

SOUNDINGS

OPUS Global Report 2017

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Abstract

On or about 11th January 2017, 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 2017, were held in twenty-five different countries around the world (Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Germany (2 Reports), Greece, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy (4 Reports), Peru, Serbia, South Africa (2 reports), 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-five 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 and revolutionary social change. 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

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economy, the shape of societies, and the framework of world governance. At this time, the most significant changes are at the level of world governance. This is most obviously evidenced by Brexit in the UK and the election of President Trump in the USA. But it goes much deeper and wider than this with so-called populism challenging the established political and social processes in many societies across the world. The experience of members of societies is one of unpredictability, insecurity, and uncertainty, which flourishes in such an environment. All societies are struggling to make sense of their world and finding it difficult to adapt to or even consider developing a new way of life.

CURRENT DYNAMICS

The current experience of members of societies throughout the world is that they are still struggling to make sense of their world. There is an underlying experience of corruption, social violence, aggression, and of natural disasters linked to climate change. Add to these the experience of global terrorism and migration and we can perhaps begin to understand the current dynamics. For the first time, Reports have referred to the relationship between man and nature, which may be seen as a rejection of non-human forms of connection, while others in like manner refer to emotional connection and a wish for greater humanity. Essentially, a desire to have their attachment needs met. The experiences of the past decade or more seem to have been an endless series of rapidly occurring changes at multiple levels. All have had an enormous impact on our current environment and all acts as a sort of backcloth to other more specific experiences.

Discovering a new way of life faces members of societies with the need to integrate their identity as citizens of a nation with their identity as citizens of the world. Due to the experience of terror, massive immigration, and radical political change around the world, members of societies experience an overwhelming sense of fear and insecurity. This is amplified by the media. Rigid boundaries between nations but also between individuals arise in an attempt for self-preservation. The global and social sphere has become cluttered with projections of raw aggression, greed, and rage, which is then experienced as a threat from outside. This experience is developed further below in Analysis and Hypothesis 1, "insecurity".

There seems to be a constant change at the level of global governance: this is mainly arising from a rejection of the establishment and the loss of traditional institutions that provided an anchor and a sense of community in people's lives. Above all, this has resulted in a new

form of democracy that is replacing that which has developed and endured since about 1945. There is disillusionment about globalisation, which is seen as increasing the gap between the rich and the poor, as fostering exploitation of scarce human and environmental resources and corruption. Survival in this chaotic experience activates binary thinking, conflict between ideologies and the longing for quick solutions. In the context of trying to be in control of a rather helpless experience, members of societies have given their support for a type of leadership that is promising radical solutions, security, and order. A result is that members of society are experiencing unprecedented levels of uncertainty, unpredictability, and helplessness. The establishment having failed them, members of societies, many of whom had removed themselves from the democratic process, have sought alternative solutions that provide them with a more direct form of democracy. This experience is developed further below in Analysis and Hypothesis 2, "uncertainty".

The opportunities that globalisation has presented us with, for raising awareness about issues like the environment and for connectedness around the globe seem to have been taken over by pessimism. New technologies appear to be used in perverse ways: they acquire a life of their own and take control of human nature; they become algorithms that need to look shiny and showing increasing performance. There is acknowledgement that managing life with new technologies and social media requires skill and responsibility towards the virtual others. Members of societies highlight the confusion generated by excessive use of the virtual world between what is real and what is not real and suggest that the more one is exposed to an idea the more likely they are to believe it. This experience is developed further below in Analysis and Hypothesis 3, "technology".

ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS 1. INSECURITY

Analysis 1

The theme of insecurity, stirred by the terrorist attacks and migration waves was among the greatest concern across the world, which became amplified by media and the internet.

Highly complex problems become members of societies' concern, which leaves them helpless. The closeness that globalisation has brought has stirred up complex histories between nations, which are hard to manage at an international and at a community scale, such as religious radicalisation. What represents security for some brings terror to some others. The hope one has of finding a job, a place, and

a better future somewhere else, raises survival anxieties of losing a job, a place, and a better future for someone else, like in the immigration situation. By accepting an invitation for being a citizen of the world, one becomes unsafe in the context of their nation. The shared global world, which seems to be identified with Neo-liberalism and individualism, is causing fear and anxiety about the possibility of a World War and damage to Earth.

Turning to the national sphere is not offering security either. Weaker economies offer fewer opportunities but they are not a target for terrorism, in contrast to stronger economies. No place feels safe. Fight-flight responses are activated among members of societies, who flee from their nation's conflicts to the global sphere, from the global sphere to the national, and from real life into virtual reality to find protection. The above are reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

Argentina: On further reflection the members reported their pre-occupation on the chronic-presence of violence in Argentine society— associating violence to terrorism and gender issues— wondering, “where is all this violence coming from?”

Australia: “Global political arena is causing fear. People are removing themselves from public life because of it.” The term war was used many times indicative of the wish to be rid of unbearable feelings of powerlessness, or as the ultimate disruptor that would cleanse the world of despicable behaviour. “Will Trump become a metaphor for a Third World War?”

Bulgaria: Members of the group . . . also shared observations about abuse of power and of human rights . . . Helplessness, and kind of expectancy for some kind of cathartic catastrophe to happen . . . Escape into the global out of helplessness locally.

Canada: And all of this violence runs on energy extracted from the earth. The earth itself is being depleted and this depletion may have provoked “panic”. There was a growing feeling of fear and an “instruction” via the media barrages that we should be afraid. It's so difficult to come together which such paranoia and insecurity.

Chile: . . . Under these circumstances, aggressive practices emerge aimed at the more vulnerable groups, like women, immigrants, and indigenous peoples. Individualism, with its indifference and avoidance of others and their vulnerabilities, responds to defences that protect against rooted anxieties in the context of the social diversity brought by globalisation and its changes in society. Faced with this

diversity, people build up boundaries that withdraw them from contact with others who, . . . , are a threat to identity.

Denmark: A tendency is that the basic feeling of security is threatened in society . . . the public sector, the state, society with its institutions appear increasingly as an unreliable persecuting maternal monster: "Mama's gonna make all of your nightmares come true. Mama's gonna put all her fears into you. Mama's gonna keep you right here under her wing. She won't let you fly, but she might let you sing. Mama's gonna keep baby cosy and warm." (Pink Floyd: *The Wall*)

Estonia: Estonia is currently undergoing a compulsory merging of counties. It evokes a worry, what will happen to democracy? The participants shared experiences of their inability to affect large systems. The large systems have a life of their own. ". . . Counties are merged together and there is now a worry about not having the local people's opinions heard. The people are worried about their county identity. A familiar turns into foreign."

Faroe Islands: The citizen therefore experiences anxiety and growing unsafety in relation to the societies formal systems of power. The greater effort the individual makes in personal development, the greater the re-enforcement of the anxiety and unsafety is. The growing responsibility for own survival and the reduced trust in authorities is experienced as a fight without a safety net; and reminds of "survival of the fittest".

Finland: Global happenings, the digitalisation of systems, the re-organisation of basic services, the handling of refugees, emigration, the building of walls, the undermining of traditions, the enormous amount of immediately available data, and the like create confusion, exasperation, and vagueness, in addition to feelings of obscurity and fear . . . In one small town, one resident began to talk to a friend about holding a celebration in honour of Finland's 100th anniversary. People began to be enthused about this idea, and now such a celebration will be held throughout Finland when the time comes.

France: Factors involved in the loss of point of reference are identified: wars and the deregulation of the global political balance, terrorist attacks in France, which have deeply shocked, new technologies . . . There are very few places in social life where it is possible to express and share what one internally feels in relation to the events that one goes through in society, and thus to initiate these personal and collective transformations to adapt to a new world . . . The end of the economic and migratory borders is announced, but increasingly high barriers are raised between spaces.

Germany (Frankfurt): Renouncing limits offers a chance, the chance of liberation from old shackles. The tendencies that were reported and deplored by the group, however, also fulfil the function of distraction from those fears initiated by the loss of limits. The re-emergence of populism, the emphasis on nationality, the search for a strong man (“Messiah”), or some happening to solve all problems can be interpreted as reaction to the dissolution of all secure limits and boundaries; new and even tighter boundaries are drawn up as protection . . .

(Berlin): The terror attacks in Berlin, Istanbul, and Israel were mentioned. Many participants shared their concern about the threat of terror but also distanced themselves from the threat . . . The growing populism with its projections, right-wing extremist forces, and violence against women are experienced as a threat. We see the core of democracy to be threatened, which in itself is important to us because preserving equality and respect to others also protects us.

Greece: Children are not taught geography and history in the way they were taught before. The emphasis is not any longer on information about the country’s borders, counties and nor on important events that have happened in the Greek history, but on Europe. In the spirit of globalisation the national issues are ignored. The attention goes to big cities, which are targeted by extremists. Greece is safe because it is not an influential country.

Hungary: . . . the governing party is creating a culture of fear in order to create the sense of a common enemy (outsiders, immigrants), and in order to control the masses by attacking on their basic level of security . . . their attitude to borders and security checks have changed . . . Today only a small fragment of society has personally experienced war, we don’t have a sense of what is it like when we are not applying self-regulatory institutions (e.g., EU, NATO) to keep ourselves under control.

India: The members moved on to express their fear towards violence and abuse that occurred in the city of Bangalore during the last year . . . Another female member expressed her insecurity to walk on the street in western outfit due to a sexual abuse incident at Bangalore on the New Years Eve . . . The older generation is trying to discipline the youngsters by instilling fear. When opportunity strikes they (the sexually repressed adolescents and young adults) grab it without analysing the impacts of their actions.

Ireland: “I’ve been preoccupied by boundaries and what has to be shut out and what is within that has to be protected . . . Lines are being crossed, boundaries violated.” “. . . Brexit seemed to reinforce a sense

of security. This retreat will make England feel more secure whereas in Ireland, the emergence of the border again won't feel safe at all. Something about what Trump says makes people feel secure. There is a profound sense of insecurity and need for a profound sense of security."

Israel: The efforts at multi-culturalism and at being politically correct bring only fakeness. Trump and Brexit are a kick to the Muslim World and to political correctness. We should come back to ourselves, back to our sources . . . At any moment there will be a catastrophe . . .

Italy (Milan): It's as if the idea of self-efficacy was only linked with the ID dimension, while the collective dimension was characterised by chaos and disorder. We feel like we have control over and can make an impact on the decisions that regard ourselves, but the same doesn't happen when it comes to decisions on a larger scale . . .

(North): Immigration, terrorism and economic crisis continue to widen the gap between rich and poor, the clash of cultures international and intra-national favouring fundamentalism that foments conflict and fear . . . We are in the middle of a major humanitarian catastrophe . . . And while the world is travelling on the contrary, everyone is immersed with their headphones to music or chatting with their Smartphone in social networks . . . The opposite of rationality, the opposite of perfect nationality . . .

(Rome): To some extent this representation of society may recall a stage in the evolution path of the human being, at the time when primitive men were struggling against the surrounding dangers. Immediately after that our ancestors had discovered how to find shelter inside the caves, with their backs safe, they were able to evolve their own social capabilities and feel the safety provided by the presence of the group and of the community. Can they (these groupings) represent the impulse for new forms of collective identity or are they the cover for avoidance and denial of reality?

(South): the participants feel high concern for natural disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, etc.). They feel very confused, frightened. One of the preoccupation detected pertains to politics and global security. The political landscape with the advent of Trump and everything that goes with it determines a strong perception of insecurity about the future scenarios . . .

Peru: The members of the group expressed a feeling of withdrawal from other people, either by building barriers that avoid approaching others (. . .), or by self-isolation of what is not close to them and is untrusty . . ., where the sensation of insecurity and fear prevail ("*everyone has put an invisible barrier through insecurity*" . . .), and that at the same time it would facilitate manipulation by the Other (. . .).

Serbia: how would it be possible to conduct a dialogue without immediately fearing and expecting to re-enter past conflicts. It seems that the system of values is overflowing with different concepts, and consequently the boundaries of our own and Western and Eastern values are blurred in such a way that they are unrecognisable. There was a lot of discussion as to how to protect oneself and at the same time be able to keep one's identity . . .

South Africa (Port Elizabeth): a White girl made the comment that "she wished apartheid was still in force" . . . we have bought into the thesis of "one truth", we establish what the truth is and then put a boundary around it which requires coercive power to resolve the competition or dissonant voices or gate-keep to control.

(Pretoria): Participants discussed world events beyond the boundaries of South Africa, as a defence against what is happening in the here-and-now in our country. Words such as "scary", "frightening", and "terrifying" were used to describe a culture of intolerance among international members of societies. Is our future in Africa or is there a future here in South Africa for us? Our children are talking with ease about getting married "beyond" their own cultures, within South Africa but also beyond national borders.

Sweden: There is a fear of what will happen with the unaccompanied children when the homes for asylum seekers are attacked. We can't provide necessary security. But this fear may be induced. Someone wants us to fear the situation—but everybody is not afraid. There is a striving for extreme security but the control obtained is deceptive. We handle rules and borders largely in a self-organising way. In a way, the city presents a facade to the world, of being prosperous and growing, wanting to be taken seriously, but behind the facade there is troubles, violence, poverty, and generally friction and turmoil.

Switzerland: Brexit, Trump, and the rise of far right leaders in Europe are seen as warning signs of discontent with the incumbent power structure. Fears about terrorism, mass immigration, loss of jobs which are intractable problems for which there are no easy answers tend to split opinion starkly into polar opposites. Closer to home, job losses, sickness, and struggles to keep up with financial obligations threaten people's way of life. Security is longed for but seems an idealistic dream of a world long ago.

Turkey: Systemic pressure on the media, human rights violations, state of emergency applications, increasing levels of women's murders, and child abuses, and harassments for last ten years, coup attempt, threat of ecological destruction all over the country, mining accidents begins

to be “usual” agenda of the country. For many people, everyday life routine took a heavy blow. Society’s chemistry is broken. It is not a usual situation to witness traumatic events, over and over again. We are in a place where the theoretical tools that were available to us before, are inadequate to understand the meaning of those unusual things that we live in.

UK: People tend to hide behind masks in their social interactions as a way of avoiding authentic contact, which feels threatening. There is a desperate need to be found and a wish to be heard but without being seen. There is an idea that shortcoming all the way to the top is the ultimate solution to one’s problems. We see barriers emerging between countries, between people.

USA (Chicago): “I am fearful of being in my country and my home. Black and brown don’t fit in here anymore. We live in violence and entrenched poverty in this city, with murders every week, with a mayor that has closed down over fifty schools on Chicago’s south side and no mental health services! Now this issue national level this tips the scale for me and the future of my children—we must fight back” . . . lack of trust in our leaders, vulnerability, helplessness, and strong feelings to fight or take flight and leave the country or continue the protests and unite on their desire to take back their country and make sure their legislators represent their needs.

Hypothesis 1

Because of the loss of regulation provided by traditional institutions, the media seem to have acquired the role of a harsh super-ego that is battering members of societies’ ability to own their actions and their ability to think and to feel. With such a harsh super-ego function, vulnerability is intolerable and so is inter-dependency, because they stir up persecutory guilt in ways that fail to encourage reflectivity, reconciliation of the differences in opinions, integration of needs, and interests of people with different backgrounds and experiences and forgiveness about past national and international traumas.

Members of societies are left with overwhelming anxiety that leads them to self-preservation and to the projection of their greed and destructiveness on to others who are then experienced as threatening. There is wishful thinking that the fear will stay away and one’s own world will be cleansed, good, and safe. This solution leaves members of societies in despair about further damage that they feel they have done to relations and terrified about the possibility of worse consequences returning back, penetrating the borders and causing more damage.

ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS 2. UNCERTAINTY

Analysis 2

As a result of the massive changes experienced during the past decade, there has been a significant response by members of societies, in the nature of a so-called populist uprising, a rejection of the establishment who have seemingly governed more for their own interests than those of whole societies. There has been a form of a “soft” revolution that has resulted in Brexit in the UK and the election of President Trump in the USA. It continues with serious challenges to governments in many other European countries and, of course, in many Arabic countries in the battle against ISIS. In addition, globalisation seems to have run its course and economists seek to discover new ways of ordering the world economy. The framework of world governance, from severe doubts about the continuing governance of the EU, to a possible dominance of global governance by China, who may become the controller of the reserve currency, seriously adds to this uncertainty. This is reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

Argentina: The second category of themes was about existential cultural void, it was mostly within the context of witnessing a society in transition where the citizenship feels the attraction to be seduced by a political and media seduction that is manifested towards “colourful mirrors”. The group reflected on how society has also split in terms of generations, with usually young people being much seduced creating this sense of existential cultural void and older generations who tended to be more stick to the values of past generations.

Australia: That members of society experience intolerable anxieties about loss of a way of life and familiar systems that have become perverse, attacking the capacity to think and humanity itself, resulting in a paranoid fantasy that society is heading towards an unstoppable “Brave New World”.

Bulgaria: Support for transition seems to be an almost shameful and covered need. Probably (any) transition needs support and this seems to be an unacknowledged and unmet need throughout society and communities in Bulgaria. This support is not just knowledge about where to go and what changes/losses one must entertain, but also some emotional support throughout the journey.

Canada: There were concerns that social care and democracy itself is eroding completely. There seems to be a “death of a more positive and hopeful way of life”. This is felt as a death of “progress”—a deeper

sense of “things no longer getting better” and loss of hope and resignation that nothing now can change. There was a growing feeling of fear and an “instruction” via the media barrages that we should be afraid. The message is “beware”—“you are one step away from danger”. And at the same time, one becomes numb.

Chile: Citizens experience insecurity, lack of protection, and uncertainty that cause them fear as they do not know what to trust, who to trust, in addition to being unclear as to how to proceed to generate and maintain such trust or faith. The government’s unfulfilled promises of implementing transformations to activate the economy, increase employment, reform education, reform labour laws and create a new constitution, are sources of despair and frustration.

Denmark: In a world of accelerating complexity the connection between cause and effect can be difficult to identify and therefore is often left to creative fantasising. A tendency is that communication and dialogues no longer have mutually binding consequences and leave people isolated and lonely.

Estonia: A period within the relative equilibrium of the large system is at an end, and the large system is moving towards imbalance and surprise. The relatively predictable and stable is becoming unpredictable. One is seeking something new, but it is still unknown. The unlikely is able to happen. One must think about their connections (family, friends) and tighten those connections. One must share worries and joys, and interact. This is how aid is best received, together survival becomes easier.

Faroe Islands: The trust in the systems and “The established” is hesitant and almost in free fall. We can no longer predict what will happen even in the short run. The lack of predictability creates anxiety and we become greedy and self-centred. We are looking for a hope, a faith, or a person, that can bring back order in chaos.

Finland: The experience of nations in this post-transnational world is that traditional systems, such as the church, state, community, health care, political parties, and interest groups, are outdated and cannot support their citizens in today’s chaos. Where are the faces of power? Today’s political solutions force people into excessive independent initiative. Can we believe in our own survival, our own ability to fend for ourselves and support ourselves, and our own abilities and skills?

France: We are in a period of change in our societies, which are still indecipherable. A general sense of deregulation, a loss of points of reference in society are dominating. The pieces of information that

circulate are contradictory or paradoxical in regard to everyone's life and feeling. Unlike their elders, young people did not experience any other world than this world. The current uncertainty is part of their environment, and they accept it as such. In this environment of anomy, in which there is a loss of sense of situations, behaviours for which everything would be allowed emerge, especially from the politicians.

Germany (Berlin): The growing populism with its projections, right-wing extremist forces, and violence against women are experienced as a threat. We observe a lack of respect for the others—the refugees, the deprived, and the women. We see the core of democracy to be threatened, which in itself is important to us because preserving equality and respect to others also protects us. If the resolution of conflicts and the holding of discourses are not successful and we strive for better politics we actually feel very helpless.

(Frankfurt): In the group there was a subtle but unspoken concern not to be swept along in the wake of the reported tendencies. That may well be why the big topics such as the question of refugees, climate change . . . were not explicitly expressed. There was an implicit need to retain an anti-simplistic attitude to preserve the potential of taking action or permitting it to develop. Ultimately these fantasies cannot be satisfied. They may even be hearkening back to infantile greed.

Greece: Because there is difficulty in coordination for resolving complex issues both at a European but also at a National level, there is confusion and uncertainty in the Greek society. Citizens struggle to take on responsibility and handle complex issues in the micro level of their everyday life. Decisions entail the risk of radicalisation; of creating enemies and scapegoats.

Hungary: The third main theme that has emerged is related to the changes that surround us on a national, international, and global level. Related to the terrorist attacks of the near past, participants shared their uncertainty of handling the situation, their thoughts on how to remain humane and trusting in these situations, and their dilemmas on how to prepare the next generation for a world like this. A member spoke of their sense that Donald Trump's appeal was that he would challenge this uncertainty.

India: Disappointment with regard to the efficiency of the leaders was predominantly seen among the members of the group. They believe that there are not capable and trustworthy leaders elected to govern our country. Even if there are any efficient and competent leaders once they are in power they tend to forget their duty and become corrupt.

Due to this the citizen does not take responsibility in choosing the leaders, thus resulting in the persistence of corruption.

Ireland: The middle position between the polarised extremes is very difficult to hold because of the amount and immediacy of information and images sent which we hope will satiate our need to know and our need to be contained but which in actuality bloats us and makes us anxious, uncomfortable, and angry and then either harkening to extremist positions or are paralysed to inaction.

Israel: During the LP little verbal explicit reference was made to the experience of anxiety present in the room and it expressed itself in the difficulty to bring and stay with associations, and later on to build hypotheses. Instead of these, slogans and recommendations for action took the scene. At the same time the issues referred to were all expressions of anxiety: Trump, Brexit, the deterioration of the Western World, ISIL (Daesh), catastrophes, the impossibility of multiculturalism and political correctness.

Italy (North): The individual now lives in a society where the tradition is broken forever and must decide for himself who he is and what he wants to be. We are unprepared and inadequate. To stand in the present, bearing all the painful emotions it provokes, seems to be a much difficult task for the members that feel lost in their individual visions. Life seems to have become too complex and out of control, mostly not intelligible. Feelings of impotence and frustration result from that. This gives us a sense of tipping parts and we feel dismay. The loss of certainties, the middle class is struggling, the values are lost, the paradigms change.

(Milan): The mere fact that our ways of living and behaving in different social contexts have changed makes us think we've been deeply changed; it makes us less sure about knowing how to interpret all this. Today we have felt the need to have pillars: specific points of reference in order to give shape to a society which, being liquid, is in danger of being too exposed to the medium it is surrounded by can values play a part? And what about individual responsibility? How much our keys for interpretation are actually possible and can they act as defence mechanisms against a chaos which would require a different pair of glasses, one that we're still unable to find?

(Rome): The theme seems to represent a citizenship with its own sight obstructed by an extremely short-sighted perspective. There is no longer a containing vision nor the capacity to take care of any connections, links, or human bonding, so citizens are more concerned with watching behind their backs instead of looking forward towards the future and the younger generations.

(South): It seems that worry about security affects everyday people's life. One wonders how some political news is disruptive in people's lives and provoke concern and common anxiety effects, whereas others leave unresponsive. If this new communication systems puts into question knowledge and information and affects young people up to make to the point to make them stuck, unable to move and unable to project future, so the misinformation is functional; however, functional to who?

Peru: The discussion led the group to recognise that relating to the other involves the risk of experience something new, but is very difficult to face something different because of the fear of change, even if what is known cause suffering, preferring to deny it rather than modify it. Due to the globalisation of information and the increase of the flow of information through the new technologies, members of our society feel unable to process and discern what is true of what is not, which increases the feeling of insecurity, the fear about the future and the new, generating a regression towards defensive positions, the dependence of a saviour leadership and a greater isolation within the society.

Serbia: How to be a good teacher to the next generation, when we are losing contact with our tradition? There was a lot of discussion as to how to protect oneself and at the same time be able to keep one's identity. Where does the need to step into other people's shoes take us and why? Searching for good boundaries might mean trying to find a balanced measure of words in relationships. Overstepping the boundaries of hospitality is also explored, as well as overextending the hospitality. Death, as the final boundary that needs to be acknowledged in order to move on.

South Africa (Port Elizabeth): We have grown up in a society where identity was structured and today identity develops organically and will create unique boundaries but will also require some structure and holding by leaders and/or parents.

(Pretoria): The important link between personal identity and the community was discussed. "Who I am" is defined by "Who I am amongst others" in interaction with other citizens. There is a focus on quality of relationships and how it contributes to quality of life. The scale moves constantly between feelings of hope and despair, especially for the younger generations in terms of where they will find a safe space in future.

Sweden: The reign of pessimism—we allow fear to dominate. Others hold the balancing depressed position. The world appears to be falling

apart and the fear induced by the unscrupulous selfishness dominates the conversation in society. The splitting is sustained in the international political arena.

Switzerland: The instability in the world with major shifts in power, an increased splitting of societies into rich and poor, the march of immigration threatening to overwhelm Europe and continued terrorist attacks in Europe create an increasingly frightening world. Against this backdrop responses to domestic issues can be exaggerated. Concerns about what is next and how to respond abound.

Turkey: Loss of identity is intolerable, and large group identity is threatened. Disappearance of basic trust between members of the society; blurring of boundaries between fantasy and reality; excessive dependency on a leader; magical thinking; regressed morality, splitting, polarisation, and denial are observed in the society.

UK: The outcome of the referendum is equated with the actual Brexit. People talk as if Brexit has happened. However, there is a process of evaluation of the situation that takes time. It is hard to stay with not knowing whether Brexit is going to happen and what the outcomes of Brexit will be for the UK society.

USA (Chicago): The enormities of the problems that our society was facing have been magnified by the election. As part of this underlying thread, issues about feeling angry, helpless, and anxious were discussed, particularly how we are disowning the feelings of helplessness and projecting them unto the leaders who were now seen as impotent and deserving of our anger. This process of disowning and projecting was done for each candidate on both sides of a much divided America. This might point towards a deep feeling of helplessness, bewilderment, isolation, and anger and toward us for not being able to do anything about it.

Hypothesis 2

Because of the instability in the world with major shifts in power, an increased splitting of societies into rich and poor, the march of immigration threatening to overwhelm existing societies in Europe, and continued terrorist attacks in Europe, members of societies are faced with an increasingly frightening world. Relative equilibrium of the large (global) system is at an end, and is moving towards imbalance and surprise.

The experience of members of societies in this post-transnational world is that traditional systems, such as the church, state, community,

health care, political parties, and interest groups, are outdated and cannot support their citizens in today's chaos. The relatively predictable and stable is becoming unpredictable. Members of societies experience insecurity, lack of protection, and uncertainty that cause them fear as they do not know what to trust, who to trust.

A result is that members of societies see the core of democracy to be threatened. It is an experience where the world appears to be falling apart and the fear induced by the unscrupulous selfishness dominates the conversation in society. Splitting is sustained in the international political arena. In this environment members of societies adopt forms of behaviour that are responding to fear about the future and the new, generating a regression towards defensive positions, the dependence of a saviour leadership, and a greater isolation within the society.

ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS 3. TECHNOLOGY

Analysis 3

There is increasing disillusionment about the role technology can play in modern societies. Alongside with acknowledging some positive aspects of technology, members of societies seem to be in a process of mourning the loss of all those unrealistic expectations that have been made upon technology in the past. They have been trying to own again the needs and the unwanted parts of themselves that they had projected in the virtual world and have begun to find realistic ways of addressing them elsewhere. They have also been trying to disengage from the addictive and voyeuristic way in which they have been feeling invited by media to get involved in the past. They have been protesting about what is on offer on the online world and have been making a claim for a fairer representation of reality and for a useful communication of information. Increasingly more people withdraw from the online world altogether, or begin to regulate the way they use it. Younger generations have developed competence in distinguishing the real from the false news.

At the same time there is still an experience of exclusion from face-to-face interactions at an interpersonal level, but also in the social sphere where professional attributes seem to be replaced by the algorithm of performance, which leaves members of societies feeling either pushed away or controlled by machines and expected to behave like machines. Members of societies have raised their concern about whether technology and social media blur the boundary between what is real and what is not. Lack of critical thinking leads people to believe information that they are repeatedly exposed to, while the

online world is suggested to be making it more acceptable to act out phantasies, which can then be more normalised in the offline world. The above experiences are reflected in the following extracts from the National Reports:

Argentina: banal and frivolous use of technology and a high exposure—as in the series—the other defines the “other” (the protagonist) with how many likes she has. Speed and instantaneity were two main conditions which technology was identified; those tech values have been transferred to the way of life and their behaviours of those who use them. (The change of language, the abbreviations, the emoticons).

Australia: “The algorithm is in control” expressed a concern with technology being in control rather than humans. The algorithm was said to contain logic but lacks capacity to apply any human morals and ethics and conveniently turns the grey area of human judgement into black and white rules. There was a sense of the non-human taking over society, with examples given of technology running our lives on social media, pervasive GPS, use of robots in the army and warfare . . . Obsession with “efficiency” is another kind of algorithm.

Bulgaria: Someone decided to leave social networks in favour of face-to-face meeting with friends. Resisting the “virtual”. A parent of a pupil was supportive to her child’s schoolmaster who fall under public attacks recently following a malevolent leak of his personal photographs on the school’s website.

Canada: There is so much regulation in our systems such that more time is spent on recording activity rather than providing real care. Neo-liberalism has allowed for public assets to be taken over by private interests—we have a business agenda not a caring ideology. Participants commented that there is so much conflict and violence in the world; as a result of media we can see this.

Chile: The intensive use of information technologies saturates the citizenship, confusing the issue of which initiatives they should support. Furthermore, empowerment demands persistent wills, energies, and resources, and the results are modest, without achieving substantive solutions to the struggles and resistances it arises.

Denmark: The small number of journalists who have the time to look into things and who can therefore ask critical questions are met by distancing politicians who present themselves through feelings instead of facts and arguments. In return despondency and anger turn up in the social media where many people try to get rid of their anger by directing it at big groups of anonymous people or at politicians.

Estonia: Digitalisation and robotics brings both good and bad. The bad must be recognised and erased. The good must be taken into use and developed. As digitalisation increases, nature becomes more and more important to us. There was also talk of how working at home has become a possibility. Estonia is digitalising, one participant told about a positive experience in applying for a passport . . .

Faroe Islands: Young people worship quality in communities in E-play and team-sports, where the team and the unity gives results far beyond the sum of individuals. They are happy and full of hope for the future, and they show a skilful administration of the new platforms and possibilities. Moreover, the young people have created a language including “cant”, abbreviations, and symbols, that for them are natural and give a here-and-now-meaning in their communication with others, using the same language across boundaries and generations.

Finland: I don’t understand the logic of the digital world, but, nevertheless, day by day, someone knows more and more about it than I do and has Orwellian control over my everyday life . . . I feel like I am being controlled by a digital tyrant. Not only countries and political parties, but also individuals, are the object of Orwellian hacking, monitoring, and surveillance. Talk about animals made everyone feel good . . .

France: Few people have skills in these areas, and few get a benefit. Moreover, the bureaucracy sometimes looks like a “kafkaïesque universe”. Screens are mentioned several times, of television, cinema, and smartphone. Are they links to reality or means to avoid it? One wants to be in a “bubble” to meet oneself and think by oneself. It is also the search for a space of gratuity, where human behaviours are not directly utilitarian, where one can carry out activities as an amateur.

Germany (Berlin): The unconnected muddle of real world on the one hand and virtual digital world on the other was expressed, the virtual being no longer controllable and leading to a loss of feelings . . . People were staring at their smartphones, stumbling through the streets, endangering not only the road traffic but also disregarding cultural sights such as memorial and sacred places like temples. The loss of real connections and of the ability to be alone is seen in adolescents who are fixated on Facebook . . . digital communication would bring new technical and social possibilities so that it could also be experienced as enrichment.

(Frankfurt): One reporter categorically refused to interview a police speaker who coordinates police youth work since she was unable to provide sensational insights into youth gangs . . . There are more and more citizen pressure groups seeking attention and promotion

publicity so that their original authenticity becomes blurred. Complexity of our reality is reduced to the level of the spectacle—frequently in the field of nutrition.

Greece: The parents sacrifice a lot on a material level. But they are not so involved with their children at an emotional level. Facebook and coffee. There is abundance in what they often provide, but little attention to their real needs. The children are more grumpy and nervous in our days . . . We observe that adolescents struggle to express themselves in simple sentences both in written but also orally. We lack being sociable. Do we give children the tablets to calm down instead of asking them how their day had been? Are their difficulties in communicating and expressing themselves relating to this?

Hungary: They agreed that a significant part of our society takes whatever comes from the media as granted . . . a majority of the target group has no access to or no interest in alternative sources or channels of information—"In the channels, that everyone has access to, it's not about how you see it; they tell you how to see things". They also referred to how the low level of education makes it less difficult to manipulate people . . . For elderly people, it is difficult to follow all these gadgets, and this makes hard to connect to people and to discussions.

India: This evoked anger and disappointment among certain members because the media does not provide such important information (about various provisions by the government that not many people are aware of) rather has become a place for gossips. Because of ease in access of information younger members of the society are questioning blind beliefs resulting in intergenerational clashes.

Ireland: "I've seen independent research on climate change that says the problem isn't fossil fuel and then other research that says the opposite." She spoke of only being able "to manage small shots of news" . . . more serious items are told by the journalists that "We've run out of time". "Trump has created his identity through social media. I've come off Facebook. Do we know people? Now we have alter-identities." I'm not on Facebook and I miss things but the cost of being on Facebook is to get the sanitised version of my friends' lives".

Israel: Brexit, Hitler Youth, white trash are not Hillary Clinton's people! The people are fed up with surprises and have no respect for our Western Values.

We should come back to our "being together" to face what the western culture is bringing to us now: a deterioration of the western civilization.

Italy (Milan): “Just like working for Amazon: you’re like a robot, you go in and they tell you you have thirty-five seconds to pee, if you need to, because this is how long it takes according to them.” . . . technology often seems to keep people apart more than it draws them close. Lack of competence also plays a part, and this can entail harmful consequences: adaptation, flattening of one’s personal dimension, media “hoaxes” generating consent and mutual influence, lack of awareness (and control) of the consequences of one’s actions.

(North): The fragmented structure of society becomes ever more chaotic and precarious leads us to seek refuge in social media or in some communities that are still fragmented social entities created on the basis of unmet needs and the need for shared values. A growing sense of omnipresence, omnipotence no boundaries of time and space and social control is present but at the same time we feel isolated, inadequate, and unprepared to change.

(Rome): Online “haters” are vocal and malicious web users who broadcast hatred and insults whenever they disagree with something or someone. They seek to spread negative opinions and attack a person or an idea. Haters can be outright bigots, racists, and militants who will poison the social fabric of a community and actually threaten and stalk the people whom they hate. Gambling and video-poker machines are spreading everywhere in Rome.

(South): . . . high level of misinformation at cultural level, news and/or information in general that in Italy we called “Bufale” (is a neologism which means fake news), emulation, among young people, of self-destructive behaviour, spreading of homophobic and racist ideas. Social networks tend to exaggerate information and at the same time to minimising the seriousness of some facts. For many participants it is clear demonstration of a high degree of ignorance in turn due to lack of depth and reading. However, it’s real the perception through whit if a person doesn’t use the social network it’s possible that will be considered like alien.

Peru: from all this many versions of reality, which is the true one? . . . The participants ended up discussing how a post-truth was developed, a reality that is constructed from false facts or half-truths, that from being repeated or continually visualised in the media and social networks ends up being accepted as a generalised truth.

Serbia: Participants explored examples of turning the blind eye towards the other—in the families, close neighbours, as well as those in the region, neighbours in the West near and far, as well as the East; and hypothesised that this kind of blindness breeds extremes, disables empathy, renders negotiations impossible, and devaluates relationships.

South Africa (Port Elizabeth): The next member started with saying that his defence against what is happening in the country is to focus on building self-esteem and developing entrepreneurial skills in his young son of eleven in order for him to become self-sufficient. He has also taken off one morning per week to focus on creative activities such as painting, music, and his son's book which has just been published. This has been very exciting for him and he has developed his own skills in using social media.

(Pretoria): Trumps' phenomenal ability to communicate via Twitter was a stark contrast against the lack of communication from leadership in South African politics. False news on Facebook has become a burning issue as it creates unnecessary panic and chaos. Society members experience disappointment in authorities through technology, nationally as well as locally. It is a different platform where humans project their unmet needs. Has technology become the transitional object, replacing the real with the fake, as citizens report a dependency on their digital devices?

Sweden: One question is how the algorithms on internet that supervises and selects news for us will handle us in the future. Maybe as inferior beings. A reference was made to dating-apps.

Turkey: Systemic pressure on the media, human rights violations, state of emergency applications, increasing levels of women's murders, and child abuses, and harassments for last ten years, coup attempt, threat of ecological destruction all over the country, mining accidents begins to be "usual" agenda of the country.

UK: The activity in the virtual world, where one clicks a key on an online petition and "saves" a vulnerable group somewhere in the world and where one can freely express some hurtful comments without any responsibility about the impact those comments have on other people as if virtual others are not humans, makes it easier for despicable behaviours and omnipotent states of mind to be easier met in the non-virtual life.

USA (Chicago): The overwhelming availability of information and upstart of fake news sites along with the rapid rate of change contribute to an increasingly complex world where members of society experience a lack of clarity and trust. This leads to a general feeling of being overwhelmed and in turn resorting to strategies of polarisation in order to retain some sense of coherence and control.

Hypothesis 3

Because of the disillusionment about the role technology can play in the modern world, it becomes increasingly clearer and to more that modern societies have put a lot of emphasis on a type of unrealistic performance and false identity, which aims at preserving a shiny façade and together with it the illusion that things are under control, as a social defence against helplessness. Members of societies are confronted with a frightening experience of an online clutter of toxicity that has been accumulated over the last years through projections of unmet needs in the virtual mind of the global society. The online world, which had embodied members of societies' wishful thinking, seeking for comfort, and need for control, is now experienced as a persecutory entity with a life of its own.

This results in denial of a more complex and not so much under control reality, which needs members of societies to find new ways of working alongside artificial intelligence so as to provide a realistic, slower, and more reflective way of negotiating their differences, interdependencies, and vulnerabilities. The need to deny that this learning will need to be messier and not so shiny a lot of the time, perhaps, accounts for the experience of members of societies of not feeling heard.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

Given the significance of these latest social developments it is tempting to consider this to be a watershed moment, however, it seems more likely that this is a further enormous change that, with all others we have experienced over the past decade and longer, is leading to some sort of new way of life, this simply being a further stage along the way.

However, it does seem a distinct break from the past, and it is doubtful that the old establishment will recover, things will have changed forever. In terms of this being a period in history as one of unprecedented and revolutionary social change, Brexit can very much be seen as a “soft” revolution, as was President Trump’s victory. It remains to be seen if this satisfies the demand by members of societies for fundamental change.

At this time we can only join with the members of societies when they ask, where they will find a safe space in future. How will they prepare children for the future? What will the future be? What will it be like? How will we survive?