

AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY (OPUS)

Estonia and the World at the Dawn of 2016 Report of a New Year's Listening Post



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Part 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

In this part of the Listening Post participants are invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experience in their various social roles. This part is concerned with what might be called 'the stuff of people's everyday lives' that relates to the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants. Participants are invited to share their preoccupations and experiences as citizens of Australia, and to explore these from their various social roles, be these in work, unemployed, or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood, voluntary or leisure organisations, or as members of families and communities.

Part 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

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

The LP event's atmosphere was laid-back and nice. People were sharing their personal thoughts, experiences and dreams. There was a lot of talk about current events like the marriage of the Estonian president (2.1.2016), or the acceptance of refugees and the insecurities involving it. What we have learned about the Chernobyl accident that happened 30 years ago was also discussed.

Theme 1

Insecurity in society, insecurity in me.

The theme of insecurity sprang up with almost every speech. There was worry about the future, one's own job situation, health, amount of money, children's health and future livelihood. The economic situation in Europe feels worrisome especially with "rescue plans" that don't seem to be working. The choices for our leaders are diminishing. Some "stunts" are made and there are reports in the TV about their failure, and thus the worried feeling will not leave. The way the government "handled" the Chernobyl accident, and what followed it, was seen 30 years ago.

The refugee topic divided opinions. At the same time the need and

distress of people were seen and there was a wish to help. On the other hand there was fear over what will happen to one's own identity and religion. There was worry of criminal activity increasing. In addition, people pondered things like what the relationships between refugees are like at the reception centre as well as TV and radio coverages about any related events and politics. There were no actual personal experiences with refugees, only thoughts and opinions.

Theme 2

Methods of survival are different for every individual; the attention in personal coping

In the participants' stories there was a clear need to share the survival methods for challenges brought by time. The tone of the stories was not purely gloomy; there were thoughts on how to calm one's mind and bring sense into life.

- *One participant told that they took on a gardening plot and grew vegetables there. It made them feel good and the plot became a hobby together with their grandchild. The participant laughed and praised the carrot harvest.*
- *One participant shared the feeling that their family had started to eat together more than before, with the child having wanted to prepare dinners too. Sitting at the table had become a place to share experiences, worries and everyday occurrences as well as a place to laugh.*
- *One participant told that last year they made an agreement at their workplace about having a coffee break together at one o'clock everyday to talk pleasantries.*

Part 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the members are working with the information resulting from Parts 1 and 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 are 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.

Hypothesis

The state of the society is currently very challenging for the individual. There are many simultaneous things happening that can make an individual begin to worry and not know what to do. One feels that it's

impossible to influence these macro scale systems.

The individual feels that they can't do anything but "go with the flow" and see where it leads them.

The small systems are carried by the larger systems. Big changes continue to happen in large systems (for example, changes in law, tax increases) and this forces smaller systems (for example families or individuals) to devise solutions in order to cope with these challenging times. It can be noticed that one possible survival method is to cluster. Small systems sort of cluster around certain conversational themes and viewpoints. Being alone is not wanted, one wants to be "we", part of a community. For example to agree with someone and to do the same things with someone.

- *One participant told that they've started sewing. They take a class and enjoy sewing with others because the environment is guiding and they can converse with others.*
- *One participant told that they are moving into a smaller apartment with smaller expenses.*

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