

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The present modern Western development model is in chaos, and many researchers refer to it as broken. This paper examines the roots of this breakdown. Based on the wisdom of visionaries, both past and present such as Einstein, Gandhi, Laszlo, Harman and McGilchrist amongst others, this paper offers an alternative approach to our present development situation. This alternative approach involves a BALANCE between our present objective, scientific approach to development, and a human, subjective, qualitative approach. This rebalancing appears to affect every human behaviour and action, and thus forms an essential foundational step in coming to grips with the present one sided objective scientific approach to development.

Key Words: Values, sustainability, transformation, business, education.

INTRODUCTION

Our present worldview reveals a modern Western development model that many consider irreparable. In this situation there are a few leaders who see the situation as signs of a need to search deeply into our own thinking and principles, if we hope to find a genuine sustainable outcome, leading to sustainable development.

In searching for solutions, the depth of the transformation needed appears to be far beyond the usual “readjustments” of the basic model, that is, the Western Development model of consumption and maximizing of profits for mainly financial investors. This has always involved an approach where we can change some activities, but the principles and values that underpin that Western development model we are assured, are solid and should not be touched.

At present we are at this crossroads: The present model has broken down, but we dare trying only to readjust some of the activities involved in this model without touching the deeply held principles and values that lie at the foundation level. This paper is focused on this foundational level of principles and values that basically control how we think every day, and thus affect the long term sustainability of our actions.

The transformation of this breakdown appears to require the involvement of all sectors of our society, from leadership in governments, business, education and many others, as well as each of us at whatever activity we are involved, even students studying in educational institutions.

This paper is divided into different sections with the purpose of trying to come to grips with our present worrisome situation. These sections include the following:

1. Visionary views of the breakdown:

This paper is based on the book *THE BLOCKAGE*, and thus the analysis depends heavily on the views of various highly respected visionaries, such as: Einstein, Gandhi, Laszlo, Harman and McGilchrist, amongst others. These views form the basic guidance for the process of transformation proposed, and the importance of foundational principles and values in this process.

2. An Alternative Approach:

Based on the common thread of insights provided by these visionaries, a new approach to foundational thinking is proposed to rebalance the present objective scientific model.

3. Left/Right brain thinking, Diversity and Sustainability: This section includes new research done by highly respected, Iain McGilchrist, who is both a medical doctor and a philosopher, and proposes a new approach for genuine Sustainable Development.

4. Some key universal values that we as humans already possess are outlined. These apply to all sectors of society, and form the basis for sustainable, new.

behaviours and new actions for all decision makers..

5. Key Sustainable principles are outlined. These grow out of universal values, and apply directly to everyday decision making and daily living.
6. Finally are found briefly summarized conclusions related to a new model for genuine Sustainable Development.

OUR PRESENT THINKING : VIEWS FROM VISIONARIES

As indicated in the introduction, Western decision makers and society as a whole provide us with the idea that scientific based research alone should provide a solution to our sustainability problems. However, there is also entering a strong wave of concern over the challenges related to the financial organizations and their influence over how governments, businesses, education and all organizations and society can act. This we have seen recently related to the breakdown of the Western development model. As a result decision makers are mostly trying to use “band aid” solutions in attempting to stabilize our conventional system of thinking and principles. In areas of sustainability most decision makers are relying on science and technology to solve not only ecological problems but also economic and social issues, including the financial related issues that presently plague the Western world.

In order to find other possible alternatives, fortunately we can learn firstly from some insightful highly respected visionaries from both the past and present.

Following are some quotes from a select few of these visionaries who indicate clear concerns and a new view of where the real problem may be located in order and provide new insight for a new sustainable model of development;

ALBERT EINSTEIN (quote from Einstein, 1979; Calapice, 1996,2000)

... We cannot solve our problems by using the same kind of thinking that created them.

... Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts.

These are well known statements from Einstein , but looking more deeply into their meaning in view of our present challenges can be very helpful. He obviously had an insight into the problems of our present thinking, and the need to search out a new way of thinking to solve our new problems. As well Einstein indicated that there is a problem in depending completely on “things we can count”, that is, science as the solution to everything . Einstein clearly is concerned about these assumptions, and states very clearly that we need to search deeply within ourselves in order to locate “what counts” in our lives, and that these things cannot be counted in the scientific sense. Based on Einstein’s strong spiritual (in its broad sense) involvement, it certainly appears that he considers the values and principles that evolve from this deep thinking (that cannot be counted in the scientific sense) as essential for long term sustainable development.

WILLIS HARMAN (quote, Harman, 1984,1994,1998)

... The industrialized world, having lost any consensus on ultimate meanings and values, steers itself mainly on economic and financial signals serving pseudo-values (..) The key step in our bringing about change is eschewing the negative vision (of purely objective, positivist thinking) to which we have unwittingly been contributing, and choosing a vision that benefits our inner purpose and that of those around us.

What are these “pseudo-values” that Harman indicates that have led us to the difficulties we now experience ? It appears, according to his many works that we need also to search out our deep personal values and from there choose those that lead us to some “inner purpose” for each individual. Harman points clearly to some inner values that could be extremely valuable for the renewal of life for everyone.

E.F.SCHUMACHER (quote, Schumacher, 1999)

... The purely quantitative approach misses out on everything that really matters.

There appears to be an indication that the “purely quantitative” approach, that we are familiar with in our world, is not enough, and misses out on something apparently we all possess deep inside ourselves.-----and this is qualitative.

DAVID KORTEN (quote, Korten, 1999)

--- Successful as capitalism has been in creating a mass consumer culture, the fact remains that its values are largely alien to our basic nature.

It appears that Korten is concerned about the linkage between success in capitalism and the consumer society due to the questionable values on which these ideologies are based. The question is: What are the values that he views as part of our “basic nature” that will be able to deal successfully (sustainably) with our present problems?

What can we conclude from these visionary examples of present day thinking about innermost thinking or values, both at a personal level as well as for decision makers ?

There appears to be a common thread that runs through these insights, as well as many more that are present today. This refers to the inability of our present system of thinking (that is, values and principles), to deal with the seriousness of our present problems. They all seem to point to something deep within our human minds that we somehow need to reach in order to gain insight into the root of the problems., and thus new hope for finding successful solutions.

This situation of “searching inwards” leaves many decision makers and researchers particularly in an uncomfortable position, as they have been accustomed to only dealing with the idea of “external factors” being the source of effective roots of our problems. But now it appears that this externality is not sufficient, and that deeper internal values or thinking are also involved in order to find adequate solutions, and a new balance. This means also that the very principles on which we have based our modern Western model of development are, for the first time in many decades, being questioned. As a result, this basic “transformation in

thinking”, that is, moving from “external” to also seriously considering “internal” factors , is a new world, that many tend to resist, based on the length of time that seemingly the conventional system of only considering externalities seems to have worked well . Now it no longer works and most decision makers are aware of this, but do not have a viable alternative.

These visionaries quoted above have also indicated the tremendous capacity of humans, and so it appears that we each have within our own consciousness (or inner wisdom and spirituality) some deeply rooted values that we need to reexamine in order to gain new insight into the solutions to our present serious situation.

OUR TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABILITY

It is clear that many organizations and individuals are presently in a transition period. Many have accepted that the conventional model of development does not work, but have no obvious alternative , so continue to work on some external factors, with some improvement shown especially in some ecological areas. However, **THESE EFFORTS ARE STILL BASED ON CONVENTIONAL PRINCIPLES ONLY** and consequently show limitations in terms of finding solutions to the deep seated problems for the longer term.

In that regard, following are some quotes from visionaries who provide some insights into this transition period.

MAHATMA GANDHI (quote 2006, reprint)

--- Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need, but not every man’s greed.

This is a well known quote from Gandhi and his visionary view of development. Today it is particularly pertinent as we are experiencing “greed” in so many forms, and the average citizen is beginning to realize the impact this can have on his possibility for a genuinely sustainable life.

WILLIS HARMAN (quote, Harman, 1997,1998).

--- The contemporary reassessment of basic assumptions (conventional principles and values) is a consequence of the growing suspicion that without some sort of fundamental change, modern industrial society appears to be unable to resolve the socio-political and ecological dilemmas that beset us (...) The change that is required is not simply a shift from one form of industrial society to another (such as capitalism to socialism) but rather a major change in the basic assumptions underlying both versions of industrial society.

Harman makes the point clear that a deep level of transformation is needed, taking into account our deep basic beliefs or values. This means we need new insight into our internal deep level values. These are of course the ones that finally govern our behaviours, attitudes and decision making every day ---personally, politically and organizationally.

ERVIN LASZLO (quote Laszlo, 2001,2009)

--- We are attempting to cope with the conditions of the 21st Century with the thinking of the 20th Century (...) Ultimately , such a “shift” (in human thinking) lies in changes in hearts and minds, in the values and conduct of all.

Laszlo clearly indicates the need for a new 21st Century approach , as opposed to trying to solve the present problems, while relying on 20th Century principles and values. This means we need to go through a process of searching deeply within our “hearts and minds” in search of 21st Century thinking or values.

DAVID KORTEN (quote Korten, 1999,2006)

--- That which cannot be observed or measured, such as spirit and consciousness, came to be excluded from consideration by science – and therefore from the scientific perspective does not exist.

Korten clearly warns us that for sustainability we need more than the scientific approach, that only considers as valid what can be measured or counted. He also indicates that we need to go “inside” to locate additional valuable wisdom in order to be successful in our 21st Century approach to genuine sustainability.

E.F.SCHUMACHER (quote , Schumacher, 1997)

--- A civilization that deprecates the heart, which idolizes objectivity in the forms of scientism, positivism, and rationalism, which bases the entire education (in its broadest sense) on the notion that decisions must be taken without interference from the emotions, inevitably exposes itself to the dangers of unlimited violence (...) modern civilization can survive only if it begins to educate the heart, which is the source of Wisdom.

Schumacher, for many years of his professional business life believed completely in the singular importance of science and rational, objective thinking for all decision making. However, he experienced a total transformation and became convinced that we need a special harmony in life and work, that combines the need for BOTH scientific objectivity as well as spirituality (inner Wisdom) for a successful outcome in work and everyday life. That is, we need a new balance between two essential aspects of our human thinking.

In summary, these insights from highly respected visionaries are far reaching and complex. However a common thread appears throughout: We as humans, need to consider, in addition to our highly developed scientific, objective capabilities, a whole new aspect, if we hope to embrace genuine sustainability: We need to also seriously consider our “inner wisdom” , in all sectors, and from the personal to the highest levels of decision making in governments , business and education.

We are in fact, it appears, realizing that we must consider the “whole person”, that is, both the “external” as well as “internal” aspects.

TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

This Alternative Approach , involving both the present day usage of science and objectivity as well as the “inner wisdom” or deep values , appears to have already shown some positive results in a few areas where participants have seemingly intuitively realized that that human aspect and its accompanying values are essential for this alternative approach.

In this process a number of researchers are also discovering with new clarity the “wisdom” of indigenous populations, and how studying indigenous ways of thinking and values can help us

to reach much of our own “inner wisdom”. These are complex studies, as historically it appears that the indigenous peoples of many countries did not join the industrial/scientific revolutions, and so their minds remained open to the development of “inner wisdom”. As a result, many researchers are now finding some encouraging results when studying this important group in relation to our search for a viable alternative approach.

In addition to this group, there are also indications from other visionaries in our Western world who have also provided valuable insights into an Alternative way of looking at our present realities, and the important need to also consider our own consciousness or inner wisdom, in order to balance our objective and subjective thinking.

Following are the views of some visionaries that we need to consider carefully.

ROGER WALSH (quote, Walsh, 2000)

--- The physical world we live in and see and touch is not all there is to reality; that underneath it – at its source – is another world, a world of spirit, or consciousness or Mind (...) coming to know this sacred realm and coming to recognize it as ourselves is the highest goal of human existence – it is the means by which we can best serve ourselves and others.

Walsh, who comes from the medical world indicates that we can in fact “experience” this inner world that apparently we all possess, and manifests itself as part of our human nature .

Walsh has also summarized a comparison between “knowledge” (using objective, scientific thinking) and “wisdom” (using also our subjective inner spirituality or mind):

1. Knowledge requires information, but wisdom requires understanding.
2. Knowledge informs, but wisdom transforms us.
3. Knowledge empowers, but wisdom enlightens.
4. Knowledge is something we have but wisdom is something we become.

We have become accustomed to thinking of knowledge as ‘king’, and depending on it totally, even though it depends completely on logical thinking , and discounting the much deeper wisdom coming from our subjective mind. In that sense some visionaries have commented

that we in reality use only a small part of our potential as humans. We apparently have a huge storage of wisdom that remains mostly untouched. Walsh recognizes this potential for all humans.

KENNETH BOULDING (quote, Boulding, 1968)

--- Spirituality involves the spirit and “spirit” is a code word for what lies at the deepest level of consciousness (...) Spirituality, as distinguished from religious dogma, is a kind of consciousness, that is, characterized by ‘noetic’ sense of unity and ultimate reality, the fruit of which is compassionate, unconditional love.

Boulding indicates clearly that Spirituality is found in the deep inner self. Religions, on the other hand are man made dogma, but religions most always have inner spirituality as their foundations. As a result, religions are usually culture sensitive, and have been throughout history an important source for meaningful human development.

ALBERT EINSTEIN (quote, Einstein, 1949)

---My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble mind.

--- The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt with awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.

Most people think of Einstein as purely a scientist, but the depth of his spirituality is remarkable. He can certainly provide a special role for many as we search for the source of our dilemma, and clearly points to the need to also consider our inner wisdom and natural human spirituality. Einstein was very clear: Without accepting the mystery of nature (including human nature) we are nothing, and cannot hope to find a viable solution to our present problems.

WILLIS HARMAN, (quote, Harman, 1998)

--- The Western neglect of the realm of the subjective experience has had serious consequences in our confusion over values. For it is ultimately in the realm of the subjective (consciousness), the transcendent and the spiritual that all societies have found the basis for the deepest values, commitments and sense of meaning.

Harman also believed in 3 ways we can learn (that expands our present restricted linear rational, objective approach to learning or knowing).

- a) The reasoning process of the Intellect.
- b) The perception of our experiences through the senses.
- c) The intuitive, spiritual or inner ways of knowing.

We are accustomed to, within our Western development model that learning basically applies to “The reasoning process of the Intellect” , through formal education and research. This utilizes only our objective logical approach to learning. However, if we balance this with “subjective” learning as well, we benefit from much broader sources of learning, as well as accepting the “whole mind” in the learning approach, that is, learning also through our “inner wisdom”.

In summary, these visionaries, amongst many, show us that we have been in fact limiting our overall knowledge to only one source -----our objective positivistic thinking. However, we as humans apparently have additional capacities that many of us are unaware of, and if we access this inner wisdom and values, we will have the capacity to successfully solve our present problems , using a combination of both objective and subjective thinking

SUSTAINABILITY AND LEFT/RIGHT BRAIN THINKING

There has been much controversy about how we think, and especially within the research world, this includes concerns over Left Brain and Right brain functions. In that area, we have had the good fortunate to learn through new and very detailed research by Iain McGilchrist , some convincing details related to the different functions of our Left/Right brain .The title of McGilchrist’s recent book,” THE MASTER AND HIS EMISSARY: The Divided Mind and

the Making of the Making of the Modern World,” provides us with an indication of the essence of the outstanding capacity of the human mind.

In this book he indicates that the Right brain is basically our Master, where our overall big picture of reality is rooted, and all the different interrelated influences we need to take into account in decision making, as well as it being the foundation of our deeply rooted wisdom and core values. The Left brain is considered essential for putting things into practice, (that the Right brain cannot do) and it provides the basis for essential logical scientific thinking. So McGilchrist sees the absolute need for both, as each performs a key function for a long term healthy development model. He views our present model as purely Left brain thinking and thus we have lost our way in terms of the needs of overall “sustainability”.

In this whole process we have apparently allowed the Left brain to become our Master, to our peril and now we are trying to REBALANCE our thinking , to allow an important place for both the Right and Left brain thinking and actions, affecting all our attitudes, behaviours and actions.

SUSTAINABILITY and DIVERSITY

The question is: How can we develop a new balanced sustainable development model that is applicable to all and yet recognize the huge diversity of cultures, regions, disciplines, etc.

In this whole picture it soon becomes clear that we need both left and right brain usage in order to BALANCE our thinking for sustainability.

Here we look to researchers such as McGilchrist and also Willis Harman who both recognize the huge capacity of humans for both objective and subjective thinking, and the need to develop both. Some researchers even indicate that we have often “overdeveloped” our left brain objective and scientific side, while disregarding or discrediting the right brain subjective “big picture” insights and universal core values.

Therefore our alternative development model provides the basis for REBALANCING our thinking , where we develop both Left and Right brain thinking.

It is here we seem to have a blockage -----we have been so accustomed to developing our Left brain capacities ONLY, so this thinking has penetrated every organization, from governments, to business, to education, to health to all civil society.

Diversity in this alternative sustainable balanced approach also needs to be considered , where we find many different countries, cultures, disciplines, etc. that also need to be respected . This is the concept of Diversity in its full sense.

What can we do?

Firstly we need to recognize that the deep universal core values form a common foundation for ALL humanity . These apparently come from the Right brain. Therefore we need to begin to learn or relearn what these values are. (many researchers believe we all have them stored but they have been hidden for a long time).

Secondly, we need to accept Diversity. Researchers have been studying this concept , and it is now accepted that there are many different ways to develop, and we need to respect the different ways as valid. At closer examination we find that we all begin with a common foundation of universal values—Right brain. Then, from that point we can basically differ in the development form we use, taking into account all the differences we find in society, such as different cultures, countries, disciplines and regions.

It appears that this is not a problem : Why?

We can have all kinds of different ways of developing, but our common foundational core values are the ones we all draw from like a “common well”, and these come from the Right brain.

What has been happening is that we have been drawing only from some short term purely Left brain objective based principles , on which to develop. This means that the deep commonly held Right brain core values have not been used in the modern Western development model.

In summary, we need to redevelop our use of foundational core values to REBALANCE our development model , to include BOTH objective and subjective thinking. With this new BALANCE the concept of Diversity becomes a process of commonality of core values and diversity of applications.

UNIVERSAL CORE VALUES

Universal core values involve basically 3 major groups of values. The values shown in this study are drawn from a wide research base, but principally drawn from the United Nations Earth Charter (1997) , which involves an international scope.

The 3 main groups of values are:

a) Values related to self : (Kras,2007)

- Love: includes our respect for and appreciation of all humans. The concept of Love Involves some key values such as: COMPASSION, KINDNESS, GENEROSITY, FORGIVENESS, JOY.
- Respect: This includes respect for oneself , as well as respect for others.
- Honesty and Trust: To have honesty we need trust; to have trust we need honesty.
- Non-violence: This refers to non-violence in thoughts, attitudes, behaviours, as it applies to all organizational and personal interactions and utilizes dialogue to handle differences.
- Humility: Usually considered a weakness in western society. Humility is considered a positive value, which often requires quality education as a basis for understanding the strength of humility.
- Service: We all need to give of ourselves, to help others, without expecting anything in return.

b) Values related to Family, Community, Work (Kras, 2007)

This value is broad and is associated strongly with the values related to Self. It considers family preparation as a key to a happy experience in the community and working world. Schumacher (Schumacher, 1997) summarized the importance of work for the world. He indicated that the average person wants:

“ to be creatively productive, to render service, act in accordance with our moral impulses”.

c) Values related to Nature and Outer Space (Cosmos) (Kras, 2007)

Human existence on Earth would not be possible without Nature. Simply to stay alive we need Water, Soil and Air. All human existence is thus closely dependent on and

interconnected with Nature and Outer Space. When we damage this life line, we are also affecting ourselves as well as the existence of our future families and all life in Earth. These values include a depth of wisdom, awe, and mystery related to Nature and the Cosmos.

PRINCIPLES

These briefly summarized principles listed below are dependent on, and grow out of universal values as a foundation. The principles have been grouped into 3 main sections: Ecological , Social and Economic principles.

Ecological Principles; (Kras,2007)

--- Harmony and Balance: This refers to our combined objective/subjective values thig and is essential for a new balance in especially ecological and social realities.

--- Long term planning: This is based on the necessity to be in harmony with Nature's long term plan.

---Earth is a living system: All life on Earth, including human life is interconnected with Nature , and this creates interdependence and controls how we as humans treat out natural systems and environment, as well as renewable and non renewable natural resources.

---Commitment: to protect, conserve and restore damage done by humanity.

--- Precautionary Principle: We are limited in our genuine knowledge of Nature, and hence need Precaution as an important control on all human activities.

---Integrated thinking: This involves an understanding of how human activity in all key functions, ecological, social and economic are all connected.

--- Polluter Pays: Businesses and governments especially need to understand their full responsibility to restore all damage done by their decisions.

Social Principles: (Kras, 2007; Maslow,1968)

---Humans have inherent goodness : All humans have , by nature, universal values in common, but how these are manifest depends on positive human development.

--- Right to equitable use of natural resources: This right applies to all sectors of society.

--- Respect for Diversity: This includes different cultures, disciplines, countries, businesses, etc.

--- Equality of opportunity: This is important for all in spite of economic, ecological or social differences.

---Tolerance and non-violence: In thoughts, attitudes, behaviours and practices.

--- Social and economic justice for all.

--- Work has intrinsic value.

---Education is life long.

Economic Principles:

---Main objective : quality of life ----overall human well being.

---Long term development of Key importance.

---Institutions, decision makers : must be democratic, accountable , transparent.

---Integration: Balanced carefully amongst ecological, social and economic needs.

---Distinct societal groups are needed: Each group, such as government, business, education, etc. have distinct roles and responsibilities in society.

--- Progress measured by Quality of life: Progress emphasizes positive and balanced relationships.

--- Trade: Balance between local, national and international, with importance attached to local and national.

--- Money: A tool for exchange purposes, not a commodity for trade.

--- Economic sector: A subsystem of and dependent upon whole Earth ecological system.

--- Development: Based on balance of ecological, social and economic sustainability.

--- Wealth: Based on natural resources as the main source.

--- Cooperation: Use of cooperation and dialogue to resolve differences.

REBALANCING : CREATING NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

This alternative approach to our present crisis, requires us to place equal importance on both conventional objective scientific aspects , as well as subjective human intuitive aspects. This will undoubtedly create some changes in thinking and lifestyle.

Some of these changes could include:

- a) Priorities in life: Moving from placing importance on “things” towards prioritizing human relationships and meaningful , fulfilling work.
- b) Service : Feeling a need and joy in helping others without expecting anything in return.

- c) Non-Violence: This involves our thoughts, attitudes, behaviours and relationships in general, with a belief in dialogue to settle differences, in place of confrontation.
- d) Deep respect for Nature: As we are part of Nature, we also begin to understand the need to reduce consumption in rich countries, to allow other to live, and a new respect for and conservation of the natural environment.
- e) Creativity: This new personal development of deep core values will increase our ability to be creative in finding new ways of living and working sustainably.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Present breakdown: We are now learning that an important root of this breakdown lies in our attempt to solve all our problems using only objective, scientific thinking in our solution attempts.
2. Alternative Approach: This different approach involves involvement of also our huge human capacity, and to “rediscover” our core foundational values that results in a new Balanced approach to development, using both Right and Left brain thinking.
3. Core universal values appear to be an essential ingredient for a sustainable foundation for all development. These are outlined in 3 major groups: Personal values; Values related to family, community and work; values related to understanding Nature and our natural environment, values related to Outer Space or the Cosmos.
4. Diversity of cultures, countries, disciplines, amongst many different groups are all important for sustainability. These Diverse groups all draw from our foundation of commonly held deep core values for all mankind.

COMPARISON CHART

CONVENTIONAL THINKING

SUSTAINABLE THINKING

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Strong Individualism ----- | Whole system collective concerns. |
| 2. Strong Personal Ego ----- | Personal humility |
| 3. Win/Lose outlook ----- | Win/win outlook |
| 4. Vision: short term ----- | Vision: long term |
| 5. Linear thinking ----- | Integrated thinking |
| 6. Economic priority----- | Balanced priorities |
| (all others externalities) | (ecological,,social,economic) |

Source: Eva Kras, 2011.

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