

**"Denmark and the World  
at the Dawn of 2010"  
Report of a Listening Post  
held in 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.

**Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES**

In Part 2 the aim was to collectively identify the major themes emerging from Part 1. From several presented these have been drawn together under the following three interrelated themes:

1. **Authority and Political Leadership**
2. **Fear of extermination and the end of the world**
3. **New problems, new possibilities**

**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.

**Analysis and Hypothesis 1**

*Authority and Political Leadership*

**Analysis:** People find it difficult to act and express them politically. Journalists might be critical on a daily basis, but they do not pursue a case in depth and end up going after persons instead of the problem and after the game rather than society. The government's policy is antirational: they do not care about facts and professional

knowledge, but give in to opinion polls. No one feels obliged to go against immediate emotional reactions with arguments and knowledge.

The media disregard demonstrators' banners and only report what a small number of troublemakers are doing. People feel pestered by evaluation forms, systems of accreditations and other kinds of depersonalized authority. 9-year-olds are supposed to evaluate themselves. Children are unsure of their parents' authority in relation to themselves. An otherwise peacefully minded participant expressed an urge again to turn to throwing cobblestones or at least to reinventing creative forms of action. An industrial worker missed a desk to hammer his fist onto and referred to Lucy's shop in the comic strip *Peanuts* without mentioning that Lucy was selling psychiatric help for a dime. The political sphere seems to be cut off from ordinary peoples' world and political acts seem to be a matter for the individual in relation to a psychiatrist. The young ones struggle with themselves doing exercises, following diets and taking slimming drugs – self discipline takes over the role as the person's governing authority, rebellion has become an inner process. Party politics are boring. One is only informed about the party line. Listening posts are exciting.

**Hypothesis:** As the political public sphere is being professionalized and as it has separated power, knowledge, and involvement, people feel cut off from the political world. Frustration and disempowerment are lurking, and it is difficult to turn feelings and critical analysis into a fitting political expression.

## **Analysis and Hypothesis 2**

### *Fear of extermination and the end of the world*

**Analysis:** There is a general feeling of guilt and shame in relation to future generations: our generation has ruined the environment and gorged on resources in a greedy decade, but still we cannot take the responsibility upon us, and establish powerful political leadership, clear things up and make reparations. We transfer the disasters to our children.

The climate summit and its related issues function as a mass psychological scare story. Apparently we need to be afraid of something: unemployment, cold war, nuclear weapons, birds' flu, swine flu and now climate changes. Apart from being a real problem, the climate threat also functions as a cover up for the ongoing power redistribution in the world. This, too, is terrifying to speak about in the west, but the fact is that China owns big parts of the USA and its power and influence are increasing day by day. So climate changes paradoxically also have a soothing influence on the fear of global reorganisation. Among anxiety provoking images are:

- we shall become as poor as the Chinese
- and have to live on a bowl of rice a day while the Chinese eat burgers and go on charter holidays.
- that we will have to slave away in the factories and produce plastic toys for the children in China
- that we shall be exposed to brainwashing and forced to submit to a Chinese ideology.

Along with the threat of climate changes one has to face the fact that not much is left of our ordinary, good welfare society.

**Hypothesis:** The ongoing reorganisation of the world economy and power distribution in combination with the many signs climate changes continually stimulate our fantasies of extermination and the end of the world. As the Chinese financial success in the first round seems more terrifying than the climate change – perhaps because the Chinese impending financial takeover is seen as a narcissistic violation of all of us westerners – all the uncertainty is crammed into the fear of climate changes.

### **Analysis and Hypothesis 3**

*New problems, new possibilities*

**Analysis:** The climate issue creates new value systems and thus also new possibilities for innovation and business. A photo from COP15 attracts attention. It represents the global top leaders gathered in a room late at night. They are exhausted, perplexed and frustrated and therefore they look very human. It is quite unusual that top politicians let themselves be observed in that state of mind. It seems to be a new thing that the world's leaders are gathered to discuss how to lead the world jointly, cut above traditional polarisations. It is a difficult challenge to lead without a personified enemy.

**Hypothesis:** As it is hard to make waste, pollution and global warming respect national boundaries, the climate threat demonstrates very clearly the inhabitants and countries of the world as connected. The shared crisis is also – as the Chinese character for crisis shows by being put together by 'danger' and 'possibility' – a possibility for global cooperation and an invitation to creativity and innovation.

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