An Organisation for Promoting Understanding of Society

Faroe Islands at the dawn of 2020
Report of a Listening Post held january 8th 2020

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PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND 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 was to identify collectively the major themes emerging from Part 1.

Mental health and illness amongst the youth on the agenda
The awareness on mental health and illness amongst the youth population has never been as comprehensive and pertinent. It has become quite ubiquitous to see young people standing out of the crowd, in order to distinguish themselves and their mental disorders, illnesses and special personality traits as an identity marker; a component in the individuals own creation of an identity. Consequently, this could arguably contribute to the gradual growth of the youth indulging themselves in their mental illness and personality traits.
Conversely, an argument could be made that standing out of the crowd does not necessarily entail anything inherently negative; on the contrary, society has become more receptive to engage in discourse about mental illness. Thus, society has seen substantial improvements in addressing and combatting mental illnesses amongst the youth community; the only downside being the dauntingly high number of young people struggling with suicidal thoughts and depression.

Authorities in modern society are hollowing and vanishing
We live in a digital era where most people have the Internet at their availability, thus making the search for applicable sources attainable within seconds. The patient oftentimes searches information about one's symptoms and diagnose prior to seeing the doctor, who thereafter searches for the same information on the Internet; subsequently unveiling the prominence of autodidacticism amongst the youth. '*What do I need the authorities for, when I can bypass to inquire information and knowledge?*' Or the teacher stating: '*It is far more difficult to teach in geography today…!*'.
Expert-based information is being democratised, and institutional authorities are dissolving at an alarming rate. Institutional authorities are not capable of handling the fact that the general state of knowledge has broadened, and consequently they adhere to allocating more resources to preserving authority rather than developing and applying it. Psychologist: '*The expert authority is in a free fall! Psychiatry is occupied with preservation of one's own position of power, not the patient*!'.

A fragmented society germinates anxiety and perturbance for the youth
It appears to be the norm that institutions conserve their own longevity rather than contributing to society. In doing so, they discourage themselves in that the citizens begin to perceive them as unsupportive and incompetent, hence their priorities. This makes them appear more fragmented, detached and inadequate. Particularly the digitalised youth require stable and firm parameters.

Without the aforementioned factors, the outcome could likely pave the way for anxiety and insecurities to thrive, which could cause severe distrust to society. '*I have lost faith, trust, and happiness regarding our society and its institutions. This has been the case for the past 2-3 years now*'. Fictional characters like 'The Joker' in the Batman cinematic universe are becoming more frequent, consequently invoking more people to pursue an answer for the question: '*How can I, as a citizen, find a place for me to be and show what I stand for?*'.

Meanwhile, parents strive to become more determined, in order to achieve a prosperous and successful career, thus engendering the query of whom the children's upbringing should be entrusted to, as well as their future – is it society? It is unfeasible to equally appease all aspects of life, therefore making it a case of prioritisation, be it the career or family life. Though there seems to be a pattern of more people investing their time with their families, and dethatching themselves from society's maelstrom of career, consumption, status, and irresponsible self-interests.

Instable leadership creates the need for internal leadership
There is an increasing propensity for directors to leave their positions, without having a back-up position. Abrupt resignations of directors are affecting the organisations and society. What happens with the employees when they experience such instabilities in the leadership? It has become more arduous to lead the generation of the digitalised youth, since they necessitate different requirements and demands. If the youth does not experience sufficient leadership, they become compelled to lead themselves internally.

Senior citizens are occupied with consumption and comfort
The established citizens are more concerned with their own comfort and consumption than the upcoming challenges for the youth, humanity, and the planet. '*Why am I as an elder, less active and less concerned...perhaps it is due to the future that I perceive, revolves around my own personal life-expectancy, and not my descendants?*' and '*We are more concerned about ourselves than each other!*'. Perhaps the fault is that the youth is not capable of comprehending the complexity, and are therefore more prone to act and react? Is there more optimism amongst the youth population, and more pessimism amongst the elderly?

Environment and climate around, between, and within us
Today's discourse revolves heavily around the environment, climate, and pollution. Some might argue that we feel protected and isolated from these threats' dire predictions, since we are not acting on it? Collective learning has become so prominent in modern society, which is becoming exceedingly more apparent amongst the digitalised youth, since their voices are being more heard and acknowledged; challenging politicians, industries, and societal institutions, though it predominantly appears to be revolved around discourse, and lack of action. The paramount quantity of plastic in the oceans are becoming plain to see, the weather is altering, and the fishing industry is polluting more than ever, however, we as society seem to be either deaf, blind, or mute. Moreover, now there are boats that are designed to fish plastic instead of the living resources of the sea.
The youth is attempting to illustrate the severity of this situation, however, they seem to act too politically correct, and lack aggression.

There are two realities; a digital and a temporal
We seem to be living in two worlds; a temporal and a digital. We are being controlled and manipulated by Facebook, commercials, and "Big Tech". We are working tirelessly, utilising Messenger as a mean for communication, replacing proper upbringing and consistent contact! The teachers seem to be remiss of this cultural upheaval, since they might fear the consequences that parents' reactions on social medias might entail, hence the undermining of role models and authorities in the real world. It has come to be expected of children to outperform and score the absolute highest grades on the exams. We want to determine the results in our children's grade books, thus creating the foundation for an unrealistic and unachievable future. Are we heading towards a fragmented culture? Where can you stand up and act for yourself? In the digital or the temporal world?

Youths are "surfing" for meaningfulness in their attempt to take up responsibility
Numerous people from the youth population tend to engage themselves in something grand and meaningful. It has become a lifestyle to sporadically involve themselves in momentaneous

movements, such as climate change, environmental issues, and animal-welfare. Is this just a momentary trend, or are they truly attempting to take responsibility into their own hands? Coincidentally, several people from the youth population seem to be engrossed in their own personal imbalances, diseases, deficiencies, diagnoses etc.

We are waiting for the crisis to befall!
What awaits us? It is as if there is a flaw in a system that needs to be rebooted. This reset might be the hope that we are looking for, however, we lack any proper sway of influence or responsibility. It seems nearly unrealistic; bordering to the psychotic, almost as if we are a society on cocaine. *'The Faroe Islands is a party-animal in the hearth of the Northern Atlantic, with pupils as tiny as the top of a needle…. – but in fact, it is impotent'*. One of the participants: *'Perhaps its too good to be true...I am looking forward for the crisis...(laughter and relief)'*.

Complexity and good times pacify us
It only take five minutes of donations to restore the Notre Dame in Paris, however, how do we engage and pledge ourselves to vital causes, such as climate change and the environment? We know what it requires, but do not act accordingly. The perspectives on these matters are incredibly complex, but who determines the validation? Who possesses the power to act on such matters?
The society is more occupied with judicial systems and control, the handling of personal data, and distribution of resources instead of taking care of citizens that need help. *'Look how badly we are treating our elders and the ones suffering from dementia*!'. The idea that the public administrations have been established to cause harm and sprout depressingly sombre traits in institutions might not sound too farfetched nowadays. We are producing 'cover-my-ass' politicians. *'We live in a society that produces flat bananas!'*.
There is a lack of consequence today! People are being too loquacious, since words alone do not foster movements and developments. We need more initiative and bestow consequences for the people in power. *'If you want the harbour to be clean, go clean it!'*.

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 1: Enlightened and differentiated individuals as main ingredient in the Society-soup
Society has become more tolerate and tries normalising all kinds of behavioural and personality traits, in order to be more inclusive for all. Knowledge level is at its highest. Young people are becoming more conscious about their mental impairments, and it has become quite popular to espouse a more balanced lifestyle rather than a career. Society places increased responsibility within the individual, whilst anxiety and insecurities is increasing amongst the youth.
Therefore more people in the youth community experience personal suffering, which becomes an identity marker in the interaction and associating with others. Mental illness is to a greater extent a part of the present existence and being, and is being exercised in all forms and variants, both as a lifestyle, as well as an industry.
This results in a highly well-informed society with an exceedingly high conscience-level regarding existentialism, as well as the consequences they entail. The enlightened and differentiated individuals becomes the main ingredient in the Society-soup.

Hypothesis 2: Generations are divided between hope and comfort
The youth population needs a place to belong and a belief on a functioning society. They need meaningfulness and cohesion. They need hope for the future to come. Thus they invest their time and energy in environmental and climate-related issues, yet simultaneously experiencing futility regarding their actual progress in these issues. They want to trust the institutions, but the authorities

are in a free fall, leaving only distrust. They seek guidance from teachers and parents, but they are perceiving them as abrupt and focusing elsewhere. The youth attempts to shape a more fruitful future but lack the support of the senior generations which undermine the severity of their causes. Thus the youth creates and designs a digitally parallel universe where they are the architects themselves.

Therefore youth experience anxiety and fundamental distrust in authorities. Their experience is beeing in an empty space with chaos, loneliness and still all responsibility placed on themselves.

This results in a collision between the need for hope and action on the one hand, and on the other hand the distrust towards the holders of power, and a senior generation focusing on comfort and consumption. Thereby a split occurs between generations, where the youth seek refuge, purpose, and viability in the digital universe, whilst the seniors consolidate their own welfare in nice houses.

Hypothesis 3: Selfcastrated while waiting for the crisis
There is economic growth on the Faroe Islands, which fosters passive behaviour and inhibits natural initiative and capacity for action. Bureaucracy and governance cause pseudo-work and depressive conditions. We focus on control and adequate allocation of resources in contrast to compassion and caretaking for our elderly. Citizens gets occupied with cupidity, self care and the overwhelming amount of choices and options, instead of caring for each other. Citizens are experiencing alienation in the institutional containers. Nevertheless, we are failing to see the obvious and self-evident warning signs, neglecting the dangerous path of collision apparent in both society and the world surrounding us.

Therefore citizens are experiencing their life in a illusionary bubble, where they on one hand are striving to attach themselves to meaningfulness, and on the other hand feel castrated in terms of capacity for action for requisite change.

This results in major dissatisfaction for individuals as well as society. Hope is hanging in a thin line, and hopelessness manifest itself in passivity and overconsumption. Under the surface tensions and polarisations increases. Everyone is aware of the deadly danger, while apathy and impotence thrives under the surface. Hope is attached to the idea that a near future crisis will alter the course and provide salvation.

Hypothesis 4: The creation of skewed and schizoid cultures in society
We have hollowed the institutional authorities, and lost confidence in politicians and society. Since they are making the decisions and have the power for a controlled change, we have created a Gordian condition, where psychological defences such as denial, displacement, suppression and dissociation thrives and dominates. The youth seek refuge in a digitalised reality, whilst the elders indulge themselves in hedonistic consumption. Mental illness is growing rapidly amongst the youth, and we are frequently producing 'Joker-characters' in society. We neither relate to the world around us nor do we take co-responsibility for the global discourse. We export salmon to Russia, purchase technology from Huawei, discuss the Arctic region with USA, and want an embassy in the heart of Jerusalem against all advice and commonsense. However, we do not get involved in warfare, catastrophes, and global challenges. We are over-fishing our ocean yet refuse to accept and come to terms with reality.

Therefore the citizens experience is to participate in a pseudo-reality. Our whole existence is threatened and we are on a deadly collision course, but....we have positioned ourselves comfortably with a superficial smile and a false sense of security. The border that separates reality and fiction become murky. We live in fatamorganas, where fictive and designed parameters in the digital universe are being imported into real life as if they are natural realities.

This results in a germinated and schizoids cultures in society, where the citizen apparently has a balanced and wealthy life on the surface and in the frontyard, while there are underlying imbalances and distorted facts below the surface and in the backyard that cannot be handled.

[Faroe Islands, January 8th 2020, Sanna á Løgmansbø, Magni Mohr, Jóhanna Andreasen & Jan Willemoes]