



Finland at the dawn of 2018

Report of a Listening Post held on 12 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: The accelerating CLIMATE CHANGE - mutual offspring (problems) of ecosystem and human-system

The participants shared remarks and thoughts on the catastrophic acceleration of climate change, with its shared feelings of worry, helplessness and cluelessness. Images of the world's end and anxiety were coming to their dreams as well. For an individual person to grasp such a large, complex phenomenon was seen as almost impossible, but nevertheless there was anxiety carried by people's bodies and thoughts. One way - to not think about the whole thing - seemed like the best help. The group was asking itself: What should I do? What should I think? How should I take a stand on this? There were wonderings of how an individual can affect the ecosystem and human system; could the advancement of technology achieve a radical turn to combat climate change; is it possible to identify and study these forces feeding the accelerating process? There were wonderings of also if these personal stands and actions were of any consequence. The participants had a sturdy understanding of the unity between themselves and the enormous eco- and human system.

The participants shared stories of humanity, needs of humans and on the other hand the rapid progress of technology. It was said that abundant communication online can still achieve feelings of loneliness. A person can physically miss another person. On the other hand it was felt that the possibilities for interpersonal communication have increased, which the participants were happy

about. Talk was shared on the difficult situations posed by technological devices, when they weren't working. These events provoked feelings of ignorance. There was talk about the slow adaptation of human (nature) and the rapid process of technological advancement. Technology doesn't replace basic needs of people: the need for closeness and love. Technology then both separates and joins people together. The perceptions of humankind becoming separated from their own nature, own humanity was shared between the older generations of participants. The pros of technology, digitalisation and robotics were still acknowledged. The basic needs coming from within one's humanity were recognised: ME-feeling was felt important, as well as the need to be loved, fed and safe. The participants talked about the tension between change and stagnation, between preserving and changing, between old and new.

Theme 2. Different age, different time

The participants discussed different ages and the differing energies between different ages. A perception was brought forward about the 60-100 age, that involves a lot of new kind of energy in comparison to the people generations ago that were of the same age. There was talk about how 60y-100y old people have a historical link to the past as well as a shared vision of the future. This generation has a slowness and wisdom of experience, that is needed in modern times. One wishes to share that wisdom, but are there listeners? Who cares? There were thoughts about the kind of future that is possible to build from within this generation. Are there adventures ahead? There were thoughts on how much it is up to this generation itself to achieve?

The participants talked of the experience where a person can live simultaneously within different times. There is a slowly progressing time, especially when one visits one's parents. There is a fast-progressing time, when doing interesting things. Time of the daily life is chronological, and Kairos-time is experienced every now and then: something happens when the time is right for it. The participants felt that time feels differently in us all. We are in touch with the slowly progressing time of our mothers, and at the same time we see the fast, future-oriented progression of time in our grandchildren's rapid growth. One participant talked how this Listening Post space was a very slow, calm atmosphere to share thoughts. They held birthday parties in this same space, which were full of hustle and bustle, fastness and a different world of sound. Time for different generations is like a chaotic beginning and a calm finity at the same time.

Theme 3: Between safety and unsafety

Participants talked about the need for a mental safe place, and the fear of loneliness. There was anxiety about the fear of loneliness, and at the same time wonder about whether there is anything to do about this feeling. Who to attach to? How to make sure there was more ME-feeling, the feeling of communal belonging? How to find a group that cares? The participants wondered how to influence societal development - so that structures, laws and culture could give

birth to places and spaces fulfilling the communal experience of an individual and their need for belonging. Arts and crafts as a hobby were seen as an action that creates deep feelings of safety and humanity. How could the energy created from fear of loneliness be transformed to help finding these mental safe places, safe havens?

The participants talked about in-between-ness and the necessity of building bridges. Relationships bring about a space in-between and this is significant in interpersonal communication. That what is in between (in between person and another person, in between person and nature) determines what happens and emerges / comes about and stays on. Communication, words, gestures, tones of voice are in this in-between space. Their quality matters. An ethically built in-between space can achieve good, right, and beautiful things. The participants talked about the need of building bridges between different dimensions: between the young and old, between humans and technology. The in-between space between two opposites is what matters. That something which is in between us, should provoke curiosity, and should be seen as significant and impactable by anyone with their own actions. The in-between space is like a demilitarised zone where negotiations occur (Winnicott).

Theme 4: The Missing theme = desire and will; a new ethic

The final statements raised the idea that we weren't talking about desires and wills of people. A thought about a new ethics was brought forward; only serving the holistic entirety is right and good. (?) There was wonder about the fact that today, things that were bad before can be good and the other way as well. There were thoughts about conflicts of values and their consequences.

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:

Our society and culture has slowly built itself into a great complex of systematic processes - a Cluster that directs human behaviour. This Cluster (culture, strength) self-orientates towards an indeterminate direction and evokes feelings and states in people, sometimes of anxiety, sometimes of joy and content. An individual has no contact with this Cluster other than feeling that they are a part of it. The individual doesn't know what this Cluster does. This is also the reason for the ambiguity of feelings - on whether they can trust to drift along with this Cluster.

Hypothesis 2:

The themes come together with four segment systems to form a kind of cyclical, multi-layered process - from the human mind and body, to virtual and face-to-face communities all the way to the system of the humankind and to the wider ecosystem.

Our society and culture has been slowly constructed by systemic processes to become a great complex whole – a Cluster that governs human behaviour. This great Cluster (made of culture and the strength of the cluster) self-orientates towards an indeterminate direction and evokes feelings and states in people, sometimes of anxiety, sometimes of joy and content. An individual has no contact with this Cluster other than feeling that they are a part of it. The individual doesn't know what changes this Cluster will do. This is also the reason for the ambiguity of feelings - on whether they can trust to drift along to a 'good' direction with the Cluster. How can an individual provoke changes to governing swarm intelligence? How to bring about alternate ways of thought and action, as individuals and groups, in order for new thought- and action patterns to emerge?

To understand the thematics, psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott offers a metaphor of the relationship between a mother and a baby, and the potential state of possibilities and transitional ages that it holds within it. Behind this is the thought of the individual's struggle to accept the outer reality as it is; life requires with itself a tension between one's inner mind and reality, and the outer reality. To give relief to this we can bring in the experimental, psychic space of in-between-ness. It is like a psychic rest stop, a safe haven where on one hand you have to keep the inner and outer realities separate and on the other hand keep them in constant interaction. The space requires trust and respect. It can be seen as a demilitarized zone, where life's smallest and biggest questions are negotiated to reach solutions that fulfil the needs of both realities. If one reality invades too forcefully, too deep within the other world, the negotiation link breaks and borders are closed for safety. Something that once began as a two-person relationship is expandable to a potential state also for larger social communities.

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