



## **Serbia at the dawn of 2018**

### **Report of a Listening Post held in Belgrade on 14 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.*

There were several empty chairs for announced participants who were lost near in the neighbourhood, trying to find the exact address. There was a strong belief that they will find the venue and the group. So, in a few minutes they came and the group felt a relief and joy. Some of them were schoolmates, back in elementary school, which is located nearby. They came together interested to join for the first time this, for them, unknown type of gathering.

After a brief explanation about this particular workshop being a part of an international project, which is practiced in more than 30 countries, the free associations and some dreams were shared. Associations were very rich and the work of group was very dynamic, resulting in a nice dialogue among participants, who could share mutual understanding and creative answers among each other.

The associations were mainly connected to feminine figures of elderly ladies, grandmothers, mothers and daughters. There were strong feelings of the presence of ancestors who are literally among us, reaching out from the past with some massages for our group. The first dream shared, was about the grandmother of a participant who worried in her 95th year of age about her menstrual cycle, and she was concerned about her physical health. The associations were about some good containment and holding from mother figures for their children and about roots and family tree, as well as new branches which grow on the family tree. A participant shared her memory of one book she read "The French legacy", which described a story of a French writer and his relationship with his Russian grandmother underlying the differences between the French and the Russian souls. The group shared feelings about difficulties to understand the differences of cultural heritage, and importance to

deal with issues of cultural and traditional roots. A participant recalled how she spent the last summer when she started to investigate about her grandfather's roots and visited Istria, in Croatia, the birth place of her grandfather. He had 10 brothers and sisters and how she realized at the time the importance of getting to know her origins.

The next participant shared her dream about some school children who went together to the cinema, and who ate so much of popcorns that they were sick and started to throw out the popcorn from the top of the building down on people and all around. That immediately arose some questions "with what we feed our children if they are so sick that they start to throw food away", what was the food that made them react like that, something poisonous or bad?

Some interconnectedness was recognized between older and younger participants through the dialogue. Some younger participants recognized and described some parts of the past period like golden era in which people had good life, lived with much more freedom, protected in a secure social system. They used to have opportunities for work and were creative and produced art. They thought how their parents were the generation which lived in the golden era, whereas their grandparents - who lived in the period after the World Wars I and II as if they were the ones predestined to build from ruins and rise from destroyed towns, communities etc. According to the modern generations, they did not have the right means to transfer their roots to their descendants. This stirred some feelings of shame regarding our experiences, as if our experience is not good, and that young generations do not have enough knowledge about the previous experiences, whereas they live in the era of virtual experience beyond reality. Those participants who allegedly lived in the golden era strongly denied that it was so golden and secure; they claimed there was a lot of political influence on their lives imposed by the then system.

They also said that one had to hide personal and traditional from the eyes of the persecutory structures of the former system.

There were some thoughts about the forgotten tradition, about achievements and knowledge of our ancestors which had been neglected and forgotten, not saved and brought to further generations, maybe because of the historical or social conditions in the country. One association appeared that, according to some historical chronicles, Belgrade was the most bombarded city in the world. This information produced the feelings of fear and surprise, but also recognition that even though it had been destroyed so many times, it was also rebuilt as many times.

Presence of different feelings was felt, and thoughts about why participants stopped talking about their ancestors, about their burden as if one could not be talk about the burdening experiences of our nation - of Serbs. It raised a question: "What was transferred to descendants?" One participant mentioned the novel "Luzitanija", written by Dejan Atanackovic, about the lost information of great doctor from 1909, a psychiatrist, professor Stojimirović, who developed the

first Therapy Community (TC) at the psychiatric clinic. The book describes his unusual approach to patients, during the Great War in 1915 when the doctor was arrested while the country was occupied. All patients at the clinic continued to work in TC, just as if he was present among them and as if they were not suffering pain and loss. What was alive represented hope, good work and great achievement of one of our ancestors. This information appeared to be in some textbooks and literature on the history of psychology in the army forces, as one participant remembered, while in the experience of psychiatrists it was unknown information and something amazing that came up. Association connected to this was how much different information were presented to different people or generations, or even in one generation how many different things from same historical domain are presented. Some participants brought examples about forgotten faith in some good things and values. It seemed to some that it was wrong that children did not spend enough time with their parents and that there were no good ways of communication between them. In the story of participant, an architect by profession, the group could hear a great deal of fury and anger because of the persistent rumours at her workplace about moving the whole department from the old building in which they worked for 70 years, just because some politicians need a place for themselves. The participant was a chief of department and in protest she decided to celebrate 70th anniversary of the department, presenting on the occasion immense and rich achievements, backed up by the documents and presentation of whole work.

## **PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES**

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

The group was asked to separate into smaller working groups to try to identify the major themes that had emerged spontaneously during part one. Then a spokesman from each supported with others from group shared with the whole group and we clustered them in several main themes:

**Theme 1:** Alienation in the family, with differences between the needs of children and parents and also the ways how to find good enough strategies to relate differences

**Theme 2:** Wisdom and the use of modern technologies to communicate in a creative way to return to old values which were forgotten;

**Theme 3:** Our roots and origins, finding out ways to connect them with the new era of networking, relatedness of ancestors and offspring

**Theme 4:** Loss of self-confidence

**Theme 5:** Fear for future generations and what we left them as inheritance

**Theme 6:** Recognizing the fear of free speech about the war losses, national suffering and waking up ideas of importance of freedom of speech

### **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: Strong appearance of feminine principle and mother figures who bring feelings of containment and holding anxieties which are present in the wide social setting but with the lacking of masculine principle and because of that some feelings of instability and insecurity**

**Analysis of hypothesis 1:** From the very beginning of the work group a strong presence of the women figures appeared who were vary carrying and worrying. It was a kind of feminine principle which took great part in discussion and which spread over caring and it went towards accepting. It was present through dreams told, and also a feeling of containment and the strong need of woman participants to make good containment for the others in group and in larger community. The group's needs were satisfied, and fears were acceptable and not overwhelming. Questions were welcome, and it was quite acceptable that there were floating freely inside the group, without a strong need to be answered, like they were recognized as part of everything that existed, not as separated and dangerous.

**Hypothesis 2: Finding out where the responsibility was for connection between different generations – ancestors and descendants**

**Analysis of hypothesis 2:** Discussion went about differences over generations, and how the older generation of our grandparents was the generation of the builders, than after them our parents got something much easier than the grandparents because they inherited from the builders a lot so they could enjoy. Contents of the discussions from the smaller groups were connected to wondering about the power and knowledge of actual generation, how to accept what they get from ancestors in bridging and how to bridge all of that to our younger generation. Participants tried to find out new ways of bridging between the adults and children, how to overcome the misunderstanding between them.

Accepting the modern virtual reality as reality of our children, and wise use of old knowledge and new one in getting closer, without wasting time and waiting for younger to change themselves. It is a matter of adaptation to new times (technologies, digitalization, social networking, etc) and not expecting that the others need to adapt to what we want. There was a fear of possibility that the present generation was the last one, and that maybe our children could somehow "unlock" from us and become "rootless global citizens"; as if today's generations could be the last in chain who would keep some old principles and

tradition of our ancestors because we cannot find the way how to bring it all to them. There was a question about integrity and to whom we are responsible – to our ancestors, to ourselves or maybe to our descendants.

### **Hypothesis 3: transferring the responsibilities for good work in communities from global / political to small communities and families**

**Analysis of hypothesis 3:** Strong presence of the theme of personal and family responsibilities for making better future instead of earlier where power was put in the political and global states with the responsibility to make things better. Discussion appeared to have left the political themes outside, with very little space left for it in the group. A strong symbol of evil eyes without a surrounding structure appeared, and a need from participants to make a structure around them, developed through new ideas and associations as projection of hope and knowledge and a different look at bad and evil in society generally. There was an effort to make a new view of goodness, a consciousness of power and fight between evil and good. Hope for making better future was put in the reflective citizens, who might find ways in small thoughtful communities to make good connectedness and creative solutions for all types of problems – personal, global, communal. As one participant mentioned a name of the domestic film “The other side of world=everything!” (relatedness of Serbian words sveta=svega), and metaphorically speaking, representation of hope how real values are passed only “temporarily” through ideas. Some were wondering how we can present the traditional and forgotten values to our descendants in the spirit of time and in such a way that they represent for the young something attractive and not something that should be avoided. Participant mentioned A.

Einstein sentence “Past, present and future all exist simultaneously and are illusion!” Towards the end of the workshop, one participant courageously talked about feeling of isolation which appears in one Forum communication related to some questions and thoughts about the national and professional identity and asked for opinion of others, so she felt relief when she got some support in opinion of others present in group. So it come through one symbolic drawing from a small group how deep buried values can be found and brought up through dialogue of reflective citizens, so it is representation of found hope among desperation, and safe place where the fear can be contained.

**Convenor: Marina Mojović and Jelica Satarić**

**Report drafted by Dragana Dragojević-Gajić**