

REPORT
OF
A LISTENING POST

“SWEDEN AND THE
WORLD AT THE DAWN
OF 2007” - Lund

WEDNESDAY 10th JANUARY 2007 from 7.00pm to 9.30pm

ARCANA OFFICE AT SANDGATAN 14 IN LUND, SWEDEN

CONVENORS

Gun Kjellberg, Petra Bovide-Lindén

Listening Posts are based on the notion that a group of people meeting together to work in the way described below allows the unconscious expression of some characteristics of the wider social system and the experience of the Listening Post is itself, therefore, relevant to an understanding of society beyond individual and personal preoccupations.

The aim of the Listening Post is to enable participants as individual citizens to reflect on their own relatedness to society and to try to develop an understanding of what is happening in society at this moment.

The Listening post will provide an opportunity for participants to share their preoccupations in relation to the various societal roles they may have. Collectively they are invited to try to identify the underlying dynamics both conscious and unconscious that may be predominant at this time.

REPORT

Part 1. THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

In this part of the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experience in their various social roles. 14 participants were gathered and two thirds were women. Age varied from forties and upwards, with predominance in the age group between the fifties and age for retirement. A majority were parents, some also grandparents. Professions like consultants in the public sector as well as in the private sector were represented, as were psychologists, psychotherapists, priests and managers. More than half the group had attended one or several Group Relations conferences. Convenors were Gun Kjellberg and Petra Bovide-Lindén.

Initially it was pointed out that the diagnosis of 'burnt-out', once so often debated during the 90's was not much spoken about anymore but referred to as being worn out or depression. It was mentioned that the political shift in Sweden, resulting in a new government after the last election in the autumn of 2006, tends 'to look at the bright side of life'. Alongside with this there is an ongoing extreme individualization as well as polarization in society connected to a deep longing for meaning of life. In the welfare society there is loneliness and over-consumption taking place as a way of finding meaning to life and get content. Borders have shifted in the era of globalisation. New technology creates stress and sometimes loneliness.

Issues concerning the generation gap arose and lingered through Part One in a reoccurring way although there were many attempts to focus on other themes as well. Questions whether this might have occurred in earlier generations as well, but perhaps in a different way were asked. Lead words like the collective and solidarity that were much in focus in the 60's and 70's. But now the lead words seems to be more towards 'we and them' and individual life projects that constantly forces people to make choices of various kinds. It also gives rise to the stress that competition creates. Everything seems to be a possible subject for exchange, 'the use-and throw-away-culture' at it's peak.

The pace of life is at a high speed with no time gaps. Technology has dramatically changed the work life during the last decades and there is a risk that machines tend to replace innovative projects. Globalisation has influenced the role of management and created managers that are of a more authoritarian style. A number of rules and regulations and measures of action have been enforced in the purpose of regulating work life. What happens to the ability to find your personal responsibility here? And to the ability to relate to others and within yourself?

Also in our private lives there is a call for authorities that tell us how to live our lives, such as Dr. Phil, Supernanny, diet and economy experts etc.

Furthermore technology promotes distributing experiences in an on-line manner. This is both good and bad. What happens with the ability to wait? What happens if one permits to expose oneself to void? Will the devil occur and is the devil in the disguise of a novel experience? Also in this discussion the theme concerning the generation gap was involved. The need for help in navigating in the more technified everyday living, integrates the old and new generation. There is also a lot of hope connected to the new generation.

Another issue was the role the media plays. Information is often immediate, extremely negative and brutal. Not much is reported about good things happening around the world. We all share the bad parts exposed 'out there'. But in our private lives we tend to mobilize cosy corners.

Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

In Part Two the aim was to collectively identify the major themes emerging from Part One. Several themes were identified when discussed in small groups of four and five and reported back to the whole group. The three major themes below cover the most significant ones.

- a) Differences between generations
- b) Good and Bad
- c) Quick images vs. slowness

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the participants were working with the information resulting from Parts One and Two, with a view to collectively identifying the underlying dynamics both conscious and unconscious that may be predominant at the time; and, developing hypotheses as to why they might be occurring at that moment. Here the participants were working more with what might be called their 'psycho' or 'internal world', their collective ideas and ways of thinking that both determine how they perceive the external realities and shape their actions towards them. It was an arduous task to stick to the task of forming hypothesis connected to the hypothesis made, and several attempts were made to continue the discussion from Part One. The generation gap theme tended to interlace throughout all defined themes, but work was being done in formulating hypothesis or parts of hypothesis in all major themes. They are summarized in the following:

Analysis and Hypothesis 1

Analysis:

It was recognized that as a result of good parenting and upbringing the more independently grown up children make their choices and lifestyles the more this causes disappointment among the older generation. Envy towards the young people was expressed. They are now in the position of being updated with new knowledge and in the position of making use of these in vast possibilities. The older generation is thus left to be the last link in the lifespan, feeling the absence of an older wise person to lean to which in turn creates a mourning state. There is also a fear of not having the capacity to keep up with the ongoing process of change in society.

However the young generation also brings excitement, joy and new interests to the older generation in an energizing way and thus paves the way for new learning.

Hypothesis:

Being a subject to alternation of generations we get in contact with feelings such as fear, envy, disappointment and loneliness. The attack on our egos and the inability to deal with these feelings make us use projection as a social defence mechanism towards youth, thus

preventing us at a larger scale to embrace glimpses of joy, also connected to the ongoing changes.

Analysis and Hypothesis 2

Analysis:

There are difficulties in processing statements made about how well one has managed to provide for one's private sphere in the Western world while daily information from media brings about frightening news from the wider world, exposing war, poverty and injustice, most predominant in the third world. It was most arduous to emotionally process this and to even talk about this at the Listening Post. The co-existence of Good and Bad in the world gives rise to feelings of both guilt and shame and avoid self-examination. It is difficult to cope with differences, analyze complex situations and engage. "Suffering people are not necessarily good by nature".

Hypothesis:

Difficulties in accepting that life is not perfect and the co-existence of both Good and Bad (=life and death) makes our inner selves a battlefield. We have difficulties in finding means of reparation and tend to deny the pain. The frustration of feeling powerless and having no control give rise to anger, which we act out through projections onto the messenger, the media world.

This inability can be seen as using a collective defence mechanism in our daily lives. It was also recognized as avoidance (baFlight) in the LP discussion.

Analysis and Hypothesis 3

Analysis:

The modern society makes it possible to move speedily around the world in high-speed vehicles. In order to get in touch with your feelings you have to slow down. There is an emerging movement stressing slowness, which has caught the attention of numerous people as a counter-reaction and opposed to the quick, effective society.

The call for breathing-space, getting in contact with the inner self and being pulled to activities in the external world is a dialectical process.

"What we cannot come to grips with consciously; we will produce to become our destiny."

Hypothesis:

There is a fear of facing oneself and possibly get in touch with the Evil inside. There is a fear of the void as well as the inner self, the unmentionable. Simultaneously there is a fear of facing the Divinity inside. Feeling unwanted to oneself would be a most frightful discovery. A way of disguising our inner selves is by getting tangled up in a lot of activities at high pace. The split may reject us from further learning in life.

Report was put together by Gun Kjellberg