



## Germany at the dawn of 2020 Berlin, 8.1.2020

### **PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES**

Who we were and what we talked about:

We were 16 people, nine women and seven men, three people attended for the first time.

The discussion was characterized by an effort to contrast expressions of concern and anger with positive assessments, so that an overall impression of reassurance and hope emerged despite concerns and threats.

Topics for concern and anger were:

- Self-reference: de-solidarization and selfishness using the example of a lack of listening and mutual understanding, lacking funding and access for education or waste of food, singularization, separation and isolation, simplification, black-and-white thinking and 'us versus them' attitude, mistrust, refusal to learn and to understand, offense, exaggeration, blame, accusation.
- Overload: information overload, technisierung, media overload, overstimulation, complexity, disorientation,
- Destruction: anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism, populism, denial of reality and instrumentalization, hate on the Internet, waste of food

Topics for confidence were:

- political movements and actions, protests, active young people, change, attention, commitment, orderliness and security here at our place.

### **PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES**

Four small groups identified the following main topics:

Interconnectedness and separateness: The close interconnectedness (globalization, Internet) leads to new and good things, but also to overstimulation. It enables new movements and responsibility, especially by young people, but leads also to lies, fake news, narrowmindedness and a lack of "correct" information. The simultaneity of developments leads to a feeling of being overwhelmed, to overreaction and repression.

Ambivalence and 'overwhelmedness': Society is characterized by positive and negative developments: on the one hand by self-empowerment and positive usage of democracy, development of social participation, taking responsibility e.g. dealing with

colonialism and stolen art; on the other hand by selfishness, optimization of individual interests, requirement to build small groups with emphasis on unique features, disregard for others, blame, instrumentalization and populism.

Destruction versus common values: a lack of willingness to engage in dialogue leads to the destruction of communication, attacks on fire fighters, police officers and paramedics means destructive rage against state structures, a lack of ability for remembrance and acceptance of guilt inclines to crime. We would need more common values such as reflection, speaking, listening, enduring and solidarity.

### **PART 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION**

In the third part, we pursued the following lines of thoughts as a summary of the themes and dynamics in the group:

The present is like a colorful bouquet with thistles: various concerns contrasts with careful optimism.

After the Second World War, misery led to common goals. Today, prosperity leads to self-reference and disconnection.

Society is divided into those who are looking to the future with actions and protests for democracy, climate, sustainability (transport), justice and human rights (colonialism) and the backward-looking with hatred of others, black and white thinking and thinking in ideologies. In between, people face overburdening and ambivalence.

The group ends up in a mood of worry without anxiety, optimistic but also passive.

Berlin, 26.1.2020

**Conveners:** Ulrike Beland, Laura Jorde, Friedrich Lindemann