

AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY (OPUS)

Turkey 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 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 interrelated themes:

Theme 1: Personalisation and politicization of institutions; ethical dilemmas and role paralytations; being lost and fear of losing identity; stuckness of 'not taking a side'.

'There is no state as if. Situation that we are witnessing nowadays is very worrying. We are not able to practise our professional roles and it is very hard to use own authority and authorship. We are not able to put into action the ethical responsibilities relating our roles. System is not working, there is no ethical values, everything is personalized. We are facing ethical dilemmas with our own selves. In conditions that we need to talk, we find ourselves falling into silence.'

Political use and abuse of religion, feeling of being ashamed of different kinds of identities; questioning the past; 'no way out' by instrumentalising the ethnic and religious identities;

'More than 30 years I am working as a senior civil servant. I worked with different governments. I've never had difficulties relating my role, like this period. We are in the period where the laws and legal system is personalized, and is related with personal wishes of political figures. If you are not able to realize these wishes, you are threatening with losing your role(job). We feel stuck and we are afraid of this situations. We are in period of our history that never had witnessed before. We

feel lost.'

'There is splitting in between family members relating having different political views. Family members begins to afraid of sharing their thought and feelings in-between. Some members fall into silence just because they don't want to have a conflict inside the family. Mixed ethnic and religious marriages are under the pressure of the politicized environment and everyday life. '

'Many people who consciously choose to be apolitical relating politics, are under the pressure of ' take a side'. If you don't want to have or take a 'side' relating political party or view, you are outsider and 'othered' into your context. How you can 'take a side' where there is no ethical and value based system, where you don't want to be part of that. If you have your 'side' it is very easy, but people like me are under the pressure of not 'taking a side'.

'Every day we are witnessing different kinds of death. The uncertainties relating our country situation, have affects on us. Change is rapidly and so fast, it is not possible to follow. I feel lost into the social media, I lost my trust. I prefer not to watch TV. Our country situation is getting worse.'

'The feet gets head, the heads gets feet nowadays. There is no importance of being educated, or having a talent or different abilities. To be educated, to be ethical, to have values is loosing their meanings.'

Theme 2: Political use and abuse of religion, feeling of being ashamed of different kinds of identities; questioning the past; 'no way out' by instrumentalising the ethnic and religious identities;

'During the republican history, there is no other period of the abuse or exploitation, the politicisation of religion like this period. I am shocked when I am watching on TV programs, the people who perceive themselves as a religious figures. I am a person who raised up in religious family context and practising religion and accept the conservative way of living. I am also criticizing Ataturk's republican reforms during the nation state building process. I am saying to myself ' If they accept themself as a Muslims, I am not a person who accept their way of interpretation of Islam. Where these people come from, where were they before? When they appear? Where is the Turkish interpretation of Islam, where is Mevlana, where is Yunus Emre, where is Bektasi Veli, where and when we lost them? What kind of interpretation of Islam is nowadays, interpretation that is out of realities, close interpretation. I am ashamed to say myself that I am Muslim. I begin to get ashamed also related my thoughts about Ataturk. He was right when he was accepting radical reforms. In early 1920'es if Ataturk and his friends, were not able to practise these reforms, I am afraid that

nowadays Turkey will look like a Pakistan or Saudi Arabia. I am very angry to Muslim world also. And to Muslim theologians also. Why you are silenced, if you are not able to talk nowadays, when you think that you will be able? Islam is saying that, 'Don't be in silence while you are witnessing injustice.' Islam is saying, 'Be servant of Allah, don't be servant of persons.' But we begin to fear from people, from persons with power, and not to have a fear from Allah. We begin to be slaves of persons and their interests. Everything is getting confused. It is enough, enough.'

'We are a country who have lived experience with different cultures and communities. I think that Ottomans genetic spirit is also with us. We need to remember again ourselves. Ottomans are the only empire who is not colonial. Ottomans are first empire who experienced multicultural way of living. What happens after that. Look now. From not being colonial and not having these experiences, now we are colonised by the different power relations, and now we are slaves of western and eastern interests. If you are ashamed of your history, if you are not able to have a memory and accept with bad and good sides your history, who can do that instead of you? We need to perceive history as it is, and to accept it, not as a nostalgia but as a reality.'

'We witness the politicized version of religion and understand what it means. By politicising the Islam, everyone, even the religious and conservative people, saw that there is no way out. We saw also, that there is no way out, by instrumentalising the ethnicity. Kurdish ethnic identity and Islamic identity, when they both begin to have and get a power, even they perceive themselves as victims till now, now they are cruel and persecutors. To get visibility and get a power, don't help to empathize with its own past, but what happens is opposite. More visibility and more power, turns to more pressure and more splitting. I feel disappointed.'

Theme 3: Anger at the government, to the state, for not taking and having a limits and boundaries relating refugees, relating terror;

'As a country and geopolitically, we are in very difficult context. This affect us very much. All around us is under the fire. On the one hand, Middle East, on the other hand Russia. Our neighbourhood with Syria, get out from being a neighbour. In our culture, to be a neighbour or to have a neighbour, is associated with 'doing a favour'. When your neighbour is hungry you can not sleep, you need to share your meal with your neighbour. We try to do our best relating our neighbourhood duty with Syria. But everything has a limit and need to have a boundary. It needs to have a limit also with doing a favour. First you need to take care for your home and family members, and later that, take care for others if you can. How you can protect others when you don't feel secure. When your own family and citizens of course, are in

hunger you are not able to share meal. When you do that, it means that you change your direction and begin to lose trust. That's what happens with Syrian refugees relating to the government policies. Government accept more than 2.5 million refugees without taking a control and have boundaries. As a citizen we are not against the refugees, we are against the government position, who have no limits and no boundaries relating to acceptance of the refugees. We don't know who are these people. They are in every city now. We are sure that there are good and also bad people inside. Last months what's happening relating to terrorist attacks, and live bomb coming from Syria, makes us very anxious. We are angry to government not to take care for security to its own citizens.'

fear of the terror and terror attacks; stuckness and paralysis in between new hate-born religious terror and the oldest ethnic terror; Back garden of East and West; hypocrisy of the countries;

'Last months the terror attacks to the city centres is very frightening. ISIS and PKK, the one with religious motive the other with ethnic motive. More than 30 years we have Kurdish terrorists and now the new born, born from hate, the Isis is on the ground. Where these people come from? Where are the state, where are the security forces, where are the intelligence? These terrorists, very easily are able to come to Ankara, to Suruc, to Sultanahmet-Istanbul. where are you then? We are very sad, really very sad, no words to explain. The biggest shock and silence. Silence, not because we have not got a word to say, but because of disappointments, of not being able to be heard. We feel insecure. As if we are the back garden of the West and East. If you don't have a work to do, you can clean the harmful weeds. 3 million refugees and are living on different cities now. We don't know who are simple people who are live bomb. The educated refugees are living in the Western countries, in Germany, uneducated refugees with 7-8 children each family are staying in Turkey. Why? What about this PKK? How they get so powerful last 2 years? As a government you were in peace process with Kurds last 2 years? Is this a result of the peace process, to be strengthened more with guns, with bombs, to be strengthened in each city? Where are you as a state? Where are you, where? We are very angry? There is no state, no institutions which can do their roles. We don't know to whom we can trust? When we are saying that state needs to control and have a limit of acceptance of the refugees, we are blamed for being against human rights, when we are against PKK Kurdish terror, we are blamed as being against Kurds. Oh my God, what a confusion. I begin to have a fear to say that I am a Turkish, then I will be blamed for being a racist and fascist. It is enough.'

'We are witnessing different interpretations of Islam. We are afraid of that. On the streets, it is not usual and ordinary for Turkish people, to see the woman in all black. Turkish woman who covered their head, and

the face is visible also, and colourful wearing is also very common. News on the media relating Syrian immigrants, are very worrying. Near to the Syrian border city, where the city population is 90 000 and the Syrian refugees are 150 000, the percentage of family who get divorce increase % 100 last one year. Turkish women get divorced from their husband because of the Syrian refugees. While for Syrian women, being a second wife is acceptable and normal, for Turkish women and family structure, it is not appropriate and usual. Turkish women begins to get a fear to loose their husbands. Government is just interested with accommodation and have a hotel role as if, but they are not aware what is happening in deepest in societal level. We are very angry. Why European countries and Arab and other Muslim countries didn't accept the refugees but just Turkey is accepting them? Merkel is coming, by giving a money for refugees is shutting up our mouths, Russia is attacking and threatening us with not giving a gas, and again shutting our mouths, America supports terrorist in Syria and again shutting our mouths. Who we are? We lost our believe to ourselves. how many times these betrayal will continue? How many times citizens will feel these betrayals?'

Genetic incompatibility in between Turkey and Middle East; fear of saying your identity.

'Social structure is changing. People who experience war are living with us. There is no action for rehabilitation the society. Governments eats each other with the opposition. No one is interested and really tries to develop realistic politics relating foreign policy. Lonely country Turkey. Are you mad by turning your face to West and European Union. Turkey is not a Middle Eastern country, our genetics are different, historical, physical genetics. There is genetic incompatibility in between Turkey and Middle East. We need realistic politics. It is not time to eat each other and to have conflict inside the country. We need to be together now. But look what is happening now. We get split off. I begin to have a fear to say that I am a Turkish. Why? Because I am a nationalist then. We begin to have a fear to say our identity.'

For Western countries Death was a distant and far away from them, associated with East and Islam and Black. Now, Death is also very closed to them and it is coming from inside...

'It is pity to see the different reactions of the countries relating terror attacks. Reactions are different when there is attack in Paris and Istanbul and Kahire. As if dead, also have different values. Even the deaths have nationalities, religions, ethnicities. Very sad. For Western countries Death was a distant and far away from them, associated with East and Islam and Black. Now, Death is also very closed to them and it is coming from inside, from their citizens. What is the difference between attack in Paris and Istanbul-Sultanahmet? in both the public

sphere, the civilians are under attack. In both places, attacks were against the civilizations; Paris, the centre of the western modern civilisation; Istanbul, the centre and synthesize of Eastern and Western civilisations.'

Theme 4: TV programs, hypocrisy of international channels, lost of trust; feeling of meaningless and not able to mourn, sick society.

'Programmes on TV are to numb the brains. Survivor, marriage programs, love serials. Alternative media is silenced. There is publication but for news relating the terror attacks for example. We are informed by the international media. It is very interesting to see again the hypocrisy of the news channels. The same news are very different in CNN international and Al-Jazeera and in Russia today. We lost our trust.'

'We are in silence. Speaking is not meaningful as if. When we are speaking words are getting meaningless. As a society, we are witnessing the loss of meaning. We are sick, but we don't have the doctors that will help us; we are in mourning, but don't have a time to mourn deeply and healthily, everything is so fast and changeable. We are angry, but we don't have the power to deal with this anger.'

Theme 5: The robotic education and 'autistic' children; unattached family and children

'More than 25 years I am practising kindergarten teacher. I've never lived difficulties like my last 4 years. It is very difficult to have an eye contact with children. They have no interest. Families are not attached emotionally with their children. Families are not talking in between, they prefer to watch TV or to look to computers instead of communicating in between. New young generation mothers are not reading books to their children, even before sleeping. iPads and computers are the big emotional attachments nowadays. If I am using computer in my classroom, they have an interest, but if I try to motivate them to play on the garden, it is very difficult. I lost my hope for the future generations. I try to make family meetings relating children problems that I face in the classroom, from 25 families just 4 families are participating to the meetings.'

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.

Remembering the pain and accepting the anger and hate for reparation of goodness and ethics and justice.

“Person who was my neighbour yesterday, how begins to be my enemy today?”

“If there is a country in the world, who is hospitable, this country is Turkey.”

What we need to do, what are our possibilities in these context? Is it possible to forgive in a context where there are mutual deaths? How it is possible to the people who lost their lives, their husbands, their wives, because of the terror, in terror attacks? Where the forgetting is happening so fast, which apology can be convenient?

There are angers, for the crimes against humanity. The experience of war can not be compared. There is anger, there is feeling of hate against the badness. Without not having the anger, and the hate against the evil, it is not possible to have a justice. The hypocrisy of the West, and the role that West have in that, do we need to fall into silence? What about the people who were silenced years and years? What about the Bosnian, Turkish, Syrian, Afghan, Palestinian victims who were not able to sit onto the witness stands because they were silenced? Is it enough to know who is the criminal, for healing the anger? After so much blood flowing, don't think so. It needs (reparation) to repair the trust relating the goodness, relating the ethics also.

If we want to protect and understand our neighbour, we must and need to remember also the pain that people witnessed generations and generations relating death politics. “ Person who was my neighbour yesterday, how begins to be my enemy today?”

There is new kind of discrimination, new kind of racism; it is experienced with people who are exiled from their own contries, and are homeless now in their new context and are faced with xenophobia.

“If there is a country in the world, who is hospitable, this country is Turkey.”

Convenor: Muzaffer Mustafa