

# CONNECTING WORLDS

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**ZOFIA DZIK**, entrepreneur, investor, founder of the Humanites Foundation which focuses on leadership, human and technology, talks to Maciej Proliński.



**PM** “All “that is human is more and more alien to me,” Polish filmmaker Andrzej Kondratiuk once said. Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky, poignantly described the West as a world devoid of values, including spirituality. Man seems somehow left by the wayside...

Man is not only capable of rational thinking, and definitely is not just a consumer. Man is a complex, multidimensional being. What would we be without spirituality? In 2012, I developed and published the Coherent Leadership™ model. It is a holistic programme of corporate management culture, based on a multidimensional leadership development programme in the private and professional spheres, based on the philosophy of sustainable development on the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual level. In my book I quote Polish philosopher Father Józef Tischner: “Man is in a state of constant becoming. Created by nature, Man is transformed into a personality, reaching full bloom in terms of spiritual and physical powers. The more a person becomes a personality, the more human they are.” Tischner also said that we always exist for somebody. And today, people exist more and more in parallel to one another. Loneliness affects 50% of Europeans

in large cities. It is also experienced in China or Japan. We live under pressure, we neglect relations and escape into the virtual world. The level of prosperity is rising, but satisfaction with life is declining.

I developed the Coherent Leadership™ model based on many years of business experience in building organisations in Poland and the CEE region. It takes into account the realities and consequences of economic and social transformation, and the strong need for leaders to develop, also outside the purely professional area. The programme is open to mature companies whose vision is broader, not only geared toward profit, but also based on values. In future leadership, not only the result will count, but also the means to achieve it. If we want to build creative, innovative organisations, to attract talent, we must develop our management style.

**PM** **The idea of development encompassing all these spheres underlies activities of the Humanites Foundation.**

The idea to set up a foundation to tackle man’s relationship with his ecosystem, which faces an ongoing technological transformation, kept germinating for many years. Nine years ago,

when I founded it, my voice was alone in the desert. I encountered scepticism, also among my friends. Only now, it seems, has the time come to stop and think about what it means to be a complete human being. This model generates interest in academic centres around the world.

I had the opportunity to work in many markets, in insurance, banking, construction, automotive industry, logistics and consulting. I watched the world running at various speeds. And the higher I climbed the business ladder, the more I felt that the human factor was being lost. In Poland, we have gone through economic transformation, and the social transformation has been neglected. To some extent, economic development occurred at the expense of social capital, so it seems only fair to rebuild it. There are also many people who have made it, but at the cost of broken families, estranged children etc. Hence the Foundation, whose aim is to promote the idea of a conscious, happy and open human being sensitive to social issues.

By supporting the development of the individual human being, and of leaders who are value shapers, we support the development of social capital and its transformation in the face of global trends, such as the Technology Revolution.

We want to create an environment at home, at work, at school, in the media, which will enable everybody to develop their potential, based on self-esteem, moral compass, love and sensitivity to social issues. We believe that people should not stop thinking, that they should take advantage of the opportunities that new technology brings, and not become slaves to it.

On the threshold of the digital revolution, we take a broader view of human and his development in key areas: openness to learning, emotional maturity, curiosity of the world and other people, critical thinking, persistence, cooperation, and taking responsibility. As an African saying goes: "It takes the whole VILLAGE to raise one man."

We operate based on the Non-linear Model of Social Development™ which I developed, initiating projects which facilitate social change in four main areas of the ecosystem of "our Village": Family, Business (Work Environment), Education, World of Culture and Media.

**PM What tools do you use to implement this holistic programme?**

In each area, I always look for ways to link different, often artificially separated worlds, through projects which trigger change. Business is not just an economic force, but it also has a huge social impact. That is why we attach great importance to the development of business leadership. Every year, the Foundation organises a Conference for Business Leaders to promote the idea of Coherent Leadership and to explore the relationship between man and technology. It gathers several hundred business owners and key business players. Its motto is that we are human beings first, only then we are managers, and that the two roles are combined. The 6th edition of the conference took place this year.

The Foundation also runs the "Two Hours for the Family" project, which is snowballing. Its 8th edition was held this year. It encourages people to relate to other people, and not just to their corporate positions. This project ties in with the UN International Day of Families. On May 15, workers cut their work time by a symbolic two hours to devote more time to their loved ones. It's becoming a global movement for human contact. Several hundred entities take part in it - companies, local government bodies, schools and organisations. Since 2017, employers in 15 countries have joined in. This project has brought the human factor back into business.

Another major project, in the area of education, has been organised for 9 years. It is the Academy of Leadership in Education (APLO) to highlight the need for systemic changes in

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this field. To prepare the younger generation for Economy 4.0, we must significantly change teaching methods. Working with parents, the school should prepare young people to be independent, to embrace the concept of continued education, instead of studying for the next test. School is made up of people, and its shape depends on what kind of a human being its head is. To respond to the needs of the environment, the school head should not just serve as an administrator, but also as a genuine leader who engages others in action. Since we entrust our most valuable social capital to schools, it occurred to me that school heads should be educated in a way which is now reserved for business leaders. APLO is based on working with leading lecturers from the world of business, psychology, social innovation, sociology and pedagogy, who normally train business leaders. The project has initiated systemic changes in the field of leadership in education in Poland. Former methods focused on technical, legal and administrative matters, but did not explain how to manage human relations. 500 school heads, local government officials responsible for education, and over 350 business leaders, have taken part so far. In 2017, I founded the Humanites Circle of Social Investors.

**PM What to do to adjust to the growing impact of digitisation and automation on the labour market?**

I have a business background in fintech. We feel that the world is accelerating because technological progress occurs exponentially. Concepts like AI, the Internet of Things and blockchain are entering practically every sector of the economy. Never before has man's

relationship with technology been so strong. The key seems to be the ability to learn constantly. Without it, it will be difficult to follow inevitable changes in the labour market. Every year some professions are going to disappear and new ones will be born. Switching to continuous education can be a challenge. That is why business leaders have the responsibility to prepare their employees, or human beings, really, for this new reality and support them in retraining. According to some studies, by 2026, more than 50 million people could lose their jobs.

**PM What to do to tap the potential of women in business?**

Assessment should be made based on competences, regardless of gender. It's tougher for women who need to reconcile their private and professional lives. Women are creative, consistent and conscientious. They cope very well in managerial positions. I like to connect worlds and for sure, on the one hand, I support women in their drive for equal access to many areas, including top business positions. On the other hand, the job and the family should not exclude each other. That's why I'm against the notion of a work life balance. I'm for integration and combining different roles, because they are all part of our lives. In Poland you can see more and more very successful women who are unhappy, lonely and unfulfilled in their private lives. At a women's congress, one of the leaders once said: "Nobody can convince us that we need to have children." With utmost respect to women who do not want to be mothers, I reckon it was a stupid thing to say, and I have doubts whether it actually served to strengthen the role of women, or make their dilemma even more pronounced. □