Denmark at the dawn of 2018
Report of a Listening Post held in Copenhagen on 15 January 2018

PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND 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: Disarray – new maturity

We live in the Age of Disarray - we used to speak of the Age of Enlightenment. Today, society is not as preoccupied as it used to be with themes like freedom, equality and private property (sic!). Pay differentials are increasing. Government is micromanaging: Considering curfew after 8 pm for immigrants and fiddling with anti-masking laws. Nature turns against man: Natural disaster, climate change, polluted oceans and cities. Is Judgement Day near or is there hope?

In her New Year speech, the Queen of Denmark mentioned the importance of doing needless work instead of focussing on growth, productivity and money all the time. Before the end of the speech, it turned out that in fact the needless was useful, too. We have become permeated with ideologies of utility and growth so that these ideologies turn up even when we turn against them. In London, "coffee to go" is being banned due to environmental issues. Something is happening. Just think of how our view on smoking has developed. New types of energy and ideology give us hope. And, actually, in broad outlines the world is moving forward with regards to education, health, famine, equality, etc. Maybe a new maturity is showing?

Theme 2: Patriarchy has fallen but what is following?

There seems to be agreement that patriarchy has fallen – if not wholly and not in

all countries - but it doesn't bide well for the future of patriarchy. Notions of matriarchy as an alternative do not seem to awaken enthusiasm, brothers and sisters and horizontal authority are put into circulation and evoke memories - sometimes of brotherhoods of the 1930's and sometimes of the aggressiveness of Facebook storms. Not easy.

Theme 3: Gender between fundamentalism and "playfulness"

For a long time, the avant-garde has worked with dissolution of the binary conception of gender and has recommended queer as a playful dissolution of rigid concepts of gender. Today, the scene is being radicalized by transgender groups focussing on the fact that it is not a game to be born with discrepancy between body and gender and that sex change through hormones and surgery is the only solution. Also, the #MeToo movement seems to have rather polarized views on men versus women.

Today, there is a sense of having to be very careful when speaking of sex and gender. The days of "Blonde jokes" are over. And out of fear of being called or taken for trans-phobic, you refer from stating your opinion that people should put off hormones and surgery until they have grown up and know with what they are dealing.

There is a sense of polarization and tension between the young and the elderly, between the newly authoritarian politically correct generation and the anti-authoritarian flower power generation. A new young people's revolt. Young people shut up those who tell "Blonde jokes", they, who, too long, have been shutting up blondes.

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:

We live in times of change where dystopian notions of catastrophe are conflicting with gleams of light and hope and maybe of new definitions of usefulness and of how to be useful to each other. In spite of progress in the big scheme of things and many small steps in the right direction, too often we seem to be paralysed by dystopian anxiety and impotence.

Hypothesis 2:

Family models for societies seem to focus on domination/submission. What is

new is the competition on horizontal levels playing an increasing prominent part where, formerly, the dominance relation was be settled on beforehand. Today, men and women have the same tasks and responsibilities and thus they need to cooperate both at home and at work and to compete with each other for positions, for being the best parent and for being the best cook. Maybe this type of generalised competition is difficult to face. Horizontal organisation on Social Media enables fast modes of mobilization, containing both unsublimated aggression and constructive/democracy-based feelings of community.

Hypothesis 3:

On the surface, the fall of patriarchy releases a wealth of possibilities. Gender becomes an arena for its own matters and, at the same time, it absorbs tensions from the general "discomfort of/in culture", dealing with finding an identity. Unfortunately, identity policies are a polarization mechanism, making people, who in fact would be able to cooperate, turn against each other.

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