

**"Manchester and the World - 2010"**  
Report of a Listening Post  
held in Manchester in June



**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 experiences in their various social roles, (work, unemployment, retirement, religious, political, neighbourhood, voluntary, leisure organisations, or as members of families and communities). This part was largely concerned with people's everyday life experiences, as it related to the 'socio' or 'external lives' of the participants.

**Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES**

In this part, the aim was to collectively identify the major themes which had emerged from Part 1.

- Guilt and shame about not doing enough to make a difference.
- Global concerns v local focus – we move between the two. A consequence of the dominance of big political events is a disconnection from real concerns and a perceived inability to act in a local, informal environment.
- Self interest, individualised preoccupations v collective focus.
- The collective viewed as desirable v 'circling the wagons', withdrawing to a more comfortable, personal/familial arena.
- Capacity to influence (politically) v feeling impotent, unwilling and/or unable to acknowledge a sense of responsibility wider than our own personal concerns.
- Potency: recent political events give us an opportunity of joining with others to express shared concerns, though this desire for connection (not demonising or splitting) gets diverted into political rhetoric.
- Impotence and withdrawal: we feel impotent because we doubt our abilities, can't connect with 'Nicky and Davy' (of the new coalition government) because we didn't vote for them, and we forget the enlivening effect of making connections.

**Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION**

In this part of the Listening Post, members were working with the information resulting from Parts 1 & 2 with a view to collectively identifying the underlying conscious and

unconscious dynamics that might be predominant at the time, and developing an hypothesis as to why they might be occurring at that moment.

### **Analysis and Hypothesis**

**Analysis:** Election and government – identify with the North, rather than the South, watching with interest and apprehension. It felt liberating for the few days when we didn't know who was running the country. Things carried on. Feeling dissociated from the new Government, a 'Them' who will impose unacceptable realities, feel suspicious of a soft message like 'big society', remembering what it was like under the last Conservative Government. What will they make me do, and what may I do voluntarily?

Global, local – There is a tension in feeling responsibility for wider, global issues, wanting the trappings of wealth in western society, so we are linked to eg BP, yet feel horrified about the environmental impact of the oil leak. I recently watched a film about tar sands in Canada. It's one more thing to worry about. As an individual, it's hardly bearable to think about, I feel guilty, it's on my list of eco things to worry about. Those who take aid ships to Gaza are doing something.

Withdrawing to local, self interest – facilitating a group of civil servants who have been directed to 'look after yourself' rather than focus on programmes. Studying anglers and angling clubs which comprise older and fewer members than in the past. There are negative views about the younger generation who are not coming through. In contrast, in Australia, where I come from, many people volunteer as lifeguards, unpaid on Sundays, going beyond self interest. Feeling quite content in my own company, not feeling particularly linked into the local community, then shocked to hear another Listening Post participant refer to someone (anonymously) that I also know. This is about a neighbour having a relationship outside marriage, in itself a shocking disruption to assumptions about a couple happily married.

Survival and startling images or information (linked with above) – Saw the image of a bird covered in oil in US. Will it be saved or will it die? It's remarkable that it is alive, a symbol of hope in despair. On the radio was the news story of the helicopter pilot who remarkably survived when he was shot because his helmet took the impact of the bullet. The helmet was on display. In the Don Mucullen (war photographer) exhibition at the Imperial War Museum North his camera with a bullet wound was on display. He could have been killed several times but wasn't. Will the anglers clubs survive? Will our neighbours' marriage survive?

**Hypothesis:** We feel disconnected, which leads to insularity, because acting in a connected way feels dangerous or too difficult OR We oscillate between experiencing connectedness and withdrawing; the movement triggered by feeling overwhelmed by our impotence to influence large scale issues. We are preoccupied with what and who is absent which makes it hard to be aware of what is alive OR We feel pessimistic about what will survive and so we are startled when we see signs of hope.

**Conveners:** Clare Allen and Myna Trustram