

**"Norway and the World
at the Dawn of 2007"
Report of a Listening Post
held on 10th 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. This part was concerned with what might be called 'the stuff of people's everyday lives' that related to the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

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

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the members were working with the information resulting from Parts 1 & 2, 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.

Analysis and Hypothesis 1

Analysis:

The members of the Norwegian LP started reflecting on our vast environmental challenges. At the dawn of 2007 Norway is one of the most wealthiest countries in the world. We are a rich people, still the citizens are increasingly anxious for the kind of planet we leave for the generations-to-come. The authorities do not seem to deal with the environmental challenges in a sustainable way. Greenhouse emission, the global heating and the pollution leave a strong feeling of "something" out of control. We are facing mild, rainy winters instead of a cold climate with snow. A fresh United Nations report indicates that we, the human beings ourselves, create the dramatic change of climate. Norwegian politicians generally agree that "something" needs to be done, but authorities and capitalists on the one hand and members of the environmental movement on the other hand, disagree about the necessity of rapid action.

New Public Management influences the way of thinking and acting in the public sector. It is a paradox that many elderly citizens in the welfare state of Norway experience a lack of health care. Elderly people who no longer are able to take care of themselves in their

home, are entitled to a daily home service. Health personnel come in once or twice a day. This kind of service is provided for by the municipal authorities. All elderly citizens have a legal right for care in their own home or in an institution. After a pilot project in time studies last year in Oslo we call it "stop watch care". Each piece of the physical work is calculated and steer the time available in each home. There is no time for just being with the elderly person, for small talk or comfort. Social activities are not valued in the method. The basic assumptions of an efficient health sector brings about associations to Taylorism, and the means utilized to increase the industrial production. Citizens are feeling powerless and the situation is unworthy. Also in another area of public health, citizens experiences lack of care. Patients with permanent sufferings have to fight for their right to treatment. One can put the question if there is space for elderly citizens and citizens with permanent sufferings in a modern society.

Hypothesis

There is a lack of will and empathy to reconsider the way of life even if we are fully aware of the damage high consumption may lead to. The Norwegians enjoy their high consumption. At the same time there is also disgrace connected to the high consumption. We are proud and ashamed. We passively observe the evolution of an individual society not capable to take responsibility for a sustainable development on behalf of the group. There is a growing distance between those who rule and the common citizen. There is a feeling of helplessness in the society. We worship the successful young man or woman and feel embarrassed for elderly people.

Analysis and Hypothesis 2

Analysis:

The new computer generation of workers know no limit. The boundaries between work life and home/private life are vanishing. Researchers name organizations as seductive. The job is fun for young people and new technology makes it possible to work from home or from any other place with a network. The upside is easy to see, the seduction is a kind of freedom to each individual where to work, when to work, how many hours to work, and so on. Numerous surveys uncover that many employees work 18 hours a day. The downside is that people in their first thirties tend to get burned-out. And their leaders are as young and "hungry" as the employees. There is something heroic about the guy who works at all hours. Work environment is suffering from lack of focus on social-psychological phenomena.

Big organizations and enterprises turn into smaller units and clear the road for more and more project organizing. The traditional hierarchic organization does not supply enough flexibility. The citizens are at a doubt of whom to turn to with their problems and their needs. Leadership in such organizations is often accidental.

As an alternative to working within vast organizations many citizens start small businesses based on a speciality in their niche. The need for long term commitment has changed over some years.

Hypothesis

The complicated and changing dynamics in society influenced by global economy nourish structures and work systems which threaten the Scandinavian democracy model. The tradition of involving employees in decision making (employers and labour democracy) is

under pressure as our business partners in the global economy experience this system as an exotic state of the art. The lack of firm leadership leaves people bewildered. The technological challenges leave people with a feeling of incompetence. Some of the citizens react by getting ill. Others react turning to political parties with a clear right-wing preference.

Analysis and Hypothesis 3

Analysis

In the individualistic society many citizens focus on their own health, on friendship, joy in life, job and family. Although there is an increasingly number of citizens being single, not having a partner in life, there is a tendency to define success as living in a close family; mother, father and 2-3 children. This challenges the single citizen who may feel that he or she is lacking something in the eyes of society. To have a happy life, a single person needs to be grounded and know his/her own values. The "glamour" society has a strong impact upon families, upon earnings and how you motivate your children to participate in all kind of sports and social events.

On the other hand there is a great concern about the number of citizens on social security. As a nation we need to increase awareness of taking responsibility in our own life. What do you want and how can you contribute? This is about values and making choices. If we open ourselves up, we can see the light and get better lives. Many citizens open themselves to humanitarian organizations who experience a will to contribute amongst the citizens and companies with social responsibility.

The citizens tend to be less religious in the traditional sense of meaning. Our belief in the Holy Bible is decreasing. The Bible was written in ancient times. There are other channels to belief. God in human beings is in transformation. Human beings seek the divine within themselves yearning for life itself in addition to the spiritual dimension. There is a spiritual longing for understanding the dogmatic within Islamism and Christianity. All nations protect their culture and fear involvement from other cultures. There is an anxiety that we as citizens will create many conflicts due to our lack of understanding and accept of other people. It is heartbreaking to view the conditions in the Middle East and in Somalia, not to speak of the conditions in Afghanistan and Caucasus.

Hypothesis

The multi-cultural society highlights existential issues as who we are and what we want in life. There is a lack of understanding of the diversity in our society. When citizens are anxious that the characteristics of their origin and culture will get lost, they are incapable of feeling the pleasure of diversity. The relationship to others, the experiences with different belief society are often influenced by anxiety. There is a lack of will to meet people with another God than our own. How we treat ourselves and others with or within our group, is important to have a good life. We need to start with ourselves. We often find it difficult to contribute to the lives of other people if our own lives are inadequate.

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