

**"Denmark and the World
at the Dawn of 2009"
Report of a Listening Post
held in 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, 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 a clustering of at least some of these themes.

1. Global warming and climate change

The climate changes, CO₂, global warming etc. are very urgent issues although they threaten us in different ways. One in the group said that he thinks it activates lemming behaviour in people. They become thoughtless believers and do not give room for conflicting points of view in our society. Another participant thought that our problems are real enough, but there is a mismatch between our attitudes and the seriousness of the problems. We consume things in ways in such proportions that have never been seen before and our involvement in the different issues changes like the weather. But things are completely different when it comes to the financial crisis. Here all nations were quick to give banks a helping hand in the form of large sums of money.

2. The many 'we's'

At a demonstration with torches and lights one participant got the idea that it would be a beautiful and impressive manifestation if such light could encircle the world. On second consideration it was also thought to be terrifying to imagine such a massive global unification, in total agreement and with emotions in perfect harmony. Another participant (from a Jewish background) had been frightened by a demonstration carrying banners with incomprehensible Arab signs shown supported by strong emotional intensity. Others were able to explain that the demonstration was in honour of the Prophet and that the frightening letters meant 'peace and love of man.' One participant had first been outraged at some young women who very determinately had sent an elderly woman out of the bus. The pre-history was, however, that a dark-skinned immigrant had risen in order to give his seat to the white Danish woman who had responded to his kindness by hissing: "Go home where you come from!" Another person pointed out that it was historically new that one could think of mankind as sharing a common fate because of globalisation and the climate changes.

3. Control and Control

One participant remarked that when he was a young craftsman, his fellow craftsmen had internalized a pride in good craftsmanship and thereby also an inner sense of quality. Today this sense of quality has been eroded.

Several people complained that there was more and more control from the state. A politician explained that control systems were necessary when hierarchies are being torn down. Still, a person said that he had counted 9 steps in the hierarchy at a normal hospital. But no one controlled the speculators who are more or less guilty of the financial crisis. The speculators could, however, also be seen as representatives of general greed incarnated in a popular movement. We have all to some extent been participating in bloating the economy – via pension funds, new groups of stock investors and our general cravings for new kitchens, bathrooms etc. Now feelings of guilt come to the surface and with it the wish for forsaking material goods in favour of fellowship and human warmth. But video cameras will soon be put up in the centre of the city, and people were both for and against them.

4. The Incarnation of Hope

One person commented on the American presidential election. There has been an unprecedented global interest in the election of Obama. It was noted that it seemed as if only Poland and Macedonia had not invested a global hope in the president who then has become the incarnation of world hope. It was good and promising that an almost worldwide symbol of hope and humanity had appeared, but once this hope was formulated, there came an anxiety that such a vulnerable hope could easily be the target of an assassination. There was a wish that Obama would do something to be less idealized.

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the 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.

Hypothesis 1: Displaced control

There seem to be many signs of the displacement of control. Things and threats one would wish to control (e.g. climate changes, financial markets, civil wars, terror, love, weight) are not really possible to control. Instead what is possible to control is controlled: disability pensioners, immigrants, the unemployed, working processes etc. In organisations it is becoming more and more difficult to solve the problems connected with the various tasks, and control systems and quality measurements displace the focus from the meaning of work to rather meaningless details.

Hypothesis 2: Hope of salvation – and anxiety

There is a hope for unity, humanity and fellowship on a global scale, but also fear of suppression, totalitarianism and standardisation. The feeling is that polymorphous tendencies and the ideal of multiplicity are more peaceful than perfect harmony, and

that the wish for reconciliation might come about at the cost of something one would not want to do without.

Obama as the invested incarnation of hope also represents a danger that we make the new Saviour solely responsible for the solution of climate changes and financial crises.

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