

AN OPUS SOCIAL DYNAMICS REPORT

– ‘GLOBAL DYNAMICS AT THE DAWN OF 2009’

WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS REPORT.

Founded in 1975, OPUS – An Organization for Promoting Understanding of Society - is an international think tank that is a world leader in providing a psycho-social understanding of societal dynamics in the UK and in other countries.

Every year for the past six years OPUS has conducted a series of Listening Posts around the world to gauge the feelings and the concerns of citizens across the widest spectrum possible. This year the findings are particularly disturbing, suggesting that there is now a real level of concern about the possibilities of social disorder.

We would urge you to read the summary of the report which follows below and would also encourage you to read the full Global Report which can be accessed on the OPUS website www.opus.org.uk under ‘Current Issues’; or click on the following direct link <http://www.opus.org.uk/glbldynm.htm>

OPUS INTERNATIONAL LISTENING POST PROJECT REPORT

– ‘GLOBAL DYNAMICS AT THE DAWN OF 2009’.

SUMMARY

This Report provides a warning of potentially extreme dangers as a result of the current social dynamics of societies throughout the world. This is part of a lengthy process that has been building for several years and as such is a deep seated and not easily relieved problem. In such circumstances, members of both the far left and the far right can easily influence members of societies and the young are likely to respond to societal projections by taking a lead in any violent rebellion. The importance of this Report is to ensure that the required understanding lies in an awareness of unwitting collusion whereby the Media, senior police officers, senior church leaders, and political figures, who through their actions and public statements, may confirm and increase the fears and encourage the displacement of violent rebellion, by expressing concerns about immigrants and others; even if they limit themselves to warning of dangers. The near certain reaction is that the response is likely to be vastly disproportionate to the immediate concern.

These are extremely dangerous times and great care is required to avoid or to defuse any potential situation that may act as a trigger for the expression of violent rebellion. It needs to be appreciated that acts of violence will carry with them the full weight of a society that is

desperate, angry, and unable to contain its primitive evil impulses. At the same time, citizens will be seeking to displace these unbearable feelings onto any convenient receptacle, especially those they can identify with the perceived persecutory State. These may include police, immigrants, an industrial dispute, a police arrest, a sensational or brutal crime, a perceived attack on religious belief, Jews, Muslims and those others who are frequently stereotyped.

An effect of Globalisation has been to destroy the 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 and meaningless that there is no sense of connectedness, no sense of belonging, or of community or society. This leads to an experience of disintegration, a fearful dread, and a fight for survival. The 2008 analysis showed that violence was never far from the surface. This year the experience is that violent feelings are being acted upon and the fear of further violence is a frightening prospect.

Since last year, things have evolved and members of societies are now mainly concerned with survival. In most instances, because of the collapse of society and culture and the loss of societal and individual identity, this means individual survival. The experience seems to be that of individuals giving up on the political, religious and social leaders and institutions that previously met their dependency needs and turning their own persecutory anxieties onto the State. Thus the essential difference between this year and last year is that members of society now experience themselves as victims of cruel, uncaring and persecutory States and that they are victims of psychological and structural violence imposed on them by the State.

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GLOBAL DYNAMICS AT THE DAWN OF 2009

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Abstract.

On or about 7th January 2009, 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 2009, were held in twenty six different countries around the world (Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy (two Reports), Peru, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, South Africa (two Reports), Spain, Sweden, 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:

1. Identify common themes arising within the twenty eight Reports;
2. Explore relationships between themes and to reduce these down to major or dominant themes;
3. Collate supporting information from the Reports for analysis of these themes; and
4. 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.

As in previous years 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 is increasing in intensity. 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.

When we analyse the affect of Globalisation at this time we can see that something profound is happening and that the dynamic processes are of such intensity and frequency that the consistency, continuity and confirmation normally part of our societal culture is fragmented and non-existent. Life as we knew it no longer exists we are living in a period of history that is experiencing 'death of a way of life'. This is a world that makes little sense to members of societies and one which is experienced as being out of control. Members of societies experience fear, rage, impotence, vulnerability and despair; they experience a lack of containment, social disintegration, uncertainty and insecurity; and this even extends to fears for personal safety and annihilation, and threats to and loss of identity.

This year, it would we appear that the death of the old and development of a new way of life has reached a sort of ‘breaking point’ a critical point in the above process where it is more helpful to see the current situation in the light of past experiences and as part of a continuing process. The main finding of the 2004 International Project was that members of societies were experiencing ‘death of a way of life’. This was not so much in the nature of a sudden death such as a heart attack but a sort of creeping death like a cancer spreading through a body. Save, of course, that this has been a psychological death, of ‘a way of life’. Since then, there has been a progressive spreading and deepening of this death through various facets of our societies. These include the considerable technological changes brought about mainly by the development of the world wide web, but also through much more important changes that include religious and moral, social which includes immigration and the movement of people’s across national boundaries; political; and philosophical; and recently, through the financial crisis, an economic death which should also be seen as part of the continuing process.

At the heart of this experience is the destruction or fragmentation over the past decade or more of societal cultures. Never before has the phrase ‘when our world begins to crumble we begin to crumble’ been more meaningful. A result is that cultures are no longer available to provide the consistency, continuity and confirmation so necessary to our individual and group identities and death of a way of life is now regarded as being at the end: an apocalyptic or doomsday experience. The steady build up first reported in 2004 has now reached breaking point. The experience of their external world is that, with the exception of a few basic ‘objects’ such as the family, the multitude of objects that members of societies have used for their positive and negative projections are no longer available to them. Individuals and institutions that were essential objects for providing containment for members of societies are no longer regarded as being in existence for this purpose. This is a world experienced as being in total collapse, a death of the world as we know it and an experience that provokes apocalyptic and annihilatory feelings. This experience is further developed below in the first Analysis and Hypothesis – ‘Psychological and Structural Violence’.

Running parallel with this experience has been the processes of responses developed by members of societies. The ways that members of societies have responded may be helpfully categorised under two main headings: by dependency and violent rebellion. Since we first reported in 2004, dependency has been shown in several different ways: Displacing dependency onto political and religious leaders; A flight into an independent approach; Regression to primary identities; Denial and flight into own private world – resulting in individualistic attitude which dominates our society; The projection of hope and fear into younger generation; a search for the magical; and a phantasy that a Messiah will rescue them. Violent rebellion is also shown in several different ways: Displacement of fear and rage projected into identifiable groups such as immigrants, asylum seekers and Muslims, who become the bad object who are then demonized; Demonisation of bombers leading to stereotyping and scapegoating of Muslims; Projection of rage and hurt into marginalized groups that we then perceive as barbarians; Splitting and locating evil and hatred in the powerful (usually USA). A society that is beyond comprehension and is highly disturbing at both a social and psychological level that at times leaves members of society witless.

Over the past six years we have seen the gradual increase from massive dependency towards a greater expression of violent rebellion. The responses to the extreme psychological and

structural violence have been: extreme dependency in searching for a Messiah to rescue members of society from their anxieties; near total impotence whereby members of societies shut down and retreat into the self; a focus on the past and fear of the future; a desire for popular rebellion; and acting out of violent rebellion. In 2008 there was a distinct warning that violence was present beneath the surface in societies throughout the world and that there was a danger that this could be acted out. This year that warning becomes more important as violent rebellion has been acted upon in several societies. This experience is further developed below in a second Analysis and Hypothesis – ‘Dependency and Violent Rebellion’.

A further continuing theme that has been omni-present in reports since 2004 has been the relationship of societies towards young people. Members of societies have sought to mobilize youth in every year since 2004 either in the capacity of scapegoats or as saviours. At this time the balance is heavily tilted in the use of young people as saviours coupled with fears for the future. The significance of this activity and a major concern is that young people act on these projections and lead the violent rebellion. There are now several examples in societies across the world where this has been or is the case. This experience is further developed below in a third Analysis and Hypothesis – ‘Fear of the Future: Youth as Saviours’.

Linking to this theme is that of a desperate need to retain some vestige of hope in a doom laden and unbearable world. The experience of members of societies at this time is one of hope related to fear. It seems clear that there is a desperate human need to experience any sort of situation as providing hope. Even to the extent of seeing hope even in the very act of destruction: crisis as ruin – crisis as re-birth. At this time, the exceptional presence of Barack Obama provides a major catalyst for such hope. In some instances this is blind faith, an illusion or a phantasy. And in all cases it is qualified by a massive doubt that hope will not be fulfilled. This experience is further developed below in a fourth, last, Analysis and Hypothesis – ‘Hope and Fear’.

Analysis and Hypothesis I: Psychological and Structural Violence.

Analysis:

At this time, the overwhelming experience of members of societies throughout the world is one of being victims of psychological and structural violence imposed on them or resulting from the activities or omissions of those responsible for the management, leadership and administration of political, religious, economic and social institutions. A selection of the experiences from the National Reports shows just how grim the current situation is for members of societies around the world. These experiences include a collapse of the world system, a spinning out of control and doom and foreboding; They feel there is no hope and that there is a loss of meaning; They feel overwhelmed, that their culture is destroyed and that they are helpless, hopeless and impotent; It is chaotic, mad and touching on craziness; There is grief, anger and a fear of primitive uncontrollable evil forces; A loss of identity, loss of religion and chaos; They suffer a lack of leadership, loss of institutional credibility and dependency needs are not met; Society is experienced as inhumane, dehumanized and is seen as a cruel environment; A loss of belonging, a broken system and severe persecutory anxiety; A fear of violence, structural violence and violent riots. After such a long period when they have been in a state where they are unable to determine reality - a state of near permanent disintegration - members of societies experience impotence and persecutory anxieties that the state is cruel; and is imposing

psychological and structural violence on them. This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

Australia:

The end of the world as we know it is nigh. Underlying feelings amongst participants that the world is spinning out of control. There was expressed a sense (un-defined) of foreboding and doom, much of it linked to the financial crisis and the uncertainties it has brought. Participants expressed awareness of the unrealistic hope held in politicians and public leaders – especially the individual leader (such as a Prime Minister or President) – and also the dark side of this ‘the personality cult is a fascist orientation’.

Bulgaria:

Feelings of helplessness, grief, anger, and indignation dominate. People strive to be good citizens. The rule of law is regularly violated, as if the mere possibility to abide by the laws is being denied. There is a problem with the narrowed personal, civil and sometimes - physical - space. There is a lack of agreement around what is good and bad, and a lack of universal (shared) values. The privileges, that abolish rules are still reigning.

To what extent can we achieve predictability in our relationships and at the same time - to be spontaneous?

Canada:

There is an ever increasing capacity to create unnecessary suffering in the world through advanced weapons systems. The aerial bombardment of Gaza followed by the invasion by Israeli troops was seen as a good example of this and was discussed at some length. There was agreement about the horrific situation in Gaza, and the extreme nature of Israel’s military actions. There was also disagreement about the growing capacity to do harm to others – some argued that in the history of the world there had always been terrifying abilities to do unnecessary harm to others. This event was no great exception.

Chile:

We feel overwhelmed by Chilean society's dehumanization that expresses itself in the deterioration of the quality of life in the citizens. In the deepest thoughts there is the belief that societies nest primitive and uncontrollable evil forces that, in case of being unleashed, do not measure the damage they can provoke. Among Chilean citizens there is a huge unease related to the dissatisfaction of needs and the lack of leaders that bring order, clarity, security and protection from a globalized chaotic and nihilistic world. When dependence is not being fulfilled it activates severe persecutory anxieties among people which lead to the unconscious use of primitive psychic mechanisms that extremely distort perceptions, thoughts and behavior against the overwhelming reality of Chile nowadays

Denmark:

There seem to be many signs of the displacement of control. Things and threats one would wish to control (e.g. climate changes, financial markets, civil wars, terror, love, weight) are not really possible to control. Instead what is possible to control is controlled: disability pensioners, immigrants, the unemployed, working processes etc. In organisations it is becoming more and more difficult to solve the problems connected with the various tasks, and control systems and quality measurements displace the focus from the meaning of work to rather meaningless details.

Faroe Islands:

There is suspense in society due to the dissatisfaction with the present set-up and hope for change. Neither the discontent nor the hope has yet taken shape. People are awaiting and treading water. But something new is in the making.

Finland:

What if everything collapses. What does it mean to me? I am worried about the system. What happens if it collapses? Citizens' experiences the disappearance of meaning. A paradox in working life, for example: Opportunities for fulfilling and developing oneself have increased, but so have work-related fatigue and stress, too. The meaningfulness of work has disappeared. Life has become surprising and frightening, as it has been realised that the decisions and choices that we make can have serious consequences that shake the balance of nature and people's lives.

France:

While hypermodernity has always been a subject of complaint for many people (excess is becoming hard to bear), today it seems to be a very disorientating, even anxiety-inducing, factor. They are worried about the growing absence of the symbolic and the increasingly violent invasion of the real (the reign of pragmatism).

They say they wish this society would disappear, but do not see what could replace it.

Many participants admit that they no longer understand the events of the world around them. The end of a civilisation/In-depth transformation of society. Fraying of the social fabric confronted by the crisis, rise in individualism and rise in the feeling of loneliness. Feeling of working too much, stress, "I feel on the edge of burnout, like many in my entourage", mentioned by almost all participants. The institutions which no longer play their role, the individual left to cope on his own.

Germany:

The group subsequently focussed on the pervasive feeling of being overtaxed by excessive demands, helplessness and sheer emotions and the loss of trust in the face of increasing complexity and diminishing transparency of technological development. The economic crisis has revealed that this very same complexity can be abused in the interest of power retention, control, deception and thus thwarting change in both economic and political areas.

Greece:

The recent social demonstrations throughout Greece contributed significantly to the prominence of the theme of police and its role in Greek society. The attention soon turned to the state as a whole as the group suggested that the police is the "arm" while the state is the "brain". And that prior to physical violence, as in this case exercised by the police, the state has been experienced as psychologically violent to its citizens (through lack of public services, inadequate health system, economic corruption, etc). In that sense the demonstrations against the state/police were examined as a reaction to a long history of psychological and physical violence that has been experienced as coming from the outside ("the state"), which was acted out by the markedly violent but otherwise mindless demonstrators with no clear demands in mind.

Holland:

Society has gradually started to function in accordance with western economic principles. The values and norms created by these principles are not sufficiently felt to be humane. When

people cannot create and live by their own values and norms, cynicism, alienation and apathy arise next to feelings of paranoia and/or suspicions of manipulation.

Hungary:

There was a general feeling of loosing faith in democratic institutions, and other institutions (workplace, banks, pensions, health system etc.) as well. Because of the apparent crisis of the institutions of capitalism (especially the crisis of a system, the function of which supposed to be managing financial risk or preserving the value of people's savings (handling risk and uncertainty) members of a loosely established system (economically in a peripheral position) experience extreme levels of anxiety, letting them to turn away from macro systems and focus on their immediate social/professional relations (small worlds).

India:

Gloomy environment; Fear of violence; Acceptance of pressure of violence; Helpless; Confusion.

Ireland:

There was comment about the remoteness and grandiosity of Irish politicians and public service. Politicians are taking the high moral ground in relation to banking and bankers. We as citizens have not been angry and are not angry enough about the abuses in financial and banking settings and about revelations of profligate personal spending by public and semi-state officials. Members reported resolving not to listen to the news anymore, because it reinforces a sense of impotence. A member questioned how we can get enough confidence to listen to each other now. There was an exchange about preparing for unemployment in the same way that you would prepare for a nuclear attack.

Israel:

War was farther associated with the opportunity to regain trust in the leadership after long period of disappointments; war as a reset – when all is collapsing and becomes chaotic the war contains a fantasy of gaining new (or old) order. All three monotheistic religions believe in Gog & Magog war at doomsday. Every one of them believes itself to be the chosen one after Doomsday. It is a reversed and dangerous course of development.

Grand paradigms, like the free global market in economy and a new Middle-East in politics are collapsing, adding confusion and devastation. The economic crisis which began in the US and became global might be just a minor consequence of the fallacy of regulation. The increasing fear of the war is the fear of confronting the shadow within us all: finding that the Devil and God are both living inside Man.

Italy:

Members talked of how difficult it is to see a collective and positive way out of the current crisis. Such feeling of hopelessness is coupled with a feeling of helplessness. It seems as there are no external and/or internal sources capable of restoring a satisfactory degree of hope. Nobody (and nothing inside us) seems capable of restoring hope Blindness is at the same time turning our head away from the growing and difficult problems of our societies and inability to imagine the future. It represents our inability and impotence to deal with the crisis. The evidence is the trend to look for a place where to retreat in before any further development could reach and affect us.

Peru:

Globalization was assumed to be the main subject. It contained various ways to question identity, which we are and what we represent now for the world. We look to the outside with no self esteem, we forget our identity. We are running after a monster that it is not even working. The financial model is crashing and we continue looking to it as an example. Moral crisis is touching all social classes.

There is a lack of clarity between what is right or wrong. Members admit to never have the experience of a "good government". Many references are made to the way Peru was exploited by Spaniards, and how entering into a globalised economy has open different doors to Foreigners that end up leaving the country in non favourable conditions. A pattern of submission to corrupt authorities seem to be associate as a consequence of the way conquered was exercise. Peruvian industry is vanishing in the context of the open economy.

Poland:

Some participants raised the theme of religion and spirituality. One person expressed his growing disappointment with a growing gap between real-life experience and teachings of the Catholic Church. We experience rapid shifts in/of our environment, borders between "known" and "unknown" are being diluted, we are bombarded by too many various stimuli. All this evokes a fear of a contact with the "unknown", an increasing confusion, and desperate attempts to (re)define what is and what is not "normal".

As a result of never ending creation of new groups there are still more and more groups that we do not belong to: more borders, more divisions, and more others. Those various types of otherness lead to increased fear and anxieties.

Portugal:

Insecurity caused by social exclusion. Global economic crisis and difficulties. National identity and a discussion about how we affirm ourselves. Legitimacy of social institutions/crisis of institutional credibility. Inter-cultural diversity and homogenization/Globalization. Invisibility and unawareness of some social realities. Splitting between institutional problems and new codes of communication. Another participant refers to the general sense of insecurity present in Portuguese society. Children hit professors in schools nowadays. The middle class has a sense of wanting to be safe in secure condos, kept away from this society. The participants are worried with the global economic crisis and its consequences. Some referred a concern regarding China and the fact that rising economies are growing due to their huge internal markets.

Serbia:

Associations about homeless people: fear from them, prejudices, projection of some general discontents and rage into people, who are different in a way and thoughts that these thread might not be just about minorities "Maybe we are talking about us all, that in a way we all feel homeless and marginalized. We are angry towards the helpless, reject them, and if we were equal, an anxiety might overwhelm us, that they could take us into the abyss with them. The roots of the overwhelming social negativity are many, but most of all the consequences of war and other social destructions perpetuating them further through various psycho-social layers, consciously and unconsciously, destroying positive relationships and faith into any aspect of good-self image. Stuckness into these positions is especially found to be the mechanism of perversion of good into bad even without any real cause.

South Africa:

A way to understand what is happening is the changing consciousness regarding the church and religion. Christianity is ceasing to function as a defensive container against moral dilemmas and complexities as it did in the past. The vacuum which is left by the changing consciousness results in some of the chaos being experienced.

Over time, where an archaic status quo is maintained, people will either act out in anger or feel empty and then introspect, in both instances eventually expelling the leader.

Society is overwhelmed by complexity, chaos, change, interconnectedness, volatile relationships, disappointment and uncertainty, leading to an extreme negative world view ('where we only expect the worst'). The past is idealised ('when we knew what was going on and what was expected'), the present is not enjoyed (it is filled with constant and extreme hard work / labour without rest or fun) and the future is seen as a hole of uncertainty filled with threat ('doom and gloom').

Spain

Because of globalization in the system, the members of the society are breaking up with their cultural identity to be all the same and have the same things, with the result of the decline of this system, which takes us to look for another balance, and it generates crisis.

There is a difficulty to manage the change, there aren't leaders, and the re-education hasn't started. It is difficult to tolerate the discrepancy or difference because globalization and democracy are confused with being all the same. Because a tendency of the society to external attribution to all the problems, the members of the society are dependent, comfortable, insensitive and interested, with the result that nobody takes the responsibility of nothing, contrary to this, people used to ask responsibilities to others, expecting someone save them.

Sweden:

It is as if one does not want to think that it is as bad as it looks. The complexity of globalization, international cooperation and contradictions in the world is unbelievable. It is stated that the financial crisis has created endless problems for many, but "the phenomena we experience are so overwhelming that you do not know where to turn or what to do. It shows how fragile everything is, and you tend to look after your own family and hope that they can manage". "It makes you feel small and hopeless and you don't trust the way large groups of people make decisions". The word violence is only used in connection with situations where you want to harm others through abuse. Structural violence is mainly discussed in relation to small groups of people.

Switzerland:

A tension was held between an underlying feeling of insecurity, manifested by attacks on family members, burglaries, health concerns and the difficulty of seeking employment and of finding a secure income being felt by several members & their families and on the other hand a positive view of Switzerland as a little Paradise.

UK:

The underlying experience of members of society is the interrelated fears of death and violence and of not being able to distinguish between reality and fantasy. We can perhaps understand this fear and uncertainty in the context of globalisation having destroyed societal culture. In the absence of a societal culture members of society no longer have a framework that they can rely upon for their consistency, continuity and confirmation. When our world begins to crumble we

also begin to crumble: members of society have no means to confirm their individual or group identities.

USA:

Barack Obama's election and impending inauguration have filled us with an enormous amount of hope. At the same time, we are aware that many of our systems are broken: health care, the economy, education, the climate—"it's like a scenic train wreck." This crisis has been a long time in coming, yet we have kept ourselves from seeing the red flags. We can no longer deny the system is broken. There was some hope that we are no longer in denial, and we can begin to correct what is wrong. As one participant put it, "here we are, in the midst of the worst of times that I've seen in my life—and yet I have a sense of abiding hope or possibility. At the same time, I can't run as far or as fast or think as straight."

Hypothesis: 1

Having lived for years in a state of increasing uncertainty, unmet dependency, loss of individual and societal identity and culture the current experience of members of societies is that they are now at a sort of breaking point. This is experienced as a point where the old way of life has seemingly come to an end. They have reached a crucial point where the known world is experienced as gone for ever. The experience of their external world is that, with the exception of a few basic 'objects' such as the family, the multitude of objects that members of societies have used for their positive and negative projections are no longer available to them. Individuals and institutions (social, political, and religious), that were essential objects for providing containment for members of societies are no longer regarded as being in existence for this purpose. This leaves members of societies with the option of living in a near continual and painful state of mourning; and yielding to the apathy, cynicism and indifference by a retreat into the self and withdrawal from society; or to violent rebellion. The resulting state of relatedness leads to the phantasy that they are victims of psychological or structural violence imposed on them by 'the State'; 'Society'; 'Government' or simply 'they'. The relatedness of members of society consists of unbearable feelings that result in a phantasy of the State being violent and uncaring for its members. A 'State' that has led them to the point of collapse; as spinning out of control; and to a doomsday scenario whereby, individual survival is the overriding concern.

Analysis and Hypothesis 2: Responses – Dependency and Violent Rebellion.

Analysis:

Living with the experience of impotence and persecutory anxieties that the state is cruel and imposing psychological and structural violence on them, members of societies respond in various ways. The following is a selection of the responses from the National Reports: Members of societies seek for a Messiah who will deliver them from their extreme anxieties; they retreat into the self and cut themselves off from a society in an act of denial; they seek to displace their anger by blaming and scapegoating others; they are at their limits of what is bearable and experience an incapacity to think; there is pessimism, cynicism and indifference; they are blinkered, unable to act and suffer paralysis; they seek a return to the past as an avoidance and denial of the unbearable present; there is a fear of wars; people shut down and protect themselves; they desire popular rebellion and in some instances act on these desires. Finding their dependency needs unmet, members of societies retreat into the self and withdraw

from society. From this position individual survival becomes the principle concern. However, for some, this position may become unbearable and it is then dealt with by a desire for or an acting out of popular violent rebellion. This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

Australia:

Because of real concerns about the future (economic and environmental) over which individuals feel they have no control, members of society feel helpless, a foreboding of doom and invest their hope in a leader of another country (USA), resulting in a projection of potency onto another individual and a phantasy of a new Messiah who will save us from our overwhelming anxieties about the unknown future. Survival has become personal; people are shutting down and protecting themselves. 'Being in the city and feeling blindness amongst people who are not connecting beyond themselves.

There seems to be an avoidance of personal responsibilities, accountability is displaced onto someone else.

Bulgaria:

We live in but we also co-create a relatively unfriendly social environment.

The dominant experience is similar to a situation of disappointment from the authority.

At the same time we are sadistic (envious and destructive) towards the small community and towards many of our peers.

Canada:

The dichotomy between agency and victimhood was an especially loaded underlying issue. The fear of becoming impotent victims of global and other external forces like the rise of Anti-Semitism is accompanied by the further fear that our capacity for action, like the Israelis' might only result in greater damage and loss.

Chile:

The incapability of thinking makes difficult to understand the gloomiest and darkest sides of society, which in turn prevents people to understand who the enemies to combat are. Worst aspects of society contaminate with remarkable effectiveness people's behavior and spread the germs that incite them to act fiendishly. Individuals have a tendency to look for and find scapegoats to release in them all the responsibilities for the sorrows affecting them. They fall into sophisticated fantasies that create possible reasons to explain the impotence they go through in their personal life that prevent them from taking care of themselves, of what is going on in the society and to assume an active and smart position towards solving problems and challenges. Paranoid-schizoid mental state, dominating people, generates severe persecutory feelings that are projected in external objects, which individuals tend to attribute such a huge controlling capacity that it justifies inactiveness and impotence.

Denmark:

Several people complained that there was more and more control from the state. A politician explained that control systems were necessary when hierarchies are being torn down.. But no one controlled the speculators who are more or less guilty of the financial crisis. The speculators could, however, also be seen as representatives of general greed incarnated in a popular movement. We have all to some extent been participating in bloating the economy – via pension funds, new groups of stock investors and our general cravings for new kitchens,

bathrooms etc. Now feelings of guilt come to the surface and with it the wish for forsaking material goods in favour of fellowship and human warmth.

Faroe Islands:

Fear gains a foothold partly as psychosomatic symptoms: increased sickleave, stress etc., and partly as increased cultural activities: the men play with new high-tech rescue boats, people go to the theatre and to concerts as never before. The New Year fireworks beat all records, and everybody indulges in FaceBook.

Finland:

Mixed feelings of guiltiness, anxiety, helplessness and insecurity seem to have increased dramatically (cf. depression and marginalisation), the increased freedom of the individual has increased the burden of responsibility experienced by him. He has to make choices alone, on his own. He also has to face consequences alone. The choices that he makes also affect others, even those living on the other side of the globe (e.g. consuming energy). The mixture of guiltiness and helplessness makes you cynical and at the same time is scary, because you can suspect that somebody else can take the same stand to your needs, too. He has to face the “evil” in himself concretely. A negative vicious circle reinforces itself and the feeling of hopelessness.

France:

The loss of meaning concerning the society in which we find ourselves seems to have reached the limits of what is bearable. There is also a kind of failure of the imagination. If there is still a little desire, it is having great difficulty in finding its objects of investment.

It is as if society was entering a process of mourning for its previous objects of investment (denial, disconnection of impulses, guilt, violence, depression, fear/rejection of the future, acceptance and recovery), and as if the members of that society were at different stages of this process.

Germany:

The general mood in the group was marked with concern, with desire to comprehend as precondition of one’s own behaviour, the need to realize, when one’s vision is impaired like a horse wearing blinkers, and the necessity to endure the vagaries of change processes.

Greece:

Prior to physical violence, as in this case exercised by the police, the state has been experienced as psychologically violent to its citizens (through lack of public services, inadequate health system, economic corruption, etc). In that sense the demonstrations against the state/police were examined as a reaction to a long history of psychological and physical violence that has been experienced as coming from the outside (“the state”), which was acted out by the markedly violent but otherwise mindless demonstrators (with no clear demands in mind). Thus, in hindsight, the latter phenomenon served as to reinforce state-expressed violence and block any opportunity for meaningful social change.

Holland:

Experiencing a limited influence as citizens in observing and establishing more humane values and norms in society, leads to pessimism, cynicism, dependency and distancing oneself from that same society.

Hungary:

There are different reactions to uncertainty: some narrowly search for ways of defining certainties, human interactions become unified, schematized – though previous splitting in political terms seems to be less prevailing. Small societies, families, individuals wish to focus on their internal worlds – and exclude everything, what might disturb it.

A contrasting force is the fear from Reality (hitting in unexpectedly), and a sense of guilt for not taking responsibility by ignoring facts or not keeping track of what is happening in the outer world, even if people feel they do not have any influence on it.

Ireland:

And what's going on in Gaza tonight – the focus on our much smaller concerns takes my mind off my impotence. So much pressure on Obama and a concern that one analysis is that war is good for the economy. Trying to make sense of the macro because of discomfort in the micro.

Israel:

Following crisis and collapse in grand paradigms which had been considered unshakeable until recently, people losing their trust and feelings of safety and regressing to a combative paranoid position. There is fear of local wars and of more war, as a reset – last resource to be grounded in actual reality, regain the depressive position and with it the power to freely fantasize and reflect.

Italy:

“I feel we all are tired and wear out. I am waiting for someone to save us but I have no trust in any government. We are facing the abyss because nobody is using the theories”. “I have difficulties in focusing on the present, keep thinking of the past”. The group coalesced around the expression “umore patibolare” (a gallows-like mood) to describe mood disorders in which depression and a maniacal response to that depression live side by side: a lack of trust and depressive expectation on the one hand and, an excessive and unjustified euphoria on the other.

Peru:

Our depressive position is a way to reinforce the status quo and not be confronted with ones accountability and the power of interconnectedness. The desire to receive an external treatment as the metaphor of “Prozac for the population” needs to be challenged for the potential work in understanding the healing resources from within.

Members of society are struggling to define their identity as a country that has politically, economically and physical replicate the conquest and discriminate the local communities for more than 500 years. There is the need to rediscover the Peruvian identity paying attention to its inner dynamics in order to construct social systems that can offer better opportunities to the country as a whole and promote transformation instead of revolution.

Poland:

In this context, a natural seems to be striving to regain safety by encircling oneself with something "known", by reducing the amount of stimuli and by creation of a more stable system of traditional values. Chaos evokes in us a feeling of fear of "otherness". Since this fear is contradictory to a social norm promoting tolerance, we begin to feel guilty. This fear is difficult to contain and we express it in a form of "bubbles", "blasts" that carry guilt-creating topics. This way various foundations and charity organizations form which - in the name of the whole society - contact this topics and people that evoke our unease.

Portugal:

The general feeling that the world is a global village is amplified by the media. This increases the sense of insecurity and fear in individuals, when confronted with difference. This difference is present at various levels, from social background to different language codes, to different societal roles and different generations.

Serbia:

The group searched for reasons for this: feelings of helplessness, dark malignant envy, connected to many complex processes. This is found to be a syndrome escalating in the last fifteen years as a consequence of war and other degradations of institutions and society, then over the lack of trust between people and so on the chain of dark forces goes on. The values could not make roots, as through the centuries of various wars and revolutions the elite was damaged. But it is the first time in the Serbian history, that it happened, that the national honor has been really humiliated. We feel rejected from the Balkans and from Europe, unfortunately from ourselves, as well, being partly an acting in of these projections. In that way the enthusiasm, which should be the moving force for transformation and would fight with those various dark forces, has been killed. We have fallen into cultural darkness and identity confusion. The lack of a good self-image and of self-esteem and loosing faith, that anything may have positive impact.

South Africa:

Anxiety and stress cause depression and negativity in almost all spheres of life as if the macro economic and political depression is being absorbed in social and interpersonal relationships. The negative is introjected and the positive is projected onto *the other*, keeping the identity split.

Spain:

What we are living as citizens is claiming for popular rebellion, but the reality is that we are swallowing everything the system is giving to us. May be is because during the day there is no time to rebel ourselves against. However many people wants their life be controlled by others, because there is no sensation that a majority could be worried for changing the climatic change or other situations like that... in many aspects there is no perception of crisis, because there is many people that doesn't mind about what is happening now.

Sweden:

The forms for political activity are experienced as foreign. It is not reasonable to be a street activist and one does not want to work with the conventional forms for politics, with meetings, representation and experience the increasing distance between politicians and voters. People feel small and insignificant and without any hope of contributing to any change. Politics is increasingly seen as an area for experts and marketing people or becomes a temporary discussion about a current issue. Underneath this there might be an experience of being alone and of privatization of many societal issues.

Switzerland:

Because people are in Paradise, they might then start to believe that they merit their position of privilege. This can lead to members of society to unconsciously conspire not to talk about certain issues as a way of ignoring things they do not want to face. Because of this, it is easier to project problems onto international issues and foreigners, who can then carry many of the

more difficult feelings we may have about insecurity and fragility. The other consequence might be that there is less “deep” connection in communities as people feel unable to talk to their real feelings or problems and thus the Privileged society may also be a veneer over people’s feelings of loss about a more intimate connection.

UK:

A result is that members of society have difficulty in distinguishing between reality and fantasy. This is experienced as helplessness and a state of psychological incompetence. They are left with concerns for the future well being of society.

The overlying experience of members of society is that we are at, or approaching, a sort of ‘tipping point’; a point where things cannot get worse and that there is hope of new beginnings. It is as if this period in our history which has been evidenced by ‘death of a way of life’ has reached a point where we can begin to consider the development of a new way of life and a new culture. On the one hand, members of society are hopeful that this is an end to an old way of life and time for new beginnings. On the other hand, they are fearful as to where it will all end up. This raises extreme anxieties and fears for survival. Members of society are left feeling overwhelmed and fearful that either route might result in annihilation.

USA:

We share an illusion—or is it a delusion?—that we are all together and will be led by a brilliant leader. In crisis, we tend to pull together, and there is more of a connection with others. Perhaps it is easier to fantasize about how great things will be under President Obama, rather than face how awful things really are. Is this a grand denial?

Hypothesis:

Because of experiences of disintegration, impotence and persecutory anxiety that leads to isolationism and withdrawal from society; dependency in the form of massive denial of reality; and unmet dependency that increases the persecutory anxieties; members of societies experience themselves as victims of psychological and structural State violence. They either react by a retreat into the self and individual survival; or react with thoughts of violent rebellion that are at times enacted. The trigger for these violent activities is varied but not really significant. It may involve a shooting by police, immigrants seemingly taking local jobs, or whatever but this is simply a displacement. The true locus for these activities lies in a deep-seated and long standing experience that members of societies find unbearable. However, it is difficult to be angry and focus aggressive violence on an unbearable experience that is complex and multi-causal. This is when real time events can initiate forms of relatedness whereby the killing by police of a young man is phantasised as part of the cruel attack on members of society by the State; or when it is phantasised that immigrants are a part of the cruel attack on members of society by the State. When members of societies adopt such relatedness police, immigrants and others can act as ready vehicles for displacement.

Analysis and Hypothesis 3: Concerns for Future and Young as Saviours,

Analysis:

Given the current societal dynamics, it is hardly surprising that members of societies should experience concerns for the future. And, given the extreme nature of the anxieties felt at this time, it is hardly surprising that members of societies should seek some sort of saviour. This has

been part of the trend over the past six years and a further trend has concerned members of societies having sought to mobilize youth, either in the capacity of scapegoats, or as saviours. At this time the balance is heavily tilted in the use of young people as saviours coupled with fears for the future. At both conscious and unconscious levels the young are identified with the future and not seen as part of the old way of life that is now ended. The older generations faced with an ability to make sense of their environment project their hopes and concerns onto the young generation who they anticipate will save them from this unbearable situation. This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

Australia:

There are also hopes and fears placed on the younger generation, especially those in their 20s. Participants spoke of the place of values and social responsibility in this generation's world. They are doing things differently from the 'baby boomer' generation, who are seen to have left a legacy of 'there's nothing left for the younger generation'; 'post-war baby boomers are "exiting" and look what they have left us?!' The optimism seen in this generation – who are perceived to have had freedom to change jobs and travel at will – will be tested by financial crises. 'Change has hit the Gen Y generation.' It is feared that 'they may become a disappointed generation, who may not be able to travel as intended, and will lose their jobs'.

Bulgaria:

During a conversation with his senior officer (an older than him woman in her fifties) she later tries to "reassure" and "encourage" him with: "Things will start to improve after you – the junior generation - take the power. Parents usually sent their children abroad with the message that "here" the situation is helpless and un-resolvable thus denying any responsibility for the current social environment and inflicting shame and guilt within many of the emigrants. As a consequence these separations are often loaded with guilt and unresolved anger.

Canada:

Because of the tension experienced in the opposing forces of hope and fear, destruction and redemption, members of society are seeking connections to what feels safe (the family, ideologies, personal protection), resulting in a retreat to individual survival responses. Youth and blacks became politically involved in the movement for Obama as was evident even a year ago

Faroe Islands:

It is very important that the young people going abroad for education, work or to see the world return to the islands. But how do the islands, the society, become attractive enough to attract the young ones to settle?

Finland:

Traumas pass from one generation to another. The things that happened in Jokela and Kauhajoki raised the question of caring about others. The ill-being of young people makes me think, Kauhajoki and Jokela. We want to find quick solutions to relieving people's ill-being. Adults have lost their sense of responsibility.

France:

The young generation / older generation what space does the "older generation" leave for the young generation? "Some of them are clinging on".

Germany:

Public claims on the importance of the family, yet paralleled by an increasing rate of children living below the poverty line.

Greece:

A point of common agreement was that while there had been widespread demonstrations all over the country, there had not been common demands expressed by the demonstrators, nor had there been a common social movement that emerged from these riots – rather the common denominator was anger (against the death of a child, social injustice, economic downturn, corruption in government, amongst others).

The shortfall of ‘paideia’ in Greek society was then thought about in connection to family and school – both of which were until recently seen as the central providers of such mental and spiritual cultivation to citizens – but are now felt as absent.

Holland:

The participants talk about a lack of contact with their children to discuss matters about which they hold a different opinion and/or moments where they act differently. They observe among their children an ignorance regarding money, the future, their career perspective and consumption. They lack security in their contacts with others.

They are ambivalent towards the possibilities for younger generations. The group aged 28-35 has been burdened with considerable responsibilities in companies whereas the group following the baby boomers hardly holds any positions in management boards. Those that are on boards are mainly in it for the money.

Hungary:

Ambiguous feelings were expressed about keeping younger generations away from media, vs. letting them confront reality and teach them how to deal with it. There was a general feeling of losing faith in democratic institutions, and other institutions (workplace, banks, pensions, health system etc.) as well. Especially younger generations suffer from losing clear value orientations.

Ireland:

Members identified a range of ways in which anxiety about the future was expressed during the evening. In the face of confusing, disturbing and unprecedented developments, we formulate meaning and multiple meanings to reassure ourselves. Even our anxieties are confused: we experience shock that our certainties (money, security, property, shares, endless economic growth) were wrong, but at the same time feel satisfied that we were right all along – our own intuitions were right. The dog that didn't bark. And what's going on in Gaza tonight – the focus on our much smaller concerns takes my mind off my impotence.

Italy:

Despite the desire to look at the Crisis with hope, society is experiencing a paralysis that stems from the different generations not fulfilling their respective roles. The older generation doesn't defend tradition and the young don't try to subvert it. In fact, the roles have been reversed. The older generation fulfill the role of their younger counterpart, either praising, admiring, or imitating them. Conversely, the young assume an attitude of benevolence and insincerity, patronising their elders and criticising the inherited hopes and illusions from which they (the

elder generation) will never be free. This makes for an insufficient dynamic between the generations and creates a paralysis in society in a time where what we need is positive action.

Peru:

There are non-examples to be following for further generations. Elder members were lecturing a group of young participants about changing the country is the role of the youth. "For us, it is too late, it is your responsibility to make a difference." The eldest representative emphasizing that it is not his generation role the one in charge of changing the Peruvian culture. He was claiming the responsibility of the youngest members and telling them how important it is for them to learn and work as professionals with integrity to make it right for the mistakes of his generation, that is now associate with corruption in the three last governments.

Portugal:

There is also a difference felt among the new generations between the ones that will be able to master computer technology and the ones that will not. It seemed that there is a general fear of novelty or of what is unfamiliar. It was mentioned that the new generations have new ways of relating to each other, namely through computer technology. The new generations have new ways of communicating that feel unfamiliar to our generation, namely that they have contacts in the facebook network.

Serbia:

A sociologist working with children in school, told about researches, children choose to do. All are about deviant things like pedophilia, drugs, no themes about love, romantics, like it had been just few years ago. There was more individualism, not so much longing for uniformity. This moved discussion about young people living in a closed world, not being able to travel for years and how they need more pedagogic work from the elders

Spain

At the University young people has no illusions for anything, their only aspiration is just to have a wage for the rest of their lives, being a public servant "funcionario". Nothing helps for those who want to set up an enterprise; the only important thing is having the same salary every month and nothing more. This is connected with a Spanish term of the 16th century that is the "Hidalgos" that were people with no fortune but without any wish to work.

Sweden:

The illusion that young people have the freedom to make choices seems based on the notion of that a large group of young people leaving school without being able to read and write, without any possibilities to join the welfare state system in a constructive way, are left out, and may become outsiders or engage in criminal activity. How to engage people, especially young persons, politically and how can they get a sense of being able to exert some influence in a positive way was discussed.

Switzerland:

There was also a questioning of this privilege, especially coming from the younger generation. For example, one young group member is leaving well-paid employment to do volunteer work abroad and several people with children and teenagers in the group expressed a feeling that young people "rebel" against the privilege of their lives through nostalgia for liberty and idealism and wanting more challenges in life.

UK:

A result is that members of society have difficulty in distinguishing between reality and fantasy. This is experienced as helplessness and a state of psychological incompetence. They are left with concerns for the future well being of society. One of the ways they deal with this is by scapegoating young people as in their involvement in gangs while at the same time putting unreasonable projections into young people as the saviours of society.

Hypothesis 3.

There is an increased awareness by members of societies that they can no longer predict what will happen in the future. Previous generations were able to make provision for their children's development and growth and for their own care and treatment into old age. However, the current experience is one of extreme uncertainty of not knowing, whereby concerns for the future and for their children's future, at both a conscious and unconscious level, are an outcome of the situation. At times the concern takes the shape of criticism of young people who are not doing enough to prepare themselves, for the tough times ahead. And, perhaps, not doing enough to ensure their parents well being. There is also a more general unconscious notion that young people will be the saviours of the world. A major concern is that young people act on these projections and lead the violent rebellion. There are now several examples in societies across the world where this has been or is the case.

Analysis and Hypothesis 4: Hope and Fear.***Analysis:***

Linking to the previous theme is a desperate need to retain some vestige of hope in a doom laden and unbearable world. It seems clear that there is a basic human need to experience any sort of situation as providing hope. This extends to the notion of seeing hope even in the very act of destruction: crisis as ruin – crisis as rebirth. At this time, the exceptional presence of Barack Obama provides a major catalyst for such hope. In some instances this is blind faith, an illusion or a phantasy. It is idealization to a massive degree; as if Obama is a sort of Superman who will soar through the skies and save the world from this madness. However, at another level, and in all cases, hope is qualified by a massive doubt that it will not be fulfilled. The experience of members of societies at this time is one of hope related to fear. This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

Australia:

The end of the world as we know it is nigh. The fantasy that we are NOT all connected has been blown sky high by the financial crisis of 2008. Our glimpse of the future feeds hope for a more connected world, led by a new generation of leaders. We feel hope for and hold a desire for the end of the culture of narcissism. We put hope in the next Generation (Gen Y) who are doing it differently from the generation currently in power.

There is fear too: we are afraid our hopes will be dashed and that our fascination with the new leader of the most powerful western democracy – Barack Obama – is a phantasy for a new saviour, a new Messiah, who will redeem us, forgive us, and above all save us from ourselves and our complicity in the economic and environmental disaster the world is facing. We are living with the juxtaposition of hope and fear.

Canada:

Waiting for Obama. The election of Obama has emerged from a politics of hope embraced in the USA. Obama has become a global figure and has brought hope for major changes in the nature of the American Empire. Expectations for him are very high all over the world. It was felt by some in the room that he would set a positive and progressive tone that would infect national and international affairs. Others felt that his star has risen so high and expectations are so great that his reputation is a new bubble replacing the credit bubble of recent years. They argued that it is not so clear what Obama will be able to accomplish despite his massive popularity.

Chile:

The new US president elect, Obama, brings encouraging feelings that lighten the sorrow Chilean people feel towards the huge power asymmetry with world power governments, corporations, local elites and capitalism as such. People wish they had a Chilean Obama whom to trust in and someone that might fill them with hope, dreams and ideals toward achieving a more humanitarian, fair and supportive society. Individuals develop the suspicion if Obama and his collaborator are able to successfully face the political managements that, in the shadow of the institutions, rule the world's people.

Denmark:

There is a hope for unity, humanity and fellowship on a global scale, but also fear of suppression, totalitarianism and standardisation. The feeling is that polymorphous tendencies and the ideal of multiplicity are more peaceful than perfect harmony, and that the wish for reconciliation might come about at the cost of something one would not want to do without. Obama as the invested incarnation of hope also represents a danger that we make the new Saviour solely responsible for the solution of climate changes and financial crises.

Faroe Islands:

Perhaps the hope of change is the kind the new US President, Obama, embodies. What is the real topic: Hope of Change or Change of Hope?? Clearly there are a multitude of mutually conflicting hopes, wishes, and expectations which all have been bundled on the back of a single man. And the new thing is this emotional insistence on hope and change, and - until now – an uninterpreted dream.

Finland:

An adjusted interpretation of social reality: a collective wake-up gives hope to mankind. Interpreting reality (experiences) from the perspective of hidden opportunities resulted in the following "adjusting" interpretations that give us hope about a new turn: A change at the cultural macro level, the first signs of which are the various forms of anxiety, also hides the following things that will give hope about a new turn when transferred to the macro level.

France:

Transitional space and painful process of subjectivation. For some, this is a process of subjectivation: the difficult rediscovery of the subject's freedom and creativity in the social context. "Subjectivation, meanwhile, is a more improbable process through which an individual (or a group, or maybe a class) sometimes manages to occupy places other than those assigned to it socially and institutionally" This happens in a transitional space in which people give up the illusion of a totally good world, a world we could have a hold over. This is reflected in a retreat

of the feeling of powerlessness, a fall in the associated complaints and development of capacities to get involved creatively.

Germany:

Change would imply acceptance of the totally new responsibility for one's own behaviour, farewell to the fascinating promise of omnipotence offered by technology and not to be content with external appearances. Fear of change also results from shame and other disagreeable emotions. We assume narcissistic structures in many who set the tone, who are no longer grounded and tantalized by greed.

Holland:

Towards the end there appeared hope, that it would be possible to find your ways, by accepting circumstances and defining creative solutions to problems, especially by re-framing (and not confronting) existing frames of references

India:

Need to be hope. Painful experiences are sources of learning. Are we listening to new paradigms in LP? Hopelessness---old paradigm. Hope----new paradigm. Gloomy envt.-growth & expansion. There seems to be an oscillation happening (see-saw) between hopelessness & hope

Ireland:

We have both fear and optimism for the future and a concern not to return to a more unequal, more deprived past. We feel overwhelmed, impotent and hopeless and at the same time resigned, resolved and confident that a way forward will be found, even if this is difficult to picture now. Underlying much of the earlier conversation was a concern about transformation and transforming experiences. How a crisis can be either/both threat and opportunity. How the current difficulties, personally and societally, can be framed as hopeless and catastrophic or as a chance to revisit and rethink fundamentals.

Italy:

The Crisis as Ruin, the Crisis as Re-birth. This theme emerged from the very opening comments of the first phase and the group returned to it throughout the session. Although there was much to be gloomy about, the crisis was also seen as an opportunity for hope.

The perceived gravity of the social and economic crisis in Italy cast a malicious and immovable specter over the discussion. While this specter pervaded the various socio-cultural-economic roles each participant fulfilled, as well as their roles as citizens, it nevertheless produced strong anti-depressive reactions: declared intentions for hope/trust (reminiscent of Kennedy– Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country) that stimulated an awareness of the possibility for positive development in the future. Participants seemed to want to minimize the gravity of social problems, preferring to underline positive elements that could be obscured by too negative a representation of the phenomena.

Serbia:

There are small positive changes, but important to be respected. They create or keep alive small islands of positivity, shining with optimism. As an important social mirroring was found to be the group experience, that when becoming aware about other similar islands, a transformation starts from loneness into relief and delight and a vision of an invisible large group of islands. In the Serbian transitional society under the surface there are expectations for more mature social

distribution of power and responsibility, but complex sequels of traumas and old regimes are still frustrating these positive needs.

South Africa:

Coping with existential anxiety is based on trusting the universal, systemic and unconscious life forces towards equilibrium, linked with an inner strength to survive. The belief is that the moment there is too much of one side (such as power, corruption, pain), its opposite will emerge in unexpected, surprising and interesting ways. Thus our trust in life's fairness and balance is restored.

Spain

There is a social crisis because this situation is unsustainable from a personal and social perspective. The important thing is how to learn from this situation.

There is a "values crisis" We have a selfish and individualistic society. The consumer society has brought us towards where we are, and now all hopes are that Obama will bring us a change.

Sweden:

Obama's leadership – that he actually was elected gives a hope about something new – but in what way is not clear. This hope seems to be of the same kind that resulted in the election success. The important thing about Obama is charisma, youth, personal history and talent, not what he has pledged to do, or that his campaign was the most expensive in history so far.

UK:

This prospect is viewed by members of society as an opportunity to build a greener, fairer and more sustainable future. However, with all its faults the current way of life is all that members of society know and the prospect of a new way of life is experienced by members of society with fear and trepidation as to what this new way of life might be. They are thus trapped in a world of not knowing. On the one hand, members of society are hopeful that this is an end to an old way of life and time for new beginnings. On the other hand, they are fearful as to where it will all end up. This raises extreme anxieties and fears for survival. Members of society are left feeling overwhelmed and fearful that either route might result in annihilation.

USA:

Crisis and opportunity/Hope amidst the rubble: It is the best of times and the worst of times. On the one hand, we are a nation in crisis—all of our systems are broken—health care, the economy, climate, our world standing, etc. On the other hand, we feel a tremendous amount of hope as a result of Obama's election. Barack and Michelle Obama are containers of hope for the whole nation.

Hypothesis:

The dynamics described in 1 & 2 above result in members of society living for large parts of their life in a paranoid schizoid position whereby things are seen in simple black and white terms. They deal with their experiences by splitting, seeing the cruel, uncaring and persecutory 'State' as a wholly bad object. Constantly experiencing this position leads to a desperate search for good objects that are experienced as 'hope' The main object that members of societies across the world have identified is Barack Obama who is seen as not just a wholly good object, but is idealized as a Messiah who will be the sole saviour of everything. At one level this brings hope to members of societies at a time when they experience only doom and gloom. However,

at another level, members of societies realize the phantasy nature of this hope and express their fears that this blind faith may prove to be unfounded and that fears for the future are not to be ignored.

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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 where they can be found under **Listening Posts**.

Concluding Remarks.

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 and meaningless 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. Last year, the analysis showed that violence was never far from the surface. This year the experience is that violent feelings are being acted upon and the fear of further violence is a frightening prospect.

Since last year, things have moved on and members of societies are now mainly concerned with survival. In most instances, because of the collapse of society and culture and the loss of societal and individual identity, this means individual survival. The experience seems to be that of individuals giving up on the political, religious and social leaders and institutions that previously met their dependency needs and turning their own persecutory anxieties onto the State. Thus the essential difference between this year and last year is that members of society now experience themselves as victims of cruel, uncaring and persecutory States and that they are victims of psychological and structural violence imposed on them by the State.

These are extremely dangerous times and great care is required to avoid or to defuse any potential situation that may act as a trigger for the expression of violent rebellion. It needs to be appreciated that acts of violence will carry with them the full weight of a society that is desperate, angry, on the edge of craziness, and unable to contain their primitive evil impulses. At the same time, they will be seeking to displace these unbearable feelings onto any convenient receptacle, especially those they can identify with the perceived persecutory State. These may include police, immigrants, Jews, Muslims and those others who are frequently stereotyped.