

Soundings

OPUS Global Report 2015

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Abstract

On or about 15th January 2015, 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 2015, were held in twenty seven different countries around the world (Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany (2 Reports), Greece, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy (4 Reports), Peru, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, South Africa (2 Reports), Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, & USA). These were all reported in a similar format (see “Britain and the World at the Dawn of 2003” in *Organizational & 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) Identify common themes arising within the Reports from the twenty-seven countries;
- (b) Explore relationships between themes and to reduce these down to major or dominant themes;
- (c) Collate supporting information from the Reports for analysis of these themes; and
- (d) Formulate hypotheses arising there from.

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

Key words: Listening Posts, global dynamics, societal dynamics, social defences against anxiety.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade and more, members of societies throughout the world have experienced this period in history as one of unprecedented

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and revolutionary social change. Much of this change began and continues with technological developments such as the availability of social networking. A further effect of technological change was to pave the way for globalisation which, adopted policies of freedom of movement of people, freedom of movement of capital, and international outsourcing of manufacturing. This has led to massive immigration, the economic crisis, a widening of the gap between rich and poor; as well as changes in the ideas; including political, social, philosophical, and religious ideas. Taken together, members of societies have experienced the totality of change as a huge loss: what we have referred to as death of a way of life. This experience is shared by all societies, the used and the users; the rich and the poor; resulting in a clash of cultures where international and intra-national, fundamentalists have been mobilised to seize the opportunity to ferment conflict and fear.

There is continuing evidence that the experience of members of societies throughout the world is that this period is one of formative changes in the structure of the world economy, the shape of societies, and the framework of world governance. All societies are struggling to make sense of their world and finding it difficult to adapt to a new way of life. At this point it seems impossible for members of societies to imagine what a new way of life would be like or even begin to create one. Economic outsourcing to multiple countries and incoming economic immigration has created greater integration of peoples of different race, religion, political belief, and traditions. However, it has also served to highlight the differences, not least, the differences between the wealthy and the poor, be that at a national or personal level within societies. In some instances, the threats to personal and national boundaries has led to far left and far right political parties vying for power. In addition, it has resulted in the presence of fundamentalists within the host society; those who can be easily convinced of the inherent need to revert to extreme religious or cultural beliefs.

CURRENT DYNAMICS

The current experience of members of societies throughout the world is that they are still struggling to make sense of their world. Admiration was expressed for the large numbers of people who demonstrated in Paris after the Charlie Hebdo massacre. This stirred the interest of members of several societies as being an example of how people could come together as a community. Indeed there are (continuing from last year) stirrings of a wish to join with others in a common cause. There is though, little evidence that this can be achieved in a depressive position way. The most common experience

is people coming together to commit acts of violence and terrorism: all involving splitting at an extreme level, to the extent that the other is seen as inhuman and exists to be destroyed. Even the Paris demonstration is to be seen as a paranoid-schizoid activity, being against terrorism and idealising those who were slaughtered. Failing to see, or want to see, that through the publication of the cartoons considerable offence was caused to fellow Muslim members of French society: as well as to Muslims the world over. These acts themselves had fomented rage and hatred, a far cry from the supposed humour allegedly intended by the cartoonists.

There appears to be a sense of overwhelming uncertainty about the future, about the changes that are taking place and pessimism about what the world is going to be like. Members of societies experience helplessness and despair and are struggling to find their way in this rapidly changing world. Turning to authority figures and to leadership for answers does not seem to be an option; leadership is not considered to be trustworthy, consistent, and insightful—far from it. Members of societies feel that their dependency needs are failed and their rage and despair about that are profound. In some reports members of societies have described themselves as orphans or ungovernable. There is a notable splitting cutting across society, dividing leadership from followership and this may well be a reaction to a feeling of an inability to take in decisions that have a massive impact on people's lives but also a denial of both sides to know what happens at the other end.

Not surprisingly, there is a huge amount of dependency exhibited by members of societies. The fragmented nature of communities reduces individuals to experiencing helplessness and isolation. Instead of owning their responsibility for themselves and their communities they depend on politicians and institutions for “doing something”; that something being as diverse as fixing the economy to dehumanisation of immigrants. There is never a realisation that these problems are simply not soluble. A result is an experience of unmet dependency and anger at political and other institutional leaders. A further result is members of societies giving their support for and mobilising extreme parties be they left or right wing parties. The simplistic responses are seen by members of societies as a seemingly clear way of resolving the hardships and discomfort, the not knowing that they constantly face in their daily lives.

Technology, in the shape of news media, social media, and the written news media; continues to be a concern with overt or underlying fears that these are corrupt representations of governments and other large and powerful bodies. The use of social media is, on the one hand,

seen as enabling terrorists and other wrongdoers such as paedophiles to come together for evil purposes; while on the other hand, it is seen as a life line for various others in society. There is also a considerable degree of generational conflict arising from a lack of understanding by the older generation. There is a realisation of the consequences of the attitude of previous generations; the immense ecological, financial, political, and societal debt that is emerging on the surface: the burden goes to the young. With virtual families extending way beyond national boundaries, it possibly results in a greater integration of peoples throughout the world. At the same time it enables fundamentalists to groom vulnerable young, would be converts, to travel to war zones to fight the evil other.

As religion is an integral part of Muslim culture, any threat regarding Muslims and the Muslim way of life, regardless of differences in ways of life, is regarded as an insult to their religion. The centrality of religion in the Muslim world is seldom understood or recognised by those in other countries. The continuing discussion about "home grown" terrorists misses the point. They are Muslims and as such will defend their religion first and foremost regardless of their upbringing in western countries. They and others will be mobilised by the Muslim community.

This is a world where the identities of members of societies are threatened; a world that has become increasingly violent; and a world where the often unbearable thoughts and feelings are played out in the relative safety of the family. These three themes are particularly prevalent and are further developed below in three interlinked and progressive Analyses and Hypotheses that follow:

ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS 1. FRAGMENTATION

Analysis 1

Members of societies report an overall feeling of societies being fragile, unhealthy, and toxic: superficial, misleading, and simplified relations that do not create any form of bond. No societal area and sector is immune from a radical break down of trust, hope, creativity, and supporting mechanisms and institutions. Members of societies experience fragmentation of roles and meaning is mirrored by the experience of fragmentation and confusion in societies expressed as lack of solidarity or unity. Feelings of fatigue, heaviness, loss of abilities, and failure are expressed. Societies are experienced as the place of deep divisions

(economic, political, religious, generational etc.) and overwhelming stimuli are difficult to control; it is very difficult to be ethical. Identities are at the same time too strong or too weak to contribute to meaningful engagement. Differences are presented as a source of division and alienation. The prevalent feelings are ambiguity and ambivalence. However, no one seems to be able to take responsibility and ownership of such feelings. Members of societies seem to indicate the lack of any comfort zone or process. Each positive example is matched by a negative experience that challenges the sustainability of positive or meaningful thoughts that can help in making sense and containing all these tensions and preoccupations. There is no respite and members feel powerless and confused moving between anarchy and authoritarian phantasies. While members express the feeling of being stuck, the past becomes a sort of seemingly golden era to reflect on with pleasure. The social classes and the professionals that are usually perceived as the bearers of critical thinking are not immune and, on the contrary, seem to contribute to the overall sense of isolation and alienation through a sterile repetition of cliché and ways of thinking that have no creative energy. A robust sense of dehumanisation is reported and described in all parts of life (family, work, society). This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

Argentina: The last discussion themes were about individualism and the experience of living in a toxic social and political environment. The connections to these themes had mostly to do with a perceived lack of social solidarity and the isolation these types of attitudes give rise to. Furthermore, the members discussed another type of isolation which comes from the current social and political environment which is evident in: the absence of any real interchange of opinions and ideas; the manifest anger towards politicians with incidences of public humiliation of such figures the failure of the political class to provide a good-enough social and political vision.

Australia: There are multiple divisions in our society that are deepening: between the haves and have not's; the rich and employed and the poor who are dependent on welfare; those who get heard and the missing voices from public discourse. Nearly every preoccupation shared in the group was a statement (explicit or implied) about the relations between people.

Bulgaria: In the context of strongly fragmented identities (broken/traumatic relations with the past, with neighbours, with personal experience) we become dependent upon the causes and the organisations

that promise belonging, cause and meaning. Our need for emancipation then is both strong and ambivalent/conflictual.

Canada: Several participants spoke of the difficulty in “thinking”, of trying to fashion a self-connected to others, the slippage or split between one’s on-line self and one’s “real self”, “forgetting where one is”.

Czech Republic: This was part of a sense of confusion and powerless over knowing who to trust and what to believe. Given the presence of people from more than one side of an international conflict, the awareness of media distortions in reporting was acute, with all sides wondering who could be right and who to trust.

Denmark: The fear of terror and paedophilia lead to disproportionate counter measures: men dare no longer touch other than their own kids and the intelligence service abolishes civil rights in their attempts at defending them . . . Lawyers, political scientist and economists feel bullied and excluded at workplaces and at programmes dominated by doctors and psychologists. There is no genuine helpfulness.

Estonia: The participants were talking about a strange feeling that they experience. Something is missing—the feeling. On other hand, they own products and are well-maintained, but it still doesn’t make them feel whole . . . There are many changes in the workplace. Everything is constantly changing. Co-workers change. There was a lot of talk about the inability to express one’s true opinion in their workplace, which feels frustrating.

Finland: A digital network is primarily an instrument for verbal communication and leaves people as emotional creatures without taking into consideration the produced indifference among them. Inter-communication becomes superficial in a way that leaves them internally alone. In addition, the bases of their identity become unstable.

France: The fact of participating in the Sunday, January 11th March, with nearly four million people in the streets of numerous French cities, corresponds to a need to feel this pulsating link between humans. We are together united, determined pacifists, striving for human dignity.

Germany (Frankfurt): Media topics are granted minimal sustainability as newsworthy, and are immediately “wiped off” from public focus. Dissociation as reaction to what we do not comprehend. The strange—

new—unfamiliar offer potentially positive experiences. Endurance—even acceptance—of ambivalence and counter poles as intrinsic everyday reality.

(Berlin): The own experience of exclusion was expressed. Differences appear negative and not as an enrichment. But it was also mentioned that we witness the exclusion of others—for example, PEGIDA against foreigners, the EU against refugees.

Astonishment was expressed, that many of the PEGIDA protesters come from the middle class, therefore they are able to reflect, but obviously not capable or willing to. To reflect would mean not repressing the own prejudices and reservations, but instead questioning, trying to understand, and changing. In addition, a loss of values was seen and a spreading dynamic of exclusion and splitting in society.

Greece: Young people are expected to accept dehumanising conditions without working towards a better future and building up their confidence as professionals and as valued citizens. A wave of despair emerged again as members started to talk about the faults of the Greek educational system.

India: Due to this intense competition and individualistic lifestyle of people, are living in a constant fear of losing their comfort zone and are having an insecure mind. Because of this fear they tend not to take up others responsibility and do not claim ownership when faced with a problem. This lack of responsibility and ownership due to fear can be well understood with the incident where a person lies on the road struggling for his life due to an accident and no person from the society wants to aid him as they would get into trouble. Hence leave the man to die which shows that people are losing the sense of humanity and are becoming self-centred.

Ireland: There is so much going on, so much to know, so much we feel we need to be told, we need to know. We can communicate with so many through technologies, but while we get the gist, the information, we avoid intimacy, emotion, engagement, and a deeper level of knowing.

Israel: Israel's kibbutz ethos is evaporating and this is contributing to increasing feelings of alienation and fear. Fundamentalism with its oneness is filling in the gap of not belonging. Another (member) described living away from Israel for many years and coming back to a different society, one far less compassionate and one where each for his own was the predominant ethic. Does the policy of teaching holocaust studies to

young people increase connection or increase alienation? Many in Israel were hopeful at the beginning of the Arab Spring that Israel's own integration in the Middle East would be improved though the developments proved the exact opposite.

Italy (Rome): Rome is indeed stuck, like other cities in Italy and in Europe, inhabited by a culture of individualism and a poor professional attitude, as though what matters were just mere, and short-sighted, survival. No competence, nor love. There is an appeal to memory, remembering the past and the historical milestones of the last seventy years of Italian life: the achievements in terms of civil rights and freedom for women. However, in the present there is no hope. Parents and grandparents are the true social shock absorbers who allow the society to go on.

(Milan): In the last decades, the traditional socio-cultural agencies (such as churches, trade unions, political parties, etc.) have been methodically discredited and symbolically destroyed. The new social channels—the so called “social”—open the users to unprecedented personal opportunities. The narrowing/tightening of personal relationships that they promote, though, it is—often—nothing but misleading simplification and virtual/fake pseudo-reality.

(South): Someone proposed a metaphor to give an idea of this: “replicant”, in the Italian sense of just do something in a very automatic way with no reflection, with no understanding, with no creativity—we are a society which works “replicating” learnt models and processes that do not require any effort of thinking and challenges.

(Arielle): Discussion begins with members expressing distrust and detachment towards the external world, from which they are willing to take distance. Feelings of uncertainty, lack of serenity, fear, “internal contraction”, heaviness, emerge. The outer world is like an old movie, mechanically showing the same old clichés, in a situation that seems to be lasting since forever. Members experience a sense of impotence face to a magmatic reality which is very difficult to grasp, full of negative elements, unchangeable. Any sense of hope is weakened, almost dead, and this sentiment seems to be a general existential condition, specially for the members of the group in their forties and fifties, males and females.

Peru: This feeling of not being able to control the impact of each other was related to how easy it is to replace the “whom” with “what”: objects or things that you can control, which end up replacing human relations with material things, turning the person into a thing that consumes things.

Poland: Relationships with men have ceased to satisfy vital for women need related to creating closeness, establishing bonds, and sense of safety. Due to the lack of satisfaction and continuous deficit, women start to look for bonds, closeness, and safety on the outside forming associations with other women.

Portugal: People feel like they have no choice, although at the same time, feeling that remaining like this can no longer be an option. What contributes in a real sense to great anxieties, diffuse identity, depression, and lack of self identity, because people can no longer define their identity by their career and their professional success.

Russia: The fear of punishment still very strong in the society and recently adopted more laws, giving rise to fear. One of the participants remembered words of one Russian satirist about Russia and people in the Russia “population with great difficulty inhabiting this country”. Disgusted by the flood of lies on the main television channels, expressing the official view of many participants react by creating their own world. This may be the world of family, or virtual communities, or just a position of observer.

Serbia: One participant asked the question how it was possible that creativity and ability to listen to others was mentioned so many times during the workshop, without anybody mentioning the present moment and the recent terrorist attack in France. . . . Having been through so much ourselves, after enduring so much trauma, there were voices that we should primarily be concerned with our own concerns.

South Africa (Port Elizabeth): The group member found it so moving and hopeful that there was so much love in the midst of such hardship.

South Africa (Pretoria): Human connections seem to be under attack. Increasing diversity and complexity lead to disconnection, avoidance, loneliness, and isolation. Flight responses lead to superficial and fake connection with “faceless friends” on Facebook and having unknown people “liking” (boosting) one’s competence on Linked-In.

Spain: Some people in this second group point out that they find successful people hiding their situation.

Sweden: Another aspect of generational differences was raised by a participant in the role of pensioner, who described the massive indifference he encounters in children and younger family members when

he goes to share his experiences. At the same time, he also admits never listening to his own parents.

Switzerland: Stories of the difficulty of being human were very prevalent; whether it be stories of immigrants trying to settle into the country, the tragic story of a mother killing her two children when told they would be taken into care, or stories of the difficulties of local shops facing closure in the face of insurmountable competition from the Internet. A theme of being preoccupied with the fragility of being human, of forging a life surrounded by menacing and faceless threats was a major theme, representing the uncertainty and fears that people are wrestling with.

Turkey: Why do not we come together as citizens? Some of us as rightist or leftists, some of us who are secularist, or atheist, or religious ones. Is not it possible to get close with love and affection. Human love must be at the forefront. But how is it possible to love while you are full with hate?

UK: People have lost faith in representative democracy. People are looking for another way. I've never felt so lonely now I'm in my eighties; one of the things contributing to this, having worked as a psychotherapist I was often in teams. Now it seems other people are not where I am.

USA: Because of economic, social, and political inequality, members of American society are more competitive, less connected, more fragmented, and this results in an increasingly rigid American social class system and injustice.

Hypothesis 1

The affects of Globalisation over the past decade has resulted in the "death of a way of life" that results in members of societies across the world experiencing a massive loss. At this point in time, it seems impossible for members of societies to imagine what a new way of life would be like or even to begin to create one. The ensuing loss of society and community leaves members of societies largely unable to fulfil their needs for "groupishness" and attachment. Anxieties and preoccupations are so deep and strong that the feeling of being stuck is paralysing, in terms of thinking, acting, and feeling. Being stuck prevents the development of almost any form of collective endeavour, be that at a community or societal level. A result is that members of societies experience

isolation, alienation, a loss of personal identity, and an inability to confirm their identity with others. Societies are fragmented and the norm is individuality. For the group animals that we are, this is a painful experience of being dehumanised. This in turn results in splitting between me and not-me, the us and not-us that prevents the search for creative thoughts and a coming together as communities or societies.

ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS 2. YOUTH AND FAMILY

Analysis 2

Moral, religious, and other societal change have had a big impact on family relationships: the roles of males and females continue to change, homosexual couples create families, more young people move abroad, family traditions are losing their value, members of societies turn to online families, while the current financial climate has rendered young people dependent on their parents. Members of societies are experiencing a breakdown of the family structure and struggle in their effort to parent their children. Young people are experienced by the older generations as victims, self-centred, addicted to drugs and to technology, pseudo-mature, failed and failing, demoralised, violent, deprived, abused, alienated, dependent, increasingly suicidal, and struggling to reproduce. The older generation is seen as an aging population with no memory, isolated, guilty, worried about the younger generation, and burdened with the task of sustaining them. Although some hope was expressed, the overall picture evokes a sense of being stuck; where the young people cannot find their way and the older are struggling to help them. It appears that members of societies feel persecutory guilt about the consequences of past and current decisions and practices and about the consequential loss of hope, in regard to the world in general and to the inheritance that is handed down to the young generation. The older generations carry the blame for having failed to protect their offspring from a hostile world, while the unbearable feelings of helplessness and despair are conveniently located in the young people who are seen as the ones who will have to live in this terrifying landscape. The positions in which young and old are finding themselves, appear to be locked and keep them clinging on to each other, as an alternative to the most worrying scenario of a fight between generations. This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

Argentina: "... an increasing number of young people addicted to drugs and lacking access to any education opportunities ... a large

portion of society is growing increasingly convinced that the country has been slowly transforming into a drug producing nation.”

Australia: “There are many more youth suicides than are publicly reported” . . . “I’ve not felt hatred like this since a child.”

Bulgaria: Parenthood: to be a parent means also to feel one’s own mortality. Is that a kind of claim for maturity, for taking responsibility? What are the fears connected to this? There is a particular sort of newcomers, of newly married, who have a big burden of tasks to resolve both inside their families (are we going to have any children?) and outside—with their new neighbours (who, why, and how is making noise?).

Canada: Another spoke of the aging Canadian populace, and her worries about the pervasiveness of Alzheimer’s disease.

Czech Republic: . . . At this point in world history they were being asked to enter as adults, the anxiety and insecurity about their lives and precarious futures, despair that anything could be done (maybe it was better to accept that we were a bad lot), and a small and fragile hope that perhaps it may be possible to find a way.

Denmark: Two eight-year old boys were suspended from school because they had shown their dicks to a girl. The fear of terror and paedophilia lead to disproportionate counter measures.

Estonia: A participant told that a sixteen-year-old boy wanted to move out of the house to live with his girlfriend. The girlfriend’s parents are divorced, mother moved to America and father to St Petersburg. They both have new significant others. The sixteen-year-old girl has the whole house for her that she is unable to sustain. Therefore both children eat and sleep at the boy’s parents and go to school from there. They believe that they wish to become more independent, but the reality is that they still prosed the desire of affection and being taken care for.

Finland: “As a mother, I can only hope that nothing bad happens. My daughter is moving to St Petersburg, and the child of a close family is re-locating to Gaza. I am afraid and cannot sleep at night when I do not know what the circumstances are for children in these places. Relief comes from the fact that, through the Internet, the children have found people who have lived in these places. These people have

provided practical information about renting a place to live and how to organise their lives.”

The participants also mentioned children’s ability to maintain hope even in dangerous conditions and to act according to their imagination when they are listened to and seen. They should be seen and accepted as they are.

France: For some women on the panel, this applies equally to the violence against women and more specifically, the young girls who were kidnapped, sold, raped, and married off. Some participants feel that the violence brings to sight their own past experiences: childhood in a war ridden zone, the deportation of a close family member during the Second World War

Germany (Berlin): Reported was then an incident of violence at school. A boy was beaten during the World Cup by his classmates in a residential suburb, because he wore a T-shirt with the name of a foreign footballer. Astonishment was expressed not only about the unbridled fury of the classmates but also the lack of ability to perceive the violence as such by the teacher. This was seen as a denial of reality.

(Frankfurt): As far as technological developments are concerned, there was a general appeal for greater acceptance and less defamation . . . The young are keen to be part of this movement. A father told of his negotiations with his daughter who was the only one left in her class without a smartphone.

Greece: “What kind of families are going to emerge from the generation that has learned to find everything ready?” After the collapse of the “Greek wealth” myth the older generation has put on a self-punishing spectacle that the younger generation is witnessing. As a result the older generation is not passing on the torch to the younger generation with trust and faith that by inheriting their poverty and wealth that each generation passes on to the next, the young generation will manage to find their way, learn from history, and even take Greece a step further. There is a war between the generations. The young generation will beat us up! We burnt their forests, we stole their beaches, now we are destroying their pensions.

India: “This woman was about the age of eighteen years and had three children. They were of below poverty group and one of the children was physically challenged. The children didn’t go to school and were shabbily kept and looked unhealthy, while the mother was dressed fancily and looked healthy.”

Ireland: The group spoke about a particularly vulnerable group in Ireland, children, who, in the economic downturn have been neglected. A member reminded us that only now is the government looking at the Child and Family Government Bill. Another member wondered why the Loreto Nuns in Ireland, who educate children of the advantaged in Irish society, do not run education for the disadvantaged in Ireland as they do in India (it was considered to be much more advanced).

Israel: Dash was mentioned, the appeal, the fascination. How young people from around the world are drawn to it. Terror as marketed, sold, and wrapped as a product and a merchandise in the modern world. Terror games in Sony play-station.

Italy (Rome): The theme of “the great delusion” follows: the fantasy that society could carry on growing and offering to its children a life without death nor pain—in fact out of touch with reality—leads to the feeling of vulnerability and extreme solitude, feeling attacked on many and diverse fronts . . . Indeed there are no parents: “*we are a terrifying—terrified and ungenerative—society of orphans*” because “*we are an aged group out of touch with the source of renewal*”. “*We have failed our children—and our possible hope in the future—and we are destined now to live in fear, uncertainty and vulnerability*” . . . there is no competence to produce future leaders, and vision cannot be explored.

(Milan): We seem to think that change is acceptable only if it brings about—for us—positive, cumulative, obvious, material benefits. A childish idea of what the word “progress” meant and means.

(South): In this sense, compared with the generation of the post-war, the current generation of young people faces tougher conditions and restricted prospects across several spheres: limited opportunities to face successful the transitions from education to employment and to establish independent living away from the parental home are just two examples.

(Arielle): I feel insecure at work, for my sons’ future . . . my wishful thinking would be a decent work for the new generations that need a future . . . I’m thinking at all the young people I meet in the streets, who have dull looks because they can’t figure out their future, which makes me very sad . . . The optimistic vision of some of the members is expressed only through generic statements about the capacity of the young generations to act differently, specially through technology, satisfying their needs through social practices based on sharing: car sharing, co-housing, are seen like alternative “revolutionary” social practices.

Peru: “The overprotection of parents to their children has increased and this creates a greater dependency . . . It is an extension of adolescence or is starting early, there are young adults who do not take their role as adults, taking responsibility for their decisions”.

Poland: Feminine elements leading towards softening of relations (carefulness, awareness) are appreciated. We, women in particular, begin to sense the lack of these qualities in relations with our dear ones, families and friends. In relationships they (women) become to a greater extent partners in building a safe environment for both sides, rather than individuals in need of someone who would protect them.

Portugal: The normal nowadays is becoming thirty with no sense of progression, depending on their parents, living with them, and not having the choice of construction a family of their own. At the same time, older generations are feeling the pressure of having to ensure the basic needs of younger generations that are not being able to make it on their own. . . . People were immediately fighting fiercely for the gay right to adopt or not adopt, demanding a fast response.

Russia: Symbolic father usually an authority figure, whose decisions cannot be questioned. In order not to lose internal reliance, a majority of citizens fully support and avoid criticising Father’s decision.

Serbia: Namely, a disabled man, a father of six children whose wife had MS, found a wallet with 3,500 euro and returned it to a tourist from Bulgaria who accidentally lost it.

South Africa (Port Elizabeth): Apart from plagiarism there are instances where students pay others to do their assignments for them. Coupled with the above there are issues around the failure rate, which “cannot be too high” . . . A member who does school readiness tests battles with feedback when the children are old enough to go to school but not ready. He finds the dynamic where children are promoted despite not having achieved the required results disappointing, frustrating, and disheartening.

South Africa (Pretoria): Citizens yearn for renewed intimacy in their relationships towards fertile transformation . . . Our discourse also entails adolescent and humoristic metaphors about courtship, foreplay, marriage, and optimistic life-building (sexual) efforts to connect.

Spain: Young students see no sense to study anymore after years of high rate unemployment, people with higher studies are unemployed or living abroad.

Sweden: The self-centred younger generation was described from the role of manager. Employees are more interested in their individual career projects than the demands their jobs place on them. At the same time, they expect to receive almost total care and attention from the companies and managers they work for. This generation was described as spoiled and full of high expectations and demands on its environment. Later generations have been raised to a life of high demands and expectations, but are also predicted to be the first not to have it better than their parents.

Switzerland: A mother killing her two children when told they would be taken into care.

Turkey: “Children, who are watching movies from televisions or Internet, began to think death as a real. I’m watching the evening news and it says that twelve people were killed. I say ‘so what’. I was not born in Turkey, I was born in Serbia, in a religious family and my mother nursed me with disgust. They said, ‘their religion is different from ours, they are infidel that is Serbian, they are different from us, he/she is the enemy. For me this is breastfeeding with hate.’ When I was forty-five, I understand very deeply that this internalised hate, has given me a lot of harm.”

UK: I am thinking about young people how they feel alienated, there’s a lot of discomfort, young adults; young men mature in these surroundings . . . Young people are feeling scared. My God children are seventeen and nineteen their responses shocked me. They talked about their family and their online family, all over the world. This seems to go on all the time. Old think in the old way, young think a different way. They don’t think like others, not the same as we and our parents. Children believe in free speech, I still believe in religion—there is some chance we were led down a road.

USA: Student debt more than worth—no way to achieve American dream. There is a breakdown of the family system. The breakdown of the family structure. The power difference when males are not part of the family system. Lack of the African American male as head of household. How much do we value our own kids? Sexual trafficking rates highest among neglected and abandoned children.

Hypothesis 2

Because members of societies throughout the world have experienced this period in history as one of unprecedented and revolutionary

social change; they are feeling helpless, hopeless, and unable to face the constant, continuous, and complex change. Almost everything that they knew and understood no longer exists or exists in a different form. Death of a way of life has resulted in the loss of many good and bad objects. A result is that members of societies have to take back their projections and struggle to make sense of their world. Many of the institutions previously available, such as religious and social care organisations; no longer resemble what was previously known. The only available existing institution is that of the close family, which is now of greater significance. However, even the family has been radically transformed as a result of political, economic, and societal change, regarding values, morality, and the (sometimes politically correct) acceptance of different family structures. Families with children fathered by different men; homosexual parents; single parent families: the variations are multiple. A result is a massive dependence of the older generation on the young to be responsible for and shape the future. While the young generation rely on their parents for economic support and extended attachment need fulfilment at the same time they view the older generation as neglectful parent/authority figures who have failed to meet their dependency needs. The family, so long the bastion of society, is becoming a conflicted and business like relationship rather than the loving and guiding experience it has always been. It now becomes an all round stressful experience contributing to a fragmented society.

ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS 3. VIOLENCE

Analysis 3

The recent terrorist attacks in Paris; the Russian intrusion and resulting deaths in Ukraine; the continuing conflict between Israeli and Palestinians; the recent bomb blasts in India; and the suspicious death of a prosecutor in Argentina; what we might refer to as state and political terrorism; have shocked members of societies. These overt examples of violence are accompanied by various subtle forms of violence that are occurring in all societies: violence is endemic and experienced globally in many different ways. For example: marginalisation of immigrants; sexual assaults on women and children; fundamentalist inspired terrorism and wars; and wars for resources. A result being that the world is experienced as threatening, abusive, merciless, and violent. The media and the Internet contribute to, and amplify these feelings; especially through twenty-four hour news coverage, that brings all the

horror of massacres into the living rooms of members of societies everywhere. Members of societies get in touch with their mortality and vulnerability in terrifying ways and become overwhelmed by survival anxiety and persecutory guilt. Structures that used to exist for the containment of violence (Apartheid, leadership, etc.) no longer exist or fail to fulfil their function. Members of societies feel unprotected and the porous nature of secure national borders adds to the resulting fears. There is a sense that borders can no longer be controlled; natural disease such as Ebola knows no boundaries, paedophilia cannot be controlled by national boundaries, the Internet crosses all national boundaries. In these circumstances, thinking becomes impossible. The violent emotions and terror that members of the societies, dealt with in the past, by denying their own violent thoughts and feeling and projecting them on to criminals and other social deviants are now experienced at a deeper level; they are now projected on to authority figures, traditional institutions, to the marginalised, and even to each other. This has a powerful impact on communities, where rage is projected on to and into the other resulting in fragmented societies. This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

Argentina: The recent death of a state prosecutor has been stirring up long-held anxieties in the national psyche having to do with the “dark state” or “state-sponsored terrorism” and the accompanying uncertainty of who is on whose side (state *vs.* citizens). This deep-held trauma in Argentine society, largely dating from the horrific practices of the last military regime, was also evident in the members reporting feelings of physical discomfort when reflecting on the highly-suspicious death of the above official.

Australia: “We have affluence and freedom at the expense of terrible suffering elsewhere. We are among the most privileged. Refugees have little hope of employment and turn to terrorism.” . . . The consequences of systems being out of whack are seen in the hidden violence in our society, “one woman a week is killed because of domestic violence”, “[there are] many more youth suicides than are publicly reported”, “statistically, the poorer you are, the more depressed you are likely to be”.

Bulgaria: The prison theme and the theme of prisoner and the prison guard raise the question about the (social) power and its consolidation and rigidity.

Canada: Everywhere we look, we are presented with violence and images of violence. The experience is one of demoralisation and terror,

with no action that can reduce this. Our own psychical survival seems at stake hence we feel both vengeance and seek revenge from the unknown and unknowable attacks.

Czech Republic: Fundamentalist terrorism and the dangers of attack, following the crises in Ukraine and elsewhere a sense of war being the new normal state of affairs and anxiety about it become more generalised especially given the environmental crisis and the possibility of resource wars, as well as the psychological and identity crises fuelling nationalism and fundamentalism.

Denmark: Denmark is a war faring nation. We are taking part in a long distance war and are bombing the so-called Islamic State which is inhabited by fanatical, evil, and violent men. The media create our internal images of a dangerous and violent world.

Estonia: One must find a new direction, a new way of coexisting in order to not perish. However, change should happen in the individual's personal level of thought, understanding, and action.

Finland: "I felt enormous shock at the blind violence; someone just walked in and shot people." "Then after a couple of days, while ironing at home, I saw on the TV how 700,000 people gathered on the streets of Paris to march for non-violence, and I felt unbelievable joy."

France: The participants first point out the barbaric and deadly violence. Violence is first and foremost the link to life, to death. The fact that this violence be so close, and not thousands of kilometres away like other recent events, causes us to become aware of it with particular acuity.

This violence is expressed in different ways: economic violence, social violence, violence linked to religion.

Germany (Frankfurt): One member pointed to the fallacy of secure barriers ("build secure walls around us") but that does not work anymore: Ebola, acts of terrorism etc. cannot be fenced in, one must co-exist with the factum of a cosmopolitan world.

(Berlin): Various experiences of violence were reported. The terror in Paris and the terror of IS were perceived as a threat. The idea came up that destruction can be an expression of hope for development and rescue . . . The group found that destruction and terror cause uncertainty and fear. Terror is disastrous. Associated with destruction is sometimes but the creation of new developments. This is the case in art or in the course of the personality development during adolescence.

Greece: What emerged from the discussion was that Greece's history as an independent state was too short and marked with blood. The civil war had curved in people's minds, splitting; the left wing, the right wing. This national trauma has not been healed yet.

India: Another predominant thought which was seen in the minds of most people in the group was about the various number of abuse cases and the bomb blast attacks across the country and the world, which instilled fear and a sense of insecurity among the members of the society.

Ireland: The first contribution referenced the shootings that had taken place at the Charlie Hebdo offices and Danmartin-en-Goele in Paris during the past two days . . . A member spoke of feeling conflicted about the two brothers . . . What had happened for them? He reminded the group of the many killings carried out in Ireland by the IRA and SAS in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s and how many had involved families. In Germany, people marched past a Jewish museum with the sign "turn on the gas".

Israel: A member described having thoughts around the stabbing terror attack on the way to the listening post; imagining being in the bus or being in a bus nearby. One member described being glued to the Internet following the death of the Jewish Argentinian special prosecutor feeling that such a thing could happen here. "They have suicided him". Were some of President Clinton's friends in the USA also "suicided"? Do we live in a society which is committing suicide? One member described feeling orphaned when hearing of the stabbing attack and not having to call and reassure a parent who had recently passed away. Russian tanks have appeared in the Ukraine a reminder of Russian tanks in Prague.

Italy (Rome): The fatigue of living in a city—or nation—which has stopped growing and opening to the world outside is contrasted with images of the big march in Paris in response to the latest terroristic attack against "freedom of press".

(Milan): The first interventions expressed emotions connected with the shock prompted by the murders caused by overt terrorism, but also the uncertainty and puzzlement connected with the hidden violence implied in the anonymous, influential powers of the financial markets/agencies.

(South): The first concern is a lack of any form of ethics. From participant's point of view, it seems that people have lost their sense of

limit, the value of “being human”, the basic values of civilness; not even life and death are respected.

(Arielle): The present is unbearable, is the terrorism in Paris . . . we should hold our fears to be able to go forward, our fears should become our allies . . . taking refuge into nostalgia is trying to escape from this task . . .

“We are putting out alibis, talking about terrorism, of course we are scared but we should also recognise that we are privileged compared to those countries that confront with terrorism everyday”.

Peru: The discussion led the group to recognise that a fear of terrorism rebirth is still living in the present, leading to social distrust that is evidenced in the reported cases of spying to politicians and the public exposure of private life through social networks, whether permitted or not by the same person.

Poland: Political situation in Europe related to the political situation, conflicts, border changes is for us a major source of concern. Conflict in Ukraine has increased our sense of threat resulting from geographical location of Poland between two superpowers. The fear caused by the loss of the sense of safety and the imposed political correctness “tie our lips”, force us to omit these subjects in our conversations and not to engage.

Portugal: . . . There is a sense of hard pace and speed in social life and strong pressure to go along with the speed of social changes that almost seems like social “acting-outs”, actions that need to be seen, and done, instead of being thought.

Russia: Someone thinks that inside problems are impossible and sees NATO countries as enemies and sincerely believes in the threat from the outside. The fear of punishment still very strong in the society and recently adopted more laws, giving rise to fear.

Serbia: One participant asked the question how it was possible that creativity and ability to listen to others was mentioned so many times during workshop, without anybody mentioning the present moment and the recent terrorist attack in France . . . Participants strongly reminded of the need to keep to our own issues, worries, hardships, and everyday challenges. They were questioning artistic and cartoonist’s liberties as regards topics that may be perceived as ridiculing religious figures. Having been through so much ourselves, after enduring so much trauma, there were voices that we should primarily be concerned with our own concerns.

South Africa (Port Elizabeth): Apartheid was a container for badness and when that went we developed a superficial understanding of society, accompanied by a loss of faith in the goodness of humanity and the genuineness of care.

South Africa (Pretoria): Groups follow televised court cases about intimate relationships of (now fallen) heroes with their loved ones which ended in murder (Pistorius/Divani). The inherent splits in society make connections very difficult between differences such as the past (Apartheid) and the present (new South Africa), first *vs.* third world views on values and ethics—Ubuntu and individualism. Black people are allowed to criticise the (Black) government, but when Whites do that they fear being labelled as racists, losing face, or “losing your head”.

Spain: . . . Some participants were pessimist because they saw people increasingly depressed or suffocated by forces and wills out of reach.
Sweden: The feeling of fear and vulnerability during a small demonstration at one of the sites of the shootings was described as an important memory of profound significance.

Switzerland: News of the Charlie Hebdo attack in neighbouring France shook many, especially in the French speaking part of the country. It was experienced as an attack on European society and values, which raised concerns about whether Switzerland would be safe sparking outraged and self-protective responses.

Turkey: The Terrorist attacks done by immigrants to Europe’s most symbolic city is perceived as very bold, brave action. There are many participants, both man and woman, from different European countries who participate to terrorist group called İSİS. It seems that it is a reflection of people’s anger who doesn’t feel integrated to Europe’s values. Every day on media we watch, hear news about different kind of deaths.

UK: After 9/11 this one is also horrific and my mind goes to young men, to try to understand their minds. I have difficulty in thinking about it. I worry about the idealisation of the Charlie Hebdo message. Yes, it’s difficult to approach this event with any moral certainty. Have I got any principles? What would I die for? It’s strange, but when I was at the LP last time, it took place at the same time as the tragedy in Norway. It seems that now something dreadful coincides with this event. It’s surprising that these massive crowds gather together when these things are happening; large numbers, having a need to reassure themselves.

USA: We have developed a higher tolerance for violence in our society. Sexual Trafficking rates highest among neglected and abandoned children.

Hypothesis 3

The unprecedented and revolutionary social change has brought about closer integration of people's from differing cultures throughout the world but has also highlighted the differences. The boundaries between different cultures have more often proved to be an abrasive experience. It is at the boundary that clashes of cultures occur, be that at an individual level within societies or at an international level. At the international level members of societies have experienced overt terrorism and war on an exceedingly frightening scale. Sometimes this same terror is occurring intra-national boundaries, through so-called "home grown" terror. But there is also a much more covert or hidden but endemic violence occurring within societies. The bases of this violence are the economic crisis, immigration, and the widening gap between rich and poor at all levels of society. A consequence is that at this point in time, members of societies have lost their generosity, their humanity, their warmth and kindness, their caring for others. Instead they have become greedy, inhumane, and self-centred. A result is that members of societies experience their communities as being constantly violent.

Acknowledgements

The authors personally and on behalf of OPUS wish to extend their warm and sincere thanks to all throughout the world who participated in this event. In particular, we should wish to thank the following who were the Conveners and Authors of the National Reports: *Argentina*, Gabriela Barrial and Dimitris Vonofakos; *Australia*, Dr Jinette de Gooijer and Claes Agin; *Bulgaria*, Rumen Petrov; *Canada*, Barbara Williams and Howard Book; *Czech Republic*, Joseph Dodds; *Denmark*, Anette Jonson, Maja Wiberg, and Steen Visholm; *Estonia*, Marianne Tensing; *Finland*, Maija-Leena Setälä, Leila Keski-Luopa, and Timo Totro; *France*, Maryse Dubouloy and Patrick Obertelli; *Germany* (Frankfurt), Barbara Schneider and Diethelm Sannwald; *Germany* (Berlin), Dr Ulrike Beland and Dr Friedrich-Wilhelm Lindemann; *Greece*, Evangelia Laimou; *India*, Cicily M. P.; *Ireland*, Jude Bowles; *Israel*, Dr Joe Djemal and Dr Ronit Kark; *Italy*, (Milan) Giovanni Foresti; *Italy* (Rome), Franca Fubini and Alfredo Vneziale; *Italy*, (Ariete) Elisabetta Pasini; *Italy* (South) Marina Galati; *Peru*, Jorge

Mendoza; *Poland*, Iwona Soltysinska and Malgorzata Gwozdz; *Portugal*, Caterina Rodrigues; *Russia*, Ekatarina Mikhailova; *Serbia*, Marina Mojovic, and Branka Bakić; *South Africa (Port Elizabeth)*, Frans Cilliers; *South Africa (Pretoria)*, Lorna Brown; *Spain*, Ignacio Garcia and Manuel Seijo; *Sweden*, Johanna Crafoord; and Peter Hugo; *Switzerland*, Heather Cairns-Lee; *Turkey*, Muzaffer Mustafa; *UK*, Lionel Stapley; *USA*, Janet Chandler.

PUBLICATION OF NATIONAL REPORTS

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

The overall dynamic is still similar to that of previous years where members of societies are dominated by feelings of impotence, helplessness, and hopelessness, resulting in a necessary retreat to individualism and an avoidance of connectedness to community or society. The culture is a simple social system that provides containment in a defensive manner not allowing any opportunity to take risks and be creative. Everything is concerned with survival and that involves splitting off the unbearable thoughts and feelings and projecting them into political and other authority figures. A result is that members of societies are left with no ownership of the challenges that currently face them. This, in turn, serves to perpetuate the isolation and individualistic approach as a means of survival.

It seems that current dynamics are evidenced by much more violence than in previous years. This seems to be a result of a much more obvious coming together at the various physical and psychological boundaries. At this time, the result is conflict and violence but perhaps we should bear in mind that it is also at the boundary where learning occurs. An example of how this may happen was mentioned in the Australian Report, where the experience was that there was a sense of something stirring in society, as if a tipping point had been reached. As indeed, "learning at the boundary" did happen. Following the Australian hostage siege involving a Muslim fanatic that resulted in several deaths members of society went out of their way to seek Muslims to "ride with me".