

## "Greenland and the World at the Dawn of 2008"



### Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

#### Part 1. THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

In this part of The Listening Post the 37 participants were invited to identify, contribute and explore their experiences in their various social roles, be those in work, in the family, as members of political, religious and neighbourhood organisations, that is the external social life. This part was largely concerned with people's experience of every day life in the society, now, before and in the future.

#### Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

In this part the participants divided into smaller groups to identify the major themes coming up in part 1. The three group's results were very similar. The following major themes came up:

A. Language and culture are dividing people into groups with different status. It is of high value to be able to speak Danish. It is a sign of disrespect not learn to speak Greenlandic. It is part of 'greenlandising' to change the language of administration from Danish into Greenlandic.

B. Personal histories were told, illustrating how ones life has changed from ones parents traditional lifestyle to a life, where one speaks Danish, is educated and has different ways of working and earning a living. Many were occupied with thoughts about cultural values from the past and in the future. The same development that has taken hundreds of years in Denmark has taken place in a very short time in Greenland and this has left people in a vacuum searching for the values of the future.

C. Differences between cultures, within Greenland and between Greenland and Denmark were seen both as a possibility of diversity and as a threat to values and identity. Many people are of mixed ethnic heritage and may see it as a dilemma inside them or see it as an advantage.

D. There are serious problems in the society in regard to taking care of children. Some children are left on there own and lately a school was subjected to vandalism by children. What are children telling us through this behaviour? It was a theme whether or not this society has economic resources to do something for these children and their families and if the social system is at all able to manage. It was questioned, if things happening in Greenland are better or worse than things happening in Denmark.

E. 'Greenlandising' was a major theme which came up several times. Participants were talking about difficulties in Greenland comparing these with other countries, especially Denmark. 'Greenlandising' has to do with language, history, education, values and new

possibilities due to oil drilling rights and mineral rights, which could make Greenland a rich country. It was very hard to put any characteristics to a more Greenlandic Greenlander. Will values be past-like or future-like? It was questioned, if a unified culture in Greenland is at all possible or wanted.

### **Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION**

#### **Analysis and Hypothesis 1**

**Analysis:** Different cultures are seen as states in a development, where the Danish culture is the most developed and different Greenlandic cultures have different status. This means some dependency and striving to be like the 'better' ones, but also experiencing devaluation leading to protest and wanting to develop in a Greenlandic way. This ambivalence is expressed in different ways: Ambivalence about education, technology and values from other cultures. This will destroy the Greenlandic culture, but is also wanted and necessary. Thinking that these things from other cultures are positive for the individual but destructive for the society is creating an inner conflict in people and a conflict between people and between people and politicians. Politicians have lost their sense of people's needs and desires.

**Hypothesis:** 'Greenlandising' is a mantra, containing an elusive dream. It also contains anxiety of realising the dream about independence and 'Greenlandising' through education, oil-drilling and mineral rights and economic richness. It is unknown which way this dream will take Greenland, and if people want it, will accept it and will manage it.

#### **Analysis and Hypothesis 2**

**Analysis:** Danes are seeing Greenland as a place, where parents and society is not able to bring up the next generation in a proper way. It is also a place, where guests are met with kindness and generosity. Green-landers are seeing Danes as somebody with a higher status due to their language and as somebody who do not want to learn the local language and thereby showing their disrespect. There is ambivalence and conflict about dependence/independence.

**Hypothesis:** This sense of hierarchy between cultures is kept alive through interdependency. By sticking to the pictures of 'the powerful helper' (the good parental authority) and 'the dependent, who want to be independent, but is short of resources' (the teenager who want liberation but still isn't confident enough) we are both freed from responsibility and guilt. Danes are denying responsibility and guilt about destructiveness resulting from imperialism through the picture of themselves as helpers and Greenlanders still incapable. Green-landers are denying responsibility for own development through the picture of themselves as dominated by Danes and struggling for freedom. Both hope and anxiety are kept alive as long as nothing is changed. We are waiting for the revolt.

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