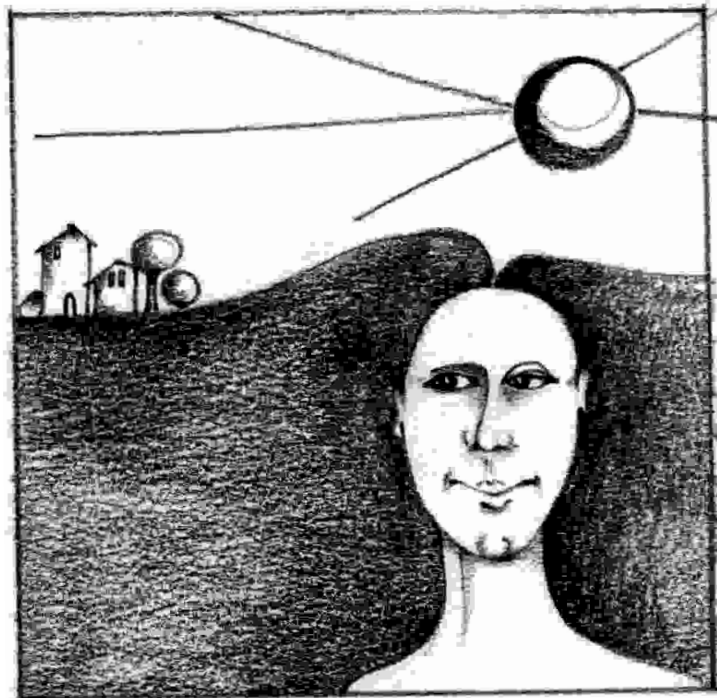


GAIA NEWSLETTER

SUSTAINABLE WAY OF LIFE & THE FEMININE APPROACH



Dear friends,

GAIA Newsletter was inspired by Reinhold Pape from ACID RAIN Sweden. He saw the program of Agentur GAIA and we were together discussing the connections between sustainable way of life and the feminine approach. Along with that, we would like to discover whether there is a relationship between the situation in society and the gender of people in decision-making positions, having power and management responsibility.

The goal of GAIA Newsletter is to understand different perspectives and to see if and how other people perceive gender differences mentally, psychologically, sociologically and culturally. I started to think about gender differences a few years ago when I wrote my MBA dissertation work „Sustainable way of Life and the Feminine Approach“. I thought about huge environmental devastation in my country during the communist time and continuing devastation in new democratic society. Since the revolution we have seen new problems: increasing individual transportation, the decline of public transportation, growing waste and the growth of consumption values.

My theory was combined with my practical experiences. I worked as the secretary at the president's private office after the revolution and I had a chance to observe the management of society from inside and to see how our politicians, who are mostly men, behave and how their priorities are formulated. My personal experience as the assistant to the deputy general manager at the country's largest insurance company enabled me to observe the hierarchical way of behaviour of the exclusively male management. The questions which came to my mind were: „Is there something which makes men better able to manage and women better able to serve?“ „Is this task division determined by our biological, sociological and psychological predisposition, or is it due to tradition, education or cultural habits?“ I was wondering if there is some disability affecting women which prevents a more even balance between men's roles and women's roles in society. I personally decided to test it on my own. I started to manage a non-profit and non-governmental organisation more than ten years ago and I successfully managed several projects. I realized that management in the non-profit sector is often the responsibility of women who take responsibility for improving social conditions and the environment. Politics and business management that makes profit is mainly in man's hands. Why?

„What would happen if there were more women with power and responsibility in government and in businesses?“ „Could their management change our consumption priorities?“ „Would we then become more oriented towards human relationship and better relationship with the environment?“

The dominant aspect in society could be expressed with the verb 'to have' - money, property, power... „Could more women in managerial positions move our priorities towards 'to be' better people, more sensitive to the environment, and to others?“ Our aim is to identify the effect of the feminine approach on the sustainability of our way of life and to analyse the proportion of women in strategic roles within society.

We would like to know, what is the situation in other countries all over the world.

Please, if you could inform us about the situation in your country, we would really appreciate it. We are looking forward to reading your answers. Thank you,

MARIE HAIŠOVÁ, EDITOR

AGENDÅ 21

Chapter 24

Global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development

AIMS:

Agenda 21 to national governments:

- Increase the proportion of women among the decision-makers, planners, technical advisers, managers and highly qualified personnel in the field of environmental issues and development.
- Formulate and implement a clear governmental policy, national directives, strategy and plans allowing to institute equality of women from all social points of view...

WHY WOMEN?

The feminine principle consists:

- In a positive approach to life, love, care
- Emphasis on "being" not "ownership"
- Creativity, complexity of vision
- Sense of equality instead of hierarchical principles
- Understanding on the basis of empathy, intuition...
- Women do not consider nature as something "external", but consider themselves and their surroundings as part of nature...
- Relationships are women's priority
- Mothers cannot wish their children to live in a life-threatening environment, or to become victims of violence or war. To give birth and to raise a human being is much more difficult than to take somebody's life...

CZECH REALITY

"When we have enough money, we can permit ourselves the luxury of a sound environment." Václav Klaus

- The president is a man
- The government is 84% masculine
- In the Parliament and Senate more than 85% of members are men
- The 50 wealthiest people in our country are men
- Criminality is up to 95% men's business

THE RESULT IS:

- A materialistic-consumerist society in which profit, money, prosperity and corruption is the vision human endeavors...
- The present-day ideology of consumerist society is a threat to life on Earth on an unprecedented scale.
- People go to work, in order to buy a car so that they get to work.
- Stress, lack of time to cultivate interpersonal relations, to care not only for oneself and one's own health but also to one's environment and closest surroundings.

LIFE IS NOT FOR SALE

Jean Grossholtz, USA: „Globalization is the trend of total domination over all natural resources, labor forces and all other resources by corporations which are set up for one single purpose that of increasing profit.“

Maria Mies, Germany: "Women, children and nature are always the main victims of wars."

Ursula Oswald Spring, Mexico: "Women represent 70% of the poorest population of the world."

Vandana Shiva, India: „We have been fighting more than fifty years ago against one type of colonialism, but now the time has arrived when we all will have to repeat these efforts to keep our freedom.“

ThiNK GLOBALLY – ACT LOCALLY

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Agentura GAIA searches for new ways of interpersonal communication in the field of environmental protection, education and culture.

Programs:

“Green means life”: The return of trees to our towns and communities

“Women and the environment”: Emphasizing the feminine principle in understanding the world

“Your purse or your life”: A way out of the worldwide environmental crisis

Some research data from Czech Republic:

Interview with Eva Huserova – Czech writer

GAIA: Is there something which makes men better able to manage and women better able to serve?

EH: Nothing else than the patriarchal conditioning and socializing of men and women – men are rewarded by society for dominant, ambitious behavior, women are rewarded for submissivity.

GAIA: Is this task division determined by our biological, sociological and psychological predisposition, or is it due to tradition, education or cultural habits?

EH: It might be partially biologically determined – but I don't think that women are determined to be submissive and to serve men. Maybe they are determined to focus more on human relations, or relations between people and their environment, and less on hierarchical pyramids or competition with the other people. I was wondering if there is some disability affecting women which prevents a more even balance between men's roles and women's roles in society?

I don't consider focusing on relations a disability! Women probably do have different system of values than men, for example they value more their families and immediate environment than their careers, but who is more „disabled“, men or women – considering the historical results and outcomes of patriarchic society?

GAIA: What would happen if we also had more women with power and responsibility in government and in businesses? Could their management change our consumption priorities?

EH: I think that something would definitely change, and maybe we can look to Scandinavia to see what will happen. But I am not entirely sure that the whole mentality of consumerism (by the way, consumption is a lung disease – TBC) is one of the things which would change first, or most radically. But the society would be probably more responsible – in many aspects.

GAIA: Would we all then become more oriented towards human relationship and our relationship to the environment?

EH: Yes, I hope so.

GAIA: The dominant aspect in society could be expressed with the verb 'to have' - money, property, power... Could more women in managerial positions move our priorities towards 'to be' better people, more sensitive to the environment, and to others?

EH: Yes, I hope so.

Interview with Jan Hawerkamp – Campaign Director at Greenpeace in the Czech Republic:

GAIA: What would happen in your opinion if we also had more women with power and responsibility in government and in businesses? Could their management change our consumption priorities?

JH: I am afraid that women who will start to work in the present structure will adapt to what we have – that means little change. Unless they are able to come in a large enough number to change the behavioral pattern of the men involved. We men are very strong in putting our ways of working on anybody.

Another thing that we can see, is that women not per se are less consume driven. But – and that is important – I think that women earlier see the relations between their action and the (broader) environment. That means that it will be easier to argue in favour of sustainable consumption. Feminism brings also another important aspect to environmentalism: fun. I don't think it is per se wrong to consume more – if this consumption adds to the quality of life. And if it does, there will always be ways to make it sustainable, technical ways, social ways, or by moderation without loss of quality. Because quality of life is more visible to women than men in the current cultural settings – especially in the Czech Republic – women may drag „sustainable development“ more effectively out of the „back to the stone age“ image than men do. Male activists reacted very strange lately, when I wrote under the picture of the ideal male activist „uses cosmetics that are not tested on animals“. Men here can do with a bit more care of their appearance. How more fun a sustainable future would be if also more men look gorgeous?

GAIA: Would we then become more oriented towards human relationship and our relationship to the environment?

JH: Enstrangement from the environment has also deeply rooted amongst women. I think what will come up is a closer relationship between ecological questions and social questions. Men have brought in emissions as important factors in environmental sciences. It were women who brought in children. The projects of Prazsky matky or MAMA 86 have been groundbreaking in this respect. And for me now the most important argument against nuclear power is that I find it incredible to ask from my son or daughter to work out the problems that we produce with the waste. The Czech Republic's first final repository for waste is planned to start operation in 2060. Then my son will be 63 years old, my daughter 66! They will be grateful for not being able to do much with the energy that Temelin produces, but having to take care for its waste...

GAIA: The dominant aspect in society could be expressed with the verb 'to have' - money, property, power... Could more women in managerial positions move our priorities towards 'to be' better people, more sensitive to the environment, and to others? What is your opinion and experience?

JH: See above. I think that this is the main difference that larger participation of women would bring in. But we are far away from that in the Czech Republic. Feminism is only since the last 2 years not a dirty word anymore. Women will first have to grow over the trauma of having been „second class citizens“ – that means for the men here that they can look forward to strong attacks against them. Feminist polarisation in that case will be very healing, i think – especially for us like men in this society of the Czech Republic now.

Interview with Alena Huptychova – “programme coordinator” Of National Training Fund o. p. s., National Agency of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme

GAIA: What would happen by your opinion if we also had more women with power and responsibility in government and in businesses? Could their management change our consumption priorities?

AH: I think it is very difficult to change consumption priorities generally. A person can be aware of the consequences of the uncontrolled economic growth regardless of gender. But women can be more caring – from the prospect of the care of the family – about the impacts of the growing consumption.

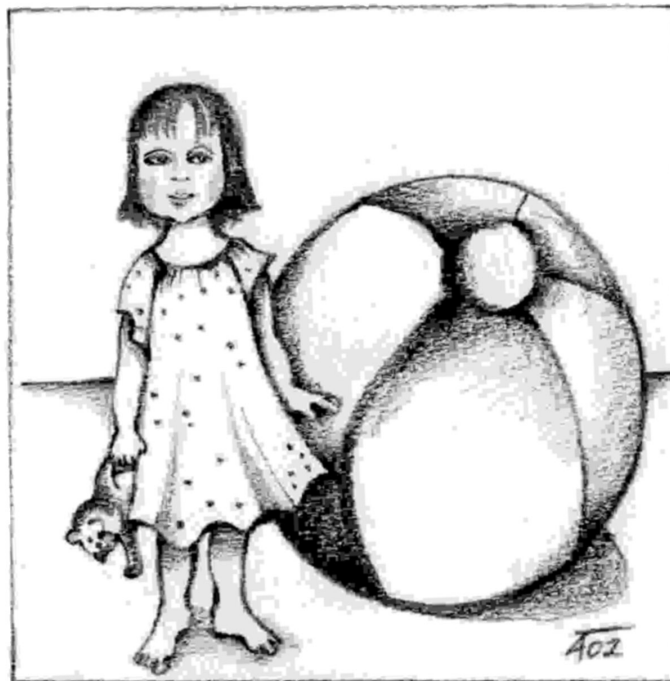
At the government it might help as the women are also more realistic and usually more open to consider other opinions – for example from the side of anti-consumption activities. In business there is a principle of profit and the women there also share the profit aim, but I think they might be more willing to implement processes to balance the profit and the environment protection.

GAIA: Would we then become more oriented towards human relationship and our relationship to the environment?

AH: I am afraid not - as this is a very complex problem. My experience with the “common” people (at the countryside) is that the need of “to have” is becoming stronger and stronger. This is caused I think – especially now in our society - by the feeling of social insecurity in the middle generation. Parents around fifties feel insecure (comparing to the era of carrying communist state) and want to create own secure micro environment that is easily achievable – thanks to the broad offer of goods/services. The ordinary women plays there the key role with her need to protect the children and secure for them the material conditions she thinks are necessary i.e. as much as possible.

GAIA: The dominant aspect in society could be expressed with the verb ‘to have’ - money, property, power... Could more women in managerial positions move our priorities towards ‘to be’ better people, more sensitive to the environment, and to others? What is your opinion and experience?

AH: If such a women have the mentioned priorities and will implement them in their work, it might have influence on the reduction of the impact of the businesses on the environment – but hardly on the preferences of the society.



Interview with Jan Kristek – sex reintroduction activist

GAIA: What would happen by your opinion if we also had more women with power and responsibility in government and in businesses? Could their management change our consumption priorities?

JK: I think this is not a matter of number of sexual organs of this or that type. This is rather a matter of number of true individualities and pseudo-individualities in government, business and so on. Consumption priorities are mostly given by the access to money. In societies, where the access to money is more easy for women than for men, through positive discrimination or through obtaining money from men, women generally do behave more anti-ecologically than men do.

GAIA: Would we then become more oriented towards human relationship and our relationship to the environment?

JK: As I already told: if we change only sexual organs of our rulers, and not their thinking, we cannot expect any significant change.

GAIA: The dominant aspect in society could be expressed with the verb ‘to have’ - money, property, power... Could more women in managerial positions move our priorities towards ‘to be’ better people, more sensitive to the environment, and to others? What is your opinion and experience?

JK: Again, I do not think that the opposition between „to have” and „to be” is a parallel of the opposition of sexes. I only think that Erich Fromm was not a woman, and I do know that women do not respond to my ad with text: „to be, not to have”.

P. S.:

1. **Men do not identify themselves with politicians**, so if you say that politicians are mostly men, it means the end of communication. Simply: not every man is a politician, and not every man is Wenceslas.
2. **The hierarchical way of behaviour has nothing to do with masculinity**, but only with suppressed individuality. ...Some time ago it was modern to say that the hierarchical way of behaviour is typical for German, non-hierarchical for Slavonic people.
3. There is nothing which makes men better able to manage and women better able to serve or vice versa. **We can only say, that those with suppressed individuality tend more to „manage” others and want others to serve them.** Biological, sociological and psychological predisposition, or tradition, education or cultural habits can only enhance this tendency, but not to cause it.