

"The Farøe Islands and the World at the Dawn of 2009"

Report of a Listening Post
held on 16th 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. The Crisis and Jante's Law

At present the whole public sector is in shock after a budget with cuts all over. The situation is experienced as a brutal termination of all aspirations and dreams, e.g. 'Vision Faroe 2015,' which has been developed in focus groups etc. over the past years.

There is also a feeling of change in the air. A change of systems?...of gender?...culture?...attitudes? Treading water, waiting for something to happen. The future lies in knowledge and culture, but the agents of the old system focus on allocating funds for more tunnels and short term investments. It is very important that the young people going abroad for education, work or to see the world return to the islands. But how do the islands, the society, become attractive enough to attract the young ones to settle?

There is a tendency for the leaders to withdraw psychologically and as leaders. They hang back and become less visible. There are fewer who apply for managerial positions, and the leaders speak more quiet and less clearly. You sense a change in demands toward the leader-role.

There is a longing for energy, breadth of view and courage for long term decisions. It is not difficult to find solutions for the problems, but the political system and traditions transform all fresh ideas into tangled balls of yarn and slowness. No broad majorities. And every time an opposition takes office, it slow downs or spoils everything the government has just implemented.

In industry whispers are heard of new opportunities created by the crisis. Not much ado, but rumours spread about daring ideas and a sense of possibilities. "Crises bring change. During stable times not much happens," as someone put it.

Perhaps the hope of change is the kind the new US President, Obama, embodies. Perhaps the expectations of 'Bank Parcel II' are of the same ilk. What is the real topic: Hope of Change or Change of Hope?? Clearly there are a multitude of mutually conflicting hopes, wishes, and expectations which all have been bundled on the back of a single man. And the new thing is this emotional insistence on hope and change, an – until now – un-interpreted dream.

2. Excitement and Hope

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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 'internalí 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: The Crisis and Jante's Law

Due to the somewhat closed and anti-aggressive social conventions in the small tight-knit island community, the *Angst* and uncertainty which the financial crisis produces and provokes cannot be discussed openly. So it manifests itself partly as increased psychosomatic symptoms – and partly in a switching from an interest in long term investments and improvements of one's house and garden to a rallying around cultural events.

Hypothesis 2: The Times Are Changing

There is suspense in society due to the dissatisfaction with the present set-up and hope for change. Neither the discontent nor the hope has yet taken shape. People are awaiting and treading water. But something new is in the making.

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