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## THE ROLE OF LOVE IN PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP IN SLOVENIA

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The article discusses the importance of self-love in public sector leadership and public sector employees engagement. Given the importance of leadership in our civilisation, the almost complete absence of self-love in leaders is especially detrimental to the organisations they lead and their employees. This is especially important in the public sector—due to the importance of the goods and services it provides, and the fact that it does so with the taxpayers' money. Leaders who love themselves and lead with love, know how to step into the employees' shoes, understand them; know how to find the best in each one of them and encourage the development of that aspect; they are sincere and warm; know how to listen to employees and impress them; they are respectful of them; they inspire a sense of security and confidence; spread positive energy and know how to make decisions.

Also, the connection between self-love and sustainable development social model is discussed. Due to the unilateral orientation of our civilisation toward material development, individuals have almost eliminated the pursuit of spiritual development from their lives. However, love and happiness can only be achieved with the balance of both. The integral principle of sustainable development, which, in addition to economic growth, encompasses spiritual growth, is a model that offers us a way out of our (bad) state—in the world and in Slovenia. Of particular importance—primarily because of the long absence—is the spiritual side. People need to reintroduce it into their lives. In doing so, the state and the law should be “utilised”, and to set as their main task the provision of conditions for (in addition to economic) spiritual growth and thus love and happiness.

**Key words:** *self-love, public sector leadership in Slovenia, public sector employees engagement in Slovenia, sustainable development, spiritual development.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Slovenia has endured markedly negative energy for some time. It has been in such state for considerable time, and there are no signs of change. One of contributing factors is a fact that as a nation it lacks vision and clear goals. These are a prerequisite for a state's success. Just as in private life, one cannot be successful, satisfied, self-fulfilled—happy—if one does not have a vision, goals, or does not know where they

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are going. Such negativism has a multitude of manifestations (hostility, apathy, pessimism, arrogance, disrespect, etc.) indicating quite clearly its origin—fear, existential fear, fear for the future. In general, fear of living. Obviously, fear is the root cause of spreading the negativism and narrow-mindedness in our state, and of increasingly sinking into the averageness and even below in all areas—the economy, politics, science, etc. On the other hand, Slovenia is also capable of a different energy—cosmopolitan, positive, ambitious. It is noticeable among entrepreneurs, scientists and innovators, among mayors and other politicians and even beyond. However, their energy, their knowledge and experience do not penetrate deep enough and therefore, do not affect most.

Negativism is also one of my main personal experiences that I encountered when I was in state executive politics as a leader a few years ago. I realised that negativism was also prevalent in the state government and had a feeling that it was even more concentrated than in other sectors of society. I felt as though a dark cloud was hovering above most government officials preventing them from performing their respective duties with more joy and commitment. The corresponding situation can be found at the municipal level, as well. On the other hand, I was also privileged to experience an immense positive energy of many individuals. This, however, remains behind an invisible curtain preventing their energy from becoming a dominant feature of their respective working environments.

The government could do a lot to improve the situation in Slovenia. However, in the exercise of its powers, it is entirely dependent on its civil servants, but they are dominated by negativism and, therefore, significantly less committed to work. For me as a political leader, this was a source of great frustration. On the one hand, I was able to diagnose precisely the situation and outstanding issues in the fields I covered, as well as maintain a clear vision of how to remedy the situation and I possessed a sufficient amount of authority to realise that vision. On the other hand, however, the implementation of the vision (regulatory changes and other measures) is entirely in the hands of civil servants. A political leader's position is such that even if he or she wanted, was able and knew how to lay the grounds for the implementation of his or her vision, he or she mostly cannot do that alone. Therefore, political leader's function is primarily leadership. In doing so, he or she is confronted with mostly scared and therefore not sufficiently committed colleagues. Thus, the efficiency and quality of their "products" are poor. Consequently (also because of negativism in other authorities, such as in the Parliament), the political leader cannot implement his or her vision, i.e. prepare all those measures necessary to improve the situation in the areas covered. This is one of the main reasons why governments are so poor in improving the current (miserable) situation in Slovenia or fearing the implementation of real reforms.

In this article, I present my vision on the needed changes of the situation described above in Slovenia.

Therefore, in this article, first, the reasons are analysed for the prevailing negativism in Slovenia in general and in its public sector, for which the absence of self-love is perceived as a main reason. Secondly, the need for an inclusion of

spiritual development as a tool for achieving self-love into the present sustainable development social model is analysed. Then, it is proposed how to bring the comprehensive sustainable model into practice in Slovenia and what should be the role of state and the law in doing this.

## 2. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS, RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND MAIN GOALS

The first hypothesis of this article is that the absence of self-love in Slovenia (and world-wide) influences public sector leadership and public sector employees engagement in a negative way. The second hypothesis of this article is that for achieving self-love, spiritual development is the main tool. The third hypothesis of this article is that to shift from the absence of self-love to self-love-based society spiritual development should be included into the sustainable development social model as a main organising social model of humankind.

The main goals of this article are to show theoretical and philosophical arguments for the benefits of self-love in life generally and consequently in public sector leadership and public sector employees engagement. Also, the goal of this article is to present the theoretical arguments for the connection between self-love and sustainable development social model. Further goals of this article are also to develop the foundations for a new comprehensive model of sustainable development, in which spiritual development is included as an integral part of development and to propose how to bring the comprehensive sustainable model into practice in Slovenia and what should be the role of the state and the law in such pursuit.

In this article, the hypotheses will be tested using analytical methods. Thus, theoretical literature will be analysed to test the above-mentioned hypothesis.

## 3. DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Root Causes of the Negativism–Absence of Self-Love

To change the situation in Slovenia described in the introduction of this article, we need to establish **the root causes of the negativism**. Our actions, positive or negative, are guided by our fundamental drives. The primary human drive is **“a pursuit of happiness”**.<sup>2</sup> This desire at the deepest level steers our actions. (Osho (1), 2008 and Tolle, 1999) Happiness is a state of material and spiritual well-being and is only possible if one is in balance—materially and spiritually.<sup>3</sup> Other cultures<sup>4</sup> have long since realised that the path to happiness is connected to development in both areas of

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<sup>2</sup> “Happiness is the meaning and purpose of human life” (Aristotle).

<sup>3</sup> It is an increasingly common knowledge within established psychology as well. Cf. e.g. Grof, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. in Chinese Taoism, Aboriginal culture and other “natural” peoples.

human existence—material and spiritual. Humans are not just material beings, we are not mere bodies or vehicles, but much more—let us call this spiritual dimension “soul”.

The path to happiness is, therefore, a path on which we strive for material progress, but also for spiritual progress—for **the growth of our soul (personal growth)**. In doing so, the objective of material growth is to satisfy our material or bodily needs—our physical needs. The goal of spiritual growth is to know who we really are. We are not a mere body, and we are not just a mind made up of thoughts and beliefs—all this is in constant flux, yet we remain we (Železnikar, 2009). The goal of spiritual growth is also to improve ourselves and to realise that our selfishness and greed do not equal to We, because our essence is Love, and to realise that selfishness and greed are a reflection of fear and a part of the ego.<sup>5</sup>

The goal of spiritual growth is to achieve love— **self-love, love for people and love for other living beings**. Besides, when we are in a state of love, we give love.<sup>6</sup> Self-love soothes and makes us happy and is a sign of universal responsibility to others. Because if we feel good about ourselves, we perform much better in all other aspects of life (Osho, 2001, pp. 59–63). Happiness is then a “by-product” of our activity in love (Ulluwishewa, 2014, *Spirituality and Sustainable Development*, p. 35). It is clear, therefore, that happiness can only be achieved if when striving for material, economic growth **we are also committed to our spiritual (personal) growth**. When we look back—into our past—we are horrified to see how fatally “blind” we were when, in pursuit of happiness, we believed it could be found in material goods only.

In our civilisation, the importance of spiritual growth for the pursuit of happiness has not been realised. Moreover, any attempt to exhibit and raise awareness that one cannot excel without spiritual growth has been suppressed in its roots. The material-oriented posture to satisfy material needs forms an integral part of our existence but to achieve happiness, spiritual growth is quintessential and the key “good” that we acquire with it is love.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, in our civilisation, this is still a prevalent view reflected in the perception of the “spiritual” as something inferior, frivolous and unscientific.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In humans, there is a stable conscious nucleus, a free spiritual consciousness (“soul”), which, however, is subject to a disruptive factor. The factor is the false self or the ego. This one overshadowing the free spiritual consciousness and covers us with a mental blanket that hardly lets us breathe. We are constantly reflecting about the ego’s initiatives that are in constant flux and losing contact with ourselves. The ego resembles a dark cloud overcasting our inner sun—the soul. When it controls our emotional and thought processes, the ego is not easy to recognise because its roles are in constant flux: it infuses us with horror, with anger, later with despondency or despair, jealousy, greed. For more on the ego, see Osho (2), 2008. See also Krishnamurti, 1995, and Tolle, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Besides “esoteric” thinkers, love (happiness) is perceived as a fundamental evolutionary mechanism of humanity also by a number of prominent Western thinkers such as Plato, Fromm, Maslow, Sorokin, Peck, Gibran and others. See in more detail Maharaj and April, 2013, p. 120.

<sup>7</sup> For more details on the destruction of “wise” women, i.e. those who had (or still have) the knowledge of who we are, of transcending a mere body, of the importance of the spiritual and of the immense healing knowledge, see: Heinsohn and Steiger, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Recently, such a comprehensive view of humans has been increasingly present in established psychology, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. However, it is still (socially) marginalised.

Fortunately, this has been changing rapidly lately. A growing body of scientific evidence exists about the importance of the “spiritual” in our lives, and our “fateful self-conceit” is increasingly revealed when this part of ourselves and our role in our lives are entirely ignored.<sup>9</sup> Although I believe that to be aware of the importance of the spiritual, we do not need scientific evidence.<sup>10</sup> However, these are important because science is one of the key (besides law) social institutions of the West. The behaviour that (about humans and their position in the environment) is “produced” by science, namely, at least within developed Western cultures, is believed by most.

With our focus (also) on spiritual development and spiritual growth, we will be able to replace the selfishness-dominated fear (ego).

The search for love, thus, is the deepest, fundamental mechanism that drives us. This is not just about erotic love (of a man and a woman), motherly and brotherly love, but above all, **self-love**. Only when we love ourselves are we capable of loving others. When we love ourselves, **love becomes our general orientation (we are in love)**. It is also directed at the world as a whole, not just at particular persons (Maharaj and April, 2013, p. 122). The self-love is composed of **knowing oneself, accepting oneself, self-actualisation, self-awareness and self-care**.

**Knowing oneself** (ancient Greek “*gnothi seauton*—know thyself”) means knowing ourselves as a body, psyche, and especially what we really are, i.e. our “souls” (inner soul—the image of “god” within). Knowing oneself is a prerequisite for **self-acceptance**. It is a state where we know who we are and, therefore, are not afraid of the outside world and the judgments by others about us. Knowing oneself is a prerequisite for **self-actualisation**. It means becoming who we are, what we are capable of becoming. Knowing ourselves means that we are in a state where we are constantly focused on actualising ourselves—when all of us are driven to understand what we are. At the same time, it means that we are original and authentic because we are actualising ourselves as unique beings. From knowing ourselves, we come to **self-awareness**. Because knowing ourselves, we know that we are part of the whole and that we are connected to others (humans, animals, plants) (Maharaj and April, 2013, pp. 2 and 3).<sup>11</sup> **Care for oneself**, however, means that we are continually caring for our bodies, our psyche and our spiritual (personal) growth.

It is a fact that, in our civilisation, we forgot the importance of love. We believe that it could be replaced with material goods and therefore devote all our energy to that goal. Today, it is increasingly evident that love (happiness) cannot be achieved only through material advancement and satisfying the material needs, but (primarily) through spiritual development.<sup>12</sup> Due to the “elimination” of such knowledge from our civilisation,<sup>13</sup> in search of love (happiness), we have focused on material advancement only. In this (never satisfied) grasping for love (happiness),

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<sup>9</sup> See comprehensive on this issue in Ullushewa, op. cit. In Slovenia, see for example Kononenko.

<sup>10</sup> The mental perception of reality is limited. See more in Pličanič, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> The authors cite a similarity to the African concept of *ubuntu*—“I am because you are”.

<sup>12</sup> Similarly Maslow. See about this in King, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> See more on this Pličanič, 2020.

we have started to ever more affect the environment, believing that hoarding the material goods will finally make us happy. The result is known and crushing—the almost “devastated” environment and nearly extinct cultures that were aware of the importance of spiritual development. And much of humanity plunged into poverty and on the brink of survival.<sup>14</sup>

However, unfortunately, the old paradigm still prevails in the world. The consequence is an **almost complete absence of self-love** in our civilisation.<sup>15</sup> This is also the case in Slovenia. However, for historical reasons (centuries of subordination), in Slovenia, the consequences are even more pronounced. All this (dominating) humility, the willingness to accept everything, fear—in short, lack of self-esteem—is a clear evidence of the almost complete absence of self-love in Slovenia. I believe that an **almost complete absence of self-love is the main reason for the prevailing negativism in Slovenia**, also in state (and municipal) administrations. Namely, the lack of self-esteem and the presence of fear and selfishness prevail—all of which are clear symptoms of the absence of love (for oneself and for others).<sup>16</sup>

### 3.2. The Importance (Power) of (Self) Love in Leadership

Given the importance of leadership in our civilisation, the almost complete absence of love in leaders is especially detrimental to the organisations they lead and their employees. This is especially important in the public sector—due to the importance of the goods and services it provides us, and the fact that it does so with our money.

If love is at the very core of our existence, and its presence or absence at the very foundation determines what we do, why we do what we do and how we do it, then it is clear that love also has a vital role in leadership. If we lead with love (based on self-love), our subordinates will follow and trust us. They will perform their work diligently and effectively. Self-love is the key to leadership. Namely, one cannot lead others if one does not like himself or herself, does not accept and does not know oneself—if one is not in a state of love.

Leaders who love themselves and lead with love, know how to step into the employees' shoes, understand them; know how to find the best in each one of them and encourage the development of that aspect; they are sincere and warm; know how to listen to employees and impress them; they are respectful of them; they inspire a sense of security and confidence; spread positive energy and know how to make decisions. All these traits of leaders who love oneself stem from their self-knowledge, self-acceptance and self-actualisation.

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<sup>14</sup> Most of these so desired material goods and wealth is in the hands of a few wealthy individuals—who are likely to say they are not happy.

<sup>15</sup> In their study, Maharaj and April conclude that this stems from the value system of the Western civilisation, based on “fear” as the antipode of love. Thus founded on the absence of self-love (Maharaj and April, 2013, p. 127).

<sup>16</sup> See more for signs of the absence of love in Tolle, 1999 and Hay, 1999.



On the other hand, leaders with a lack of love for themselves—because they do not feel safe and are scared—are unable to provide their employees with a sense of security and confidence. This negatively affects innovation, motivation, commitment and thus the efficiency and growth of the organisation. Such leaders are insincere, unconvincing and unable to pull their employees behind. Because they do not love themselves, they are incapable of loving others—their employees—and they are incapable of putting themselves in their employees' shoes, and encouraging and guiding them through their afflictions with love. They are inconsistent and incapable of making decisions.<sup>17</sup>

When I became a minister myself, I had (and still have) plenty of work to do on the path to self-love. I was largely aware of the facts I write here, but at that time, I was not where I am today. Mostly, also because of the experiences I had with individuals during my tenure as a minister, and because of the incessant awareness of my own experiences, I made considerable progress on the path of personal growth, i.e. the path to self-love. In conversations I had as a minister (with opposition and coalition MPs and other officials), I realised how rare love is. Because every time I was in love and talked to them in love, they came to life like a watered flower. I myself am surprised and glad to find that I gave them something they miss so much, something they do not have or have too little of.

Where there is no love, fear prevails. Fear, however, is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering.<sup>18</sup> Fear (hatred) unfortunately prevails (also) in Slovenian politics. The latter needs love just as the desert needs the blessing of the rain. I believe the lack of self-love is also prevalent among the leaders in Slovenian politics.<sup>19</sup> Thus, it is no surprise that for several years now we have stalled in the “darkness”.

### **3.3. How to Empower Leaders and Employees with Spiritual Growth and Self-love – A Model for Sustainable Material and Spiritual Development as a Solution**

For the elimination of dominant negativism in Slovenia, therefore, **love, first self-love**, is critical. Knowledge of how to reach this state of affairs was eradicated from our civilisation, so we must **bring that knowledge back into our lives. The path to love (and happiness) is the path toward balanced material (economic) and spiritual (personal) growth.** Unfortunately, we have long lived in “darkness”

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<sup>17</sup> In their study, Maharaj and April find that in 95% of leaders such state is present. They believe the reason to be in our Western culture of “fear” (which is essentially based on the absence of self-love) and fear-led leaders. Therefore, employees are less and less committed and loyal to their organisation or leader. See in detail Maharaj and April, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>18</sup> Yoda from the Star Wars movie, cited from: <http://www.yodaquotes.net/> (4.2.2020).

<sup>19</sup> An empirical analysis would be, of course, necessary to confirm this view. Such my perspective is founded on my own observations, insights and knowledge of human action, which I have largely gained through self-analysis.

and have been convinced that love (and happiness) can only be achieved through material (economic) growth. All the while, we believed in the fundamental “mantra” of capitalism, that “as much as possible” of material (in addition to satisfying material needs) would bring us more than that—love and happiness. That is why we have also been unsuccessful in realising **sustainable development as a lifeline for humanity**.

The main goal of a sustainable model, i.e. to alter our attitudes toward fellow humans and to the environment will only be possible if we begin to strive for spiritual growth and, above all, for love. It is evident that without this, that is to say, love for human beings and for the environment, no change will occur.

Thus, **sustainable economic growth** is not feasible without **spiritual growth**. It is not possible without (“awakened”) people who will realise that the path to happiness is the path of balance between the material and the spiritual development. For us today, this means that we have to realise that it does not hold true we can only become happy with the possession of material goods, which we have been convinced of until now. To that (the acquisition of material goods) we subordinated everything: our political, social and economic organisation and our private lives. We must recognise that this material part of our existence is essential, but **we cannot find happiness outside ourselves. We can only find happiness in ourselves—in love (for ourselves and for others)**. (Ullsuhewa, op. cit., p. 36)

The key to the success of a sustainable model is, therefore, its **social aspect**. We can only change attitudes towards the environment by changing attitudes towards ourselves and to fellow human beings (and other living organisms), i.e. to build those relationships on love and not on fear. Therefore, two elements could be found **missing from the existing sustainable model**:

- an awareness that its social aspect is critical to the realisation of the whole model,
- an awareness that it is not enough to provide **material well-being (economic well-being)** for all people, but also (and above all) **spiritual well-being**—only such circumstances allow us to “love and be happy”.

Therefore, our **first step** should be to **return “the spiritual” to our social, political and economic organisation**.

Since the principle of sustainable development is a “lifeline” and is, therefore, a bedrock of our future operations, we should first integrate it. To achieve the goals of sustainable development, we need to **supplement** the principle of sustainable development. However, in the principle of sustainable development, we must include the realisation that its social aspect (i.e., a human being) is quintessential for the realisation of the whole model. In doing so, the awareness that it is not enough to provide economic well-being for all people is critical, but also (and above all) spiritual well-being must be provided—only such circumstances allow us to “become happy”. While “economic well-being” is already a constituent part of a sustainable model, **the orientation to spiritual growth is entirely new**.



Because of its importance in our lives and its long-lasting “absence” from our lives and social organisation, we should pay special attention to it in the future.

The path to love (and happiness), therefore, is related, in particular, to spiritual and not just material growth. Because we were not (sufficiently) aware of it, we were so “obsessed”<sup>20</sup> with the material world that has permeated everything since the beginning of our lives. That is why we also have been so aggressive to the environment and to fellow human beings. Because we have not been aware enough of the importance of love, which can occur only if we cultivate the spiritual part of our being. Therefore, we must return the spiritual side to our lives. To that end, we could “utilise” the state and the law. Of course, we cannot live without the material aspect. Therefore, we must focus all our efforts to satisfy our material needs sustainably. In such a way as to be more modest in our actions affecting the environment. The “green economy”, together with today’s technology, renders this possible. For this, we have to turn to the state and law.

Evidently, we needed to reach the limits to begin to realise what is important and what is right. To recognise that the meaning of life is achieving love. Toward oneself. Then toward other people (and other living beings—animals and plants), as well. Therefore, it is now vital that we begin to act in accordance with these findings. To reshape the principle of sustainable development. That we set the provision of conditions for balanced economic and spiritual (personal) growth as the main task of the state and the law. Moreover, especially that we set the provision of conditions for achieving happiness as the primary goal of the state and the law.<sup>21</sup>

In Slovenia, we have all the possibilities to achieve this goal. Let us connect, join forces, and transform Slovenia into a “sustainable society”. Let us adjust our country and law by defining “the pursuit of love and happiness” as our goal, as well as (along with economic) spiritual growth as the path to it.

The goal of spiritual growth is to discover who we really are. We are not a mere body and not just the mind consisting of thoughts and beliefs. All of this is in constant flux. Yet we remain. The goal of spiritual growth is also to improve ourselves and to realise that our selfishness and greed are not the sums of our lives because our essence is love, and to realise that selfishness and greed are a reflection of fear, which is a part of the ego.<sup>22</sup> The goal of spiritual growth is to achieve love: love for yourself (self-love), love for others, and love for other living beings. When we are in a state of love, we can give love to others. Self-love calms us down, makes us happy and is a sign of universal responsibility to others. If we feel good about ourselves, we act much better in all other aspects of life (Osho, 2001, pp. 59–63). Happiness is then a by-product of acting (and being) in love.

**It is clear, therefore, that happiness can only be achieved through economic and spiritual (personal) growth.** When we remind ourselves of our past, we realise

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<sup>20</sup> The term is used by Naomi Klein, 2014.

<sup>21</sup> See more on the transformation of the principle of sustainable development and the role of law and the state in its implementation in Pličanič, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> See more about “ego” in Osho (2), 2008 and J. Krishnamurti, 1995.

how fatally blind we were when we were convinced that happiness could only be achieved through material goods (economic growth). Today, there is a growing body of scientific evidence that demonstrates the importance of the spiritual in our lives.

Taking into account all of the above, it is clear that **the desire to be happy is the primary mechanism that “drives” human beings**. It is also clear that happiness cannot be achieved only through material advancement and satisfying material needs, but (primarily) through spiritual development (Maslow in King 2011). It is also clear that due to the elimination of such knowledge from our civilisation, in search of happiness, we have been focused on material advancement only.

In this never-satisfied grasping for happiness, we started to affect the environment increasingly, believing that with ever more material goods we will finally become happy. The result is known and dismal. We have almost destroyed the environment and nearly extinct cultures that were aware of the importance of spiritual development, and a large part of humanity has been pushed into poverty and is on the brink of survival.<sup>23</sup> Sustainable development as a life plan in its current form is a sound ground for change. However, according to this analysis, it is also clear why thus far, we have been unsuccessful in its implementation.

**The main objective of a sustainable model, a change in the relationship to other people and to the environment, will be achieved only if we integrate spiritual growth into the model itself and then into everyday life.**

Sustainable economic growth is not possible without spiritual growth. It is not possible without awakened individuals who know that the path to happiness lies in the balance between the material and the spiritual. We must recognise that material part of our life is essential, but we cannot find happiness outside ourselves. We can only find happiness in ourselves—in self-love and in our love of others (Ullushewa, 2014, pp. 36). Therefore, if we want sustainable economic growth, and thus further economic growth and simultaneously a preserved environment, we should devote most of our energy to spiritual growth.

The main reasons for our failure to achieve sustainable development lie in the beliefs mentioned above (anthropocentrism and material wealth as the sole prerequisite for happiness), which are deeply rooted in our culture and within us. We have not yet fully confronted these facts. However, we will not be able to achieve sustainable development unless we transform such beliefs and mechanisms. Our focus on spiritual development and spiritual growth (besides material growth) will enable us to replace the fear (ego-“selfishness”), which drives both mechanisms with love (“selfless love”). Only with love will we be able to achieve sustainable development, eradicate poverty, and achieve sustainable economic growth—and happiness as well!

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<sup>23</sup> Most of these so desired material goods and wealth are in the hands of a few rich—who are likely to say that they are not happy.

### 3.4. The Concept of a New Social Model: Comprehensive Sustainable Development

Therefore, to achieve the objectives of sustainable development, we must modify the principle of sustainable development. The recognition that human beings are part of the environment and not above it, and that the Western societies are not above others, should be integrated into sustainable development principles. Additionally, it is essential to recognise that it is not enough to ensure material (economic) well-being for all the people, but also (and especially) spiritual well-being, and only with a balance of both can happiness be achieved. **While material well-being for everyone is already a part of a sustainable model, the focus on spiritual growth is entirely new.**

Because of its importance in our lives and its prolonged absence from our lives and social organisations, we should pay particular attention and energy to spiritual growth and well-being. **Thus, the concept of human “development” should cease to encompass only material development (economic growth), but should also focus on spiritual development (spiritual growth).** Only if we strive for the development of both areas of our life (material and spiritual), can we really speak of development. Only in this case will the material part of development be sustainable, thus maintaining and preserving the environment.

Human development, therefore, includes material and spiritual development. Only in this case, development means the path to happiness. Being happy is, as we have already seen, our fundamental driving force. Now we know that the path to it leads through material and spiritual growth, not only through material growth, as we have previously believed. Because we know what our objective is, what our fundamental driving force is, we have to define achieving it as our **common goal**. Being happy should be defined as our common goal. Since a sustainable model is our “rescue plan”, to be happy should be incorporated into the sustainable model as our primary objective and the balance of material and spiritual progress as a tool for achieving happiness.

One of the first steps in this direction is the **UN Resolution 65/309 “Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development.”** It is based on the “pursuit of happiness” as a fundamental human goal. It also emphasises that material development and economic growth as measured by gross domestic product (GDP) is not a sufficient measure of well-being or happiness. Therefore, it stresses the necessity of transforming the existing sustainable development paradigm into a new one with a more comprehensive view of development that will include both material and spiritual growth. (Defining a New Economic Paradigm, 2012). The resolution emphasises that all states and their governments should change their priorities in formulating development policy and identify the achievement of happiness as the main objective. This is only possible with a balance of material and spiritual growth.

The key is to make achieving happiness through material and spiritual development the objective of sustainable development. Even in the final resolution of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development Rio + 20 “The Future We Want” states recognise the need to extend the principle of sustainable development so that the material aspect of development includes an immaterial aspect as well.

With regard to the orientation of the EU, we could conclude that the EU also recognises the importance of enriching existing development paradigms and transformation of sustainable design. The “**Inclusive Green Economy**”—a fundamental objective of the EU (Europe 2020) is a model that should incorporate both material and immaterial growth. This is also clear from the content of the European Commission’s Conference “Beyond GDP”.

Let us mention that also the US Declaration of Independence speaks of “pursuit of happiness” as an inalienable human right. “Happiness” here means the state of material and spiritual well-being, the main content of which is the awareness of their own values and love for oneself and others. The aspect of giving love is especially emphasised, which means that the *Founding Fathers* were well aware of natural laws.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.5. How to Bring the Sustainable Model into Practice

I believe this should be Slovenia’s focus. Only in this way can we overcome the prevailing negativism that in the end weakens us all. This orientation is a bedrock on which everyone could strive for spiritual (personal) growth and for love and happiness. Such pursuit is especially important for all those working in the public sector (because of the importance of the goods and services the public sector provides to us and the fact that it does so with our money).

It is especially important that all leaders be in a state of self-love—in public administration, education, health care, social care, etc.

How can we bring such an attitude into practice, in everyday life?

Considering the “absence” so far, our main task in our lives is **to return the spiritual**. It must become part of our lives, as something commonplace and natural. It does not suffice to say that spiritual growth is a personal matter of each individual. The situation we find ourselves in requires organised action. If we are to achieve the fundamental goals of a sustainable model, i.e. to preserve the environment for us and for the future generations and for a decent life for all, we must take action to return the spiritual to our lives in an **organised manner**. **Return of the spiritual to our lives** is so essential that it is in the common, public interest of all. To provide goods of public interest, however, we have **the state and the law**. Therefore, in the “return” of the spiritual to our civilisation and to our lives, the state and the law

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<sup>24</sup> More on this in the paper by the US Supreme Court justice Anthony Kennedy at the National Conference on Citizenship (2005), which noted that shortly after the drafting of the declaration understanding of happiness “dissipated”. See more in Kennedy, 2005.

must work in tandem. Moreover, I believe this should become one of the main tasks of the modern state—“**sustainable state**” and modern “**sustainable (development) law**”. Namely, the state and the law have “served” the fundamental goal so far—the material progress. As I have already demonstrated, the whole society—the law and the state included—adapted to this as the key “tools”. Therefore, if we desire change, if we want to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, then it is crucial that **we adapt the state and the law to one of their main goals, to define “the pursuit of love and happiness”, and, in addition to the economic, spiritual development as the path to them.**

In these momentous times, it is becoming increasingly clear that the main task of the state and the law is to become the primary tool of humanity for promoting sustainable development. It seems that, in addition to other “classic” functions that were crucial in the past and are of course still relevant today (security, defence, and others), their central function today should be to provide information, knowledge, methods and public services for **spiritual growth**.<sup>25</sup> This framework also encompasses assistance to be provided by the state and the law to all those in need on the path of spiritual growth.

Until now, we have already achieved much—everything that has been achieved, we have to upgrade with new knowledge and values and establish rules of conduct and duties of the state to direct individuals and companies to exercise restraint in their actions affecting the environment and a fairer distribution of material goods—and of course, spiritual growth as a base (*conditio sine qua non*). The “upgrade”, of course, must relate to the entire legal system and all tasks of the state. Some areas, however, are quintessential. In particular, we must ensure:

- **Goal-oriented “sustainable governing”**, and its fundamental aim must be “to provide the conditions for spiritual growth (and thus the pursuit of love and happiness)”—**the sustainable planning** is quintessential in doing so;
- **The promotion of a green economy**, in particular, sustainable land-use planning and the relative limitation of actions affecting the environment by the objectives of that limitation (i.e. environmental conservation);
- **Sustainable education**—a significant part of the education of young people must be the knowledge associated with sustainable development, especially the knowledge, methods and techniques related to the spiritual (personal) growth (getting to know oneself, to love oneself and to others);
- **Sustainable training**—its essence is that (continuing) education and training on sustainable development, and in particular on spiritual (personal) growth and how to achieve self-love, should become an obligation of employees in companies and in the public sector;

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<sup>25</sup> In this respect, I should highlight the great potential of modern technology, especially information technology.

- **Sustainable health care system**—the essence of which is to transform the existing health care system so that it also includes assistance in spiritual (personal) growth.

From the perspective of the core of my discussion, **sustainable education** and **sustainable training** are crucial. To encourage spiritual (personal) growth, we have to adapt to this goal the legal system of youth education and continuing adult education and training of employees. A significant part of the education of young people and employees must be the knowledge associated with sustainable development, especially the knowledge, methods and techniques related to the spiritual (personal) growth (getting to know oneself, to love oneself and others).<sup>26</sup> It must become part of these processes, as something commonplace and natural. (O'Brien, 2013)

Today in developed societies, in Western Civilization, also in Slovenia, **we enter adult age (almost) without knowing ourselves**, i.e. about oneself as a physical body, one's psyche and one's "soul" (oneself as an energy being). The educational system does not provide such knowledge (except for some information on the physical body, much less about the functioning of the psyche, nothing about us as energy beings). Parents, too, do not have such knowledge (because they did not get it) and they do not pass it on to their children. Without this knowledge, when entering into various relationships, in the environment, we, humans, are not happy, become entangled in problems in our profession, in partnerships and in relations with our children.

It is a global problem. In Slovenia, for its historical (and cultural) reasons outlined above (**negative energy and negative approach**, manifested as intolerance, "it is not doable", etc.), such issue is especially pronounced. Since we all strive for improvement, we must first know the reasons for such a negative situation. As I have already demonstrated, the main reason for such a state is the almost complete absence of love, first, of course, self-love. The reason, however, lies in eradicating the knowledge of how to reach this state from our civilisation. Only when a person has such knowledge (and experience) can they change their views of themselves and the world around them. This is a prerequisite for improvement.

Knowledge about oneself includes all knowledge, information about **how we "operate"**, especially important is the awareness that we carry with us various blockages (especially fears). Recognising these blockages, raising awareness, and ultimately eliminating them, is the foundation for an individual's happiness, and thus the basis for the individual's happiness in the relationships they enter into. We operate in such a way that to recognise and raise awareness (on how we "function") we need **experience**. Of course, one's own experience is crucial, but other people's experiences are also relevant. Therefore, in the context of education and training, individuals should also be able to learn about the experiences of others and, in particular, to gain their own experience.

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<sup>26</sup> More and more people and organisations are taking this position; see, for example, UNESCO, 2007.



Within medicine and psychology, Western science has, over the centuries, learned a great deal about how we operate. However, this knowledge applies only to our physical body and our psyche. When it comes to knowledge of oneself as an energy being (soul), we must draw from the rich treasure trove of the so-called alternative sciences, although lately, more and more such knowledge is also to be found in the Western science.<sup>27</sup>

People need to be offered **all knowledge** about who we are and how we operate. It is equally important that this knowledge should be passed on to people in a **comprehensible way**. Especially since we have seldom encountered this knowledge in the process of education. Therefore, the education and training system for employees should provide the young people in pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education, and to enable employees to learn **who they are**: to learn **to love** and learn **to realise what they are** and **to love others** (humans and other living beings). The students and the trainees must be provided with knowledge and experience on:

- how to get to know oneself (who I am),
- how to eliminate blockages and fears (which prevent me from meeting and actualise myself),
- how to accept and actualise myself (what is my mission—my career or career path).

Self-actualisation also encompasses **relationships** into which we enter in our private and “professional” lives. These include relationships with parents, with a partner, with our children, with siblings, relationships in “professional” life, with friends and with young people, and relationships with teachers and classmates. In these relationships, we can only be happy and fulfilled if we know who we are; if we know about our blockages or fears and eliminate them, and if we know how we “operate” in relationships.

Getting to know ourselves and eliminating blockages or fears and living in harmony with oneself (self-actualisation) is directly related to **respectful and loving attitude towards oneself**—this is a prerequisite for progress in personal growth. A respectful and loving attitude to oneself, however, encompasses oneself as body and mind, and self as “soul” (as an energy being). On a daily level, taking care of oneself in all three of these dimensions means:

- a. Healthy food and drink,
- b. Regular physical movement,
- c. Healthy living,
- d. Direct and regular contact with nature (spiritually experiencing nature),

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<sup>27</sup> The holistic view of humans, which also includes our spiritual dimension, is increasingly penetrating established psychology, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. However, we are far from integrating the knowledge of the psychological and medical sciences with a vast treasure trove of knowledge originating from non-scientific traditions (the East, natural peoples, etc.). See more on this Ullushewa, op. cit.

- e. Regular (daily) nurturing of connection with one's deepest self (self as "soul"): through meditation, yoga and other "techniques".

The fundamental objective of sustainable education and training is, therefore, to provide students and employees with knowledge (methods, techniques) that will enable them **to get to know themselves, establish a relationship with themselves, and be aware of themselves**. Being aware of oneself, knowing oneself is a prerequisite for a happy life. It is a prerequisite for happiness in our private and professional life. It is essential, however, that knowing ourselves is the meaning of our lives. It is through knowing ourselves that we build **love** toward ourselves. And with that, love for others, too. **Being in the energy of love is the fundamental meaning of human life**.

We need to integrate the knowledge related to spiritual growth in the education processes in Slovenia by supplementing the programmes of pre-school education, primary, secondary, high and higher education in such a way that they cover all the aspects described above. I should like to stress that this transformation is already based on the current educational law. For example, Article 2 of the Primary School Act stipulates that primary education aims, *inter alia*, to promote the spiritual development of the individual, to facilitate the personal development of the pupil, including the development of his or her positive self-image, to educate for sustainable development, which includes a more profound knowledge and responsible attitude towards oneself, one's health, other people, their own and other cultures, the natural and social environment and future generations. In the transformation of programmes, curricula in the regulations governing pre-school education (Kindergartens Act), and elementary school (Primary School Act), high school (Vocational Education Act and General Upper Secondary School Act), high education (Higher Vocational Education Act) and higher education (Higher Education Act), one should be aware of the importance of this knowledge for "achieving happiness" and for achieving sustainable development. This means that, with the same schooling load, it will be necessary to reduce the volume of other, less important, skills for young people.

As I mentioned before, there is not enough knowledge about spiritual development and, in general, knowledge of sustainable development in pre-school, primary, secondary, high and higher education programmes. For the current generation of employees, as well as in general, because of the prolonged "absence" and because of the importance of this knowledge for the individual and for society, this knowledge should also be offered to **employees**. Moreover, I believe that continuing education and training on sustainable development, and in this context in particular spiritual (personal) growth, should be prescribed as **the employer's obligation and the obligation on the side of all the employees**. In particular, this means that Article 172 of the Employment Relationships Act and Articles 101 to 105 of the Civil Servants Act should be supplemented by introducing an obligation of education and training on sustainable development and, in this context, in particular on spiritual (personal) growth, as an obligation of the employer and the employees. Financing of such education should be considered an obligation of the employer.

Substantial technological advancements, especially in the area of information technology (social networks, websites, apps), offer great opportunities for effective and comprehensive education and training for students and employees.

Given the extreme importance of leadership, particular attention should be paid to training leaders, especially, of course, those who are (or intend to) work in the public sector. For these reasons, politics and state administration, or leaders acting in politics and state (and municipal) administration, are particularly important.

### **3.6. The Role of the State and the Law in Achieving Comprehensive Sustainable Development: The Concept of Changes in Slovenia**

As I have already stressed, the return of the spiritual into our lives is so important that it should be defined as **our common goal**. It should be defined as a **public interest**. We have created the state and the law for the provision of goods in the public interest. The return of the spiritual into our civilisation and into our lives and, therefore, in the state and the law should be engaged. Moreover, I believe that this should be one of the main tasks of a modern state, which should evolve into a more “sustainable state” and its law into a more “sustainable law”.

The state and the law have always been the main tools for achieving material progress. Spiritual progress should be added to that task as well, and the law and the state should be transformed to perform as the primary tool for achieving spiritual progress. **We should “utilise” the state and the law as central tools in achieving happiness as our main goal**. I, therefore, believe that we should define **achieving happiness as a criterion to define the fair or just law**.<sup>28</sup> When we define the achievement of happiness as a criterion of fair (just) law (this is the basis for the creation of a new holistic legal philosophy), we at the same time define the achievement of happiness as a fundamental legal value. The achievement of happiness is also a legal value that is in the common, public interest of the human community (this is the basis for the creation of a new holistic political philosophy). **The definition of achievement of happiness as a fundamental and common legal value requires the state and the law to ensure (conditions for) happiness.**

When implementing sustainable development, we have to start with the role of the state and the law from the roots mentioned above. To enable sustainable development, we need a modern “**sustainable state**” and “**sustainable law**”. Until now, we have already achieved much. Everything that was achieved, must be upgraded with new knowledge and values and we must establish rules of conduct and duties of the state to direct individuals and companies to exercise restraint in their actions affecting the environment and a fairer distribution of material goods—with spiritual growth as a base (*sine qua non*). Upgrade must relate to the whole

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<sup>28</sup> See more about the concept of (new) ecocentric legal philosophy in: Pličanič, The Concept of (New) Ecocentric Legal Philosophy.

legal system and all tasks of the state; however, some fields are quintessential. Above all, we have to provide:

- **Goal-oriented governing:** the active role of the state in achieving our primary goal of happiness;
- **Promotion of green economy:** sustainable land-use planning and the green tax system among other instruments;
- **Sustainable education:** based on knowledge related to sustainable development, especially knowledge related to spiritual (personal) growth (who we are, what is our life purpose, etc.);
- **Sustainable training of employees:** based on the same principles as sustainable education and should become a part of employees' obligations;
- **Sustainable healthcare:** integrate alternative medicine and provide support and assistance in personal growth issues.

### 3.7. The Active and Goal-Oriented Role of the State (and Local Communities)

As already emphasised, there is a predominant comprehension in the world that the implementation of sustainable development requires the active role of the state and local self-governing communities and municipalities. The active role of the state and municipalities is exhibited in the need for them to establish a clear, realistic and very concrete plan for sustainable economic development. Accordingly, such a plan should include, in particular, all necessary elements to promote those economic activities based on the preservation of the environment, and not on the (excessive) encroachment upon it, i.e. "green" economic activities.

Let me reiterate the increasingly prevailing belief that for the implementation of changes, i.e. the active role of the state and municipalities in promoting sustainable development, we need an informed public and its active role since only a public pressure on the government will bring about sustainable development. (Klein, 2014)

In Slovenia, such a role of the state in implementing sustainable development is founded in its Constitution. Although in the Constitution, no explicit provision exists to that effect, I do believe that some of its provisions provide a sufficiently firm basis for such an interpretation of the Constitution. In particular, I am referring here to Article 72(2) of the Constitution, which stipulates that the state shall promote a healthy living environment and to this end shall establish the conditions and manner for pursuing of economic and non-economic activities. While at the same time, the Constitution "legalises" economic growth as a legal value (indirectly this, in my opinion, stems from Article 74 of the Constitution, guaranteeing free economic initiative). In conjunction with the clear focus of the EU on sustainable development, I believe that we have a firm enough basis for a finding that such a policy is "commanded" by the Constitution itself.

In Slovenia, we have very good, indeed excellent (in comparison with the other EU Member States as well as globally), possibilities for sustainable development. We have a relatively unspoiled and varied environment, but also a great human potential—a high level of highly educated people and many successful individuals and companies in various fields, which are important for successful development of a green economy. Therefore, I believe that we have all the possibilities to achieve a U-turn and achieve sustainable development in practice.

The first step should be the development and adoption of a comprehensive plan for sustainable development of Slovenia. The fundamental basis for it can be found right in the provision of the Constitution mentioned above. If the state is to provide a healthy living environment accompanied by economic growth (by setting conditions for the pursuit of economic and non-economic activities), it is logical that it should have a clear vision (plan), how these targets should be met. Such a plan should be adopted by the executive and legislative branches of power.

In Slovenia, an approximation of such a plan is the Development Strategy of Slovenia. However, I believe that the document is far too general and insufficiently focused on sustainable development. The legal basis for it is the Regulation of Development Planning Documents and Procedures for the Preparation of the National Budget. The Regulation provides that the strategy is just one of the government documents. I believe that the Slovenian Development Plan should be elevated to a higher level. It should be incorporated into the legal system by a law, which should be adopted (besides the Government) by the National Assembly and National Council. The law should specify the Slovenian development plan as the underlying instrument of development planning in the country. The first step in this direction is The Vision of Slovenia 2050 – The Design of a Comprehensive Development Plan of Slovenia, which the government prepared earlier this year.

Municipalities should ensure its implementation at the local level. Such a plan for the municipalities is Sustainable Urban Strategy (SUS). The basic principle is that the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) has to support sustainable urban development through integrated strategies that address the economic, environmental, climatic, social, and demographic challenges affecting urban areas. This principle has a double meaning: it means that resources should be integrally focused on target areas that face particular challenges in urban areas, and means that there must be projects for urban development with ERDF funding included in the general objectives of the program. This is stipulated in Article 7 of the EU Regulation 1301/2013 on the European Regional Development Fund.

It is particularly important to plan and implement sustainable economic development on the regional level due to the EU approach (which directs the promotion of sustainable economic development across regions). In Slovenia, it is a necessity also due to excessive fragmentation of Slovenian municipalities.

Since urban spatial planning (i.e. the planning of urban construction) in Slovenia is within the competence of municipalities in accordance with the Law on Spatial Planning, the next step is essential, i.e. the inclusion of urban construction and

especially the urban projects planned with SUS in the municipal spatial plans. This is particularly important because the spatial plans (unlike SUS) are legally binding acts and are the basis for the issuance of a building permit.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The article analyses the root causes for prevailing negativism in Slovenia in general and in its public sector and identifies the absence of self-love in Slovenia (and worldwide) as a main reason for such state. The absence of self-love influences public sector leadership and public sector employees engagement in a negative way. In the discussion, the importance of self-love for everything we do was shown. It was also demonstrated that for achieving self-love spiritual development is the main tool.

Due to the unilateral orientation of our civilisation toward material development, we have almost eliminated the pursuit of spiritual development from our lives. However, love and happiness can only be achieved with the balance of both.

In this article, it was shown that to shift from the absence of self-love to self-love based society spiritual development should be included into the sustainable development social model as a main organising social model of humankind.

The integral principle of sustainable development, which, in addition to economic growth, encompasses spiritual growth, is a model that offers us a way out of our (bad) state—worldwide and in Slovenia. Of particular importance is the spiritual side, primarily because of the long “absence” thereof. It has to be reintroduced into our lives. In doing so, the state and the law need to be employed, and to set as their main task the provision of conditions for (in addition to economic) spiritual growth and thus love and happiness.

In this article, the theoretical and philosophical arguments for the benefits of self-love in life generally and consequently in public sector leadership and public sector employees engagement was analysed. Also, the theoretical arguments for the connection between self-love and sustainable development social model was analysed. The foundations for a new comprehensive model of sustainable development, in which spiritual development is included as an integral part of development was developed were proposed how to bring the comprehensive sustainable model into practice in Slovenia and what should be the role of the state and the law in such pursuit.

In Slovenia, all the possibilities exist to achieve this goal. Let us connect, join forces, and transform Slovenia into a “sustainable society”. Let us adjust our state and law by defining “the pursuit of love (and happiness)” as our goal, as well as (along with economic) spiritual growth as the path to it.

Given the importance of the public sector and, within it, especially the public administration (because of the goods and services it provides us and because it is funded by taxpayers), it is particularly important to embed the spiritual side of



our existence into the ongoing training of public sector employees, and by this, enabling the employees to embark on the path to self-love. Given the importance of leadership, however, special attention must be paid to leaders in politics, the sector of the economy and public administration. In doing so, our goal should be to have leaders permeated with self-love. Indeed, love should be a key “tool” for managing employees (in the public as well as private sector).

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## **O ULOZI LJUBAVI U VOĐENJU JAVNOG SEKTORA U SLOVENIJI**

Članak raspravlja o važnosti samoljublja u vođenju javnog sektora i angažmanu zaposlenika u javnom sektoru. S obzirom na važnost vodstva u našoj civilizaciji, gotovo potpuno odsustvo ljubavi prema sebi kod vođa posebno šteti kako organizacijama koje vode tako i njihovim zaposlenicima. To je posebno važno u javnom sektoru - zbog važnosti dobara i usluga koje isti pruža i činjenice da se to čini novcem poreznih obveznika. Vođe koji vole i upravljaju s ljubavlju, umiju biti u poziciji zaposlenika, razumjeti ih; znati pronaći najbolje u svakom od njih i potaknuti razvoj tog aspekta; oni su iskreni i topli; znati slušati zaposlenike i impresionirati ih; oni ih poštuju; nadahnjuju ih osjećajem sigurnosti i samopouzdanja; šire pozitivnu energiju i znaju donositi odluke.

U tekstu se govori i o povezanosti ljubavi prema sebi i socijalnog modela održivog razvoja. Zbog jednostrane orijentacije naše civilizacije prema materijalnom razvoju, pojedinci su gotovo eliminirali potragu za duhovnim razvojem iz svog života. Međutim, ljubav i sreća mogu se postići samo obostranom ravnotežom. Sastavno načelo održivog razvoja, koje uz gospodarski rast obuhvaća i duhovni rast, model je koji nam nudi izlaz iz našeg (lošeg) stanja - u svijetu i u Sloveniji. Od osobite je važnosti - prvenstveno zbog dugog zapostavljanja - duhovna strana koju ljudi trebaju ponovno uvesti u svoj život. Pritom bi se država i zakon trebali „iskoristiti“ tako da im se kao glavni zadatak nametne osiguravanje uvjeta za (uz ekonomski) duhovni rast, a time i ljubav i sreću.

**Ključne riječi:** *ljubav prema sebi, vodstvo javnog sektora u Sloveniji, angažman zaposlenika u javnom sektoru u Sloveniji, održivi razvoj, duhovni razvoj*