

"The Farøe Islands and the World at the Dawn of 2011"

Report of a Listening Post
held on 5th 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 collectively to identify the major themes emerging from Part 1. From several presented these have been drawn together under the following interrelated themes:

1. Safe systems – Unsafe humans

There's nothing wrong about the systems and the structures, it's the people who's responsible and managing the systems. In public sector they use a lot of resources to 'cover their ass' and everywhere people is extremely cautious. "It's like they are more occupied being cautious, not risking or investing anything. So they do nothing." The anxiety in the society is massive, the lack of trust is rising. Many choose not to speak and to be cautious not to be committed or to be put under an obligation.

2. Striking blindness with eyes wide open

The largest industry (fish factory) runs with a loss for the fifth year in a row and when they bankrupt it's a shock and completely surprise!? The largest bank goes bankrupt, and everybody's surprised. Hardly anyone commented on the warning signs. It's like the reality-check is suspended and disqualified. When 6-7 people get sacked in a company there's a lot of writing and focus in the media, but when 6-700 people loses their job in our main industry it's ignored and silenced after two days?! "Why is it so difficult to see and to speak to, what is going on? It's like we've got more blind spots than visible spots".

What about the financial crisis? Is it over? Can we trust our sense and senses? The PISA-survey clearly shows that our children doesn't learn enough in school, but we do not take any action nor initiatives to change this. Instead we focus on fishing quota and distribution of fishing days. There's less woman in childbearing age and most of the youth studying abroad doesn't come back. They create careers and settle down in larger societies, in other nations. We got neither plans nor intentions to attract them and to invite them to live in our society. We're stagnated in population growth, the burden of an increasing amount of elder citizens is a threat and we don't react adequate to it.

Some politicians seriously suggested building an old people's home on an almost abandoned island to get the youngster's to thrive...?? It cannot be seriously, or...?? It's like the strategy of an Ostrich: Put the head in the ground and be invisible! What about the financial and global crisis...is it the end or just the beginning?? Can I trust the wise people forecasts, can I trust the information, and can I trust my own intuition?

3. Survival by industry or by culture?

The reason why our brother nation Greenland has survived as a nation, is their strong culture and roots. How do we maintain and develop our own rich culture? Here on Faroe Island we've got a national identity as fishermen, and our survival is strongly connected to the ocean and to hard work. Education isn't as well seen as it should be (What's the use of it?) Today we're surviving by our fishing industry, but we need to invest in education, culture and new opportunities for income. That's a dilemma. A strong culture makes people stay and makes us fit for survival, but it also inhibits new and different ideas as well as integration of newcomers. In other countries the culture and education systems seems much more focused and goal-oriented, here it's much more casual and Laissez-faire. We know how to fish but not how to make our children learn.

4. Equalization & Mediocrity in the new generation

The primary school is a huge social equalizer! We learn our children, that everybody is alike and to stay a 'normal smooth member' of society. This leveling will result in a generation not creating the 'originals' and supreme individuals to take us and the society further. We teach our kids not to take the necessary responsibility in accordance to do what's right, and parents are learned not to take responsibility for their children. The interface between primary school and family is in a vacuum with no interaction. Why don't we let the primary school's compete to create innovation, creativeness and efficiency? Why don't we let the money follow the student instead of the school? Why do we repair instead of build??

5. Are we Copycats?

There's a bunch of examples how we unsuccessfully copy and import ideas, laws, systems etc. from Denmark and other Nordic countries. Why do we?? Isn't meaningful to create our own? Can we effort it? A participant told, that he's living in Huston, Texas, but hasn't met any from Huston yet. They're all imported, coming from somewhere else. So what's wrong with copying or importing good stuff?

6. Men makes the rules, Woman adapts or immigrates

Faroe Island is a very patriarchal society and the rules and laws is often made by a male dominant parliament. Woman gives away their 'space' and many immigrates to other societies with opportunities for career, easier life and better economy. The patriarchal power systems is hidden, invisible and almost untouchable. They are fighting and protecting own interests beneath the surface and doesn't seem to care about disintegration and impotence above.

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 'internalí world.' Their collective ideas and ways of thinking that both determine how they perceive the external realities and shape their actions towards them.

Hypothesis 1

Abdication from social responsibility

Patriarchal power structures strangles the birth of new ideas, critical voices, female leadership and culture and education as tomorrows new raw material etc. Therefore the members of society has to either suppress their individuality, their voice and obligation to react or has to immigrate to other societies unless they're ready to be exposed negatively in public. This results in excessive cautiousness, inability to act properly and an abdication from social responsibility.

Hypothesis 2

Allocation of guilt

There seems to be a need to place blame and place responsibility for the recession, economic crisis and lack of overall direction in the society. We are looking for someone to be responsible. But the responsible political leaders, the structures in society and the hidden authority (the ground) is invisible and untouchable. The guilt is a too heavy burden 'in the mind'. Therefore the members of society displace the guilt and the responsibility and looks for inadequacy and failure among the organisational leaders (the figure). This has lately resulted in dismissal of several CEO's in both private and public sectors as never seen before in this society; the cases have also been front page news.

Hypothesis 3

Hopelessness on the surface – unrealistic hope beneath

There is an ongoing and paralyzing battle between old industry and new culture, between hard work and academic education, between men and women, between countryside and the city and between the individual and the system as a whole. This creates a vacuum in society: Everybody seems to create extended blindness for dangerous facts obvious for everybody, living in a denial state of mind. Nobody acts and most is feeling paralyzed waiting for something to happen or someone to step up on the scene. Members of society cannot stay with it as an individual and therefore withdraw and is leveled into the mob. They displace their own responsibility for learning and upbringing solely to the primary school. Resulting in feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness in society on the surface, and an unrealistic hope beneath.

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