

Global Dynamics at the Dawn of 2006

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On or about 11 January 2006, under the guidance and coordination of OPUS, Listening Posts aimed at providing a snapshot of the societal dynamics of each country at the dawn of 2006, were held in twenty two different countries around the world (Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, USA and Britain). These were all reported in a similar format (see 'Britain and the World at the Dawn of 2003' in *Organisational & Social Dynamics*, 3(1): 165–169), researched and analysed by the authors, to produce this Global Report.

The authors self-defined their task as follows. To research and analyse the National Reports with a view to:

- (a) identifying common themes arising within the thirteen Reports;
- (b) to explore relationships between themes and to reduce these down to major or dominant themes;
- (c) To collate supporting information from the Reports for analysis of these themes; and
- (d) to formulate hypotheses arising therefrom.

For the sake of brevity this Report will only document the major interrelated themes identified, followed by an analysis and hypotheses regarding each.

INTRODUCTION

As was the experience in the past two years, the world is going through a period of unprecedented and revolutionary social change that still shows no signs of relenting. The nature of the change, which was referred to as 'death of a way of life' in 2004, is still powerful and

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influential at both a social and a psychological level in all societies. The affect of globalization has been such that it has impacted upon all aspects of society, be that individuals or those responsible for the management, leadership, and administration of political, economic, and social institutions. Members of society in all countries are struggling to come to terms with these changes and the current social dynamics are in large part evidence of the ways that members of societies are developing means of coping. There is little, if any, evidence to show that any particular society has started to come to terms with a 'new way of life'. Indeed, the evidence is to the contrary. The National Reports provide a picture of a world that is experienced as one of total confusion and inexplicable dynamics, which results in frustration and increasing rage at the extreme impotence experienced by members of societies. Given these circumstances, and indicative of the extreme anxiety being experienced, the means of coping are, in the main, primitive responses based on splitting and projection.

THEME 1. COPING WITH CONTINUING SOCIAL CHANGE

All National Reports related to the ways that members of societies throughout the world were developing a means of coping with the anxiety, frustration, anger, rage, and feelings of helplessness and powerlessness that were arising from loss and a failure to cope with a way of life that is experienced as threatening their very identity. This is a complicated and complex situation; however, we have identified three distinct ways that societies respond and react to the anxieties arising from the changes experienced and these are documented below as sub-themes. Although formulated as three distinct sub-themes it should be borne in mind that they share the same basic foundation – they all emanate out of the continuing revolutionary changes that are occurring across the world.

Sub-theme (a) Loss of identity

There is considerable evidence in the National Reports to conclude that the changes in societies around the world are so dramatic and so destructive that individuals and groups are experiencing a loss of identity. This dire experience is described by Winnicott as 'Integration feels sane, and it feels mad to be losing integration that has been acquired'; and by Melanie Klein as

One of the main factors underlying the need for integration is the individual's feeling that integration implies being alive, loving and being loved by

the internal and external good object; that is to say, there exists a close link between integration and object-relations. Conversely the feeling of chaos, of disintegration, of lacking emotions, as a result of splitting, I take to be closely related to the fear of death.

It seems little wonder, therefore, that members of society should describe their experience as 'death of a way of life'.

The following is a selection of the way this sub-theme is experienced in the various countries.

Analysis

Australia: A few themes were centred on personal identity . . . It was as if members were each putting forward their own hypothesis. This in itself seemed to evidence an individualistic way of working which might reflect an increasing individualism in society. . . . We each have our individual ways of containing anxiety. There seems to be no community container. A sense of the common good is lost. How do we grow, change and still contain our anxieties? . . . As citizens we have become alienated from our feeling selves. We intellectualize to protect ourselves from our fears. . . . The fragmentation of boundaries is felt as a threat, not the promise (freedom?) it initially was thought to be.

Bulgaria: Current changes make requisite the learning of new role-skills. There is longing for some missing knowledge . . . Authority roles (of a parent, a tutor/mentor) become more important. Sometimes they could be used as a sort of private shelter from some ambiguous and challenging social reality. . . . Although the price we pay for this adaptation to the changes is the lack of good rapport with our roots and with our peers.

Canada: Political and social destabilization. The recognition that more political and social structures have become destabilized over the last decade despite relative prosperity. . . . It was the view that society was faced with increased destabilization, much of it based far away from Canada. This period remains coupled with a powerful sense of inequality in the world and feelings of guilt about our relative prosperity and level of security. This in turn is tied to a sense of foreboding about what must lie ahead in our own lives, aging deterioration and death. Moreover it is not clear what we can do about this personally and politically.

Chile: Chilean society is suffering a process of transformation that has deeply affected its institutions and people's quality of life. People feel uncertainty and instability as a result of changes that influence

different areas of daily life such as, job relationships, organizations, family and personal relations, and so forth. People feel insecure to face daily challenges. Personal relationships are unstable and fragile, which makes difficult to understand what is happening around, and to know how to behave in a confusing and contradictory reality. Taking part in this sort of society is very stressful for people since they are continuously attempting to find ways to adapt themselves to such demanding culture of permanent changes . . . At the end Chilean society is seen fragmented, the strong differences make difficult the social integration and to have feelings of attachment and cohesion. Individuals feel isolation, they don't know how to make progresses to achieve a society more human, open, respectful and with common bindings.

Denmark: At the beginning of 2006, Denmark is a country whose citizens are worried and confused. Globalisation either as a reality or an image of the future, leaves the citizens uncertain of where they belong. There is a longing for clear-cut values, a wish for community, but the question of which values and which communities to belong and adhere to, remains unclarified . . . Some find that Denmark has already disappeared in the flow of globalisation, others that we are too provincial to take on the role of world citizens . . . There is a general and deeply felt need of ideologies or common norms which can clearly point out what is right and wrong, present durable values that to the benefit all groups in society. Without such norms, social concern is without fix points for where to start and for what can be usefully done.

Finland: We live in a world where we make changes in a manic way and do not have the courage to face our problems. Why? . . . Structures do not allow stopping. Space is taken from psychological processes. One needs time to stop. There is constant haste. Our own feeling of insecurity prevents us from talking. . . We lack courage. . . The current situation is safer, because it is familiar. . . If we realise that dealing with something is painful, we avoid it. We want to avoid psychological pain. We have fantasies of pain. We escape to the opposite of pain. We escape the pain we are experiencing now to the past or future . . . The idea of polarity was presented: hope of individualisation, which is good on one hand and bad on the other hand. The question is, to whom am I linked with and how. You can connect yourself through a network: my son is indirectly connected through a network about 80%. There are many roads, no signposts, and it is hard to predict. The situation is difficult when an individual has to recompose himself. If the current structure is eliminated, where will we get a new one?

France: Identity no longer is defined by the tensions between the identical and the different, between the 'Me' and the 'Not-Me'. It no longer seems to be in perpetual construction, feeding on the exchanges that the individual has with his environment. 'The other' in his difference, has become a source of dangers and various threats. These differences are driven by logics of exclusion and non-complementarity. People are looking for sameness. The Muslim represents a danger for the Catholic, the black person for the white, and reciprocally. . . . The transitional space (a mother who is both reassuring and frustrating) no longer applies today, for the outside world is perceived as threatening. The situation can be defined as a group narcissistic regression. As there is no future, no rules, no boundaries, the infinite enjoyment is at stake. The group has become a place of fusional regression, one of illusion and narcissistic comforting. . . . Today people are concerned by individuality, immediacy, virtual reality, and immediate enjoyment. They cannot dream together. . . . It is as if there was both no past and no future for this generation, stuck in an unpleasant and disillusioned reality (present).

Germany: The members of the group spoke of their experience that we as citizens are all confronted with increasing trends of modulisation, fragmentation, and loss of meaning.

Greece: . . . the changes in the last decade, as to the considerable influx of economic immigrants in Greek society, have made members of society fearful, uncertain and guilty as to how to deal with this new situation. The social group deals with these emotions by splitting/separating itself into sub-groups (like, 'us vs. them' or 'proper citizens vs. immigrant inhabitants') and subsequently evacuating and disowning these uncomfortable feelings in the 'foreign' sub-group . . . The sudden, abrupt and, sometimes, abusive changes in the natural and social surroundings have induced upon members of society a collective realisation of an ever-present, but underlying, identification with the archetypal/traditional experience of the Greek quality of life.

Holland: Insecurity and confusion were relevant themes for many. People feel that it is almost impossible to understand the changes in society and to come to grips with them. They do not feel connected, involved, they feel at a distance from what is going on in the world. Some of the questions referring to this were: 'The world outside is gradually getting smaller'. Where are we headed as a society; Where do I fit in; What direction do I advise my children to take or which behaviour had they best adopt in this society?

... The processes we call globalization continue. To many people this process is intangible and incomprehensible. What comes across and stays are statements about moving work and the shifting of political balances of power between Europe, the U.S.A., Russia, China, India and the Middle East with energy sources serving as a weapon of power.

Ireland: A strong preoccupation was the loss of an Irish identity. We have lost some important parts of our identity. We have ambiguous feelings about this: increased diversity makes us unrecognisable to ourselves and this is freeing and new as well as frightening. Human contact has been sanitised. There is a deprivation of human contact in many areas of life. In order to join with others, we have to find the 'lowest common denominator' – a bland sameness. In order not to exclude or offend anyone, we are required to avoid presenting difference or distinctiveness and so experience the loss of our true and different selves. This leads to increased anxiety, which is enacted in an increasingly fractured and disconnected society . . . Identity and place are still linked, but linked in different ways. We are unable to rely on continuity of identity, it has to be constructed and reconstructed. A crisis is an event that makes you question your identity and belonging. Identity now constructed by being received – an increased regulation of identity. . . . My identity is constantly being created in my connectedness – can't see identity as something static . . . In a rapidly changing world, there is little that is certain. We are unable to 'read' the world with the confidence that we had in the past. Our response to this is to strengthen personal boundaries, revealing little about our true selves and denying our curiosity and interest in each other, increasing the private and compromising the public self.

Israel: The first theme that emerged quite forcefully was the shared feeling of the pressure of everyday life, the feeling of a race against time. . . . The first associations revealed a fear of underlying chaos, both on the personal and the socio-political level, as if the social and political structures formed only a thin layer that could be easily destroyed to reveal the disorder underneath . . . One source of the anxiety was felt to be the tension between the expanding, seemingly endless possibilities opened up by globalization, wealth, new avenues of discourse, increased creativity and almost instant achievements, such as the young millionaires of hi-tech, and the accompanying fears of blurring of boundaries and difficulty in dealing with affluence and complexity. . . . The affluence, expansion and complexity inevitably threaten communal cohesion and boundaries and were seen by the group to be the major cause of an identity crisis (the second theme).

Cultural pluralism, for example, encourages friction among groups and animosity towards outsiders, including increased Anti-Semitism and hostility towards Moslem communities.

Italy: Participants referred to loneliness, to the difficulty and the added pain of being and living alone nowadays. Social and community fabrics are broken forever – or at the least they feel as if they will never be the same (the old way is over). Part of this problem is the speed of our living that does not make allowance for space and time to share with others, e.g. family members, friends, work colleagues etc. People are moving fast and away from their native places, the original community is replaced by a virtual one with no link to any land. . . . Everybody seems to follow some kind of goal that makes sense individually, but this goal is unstable and uncertain . . . Individual are thus left with the question ‘What to do?’ and ‘How to face the current situation?’ . . . The participants talked of the effects of loneliness and fragmentation as an increasing sense of insecurity. The safety of living spaces has been broken forever and this is what constitute the root of fragmentation. Violence and aggression is the way people react to the impossibility/inability to hold uncertainty.

Mexico: Many references to the situation of insecurity were done that lives itself at present and that during this year of elections seems to be more present in the everyday lives of the population. I am talking about the world lives itself as threatening and its consequences on a worldwide basis. And that this originates that most of the energy of the people this put in being defended before what attacks they seem on all sides. I am talking of the paranoia of how is presented and is reinforced before the high levels of insecurity.

Norway: The citizens experience the transformation from a society built on community, to a society where the individual has impact, in a way our parents or grandparents never could dream about. There is a tendency towards ‘worshipping’ the successful individual, the successful family, the successful exterior (look) . . . There is a lack of time in our society and people experience a great deal of stress, which nourish the quick comments, on the cost of reflection and changing perspectives . . . The citizens are in many ways exposed to organizations without boundaries . . . There is a lack of democratic processes, a lack of the will to see, explore and live with the differences of sex, ethnic background, age, education . . ., but beyond that, a lack so see your neighbour as a human being beyond sex and races. There is a lack of empathy towards other people due to the growing narcissism in the society . . . The growing individualism in the society is a threat to a

sustainable society. The generations to come are for more individual solutions than many in the generations of solidarity.

Portugal: Nowadays social roles are not very clearly defined. An example is the instability of marriage and gender roles. Once there were stable social labels and stereotypes and people would follow to them for life, but not anymore. Society conveys the idea that you can be whatever you want and fulfill all your desires but that you must work very hard for that as an individual. At the same time there is the anxiety of having so many choices and the feeling that we are losing something important along the way. This contributes to a feeling of diffuse identity and a kind of depersonalization . . . People need to define their inner identity by their professional identity and their success in work (external identity). This is linked with social pressure for competition and success. . . . It was not clear if the pressure is mostly internal, ego ideal or super-ego like, or more external, of the type 'peer-pressure' and 'role-model'. . . . There is a feeling of lack of protection of individuals in society, a lack of formal social support.

Russia: Our every day life is accompanied by the fear of tomorrow. People always worried about their own future and future of their children. The majority of women who have sons told that they are shudder with horror when think about Russian army. For them it means that they have to send their children for death. It is not only in connection with Chechnya but with relationship between old soldiers and officers and new young one. . . . There is no more image of the country with whom it is possible to identify. There is a lot of hostility to arrival new people, strangers. It is hard to be not similar to everyone. From the point of view of biology it means that there is attack on our territory. . . . Unstable life leads us to the fear of future and we even take pleasure from this . . . We feel anxiety, fear of the existence.

South Africa: Living in a society with so many and ingrained splits, ambiguities and paradoxes, leads to feeling overwhelmed, inhibited, paralysed, hopeless, helpless, incapacitated, disempowered, preoccupied and guilty, with a confused sense of belonging and identity (around the lies of sameness and the superficiality of integration), a lack of insight to understand the real diversity and poverty issues (and for some flight into work and progress), which results in apathy, not having energy to pro-actively change society, using flight into appearing busy in performing mundane tasks, continuing the games of political correctness, not sharing resources, continuing the separateness and even creating new forms of apartheid, and not attending to the abundance of opportunities to share and build. . . . Great difficulties in

setting and maintaining boundaries which leads to chaos in many spheres of life.

Spain: The global equilibrium where the US is ruling the world it is threatened because of the emergence of new countries (China) and areas (Latin America), Muslim countries that exerts a control to the energetic resources. The competition for power and resources, brings conflicts, a feeling of tension as results of the paranoia and the fight for control. . . . There is a tendency of bipolarization at every level, where nations, corporations, political parties are concentrated in order to compete or fight for the power and resources. Reality becomes just black or white and there is no space for dialogue, ideas, or thinking. . . . People cope with their life in a very individualistic way. There is confusion between what is urgent and what is important. This comes to a lack of communication and thinking, within the couples, between parents and children and the whole family . . . There is an increase of irritation and aggression and a sense of dissatisfaction.

Sweden: Survival issues are close in society's different attempts at development. Competition and advantages in power are confronted with political responsibility and security. The feeling of confronting a dissolution, that other cultures are taking over, also are signs that the process we witness points to real changes . . . When demands on the individual to be able to integrate the unknown increase, conditions in society connected to identity, spirit of community, group belongingness and feelings of being an outsider become highly charged. We experience a penetrating power in these issues that evokes fear. Fanaticism, fundamentalism and the foreign become frightening and full of conflict when you approach them. Increased knowledge, with the ability to hold on to what is authentic to oneself, gives the precondition for being able to get into contact with the foreign and thus being able to counteract splitting.

UK: Globalisation was regarded as the all-embracing element that was having an enormous influence on society. It was even considered that this was reflected by our own individual internal authority. . . . as more a process of, 'do it, control it, and move on'. Members were of the view that there was a sort of disconnection between people The experience of members was that everything seemed to work in the same non-emotional manner as that associated with multi-national companies and Globalisation, which was experienced as a monster. Driven by economic policy globalisation was considered to have developed a value system distinct from that held by most members of society. Globalisation was experienced as tyranny and members of

society felt helpless and unable to manage or remain in control. . . . Because of the affects of Globalisation and the subsequent feelings of a lack of control it was felt that we were living in a world that is in chaos.

USA: Because of the despair noted previously, with more time to be narcissistic and the fear of not getting mine, most Americans experience a push to be self-centered. People are working more, with less time for interaction with their children. In addition the U.S. is losing out in the world and domestically the safety net built 75 years ago is being undone. . . . Globalization is making adults and some private school children more aware of these international and national dynamics. Also one can't count on known traditions, parents, jobs, etc like we used to do. Under these mounting pressures members of society withdraw (Bowling Alone) and developmentally engage in self-absorption.

Hypothesis

Members of societies throughout the world continue to experience their societies as totally dynamic processes that exist in a state of flux and are characterized by spontaneity, experience, conflict, and movement. Such an environment is deeply disturbing, not least because it does not provide the continuity, consistency, and confirmation of our world that we require. A result is that members of societies are left with a serious threat to, and loss of, their identities. This results in a struggle for independence and at times a regression to a primary identity. The over-riding effect is a retreat into individualism and isolation, which in turn means that society becomes even more fragmented. The chaos and madness that ensues out of disintegration is a highly dangerous situation that literally may result in members of societies acting as if the other is totally bad and deserving of whatever fate he or she might be considered to merit.

SUB-THEME (B) FAILING PATERNALISTIC LEADERSHIP

The mainly patriarchal leadership is identified by members of societies throughout the world, with a failure to provide containment. A result is that members of societies seek alternative forms of leadership. There is a great deal of evidence in the National Reports to show that the old paternalistic, controlling model of leadership that has prevailed in most political, economic, and social institutions, especially religious institutions, has been seen to be ineffective, inauthentic, and failing to

provide containment. In effect, it has been seen to be unsuitable for today's needs and has been largely rejected. However, this has resulted in members of societies throughout the world having to take back their dependency needs. Being left with no obvious location for their projections, this results in an experience of helplessness, powerlessness, frustration, and anger. In some societies they have located their dependency needs in women who have been mobilized to take up leadership roles, resulting in matriarchal leadership both at a societal and family level. In other societies dependency needs have been located in young people who have been mobilized as fight leaders to express the frustration, rage, and anger on behalf of societies.

The following is a selection of the way this sub-theme is experienced in the various countries.

Analysis

Australia: In exploring differences between the generations within the group, a scenario was brought forward of younger people relying on their own small peer group for support, discussion and sharing of confidences, rather than relying on traditional institutions such as schools, churches and other community gatherings, that were seen as untrustworthy or unable to provide the containment needed for anxieties. Notably, this scenario was for those in their thirties, not just for teenagers or twenties. . . . It was felt that the last generation was not able to provide role models for current roles because of the rapidity of change. However, another member stated that he wished to model characteristics such as courage and honesty for his children and that this could be done despite rapid change in work roles. . . . how might one be effective in one's work role, especially how might one aid in the development of sustainability and protecting the future for the future generations? . . . there was a discussion of cross-cultural issues surrounding intercultural marriages.

Bulgaria: It is possible that our social order has up until recently been dominated by some patriarchal center. In the context of the decay of the patriarchal values we feel as if left in the margins of the 'world' where we feel physically threatened, guilty and lonely.

The process of change can be experienced as a sort of contact with some barbarian, we feel ambivalent to – we fear it, we are disgusted by it, but we also secretly like it. The barbarian seems to be coping with changes. Although the price we pay for this adaptation to the changes is the lack of good rapport with our roots and with our peers.

The position of authority as something in between the 'patriarch' and the 'barbarian' is born relatively late and is still too fragile. In some special moments, the past is still blocking the participation in the here-and-now. . . . The need for someone from outside/above to bring forth the meaning remains.

Canada: It was the view that society was faced with increased destabilization, much of it based far away from Canada. This period remains coupled with a powerful sense of inequality in the world and feelings of guilt about our relative prosperity and level of security. This in turn is tied to a sense of foreboding about what must lie ahead in our own lives, aging deterioration and death. Moreover it is not clear what we can do about this personally and politically. . . . An aging society will settle on a notion of democracy that secures its own comfort as it ages. It recognizes emerging destabilization, but hopes to avoid its personal consequences. The very notion of progress is at risk, because reductions in inequalities in a newly defined democracy will inevitable result in loss. Much of our confusion is a result of this fear of loss.

Chile: The participants of the Listening Post manifested interest and concerns with the very close presidential election that occurred the 15th of January . . . It was the first time in the history of Chile that a woman candidate had the first option to become Head of State. This fact, joined with the high probability the woman could be president, were understood as expression of the changes and transformations in Chilean society. . . . The female candidate is the focus of idealizations by the group of participants attending to the Listening Post. Her feminine condition arouse desires to have a president that gives maternity to society, protect and take care of people, making reparations to the hard and disciplinary forms men have or have had to exercise leadership and government in contemporary societies. The individuals are under the illusion the woman candidate will make possible warm and appreciative attachments, with love, generous breasts, capable to feed multitudes who are eager of containment, to be received, nurtured by a maternal figure. Idealizations and illusions are mechanisms that serve to have feelings of temporal enjoyment and repression of the fact, that independent who may be the president of Chile, everybody will have to face with work and personal responsibility the normal vicissitudes of everyday life in a very competitive society . . . Changes in Chilean society have broken with dependency culture that dominated for a long time life of institutions, and relations with the state, organizations, Catholic Church and family. The weakening of dependency relationships leads people to feel anxiety as a result of losing cultural referents that traditionally nourished their identities and

provided 'good and bad objects' to deal with personal and collective psychic processes. Changes of post-dependency culture are disconcerting for individuals, and they protect themselves against anxiety by idealizing the past. They project upon institutions and groups responsibility for difficulties and conflicts that affect them. Changes provoke schizoid paranoid mental states that hinder facing changes in a realistic and mature form . . . The perception of Chilean society as fragmented and disintegrated protects people against the anxiety of being responsible for the society and its quality of life it offers to citizens. The projection of guilt regarding the frustrations individuals feel in society is also a form to ameliorate the anxieties associated with living in world plenty of complexities, contradictions and paradoxes.

Denmark: In many respects the Danish government lies in the wake of the Bush administration: extensive powers are given to the intelligence service. On one hand a feeling of a Danish national identity is cultivated in various cultural projects, and on the other the government does not find it necessary to speak up against the atrocities carried out in the camp of Guantanamo where an absurd form of intelligence service is carried out in third part countries in which intelligence is brought forward through the torture of citizens, randomly chosen . . . The missing leaders in the outer world with both power and moral integrity, and at the same time, the missing inner structures with clear values impede social orientation and involvement. Psycho dynamically the feeling is that parental figures are missing, i.e. figures representing social care and a sensible prioritising of undertakings in a long term perspective as well as ideas which they are involved in and ready to defend if attacked.

Finland: There are many roads, no signposts, and it is hard to predict. The situation is difficult when an individual has to recompose himself. If the current structure is eliminated, where will we get a new one? . . . The challenge of leadership is: what do we need leaders who make decisions for, because everyone can predict the future just as well/badly as the decision-makers. . . . What is the real responsibility of a leader? How should one lead oneself? It is difficult to think that there is no one that knows better. We appoint leaders even though we do not know whether they are capable of the job. Container responsibility, escape, fear. If someone took care of me, I had the courage to tell. Who knows? Everyone knows something, nobody knows everything. Information is gained through a common dialogue. It requires us to be heard first. Who are we listening to? Who do we think has information? . . . Unpredictable nature of life and phenomena that cannot be controlled were raised. What does the state of the world mean for two

small people? . . . If we realise that dealing with something is painful, we avoid it. We want to avoid psychological pain. . . . Where get hope? Culture can change fast. It is tragic how important leadership is. Extended leadership is needed, other people must be engaged. Care and attention of the leader – psychological care. Where are we, what is the starting point? Dissatisfaction with the existing situation is prevalent and consuming. What we have now is not enough. The ‘when and if only’ – life . . . Nothing is enough!

France: Youth is a real preoccupation for ‘the world is in the hands of the elderly’ (which most of the present people are a part of). Overall, the underlying feelings are the ones of failure, guilt and depression: We do not know and do not have time to take care of them (nurture them). We failure to transmit our values and principles to them: The future we have set up for them is not appealing: There are economical difficulties, no social project. ‘A whole generation is in precariousness and we can no longer protect them from it’ . . . Conflicts between different generations have indeed always existed, but they have taken a particularly acuteness nowadays. The youth is the symptom of an endangered society, of the limits of the neo-liberalism, of non elaborated contractions, of parents . . . It is practically as if they incarnated the return of the repressed of the previous generation. It had been able to both sublimate in ideology and live their drive through the “sexual liberation” in the early 70s. However, we can ask if May 68 is not an alibi, and is used instead of deep reflection. This illustrates the ready-made thinking, the refusal of thinking we shall talk in the next section. . . . The youth is acting out. Now, they cannot find the words to voice their frustration and rebellion nor the motives that result in them. There is also enjoyment in destruction. We can note that they destroyed what they are excluded and which represent the aspirations of the previous generation. It looks like destruction, revenge and self-destruction. It may very well be the only outcome in front of the contradictory, paradoxical injunctions, which they have to face. They have to succeed but nobody gives them the tools to achieve it. . . . This youth, in a way, symbolizes the fear of ‘the other’, of difference. . . . The paternal authority is strongly questioned, if not in total decline.

Germany: Initially the group tended to view the problem as the consequence of global economic factors and inadequate political action. Feelings of dependency dominated in the group (‘It is “their” job to create jobs.’) coupled with disillusionment, resignation and a certain sympathy for the strategy of muddling through. However, it became apparent that we are continually in danger of accepting so-called

objective necessities as inevitable natural forces. We see this as an expression of unconscious dependency needs.

Greece: Issues of social unity and change were also relevant in the discussion on the role of the church and religion in modern society . . . The recent 'opening' of society to global trends, values and views inevitable causes ripples to long-standing social, unconscious, beliefs of identification and unity; such as the central role of Church in the modern State. This causes the members of society to lessen their idealisation and unquestionable adherence to the practices/role of the Church and – gradually but consensually – open a 'reflective space' for discussion and exchange of ideas. . . . Another emerging theme was concerned with the role of the [Greek, Christian-Orthodox] church and religion in our lives. Its social and spiritual place were discussed, in addition to its political role. Some members expressed concerns that the role of the Greek church, as it stands, feels dated and aggressively exclusive to 'non-believers'; while others voiced their recognition for the social support that the institution provides, spiritual guidance and national unity [against the ever-present Turkish, Muslim neighbours].

Holland: Where are we headed as a society; Where do I fit in; What direction do I advise my children to take or which behaviour had they best adopt in this society?

Religion is put back on the social-welfare agenda. What does religion mean in human contact (the debate on standards and values)? It also includes an analysis about the way in which religion functions in our society . . . For a long time the Netherlands thought that everything was finished. We thought we had fixed up most things nicely; supported by jealous glances from abroad looking at our 'polder dialogues' . . . This resulted in a kind of 'collective mental and organizational atrophy' concerning problematic social-welfare issues suddenly put on the agenda: as our relation to religion and its role in society. All of a sudden we 'discover' that there is also a political party in this country that does not admit women; that we too have religious groups where people wear head gear; that the church is officially separated from the state, but is still exploited when possible; and that people with a different religion (the immigrants) are suspicious.

Ireland: Members spoke about older generations and the difference in our experience of a sense of place or a sense of belonging. . . . Change is everywhere and in all parts of our lives. Religion was a place to put uncertainties. Now that religion has been displaced, we locate and express our uncertainties in a range of ways. Institutions fall away and are not being replaced – no sense of institutional authority.

Israel: The black cock became a recurring symbol in the discussion relating to the third theme, fatherlessness, in its dual signification as a source of power both to be feared and longed-for. Sharon's illness, the disengagement from Gaza and the ensuing transitional state of Israel's government yielded a wealth of associations around the death of fathers (Rabin, for example) and abandoned children, expressing a yearning for strong leadership. . . . It was felt that the early successes of the young in the world of business, and the lack of hierarchy in our world of peer competition was a form of Oedipal victory that leads to a great amount of guilt. At the same time, a leader who gets a stroke becomes 'just another person', losing his power and authority, but gaining sympathy. On the other hand, there was a general fear of the consequences of 'democratization' and a one-dimensional equal society. The resultant feeling of emptiness and meaninglessness could easily create a vacuum making it easy for a powerful 'black cock,' a fundamentalist group to take over. An interesting counteraction to the polarization into the 'good' and 'bad' cock was the call expressed by one of the members to create some sort of integration by recognizing the positive aspects of the new age, such as inter-generational communication, and bringing tenderness (which is not necessarily softness) , as neither an exclusively female or male quality, into play in individual and societal relations. . . . It was noted, again, that the need for fathers is deep-rooted, and that when there is no father, a grandfather might suffice. The other aspect of the dynamics emerged around the question of the role of women in this fatherless world.

Italy: There is a form of passive dependence, the new generation seems to be unable to think and build its own future as one participant said 'They look for something but they do not know what they are looking for', or 'They leave their cities, but they do not know if they know whether they will come back. . . . The relationship parents/children is broken: the anxiety and the worries about the future are too large to share, the future is so worrying that is unspeakable. There is a sense of guilty. How can we make sense of the current situation? Who are the leaders of tomorrow and how can we contribute to their education? . . . Young people are detached, they do not engage with what is going on. There is no understanding of what does a leader do and they will take their place in society.

Mexico: The present government promised to be 'the government of the change', what caused they were placed in this positive fantasies of grandeur and omnipotence, believing that was going to protect us of the delinquency, robberies, abductions, etc. All to be this government in the last year and to show that these indices of insecurity have not

diminished and that on the contrary they are greater, reinforces the persecution fantasies besides the presence of an object shows us splits that in these moments is the persecution bad object.

Norway: We experience a more brutal work life and burn-out is a reality amongst many young people . . . There are strong opinions towards leaders who do not manage power in a secure way. How can we influence the war machinery all over the world to set an end to this horrible raping the enemies' women or stop killing children and young men as part of a war strategy? How can we raise enough voices around the world to engage themselves in other peoples destinies and say: STOP?

Portugal: a) dissolution of traditional values and social roles, b) the rapid social changes, mobility, and fast transformations and c) the failure of the state to protect and take care of the individuals, there is a lack of safety and structure. This generation (in the late 20s and early 30s) has a lot of apparent freedom and the illusory possibly of making many choices in every aspect of life. But in fact there is a lot of pressure to conform and many restrictions to choose freely. This paradox leads to weak, superficial and ambivalent compromises in every sphere of social life. This creates a vicious cycle resulting in an increased feeling of lack of inner integrity, and in an ever stronger need to conform to external superficial norms to defend against fears of uncertainty and insecurity.

Russia: Our country is country of shame. It means that we enslaved by regime, power. People of the group are shamed of their country and at the same time they feel themselves very weak before officials who are looking for profit. Corrupt practices are very widespread.

South Africa: Leadership and people in authority in organisations as well as in government, are blamed for not attending to crime and not containing safety for citizens. What is more, leadership is not only blames for being passive, they also participate in crime. There was a reluctance to acknowledge the positive in leadership – in what it represents as well as its task outcomes and contributions. The blaming of authority figures is a projection of own reluctance and inability to make connections with others, either in similar or in different crime related situations. . . . Because of the overwhelming nature of crime, people feel lost, unsafe, mistrusting, unauthorised, and are becoming passive, followed by blaming authority figures for not taking up their power as a defence against taking up own leadership roles to change situations, to make a difference and to connect to the other.

Spain: There is a lack of ideas, of values, of enthusiasm and ideals. Nobody tries to educate children. Children miss their parents, and also

elderly people are abandoned. It seems that work has generated this situation, because there is no time for anything, only for work. . . . The family relations are more and more difficult . Parents go out for work and leaves their son unattended in the school or the kindergarten. When they come back at home they are too busy to educate children. Parents delegate the responsibility of education in the school and the school can't cope with this responsibility. . . . People cope with their life in a very individualistic way . . . There is an increase of irritation and aggressivity and a sense of dissatisfaction. . . . The school gives contents to the children but does not teach them how to learn to think. Families give many things to the children but can't contain their anxieties and frustrations.

Sweden: Once again, the issue of how we treat each other came to the fore. Attitudes and treatment was viewed as crucial to how we can bring about human dignity, value and equal rights. Are we looking at a society trying to form rules and regulations for all areas of life? Is it possible to act according to one's own judgement? If you follow the Christian morals and care for your neighbour, you may, in a complicated system of rules, come into conflict with laws and regulations!

UK: Members felt that Globalisation was creating a lack of stability in society. This was experienced by members as feelings of disengagement, impotence, powerlessness and abandonment. They also referred to a loss of capacity to think; an abdication of responsibility and an inability to cope. References to frailty of the human body, pain disease and illness and of fears that nature was taking over suggested something more than an inability to cope. Various areas of society were affected by globalization not least that concerning the nature of work. One member spoke about Blair's 'push me pull me' authoritarian policy style; and about contradictions in policy. It was as if the Government were seeking control but really there was no control One member replied that Blair's quick fix and smile was not a helpful response. There was a degree of inauthenticity in everything that was occurring. It resulted in high anxiety and feelings of what can I do?

USA: One crucial effect of this process is that the short-sightedness of immediate selfish gain will have significant negative impact on future generations thereby engendering a split between those pursuing immediate gain and those not willing to accept those short-term gains at a cost to be born more severely in the long-term (examples: environment, natural resources, financial opportunity, education, etc.). The result leaves dissenting voices sounding as though they are standing in the way of democracy or progress). Progressive measures opposed by

the self-interested elite are re-framed then by these influential leaders in anti-democratic or anti-free-market terms (sometimes quite subtly and cleverly), again preventing open dialogue around issues requiring a thorough examination. They even resort not so subtly to religious or moral demeaning of other parties, nations and religions. This regressive defense against anxiety over the present and the future utilizes obfuscation of facts and anti-intellectualism to the point of dogma.

Hypothesis

The effect of globalization has been such that it has impacted on all in society, including those responsible for the management, leadership, and administration of political, economic, and social institutions. In common with others, societal leaders have also been exposed to complex dynamics and would appear to have suffered the same anxieties and helplessness. Perhaps we should not be surprised that they have also found great difficulty in providing adequate responses to the many complicated problems they have been required to deal with. However, for members of society this 'inadequate response' has been experienced as a failure to provide adequate containment. Feeling helpless, and without any means of making sense of their experiences, members of societies search for alternative forms of leadership. The extreme dependency, which was located with the societal leaders, is now located back with the members of societies, and this is dealt with in various ways. The most obvious available leaders are women, who are regarded as offering a more reflective leadership. This may prove so in some instances, but in other instances it may be simply idealization and Basic Assumption leadership that is being mobilized. A more worrying way that dependency needs are being displaced is in regard to young people. It would appear that there is a view that young people are able to cope with the modern world better than older people. This can lead to an unconscious displacement of dependency needs on to young people and a subsequent mobilization of young people as fight leaders.

SUB-THEME (C) SPLITTING, DISPLACEMENT AND SCAPEGOATING OF THE 'OTHER'

Globalization is experienced by society as an all powerful and controlling influence that creates a sort of alternative world that is experienced as a tyrannical monster, which is driven by economic policy with its own value systems. A result is that those responsible for the management, leadership, and administration of political, economic,

and social institutions adapt these values, which turn our institutions and organizations into the same tyrannical monsters. Members of society are left with feelings of powerlessness and an inability to control and influence their lives. A typical response is as contained in the Australian Report, 'Much of the discussion around this theme had a "paranoid tinge" with feelings of anxiety and fear. This was particularly so in relation to the accessibility of private information and to the powers held by the "authorities" in regard to detaining people. It was linked to the question of who can we trust?'

At these times of increased uncertainty members of societies throughout the world identify a convenient 'other' to act as a repository or scapegoat into which they can displace all their hateful and malicious feelings. The 'other' in many countries is immigrants, especially Muslim immigrants, who are part of their societies; or are identified terrorists in other countries. But in some countries the 'other' may be polarized political parties. Having a common enemy enables members of societies to suppress their own guilt and to assert their rights to preserve a common identity. However, a result is polarization and the development of fixed and inflexible notions about this 'other', which results in demonization. A further result may be that the 'other' acts on the projections of demonization and becomes what the members of society are seeking them to be.

The following is a selection of the way this sub-theme is experienced in the various countries.

Analysis

Australia: In times of increased uncertainty about the future, an apparent technological distancing of 'self' from 'other' may parallel the (desired?) distancing and fear we feel from an enemy other and from the hatred in the world. . . . This theme was raised in different forms. First, there was the link to politics. There was a belief that our government is using 'fear of the other' to control the population. References were made to refugees and terror suspects. . . . 'The world is awash with hatred' one member said. 'Fear of the other underlies all the political stuff'. . . . Later, the hatred theme was raised more directly at home where a member described her direct experiences of anti-Semitism. But it was noted that when the issue of hatred was raised, fears became discussed. It was as if we felt the fear of hatred and were unable to see any hatred in ourselves. Second, with Australia being a country of migrants, how do the newcomers find their identity? A member from Africa spoke of the difficulty of finding how she might make a contribution here where rituals and meanings were so different.

Bulgaria: There are some barbarians (role performed by some youth, by some colleagues, by some gypsies, Macedonians, Serbians, Kosovans) around, but we prefer not to mention them. . . . The process of change can be experienced as a sort of contact with some barbarian, we feel ambivalent to – we fear it, we are disgusted by it, but we also secretly like it. The barbarian seems to be coping with changes. Although the price we pay for this adaptation to the changes is the lack of good rapport with our roots and with our peers.

Canada: A series of distinctions were made between some deep conflicts: Data and understanding; Palestinians and Israelis; Rich and poor countries; Progress and No Change; Personal, local and global. . . . It was the view that society was faced with increased destabilization, much of it based far away from Canada. This period remains coupled with a powerful sense of inequality in the world and feelings of guilt about our relative prosperity and level of security.

Chile: Other characteristic of Chilean society is its heterogeneous conditions and how social, economical, political, cultural and genre differences are used to cause discrimination, abuse and violence, obstructing collective integration and cohesion. Such diversity considers very rigid and low permeability boundaries. . . . There are acute ethnic differences in life conditions and opportunities between native minority and people with European background. . . . This situation brings about unsatisfactory life experiences and feelings of being oppressed by external forces that demand an efficient performance in all of life spheres.

Denmark: At the beginning of 2006 Denmark has a strong economy and financial welfare for most of the country's citizens. But among them, fear of polarisation is increasing. There is pervading anxiety that conflicts between immigrants and native born Danes will escalate, that the tension between the two will rise so that any act will be seen in terms of religious or political alliances.

Finland: Threats are global, although Finland has been safe for now. I read a book written by a Finnish woman on her life in Iraq. If we did not have water and electricity in Finland, how would we survive? We are fortunate for not having to experience or genuine shortage of necessities. A new form of slavery – global.

France: Identity no longer is defined by the tensions between the identical and the different, between the 'Me' and the 'Not-Me'. It no longer seems to be in perpetual construction, feeding on the exchanges that the individuals has with his environment.

'The other' in his difference, has become a source of dangers and various threats. These differences are driven by logics of exclusion and non-complementarity. People are looking for sameness. . . . The Muslim represents a danger for the Catholic, the black person for the white, and reciprocally.

Germany: Initially the group tended to view the problem as the consequence of global economic factors and inadequate political action. Feelings of dependency dominated in the group (It is their job to create jobs) coupled with disillusionment, resignation and a certain sympathy for the strategy of muddling through. However, it became apparent that we are continually in danger of accepting so-called objective necessities as inevitable natural forces. We see this as an expression of unconscious dependency needs.

Greece: There was a consensus in the group that economic immigrants, for the last 10–15 years, have been increasingly involved in our everyday lives. But the more their numbers grow, the less people seem to be identify with/recognise them. So, 'are they *really* our co-citizens?' The feeling was that they are not experienced as such. But more likely like 'foreigners' or a foreign body in society that inevitably becomes a depository of fears, aggression and suspicions. As such they are felt as second-degree citizens, not worthy of competing for similar job opportunities as the local population ('us') and mostly experienced as not trusting and frightening . . . Thus the changes in the last decade, as to the considerable influx of economic immigrants in Greek society, have made members of society fearful, uncertain and guilty as to how to deal with this new situation. The social group deals with these emotions by splitting/separating itself into sub-groups (like, 'us vs. them' or 'proper citizens vs. immigrant inhabitants') and subsequently evacuating and disowning (as seen in the collective 'forgetfulness' of the racism topic in the LP group) these uncomfortable feelings in the 'foreign' sub-group.

Holland: What comes across and stays are statements about moving work and the shifting of political balances of power between Europe, the USA, Russia, China, India and the Middle East with energy sources serving as a weapon of power. Employees in enterprises are told that inferior and too expensive work will inevitably lead to losing jobs to the Chinese or East Europeans. Disappointment, fear and aversion to the people in those areas that take over the jobs, is strongest especially in these groups when the jobs disappear after all. Declining trust in the reliability of employers and cynicism among a growing number of employees is the price that is paid. . . . Could it be that the

discussions about religion, headscarves and the like, show how difficult it is for us to deal with people with different views of life and different lifestyles?

Ireland: Who now knows the way around this new Ireland? In finding the venue, one member had the experience of helpful and warm assistance: another approached the 'hyphenated Irish' (Polish-Irish; African-Irish) who were not able to help . . . In the past in Ireland, you could look the same but know you were different. Now, there are lots of people who are not 'the same'. There is a need to revisit what is constant, what is grounded. When I am in danger of being swallowed, I want to become 'us' . . . There are no longer regional Irish accents. We increasingly reserve our difference and distinctiveness. Curiosity about others is now a taboo, resulting in dialogue which is risk-free. Anxieties are aroused by not being acknowledged as a person. Personal boundaries are not clear, so people are much more tentative about boundaries. Political correctness has replaced human contact.

Israel: Crisis of identity – accommodation of the 'other'; immigration and cultural displacement; problems of pluralism; fundamentalism; blurring of boundaries; tension between expanding global possibilities and withdrawal and reductionism; economic and ideological polarities in society . . . The affluence, expansion and complexity inevitably threaten communal cohesion and boundaries and were seen by the group to be the major cause of an identity crisis (the second theme). Cultural pluralism, for example, encourages friction among groups and animosity towards outsiders, including increased Anti-Semitism and hostility towards Moslem communities. . . . Both the threat from and the attraction towards a potential powerful invader, such as El-Queida, emerged in the discussion in the symbolic form of a black cock (derived from a play on words from the Yiddish expression 'it is difficult to be a Jew').

Italy: The fear of fragmentation and disappearance are linked to the changing ethnic map of Italy. What if the new comers do not want passive help but want to be at the same level of citizenship? People are left with facing their deep fears and balancing them with their beliefs. The absence of societal (political and religious) institution that can help containing such anxieties makes the feeling of loneliness more painful.

Mexico: The members commented that the situation of threat in these moments is greater by the changes to political level that were presented this year (elections to presidential level in July). Since the government has been one of the main depositories of the bad object introjected of

many of the Mexicans. What promotes they awake persecution anguishes when the object – bad government goes, and these they displace with greater force to other objects (neighboring countries, candidates for presidents, authorities. On the other hand the present situation of real threats (the high indices of insecurity in the Mexico City, the murders in city of Juárez, the drug trafficking) they reinforce the paranoid characteristics or the paranoia in itself of the population, being these almost indispensable characteristics to live – to survive in the city of Mexico, for example.

Norway: What does it mean to have a deeper understanding of including each other as human beings and as citizens? How can we deal with individuals and groups of citizens who we regard as outsiders - who are conscious or subconsciously excluded because of race, sex, ethnic background or religion?

Portugal: This creates a vicious cycle resulting in an increased feeling of lack of inner integrity, and in an ever stronger need to conform to external superficial norms to defend against fears of uncertainty and insecurity . . . There is a feeling of lack of protection of individuals in society, a lack of formal social support.

Russia: Emigration in own country. There is no more image of the country with whom it is possible to identify. There is a lot of hostility to arrival new people, strangers. It is hard to be not similar to everyone. From the point of view of biology it means that there is attack on our territory.

South Africa: The split between own and other also refers to xenophobia. The own is seen as 'our country of milk and honey' being invaded by 'the other' to escape their severe political and economical issues. The projection onto 'the other' has to do with own insecurity about jobs, opportunities and resources.

Spain: But the question is that external problems are so big that people prefer to stay in their individual world. At the end, people it's been silenced because there are another kind of problems more near than this external problems that make impossible to complain . . . There is a tendency of bipolarization at every level, where nations, corporations, political parties are concentrated in order to compete or fight for the power and resources. Reality becomes just black or white and there is no space for dialogue, ideas, or thinking.

Sweden: Conversation started with an observation of the importance of either belonging to a group or being barred from the group one wants to belong to. One aspect of belongingness voiced by the older

participants was the experienced need to look back in order to come to terms with one's life and the choices it has brought about. From a segregated suburb of Stockholm experiences of what alienation means were conveyed; not to be counted upon, to be given special treatment and to be met with fear and to be excluded. The question was raised whether these circumstances could develop into violent confrontations similar to those, which took place in Paris suburbia during autumn . . . Does everyone possess an equal value? Do we dare to open up? Am I prepared to let myself be integrated? . . . A paradox of the Swedish society was observed. Odd persons are not accepted; we are unaccustomed to differences. . . . Once again, the issue of how we treat each other came to the fore. Attitudes and treatment was viewed as crucial to how we can bring about human dignity, value and equal rights. Are we looking at a society trying to form rules and regulations for all areas of life? . . . In the secularized society we now inhabit, many look for a substitute for the belief in God which earlier gave confidence to lean against. Belief and excessive belief in the power of technology may serve as substitutes. This can also lead to a feeling that something overwhelming is taking over. The former over-confidence in society's capacity to create security has suffered a blow. This also means that a vacuum has to be filled. The insecure labour market induces disbelief and a threatening feeling of lacking worth when jobs are not sufficient in supply. Old models for power and exercise of power find new forms. War is not waged in old ways. Terrorism as a weapon is new to our time. The work to defend human rights and to form possibilities for people to believe in their own worth and ability gives hope.

UK: Globalisation was regarded as the all-embracing element that was having an enormous influence on society. It was even considered that this was reflected by our own individual internal authority . . . It was asked, 'How do we ever achieve mastery?' . . . Globalisation reigns in an all-powerful manner'. Because of the affects of Globalisation and the subsequent feelings of a lack of control it was felt that we were living in a world that is in chaos. Members expressed their feelings of disintegration. A search for control led to one member asking, 'who made the decision that we should adopt Globalisation?' Another asked 'What kind of leadership are we entitled to?' Another referred to the fallibility of Leadership and cited the examples of Kennedy, Sharon, and Tony Blair. The Listening Post was preoccupied with death.

USA: Multinational corporations use outsourcing, are more powerful than most nations and have little, if any, accountability. The Arabs

are holding us up and we collude by not using more energy efficient modes of transportation and heating. One group noted alienation, powerlessness, fear/vulnerability and emptiness leads to drug use, mega churches, addictive behavior, obesity and war but it is hope and compassion that keeps people going. A second group spoke about alienation and anxiety leading to and resulting from the breakdown of our institutions that in turn results from and leads to the inability to compromise across our differences . . . The third group noted the lack of connectedness, power and control, change but not progress, the fear of all of these and poverty leading to apathy . . . Current dynamics have made many citizens apathetic. Withdrawal has only encouraged the right to push their agenda more strongly. Being engaged is the only way to counter the current trend. But we need to overcome our psychology of being above the fray. Connectedness is a beginning to reclaiming a thoughtful society.

Hypothesis

Members of societies experience a high degree of anxiety, not least that arising from the loss of identity. In societies throughout the world, there is a strong sense of uncertainty about socially acceptable behaviour, norms, and values. They are unable to classify their experience on any basis of similarity and are unable to make sense of their experiences. It is a kaleidoscopic world with few, if any, reference points. The uniqueness of the here and now is intolerable. The personal and social boundaries are blurred and there is no consensus as to what is or is not acceptable. A result is that members of societies experience anxiety at a level that is unbearable, and splitting and projection are used to find comfort. For many, the means of coping is to project the rage associated with helplessness into an 'other'. In many instances, the 'other' is located in those who are clearly identifiable as different from ourselves: in most situations this will be immigrants, and in many situations Muslim immigrants, who are experienced as the most different and in some instances associated with terrorism. The 'other' may also be terrorists in other countries or even globalization itself. In some instances it is internal splitting and polarization that produces the 'other' for each party, which seems to be exemplified by the dynamics in the USA. A danger is that polarization in all circumstances produces a rigid 'other' for each party. This then leads to confrontation based on relatedness rather than reality.

THEME 2. ATTEMPTING TO UNDERSTAND CHANGE – A VIRTUAL OR PHANTASY ENVIRONMENT

All National Reports related to the way that members of societies were beginning to question and to try to develop explanations for the way that specific societal changes have affected members of society. Although not clearly understood, members of societies throughout the world are realizing that globalization and technology have had distinct affects, which, seen in the kindest light, can be considered as bewildering and surrounded in puzzlement and mystery, but, seen in the harshest light, can be viewed as potentially harmful and destructive to the future of societies. In many countries there was a strong theme of concerns about communication and of the means of communication. There is a growing realization that there is a real issue about how you communicate with others in a world that is full of new means of communication. As in Theme 1, above, this is a complicated issue that is inextricably linked to the changes within societies and responses by members of societies.

The following is a selection of the way this sub-theme is experienced in the various countries:

Analysis

Australia: This theme became persistent at times and was a centerpiece for an examination of differences between the generations. But behind it seemed to be a more anxiety provoking recognition that large-scale community, as evidenced in the large institutions is not trusted. Government and media give us a world where we cannot distinguish between reality and fantasy; boundaries between public and private are fragmenting so that our privacy is invaded,

A major (presenting) theme was the effects of modern communication technologies on affiliation and the building of community. While there are fears that these technologies may play a large role locally in community breakdown, especially amongst young people, we simply don't know. Is there a new trend toward small virtual groupings, and is this socially healthy or not? . . . Different members had different positions on this issue but agreed that as a society we just don't know the outcomes of the increased effects of communication technologies on affiliation. . . . The new ways of communicating may (ironically) be distancing people from each other. Questions were raised such as, 'Are the younger generation really connecting?' Worse, 'will the new communication technologies lead to the wrong kind of connections?' to 'mish mash' babies?

Bulgaria: When coping with such change we resort to some shelters such as the family or the anonymity of the Internet where we find security in the face of some severe anxieties such as the feeling of being physically threatened.

Canada: The failure of expertise. Social science seem to have become less able to achieve meaningful understanding of these various difficulties. There seems to be emerging a view that understanding complexity is the wave of the future. Though there is also little understanding of what this means.

Chile: This means a static social dynamic where only money matters. In opposition to the work order, ruled by a materialistic logic that strips people of what is fundamental, the domain of social actions is described as the place where important and real needs can be satisfied. The difficulties of finding spaces to satisfy these social needs create feelings of powerlessness and discomfort that weaken people and alienate them from basic means to live in a more integrated form.

Denmark: Adults are disturbed by the fact that when young people go out in the evenings, they constantly keep informed over the mobile phone where the most interesting party is, and so they let down those who throw less interesting parties. But the grown ups also let others down: There are divorces, change of friends, work, social background, and thereby also change of loyalty and solidarity. Males are no longer allowed to be males. But there is also a lurking anxiety that you will also be let down when you yourself are no longer interesting.

Finland: I am not sure if there is room for individualisation. Is there room only for the elite? Market economy: children always want a new mobile phone: daddy, I want this, I must have . . . I must have . . . Masses . . . an individual.

France: People communicate, but no longer talk . . . The two established facts that came to mind immediately and spontaneously were 'we communicate before even thinking' (mobile phone, instant messenger, SMS, emails) and 'people no longer manage to talk properly'. . . All this communication is here to prevent us from thinking. The immediacy of today means of communication pushes us to communicate before we think. Information arrives in masses, repeated and repeated incessantly for a whole day until they finally disappear, without a trace, leaving no specific impact of the viewers/listeners. The group also concluded that these messages are simplistic and deprived of a true meaning. . . . There is a real dependence to mobile phones: as soon as people leave a place, they hastily grab their mobile phones, to

see if someone has tried to reach them or what they have missed. And yet, a mobile phone, an instant messaging system and internet enables people to be reached in any place, work wherever they wish: they can work where and when they decide to . . . and in the end, ultimately, finally, much more than when at work with a strict timetable . . . We are constantly reachable. People can get a hold of us at any time and to/from any place. Simultaneously, they give the impression to have thousands of things to say.

Germany: The members of the group spoke of their experience that we as citizens are all confronted with increasing trends of modularisation, fragmentation, and loss of meaning. (These encroach into everyday life and shred away its meaning.) Content is pushed back in favour of (digital) 'efficiency' and control. . . . This phenomenon goes hand in hand with the loss of personal relationships with and in business concerns and the loss of decisive constructive action in the realm of politics.

Holland: A questionable role is reserved for the government in particular here. Participants call it downright deception and manipulation in order to implement measures. . . . Within this context other remarks referred to the disappearance of profound investigation journalism. 'The truth is no longer what it was; does not matter anymore. Personally I also get away with lies'.

Ireland: There was a strong sense of the importance of personal contact, within organisations, communities and society. There was a feeling that this was at risk and that there is a loss of contact with each other. Technology seems to have increased the urgency, frequency and range of communications but reduced face to face engagement.

Israel: An interesting counteraction to the polarization into the 'good' and 'bad' cock was the call expressed by one of the members to create some sort of integration by recognizing the positive aspects of the new age, such as inter-generational communication, and bringing tenderness (which is not necessarily softness), as neither an exclusively female or male quality, into play in individual and societal relations.

Italy: The fear is producing processes of dehumanisation. People are less inclined to meet the others, if we are unable to make sense of what is our life and what we are facing it is easier to loose the boundaries between human and not human. We can witness increasing cases, described in all their details by a voyeuristic media, in our societies in which horrific crimes take places, where human life is worthless. We are left with the question where is humanity, where we can find the meaning of life. People are so worried that are no longer able to recognise the parameter of what human is.

Mexico: The changes that live at present on a worldwide basis are many, a way of 'to confront them' is denying that they are occurring; this combined to the sensation that in spite of the fact that each time 'there are more tools' and 'more control' on the world (by the large technological advances) gives a sensation of omnipotence that turns out to be contradictory when the natural disasters tell us the vulnerable that we are before its presence.

Norway: People also experience that the 'winners' are citizens who master the political games of playing; Clarify three messages you want your audience to connect to you and your party. . . . Media advising is a growing business. There is a tendency towards a lack of time end interest to listen to complexity. To represent various perspectives in a case, challenges the human being of 2006 because our tolerance towards on what is wrong and what is right.

Portugal: There is a lack of internal safety, and incapacity of relaxing and also bearing boredom and empty periods of time, and also a lack of intrinsic satisfaction in work. We are overwhelmed with sensorial stimulation and experiences, and with a superficial and external use of time. . . . People are almost hypnotised and 'robotised', as if in a kind of modern slavery and Faustian pact for safety. People act and react without insight and inner vision.

Russia: It is important to mention that people start evening from the question: 'To whom you will send our words?' (FSB – former KGB).

South Africa: The group member was left angry and wondering about what was real. . . . This sparked off a conversation about what was real and what was not. This is complicated off course because individual perceptions play a role. Continual change affecting perceptions of what is real or not.

Spain: The impact of technology is enormous. Everything is fastest but there is a loss of language. And also it can be associated with violence: adolescents have recorded fights with their cellular mobiles. But violence doesn't emerge from technology. . . . There is an unspoken approval of the control we have in our society, but this control is not real, it's a false idea of security. Technology generates a lack of solidarity and an individualistic society, which attack the possibility to cooperate and have human values, breaking links and producing isolation, because people are with their computers and theirs head-phones.

Sweden: On this point a description was given of a culture that amounts to the demand that everyone should become a celebrity,

something emerging from the need to be visible. This may give a feeling of belongingness and in consequence answer the important question of how one could possess a personal worth.

UK: Because of medical, technological and other advances members of society have developed the notion that anything is possible, that we are highly potent and totally in control of our environment. We develop an illusion of control, a false sense of omnipotence. In a 'magical thinking' childish manner we think anything is possible. However, as must inevitably happen we frequently find that we cannot control aspects of our environment. When this occurs we no longer have the capacity for creative thinking and we respond by exploding in impotent rage which is frequently displaced onto other significant people.

USA: Because of less opportunity for genuine dialogue or acceptance of multiple views we have become self-centered and feel disconnected.

Hypothesis

The impact of globalization results in members of societies experiencing a lack of control over their environment and a feeling of deprivation at a psychological level. A result is that members of societies utilize multiple means of communication as a defence against isolation and lack of attachment. Such however, is the nature of this communication that it only leads to a sort of virtual world where members of society share the illusion that anything is possible, denying the reality that true relationships are not achieved. Members of society are still left feeling isolated, impotent, dehumanized, and remain psychologically deprived.

PUBLICATION OF NATIONAL REPORTS.

It is appreciated that readers may be interested in having access to the full National Reports. These have been published on the OPUS Web Site at www.opus.org.uk where they can be found under Bulletins.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As will have been seen from the extracts of National Reports above, for members of societies to stay in the depressive position is a mammoth and, at times, near impossible task. Yet the Listening Posts show that reflection does lead to the possibilities of thoughtful dialogue when members of societies are able to suggest possible ways forward. An example is the following extract from the Danish Report:

'Ambivalence, feelings of guilt, muddled sensations and frustrated energy could be interpreted as a potential for political action directed at defending civic rights for all, for an involvement in real exchange between ethnic groups, for working with what it means both to be a world citizen and a citizen in a nation and a local community.' (Events since the Listening Post was held have demonstrated just how difficult these issues are.)

Given that there are still few signs that individuals or those responsible for the management, leadership, and administration of political, economic, and social institutions currently have the ability to adopt the required reflective approach that will help to make sense of this, still developing, 'new way of life', there is not much hope of serious understanding. Everything, therefore, points to the possibility that current global dynamics will continue to intensify and deepen in the foreseeable future. This is a potentially worrying time, the feelings and emotions associated with a loss of identity and a reliance on the 'other' as a means of coping with the extreme anxiety experienced, could make it likely that many societies will be faced with dangerous and violent conflicts in the coming year.

Whether the likely shift from paternalistic to maternalistic leadership will provide the necessary reflective stance, or be experienced as equally impotent, remains to be seen. However, the biggest danger lies in members of societies unconsciously mobilizing young people to provide for their dependency needs. Faced with such strong feelings of helplessness, and having a captive audience in the family, expressed concerns and impotence can easily be unconsciously conveyed as the seeking of a saviour; and that young people are mobilized to fill that saviour role.

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