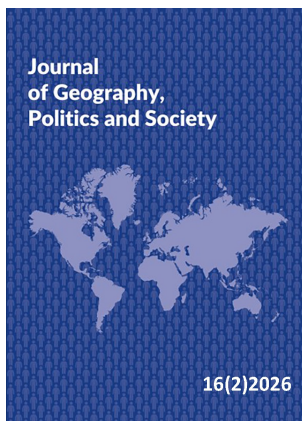




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ARCHETYPICS, REGIONALISM, AND PUBLIC GOVERNANCE IN A TRANSFORMING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT: INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Oleksandr Radchenko

Institute of Socio-Economic Geography and Spatial Management, University of Gdańsk, prof. Marii Janion 3, 80–309 Gdańsk, Poland. ORCID: 0000–0002–0437–6131
e-mail: oleksander.radchenko@ug.edu.pl

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1. Introduction

The contemporary Caucasus can no longer be approached solely as a geographically bounded region between the Black and Caspian Seas. In the rapidly transforming international environment of the 2020s, it functions simultaneously as a geopolitical crossroads, a transport and energy corridor, a security environment, a post-conflict space, and a field in which competing projects of identity, statehood, regional order, and public governance intersect. These dimensions make Caucasus regional studies particularly receptive to interdisciplinary approaches that connect political geography and international relations with public administration, security studies, sociology, cultural analysis, historical memory, and the study of collective meanings. Within such a framework, archetypics offers a potentially productive analytical perspective because it directs attention not only to formal institutions and observable political processes, but also to recurrent value patterns, symbolic structures, and culturally embedded models through which societies interpret authority, threat, cooperation, identity, and change.

This Special Issue of the *Journal of Geography, Politics and Society* brings together ten research

contributions prepared in the intellectual context of the XVII International Theoretical and Methodological Seminar in Memory of Oleh Amosov, “Archetypics and Public Governance: Caucasus Regional Studies”, and the XIV International Competition for Young Scholars in Memory of Olha Balakirieva. The combination of these two academic initiatives has shaped the profile of the issue. On the one hand, it continues the methodological development of the archetypal approach to public governance and societal transformations. On the other, it deliberately broadens the field of application by linking archetypics with regionalism, collective security, institutional culture, strategic leadership, public diplomacy, identity policy, sustainable development, political organisation, and historical-political discourse.

The thematic unity of the issue does not imply that every contribution studies the Caucasus in a narrowly territorial sense. Some papers address the Caucasus directly as a geopolitical, historical, or symbolic space; others examine Ukrainian and broader European experiences that offer comparative analytical models for societies and institutions exposed to war, geopolitical competition, post-conflict reconstruction, identity transformation, and institutional adaptation. Such an approach reflects a relational understanding of regional studies: regions are treated not as isolated

territorial containers, but as open systems embedded in wider networks of security, communication, mobility, memory, cultural interaction, and political influence.

The editorial rationale of the issue is therefore deliberately non-reductionist. Archetypics is not presented as an alternative to institutional, geopolitical, sociological, historical, or empirical analysis. Its analytical value becomes strongest when it complements these approaches by revealing how durable symbolic and value structures mediate the reception of institutions, policies, threats, reforms, and collective experiences. The contributions assembled here differ in their degree of theoretical abstraction and empirical grounding, yet together they demonstrate how the archetypal perspective can be used as a bridge between formal governance structures and the deeper cultural-semantic environments in which those structures operate.

2. Contributions to the Special Issue

The issue opens with the study by Eduard Afonin, Andrii Martynov, and Oleksandr Radchenko, "International Practices in the Public Management of Transit Flows in the Context of Caucasus Regional Studies", which places Caucasus regionalism within the broader geopolitical configuration of Central Asia, the Black Sea – Caspian area, and the Greater Middle East. The authors examine international practices of public management of transit flows and emphasise that the geopolitical significance of the Caucasus is inseparable from the interaction – and frequent collision – of the interests of regional states and global powers.

Transport corridors are interpreted not merely as infrastructure but as instruments of geopolitical influence, economic connectivity, and international cooperation, while their governance depends on the complex relationship among international law, state sovereignty, strategic competition, and institutional coordination. In this sense, the article establishes the spatial and geopolitical coordinates of the Special Issue by presenting the Caucasus as a transit region whose future is closely linked to the ability to reconcile competing projects of Eurasian connectivity and regional order.

This geopolitical dimension is continued and broadened by Tetiana Bielska and Vasyl Shkoliarenko in "Archetypes of Collective Security in the Strategizing of NATO Operations and the Formation of National Security Systems in European States". Their study conceptualises collective defence, deterrence, resilience, strategic partnership, and institutional

complementarity as durable value-oriented and organisational patterns within the changing European security architecture. Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine is treated as a critical catalyst that restored the centrality of collective defence while simultaneously expanding the meaning of security to include cyber resilience, critical infrastructure, information exchange, and interoperability among NATO, the European Union, and national security systems. Of particular importance for the logic of this Special Issue is the conclusion that contemporary security increasingly emerges from multi-level institutional interdependence rather than from the isolated capacities of individual states.

A different institutional level is examined by Nataliia Gavkalova and Dmytro Baranovskyi in "The Archetype of Barrier-Freeness in the Institutional Culture of the Civil Service: A Sociocultural Analysis". Rather than reducing accessibility to physical infrastructure or technical compliance, the authors interpret barrier-freeness as a deeper orientation towards openness, inclusion, and human-centred public administration. Their analysis identifies cognitive, communicative, structural, and sociocultural barriers embedded in the informal rules of bureaucratic organisations and argues that genuine institutional transformation requires corresponding changes in human-resource management, leadership, internal communication, and organisational culture. Inclusive auditing, human-centred standards, digital accessibility, inclusive leadership, and psychological safety are presented as interrelated mechanisms through which a closed bureaucratic institution may evolve towards a more resilient and open public-service ecosystem.

A particularly direct connection between archetypics and Caucasus regional studies is offered by Maksym Lepskiy, Nataliia Lepska, and Alexander Rusetsky in "The Argonautic Expedition and the Archetype of Strategic Coordination on the Caucasian Frontier". Combining archetypal analysis with frontier studies, coalition theory, collaborative governance, and strategic leadership, the authors reinterpret Jason's expedition to Colchis as a symbolic model of collective action in an environment marked by uncertainty, cultural diversity, and political complexity. The success of the expedition is linked not to the exceptional capacity of a solitary hero but to the integration of differentiated competencies, resources, local knowledge, and forms of mediation within a multi-actor coalition. Jason therefore emerges as an archetype of strategic coordination rather than heroic domination. At the same time, the authors employ a "binocular" perspective that juxtaposes the Hellenic narrative with Colchian and

Caucasian viewpoints, revealing the shadow dimensions of strategic leadership: intervention, appropriation, political violence, ethical ambiguity, and contested legitimacy. The Caucasus in this analysis becomes both a historical frontier and a symbolic space in which competing understandings of order, cooperation, and power encounter one another.

The symbolic and communicative dimension of security is developed by Ella Mamontova in "Screen Diplomacy as a Tool for Shaping Cinematic Archetypes of Security". The article examines screen diplomacy as an analytical category encompassing film and other screen media through which states and societies translate security doctrines into emotionally intelligible narratives. The figures of the Defender, Savior, External Enemy, and Invisible Threat are shown to organise perceptions of national resilience, legitimate political action, collective danger, and international responsibility. Cinema and streaming environments are consequently interpreted not merely as cultural products but as arenas in which security meanings are produced, disseminated, and contested. This argument broadens the scope of governance studies by demonstrating that security is constructed not only through institutions and material capacities but also through public diplomacy, collective imagination, and symbolic representation.

The relationship between symbolic structures and political resilience is approached from another direction by Oleksii Valevskyi in "Identity Policy as a Component of National Security and the Consolidation of Ukrainian Society". The Russian-Ukrainian war, in his interpretation, has accelerated transformations in linguistic practices, cultural orientations, historical memory, and civic self-identification, while simultaneously revealing identity as a resource of resistance to external aggression and information influence. The article pays particular attention to the growing European dimension of Ukrainian identity and to the institutionalisation of identity policy through legislation, strategic documents, coordination mechanisms, civic education, and public communication. Importantly, wartime consolidation is not treated as a completed or internally homogeneous process: sociological evidence indicates that strong support for European integration may coexist with persistent expectations of personalised or authoritarian leadership. Identity policy therefore emerges as a long-term field of public governance in which security, democratic modernisation, historical memory, and European integration converge.

Svitlana Yehorycheva and Mykola Lakhyzha extend the archetypal perspective to sustainable development and regional policy in "Archetypal Analysis of Sustainable Development: Regional

Dimensions". Their central argument is that economic resources, legislation, technological instruments, and administrative mechanisms alone cannot explain why sustainable-development initiatives gain or lose social support. The authors therefore combine institutional and spatial analysis with an archetypal interpretation of historically embedded values and local cultural patterns. The proposed model treats such archetypes as Mother-Earth, Community, Nature, Steward/Caregiver, and Creator/Magician not as empirically fixed regional essences, but as heuristic resources for understanding possible differences in the reception of sustainable-development strategies. Particularly relevant to post-war recovery is the discussion of public-private partnership, which demonstrates how formal institutional arrangements interact with cultural expectations concerning the roles of the state, business, and community. Sustainable regional development is thus presented as both an institutional and a sociocultural process.

Taras Plakhtiy addresses one of the classical problems of political organisation in "Archetypal Mechanisms of Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy in Political Parties Viewed as Missionary Organizations". His theoretical model supplements the conventional explanations of oligarchisation—bureaucratisation, professionalisation, information asymmetry, and procedural control—with hypotheses concerning group dynamics and recurrent symbolic relations. The author distinguishes micro-, meso-, and macro-level processes through which leader–subordinate relations, paternalistic expectations, leader sacralisation, ritualisation of democratic procedures, elite closure, and political personalisation may contribute to the normalisation of concentrated power. Particularly important is the distinction between functional hierarchy, which remains temporary and accountable, and oligarchisation, in which hierarchy becomes closed and self-reproducing. By linking this distinction to the concept of variable organisational structure, the article moves from diagnosis towards a research agenda concerned with institutional safeguards capable of dispersing influence and limiting the reproduction of oligarchical power.

The territorial and institutional adaptability of governance is then examined by Oleh Kunitsyn in "Adaptive Archetypal Governance of Territorial Communities: The Ukrainian Experience in the Context of Regional Post-Conflict Transformations". The article develops an adaptive archetypal governance model for Ukrainian territorial communities under wartime and prospective post-conflict conditions. Rather than assigning communities to fixed archetypal types, Kunitsyn treats the Hero, Creator, Caregiver, and Ruler

as foundational governance orientations that may combine under the pressures of crisis, reconstruction, digital transformation, and social-institutional instability. Six hybrid configurations—Rebuilder, Mobilizer, Coordinator, Innovator, Modernizer, and Protector—are illustrated through the cases of Irpin, Dnipro, Chernihiv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Mykolaiv, and Lviv. The contribution is particularly important for the regionalist logic of the Special Issue because it links archetypal interpretation with adaptive governance and resilience research while explicitly treating the proposed configurations as heuristic and comparative rather than as fixed territorial essences. Its broader implication is that post-conflict recovery depends not only on material resources and formal competences but also on the capacity of local institutions to recombine mobilisation, coordination, innovation, and social-protection functions in response to changing conditions.

The Special Issue concludes with Viktoriia Pazdrii's "An Archetypal Approach to Interpreting Historical-Political Discourse in Non-Classical Ukrainian Historiography", which brings the discussion from contemporary institutions back to the *longue durée* of historical meaning. Focusing on the conceptual current of the Ukrainian statehood school, the author treats the historical archetype as a deep semantic model that becomes visible through archetypal representation and may subsequently develop into historical metaphor, narrative, and myth. The proposed classification—personage-based, event-processual, cultural-historical, and chronotopic representations—shows how historiographical texts can organise political experience through recurrent models of authority, statehood, destructive social energy, collective memory, and civilisational belonging. For the overall architecture of the issue, this contribution is especially significant because it demonstrates that the symbolic structures examined in contemporary security, identity, governance, and organisational life also possess a historical dimension: political institutions operate within inherited semantic environments through which societies interpret legitimacy, dependence, resistance, continuity, and state-building.

3. Cross-Cutting Themes and Conceptual Contributions

Taken together, the contributions reveal four interconnected analytical axes. The first is the relationship between security, resilience, and institutional adaptation. The geopolitical management of transit corridors, the restructuring of European

collective security, the wartime transformation of Ukrainian identity, the adaptive governance of territorial communities, and the regional logic of sustainable development all demonstrate that security is increasingly distributed across networks of institutions, infrastructures, communities, and symbolic resources. This corresponds to broader debates on the remaking of the European security order after 2022 and on the capacity of governance systems to adapt under conditions of disruption, reconstruction, and institutional uncertainty (Brinkerhoff, 2005; Cottey et al., 2025; Gustafsson et al., 2025; Healey, 2006). In this issue, resilience is therefore understood not as a static condition but as an adaptive capacity produced through coordination, institutional learning, social cohesion, digital transformation, and the ability to recombine established governance functions under pressure.

The second axis concerns organisational culture and the problem of how formal institutions interact with informal norms. Gavkalova and Baranovskyi show that administrative reform may remain superficial when formal accessibility standards coexist with exclusionary organisational practices. Plakhtiy, from a different theoretical perspective, demonstrates how formally democratic structures may coexist with informal hierarchies and ritualised procedures. Kunitsyn adds a dynamic local-governance dimension by showing that institutional responses themselves may become hybrid under external pressure, so that mobilisation, coordination, innovation, and care are combined differently across communities. These studies resonate with research that treats organisational culture as a substantive variable of public administration and with work on archetypal roles and the recurrent foundations of hierarchy in organisational life (Koprić, 1999; Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016; Sułkowski, 2009). Their combined implication is that institutional design cannot be evaluated solely through legal rules: the practical operation and adaptive capacity of institutions depend on informal expectations, symbolic roles, behavioural patterns, and the organisational ability to reconfigure them.

The third axis is symbolic mediation. Lepskiy, Lepska, and Rusetsky reconstruct a classical myth as a model of frontier leadership and contested legitimacy; Mamontova examines the contemporary production of security narratives through cinema and screen media; Valevskyi analyses identity policy as a mechanism of political consolidation; and Pazdrii shows how historical archetypes become embedded in historiographical metaphors, narratives, and myths. Across these contributions, collective identity is not treated as a fixed psychological possession but as a narratively and symbolically organised field in which

boundaries, loyalties, threats, and political meanings are continually reproduced (Eder, 2009). The communicative dimension is equally important: symbolic representations circulate through historiography, public discourse, cinema, educational practices, and other forms of cultural diplomacy and mediated communication (dos Santos, 2021).

The fourth axis links regional development with cultural sustainability and adaptive territorial governance. Yehorycheva and Lakhyzha make the cultural dimension explicit by arguing that sustainable-development strategies acquire practical legitimacy only when they can be translated into socially recognisable values and local patterns of responsibility. Kunitsyn approaches the same regional problem from the perspective of institutional adaptation, showing how communities confronted with destruction, displacement, reconstruction, or social-support pressures may require different combinations of governance functions. Together, these contributions suggest that territorial recovery is neither a purely technical nor a purely cultural process. It depends on the interaction between institutional capacity, financial and infrastructural resources, participatory mechanisms, digital tools, and locally meaningful patterns of cooperation. This interpretation is consistent with wider scholarship on culturally mediated sustainable development and post-conflict institutional rebuilding (Brinkerhoff, 2005; Ferran Vila et al., 2021).

A fifth, methodological conclusion emerges from the issue as a whole. The contributions show that archetypics is analytically most useful when it functions as a complementary interpretive framework rather than as a substitute for causal explanation or empirical verification. Several articles explicitly combine archetypal analysis with institutional analysis, comparative case studies, sociological survey data, frontier studies, discourse analysis, historical hermeneutics, organisational theory, or structured illustration of local governance practices. This triangulation is important because it prevents archetypes from being treated as fixed, universal labels applied retrospectively to complex social phenomena. Instead, archetypal categories become hypotheses about recurrent symbolic, value, or governance structures whose explanatory relevance must be demonstrated through identifiable textual, behavioural, institutional, or comparative evidence. The contribution by Kunitsyn is particularly instructive in this respect: its community cases are best read as applications of an analytical typology and as a basis for hypothesis generation, not as independent validation of pre-defined archetypal categories.

This methodological caution is particularly important for regional studies. The Caucasus, Ukraine, and the wider European security environment are internally diverse and historically dynamic; none can be reduced to a single cultural code or archetypal “essence”. The comparative value of archetypics lies precisely in the possibility of tracing how similar symbolic models are activated, transformed, hybridised, contested, or rejected under different political and institutional conditions. In this sense, the issue moves away from essentialist regionalism and towards a relational research agenda in which culture, institutions, space, and historical experience are examined as mutually constitutive dimensions of governance.

4. Concluding Remarks and Research Agenda

The contributions assembled in this Special Issue suggest that understanding contemporary regional transformations requires attention not only to institutions, resources, and formal political decisions but also to the deeper structures through which societies interpret authority, security, cooperation, identity, territory, and change. This becomes especially important in environments exposed to geopolitical rivalry, war, displacement, reconstruction, and rapid institutional transformation, where inherited behavioural models are simultaneously challenged and reproduced in new forms. The papers demonstrate that archetypal analysis can contribute to this task when it is integrated with empirically grounded and disciplinary-specific methods rather than used as an autonomous explanatory vocabulary.

Seen from this perspective, Caucasus regional studies offer more than the study of a particular geographical area. The Caucasus can be approached as a laboratory for examining the interaction of global and regional forces, transport and security networks, historical memory and contemporary governance, institutional continuity and adaptive change. Ukrainian and broader European experiences do not replace the specificity of the Caucasus; rather, they provide comparative material for identifying mechanisms that may also be relevant to post-conflict reconstruction, resilience, identity formation, adaptive local governance, institutional reform, and sustainable regional development in Caucasian contexts. The comparative logic is therefore not one of direct transfer but of identifying which combinations of institutions, symbolic resources, and governance capacities become effective under different historical and regional conditions.

The research agenda emerging from the issue therefore points in three directions. First, archetypal propositions should be operationalised more explicitly and tested through comparative empirical research. Second, future studies should pay greater attention to the interaction between formal institutions and symbolic-cultural mechanisms across different territorial scales, from local communities to regional security architectures. Third, the historical dimension of governance should be integrated more systematically

into contemporary regional analysis, since present-day institutional choices are interpreted through inherited narratives of statehood, legitimacy, threat, and belonging. By advancing these directions, archetypes may develop from a broad interdisciplinary vocabulary into a more precise comparative framework for analysing how collective meanings and institutional practices jointly shape the resilience and transformation of states, regions, and communities.

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