

**UK National Listening Post Project 2009
Regional and Special Interest Groups**



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Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

On or about 10th June 2009, under the guidance and coordination of OPUS, eight different Listening Posts aimed at providing a snapshot of UK societal dynamics, were held in London, Bristol, Oxford, Liverpool, & Manchester, and with groups of Older Women, Christians and Greeks living in the UK. These were all reported in a similar format (see 'Britain and the World at the Dawn of 2003' in *Organizational & Social Dynamics* 3 (1): 165-169), researched and analyzed by the author, to produce this National Report.

Introduction

An overall analysis shows that members of the UK society are experiencing this period in history as one of unprecedented and revolutionary social change that is increasing in intensity. This includes technological change but also includes the ideas; including political, philosophical, economic and religious ideas. There is continuing evidence that the experience of members of UK society is that this period is one of formative changes in the structure of the world economy, the shape of societies, and the framework of world governance. It is leading to the development of a new way of life and a new culture.

When we analyse the affect of Globalisation at this time we can see that something profound is happening and that the dynamic processes are of such intensity and frequency that the consistency, continuity and confirmation normally part of our societal culture is fragmented and non-existent. Life as we knew it no longer exists we are living in a period of history that is experiencing 'death of a way of life'. This is a world that makes little sense to members of society and one which is experienced as being out of control. Members of society experience fear, rage, impotence, vulnerability and despair; they experience a lack of containment, social disintegration, uncertainty and insecurity; and this even extends to fears for personal safety and annihilation, and threats to and loss of identity.

Analysis

An analysis of the eight Reports shows that at this time the affects of Globalisation are experienced as 'a cycle of perpetual motion' and that members of UK society are overwhelmed by the pace of life. The experience is one of a fragmented and fragile society with an absence of known structures. It is a scary experience and one of great loss – even a perceived loss of God, to the extent that members of society cannot make sense of their world; issues are too scary to think about; and social disintegration results in a loss of identity and alienation.

A result is a lack of participation, alienation, suspicion, retreat to the familiar and an inability to build trust. Members of society are unsure of each other and this means there is a loss of a collective identity (or culture); a loss of human engagement and relationships; a loss of agency and authenticity; an absence of collective understanding of society; social isolation, community breakdown and a superficial connectedness. At the same time there is a need for self-gratification and members of society are attempting to find attachment or connection to others. However, such is the extent of disconnection in community that the question is asked 'where do we go to talk?' It is felt that greed and destructiveness are out of control and that connectedness is impossible to achieve in spite of the experience of severe loneliness.

This leads to members of society experiencing despair, disillusionment and impotence. They fear for their survival and experience insecurity now and for the future. This extends to fears for some sort of catastrophe or annihilation. There is a total lack of trust in institutions that are seen to be failing. Society is experienced as being corrupt and regarded as creating inequality. Members of society see themselves as agents of government who control people and take them for a ride. Yet in spite of this exploitation the feelings of powerless prevent the expression of anger. Members of society see the disintegration of society as resulting from a betrayal by government who have constantly lied. They feel that they are under the omnipotent control of government. There is an absence of a trustworthy external authority arising from a near-total disillusion with government and with unmet expectations of institutions, results in a massive experience of unmet dependency.

One of the ways that they deal with these unbearable thoughts and feelings is to seek for a saviour and this is frequently located in young people. At the same time, there is also a demonisation of young people. And a displacement of fears for the future into young people with fears for children in the future – children who are at risk and viewed as dependent crying infants, young people who don't have protection. Hope is but a phantasy and the garden is viewed as a location for hope and escape.

Faced with such an experience, members of society withdraw from political engagement. They do not trust the people in power viewing them as arrogant and wanting to control everything. An outcome is that politicians lose their authority to govern. There is a sense of grievance, and a sort of lynch mob displacement of anger onto politicians and a seeking for public humiliation of MP's. There is a distinct realisation that feelings of oppression and societal anger could explode at any time. In many respects this is a very adolescent society one which is struggling to come to terms with a new way of life but at this time unable to even begin to see what that new way of life might look like.

Hypothesis

Because of the continuing effects of globalization UK society is experienced as fragmented, the culture destroyed and no longer available for providing consistency, continuity and confirmation and people can not at this time confirm their identities with each other. There is a loss of human engagement and relationships; an absence of collective understanding of society; social isolation, and community breakdown. Members of UK society are unable to make sense of their experiences. At the same time they experience the government and other social, religious, business and other institutions as corrupt, arrogant controlling and failing to meet their dependency needs. Members of society feel lonely, hopeless, helpless, and isolated and respond in an immature and child-like manner. Members of UK society respond by seeking to humiliate

MP's in general; by displacing their anger onto politicians; and ultimately withdrawing their authority from government. At this time, the nature of rebellion is low key and in the form of revenge, withdrawal of political support and changed allegiance to less established politicians. However, there is a distinct realisation that feelings of oppression and societal anger could explode at any time.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to all who participated in this project throughout the UK. In particular, we should wish to thank the following who were the Conveners and Authors of the eight Reports: **London**, Sally Puleston; **Bristol**, Anne-marie Cummins; **Liverpool**, Sheila Ramsay; **Oxford**, John Diamond; **Manchester**, Clare Allen, Myna Trustram & Jackie Killbane; **Older Women**, Ursula Murray; **Greeks in UK**, Dimitris Vonofakos; **Christians**, Paul Regan.

Concluding Remarks

At this time, UK societal dynamics are both disturbed and disturbing. They are disturbed to the extent that UK societal culture has been largely destroyed by the massive changes (mainly those associated with globalization), that have occurred in the UK over the past twenty or more years; to the extent that there is nothing that holds members of society together. UK societal dynamics are also disturbing given the fact that the society in the mind is largely perceived as persecutory. The resulting violent rebellion is close to exploding and could be triggered by any form of societal disturbance. The biggest fear is the possibility of violence and anger being displaced onto those different 'others' such as immigrants.