



COVID-19 Online LISTENING POST

Part 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS & EXPERIENCES, PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES, PART 3: ANALYSIS & HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

Turkey, Istanbul, 23th May 2020

CONVENER: Muzaffer Mustafa

The COVIT 19 Online Istanbul International Listening Post consisted with 13 participants (3 males 10 females, including the convener) from Turkey, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, Italy, UK, Ireland and U.S.A(8 different countries). Working language of LP was Turkish and English.

SHARING EXPERIENCES AND EMOTIONS; IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

New Normal and The Fear of Unknown 'New Normal':

The denial of reality: 'Breath' as a Bridge of Internal and External

- 'Supermarket experience. Now it seems that most of the worries are over, it seems more contained that's what is coming from the news. But, what I notice in the supermarket is people are getting more frightened and avoiding me. I didn't know should I be frightened or not. What struggled me was instead of people kind of feeling relieved they seemed more frightened. I was frightened to see the masks on the shop assistants, you know it was like in a science fiction.'
- 'I am sharing struggle with coming out of it. Bcs I have a young man who are living with me. They are unemployed and they are living here. They have kind of cacaldas, for shopping and all those things... All the contradictions and not knowing, I share the terror.'
- 'We are completely free to go to work, to hospitals, to restaurants, to go out. But nothing is changed in Italy and in Lombardia. It is like before the new normal. Hospitals are in difficult situation. It is a strange situation. My feelings are fear and anger and I am worried. I don't know if I can begin again to work or not. Now I really don't know how the future will be.'
- 'But I think what is really unsettling thing is that there is not going to be a normal', we can forget about trying to return to a normal, trying to accept that this is the way going to be and how we manage it...and 9/11 for example which was such a momentous event, a single event with consequences. It was like a tsunami, people are talking about second wave of infection, this is like another wave of tsunami is coming. The absolution and counter with lacks on the real that cannot be symbolised.'

- "I was with this experience going out of the supermarket and meeting one of my students, bcs I teach in the university here, who was not wearing a mask.'

- 'This internal and external world that we are co count in, I bridge that when I am going to local town to do something as basic as the shopping. I am going to town where my mother is living, she is 83. When I come home I wash my hand and do all things so I know hopefully that it is not on my hands but it is when I breath which is such a life giving and such a fundamental. And then when I breath, that actually externalise something that could potentially kill my mother. It is just so bizarre. If we don't breath we die, and ironically with covit that seems the way people die, that they actually cannot breath.'

- 'Looking into the future I feel that, as soon as the pandemic has passes, I am afraid that we will go back to the old ways very soon. As soon as the emergent danger has gone, I am a bit scary of that.'

Being Local and Universal, National and Global, Homeland and Motherland Gets Closed and Mixed; Questions Like 'Where am I, Where is Home? What does geography mean? Begins to Emerge

- 'I am also Bulgarian who lives in UK. That's why maybe I wanted to join the LP which is closest to Bulgaria. My son is there and I am here. It is just my preoccupation really. I am worried, I dont know if I am able to hug my son soon. My daughter is here in London. Something national international gets very closed and mixed.

- "Even coming into this space, I was likely terrified with the notion with coming into this space. My son said ' Where are you going mama?' I said ' To Turkey...' and I am purposely coming to this space. Because for me it is the power of the fact that we are all in this together but with very different stages."

- 'I am a Turkish person living in Turkey. I use travel every week. I spent most of my business life in Germany, from Germany to Europe. I represent a German company and used to travel every week. It is my 3.rd month that I have not travelled. I have been thinking about ' Where is Turkey, where is Germany, where is Home. Where am I.'...After very long time I feel like I am in Turkey...I AM IN TURKEY. I am here where I am. The terror at the beginning is becoming a little bit of more acceptance and realization. What was real, what was hallucinated in my mind. So where am I ? Where am I in my state of mind?' Where is it in which geography? I don't know. Hello to everybody from the World.'

- 'My country is Serbia, I am participating from Belgrade, Serbia. This is why I join Istanbul's Listening Post bcs. it was the closest.'

Different Stages of Individual, Organisational, Societal, Political Denial, Grief, Anger, Depression, Acceptance; Big Sense of Lost;

- 'To me there is something about grieving. And the stages of grieving that are maybe familiar to you. That initial denial, the kind of anger, then a kind of burdening, depression and the kind of acceptance. I am feeling that I am going through all of those stages, bcs of what's happening to me individually, we lost very important to us loved one into covid.'

- 'I am half German and I've always lived in Britain. My mother is German and she has lived in Britain since I was born. And she was in residential home and died last September. I am constantly grateful that when she died she could die in a nicer way with people family there with her. And I am constantly distressed about what is happening in residential homes in England and a lot of that could have been avoided. I am constantly feeling going between the political and the personal around people's mental health needs when they are dying and not being able to see with their families. Terrible situation which could not been avoided but the extend with the affections in the residential homes could have been avoided and that's sort of sense in Germany they deal so much better.'

- 'I am not able to see my mother for a very long time because I am sick and nobody still not decided what is wrong with me and it turn two and a half months now. I am looking on my mother on viber calls and camera. She has cancer and she is in her treatment. So every day I am seeing her losing her hair, it is not hair that she is losing , hair will grow again but you know I feel I am losing her a bit every day.'

- 'As a collective level in terms of groupings that I am operating in, there is a big sense of lost, with different levels. Including the connection. The physical connection. I am a physiotherapist. I am not practicing as a physiotherapist but that forms part of me. Connection is about touch, feeling all the senses coming into play.'

- 'At a societal level, I am in Ireland, we have been trying to manage very manic situation in a very open economy, in a very kind of person centric way. We are trying to save lives of our more vulnerable people. We have never been in this situation before. When we are putting out older persons, our disabled, more vulnerable players of the heart of the story...we are trying to build an infrastructure to manage vulnerability.'

- 'It is something to do with difference between ordinary grief, lost and sadness and that terrible thing is happening. Going from the personal and political about covit and tremendous frustration about things not being done in the proper way. People are dying and that could have been avoided. Distress and sad and grieve and lost. Some sort of incompetence of inefficiency of how things have been being done, a sense of anger . '

The Vulnerability of what it is to be a Human; Intergenerational voluntarily support; The Sense of Being ' The Other', The Sense of Being an Immigrant

- 'There is something in me accepting the reality of my vulnerability as a human being. And my vulnerability with you. Here all the way across the world and across linking in all over the world. The vulnerability of what it is to be a human and what that affords us, in the way we are going to connect in and the new connections we are going to make with our being, with each other and with the planet. Because climate just would have been very much in my theme before covit landed.'

-‘That sense of being the other. Here in the Ireland last 25 years we have major increase in diversity in our population. I am Irish born, from hundreds of years probably there is very little mixing in my genes here. This sense of ‘being othered’ when I go into the supermarket, I now may have some sense of what it is like to be an immigrant here. I met my neighbor in the supermarket and is it safe to say hello to my neighbor. It is just so unsettling.’

- ‘Basically the old people, people who are older than 65, they could not leave house, they were forbidden to leave house. Young people who are volunteers brought them food, medicine and everything that they need. It was really hard for them and for all the people who could not see their parents and who could not help them. To know that both of my parents are taking care by the volunteers, especially my mother, was a kind of relaxing.’

Collapse of national leaderships; the fear of political division and polarisation; fear versus hope and resilience, uncertainty versus certainty; noticing the nature, the animals in a new conscious way

-‘What has been very disturbing for me is our national leadership which have been very divisive. I feel terrible about what has been happening to my country, we are pulling out of WHO. I think my country has been a leader in a world historically, not always in a good way, sometimes in an imperialist bully. As a leader country as if we are pulling out of it, abandoning that role, and I feel very worried about that and about the future.’

-‘If somebody ask me how would you name the last 25 years of Turkey, I would say the use of polarisation as a manipulation: secular non secular, religious non religious. In the last couple of years, we all know that it is not unique to Turkey or America. We see other political perspectives which are more authoritarian and populist leadership styles.’

-‘With this covid we all see crystal clear, we are in an interconnected situation during the pandemic. The use of propaganda becomes non-tolerable, and it makes us to be more rebellious, more unacceptable. Because it is all about human, all about human lives, it does not matter from which country, from which ethnicity and religion we are.’

-‘I am hopeful bcs. adversity brings change, resilience and hope. I hope that institutions, which are not functioning nowadays, there will become some new possibilities. They will become more updated, more close to our needs, the needs of the citizens.’

-‘My heart is panting. Rebellious effect which arouse in me, makes me to ask questions like ‘What I can understand, what that might mean for me, for my family, for you?’, bcs I am connected now by this pandemic with all of you.’

-‘We all share unacceptable situations politically, economically and societally. In my country, we didnt have a government, we just elected a government and they didn’t have a mandate, bcs they didn’t have a majority. We ended up with a government that can humiliated us, government that had leaved us during the crises. Yes there are possibilities but there is something that my heart is

rising, bcs I am hoping but I am also terrified. Can I stay at the core? Can you stay at the core? Can I hold that otherness? Can I hold that other and otherness as I try to manage my Me?’

- ‘Community organisation that I am consulted in England, I must admit that there is energy there. They are quite chaotic but they are trying to organise and they are passionate to try new things. Maybe during this uncertain situation, we are trying to find some certainty. It is actually that we don’t know what is going to be happened.’

- ‘During the pandemic, we noticed the nature, we noticed the animals, animals that we lived together, and how important it is to live with the animals. We were not conscious about the importance of nature, of natural life, nature as a whole before the pandemic. How much did we notice our neighbourhood, this daily dialogs we have. How much covit enabled us to see so much what we didn’t see, ever all.’

GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND MEANING MAKING PROCESS

GROUP 1

1- AMBIVALLANCE:

Ambivalence, polarisation of emotions within us at this point in time. How we are working interior and exterior. There is a very complexity about that. There is a kind of ambivalence playing in us. What can be held in any time and that manifest and you wanting to stay in and yet needing to go out and all those kind of contradictions in terms of what we are feeling and what we are doing.

2-CONTAMINATION:

Who am I contaminating? Who in turn is contaminating me? What is that doing to my behaviour, to my thinking, to my feeling? How that is playing out of me? The stranger is more apparent. The stranger in me and the stranger in other is more apparent. It is like a suicide wish to get on that, and what does that mean? Again in different levels, for me, for those that I loved. This also reflects politically. What it means for Brexit? How Europe will see this contaminating Britain?

There is something that they are loosing, their jobs, their healths, their way of beeing. This contamination ending, in Amerika was spoken in Mexicans, those coming across the borders, and how they are contaminating? How we will open our borders, flying piece and exc. Where am I in that? By knowing that I am contaminating as well as I could contaminated, and it is very litteral what does that mean? How I am engaging?

GROUP 2

1-ANXIETY AND RESPONSIBILITY SIDE BY SIDE

You cannot visit the people, you can not see the beloved ones. Even if you are with the people in the same place, again you are thinking ‘Shall I hug, Shall I kiss?’

This feeling of responsibility and extraordinary experiences that we witness, makes us to ask questions like ' How shall I protect the others with my presence? '. Feeling of being anxious and feeling of being responsible with your presence are side by side. Anxiety and responsibility are interrelated inbetween.

People are changing places, from one city to another one. We are witnessing a lot of new experiences, that creates different kinds of anxieties. Because people who are moving can impact others, effect the others. How much responsible are these people for that? University students got on busses and went to different cities of Turkey in a very short time. These situations makes anxieties.

2- NATURE, CHANGE AND HOPE

Istanbul is famous with different colored spring flowers. Witnessing and feeling the seasons is healing us. As seasons are changing, we are also changing. We experience that we are more interconnected with nature. It gives us hope. In our Turkish speaking group we talk about our own gardens and our small bottled flowers. This flowers are like our paradises. How we can create our own paradises, during this difficult times?

3- LOCALITY VERSUS UNIVERSALITY;

As a Turkish speaking group, we realized that we are connecting to LP from different places. Like one participant's wife is in Ankara, he is in Bursa, his mother is in Edirne, all different cities in Turkey, other participant is from Macedonia. I am from Istanbul. Being a LP Istanbul's participant also means being a part of the glob as a whole. All parts are interrelated and interconnected, like the nature.

GROUP 3

1- POLARISATION, GUILT AND PASSION;ABSENCE OF PLACES FOR GRIEF, LOST AND UNCERTANITY

In our group, we are struggling to find a place and we cannot find a place where polarities are. We need a place for lost, for grief, for uncertainty. We need this depressive face to find a good object in order to survive. We are all in this together. Perhaps we need to find a balance in moving. Balance and containment by using and moving our bodies.

2-LONGING FOR THE OLD NORMAL:

We need to rebuilt a new connection. How to built a new connection inbetween people. We are in need for new vision for the future.

3-INTERCONNECTION AND INTERDEPENDENCY:

Paradox of how to solve a problem of social distancing and at the same time we need to be interconnected inbetween.

Healthy narcissism is that we need to preserve, so we can do both distancing and connecting, in a healthy way. To distance ourselves and to interact at the same time.

4-PARADOXES IN THE SITUATION:

Trying to moving from paranoid schizoid to depressive position, like a baby with the sense of omnipotence, there is something around a narcissism that is unhealthy. If we are able to survive in this isolation, we need to be able to keep connected. This pandemi is not something that is going to be solved in one day and in one country. If we are going to keep on control on societal and national level, it requires absolute global response.

The necessity of connectedness and the ability to contain our own individual selves as integrated persons, we need to be able to tolerate the isolation that's required. Paradoxical situation that we are in.

CON(IN)CLUSIONS AND REFLECTION ON THE LP ISTANBUL EXPERIENCE

'I like the different languages. Trying to do with 2 different languages slowed it down. Slowing down helped me stayed connected with the power of the language.'

'I will take from this meeting that we are exploring new kind of connections between each other and with our selves also.'

'I really valued LP with so many different people from different countries. Initially I didn't want to go to Berlin or Dublin really because we are more familiar culturally, more familiar with both these places. I am so pleased I choose to come to Turkey. Actually I live in an area which is full of Turkish people. I have not been in Turkey and I am not so familiar with Turkey but I was just so interested. So good to hear people from different countries. I personally like very much translation. It actually calmed me down. I didn't feel so anxious this sort of pressure, speak over time and you know...it is okk..with not to speak, also.'

'Sharing you grief and that is very healing. It is still possibble that place can contain. Even this place is also virtual. This group can contain and you can feel that grief is not so heavy. You feel this connectedness and space becoming a container of the grief in a way. It makes me feel more bearable. It makes me more enlightening. It was a unic experience for me.'

'I came here thinking ' How am I going to do if I end up with Turkish people and can not speak Turkish in the group.' I came with that in my mind but after 5 minute, it was like as if this my though was never there.'

'I prefer to listening other people. I am from very small country but it is very interesting. This is my first time that I am participating to such a self organising event. Thank you. I feel estranged at the begining. But at the last part I begin to feel more connected but it ends very early as if. Next time I will come with this experience and I will talk more.'