



AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY

Faroe Islands and the World at the Dawn of 2017
Report of an OPUS Listening Post®
held on 11 January 2017

PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS & EXPERIENCES

In this part, the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experiences in their various social roles, be they: in work, unemployed or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood, 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': the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

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

Theme 1: Mindfulness, Meditation and the Meaning of life

More and more people are searching for a stable internal foothold, instead of 1000 different external footholds. In the effort to resist the escalating speed and conditions of stress characterizing our society, many use technics as mindfulness and meditation. Cross generations a growing number of citizens try to become "free from their role" and to be themselves outside the system, in the endeavour to catch the meaning of life. Still more create themselves as "the project of life" – in an individual manner outside what communities as families, relatives, organizations and the local society can offer. This entails a parallel weakness of relations and cohesion in the systems; systems that also are a crucial and mainstay of our individuality and meaningfulness: "We can't find the answer only inside ourselves, because we are created in the relation to others!".

Theme 2: Thoughts of trust and unpredictability

The trust in the systems and "The established" is hesitant and almost in free fall. We can no longer predict, what will happen even in the short run. The lack of predictability creates anxiety and we become greedy and self-centred. We are looking for a hope, a faith, or a person, that can bring back order in chaos: "We need a modern Robin Hood, that can master the greediness. God knows, whether Trump is the new Robin Hood!!!! Maybe Trump is the dragon, that has to be in the fairy tale before the happy end is possible".

Together with a reduction in traditions, narratives and credible persons, the lack of predictability creates a vigorous need of myths, that describe contemporary communities. This embraces both elderly and young, which thrive and develop in the present time, but no longer have narratives and traditions, that create safety and strengthen community. “We need a modern myth, that says, that we cannot manage without the community – I cannot live without the community – we are because of the other” and “we are left to ourselves to be “pioneers and pathfinders” – and that! is fucking scaring!”

Unpredictability flourishes – also on the international scene: Brexit surprises, the election of Trump is surprising, new terror approaches surprise, the aggression of Russia surprises, the flows of refugees’ surprise, etc.

But what is going on beneath the surface? What is it, that wants to rise and show its face like an Tyrannosaurus Rex? Is it greed? Why can’t we trust what we have and see? A young man says: ”USA has been undermined (buried) in shit. Trump represents the collective unconscious, that has to be brought to the light, before it is possible to go on further. Hillary did not represent this. She represents all the polished, the conscious.

Theme 3: Speed and Centrifugal force

The young are native digital and live their natural lives in digital universes, where they with extreme speed channel-surf between possible interfaces. The enhanced focus on efficiency improvement, automation and material consumption demands an extreme speed for us to catch up – twenty-four seven. There are no longer natural breaks, and the whole society runs in a “hamster-wheel”, where the centrifugal force is the mainstay in both work life, social life and family-life. Everything goes on in high speed and all intervals are used for further production or presentation.

An enormous difference between country side and town is experienced, qua the enhance in concentration of citizens. “My grandpa lives in the country-side, only 12 minutes drive from the town, and there time for thoughtfulness and standstill still is a normal phenomena”. Some citizens choose to jump of the “hamster-wheel” in the effort to survive and feel the meaning of life in a different manner, while others are looking forward to their retirement – with a child’s joy. The centrifugal force hurls citizens of the “hamster-wheel”, trashed and hit by stress – with great difficulties of ”re-entry” or ”on-boarding”. Thereby, a larger group of citizens emerges, that do not participate or contribute to the machinery of the society.

Theme 4: The Bobble-effect

The media define reality. They no longer describe reality, but create a reality with presentations characterized by “light facts”, designed to catch attention and “instant sensation”. This also concerns the social media, where several are hit by shit-storms and tsunamis of “news bobbles” of excluding or sympathizing character – tumbling into our living rooms and our minds in shorter and shorter periods. No-one is interested in the truth; every-one is interested in the sensation. Reality is no longer coherent or rooted in the facts, but is experienced as ”single bubbles blowing in the wind”.

Theme 5: The power of definition is decentralized and individualized

Concurrently with a centralization of power and resources, a counter-pressure emerges in the population; a population that to a larger extent choose to define them-selves. Still more cut social contexts and create them-selves as the project of life. This reinforces a "singularis-culture", where the individual creates the individual on its own requirements and conditions.

Simultaneously youths express experiences of an enhanced unity and society, togetherness and joy of being a part of societies across traditional gaps; reaching much further through electronically platforms, exactly where they have the power to define them-selves in a free manner, without constricting relations and societies. This also means fewer hands carrying the burdens and duties in the close society – for instance in form of voluntary work and solidary systems (trade unions, organizations of interest, protest marches, etc.). Maybe an anarchistic revolution is currently under way?

Theme 6: The hope survives

The Faroe Islands are surrounded by unaffected nature. When storms rage outside and the electricity disappears, the inhabitants lighten the candles inside and move closer to each other – and feel both safe and close, while waiting for better weather.

When citizens die, the funerals fill up the churches with people that gather around the bereaved – with strong feelings of closeness, coherence and the belief in a life after death. This nature – and natural behaviour are in strong contrast to the high speed of the machinery of society and the enhanced alienation between humans. Storms and death in the Faroe Islands is connected to hope and the natural condition of life in the long run. Young people worship quality in communities in E-play and team-sports, where the team and the unity gives results far beyond the sum of individuals. They are happy and full of hope for the future, and they show a skilful administration of the new platforms and possibilities. Moreover, the young people have created a language including "cant", abbreviations and symbols, that for them are natural and give a here-and-now-meaning in their communication with others, who use the same language – across boundaries and generations. They are hopeful.

PART 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In Part 3, the participants 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, participants 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: "Survival of the fittest" kills solidarity and society

Increased speed and higher unpredictability in a society that tries to hang on to the rest of the world, creates a centrifugal force, where the individual does not get the necessary gaps and pauses for breath. At the same time humans clog together in greater concentrations (large towns), which leads to further speed and unnatural overheating. This entails, that several citizens are hurled out of the centrifuge of the society (the hamster wheel) and become non-contributing and “expensive” elements, that the society has to take care of. At the same time, the citizens are searching for the meaning in life, that they do not experience in high-speed and production, and they create their own “gaps” and rooms for breath, where they have the possibility to find an inner foothold. The individual becomes a “life-project” for it-self, and cuts of the traditional systems and connections. Thereby the systems, that create safety for the citizen that does not thrive and grows in high-speed and unpredictability, are weakened.

The citizen therefore experiences anxiety and growing unsafety in relation to the societies formal systems of power. The greater effort the individual makes in personal development, the greater the re-enforcement of the anxiety and unsafety is; which again entails a greater weakness in societies and systems, that should catch and care for those, who really need. The growing responsibility for own survival and the reduced trust in authorities is experienced as a fight without a safety net; and reminds of “survival of the fittest”.

This results in a more fragmented society, where the components to a larger extent become the individual’s “project of life” rather than family or the working group. In the effort for best possible achievement, the solidary foundation, that gives psychological safety for the citizen, is weakened.

Hypothesis 2: The nature of Hope and Everglow will survive

When the storms rage, the trust in the holders of the power weakens and the safety becomes under pressure, the citizen turns to the inner world in his search for foothold and belief in the future. The belief in the future is connected to persons, who can save or redeem the citizen, it is connected to smaller groups and societies within close reach. Fantasies of Robin Hood, revolutionary shifts of systems and the possibilities of the individual creating it-self, suggest, that the citizen does not moulder towards powerlessness and hopelessness. The new generation utilizes the new possibilities to define its own reality and coherence, in-stead of being defined by each-others or “the other”.

The citizen therefore experiences a pressure towards own existence and towards the need for a belief in the future. In the narrow window between doubt and hope, the strive for a life, with the possibility to bring along the good into the future, emerges in the citizen (Everglow). This results in a society, where the majority of the citizens take initiatives and are creative in smaller societies and coherences; although to the largest extent with global perspectives. The navigation is done with lower security and shorter horizons (disruption), but the flexibility becomes the new platform of hope and future. Full of hope the citizen are re-defining themselves, solidarity and the society.

Convenor: Tóra Petersen & Jan Willemoes