Faroe Islands at the dawn of 2021
Report of a Listening Post held january 13th on Hotel Hafnia

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PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES
In this part, the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experiences in their various social roles, be they: in work, unemployed or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood, voluntary or leisure organisations; or as members of families and communities. This part was largely concerned with what might be called, 'the stuff of people's everyday lives': the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES
In Part 2 the aim was to identify collectively the major themes emerging from Part 1.

Power and authority have been turned upside down
The trust placed in our healthcare service has diminished due to the unilateral focus on the coronavirus, which has in consequence made them neglect other salient responsibilities and tasks that are of the utmost importance for most people. A handful of selfpromoted people seem to be more influential than the authorities and other professionals, who in reality should govern and lead the country.

"*The government is closing down on spaces for artists who work by themselves in small rooms, but they allow handball athletes to practise in large sports centres. Why are these restrictions disproportionately favoured towards a selected few, and who is making these strange decisions?*
Trump's reach and influence through social media has indeed been substantial, but he has now been excluded and marked as "Fake News". Everything has been put in reverse.

"*Our minister of Culture, Jenis av Rana, has banned support for a teen film that uses swearwords. Being aware of this, the paradox emerges: do we have an institution that is supposed to protect our freedom of speech, but simultaneously tries to restrict it as well as our artistic liberties? Is this an overt castration exercised by "old power", wherein a person rules as he pleases without consequence? I vehemently despise it.*"

Childcare workers are fleeing from their professions and getting replaced with unskilled youths. When people in charge are requesting for overtime hours or more effort put in, they get looked at with uncomprehensive eyes and told that they have already made plans after work. The person in charge: *"It leaves me with a feeling of powerlessness, and I feel like an old idiot! The hierarchy has been turned upside down…most of them are unaware of what it really means to be working! My generation has gotten tired of providing solicitude whilst leading a whole generation, dominated by egocentrism and irresponsibility. It is the new generation that holds all of the power nowadays!*"

Furthermore, the authorities that determine the guidelines regarding the coronavirus are directly in correlation with a power that seems both encroaching and liberating. Nevertheless, a new – and different – power is emerging.

"*As the head of the senior sector, I have been in the position to determine how the limited vaccine should be distributed amongst my people. It is a burdensome responsibility, so how do I administer and facilitate this power? How do I determine who should and should not get the*

vaccine? Why are the authorities not making these decisions? It does not only challenge my own personal, ethical values, but also the societal."

"I choose to place my trust in the authorities…how much of a choice do I really have? I have myself to look after as well as my safety, thus I have no choice but to trust that someone else has this vaccine situation under control."

Polarisation fosters apathy in the middle

We are in a perpetual quandary of having to choose between two sides (either or), which has consequently exacerbated the polarisation that is thriving in our contemporary space. It is unacceptable to cheer for two football teams from the same town, therefore one is expected to harbour our position in a fixed place, consequently producing a contrast that shuns out alternativeness. Polarisation in politics is exceptionally evident, where nothing exists in the middle that seeks to bring the polarized wings together. This results in us no longer being able to regulate the irregularities and distribute the benefits in a way that is favourable for all. The politician: "*It is paradoxical that this is occurring in a country that is as wealthy as ours. How do we engender options so that all citizens have an option?*" Social media has a tremendous power, and is shaping a culture claiming an either or position, which increase polarization in society.

"There is an ongoing battle between the poles in the powerbalances, where I am struggling to find myself and figure out what to do and how to move forward. In that tension field, I am experiencing a kind of performance anxiety…and I cannot do anything besides to withdraw…hence being passive."

Science or personalized power?

We are in a discourse and a paradigm shift. Science used to be a trustworthy and dominating authority that was the guiding star of truth. Today trustworthiness seems to be more personalized and dictated by opinions and perceptions that are inspired by social media and news sites that have baseless claims and are omit of critical journalistic integrity. "*He said it on the radio…ergo, it must be true."*

"Joe Rogan has a podcast that acts as a far more trustworthy source than healthcare services! He has a staggering number of followers and sets the dominant agenda. One man with access to the internet has more power and influence than any institutional authority in the whole world!"

We need to adjust ourselves for a bombardment of information that have no foundation in evidence or proof. We are producing scientific papers about the lack of science in scientific papers.

The teacher: "*In schools, YouTube is where the students access their truths. This gives rise to a heap of uninformed people…a connection to the internet sets our knowledge and science on the shoulder when it comes to educating our children and youths."*

"Perhaps the institutional authorities have reached a lower limit, and personalized power is becoming the new paradigm. The old authority no longer exists."

The psychology of the Mob sets the course

The far-reaching omnipresence of social media, influencers and podcasts have attributed to an altered influence that people realise consciously as well as subconsciously in which people a stimulated to congregate within groups with shared beliefs. This has given rise to the perception of us being part of a mob that is running in a fixed direction without espousing own personal integrity and identity.

"In my perception we are led by persons and we are swallowing their words and opinions without any critical reflections. I am disappointed with there not being more underground movements…we are too easily manipulated."

We are governed by group processes and looses a part of our self. We find our self in a condition with no thinking and without ability to act. We remain stagnant instead of moving forward.

Guilt and shame navigates the boat
Our society is so small and tight knitted that everyone knows everything about everyone. It is quite uncomfortable and has significant consequences if someone chooses to swim against the current. No one wants to be blamed for contaminating a neighbour or a colleague with coronavirus, since the extending effects will have extraordinary ramifications associated with shame and guilt. Beneath the surface shame is a vigorous and ruling parameter in our fellowship and society. Nowadays, people do not fear coronavirus as much, but fear being the one who would contaminate others.
The mother: "*My decisions regarding my child and the coronavirus guidelines in kindergarten and school influences other mothers and their children. I do not want to stand out or turn myself into the topic of discussion or gossip, so I follow the herd…*"
On the Faroe Islands, we naturally share intimacy and congregate during funerals and holidays, but that is not possible anymore. Now we must select the few who is allowed to join, thus excluding the rest. These decisions are interwoven with a sense of guilt and shame.
We have to concede on helping others in situations where it would be natural to do so. "*It is difficult to say "Unfortunately…I cannot help you!". It makes it arduous for me to remain faithful towards myself and it is crippling my life. I have gradually become another person…! Where are we heading? I loathe and are disgusted by my own behaviour!*"
Our government appeals formally to our responsibility, but in fact they speak to our covert feelings of guilt. We need to be aware, and not let guilt and shame evolve into even more chronic and dominating emotions in society.

MeToo generates passivity and change in gender roles
The MeToo wave has become an integral part of modern discourse. People lives in fear of being unjustly accused of something they did not do. It has now a law that mutual consent needs to be established before sexual intercourse. *"Does that mean you can get baselessly accused of rape? The burden of proof has been reversed…you must prove your innocence".*
Man: "*It feels like a police car is driving behind me…and I do not know if I have done something wrong and am about to be accused. Thus, I have developed an allergic reaction to the wake of the MeToo movement, and it has become a hindrance in my life.*"
How does it affect men, gender roles and balance in homes, and the work environment? We are on the lookout for outrage in every aspect of life. This results in "covert control", which consequently further leads to passivity, withdrawal, and unnatural being together.

Are we a doped-up society?
It seems like we are indulging ourselves in our own complacency and occupy ourselves with things and events that are outside our own society. Maybe the bobble we are in is bigger than we thought compared to last year Listening Post? We are using more medicine, narcotics, "magic mushrooms", and other intoxicants. Maybe it is not too farfetched to think that Christianity or other beliefs will act as some sort of dope that fences us from the troublesome reality around ourselves? Is the coronavirus also some veiled form of doping that legitimises our self-centredness and selfishness? "*When we get scared, the primitive in us begins to surface.*"

PART 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION
In Part 3, the participants were working with the information resulting from Parts 1 & 2, with a view to

collectively identifying the underlying dynamics both conscious and unconscious that may be predominant at the time; and developing hypotheses as to why they might be occurring at that moment. Here, participants were working more with what might be called their 'psycho' or 'internal' world: their collective ideas and ways of thinking that both determine how they perceive the external realities and shape their actions towards them.

Hypothesis 1: The psychology of the Mob and guilt threatens the healthy society

Social media and increased personalized power beget a mob, wherein everyone is steering the helm without any self navigation. Human beings are herd animals, and you must be in a herd in order to be a part of a whole. The Faroe Islands is a small society with strong social norms and sanctions that yield beneficial conditions for the mob mentality to thrive.

Therefore citizens experience anxiety and discomfort, thinking about what the risk of infecting others with coronavirus might entail. Within the mob the citizen experiences a loss of integrity and identity, which creates a urgent need for a relational footing and a feeling of being good enough. Beneath the surface threatens the unrelenting feeling of guilt and shame.

This results in citizens seeking unintentionally isolation and lives in small network-bubbles. The gap between us increases. The smaller network-bubbles develops differently and the mutual understanding decreases, which creates lesser cohesiveness and solicitude in our society.

Hypothesis 2: We are like Ostriches sticking the head in the sand !

In the Faroe Islands, we are more aware of what is going on in the world around us than the difficulties between us. National News focus on muttering, trivial narratives, and new tunnels. We are investing unbelievable resources on social media and almost none in our own tangible reality. We do not engage in protests and we do not demand accountability and ethics in roles and authorities. We do not engage in the basic work around marginal livelihoods, victims, violations and noncaring structures, created by the society itself. It is as if we are constantly doped!

Therefore citizens are experiencing this uncanny reality, where reality checks do not play a legitimate role on our existence. It is as if we find ourselves situated in a bobble amid the North Atlantic Sea, where we passively perceive unhappiness, death, and anxiety occurring in the surrounding world.

This results in a society where people in power apparently live in psychological defences as denial (it does not exist), displacement (Trump, MeToo), and intellectualisation (discussion without actions) with the purpose of avoiding emotions as discomforting, humiliation, isolation, contempt, and powerlessness.

Hypothesis 3: Authorities changes shape and power changes hands

Institutional authorities are fighting for their survival. Personal power and social media have become a powerful force that constitutes the agenda. Traditional values and cairns trembles and disappears in the haze. The youth has taken the position of power by saying "no" to the older generations who is left behind in powerlessness. We are looking for new landmarks for our existential and social navigation, but are captured in a powerful polarity, forced to choose sides, rather than connecting poles and opinions. There is a change of paradigm from science to personalized power leaving us in a limbo of what to trust. Are we able to trust in ourselves?

Therefore citizens are experiencing being in the middle of a vacuum without natural power of action and progress. We are conscious and knowing about it all, but we are doing nothing with the stuff we know need our attention and action. Feelings of apathy, mistrust and carelessness is creeping into our daily lives and living is only perceived alive and dynamic in the poles and in the mob.

This results in a society where authorities changes shape and power changes hands. In this process our society become passive for the most and a marketplace for the few, who is stepping forward in to the new reality and balance of power. A generational change is afoot.