

# GLOBAL DYNAMICS AT THE DAWN OF 2008.

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## Abstract.

On or about 9<sup>th</sup> January 2008, under the guidance and coordination of OPUS, Listening Posts aimed at providing a snapshot of the societal dynamics of each country at the dawn of 2008, were held in twenty one different countries around the world (Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Greenland, Holland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Portugal, Serbia, South Africa (two Reports), Spain, Switzerland, USA & UK). These were all reported in a similar format (see 'Britain and the World at the Dawn of 2003' in *Organizational & Social Dynamics* 3 (1): 165-169), researched and analyzed by the authors, to produce this Global Report.

The authors self-defined their task as follows. To research and analyse the National Reports with a view to:

- (a) Identify common themes arising within the twenty one Reports;
- (b) Explore relationships between themes and to reduce these down to major or dominant themes;
- (c) Collate supporting information from the Reports for analysis of these themes; and
- (d) Formulate hypotheses arising there from.

For the sake of brevity this Report will only document the major interrelated themes identified, followed by an analysis and hypotheses regarding each.

## Key Words.

Listening Posts, Global Dynamics, Societal Dynamics, Social Defenses Against Anxiety.

## Introduction.

An overall analysis shows that members of societies throughout the world are still experiencing this period in history as one of unprecedented and revolutionary social change that shows no signs of relenting. This includes technological change but also includes the ideas; including political, philosophical and religious ideas. There is continuing evidence that the experience of members of societies throughout the world is that this period is one of formative changes in the structure of the world economy, the shape of societies, and the framework of world governance. It is leading to the development of a new way of life and a new culture.

At one level, it is depressing that after about seventeen years of Globalisation we are still responding in much the same way as was first analysed five years ago (in 2004), when the first International Listening Post Project took place. Change and the affects of change are still continuing in much the same fashion as previously reported. Not least, it would seem that the destruction of national cultures is still resulting in a loss of group and individual identities resulting in massive anxiety. In general, this results in feelings of helplessness and hopelessness resulting in impotence. This is dealt with by huge dependency on institutions, including religious institutions, as has previously been reported.

The nature of the change continues to be a powerful influence at both a social and a psychological level in all societies and continues to have an impact on all aspects of society be that individuals or those responsible for the management, leadership and administration of political, economic and

social institutions. Members of societies still react to the anxiety resulting from a loss of identity by retreating into isolation. And, there is still a search for some sort of saviour, be that young people, religion or a complete fantasy. In many ways little has changed and these aspects will not be repeated again this year.

However, there does appear to be a shift in experiences and in levels of understanding. The National Reports still show that societies are utterly fragmented and in some cases almost non-existent; however, there is a different quality to the experience this year with beneath the surface violence being highlighted. There is also a strong experience of lack of trust in institutions and in particular of politicians; and the beginnings of activism outside the party political system. The understanding seems to be arising in the following ways: Understanding change at a deeper level, by moving from defensive avoidance activities in the paranoid schizoid position, to being able to face reality in the depressive position. A further development of awareness emanates from an expression of guilt and shame arising from an awareness of privilege. These themes are reflected in the following four interrelated Analyses and Hypotheses.

## **Analysis and Hypothesis I. From Paranoid Schizoid to Depressive Position – Towards a Deeper Understanding.**

### ***Analysis:***

Unlike previous years, the reported experience of most participating countries is that there is at least the beginning of a shift from the defensive mainly paranoid schizoid position responses to current societal threats to an approach based in the depressive position whereby the reality of threats can be confronted. The reported experiences show that members of societies are beginning to think about their own part in the processes and that the way forward lies in their own actions. Examples of this thinking are as follows: the potential to resolve present day problems; meaningful work that can make things better; freedom of expression; end of a civilisation; proactive actions; concern for our actions; our own actions relative to others; small islands of thinking; movement to the depressive position; how can we do something? A more engaged society. Overall this seems to amount to a steady, if slow, progressive movement from operating in the paranoid schizoid position to facing reality in the depressive position. Or at the least the ability to stay in the depressive position in islands where thinking is possible and reality can be confronted and examined. This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

### **Australia:**

We see a destruction of the familiar (a disaster scenario), and that a new world order is emerging to take its place. We are in the process of apprehending that, and while we experience and connect with its darkness and violence we are yet aware that out of the darkness can come growth and the potential to resolve present day problems.

### **Bulgaria:**

People are free to enter multiple new roles. There are however factors (financial, social, emotional etc.) which scare us and prevent us from profiting fully from the choices available. Some achievements lead to separation with some illusions of ours.

### **Canada:**

The hoped for positive changes after the next presidential election in the United States, the increased political involvement of younger people in the Obama campaign, and the idea that young people were bringing new ideas and attitudes to public life as a result of the Internet lent an optimistic tones to the discussion.

There was a similarly optimistic suggestion that some of our work was meaningful and could and did make things better, albeit at a relatively slow pace.

### **Chile:**

Today there is openness for being different from the rest; ....there is more freedom to express different sexual identities. Along with heterosexuality, lesbianism and homosexuality are manifested in a more open way.

The globalization of society has influenced this openness to difference, since it involves the arrival of immigrants from various races and countries, which has allowed us to get to know different cultures and ways of life.

### **Denmark:**

A vision for a global life is missing. A vision which can mobilize feelings, create male and female heroes, offer possibilities of investments in the common good and sacrifices for the sake of the whole as well as associations of something good lying ahead of us in the future.

**Finland:**

There is an illusion about justice happening. We have to go somewhere out from our own surroundings in order to see and understand our own system. It is easy to tell idealistic phrases and hard to make them true.

What is poverty, and what is courage and do we have backbone? Is it a shame to say that I cannot afford something?

**France:**

There is a kind of feeling that we are at the end of a civilisation (also referring to the fall of the Roman Empire). Collapse of the USA's dominant position in many areas.. Sarkozy talks of a "civilisation policy" (expression borrowed from a left-wing thinker). Democracy is flouted in many places.

**Germany:**

We experience how important a group is for widening one's horizon, e.g. we need not necessarily be mere victims of media, flood of information and digital procedures that increasingly appear to shape our lives.

It might possibly be easier to continue moaning, but we have to admit that personal spaces can be proactively shaped and constructive uses developed. The targets we aim for are not attainable without including our own values, convictions and emotions and they profit from cooperation across generations.

**Greece:**

The integration of European and global influences in Greek popular culture and identity has left a void in the place of traditional ideals, beliefs and values. Instead of acknowledging loss and searching for a new sense of meaning, society defends against this change by idealising these new influences and mindlessly and superficially (i.e. in a concrete way) adopting them.

The result is the exacerbation of certain destructive aspects (obsession with appearance, 'theathine') of society over more creative and thought-provoking ones (artistic influences, engaging interests, hobbies).

**Greenland:**

It was very hard to put any characteristics to a more Greenlandic Greenlander. Will values be past-like or future-like? It was questioned, if a unified culture in Greenland is at all possible or wanted.

**Ireland:**

We are angry that success has still left people behind and Ireland is more unequal than ever. We are angry that we tried to kick off the legacy of the past – we behave the opposite to our parents – but have we left a legacy that is any better?

**Israel:**

Sensitivity to our status and comparing ourselves to other Western World countries (i.e. efforts to look positive in the visitors' eyes; who is more personal and humane; who is less rigid and more flexible; had we refrained from participating in ILP2007 because of our preoccupation with the war in Lebanon?.

**Italy:**

It does not come immediately and easily in individuals the acceptance that the reality they are living in can also not change at the pace and with the speed they hope or wish. Acknowledging that change is not always natural (and this is particularly true when it comes to human and societal

event) requires reaching an emotional position in which me and not me are acknowledged as legitimate and complementary.

**Serbia:**

The negative process of nihilism, human alienation is not just in Serbia, but also, wider in the world, so coming from outside in many ways, but the main factors for those to grow are the fertile inner ground (in ourselves, in our family, in our environment).

So, the focus of the responsibility is seen to be in ourselves but thinking together about that was quite difficult. As if there were just small islands of thinking in a large sea of disintegration and destructiveness of the capacity or of the good will to work together.

**South Africa:**

These increasing levels of aloneness, loneliness and anxiety are an appropriate response in the world as it is and reveal greater psychological maturity. In the past the defense used was paranoid-schizoid but has currently moved more to the depressive position. Developmentally speaking then this is a step forward.

**Switzerland:**

The hope for reaching out and joining with others comes from the global environment with concerns for the natural world bringing people out of their ivory towers to help. This highlights a desire to take up a more active role on the global stage to move away from a beautiful but dusty postcard view of Switzerland to a more active, engaged and leveraged platform from which to initiate positive change. The question is whether we can put aside our protective self-interest in order to do so?

**USA:**

The loss of connectedness has been brought about by the unstable global economy, and local economic, political, military and religious factors that lead to withdrawal. To counter this we can run for office as one person is doing. Therefore as people vote and join in the political process that should lead to a more engaged, less despairing community, country and world.

***Hypothesis:***

The overriding experience of members of societies throughout the world is one of helplessness, hopelessness and a general impotence leading to splitting and the use of other primitive defence mechanisms. However, it would appear that there is a growing awareness that this period is one of formative changes in the structure of the world economy, the shape of societies, and the framework of world governance. And that this is leading to the development of a new way of life and a new culture. This deeper awareness enables members of societies to accept that reality and, albeit slowly and at times fleetingly, stay in the depressive position long enough to think about the experiences in a meaningful way. A result may be the development of a more hopeful view of the future.

## **Analysis and Hypothesis 2. Privilege an Expression of Guilt and Shame.**

### ***Analysis:***

One of the continuing ways that members of societies have responded to the massive changes experienced over the past decade and more has been to regress to individualistic behaviour. The reported experience this year is that there is a tendency towards members of societies having a greater awareness of the effects of individualistic behaviour which has resulted in developing concerns for the wider community, society or world. The way this arises and to which Most National reports refer to is the notion of 'privilege'. Frequently this is in regard to concerns around a disparity between rich and poor be that intra-society or inter-society. In addition there are references to the privilege of power and the abuses derived there from. Whatever the derivation, privilege arouses emotions of guilt, shame and anger because of the way it is abused. This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

### **Australia:**

The media and its constant communication of war, famine and death connects people everyday, in their living room, with the world and its impact. It is like we 'see' death everyday. Then there are those of us who don't watch and can pretend it doesn't exist, or feel guilty about our privileged life (survivor guilt)

### **Bulgaria:**

Another defense mechanism we resort to in order to preserve our own good achievements is by masking them, hiding and/or devaluing our own development in order not to attract the "dark" forces attention.

This makes us looking as if favoring predominantly domestic, local, familial roles and problems and to seem estranged from some larger, "foreign" (and global) social agendas.

### **Canada:**

We are an especially privileged group of people because we are living in Canada away from the more troubled areas of the world. We have a desire to try to make things better both through our work and our other activities. It is difficult for us to see the consequence of our efforts, or indeed if what we do has any consequence. We are therefore not sure that we are making appropriate use of our special position of privilege. We also hope that we can see things without blinders and with more compassion.

### **Chile:**

The use of physical and moral violence follows the logic of politics and the powerful, who direct their conflict and contradiction towards individuals and groups which are weaker and more vulnerable in their differences. This way those with power maintain a clean identity at the expense of those who are weaker.

### **Denmark:**

Guilt, shame, impotence are feelings which crop up when thinking of Denmark and the world at the beginning of 2008. It is also hard to find an addresser and an addressee in the political enthusiasm that is demonstrated. Who are we and they, who do we and they represent? Are we just members of the white, affluent middle class or is it possible to identify with something more passionate?

### **Finland:**

There has been a huge economic growth. To what do we use this welfare? Do we ensure that everyone has enough? Can we rich people give up for something? The ways of Consumption are time, money, experience.

**France:**

While there is much reference to the behaviour of “others”, each individual’s shame and guilt feelings are hinted at in behaviours that, although less scandalous than those referred to above, still derive from the same dynamics. The expression “It’s awkward” was stated several times with reference to ecologically responsible behaviours or the question of finding managerial behaviours that show consideration for people.

**Germany:**

One younger member remained persistent and stressed the importance of the topic of value neutrality of data. The groups' eyes were finally opened. It was deemed imperative to keep any usurpation schemes and resultant social coldness under close observation, to comprehend them and to draw public attention to them, to admit and live with one's helplessness, in order to handle the situation in a creative way..

**Greenland:**

Language and culture are dividing people into groups with different status. It is of high value to be able to speak Danish. It is a sign of disrespect not learn to speak Greenlandic. It is part of “greenlandising” to change the language of administration from Danish into Greenlandic. Greenlanders are seeing Danes as somebody with a higher status due to their language and as somebody who do not want to learn the local language and thereby showing their disrespect.

**Holland:**

The participants feel captured in a forced economical world with a remorseless and unstoppable production process. Grow, grow, grow is the most dominant sound in that world. Worry for the needs of people in less developed economies comes into existence. Exhaustion of natural resources, pollution is seen as a real thread.

**Ireland:**

Are we whipped into a frenzy of anger by the ways in which we are kept in the dark or by the ways in which information is presented to us? A member thought that this was a bleak analysis and that we had to remember that things were not black and white, as they are presented, but full of grey and that we have to find ways to live with the grey and accept that things are both good and bad.

**Israel:**

This activity, referred to the more gifted and adaptive sectors of population, is taken as an expression of basic assumption Me-ness which brings with it a strong emphasis on personal growth and success but also alienation and weakening of social solidarity. An affluence of data and opportunities is well doing to the more gifted but confusing and alienating to the slower and less adaptive people in society.

**Italy:**

The noble gesture of volunteering in a poorer country becomes then a case of physical absence in order to regain psychological presence. The poorest countries - in a new form of emotional colonialism - are rich – and will cater for the lack of it in our societies – in simpler ways of creating relationships. Within these societies it is easier for us to get access to a unitary and not threatening identity of ourselves:

**Portugal:**

Is this the “normal” ways of power alienating the individuals? Or is this a new kind of contemporary violence and abuse being done on the citizens by the power of the state?

**South Africa:**

Most citizens live in poverty and struggle with illiteracy and limited opportunities, mostly aware of their immediate needs and surroundings, while others live amongst affluence and abundance in terms of resources, aware of and enjoying global opportunities such as travelling and working abroad and seeing the world. The split seems to become an economic polarisation - the rich becomes richer and the poor becomes poorer.

**Spain:**

It is spoken of the movie "Rwanda Hotel" that is based on real facts, and is very hard, because is spoken of 1 or 2 million dead people. And the same occurs in many places. But behind all these catastrophes are the weapons, the diamonds, the mass media that confront the society. Still with all the problems that exist, today we live better than never in the history, but the crisis we have is a crisis of values.

**Switzerland:**

There was an overall sense that Switzerland's issues are those of privilege and good-living in a wealthy country and not those of hardship in a poor struggling nation.

A related response is how do we give back to society? How do we engage in sense making and the creation of meaning within Switzerland and in the world? There is a feeling that perhaps we do not know how to share nor how to take over a more global role and perhaps this is the learning we need to take on so that we do not retreat into individualism nor fall into selfishness.

**UK:**

The disparity between rich and poor was thought about and also the sense of being on an economic precipice with punitive consequences. Something of current experience was characterised as a societal preoccupation with 'the price of everything and the value of nothing'.

**USA:**

There is greater isolation by social class, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. What is new is the large middle class is also getting poorer, carrying the tax burden for everyone.

***Hypothesis:***

As in the last Hypothesis because of the retreat to individualistic behaviour as a defence against the massive changes experienced in the past several years, members of societies have adopted a selfish attitude which is more about survival of self. The reported experiences of current dynamics in societies throughout the world are of a realization that such selfish attitudes lead to members of societies adopting positions of privilege and ignoring the needs of others. This awareness leads to an experience of guilt, shame and anger at those who abuse their position of privilege – which of course includes themselves. This emotional awareness has resulted in a greater contact with reality and a more mature approach by members of societies.

### **Analysis and Hypothesis 3. Lack of Trust in Politicians and the Beginnings of Non-Party Political Activism.**

#### ***Analysis:***

To put this theme into context, we need to try to understand why Globalisation is affecting societies throughout the world in this way. A difficulty is that there is no formal definition of Globalisation and the roots of Globalisation are far from clear. However, the following summary of the characteristics of Globalisation by various authors provides the following view: 'Globalisation looks at the whole world as nationless and borderless; goods, capital, and people have to be moving freely; the global enterprise is less place bound and less tied to the traditions of a single nation; the break with national traditions can result from geographic separation that occurs when a firm operates largely outside national boundaries. These are all principle features of Globalisation and the stated aims were for goods, capital and people to be moving freely in a nation less and borderless world' (Stapley 'Globalisation and Terrorism'. Karnac: 2006).

Whatever the origins of Globalisation may be it was most certainly outside of public awareness. At this point of the process, it seems incredible that such a massive change project should have occurred without debate and public involvement and this is now having an affect on societal dynamics. The experience of the members of many societies is that the major events occurring in their lives are not worth thinking about because they have no control or influence over these events. Allied to this experience members of societies also experience their politicians as lying, deceitful, manipulative and deliberately misleading and acting on and in their own interests while ignoring the interests of members of society: A world that may be described as 'sham democracy'. A further result is the beginnings of non-party political activism. This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports.

#### **Australia:**

There arose reports of 'new cells' being created, which valued connection and creative action, e.g. 'Get Up' groups, younger work groups, intergenerational groups, 'social justice' groups. These 'new cells' influenced how people voted in the recent national election, when people voted for specific agenda change for the future. Hope was rekindled.

#### **Bulgaria:**

Corruption - the State is an enemy. Ethics still remains out of public scope. Who is the agent that brings this topic into public attention? What makes things moral? ...An increased personal authority of participants is noticeable: - frequent and self-assertive interaction with public authorities, - personal initiatives and autonomous projects in areas of increased professional skills and knowledge which many of participants aspire for long time.

#### **Canada:**

It was noted that there was almost no mention of the weakening economy, or the deteriorating environment and little talk about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan  
New Ways of Thinking: 20 year olds are interacting with the internet in new ways that suggest changes in how they think about such things as personal identity, privacy and engagement with the public sphere. This in turn suggests new forms of activism and fresh ways of dealing with the world around us.

#### **Chile:**

Society's image is of a totalitarian, controlling one, accompanied by the perception of a force that annihilates the individual, who does nothing but follow social rules, because there is nothing else that can be done. Those attending the Listening Post also discuss how to recover protagonism and

participation in society's affairs, how to make Chileans shake off the numbness and apathy, learn how to speak up, have a voice, and fight for what matters.

**Denmark:**

The only heroes are young immigrant women who dare stand up against the government, get politically involved and state in unambiguous Danish terms that both racism and the suppression of women in all cultures are unacceptable. The presidential election in USA is different. Here there is hope in the possibility of electing either a woman or a black person.

**Finland:**

Technological systems bring specially young people all over the world together, youtube, face book and so. They are in on-line contact and they can get information very quickly. This makes it possible that radical changes can happen. People understand each other better and that gives hope for the world if this understanding is used for saving the world. Therefore it is possible to find fountains of clean water and hope.

**France:**

Sarkozy's slogan "work more to earn more" when unemployment still stands at more than 8% and the economy is slower; there are more and more laws that are increasingly difficult to apply, and are therefore applied less and less; It is becoming very difficult in these circumstances to find one's place. Only a political commitment based on the notion of citizenship could give it meaning.

**Germany:**

Because of the media, the sheer mass of data and inquiries, and the threat arising from them that any and every activity will be judged merely from the perspective of numerical validity, comparability and competitiveness the members viewed themselves as victims of powers that steer and rule over them rather than being 'in charge'

**Greece:**

The problematic relationship of citizen and state in Greece is a reoccurring theme from last year. This time the relationship between citizen and state was discussed in terms of its antagonistic quality and how the wish to have the state providing some protection and guidance is left unfulfilled. In that respect the Greek state was compared with other European ones (or with the popular assumptions of them) and found to be lacking in fairness, the provision of adequate health and education. In the words of a group member, the state was experienced as "a chain with broken links".

**Greenland:**

Thinking that these things from other cultures are positive for the individual but destructive for the society is creating an inner conflict in people and a conflict between people and between people and politicians. Politicians have lost their sense of people's needs and desires. Both hope and anxiety are kept alive as long as nothing is changed. We are waiting for the revolt.

**Holland:**

We are looking for people to take the initiative, but can not find them. The politics scatter. People are confronted with their own wishes and needs, they only want to sacrifice them if everyone else will, or if someone with power decides it is not allowed any longer. These threats of identity seem to turn against experts like doctors and teachers, but also the relationships with other service providers become less pleasant. In these contacts people seem to want to get their confidence (back), they do not want to be the lesser one

**Ireland:**

Members identified the frustration felt when decisions are made more and more remotely and when it is difficult or impossible to be listened to or heard by those making decisions about our lives. Members thought that the absence of a voice and the difficulty of expressing our thoughts and feelings about what matters leads to an exaggerated sense and expression of outrage in a setting where we are invited or allowed to express an opinion.

**Israel:**

Devaluation of, and distrust in leaders, authority figures and systems\_(i.e. decrease of Holding in systems; stupid and corrupted leaders; good old teachers as opposed to no need for teachers; inhumane doctors; mechanical-impersonal procedures; Celebes as scarecrow figures of influence).

**Portugal:**

People feel alienated from civic and social responsibility and alienated from the participation in law making. We do not now who are the individuals that write the laws and who writes the parliament acts. People tend to feel the law as something out of touch with reality and the day-to day problems and issues of common people (e.g. the labour laws, the child protection laws)

**Serbia:**

The student of philosophy pointed out: "Isn't it strange that just a week before the presidential elections in Serbia for this whole time nobody did mention politics, not with a single word!?" It was obvious for everybody, and the group started to think about the meaning of that experience. It was seen as a mirror of some social processes of denial of politics. In many countries people are losing interest for politics, when it is obvious that citizens do not have much impact onto the reality of global politics

**South Africa:**

The hope is carried by the community projects initiated and administered by corporate leadership. Although some of these projects seem to be failing because of organisations wanting to impress the government in terms of their social responsibility endeavours, many are making a difference in the quality of life of the poor and deprived masses.

**Spain:**

The political establishment lies or says averages truths, and the reality analysis is completely different depending on the political party. Rose Díez is trying to emerge in the politics after leaving the Spanish Socialist Party, but they don't leave her, nobody gives her finance or space in the mass media. This represents a part of the society that is seeking to leave and to have a different space, but they are covering it because it doesn't interest other ways; only interests the bipartisanship. In that line, neither the blank votes are analyzed neither keeps in mind themselves what represent, as neither the suicides are analyzed. There is a lack of credibility in the politicians, because its profession is "political". There is distrust, they do not count the blank votes because in the end would be "to throw stones in its own roof".

**UK:**

There was a powerful sense of confusion and uncertainty at how to take up authority. This was characterised by a pre-occupation that rules are being set out of public view and that powerful agents are not playing by them. This provoked a preoccupation about fear and control and a question about whether apparently paranoid feelings are actually based in reality. Society does not have a model for this new system of being managed. Old models (like colonialism) come back into awareness as a reminder of the deficits and the challenges.

**USA:**

It started with a member announcing that he was running for public office and his willingness to serve. Others expressed their distrust of government.

**Hypothesis 3.**

The continuing magnitude and complexity of the Globalisation process has left members of societies in a position of realizing something fundamental is happening but being unable to say precisely what. This is experienced as 'others' making decisions that are beyond their control or influence resulting in disregard for major events that are too complicated or enormous to contemplate. A result is to, rightly or wrongly; displace their negative images of things happening beyond their control on to the known decision-making authority – their politicians. At a time when there is a lack of trust in politicians who are regarded as liars and cheats who are perceived as ignoring the needs of members of societies; there is considerable anger at the loss of the good authority. However, rather than attack the leader who is also needed to save them, members of societies act in two ways: First, by displacing their anger onto professionals such as doctors and teachers and other service providers. In this way they can have their influence and control the situation: sometimes expressing their latent anger; and Second, through a growing development of activism out of the party political structure.

## **Analysis and Hypothesis 4. Broken Societies – Beneath the Surface Violence and Fear.**

### ***Analysis:***

Other than Canada who seems to be holding the hope for the world; all other National Reports refer to dynamics regarding what we shall call ‘broken societies’. In all instances the causation is the changes arising from Globalisation that have been well documented in this and previous Reports. The most commonly identified causation is matters concerning immigration mainly because this is the readily identifiable effect of Globalisation. The reports identify fears and other responses arising from the following: we are all refugees; violence beneath the surface; ruthless competition; social networks ruined; totalitarian society; lack of morality; fear of those who look different; no companionship; chaos; morality – anything goes; futility; no human interaction; broken society; a search for values; split culture; not belonging; not connecting; different but only to a certain acceptable extent; fear of violence and future; silent invasion; who is friend and foe?; imposed culture; loss of morality; loss of traditional values; connection across difference does not take place; not belonging; lack of values; and fear of violence. Most worrying is that nearly all reports explicitly or implicitly refer to fear, survival and violence that are present beneath the surface. This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

### **Australia:**

And a (continuing) theme of death and its related themes of survival and violence A preoccupation with stories of violent deaths – of a man who was stabbed in his house, of a drunk man who dies in a car accident – reveal the violence beneath the superficiality of life.

### **Bulgaria:**

Out of the role of a leisure/tourist:- the mountain and a country side house are the real alternative of the urban “city”, where un-correctness, ruthless competition and corruption reign.

### **Chile:**

Deterioration of the quality of life causes despair, since the social networks that allow for authentic human encounters, where people are valued for who they are,. The use of physical and moral violence follows the logic of politics and the powerful, who direct their conflict and contradiction towards individuals and groups which are weaker and more vulnerable in their differences.

### **Denmark:**

One source of the feelings of guilt and shame is a fear of those who look different, who think and act in ways that you yourself would never do. The announcement of the death of the grand narratives created a vacuum which has not been filled out with small, local and contextual narratives. Globalisation and the ongoing modernisation process bring people into contact with each other across cultures, and there is a felt need for narratives that can create direction, cohesion and moral in this jumble.

### **Finland:**

In this environment the individuals do not get enough the experiences of companionship and supporting

### **France:**

There is a kind of feeling that we are at the end of a civilisation (also referring to the fall of the Roman Empire) The issue of responsibility is at stake. It is as if some people think they will never be accountable to anyone for anything. “We’re no longer ashamed to flaunt unacceptable

behaviour.” There is a disconnection between action and taking responsibility. Pragmatism has become an ideology.

**Germany:**

The search for independent values and targets, and efforts to create personal space in order to fend off increasing control and conformity.

**Greece:**

In a time of change society defends against feelings of uncertainty and fear by projecting into the idea of ‘the state’ feelings of frustration (for not being led out of uncertainty) and aggression arising from the disowning of ‘bad borrowing’ and responsibility, resulting in society experiencing its links (with its institutions) broken and a growing sense of insecurity in its citizens.

**Greenland:**

Many were occupied with thoughts about cultural values from the past and in the future. The same development that has taken hundreds of years in Denmark has taken place in a very short time in Greenland and this has left people in a vacuum searching for the values of the future. Both hope and anxiety are kept alive as long as nothing is changed. We are waiting for the revolt. It was questioned, if a unified culture in Greenland is at all possible or wanted.

**Holland:**

The subject ‘connecting’ was mentioned multiple times. It is getting more difficult to keep the link between the generations intact. Relationships between different groups in society cause despair when we see that people cannot or do not wish to understand each other. The word ‘crisis’ is used multiple times: “it drives me crazy; my life is going to be bothered and I see it coming”. One participant said: “We are running into a precipice with our eyes opened. To change this situation, violence cannot be ruled out: “we might not survive”. At present time making contact means encountering “devastating” differences; differences in culture; religion, behaviour; lifestyle, time management, interests.

**Ireland:**

We are an old-fashioned people that belong to an adolescent nation expecting things to go wrong. Because of rapid, continuous and widespread change, we as society are unsure where we fit anymore. We experience this as disintegration. The fear of the unknown future was spelled out as the fear of being locked in – to limited and restricted frames, resources and spaces – or being locked out – from life and the new, with all its risk and possibility.

**Israel:**

All these can mean that we are refraining from dialogue with, and integration of, other sectors of the local society and shutting ourselves to the variable and changing environment. Postmodernism and PC do not allow to differentiate between who is good and who is bad, it's all a question of narratives, so no Father is there to save us from terror and violent threats: Disrespect to, and devaluation of The Father (the authority, the seniority) leaves us with no trusted leaders to navigate and protect us, arousing anxiety experienced as confusion and perturbations about our children's future.

**Italy:**

Members talked of several aspects of their realities that are difficult to see and to make visible. It is a situation (a sort of night) in which numbness seems to prevail (incidentally, in Italian the equivalent words of “muddy” and “numbness” sound very similar). Darkness makes difficult to understand and to choose, who is friend and who is foe?

**Portugal:**

there is a growth of rigid regulations that are characteristic of northern Europe societies and in that sense are felt as slightly alien to a Mediterranean-Latin southern European culture like the Portuguese one. People feel alienated from civic and social responsibility and alienated from the participation in law making.

**Serbia:**

The fight for real contact is seen as something somehow breaking up through all other aspects we were talking about, making also, very concrete life dilemmas. The tiredness of the nation, unorganised, lost in moral and identity confusion...Dilemmas everywhere are found understandable among others whether turning back to old value systems or searching for new ones. Many times were mentioned materialism, negativism and the loss of spiritual, moral values, love and responsibility for one self.

**South Africa:**

A woman travelled abroad on her return she was dropped from two activities in which she had been involved and this opened up a chasm for her and a precarious sense of belonging and a sense of displacement and statelessness. People seem to live in fear of the integration of diversity dimensions such as race and poverty / affluence. On the superficial level it is said that "we are all similar and have to be friends". Yet, in reality the connection across difference does not take place.

**Spain:**

There is the sensation to be in the end of an epoch, when already arrives at the disaster, not only of an economic, but also personal crisis: everybody lies, and no longer the truth differentiates itself and the reality, of the fantasies and lies. This is like "Sodom and Gomorrah". There is a lack of values, and the crisis is total, is a crisis of responsibility.

**Switzerland:**

The negative aspect is that there is a sense that "only so much" diversity can be tolerated in Switzerland - one is allowed to be different here, but only to a certain extent.

**UK:**

Dis-ease illness and infection/silent invasion. There was discussion of widespread illness/infection - 'everyone is down with the 'flu'. This was also linked to the tension of immigration and migration and on another level to the sense that there is a creeping and unacknowledged infiltration of new economic forces.

**USA:**

Fear is in the air more now because of a single terrorist destroying a city or someone driving up next to you and shooting you for no reason. As people spend more time with their PC, Blackberry and TV there is a lack of connection, little sense of fellowship leading to psychological numbing and a retreat from reality.

***Hypothesis:***

An effect of Globalisation has been to destroy all major elements of culture in societies throughout the world. Members of societies have the experience that their traditional way of doing things that resulted in social cohesion (morality, values, religion, language and institutions), are now so diverse, meaningless and at times non-existent that there is no sense of connectedness, no sense of belonging, and no community or society. There is no culture to provide them with the sought for continuity, consistency and confirmation. A result is that the attachment needs of members of

societies are not being met. This leads to an experience of disintegration, a fearful dread, and a fight for survival. In these circumstances, violence is never far from the surface.

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## **Publication of National Reports.**

It is appreciated that readers may be interested in having access to the full National Reports. These have been published on the OPUS Web Site at [www.opus.org.uk](http://www.opus.org.uk) where they can be found under **Listening Posts**.

## **Concluding Remarks.**

The unprecedented and revolutionary social change continues and there is no indication that the development of a new way of life and of new culture is (to borrow from Churchill), anywhere near the end, or even the beginning of the end, but is still in the beginning phase. There is some hope as was expressed at Hypotheses 1 & 2 where the indications are that we are gradually and in fleeting moments now becoming capable of constructive thought and of confronting the realities facing us. However, the overwhelming reaction to an analysis of the Reports is one of deep concern for the immediate future. The potentially toxic mixture of broken societies bereft of values, morality and notions of responsibility; coupled with the loss of reliable authority figures who are now seen to be liars and cheats who are not trusted and are unaware of the needs of others; is a frightening scenario. Not least, because of the beneath the surface violence that is present in members of societies and which could easily be acted out.

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