

"Finland and the World at the Dawn of 2009"

Report of a Listening Post
held on 12th January



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Part 1. THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

In this part of the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experience in their various social roles, be those in work, unemployed, or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood or 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,' that relating to the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

- 250 people died in Gaza, what should I think about this?
- HS (a national newspaper) reported that the government productivity programme has produced nothing more than ill-being and made the conditions even worse. What should I think about this? Powerlessness is gaining ground.
- Are we greedy, have we lost the ability to be moderate?
- I no longer subscribe to Helsingin Sanomat. The National Agency for Medicines will move from Helsinki to Kuopio. Helsingin Sanomat is against this. What and whom does Hesari stand for in the first place? I visited Israel at the end of November. After the journey, I began to think about the history of the Jewish people. They always cause something terrible to happen. One of them said that God has promised them that land. What can you say?
- Economic supremacy
- The vortex of evil continues. How grateful we should be for living in Finland.
- What happened in Kauhajoki and Jokela was confusing (shootings). How can things like that happen in Finland? Confusing incidences.
- Indecisiveness, what can I do? How am I led by my own ego? Where do I draw the line? What is enough? It is important to calm oneself down. We have already lost ourselves.
- Where is fairness?
- We live surrounded by our desires. It is not need that prevails but desire – we are incapable of showing empathy.

- What is the turning point that makes the victim guilty and / or a guilty person the victim?
- Lack of collectiveness. I have different experiences about this. I was invited to a facebook. I joined in and wondered why people show so much empathy and sympathy there. I found the Internet – a place with playfulness and understanding.
- We are educated through afternoon paper headlines.
- 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.
- The evolution theory was discussed at the Science Forum.
- Students from top universities have complained about not being listened to.
- Experience about an occasion where the theme was fear but which did not discuss it at all.
- Organisations know how to do basic work but are too exhausted to do anything else. There should be a Peace at Work declaration.
- My mother received surprisingly good care in the hospital, I was really surprised. There was a male nurse there. My mother said that there was only platonic love between them. Surprising things happen.
- “I would not be here” if the Finnish healthcare system was not in order. I would already have died five times. I constantly here people complain loudly about the situation with health care. My experiences about it are different.
- Discussions about genes. I cannot eat, because food is so poisonous!
- Why are negative scenarios poured in? It is words that make the reality.
- A teacher asked pupils' parents why he/she should intervene when boys trip / tease girls. The parents began to joke about this. Why do people turn serious things into jokes? It is hard to stand or face the truth seriously.
- It is interest how short a time people were interested in what happened in Kauhajoki and Jokela. In January, people had already forgotten Jokela. How much do we want to know? How much can we really help? Professional help was poorly organised.
- People are enemies to each other. Or?
- Traumas pass from one generation to another.

- The things that happened in Jokela and Kauhajoki raised the question of caring about others.
- Leaving people alone. Do we give support packages when the question is of something else?
- Does evolution bring in collectiveness?
- What if everything collapses. What does it mean to me? I am worried about the system. What happens if it collapses?
- An author/man withdrew, read books for a couple of months, did not listen to news. When he returned, he felt that he knew more.
- I read Sofi Oksanen's book PUHDISTUS (PURIFICATION). An important book that influenced me a lot.
- How could I get hold of my working rhythm? What could inspire me? Where could I get energy? I have back pain. Difficult to sit. What if there is no cure to it? What then?
- I listened to Anna-Maija Lehto's presentation – the meaningfulness of work is disappearing.
- Problems get worse when we pay attention to them.
- Let's be happy.
- It is important that we long for collectiveness.

Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

In Part 2 the aim was for us to collectively identify the major themes emerging from Part 1.

1. Experiences about new situations make people confused about what to think

The question is of a new psychological situation characterised by the difficulty to distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong. Confusion is often accompanied by guiltiness, helplessness and fear. Those having committed violent acts in Jokela and Gaza, for example, were in the end victims, too.

2. The position of media as an information channel has become more prominent. The information is too one-sided and controversial

Citizens' confidence about society interpreting reality and providing a shelter is fading away.

3. Citizens' experiences about 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 is becoming poorer although the standard of living is rising.

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the members were working with the information resulting from Parts One and Two, 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 the members 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.

Group B: Leila Keski-luopa – hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The experienced reality has revealed a major twist in the self-understanding of western society: human intelligence has been idealised and nature has been suppressed for use by man. The twist has revealed itself through its consequences.

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. Measures and choices introduced to promote development have also led to negative consequences that could not be anticipated. For centuries western culture has been characterised by a tradition in which the freedom of the individual and the role of knowledge have been regarded as the guarantee of success and through which one has trusted in the ability of man to control life and solve all problems. Now the drawbacks of the tradition have been revealed and have proved an illusion.

Hypothesis 2: Anxiety that shows in a variety of forms can be seen as the consequence of admiring the freedom of the individual, as the one-sided emphasis of personal freedom has resulted in loneliness, insecurity and marginalisation.

Mixed with feelings of guiltiness, anxiety, helplessness and insecurity seem to have increased dramatically (cf. depression and marginalisation), as the increased freedom of the individual has increased the burden of responsibility experienced by him. He has no authorities that would represent parenthood and help him interpret the reality. Instead 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.

Hypothesis 3: 'The circle of evil' The risk in the mutual interaction between the individual and society is an accumulation phenomenon: the way of interpreting reality reinforces itself in the collective mirror (cf. above). It requires active collective self-reflection in order to break loose from the circle and to reverse the direction.

People's observations are selective so his conception of the world is based on what he pays attention to and what from perspective he looks at things. The risk in the mutual interaction between the individual and society is the accumulation phenomenon: the way of interpreting reality reinforces itself in the collective mirror. It can be concluded from the above that a collective conception of the world in which the main scene has been given to the 'evil' represents a biased, one-sided view of reality. Adjusting the picture calls for active self-reflection and an attempt to also look at the situation from the perspective of 'the good:'

Hypothesis 4: 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:

- people have become better aware of their vulnerability (better able to show empathy and gratefulness)
- people have become more aware of their own responsibility (better able to show healthy guiltiness)
- people are better aware of their dependence on nature (better able to pursue constructive cooperation in the face of a common threat)
- a common 'net language' (English) promotes the ability of citizens to communicate worldwide (the world becomes smaller, strange people become more familiar, a feeling of collectiveness ('we are in the same boat') increases)

Group A: Marianne Tensing – hypotheses

Hypothesis 5: Inability to accept a picture of man where good and the evil would be present in the same person, even me. I lack the ability to recognise and understand (or I find it intolerable) that these two characteristics are always present in me, too. The evil should not be sought from Gaza or Hamas, as it is present in various forms very close, even in me. People talk about the lack of empathy, at the same time generating this lack.

It is necessary that one accepts a picture of man in which good and the evil are the different aspects of the same person (group, organisation, party etc.) in order to be able to start doing something about it. This would make life better.

Hypothesis 6: The phenomenon of our time. A disapproving attitude towards vulnerability, incompetence and ignorance. Why? Incapability to withstand one's own helplessness is increasing all the time. Paradox: there are more actors than ever to offer help. Helplessness is viewed as something beyond us. The ability to withstand helplessness does not develop.

Hypothesis 7: The role and position of women in society has changed. Women participate more in public decision-making. Women occupy the most prominent positions in social life. Unfortunately women identify themselves with the masculine way of action.

Women try to escape from the role of giving support in times of distress, pain, misery, vulnerability and helplessness. This role is not rewarding. Men do not yet assume or share this role visibly. Role changes are evolving slowly, though positive signs can be seen.

Conveners Group A: Harri Hyypia and Marianne Tensing

Conveners Group B: Leila Keski-Luopa, Jukka-Pekka Heikkilä and Tim Totro