

**"Denmark and the World
at the Dawn of 2007"
Report of a Listening Post
held on 10th January**



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. This part was concerned with what might be called 'the stuff of people's everyday lives' that related to the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

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

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the members 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 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.

Sensations of Reality as Unreal - Longings for Reality

Analysis:

At the beginning of 2007 Denmark is a country where the citizens have a growing sense of reality as unreal and a corresponding longing for reality.

The collective bargaining negotiations show signs of greed and in social life consumerism directs the individuals' attention to advantageous investments, offers, sales etc. Greed narrows the individual's perspective to his or her here-and-now, but interest in society as a whole is hard to find. Greed is never satisfied and seems to lead to even more greed.

In organizations the long-term perspective is seen as an anachronism which one can only laugh at as everything changes constantly and therefore it is unpredictable. Interest in society as such and its future only presents itself through fear of globalization, ethnic groups, and the ozone and environmental degradation which is actualized by the warm winter and signs of spring as early as January.

Greed can be seen as a defence against the experience of reality as unreal, as lacking authentic passion and contact. Further as defence against the build-up of manipulating links between reality and the citizens: spin doctors, opinion polls, tactics in order to obtain or remain in power with no remembrance of what this power was meant to be used for, the desperation in the media when confronted with the falling rate of criminal violence because the editorial committee demands vivid images of violence, the embarrassing euphemisms of torture and the civil war in Iraq, quality control which has no regard for the experience of quality, but only for evasion of responsibility, management speak which calls job cuts 'decrement' and pretends that management by values can go hand in hand with still more sophisticated and time consuming control systems etc. Rather than creating a paranoid atmosphere, this contributes to a general experience of nobody saying what they mean, nobody meaning what they say and everybody having forgotten what they once thought.

There no longer exists a halfway between the 15 minutes of fame and murder committed by the media when journalists besiege a ministry or some other public institution till the top manager is fired or quits. Just as you do not really get famous by taking part in TV-shows like *Star of one Night*, nobody really believes that the dismissed minister or manager was the real cause of the problem. When on maternity leave one can have a feeling of no longer being a necessary part of society, as being superfluous as it makes no difference whether one is there or not. The future that the child represents is not part of the picture, and children are ranged on level with designer kitchens and victims of interesting illnesses that doctors have overlooked.

Greed also manifests itself by the disappearance of breaks. In the breaks one habitually checks one's e-mail, the mobile phone or whatever one is busy looking for on the internet. There is a not sharply defined expectation in the air that one should be available 24 hours a day - to one's family, work etc. However, greed also expires from the individual person who is waiting for someone or something that can cut off the feeling of a blurred reality. The year 2006 introduced several new free newspapers and TV-channels. One participant had asked the police on action in connection with the *Ungdomshus* (Youth house) riots if the helicopter circling above the house in order to follow what was happening, belonged to the police. He was told that it belonged to the Danish TV 2 channel as the police could not afford that kind of equipment.

A new internet game has attracted much attention. The game is copying reality, but at the same time it is real in the sense that real firms act as themselves in the game. The war in Iraq can also be seen as a game. It is the computer game for the liberals/ conservatives while the socialists use the fight for the youth house and Christiania (the free state in Copenhagen founded by hippies in the 1970s) as their game. On closer inspection it has not been possible to identify sensible or just clear motives in these conflicts which in some respects look as romanticized repeat showings of the youth movement and the Vietnam War. Only the dead soldiers cut a small hole in the veil shielding reality.

There is a prophecy circulating among the young people fighting to keep their house. It says that this conflict will cost the life of one of them. As it is, the throwable objects used by the young people, make it not unlikely that a policeman in uniform, too, will lose his life. The police are by the young people looked upon only as agents of evil and not as mortal citizens who carry a uniform and fill out a role. The unconscious wish for death is expressed in the young peoples' prophetic fear of losing lives in their own group, and it is also an indication of them also wanting to get into contact with something real.

Hypothesis:

Society mediated in every detail by the media is more often than not seen as if it is the media that are the objects of interest, not what the media are supposed to mediate. A blurred and unpleasant sense of society as unreal creep in on the citizens and a longing for reality and contact is right under the surface. The blurred contours, however, make it difficult to connect this longing to a task and a perspective which is determined by reality. The risk is that the spectacular and deadly actions which for a moment provide a sense of reality and meaning, will add to the lack of tangible reality in the long run.

Analysis and Hypothesis 2

Family dynamics in the public room: between cave man violence and omnipotent girl power.

Analysis:

The conflicts surrounding the Youth house attract attention and support a hypothesis that this conflict also expresses general aspects of the present society. The conflict has four central agents: The Youth House, The Father House, the lord mayor of Copenhagen and the police. The Youth House on 69, Jagtvej has been the young peoples' own house for 24 years. It has been managed by the so called Monday Meeting consisting of the people present who make decisions based on consensus. The house, which originally was deserted, was "captured" from the municipality by young squatters. Over a long period of time they have - by tacit agreement - won the the right of use to the house. However, a fire broke out in Sweden a few years ago in a house as badly protected against fire as the Youth House is, and a large number of young people who were hanging out in this house, were on the point of being burnt to death. This made the politicians decide that the Youth house should stop being a youth house and sold although the youngsters strongly protested against it.

The group of young people tried to position themselves as representatives of the true part of the young generation by naming the house the Youth house. They demand a place for themselves and their music and parties as well as their political work in groups dealing with anti-capitalistic, anti-EU, anti-globalization, anti-test animals etc. issues. They see society as very wrong and evil, profit oriented and destructive for people, animals and nature.

The house was bought and is today owned by a Christian Free Church by the name of the Father house. It was originally centred on social work and has now taken up revival activities with a strong emotional involvement.

The leadership of this religious community has been taken over from her husband by a woman called Ruth Evensen after God asked her to do it. She leads and controls the sect by means of strict rules. At the time of her taking up the leadership, the community was supposed to give an absolute oath of obedience which separated two thirds from the community and left a very loyal third. The movement has formerly had close contact with a man called Moses Hansen who, among other things, dressed in biblical clothing and took part in a march against Islam, carrying a cross through Nørrebro where the Youth house is situated.

At the same time Henrik Jensen, a historian, has recently published one of the most widely read new books called *The fatherless Society*. It should be noted in this connection that Ritt Bjerregaard, the lord mayor of Copenhagen is the city's first lord

mayor and thus she, too, has taken over her position from a man, but still not at the request of God, but because she was chosen by the electorate. She is well known as an experienced politician and a tough guy.

Ruth Evensen's congregation in the Father house thinks that the devil is at play in the Youth house and they insist that the authorities support them in their claims to the legitimate right of ownership to the Youth house. The young ones - and among them sons and daughters of well-to-do middle class families - want to keep the house, and they have mobilized support from activists in other countries. In their actions the young people move backwards and forwards between quite violent cave man methods as for instance throwing bricks, paint etc. and more imaginative methods like dressing up as Pippi Longstocking who symbolizes omnipotent girl power. The police and the authorities are very much for a non-violent solution, but on the other hand they don't want to lose face or sacrifice the rule of law. The youngsters' parents (represented by a mother) have organized themselves in a society against police brutality (with male connotations) and they are recording on video the confrontations between police and demonstrators. Apparently they find it more legitimate that the youngsters throw bricks at the police than the police handcuff etc. the youngsters.

The traditional system of mutual projections between men and women where women represent care, kindness and the individual and men represent aggressive and withdrawn traits and principles seem to be declining. The clearest profiles in the conflict are on one side Ruth Evensen from the Father house, but few people take her seriously if not as the leader of the microscopic, religiously perverted sect, and on the other side the youngsters from the Youth house, that have lost much sympathy because of their violent methods, and are seen by many young people in the country as greedy and unreasonable as they demand to get freely what others have to pay for. In this way they present a picture of spoiled children rather than symbols of the future and new hope.

Hypothesis:

The changes in the traditional rigid gender roles arouse both a fear that men will be superfluous and that women may be revealed as possessing a terrifying and tyrannical greed for power under their caring surface. The youngsters find it difficult to get into contact with reality and they are looking for an identity somewhere between the primitive cave man's violence and girl power.

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