

“Sex and the City 2”. Women Stuck in a Desert.
By Ana Tajder

“Sex and the City 2” opens in European cinemas on Friday, May 29. I, as the ultimate S&C fan should be ecstatic. Well, I’m not. I passed by a cinema with a jumbo poster above the door featuring Carrie, Charlotte, Samantha and Miranda (in a desert?!) and I had a very strange feeling – it was a bit like looking at a corpse – a mixture of curiosity, disgust and sadness.

S&C used to be our Bible. What we watched on TV screens was stories of our lives. Yes, we were just like them. Our stories were their stories. We were educated, had great jobs, paid for our own luxuries, we looked good (well, good enough...), had enormous fun and had sex with gorgeous men. We were completely independent. And mesmerised with our lives. We were experiencing the probably best phase of our lives. And S&C was an affirmation for it all.

This was 12 years ago. Many things have changed since then. Towards the end, the series wasn’t as cheeky, crisp, fun and true as it had been at the beginning. The first S&C movie came to cinemas and, although we were glad to see our old friends, we were disappointed. And now the 2nd part? I’m not sure. I’m even wondering if we should go to see it. I’m afraid it will be everything but empowering.

First of all: Sex is not what it used to be. The S&C sex, that is. The S&C sex was about freeing a new form of female sexuality. Sexuality which was at the same time our weapon and our shield. Sexuality as the ultimate proof of the newly conquered independence in all aspects of our lives.

Unfortunately, the sexuality we freed up for ourselves back then has quickly turned against us. The moment we turned female sexuality into a means for achieving a goal, somebody else used it for their own purposes: To earn money. In no time, our society has become overly sexualised and pornographed. Fashion copies SM styles. Music spots look like soft porn. School kids are watching hard core on their phones. The media is bombarding us with an impossible new image of a woman, an über-sexualised, über-natural sex doll. She is created by using styling, plastic surgery and Photoshop. She fills us (both women and men) with craving for unreachable, constructed “perfection” and makes us spend billions trying to buy it. She is turning women into objects.

Again. Our grandmothers and mothers fought against this – how did we, the S&C generation, allow this to happen?

And then there was shopping. They spent fortunes shopping. And they had enormous fun shopping. So had we. Shopping symbolised the connection between our financial independence and our newly freed sexuality. We were buying (with our own money) sexy stuff that made us feel great about ourselves. And that helped us manipulate the world which is known to be easily manipulated by attractive looks.

But then came the financial crisis. And that made it very clear to us that we had become hostages to our own consumption. We worked to consume, we identified with the consumed, and we searched for fulfilment where it couldn’t be found. It all became painful when we realised that the consumerist attitude reflected on other aspects of our lives. We were consuming men, relationships, friendships. Ourselves. And on top of it all came the threat of an environmental catastrophe. It is not fun paying for stuff, which you know will bury you one day. No, we don’t shop any more.

S&C showed us how fantastic a friendship can be. A constructed family. Four friends, all obsessed with themselves and their tightest circle. Four friends and their never-ending search for love, for the perfect relationship, for THE man, for happiness...

The search lasted for 12 years. And it goes on. It used to be cute. It’s not anymore. Because it is a product of the individualisation that is ruining our society. One of the biggest

lessons we were supposed to learn from the financial crisis was that globalisation made us all interdependent. We cannot be solely focused on ourselves anymore. If Greece crashes, Europe crashes. If Europe crashes, USA will suffer.

It's the same with women. We cannot live our emancipation alone. There are African women sold to our men as sex workers. Indian women are sewing our jeans for \$16 a month. And there are many gorgeous East European girls who, of lack of alternative to supporting themselves, accept playing on traditional gender roles. They are willing to trade their youth and beauty for financial security. Having a beautiful East European wife who keeps her mouth shut and is satisfied with a gift of designer shoes became sort of a trend: Viennese businessmen travel to East Europe searching for wives. Scared of losing their "competitive advantage", many West European girls are giving up emancipation. A new form of prostitution?

Yes, the world has drastically changed in the 12 years since S&C first became a symbol of our emancipation. The financial crisis revealed a deeper crisis – our whole system is in crisis. In order to survive, we have to rethink everything anew: The economic system, the priorities, the values.

So to inspire us again, S&C would have to drastically change. And here an idea: Now that it is clear that we have reached the limits of the male world order, how about offering a new alternative? A female, solidarity, cooperative, humanistic world order.

I know – it is too much to wish from a US TV-series-turned-film.

But please, allow me to dream.