. As with other public service sectors in a municipality, MHS management is subject to gradual marketization and, to varying respective degrees, tends to be shaped by the three mechanisms of public management, i.e. hierarchy, market, and network. These mechanisms cause such management to be exercised in practice in a hybrid system. Consequently, recommended directions for further research in this area include modeling and improving the system in terms of social, financial, organizational, and informational aspects in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of using the MHS to achieve its primary management objectives.

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