

**"Bulgaria and the World
at the Dawn of 2008"**
Report of a Listening Post



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Identified Roles and Issues

Out of the role of a parent: can I meet my rapidly growing children's needs for both autonomy and care at the same time? Out of the role of a grand-mother – a longing for the distant grand-child living abroad because of the still dissatisfying local conditions here.

Out of the professional role:

- a just graduating clinical social worker, pitying over the recognition of the fact that this so much wanted expertise is still unavailable for many poor people (chronically mentally ill people for example) who mostly need such a service.
- a school psychologist already competing for important assignments with others peers publicly. Surprised by her competitiveness and disappointed by her own resort to corruption for the sake of winning a competition.

Out of the role of a leisurer/tourist:

- the mountain and a country side house are the real alternative of the urban 'city', where un-correctness, ruthless competition and corruption reign.

Out of the role of a public/civil actor:

- National school teachers' strike participant – a blend of feeling of solidarity and mutual control between strikers;
- Technical assistant in local election voting commission: a feeling of having to choose between the roles of a victim or a violator.
- Citizen and state experience each other as enemies. Some people discover their own attitudes toward violation of some public rules (such as driving code) or proclivity to bribe public officials. Drivers and pedestrians are considered enemies too.

The role of an owner and carer for some small home pets (dogs, cats) – a new role that brings new and astonishing learning experiences.

It the role of an academic administrator – a farewell with
some illusions for academic correctness and loyalty.

Main themes identified

1. Corruption. The State is an enemy.
2. People are free to enter multiple new roles. There are however factors (financial, social, emotional etc.) which scare us and prevent us from profiting fully from the choices available.
3. There is a wish to obtain a desired professional identity without being compelled to make compromises in the name of material incomes.
4. The pleasure, the leisure and spontaneous play are outside 'labor' and 'everyday life'. Only there (in mountain for example) one can find a space for reflexivity and thought.
5. In order to be able to express aggression one has to choose between the roles of the aggressor and the victim only available.
6. Motherhood.
7. Professional solidarity.
8. Development and resistance to development.
9. Ethics still remains out of public scope. Who is the agent that brings this topic into public attention? What makes things moral?
10. Loneliness.
11. Other's envy towards our own achievements. Some achievements lead to separation with some illusions of ours.

Analysis and hypothesis creation

Analysis:

Participants' social experience is marked by new roles and/or new experiences in some well known social roles. An increased personal authority of participants is noticeable:

- frequent and self-assertive interaction with public authorities,
- personal initiatives and autonomous projects in areas of increased professional skills and knowledge which many of participants aspire for long time).

A word that can describe this but, quite interestingly, misses is 'achievements'.

Hypothesis 1:

The lack of this concept which would correctly describe a large part of shared social experience can be caused by a process of unconscious avoidance. A possible motive for such avoidance could be social actors' vulnerability in their role of citizens-with-achievements. In a way similar to small domestic pets or new born babies these otherwise social achievements are kept apart from the 'outside' envy and jealousy in the safer environment of the 'domestic', the internal and the known.

Hypothesis 2:

The care we can offer for our social achievements is from the 'maternal' than the 'paternal' register of object relations. This can be explained with both our achievements'

very young 'age' and fragility and with the lack of reliable channels for social communication and social support of these same achievements.

Analysis:

The social environment we inhabit and co-create makes us insecure for the fate of our own attainments: this environment seems toxic with envy and lack of capacity for proper thought. A corrupt state is ruling there. We are longing for spaces where social order is simple and predictable.

Hypothesis:

Our relations with our own social achievements are marked with ambivalent emotions of joy and pride and envy, guilt, shame and fear. We are dealing with the later by constructing social realities where the bad is attributed to many of the public actors and institutions, thus turning them 'bad'.

Another defense mechanism we resort to in order to preserve our own good achievements is by masking them, hiding and/or devaluing our own development in order not to attract the 'dark' forces attention. This makes us looking as if favoring predominantly domestic, local, familial roles and problems and to seem estranged from some larger, 'foreign' (and global) social agendas.

Convener: Rumen Petrov