



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 for us to collectively identify the major themes emerging from Part 1. The following represents some of these themes.

1. UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS
2. DISCONNECT
3. NEGATIVITY AND CRITICISM AS A DEFAULT POSITION

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post members were working with the information resulting from Parts One and Two, 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 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.

Analysis and Hypothesis 1

Unfulfilled Expectations

Analysis: The country's dreams of becoming a democratic rainbow nation with peace, equal opportunities and a better life for all are not being realised. The struggle mind-set that has been internalised over many years is still reigning and hindering positive experiences and feelings about ourselves. The previously forced political apartheid split of Black / White is still present (albeit in the mind), and now made more complex by new splits – very rich versus very poor, ethics versus corruption, sophistication versus primitive and acting out behaviour, the real versus the idealised, truth versus lies and manipulation, and trust versus mistrust and distrust. Life is filled with uncertainty, confusion, frustration, fear, anger and rage, bad news about poor service delivery, strikes and killings. There is a lack of personal and national vision and pride. Over the past few years the TRC and international sport events have sparked a sense of togetherness and effectiveness – in hindsight they look like 'band-aiding' and 'playing for the audience', because afterwards the chaos and the fear returns. The youth seem to dissociate from the 'old' Mandela / rainbow nation discourse. Their interests are in electronics and social media, their self-development, careers and employment in meaningful jobs to sustain their daily and future lives. From the outside (neighbouring African countries) South Africa is seen positively – almost like a

paradise where life is good. We often deflect this feedback by comparing ourselves to affluent countries (e.g. the US, UK, Europe) as if we can't associate with our positive parts.

Hypothesis: The idealisation of the rainbow nation is under attack, hope is minimised and fear and disappointment reign. The country feels emotionally damaged, fragmented, lost and de-authorised to create a contained space for all. Citizens have introjected a 'life is bad' attitude while the country is used as an object of envy in the projections from other African countries.

Analysis and Hypothesis 2

Dosconnect

Analysis: After a very 'crappy' 2012, there is a realisation that the current way of life is not working, as if we are approaching a tipping point. The new calendar year is testing us to stay focussed and not surrender to the overwhelming negativity and noisiness around crime, poverty, joblessness, corruption and chaos. Many concerned institutions arrange conferences, workshops and seminars about citizens' experiences of burning social, economic, health and educational issues. Yet, things do not seem to move towards action, solution and integration. The state seems to be busy with politics and infighting, and not to giving attention to the needs of the people. Citizens compensate by working very hard up to the point of serious fatigue and dissociation. There is a realisation that you need to look after yourself – no-one else does or cares ("you have to run faster than the bullet in the gun pointed at you").

Hypothesis: In giving up their dreams, citizens are becoming isolated and disconnected from others and themselves. As a defence, citizens compensate for the loss by working hard, protecting themselves from the systemic noise, and use flight and avoidance through withdrawal, passivity and contemplating the past. Citizens are depressed and ask: "is this worthwhile?"

Analysis and Hypothesis 3

Negativity and criticism as a default position

Analysis: Our social default position has become to be overly negative and critical of everything and everyone. Potential positive aspects are referred to as 'pockets of excellence' as if they need to be hidden ('below the radar'). Mr Ramaphosa's political appointment is seen as positive ('the new Messiah') – followed by the now expected negative comment of "one swallow does not make the summer".

Hypothesis: The country's introjection of struggle and the overwhelming sense of chaos, has ingrained negativity and criticism into the South African DNA.

Convener: Frans Cilliers

South Africa and the World at the Dawn of 2013 **Report 2 of a Listening Post held on 12th December 2012 in Port Elizabeth**

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Group relations event on Robben Island

There was some surprise that the event actually happened. Due to the Marikana Incident none of the mines sent delegates and due to suppressed economy fewer people registered for the event. A member who was to have been on the staff was aware of how what happened touched her own life. This member, was however asked to go to an iron ore mine to do work because there were high levels of mistrust and conflict in the team.

Therapy with couple – Sexual Addiction

The couple came for therapy because the husband was into pornography. During the assessment it emerged that the husband had a history of serving in the Swapo unit of the SA National Defence Force prior to 1994. The therapist kept wondering who he had killed.

Zuma and taking the law into his own hands

There are feelings of a deep sense of resentment at the cost of building operations at Nkandla while the extent of poverty increases and there is no money for health and educational services. At the same time reference is made “that the cow has run dry”. The ‘cow’ being us – the tax payer. These events dominate our lives as the media reports on radio, TV, the press and daily conversations.

A group member went to a PIN conference and found this a good experience. They believe in negotiation as a form of reconciliation. The group is based in Belgium and they work in trouble spots in the world like Afghanistan where they intervene at a policy level. They spoke in a lucid and informed way about macro violence. They have also created a vehicle for a citizens movement where people are elevated from subject to citizen as opposed to subject to object.

Mamphelle Ramphelle is a leader who also talks in an informed and balanced way and more people like her are needed. It is mooted though that the country is not yet ready for a woman or an academic to be a president.

Members feel confused and question their own sanity in the face of praise and support for Zuma and think about what is being split off and by whom.

The local municipality

There are fierce leadership battles and conflict which mirrors what is going on at Provincial and National government. Money has gone missing on the one hand and on the other money allocated for services or building is not used and is then lost to the municipality. Nothing seems to be followed through. People are told to vacate their posts and they stay where they are. Prosecution for theft or fraud does not happen and once again people stay in their posts and earn huge salaries.

Group members talked about how we were all collectively responsible for these things happening. One member said she had not voted and the fact that there was not a strong enough opposition to the ANC. The suggestion was made that if we all did something different something would change.

There is an attitude in prospective and appointed leaders of getting rich quickly regardless. A lot is talked about the gravy train and the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

The weight of the world weighs me down

These are the words of a song and express how several members feel especially there are frequent headlines of parents killing their own children. This happens so frequently that it seems to be the norm. Integrity is an exception and the weight of that also gets members down. Dysfunction is the order of the day. During Apartheid many things were not prosecuted as is happening today. It was wondered how much pathology is regimented and not spoken about. There is not a place where there is no corruption and this too is dysfunctional. Freedom has come at a high price. During Apartheid the dark side was disowned by the leaders but now corruption seems to be embraced.

Reverse apartheid

Quota systems and exclusion of Whites is very alive and there are strong feelings about this in many White and Black citizens. In school boys cricket for example there have to be a minimum of 5 Black

boys in the team and at any one moment in time 4 of them have to be on the field. Merit is not considered.

Work done at a Provincial Sports body revealed that racism is alive and well. The request for the consultation came because there was a lack of unity and a negative attitude. There is huge resentment in the Black members who want the White leadership out. There is also a great deal of conflict because the Black members want a more laissez faire approach while the members have a more structured approach. There is anger in both systems. The disappearance of a large sum of money resulted in a few month's suspension on full pay and the person is now back working. This event has left others with distrust and anger.

Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

In Part 2 the aim was for us to collectively identify the major themes emerging from Part 1. The following represents some of these themes.

1. The weight of the world weighs us down
2. Fear about what is going to happen and where it will all end as well as fears for our own children and grand children
3. Will there be anything left?
4. There is a battle to find hopefulness
5. We cannot contribute in a meaningful way
6. Hypocrisy – there is much talk about the poor but little is done about it
7. Strength is put forward to cover up the facade of feeling weak
8. NGO's asked to provide figures of those assisted in racial terms. No one asks about the donors who fund and they are almost exclusively White while there are now many Black millionaires.

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- I. Because of the perception that success is instantaneous, the people vote charismatic people into positions of leadership. When the voters become disillusioned they crucify the leaders.
- II. Because of greed and corruption (ID) functions, large portions of the population remain impoverished and therapists work with increased levels of dysfunction because the movement is from subject to object rather than from subject to citizen (EGO and SUPEREGO).
- III. Because insufficient work has been done on reconciliation there is a fear of extreme measures to redress the imbalances which results in appointing charismatic leaders instead of caring ones and then society remains undifferentiated.

Convener: Dr Lorna Brown