



AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY

Estonia and the World at the Dawn of 2017
Report of an OPUS Listening Post®
held in January 2017

PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS & EXPERIENCES

In this part, the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experiences in their various social roles, be they: in work, unemployed or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood, 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’: the ‘socio’ or ‘external’ world of participants.

PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

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

Theme 1 – Inability to affect large systems. Worry about the fulfilment of democracy

The participants were worried, how the result of the US presidential election (Trump) will affect the relationship between Russia and Estonia. There was talk of politics and reminiscing of history. Estonia is part of NATO, Trump and Putin are friends(?). The participants had followed Trump’s speeches closely and speculated what he means by his words. It is hard to trust large governments. Politicians change too rapidly in Estonian politics. Estonia is currently undergoing a compulsory merging of counties. It evokes a worry, what will happen to democracy? The participants shared experiences of their inability to affect large systems. The large systems have a life of their own.

- ... I watch the news on TV and listen especially to what is happening in the USA and in Russia. I am doubtful. I think to myself, how can it be true that Trump became the president? – what did the US people exactly chose? What does he really represent?
- Counties are merged together and there is now a worry about not having the local people’s opinions heard. The people are worried about their **county identity**. A familiar turns into foreign.

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Theme 2 – The relationship between man and nature is now closer

The participants talked about vegetable garden, growing root vegetables and berry bushes. One family was moving to the countryside, restoring their parents' old house and making it a home for themselves. They are willing to drive 76 kilometres to work. One participant wanted to start growing herbs in their windowsill and to have the herbs moved to their garden. Experiences and tips were shared. Seeing the growth process was described to bring cheer.

- ...I grow cucumber saplings on my windowsill... I take care of the saplings... this makes me happy
- ... I was thinking to renew the flower **garden**... I would like more colour on my yard...
- ...I only eat organic foods... it's important for me to know how my cucumbers are grown...

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Theme 3 – The working world under powerful reorganisation

There was also talk of how working at home has become a possibility. One participant had got a permission to work from home, they took care of doctoral appointments and overall worked via their mobile phone. The work is more divided and there is more for one person to do.

- One participant described that they are constantly given more work and they are now unable to finish all of it. Always a rush, no one hiring more workers, but a result is still demanded.
- One participant (a teacher) described how hard it is to discipline children at school. Valuing the teachers has decreased and it is hard to maintain attention in class.
- Estonia is digitalising, one participant told about a positive experience in applying for a passport. They filled a form on the Internet, had their fingerprints and picture taken in a police station and within two days, the passport was finished. No lines, there were 24 people serving the customers and everything was quick. They had invested in service. It was a positive surprise.

PART 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In Part 3, the participants 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, participants 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.

Hypothesis:

The large system is full of surprises. A period within the relative equilibrium of the large system is at an end, and the large system is moving towards imbalance and surprise. The relatively predictable and stable is becoming unpredictable. One is seeking something new, but it is still unknown. The unlikely is able to happen. It is important for a person to trust their abilities and survival in the large system. One must think about their connections (family, friends) and tighten those connections.

One must share worries and joys, and interact. This is how aid is best received, together survival becomes easier. A trust must be formed for one's lived experiences, observations and on the other hand, the faith for a better future. Digitalisation and robotics brings both good and bad. The bad must be recognised and erased. The good must be taken into use and developed. As digitalisation increases, nature becomes more and more important to us. One wants to grow their own cucumbers and tomatoes, one wants to see how they grow, how the entire growth process looks like. Seeing this becomes important to contain humanity.

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