

OPUS GLOBAL REPORT 2014

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Abstract.

On or about 8th January 2014, 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 2014, were held in twenty seven different countries around the world (Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Germany (2 Reports), Greece, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy (2 Reports), Peru, Poland, Russia, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, & USA). 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 analysed 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 Reports from the twenty seven countries;
- (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 Defences Against Anxiety.

Introduction.

Members of societies throughout the world are continuing to experience this period in history as one of unprecedented and revolutionary social change that is still increasing in intensity. This includes technological change such as the availability of social networking sites whereby members of societies can be in touch with a large number of people but not in a meaningful way such as will satisfy their human needs. But it is not just about technology it also includes the ideas; including political, social, 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.

The current experiences of members of societies throughout the world is that they are still struggling to make sense of their world; they face overwhelming feelings of confusion, worthlessness and helplessness, impotence, inferiority, humiliation and scariness; they are fragmented and are forced to flee to the comparative safety of individualism; unable to form any collective response; a tendency to regressing to the paranoid schizoid position with splitting, aggressive and violent responses; and lacking in almost any form of community. There is a strong dependency on political leaders who are experienced as incapable of providing the required responses. A result is a loss of trust and sense of being failed by politicians and the unmet dependency is located in the family or in local initiatives. The emotional basis of current societal dynamics is experienced as: one against the rest of society; frustration and anger at not having a voice; a withdrawal from society to individualism; every man for himself; an experience of not being recognised and a loss of identity. This leads to feelings of helplessness, impotence, bewilderment, passivity, loneliness, despair, and solitude. A result is disconnection, isolation, lack of integration, a lack of interest and curiosity, and a lack of social commitment. It becomes a selfish society where uncertainty results in a narcissistic focus on self, no reflection, aggressive confrontation and hostility to the 'other'. A lack of tolerance of difference, lack of compassion, members of societies become insiders and outsiders resulting in an absence of the 'other': and experiences of blaming, helplessness, disorientation, a need for acceptance, insecurity and

uncertainty. Splits between in and out groups, create the risk of social polarisation (us and them divisions), disunity and self-preservation. Members of society are left feeling disconnectedness, powerlessness, fragmented, having a fear of trust in the 'other' and polarisation.

As a result of this unprecedented and revolutionary social change, members of societies experience profound levels of insecurity and uncertainty about the future. There is a perceived threat to survival (existence, identity, tradition), which evokes very primitive fears and dependency needs for containment, recognition and guidance.

At a societal level, people look to authority (government, education, employers, the police, health services and so forth) to meet these needs. Not only do these institutions no longer offer the desired (projected) leadership, they are also experienced as corrupt and abusive by the people they are there to represent and protect.

This results in further confusion, helplessness, despair, and sometimes trauma. For members of societies the threat of fragmentation and annihilation becomes reality with governments killing citizens who oppose them and so forth.

Current Common Dynamics.

Given the above emotional experiences it may not be surprising that members of societies find defensive ways of dealing with their unbearable experiences. Attempts to relieve themselves of this unbearable experience has left them dependent and looking to institutional leadership for relief from their pain. A result is that members of society deal with this by splitting whereby they blame and scapegoat those they feel have failed them: mainly the politicians. They regard politicians as being corrupt and self-interested and they lose trust in them.

A result is fragmentation and a loss of society or community and a dire experience of a lack of group attachment. They split off their unbearable feelings and project them into all available authority figures/institutions. Members of societies are angry about the narcissism and aggrandisement of politicians. At times governments are experienced as violent and destructive. State aggression, corruption and barbarism, in turn, give rise to violent demonstrations and revolutionary activities. This also involves being part of a global community where there is an experience of an absence of global leadership.

This experience is further developed below in the first Analysis and Hypothesis –

Not owning: Projecting.

The speed and depth of change, sometimes seen to being driven by technology, is also seen to be threatening. The growing unpredictability, social disengagement, economic impoverishment and an inability to embrace new ideas results in resistance to change. Members of societies are still negatively affected by various factors that militate against taking up their societal roles, principal among these are: the continuing frequency, depth and breadth of change; Technology including social media; youth and family. Change is experienced by members of societies as being impossible to fathom and results in feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, even at times, paralysis. Technology is experienced as ever changing and progressing and near impossible for many to understand; Moreover, it continues to result in superficial relationships that do not satisfy the need for true connectedness. While a frequent way of dealing with the problems arising is to split off the unbearable thoughts and feelings and to project them into young people either in terms of blaming them for our ills; or more often, seeing them as saviours and the hope for the future. In all these instances members of society give up their ownership of societal problems.

This experience is further developed below in the second Analysis and Hypothesis –

What may Prevent Connectedness: Change; Technology; Youth and Family.

Because of the experience of extreme fragmentation, disconnectedness and the loss of community, members of societies are left in a highly depressed and hopeless situation. However, the experience of members of societies at this time is that there is a strong indication of a move to depressive position thinking, an awakening and acceptance that 'they' are society and that 'they' are the only ones that can create community and society. This is accompanied by a realisation that they need to take back their negative projections and own them. Living without the protection of a shared culture is experienced as being fragmented, whereby isolation and fear of the other becomes a threatening

experience that fails to meet human needs. There appears to be a shared realisation by members of the various societies that they cannot create a new way of living as individuals and that connectedness to others is necessary if this is to be achieved. This experience is further developed below in the third Analysis and Hypothesis – *An Awakening: the Need for Connectedness.*

These three interlinked and progressive Hypotheses follow:

Analysis and Hypothesis 1. Not owning: Projecting

Analysis 1.

The complex realities of contemporary societies appear so confusing and threatening that members of societies experience their world as bewildering, disempowering, humiliating and this results in feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Members find it impossible and painful to contain their contradictory and paradoxical dynamics. The immediate present seems to be the only available horizon. Members of societies experience their feelings and emotions as unbearable and deal with them by splitting them off and projecting them on to convenient objects particularly political leaders and governments, other government departments such as health, education and the police, and the young. Having split off these unbearable parts of the self, such as feelings of not welcoming immigrants, or fearing the incompetence of not understanding technology, they no longer own what is theirs to own. They no longer have any direct concern for the important matters of life which are now located in the various authority figures. Members of society are now able to scapegoat and blame others for the shameful way the government treats immigrants; the shameful way educationalists fail children; or the impossibility and incompetence of governments to deal with the effects of globalisation. Members of societies are left in the isolation of their own worlds largely created by this process of projection concerned only for their immediate needs and constantly engaged in the process of blaming others. This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

Argentina:

The public Education system is directly connected to the role of government that is perceived in a parental capacity capable of putting order in society. Unable to reconcile past and future people find themselves focused in the present and in their own personal lives and needs. The result is a reinforcement of the divide between the private and social spheres and growing individualism.

Australia:

Frustration and anger with not having a voice as a citizen. Disappointment and sadness at how our government treats asylum seekers. Angry that this government has been violent and destructive (of the fabric of society). It feels like anything good has been ripped apart.

Bulgaria:

People of the new experience themselves as ‘change agents under siege’. Some of them mobilise their aggressiveness to survive and thrive. Others feel disgusted from some unwanted proximity – ashamed of guilt. The inferiority and impotence somehow accompany social renovation and make us ambivalent towards the change itself and towards ourselves as change agents.

Canada:

The current problems of our society and our ‘poor government’ are symptoms of both an accumulation of power in the hands of a few and our apparent willingness to entrust this accumulation to incompetent others. It seems that societal systems our sense of ‘us-ness’ are breaking down. including our governance, our order, our very ‘health’, than how do we make or perhaps remake a common cause?

Chile:

The speed with which change occurs, the commercial logic of work, the weakening of the state’s protectiveness, and the influences exerted by powerful national and international economic conglomerates, generate much uncertainty to face everyday life and to find formulae that will allow obtaining the most basic needs. In this uncertainty, reasoning ability is soon overcome and people find themselves wrapped up in chaotic, irrational and bewildering dynamics in which it is very difficult to

find meanings that justify the actions that are taken. Current Chilean society is complex because it does not provide certainties as to how to participate in it in a continuous and safe integration, which simultaneously solves the various vulnerabilities afflicting the citizens.

Denmark:

Both leaders and population as such are blinded by the idea that nations are organisations that fight for their lives in a cut throat international competition where citizens of all ages are employees. We lose the idea of cooperation and discussion of direction and goals. As a societal productive force, criticism has been smothered without any further reflections.

Criticism is either expressed as stress, depression etc. or through abstract analyses which are only an inspiration for exclusive circles.

Estonia:

The link between other people is diminished; they will start to feel as if they are being isolated from that larger community. They feel they are missing out on something. The feeling of terror and worry is a physical feeling.

Faroe Islands:

The focus on the individual, gratification of needs and self-realisation negates solidarity, community and togetherness. Never before has there been so much 'finger pointing' directed at politicians or other public persona with responsibilities. A lot of energy is directed at fault-finding and criticism. The level of anxiety in the society has risen. The anxiety is rooted in the individual citizen and in the individual existence.

The anxiety is bound to an experience of failure, decay and increased distrust of the system. Charity and brotherly love are being challenged. Loneliness is dominating.

Finland:

Society and culture emphasises individuality and forces it upon everyone. The means for coping is formed: there are no instructions, in other words there is externalisation (also regarding morality and fairness, the result being avarice and egoism. With speed one is driven over and remains under; in rural areas, one is not even able to move about.

France:

The growing unpredictability of our lives (including our private life), the pressure of the instant which makes it difficult to meet commitments, social disengagement, social activities perceived as not being sufficiently engaging on a personal basis, and therefore a low solidarity beyond one's own tribe(s), a reduction of reflectivity and of the will to reflect on the world, as well as the capacity of lying. Demonstrations seem to have become the prime way of expressing one's opposition to the decisions of the ruling political class and to exercise pressure on it. There is no room for debate, dissatisfaction is expressed on the street and can reach such a high level that there is only violence left to be heard. There is a real withdrawal from society. The social and political life, the notion of living together are disappearing.

Germany (Frankfurt):

Others are disturbed that so many remain unmoved by Snowden's whistle-blower revelations. One member said that in his youth such news would have culminated in radical protest – street battles – whereas nowadays one could get the impression that everyone kept in the swim with the majority however murky the surroundings were. One pointed out that there is no longer any focal point such as the occupy camp in Frankfurt's centre.

Germany (Berlin):

The fear was expressed that parts of society are not able to cope with the social and ideological tensions and lose their ability to think. The group discussed why individuals in spite of an enormous pressure for change – remain passive instead of actively shaping their social contexts and why a claim to change the world is so difficult to transfer into the personal environment. It was guessed that it is the wish of personal wellbeing, which leads members of society to see the society as functioning and themselves as not responsible.

Greece:

The despair that followed the unsuccessful collective demonstrations. The massive changes in Greece both at a financial, but also political, social and psychological level have made people face depressive anxieties, but also anxieties about survival.

The idea of a longstanding funeral where one needs to maintain a sense of suffering can be both a way of support and respect, but also a defence against the thought of not everyone, actually, being in the same boat. And if one is not in the same boat then they can find themselves in the deep sea.

India:

Having those said double standards, and wanting to live in the already existing comfort zone, we give in to the unsaid and unnoticed societal demands which might be the cause of the ills. Hence, only strengthening and reinforcing those attitudes which we might want to dilute and eventually change.

Ireland:

The increasing narrative encourages us away from a belief in the shared responsibility of the community/society into taking up an individual responsibility for our own place in society and our own survival. Because this is an impossible task, inevitably it undermines our confidence in our own internal personal authority, capacity and authenticity to be resourceful. Our trust in political belief through elections are ever reducing. Consequently the task of survival and managing becomes more difficult if not impossible. As a result, fear and anxiety have increased.

Israel:

As a result of perceived threats from illegal immigrants, vocal political minorities and commercial monopolies Israel and Israelis have withdrawn into a bubble. This happens on an individual basis and also on a societal and national level. The bubble despite feeling suffocating leads to feelings of connection and protection within but at the same time it also leads to disconnection and alienation in the outside world.

Italy (Rome):

Self-fulfilment facilitates sense-making; non the less complexity is frightening as it makes it difficult to read change, to find sense, to project oneself into the future and out of the crisis. Complexity can be paralyzing. The first emerging element is the sense of disorientation produced by change. Change is inevitable but it scares me that I am unable to read the change. The comfort zone doesn't exist anymore, this is where fear begins, fear of the future, to move to an area where I've never seen before and therefore not having an experience to support me.

Italy (Milan):

Uncertainty, puzzlement and incapacity to produce constructive actions were frequently mentioned. The lack of action is so relevant that the group speaks of collective irresponsibility and lack of action. The lack of action is related to a lack of social and collective responsibility. The boredom is also seen as a variety of hidden corruption: the corruption of thinking. Boredom is a common emotion that comes from a lack of recognition of other and much more vital emotions: anger, resentment, social indignation. Boredom is the result of perceived inefficacy of every discourse and each possible analysis (frustration of any effort). It is also a diffused model of social behaviour and an inner reaction which produces effects of passivation and pacification.

Peru:

Group members expressed how difficult it is to reconcile the different interests in a common pathway in stages of growth and development: the seemingly impossible reconciliation between common projects and individual projects. Lack of commitment and no reconciliation of interests led the group to link this with the high degree of informality that exists in the country, the widespread distrust in society, mainly to the authorities, politicians and their relation to acts of corruption, and the recent cases of bribery in the police force.

Poland:

Aggressive confrontation, rather than cooperation; narcissistic focus on yourself; the latest presence regime systems in societies, accompanied by a tacit acceptance; hidden regime, raises resistance to the system.

Russia:

Authority strongly divides the society, using this purpose and method hoping to stay in power forever for their own selfish interests. Blaming others our way of protection. Fear is a warning of danger and in this sense, thinking about the society we seek the path of self-preservation, we are led almost by biological instincts.

Serbia:

This brought about numerous feelings and participants had a strong need to say that they feel helpless, saddened and as if they could burst into tears. The example was felt as tragicomic and some participants said they were angry and almost in despair. The passivity and being overwhelmed by

obstacles influences the sense of purpose. She shared an impression that there is no society and that there is no sense of community and social – there is no value system nor any rules. Many people are angry, frustrated and feeling let down and they are strongly projecting it to the others and the society as a whole.

South Africa:

Citizens are prepared to see themselves in Mandela the hero, but not prepared to take responsibility for what is projected into Zuma as the anti-hero. He sacrificially contains our shame and incompetence so that the nation can live in the fantasy of Mandela's freedom.

Spain:

There is a feeling of big split between what we worry about and what we are really doing about it. This seems to be related with states of mind of disconnection, lack of motivation, fear and paralysation. At every level in the society there are perceived many situations of injustice, corruption, disappointment, lacks of motivation and anguish. The disorganisation of the systems of social containment has generated feelings of mistrust, isolation and paranoia towards the institutions of our system.

Sweden:

This topic of things lost in our community today. Ideological engagement was mentioned as missing, along with a curiosity about other people. A man reflected on the way a façade of connectedness and unity was produced, while the reality was much darker. The feeling of exclusion seems to be in relation to 'the other', whether this is immigrants, unemployed or young people. However, the feeling seems to emanate from ourselves, but projected on others as we try to defend ourselves from the threat of being excluded by putting up a façade as being busy etc. As a consequence, other people are perceived as threats to one's own time, increasing the emotional distance between people.

Switzerland:

Because the larger world seems difficult, invasive and overwhelming, any people resist engaging with it due to a sense of powerlessness. Due to the destruction and sense of hopelessness of the world, people escape this by being fully involved in something much closer to home – family, a job, volunteering for a cause.

Turkey:

Participants have shared these as a response to the frequently changing agenda of the country: We do not know what to trust. Being too neutral started to be annoying; we were apolitical and all of a sudden we feel compelled to take a political stance. We do not know where to go and what for to go there. Who will we hold onto? Who will we trust? Despair, borderless and desolation. Rather than taking the responsibility for the existing situation, the blame it on others or the system. If that doesn't work, we blame it on the God; he would do the right thing for us. Instead of asking others for help, we take shelter on ourselves mostly.

UK:

The changes supporting the global market render both leadership and citizenship impersonalised. Global leadership is not voted for. The mistrust towards impersonalised leadership renders reasonable and taken for granted an attitude of disconnectedness, distancing and demoralisation. People can be drawn into a retreat; into a world of isolated incompetence. They have an experience of life living them, rather than them living their life. In this panic it is very difficult for members of our society to reinvent their internal leadership, so as to navigate together with others through this transition.

USA:

There is a lack of compassion toward one another and a willingness to use people as an end toward something themselves. More difficult to think of just our country as we are part of a global community. There is a contempt for government and politicians are not there for us in our hour of need, they are evasive and they don't help us look for viable alternatives. They are powerless and there are the corporate, lobbyists that are really pulling strings. Issues about feeling passive, helpless, disillusioned and angry were discussed, particularly how we disown the feelings of helplessness and project them onto the leaders.

Hypothesis 1:

Because of the fragmentation and ensuing isolation following from the lack of society and community, members of society are living mainly individualistic lives. A result of this unconnected experience is the lack of a shared way of living, namely, a societal culture. Cultures exist for a reason;

they confirm and maintain a social order which also provides order for the internal worlds of individuals. The current culture exists solely with the aim of shielding members of society from the excesses of the unprecedented and revolutionary social change that is still increasing in intensity. When the experience of members of societies is such as to be threatened by a massive incomprehensible and ongoing situation of change this is experienced as a threat to destroy the shared reality on which social and individual order is felt to depend. When our world is threatened with change and is seen to begin to crumble we begin to crumble. Members of societies experience their feelings and emotions as unbearable and deal with them by splitting them off and projecting them on to convenient objects, particularly political leaders and governments, other government departments such as health, education and the police, and the young. Having split off these unbearable parts of the self, they no longer own what is theirs to own. They no longer have any direct concern for the important matters of life which are now located in the various authority figures, which they then attack.

Analysis and Hypothesis 2.

What may Prevent Connectedness: Change; Technology; Youth and Family.

Analysis 2.

The function and the nature of relationships are influenced and shaped by new technologies that give a new meaning to being connected. The ambivalence of being in the same place but being disconnected is well represented by the ubiquitous features of new technologies. They came to represent the fast pace of change but at the same time the lack of sustainability of such change. This process is expressed through anger and frustration and feelings of being under siege. The young generations are perceived, at the same time, as the master and the victims of such ambivalence. This is mirrored in the patterns of relating between parents and children. Relationships are ambivalent: Children and young people represent the future, which is perceived as alien, uncertain and frightening: parents fear they have not been able to protect young people or prepare them but young people are finding their own way. Older people fear being left behind as young people embrace the new world. The future is already present and there is also a magic expectation: the new generation will change everything. This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

Argentina:

The group was very preoccupied with the future and what the future holds for next generations of citizens and how citizens can change and participate in the future.

Australia:

There was an ambivalence expressed about social media and its nature of connectedness.... Social media is a disembodied connection. An apathy towards changes in society and the 'fickleness of fashion', that generates thoughts of, 'I've turned off and just say this too will pass', Switching off – 'it's too hard. I have no autonomy', 'I don't have to get involved in that, give it twelve months and it will be gone'. Members of society feel bewildered, angry, despairing, powerless, and anxious about survival.

Bulgaria:

People 'of the new' experience themselves as 'change agents under siege'. Some of them mobilise their aggressiveness in order to survive and to thrive. Others feel disgusted from some unwanted proximity - ashamed or guilty. The inferiority and the impotence somehow accompany social renovation and make us ambivalent towards the change itself and towards ourselves as change agents.

Canada:

Since technology permits aggregation to unimaginable numbers as well as disaggregation to the most minute, our sense of self in relation this technology creates a confusion of the one and singular with the many. We wondered how virtuality makes for a 'commons' in which younger citizens predominantly live and yet even the younger participants spoke to the crucial importance of physical 'commons'.

Chile:

The young people are considered specially gifted to virtuously embody participation, by having energies for change, optimism and having capabilities to create true relationships. People in the group become aware how simplistic thinking is poured, idealising youth as an expression of leadership,

vitality and confidence with which the responsibility to take charge of conflicts in society is unconsciously shifted to young people.

The uncertainty exceeds the people's thinking capacity; they are shocked to realize that they do not know how to understand what is happening or how to proceed in these circumstances, all of which causes much anxiety and desolation.

Denmark:

Children have to start school earlier, stay there all day and receive more tuition with less time to play. As early as the 6th form, pupils have to make choices that determine their future. Robots and schematic rules of conduct are beginning to appear in the relations between citizens and the general public. We lose the idea of cooperation and discussion of direction and goals.

Estonia:

It's hard to trust a technical device, because one does not fully understand it. Getting professional help for using technical devices is hard, expensive and often brings shame. Learning to use these new technical systems and services is cumbersome, unpleasant and the systems feel untrustable. On the other hand, the environment and society forces the individual to learning new things all the time. It forces the individual to be attached and trust in technical devices, because there is no alternative. The face-to-face contact lessens.

Faroe Islands:

Democracy has evolved into people expressing their opinions on social media instead of discussing and debating in public institutions. This embeds the power and potency in an elected majority, and the powerlessness and impotence in the many social media. The focus on the individual. The society is now producing children that cannot read and write. This is being observed in the penal institutions, who now question the school system. The people surrounding the failing children are facing increased scrutiny. Where are the professionals? Our children determine our future. We have to prepare our children for the task ahead of them.

Finland:

One of the participants told about her child, who moved from Canada to Brussels and who was hoping to take her family to Africa to do humanitarian work. Another participant told how her son went to the border between China and North Korea and begun to practice ancient martial arts with a sword.

France:

The feeling of loss and end of something relating to the theme of death which came back frequently is everywhere in society, but unsaid. It generates some suffering that is impossible to express, because the object of the loss has not been clearly identified.

Germany (Frankfurt):

There was concern about how communication functions: people, even families sit together in restaurants their eyes obsessedly fixed on their individual smartphones, glancing neither right nor left at each other.

Germany (Berlin):

Our chance to be on every place in the world in a relatively short time does not lead to enough understanding of the world. Our possibilities to use the network of electronic media and the worldwide web do not lead to enough understanding of the dangers coming with electronic media.

Greece:

The massive changes in Greece both at a financial, but also a political, social and psychological level have made people face depressive anxieties, but also anxieties about survival. The ties within the Greek family have strengthened. Young people return to live in their parental family homes. People are getting married and having children; 'all children need is love' they say. Members of society...may also feel they need to pass on to the next generation something new.

India:

Most people face the social pressure of sending their children into the most renowned educational institutes, which would invariably be the most expensive one as well. After doing so much for the child, the question arises if we have raised them in a good way.

Ireland:

Put him in touch with the power dynamics across the planet. He described growing up when USA and EU were the centre of the world. Now India is sending missions to the moon, China is going to Mars and Africa is the next emerging power. It is something about trust and control. What will happen to the planet?

Israel:

Our online presence today makes for the end of privacy as we use to know it.

Italy (Rome):

Technology accelerates the pace of change. It's so rapid that it's not human, men are unable to keep up with it, and well-being becomes a must, we no longer look outwards we no longer think. The theme of generational conflict appears from the beginning and it's related to the topic of work. Society is faster than us; anxiety and disorientation overwhelm us in this world after so much inaction.

Italy (Milan):

Uncertainty, puzzlement and incapacity to produce constructive actions were frequently mentioned. Corruption is discussed...macro-social corruption is the most commonly recognised...Besides this, though, the group is worried by the widespread and daily small corruption.

Peru:

The discussion led the group to wonder about what is the role of men now... How to protect loved ones? How to prepare children for different environments to which their parents have lived?

Poland:

Children raised so that they are versatile, prepared for hard times. What will grow from the current generation of 20 year olds, they represent very demanding attitude towards life (worry); they are uncritical to each other, a strong base in parents.

Russia:

Maybe one of the reasons of current situation is what is called Russian Masochism – habit of patience suffering, begging. People think well it's OK that they didn't put me in jail.

Serbia:

The young are in a very challenging situation. They neither possess enough knowledge nor experience and they cannot also find jobs. The young people even when they were given opportunity for professional development and getting scholarships for PhD' degrees did not seem to have feeling for the overall priorities and community good. The lack of dialogue between generations and lack of any attempt to bridge the gap between them. Many people are angry, frustrated and falling down and they are strongly projecting it to the others and the society as a whole.

South Africa:

The young generation experiences poor education and lack of job opportunities.

Spain:

They have been incapable to adapt to and to respond to the needs arising from the globalisation processes, the technological revolutions and the social web communication. Young people can't see a future in our society barely can aspire to find just a precarious job that could satisfy their basic needs in the Maslow's pyramid, nevertheless it seems that they find impossible to transform their worries in actions that could bring change.

Sweden:

Due to the increasingly rapid pace of change and the exposure of many areas of life offered any social and other media, a myth about the need to be productive and successful in every area of life is fostered. Members of society experience this as pressure of time, and by feelings of emptiness and loneliness.

Switzerland:

Technology is ubiquitous. The use of phones and mobile devices for organisation, messaging, leisure including music, games and reading is astronomical. All of which led to an underlying feeling that there is an over-dependence on technology – it is like an addiction. This over-dependence can rupture the fabric of human relationships.

Turkey:

I participated into a parent meeting. I realised that no one refers to their kid with his name, none sees their child. The parents have given up on their kids. Most of the parents compete with the other.

The fast and continuous changes in the education system has led to the feeling that people are helpless, they are clueless about where they are heading, they lost the sense of direction, and they do not have control over their own lives.

UK:

Although the internet makes it easier for people to access knowledge freely, or to download know how information, the idea of learning from another seems lost. The internet is the impersonalised other. Young people may be in a social gathering, yet they spend their whole time talking to or

texting, someone who is not there. Because of the rapid changes globalisation introduces, members of our society feel less in control of their lives and more unable to process the losses they feel they are going through in order to find meaning in their new way of living. This leads to frustration and despair and to a constant feeling of being left out and left behind, which members of our society then try to battle by manically trying to hold on to what they feel is important in a very concrete way; and which in turn leaves them isolated and in further despair.

USA:

This rise in technology contributes to the process of individualisation, fragmentation, disconnection as well as to the rapidity of change that makes connectedness in communities more difficult. Technological advancements have led to a situation where instant communication takes precedence over deep, solid and real communication. The youth were seen in different ways; being unprotected in an age of massive shifts in economic and political power shifts in the global economy, and seen as the hope for the future and the seeds of the revolution.

Hypothesis 2.

In the above Hypothesis the experience of members of societies was that they split off and projected all unbearable thoughts and feelings onto political and other leaders. Among others, they also identified three particular aspects of current society that had a major impact on the disconnectedness of members of society: Change; technology; youth and family. Because of the way these three aspects of society contribute to the experienced hopelessness and helplessness they play a significant part in the disconnectedness of members of societies.

Because new technologies are a significant influence on the depth and speed of change they evoke ambivalent emotions. On the one hand they appear to promise new forms of connectedness; but on the other hand, they are seen to contribute to the process of individualisation, fragmentation and disconnection as well as to the rapidity of change that makes connectedness in communities more difficult.

Because young people can adjust to and use the new technology and seem to cope better with the speed and depth of change, they are identified as being different and are treated as an 'other'. The youth were seen in different ways; being unprotected in an age of massive shifts in economic and political power, shifts in the global economy, and seen as the hope for the future and the seeds of the revolution. This results in the projection and mobilisation of youth; either being denigrated as scapegoats for the ills of society; or being idealised as saviours and Messiahs for the future.

Because of the pace and depth of change members of societies are unable to make sense of their world. No sooner has one major change been identified than another is being experienced almost immediately. 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. The fact that many of these changes are occurring simultaneously and with increasing frequency renders members of societies disempowered, humiliated, paralysed and impotent.

Taken together, these three aspects of society have the effect of hindering connectedness and encouraging individualism and fragmentation: preventing any form of social connectedness.

Analysis and Hypothesis 3. ***An Awakening: the Need for Connectedness.***

Analysis 3.

Because of the pain of isolation and lack of societal and community attachment, as described in Hypothesis 1, members of societies are left feeling impotent, helpless and hopeless. The culture is a simple social system that provides containment in a defensive manner not allowing any opportunity to take risks and be creative. Everything is mainly concerned with survival and that involves splitting off the unbearable thoughts and feelings and projecting them into political and other authority figures.

A result is that members of societies are left with no ownership of the challenges that currently face them. They are impotent, disempowered and paralysed preventing any form of social connectedness. It seems that a result of the reflective process of the Listening Posts has, however, caused members of society to consider their position. As one Report (Finland) stated: 'we had progressed from being

individuals to being a group'. There was also an evident shift to depressive position thinking whereby all Reports refer to a realisation that it is only they who can change their societies, that splitting and other defensive behaviour from the paranoid schizoid position will only perpetuate the individualistic experiences.

After many years when it has not seemed possible for members of societies to contemplate owning and taking their own authority for making sense of the current and future dynamics of their societies there now seems a kind of 'awakening', a realisation that they need to be involved in creating the way forward. This ranges from ambivalence and questioning how they can avoid self-censorship to move forward; and why they are passive.

Others are more confident stating a resolute desire to take action, to work things out, while others simply want to become involved. Many speak of what is referred to as developing intermediate groupings or small battles and taking the risk to try to change their closer environment, of doing something much closer to home. Members of societies are beginning to develop alternative networks as a means of connection that they feel will lead to connectivity. Constructive forces have become stronger leading to the connection necessary for achievement; while others are making the time to think and reflect together. Above all others are recognising the basic need for group interaction, or put in Bion's terms: we are group animals.

All in all there is increased awareness of the need today, in our time of unprecedented change and uncertainty, to develop meaningful relationships and to work together collaboratively. This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

Argentina:

Preoccupied with the future and what the future holds for next generation of citizens and how citizens can participate in changing future. Sterile fight of politician's desire for connectedness. The group was quite conscious about the danger of managing risk and the big division in between the social the private areas.

Australia:

A theme on community and connectedness threaded through the discussion. Personal reactions to (such) government policy changes included denial disbelief and ambivalence 'I don't know whether to mobilise or walk away'.

Bulgaria:

I want to act, but I feel passive and voiceless. I am expecting my concrete form for my citizenship potential to emerge, to appear. Goliath is not the state but the majority of people. The tensions between the individual and the majority. A desire for connection emerges but it is still latent (covered defended) or transferred (projected) to some authority figures.

Canada:

We wondered what is this 'me' that I desire to be and what is the relation of subjectivity to the making of a good society. The pressure to mirror 'acceptable ways to be', continually self-censoring, always being careful not to exercise a freedom that would embarrass or return at some future time. If this self is experienced as constrained and without freedoms, how are we to animate our desire to 'be' and further, how are we to articulate a shared collective exchange. It is quite difficult not to be narcissistically self-preoccupied or withdraw in defence. The struggle for collective thought and action, the struggle of grappling with the current state of governance, causes the individual some difficulty in maintaining a sense of integration.

Chile:

It may be that achieving certainty means that citizens need to move forward from the transit of relations of dependence and independence, to the establishment of interdependent links where individuals can create intermediate groupings capable of solving individual and collective needs in community and solidarity. The complexity of Chilean society hinders individuals from participating in and feeling integrated to it.

Denmark:

The traditional demonization of certain persons and groups is on the way out. The consequence is not peace and quiet, but an underlying anxiousness which makes survival peoples first priority. The nation succumbs to anxiety and trembling. The political leadership has no idea of direction or vision,

Estonia:

An individual wants to be part of a larger community. We are collectively creating new needs for ourselves constantly. After that, we start to pursue them. The basic need to be accepted into a group.

Faroe Islands:

But we are also part of our community ourselves, and when will we regulate our own behaviour? There is no authentic meeting between people, and thus no effort to reach each other, to find common ground. The human interaction is crippled. Charity and brotherly love are being challenged. Loneliness is dominating. The community is increasingly superficial.

Finland:

LP we had progressed from being individuals to being a group. From being smothered with selfishness and envy to people needing other people in coping with their surroundings. Development also requires interaction among people.

France:

The pressure of the instant makes it difficult to meet commitments, social disengagement, social activities perceived as not being sufficiently engaging on a personal basis, and therefore a low solidarity beyond one's own tribe. There is no room for debate. Dissatisfaction is expressed in the street and can reach such a high level that there is only violence left to be heard. There is a real withdrawal from society. The social and political life, the notion of living together are disappearing.

Germany (Frankfurt):

In the group process a tendency towards depression or crippling grief might well have become predominant. Annoyance and indignation were the reactions but not to a destructive extent. On the contrary there developed a resolute desire to take action, to work things out. There was a definite need to ascertain one's capacity to take action, to define personal scope, shake off dependence. This may well have been expression of that unsolvable oscillation between experiences of helplessness and recapture of freedom to take action that is seen as a new challenge.

Germany (Berlin):

The group discussed why individuals – in spite of an enormous pressure for change – remain passive instead of actively shaping their social contexts and why a claim to change the world is so difficult to transfer into the personal environment. It was guessed that it is a wish of personal wellbeing, which leads members of society to see the society functioning and themselves as not being responsible. This helps forgetting that, confronted with the complexities of the world, the individual feels helpless, overwhelmed and not able to contribute to the necessary changes.

Greece:

The rage that had been expressed in public squares was ignored and people were burdened with measures that were felt to be unbearable. Very importantly they were burdened with unbearable guilt. Collective actions have not worked at a political level. On a hopeful note there was evidence that the constructive forces have become stronger and that something that we cannot yet see clearly is emerging.

India:

Hypocrisy is now noticeable, in the form of fight for a change, yet concerning only with themselves, in the smaller systems, be it individuals, or the media. And hence, complacency is noted to fight the small battles that one would need to go through to see through a larger aimed good. Expecting that the society would or should change without going through a little personal drill is having a different standard for action and expectation. Wanting to live in the already existing comfort zone, we give in to the unsaid and unnoticed societal demands which might be the cause of the ills.

Ireland:

The lack of protest in Ireland emerged again....we are too preoccupied with survival and that makes me very sad....perhaps we only become active when events become personal and impinge on our survival. Increasing narrative encourages us away from a belief in the shared responsibility of the community/society into taking up an individual responsibility for our own place in society and our own survival.

If we can persuade ourselves to take time to think and reflect together, we can perhaps feel more confident in an alternative model.

Israel:

There was discussion about what constituted connection. There was ambivalence around this with the feeling that connection could be prison like and suffocating. Distance leads to longing for connection but actual connection results in friction and sparks. Questions were raised as to the degree of connection each person felt to society and country. The tension between the need for separation as required for creativity and the idealisation of connection as necessary for achievement was expressed.

Italy (Rome):

Cross cutting discomfort involves...those who have a work with a feeling that there are not parts of themselves involved in it, observing the change with a feeling of powerlessness. They are searching for external causes to make the conflict physiological, far from personal responsibility They also experience the risk of falling down into an ambiguous situation, ending up in an impasse, forced in a passive situation. What can I do, by myself? The task is bringing back inside what they have placed outside. We gave up our personal responsibility, ethics is a form of personal responsibility.

Italy (Milan):

Collective responsibilities remain there and have to be tackled in different and more useful ways. The lack of action is so relevant that the group speaks of collective irresponsibility: the lack of action is related to a lack of social and collective responsibility.

Peru:

In this context the chosen leaders (political, social and religious) are seen only as a solution provider to 'my problem' but not as builders of a common vision and identity.

Poland:

Narcissistic focus on self. I cannot be alone no stimulus. The despair and loneliness; many people do not maintain true, a close relationship.

Russia:

Blaming others our way of protection. There is not a unifying idea of change in the society and as a result disunity in the Russian society was search of common, pessimism and depressive background. Hope and fear are fighting in our minds. We need to develop and not to be dragged back into the depths of the Stone Age. Society is ready to change.

Serbia:

We are always leaning on society, state and institutions. We need to become aware that we were the only ones responsible for ourselves. Once we would realise that we are not so helpless. She shared a very strong impression that there is no society and that there is no sense of community and social – there is no value system and no rules. It was noticed that we were looking for a way out in personal accountability.

South Africa:

We seem to be destined to live in splits of pride and shame, freedom and imprisonment, doing the right thing versus acting out, having a voice and being silenced and intimidated, rebellion versus compliance. For some citizens this implies liberation and new beginnings where they can become more independent in taking their own walk to freedom, create new possibilities and connections.

Spain:

It seems that there is a higher awareness of the own responsibility on each life. There is an empowerment at different spheres of the people's life, where as a response to the lack of authority and leadership, individually, people takes the risk to try to change their closer environment, tries to undertake new projects or to rebel themselves against organisations and leaders.

Sweden:

In a situation with increasing mobility and emphasis on individuality, production and efficiency, members of society tend to experience deeper relationships with others, that is, being part of a community, as risky, since relationships cannot be trusted, and energy spent on community does not go towards working on the individual projects.

Switzerland:

Due to the destruction and sense of hopelessness of the world, people escape is by being fully involved in something much closer to home – family, a job, volunteering for a cause. This absorption in something close gives a sense of meaning, creativity, of belonging and of fulfilment despite the broader struggles of society. The rootedness in family provides a buffer against external destruction and also strengthens individuals' sense of self and sense of resilience.

Turkey:

The society has been divided into those support the government and those that do not. Our people are opportunistic. Most of the things are profit and chair driven. People change direction just to reach a level, gain a position. In the past everyone supported the oppressed, now they all go with the strong. Everyone is longing for luxury, earning without paying much effort. No reaction, no belief, no values. There is something strange. We were apolitical and all of a sudden we feel compelled to take a

political stance. We do not know where to go and what for to go there. Who will we hold onto? Who will we trust?

UK:

Perhaps what was difficult to think about was the despair of people having to go along with a solution of damage limitation rather than a solution that is felt to be the best possible. How could such a solution be arrived at? Can citizens contribute to this solution? Perhaps what was mourned and needed re-inventing was the role of leadership and citizenship. Can we be awake to changes and be part of them? Can we claim our role and responsibility as citizens so that we can contribute to those changes and process them, with the view of finding meaning for our lives in this changing world?

USA:

We continue to be defeated by our own inner psychic dynamics. This utter feeling of helplessness and anger and disillusionment towards the authority for not protecting us creates a sense that we need to move beyond our complacency. We need to find a connection that is outside of ourselves and understand the deeper meaning to life I believe in us and I believe in change. Connectedness looks different now and people are beginning to develop alternative networks as a means of connection. There is increased awareness of the need today in our time of unprecedented change and uncertainty, to develop meaningful relationships and to work together collaboratively. There is increased awareness of the need today, in our time of unprecedented change and uncertainty, to develop meaningful relationships and to work together collaboratively.

Hypothesis 3.

Because of the pain of isolation and lack of societal and community attachment, as described in Hypothesis 1, members of societies are left feeling impotent, helpless and hopeless. The main concern is that of survival and that involves splitting off the unbearable thoughts and feelings and projecting them into political and other authority figures.

A result is that members of societies are left with no ownership of the challenges that currently face them. They are impotent, disempowered and paralysed preventing any form of social connectedness. Something that seems to have occurred through the reflective process of the Listening Post and which is reflected in the National Reports was an evident shift to depressive position thinking whereby there is a realisation that it is only they who can change their societies; that splitting and other defensive behaviour from the paranoid schizoid position will only perpetuate the individualistic experiences. There now seems a kind of 'awakening', a realisation that they need to be involved in creating the way forward.

All in all there is increased awareness of the need today, in our time of unprecedented change and uncertainty, to develop meaningful relationships and to work together collaboratively.

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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.

The overall dynamic is still similar to that of previous years where members of societies are dominated by feelings of impotence, helplessness and hopelessness, resulting in a necessary retreat to individualism and an avoidance of connectedness to community or society. The culture is a simple social system that provides containment in a defensive manner not allowing any opportunity to take risks and be creative. Everything is concerned with survival and that involves splitting off the unbearable thoughts and feelings and projecting them into political and other authority figures. A result is that members of societies are left with no ownership of the challenges that currently face them. This, in turn, serves to perpetuate the isolation and individualistic approach as a means of survival.

However, this year there was an evident shift to depressive position thinking whereby all Reports refer to a realisation that it is only they who can change their societies, that splitting and other defensive behaviour from the paranoid schizoid position will only perpetuate the individualistic experiences. After many years when it has not seemed possible for members of societies to contemplate owning and taking their own authority for making sense of the current and future dynamics of their societies there now seems a kind of 'awakening', a realisation that they need to be involved in creating the way forward. There is increased awareness of the need today, in our time of unprecedented change and uncertainty, to develop meaningful relationships and to work together collaboratively

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 still leading to the development of a new way of life and a new culture which is still far from evident as to what this new life will be like.