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Understanding of Society

International Listening Post Report: The World at the Dawn of 2019

Sandy Henderson, Dr Ulrike Beland, Dr Dimitrios Vonofakos.

On or around 9 January 2019, Listening Posts were conducted in Canada, Chile, Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Germany (Frankfurt and Berlin), Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy (two in Milan and one in the South), Peru, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Turkey and UK. This report synthesises the reports of those Listening Posts and organises the data yielded by them into common themes and patterns.

The social dynamics of 2019 societies can be seen and understood in the context of the most oft-recurring themes from the previous 16 years, many of which are evident this year:

1. Being overwhelmed by the pace and scale of change
2. Loss of faith in leaders and institutions
3. Loss of identity/way of life
4. Retreat to individualism
5. Search for scapegoats and saviours
6. Preoccupation with disaster, death and violence
7. Search for new meaning and order
8. Guilt and shame at privilege
9. Idealisation and demonization of youth
10. Idealisation and demonization of technology

Last year's International Listening Post project reported signs of active adaptation as well as the familiar retreats along the axes of complexity, relationships and purpose. For the first time in many years, hope was expressed that the societal 'undergrowth' of small groups might become 'a unit of positive change' that could lead to the development of new societal 'antibodies'. This hope was also expressed in the demand for a 'collaborative economy' in which we accept our stake in ensuring each other's happiness and work to make progress through the 'power of small gestures'. It was also expressed in the call for a 'downward transfer of responsibilities', with citizens working in 'clusters' to mend the fragments of society. There was a call, too, for 'demilitarised zones' (achieved in spaces such as the Listening Post) where, instead of 'purging' ourselves of our despair and fears for the world, we could 'balance out our pessimism by making space for optimism, joy and gratitude'. This we do not see in the 2019 reports.

This year's report contains far fewer indications of hope and optimism, which might be interpreted as a step backwards. Alternatively, it could be seen as a mere curve in the non-linear pathway to progress. One noticeable feature of this year's national reports is a high degree of commonality in the themes and topics raised, all of which appear in the Top 10 listed above. This conveys a sense of societies being stuck in a recurring pattern, almost mouthing words they

know by heart. Taken together, the 'soundings' of 2018 and 2019 may represent the rigidity and fluidity of a (dissipative) social structure operating far from an equilibrium one would wish for in a mature society. Amid the chaos, citizens see an old order of fragmentation and alienation and wish to invest their hopes in a new one based on equality, mutuality, empathy and eco-centricity – but these are no more than wishes. In conclusion: As with the old order, the hard work of making the world a better place cannot be delegated. It is a task for us all.

Theme 1: Digitalization as a centrifugal force
Digital Acceleration
Digital Extremism
Digital Polarisation

There is a strong sense that the internet, and digital technology generally, is accelerating the fragmentation of society. One way in which it does so is by shortening time and space for reflection. This has created an environment that favours extravert and attention-seeking behaviour. We feel forced to make instant judgements that are binary in nature: any kind of equivocation or qualification is interpreted as dissent. We feel that we are expected to work for longer hours, as technology has made it easier for our activities to be monitored remotely, but we also come to realise that this has made it more difficult for us to maintain a clear boundary between working and free time.

Technology also offers us many virtual forms of communication in which it is harder to offer non-verbal cues such as intonation, inflexion and gesture. Those who seek to avoid the risk of misunderstanding or expose themselves to the hazards of expressing difference become more cautious and passive to the point of complete withdrawal, leaving the field clear to those who thrive on confrontation. Many maintain their freedom of expression under cover of false identities that exaggerate their goodness or badness or are confined to representing a particular social grouping. Uncertainty and confusion reign, contributing to the sense of alienation on all sides.

Hypothesis: The internet and digital technology are a seemingly-safe other onto which citizens project anti-social characteristics such as prurience, envy, prejudice and ignorance and act out their desire to be free from responsibility, thereby creating conditions for mutual mistrust and disorder. The maintenance of good relations in society would require citizens to refrain from both the giving and taking of offence.

Theme 2: Social isolation
- *Unstable identities*
- *Insecurity and disorientation*
- *Escape from the demands of society*
- *Denial of social responsibility*
- *Retreat to the bubble*

Social changes brought about by the increasing pace of change in technology, globalisation and international mobility are challenging the established social hierarchies within groups around the world. Citizens are overwhelmed by the need to engage with multiple sources of unfamiliar difference, and feared loss of privilege, resulting from the increased heterogeneity within their (virtual and physical) communities. This generates turmoil and confusion for some, unleashes hostility and prejudice in others and encourages yet others to assert new sources of power derived from group identities based on characteristics such as gender, race, nationality, religion and sexual orientation.

The widespread response of citizens is one of disengagement from others because they are uncertain both how to respond better and whether they can adjust quickly enough to keep pace with the changes around them. The safe course seems to be to say nothing and trust no one, but the resulting isolation causes depression and despair. The next and final stage in the grieving process (for the loss of a way of life) would be acceptance, but there is little sign of society reaching any end state that is apt for acceptance.

Hypothesis: Citizens retreat to their 'bubbles' from the disintegrative forces of social media and rapid social change, seeking safety in group memberships which give them a sense of power and belonging. This divides society into in/out groups who either treat each other as invisible in order to avoid conflict and gain licence to pursue self-interest unchecked, or engage in open confrontation and competition to assert the superiority of their group's interests over the others'. Uncomfortable feelings arising from this divisive dynamic are managed via various defensive strategies (rampant consumerism, addictions, idealisation of past successes) which distract and further divide. Citizens will, in the end, be reminded that, unless they are willing to recognise the legitimacy of others' interests, they cannot expect their own interests to be recognised in return.

Theme 3: Desire for repair
Flux in society
Facing an environmental catastrophe
Searching for renewed purpose

The challenge for citizens is to accept that flux within society is an enduring state. Citizens cast around for guidance or instruction on adapting to the turbulence from institutions and their social, political and religious leaders, but are disappointed. The institutions are themselves in the grip of instability and turmoil and unable to provide the hoped-for leadership.

Citizens hope that the negative aspects of change can be reversed or mitigated but their individual efforts feel ineffectual in tackling global challenges such as climate change, corruption, political dishonesty and religious intolerance.
What needs to be restored is trust in human relationships: re-emerging from our bubbles, confronting our own intolerance and selfishness and embracing our common concerns such as the survival of our planet and the maintenance of a peaceful co-existence.

Hypothesis: Citizens experience a sense of existential dread, as if all the good that has been done in and to the world is today outweighed by the bad. They fear that the adverse consequences of their own self-interested, perverted and corrupt behaviour are irremediable, and that the institutions and leaders to which they traditionally look for redemption or remediation, such as governments, schools and religions, are no less self-interested, perverted or corrupt than the citizens they serve. In the absence of obvious solutions to a world that is dizzied by the pace of social, environmental and technical change, citizens are braced for turmoil and disaster from which they can see no escape except by collective action. This realisation is beginning to cause citizens to re-evaluate their own conduct and consider what more they can do to mend fences with their neighbours.

Theme 1: Digitalisation as a centrifugal force

Digital Acceleration

Society demands that we do more, faster (*Faroe Islands*). We are weary of modern life that demands we pay attention to so many things at once (*Taiwan, Hungary*) and encourages us to take our work to bed with us (*Faroe Islands*). The digital world is such an integrated part of our identity and relationships (*Faroe Islands*) that we experience information overload (*South Africa, Canada*). Today, we want instant answers (*South Italy*). Real conversation is impossible: there is no time or space to explore difference and find answers to important social questions (*Berlin, Germany*). Social media demands instant opinions from us (*Ireland*), not only leaving us insufficient time to know our own minds but also allowing no scope for nuance. Although it has the potential to engage us more in politics, it allows several different truth models to exist, so we can never establish the true facts (*Hungary*). The digital community is dominated by those who are quickest to reach conclusions (*Ireland*), and then interpret any hesitation or qualification as a sign of racism or sexism (*Ireland*). Questioning is interpreted as criticism (*Peru*). We do not know how to manage relationships as social change is accelerated by technological advances (*Spain*).

Digital Extremism

The internet has lost its innocence (*Denmark*). We feel disoriented and menaced by the actions of faceless ghosts and invisible actors, uttering empty words (*Milan, Italy*) yet it can also make us feel powerful and free to act without responsibility. It offers us a secluded identity (*South Africa*) where personal views can be expressed that could not be said face to face (*Taiwan*). We relate to each other through screens and masks but we don't talk to each other anymore (*Canada*). Without realising it, families are abandoning each other by disappearing behind screens (*Hungary*). At meals we find families stuck on the phone and everyone eating in silence (*Spain*). It is also an instrument of constant surveillance where activities are tracked by invisible eyes and ears (*South Africa*), creating a surveillance society beyond the wildest dreams of the Stasi (*Denmark*). We are uncertain what topics we can raise and what others' views on these will be (*Taiwan*). We either keep silent to hide our difference of opinion or we gratify ourselves with emotion-laden responses (*Hungary*). Being reluctant to speak up (*Taiwan*) limits the time for sorrow, joy and reflection (*Faroe Islands*) and renders our online communications mechanical (*Finland*), meaningless and lacking in empathy (*Faroe Islands*)

Digital Polarisation

Digital technology has created an age of incompetence in which a kind of narcissistic and misinformed egalitarianism prevails over traditional knowledge (*Milan, Italy*). It offers us limitless knowledge yet we use it to watch cat videos (*Hungary*). We cannot decide if it is a positive or negative influence on our children (*India*) as it can empower them to innovation and entrepreneurialism but lure them into gaming and gambling (*India*). Its algorithms try to manipulate our actions (*Spain*) but often miscalculate our needs (*Finland*); its interactive elements deliver little change in response to the feedback we give. Instead of enjoying the freedom and choice that knowledge brings, we protect ourselves from becoming overwhelmed by choosing the extremism of a simplified view (*Hungary*). Facts merge into opinions, making it hard to trust information or its sources (*Denmark*). The news is no longer credible (*Spain*). We narrow our information sources until we only know what we ourselves are (*Taiwan*). It presents itself both as a source of and a cure for addiction (*Hungary*).

Theme 2: Social isolation

Unstable identities

Gender is no longer a safe and stable fundament of being (*Faroe Islands*). The shift away from traditional gender roles has created bewilderment for men and women (*Chile*) and ambivalence about behaving submissively towards each other (*Faroe Islands*). Women feel pushed into a "macho" role in which not all thrive; while men and boys retreat online to compete and hunt in games such as 'Fortnite' (*Faroe Islands*). Women are still condemned for choosing career over family – the nurturing role is not valued by society (*Ireland*); while men experience similar same for choosing family over career – when seeking paternity leave or time off work to look after sick children (*Faroe Islands*). It is still hard to question the roles assigned to men and women in groups (*Peru*), although we should feel grateful to those who are willing to bring up children (*Taiwan*). We want to be comfortable with all our different identities (*Turkey*).

Diversity and inclusion are easier to embrace as abstract concepts than they are as flesh and blood realities, or when we watch a YouTube video of something exotic (*Serbia*). The *#MeToo* Campaign has united all generations of women in losing their fear of demonstrating and demanding respect (*Spain*). However, this has represented steps forward and backward for equality: whipped up by the media, some women misused it to exact vengeance (*Ireland*). Still female politicians are treated worse than their male counterparts (*Ireland*). Men stick up for men whereas women hang each other out to dry (*Ireland*). Men don't have to be perfect but women do. The solution is to value everyone rather than have one sex dominate the other (*Ireland*).

In parallel with the uncertainty of gender roles, a generational split is appearing between those who see the world as open to them and those who feel it is closed (*Israel*). Each generation feels marginalised in its own way: Millennials find power and possibility online but see only limits and constraints in the real world (*Milan, Italy*). There is shared loneliness and no holding space between families and children, schools and students, youths and each other. (*Turkey*). Young people do seem to be mobilised to act on initiatives of their own (*Denmark*) yet they regard education as having nothing useful to teach them. They believe nothing because they cannot distinguish truth from falsehood (*Milan, Italy*). They experience a conflict between their values and those of the workplace (*Turkey*). This does not stop 22-year old celebrities from producing autobiographies (*Milan, Italy*).

Likewise, the old used to believe in something but have lost faith; they feel that the value of what they have learnt and done is no longer recognised (*Milan, Italy*). They wonder what the purpose of life is for if not to make things better for the next generation (*Israel*). Yet, as parents, we seem reluctant to show leadership (*Sweden*). We shift off responsibility, as if we couldn't help our children becoming like they are (*Hungary*).

Insecurity and disorientation

We all feel pushed into responsibility, feeling less free (*Taiwan*). We can't metabolise our experience enough to make sense of it (*Milan, Italy*). We struggle to make a judgement or ground ourselves in any truthfulness by which to differentiate true and fake (*UK*). We need to get rid of the ghosts of social control that make us feel impotent (*Milan, Italy*). We could do many things but are lethargic, unable to take the initiative (*South Africa*). We have lost our boundaries and sense of responsibility (*Milan, Italy*). We live in an age of disruption – and the rate of disruption is will going up, not down. (*Turkey*)

We lack the inner strength to see the good and the bad in ourselves and others (*Serbia*). We can't cope with context and need help to frame our thinking (*Milan, Italy*). We are at a crossroads and don't know which road to take (*Milan, Italy*). Somehow, we have lost faith in our own abilities and creativity, and feel ashamed and inadequate (*Sweden*). Our response to hardship is to become helpless and envious of those who persevere (*Serbia*). We use destructive despair, presented as sarcasm and sophistication, to protect our comfortable lives (*Israel*) but it has made us disoriented (*Milan, Italy*), rootless (*UK*), disconnected (*Israel*) and mistrustful of ourselves and others (*Milan, Italy*).

We are in the throes of deep and dominating insecurity (*Frankfurt, Germany*), through being faced with unfamiliarity and unknowingness (*Ireland*). We invent rules of conduct to avoid the need to discuss our own capacity for bad behaviour (*Ireland*). We are threatened by what we see around us but cannot discuss the threat (*Berlin, Germany*). We talk about our fears but such talk displays a complacency, not a desire for action (*Peru*). We speak in slogans (*South Italy*), expressing our oppositional thinking (*UK*). Conversations become shallow and inauthentic (*Sweden*).

We try to make ourselves engage but then retreat, feeling guilty and hopeless (*UK*). There is a need not to hear news, to isolate ourselves from society (*Spain*). We watch events unfold helplessly, protecting our own sanity by not engaging (*UK*). We intellectualise coldly rather than explore the heat of disagreement. Our aggressive and violent feelings are hidden behind a veneer of exaggerated courtesy (*Milan, Italy*). The more we try to control ourselves, the more our insecurities, fears and obsessions increase (*Milan, Italy*) and our sense of belonging ebbs away (*Peru*).

Escape from the demands of society

We no longer learn to contribute to society (*Serbia*); we see community as oppressive to our personal freedom (*Canada*). Collective action feels impossible (*Canada*) as we are constrained by invisible norms not to act (*Sweden*). Our fear of questioning social patterns has undermined our sense of belonging (*Peru*). Yet the value placed on community and individuality differs around the world (*Canada*).

Somehow, the hardships of others do not seem to threaten us (*Berlin, Germany*). We feel we exist only to the extent we are seen by others (*Milan, Italy*) – seeking validation from our echo chamber (*Taiwan, Denmark*). We feel gratitude for our own wellbeing and look to preserve it rather than share it (*Hungary*). We use optimism as form of self-medication even though it has harmful as well as healing properties (*South Africa*) or we wallow in the past (*Ireland*).

Fear of strangers has furthered our isolationist tendencies (*Denmark*). We see each other but do not interact, like fish in clear water (*Milan, Italy*). Our feelings towards others are strong but they express the gulf of emotional distance between us despite the physical proximity: fear, disappointment, anger, hatred (*Berlin, Germany*). Like on a train, we sit next to each other but do not speak; we travel through scenes of poverty, deprivation and crime without losing our own sense of wellbeing (*Berlin, Germany*). We are less concerned to stand up to injustices done to others (*Taiwan*).

Real connection is missing from society (*Hungary*). It is not easy to see a solution within the group (*Frankfurt, Germany*). Social media is a way to escape from our deepest loneliness (*Turkey*). We allow society to fragment into individual identities to avoid belonging to a whole (*Israel*). We constantly deny the other, finding ourselves forced into the loneliness of observation rather than

interaction (*Peru*). We project responsibility onto an undifferentiated crowd of others (*Milan, Italy*).

We have become observers (*Faroe Islands*) expressing strong commitment in private but lacking the courage to address the problems we see (*Berlin, Germany*); whereas we can be mobilised if the threat is to our own property (*South Italy*). Change is resisted by those wanting to protect their privilege (*UK*) while for many others the worst has already happened (*UK*).

Denial of social responsibility

Around us, we treat others as invisible (*Peru*) or we respond with cynicism (*Israel*), violence (*Frankfurt, Germany*) or insults (*Peru*). We invest in beautiful buildings but not in the people who work in them (*Ireland*). When equality seeks to treat everyone as the same by blurring or ignoring difference, we are forced back into old identities (*Israel*).

There is increasing polarization between nearness and remoteness (*Faroe Islands*). Our communities are not geographical anymore (*Canada)*. It is not just empty houses that deprive us of a sense of neighbourhood (*Faroe Islands*). Our social skills are dwindling as a result of our thirst for privacy (*South Africa*) and our anti-social desires (*Faroe Islands*).

We experience guilt for society's incompetent and inhumane treatment of immigrants, as if they are disposable beings without human rights (*Chile*). We don't notice who is included and who is excluded (*Faroe Islands*). Some assimilate easily as they have good manners and technical or professional skills while others are seen as aggressive and transgressive (*Chile*) and as gaining access to health and education ahead of local people (*Chile*). Everywhere, the choice for people is to stay or leave (*South Italy*).

Some question the need for borders at all (*Ireland*), arguing that globalisation has made nationality a 'fake' source of identity (*UK*) that delineates economic and political differences rather than social ones. Others see them as creating the illusion of containment that helps us to tolerate each other (*Serbia*), as a source of tension and contradiction (*Peru*) and as a vehicle for projections of anxiety about departures (*Serbia*) and arrivals (*Milan, Italy*).

Retreat to the bubble

We retreat into our bubble, disoriented and confused. (*Milan, Italy*). We want to take a holiday from the demands of responsible and troublesome citizenship (*UK*). We are more interested in self-gratification and ephemera than looking for meaning (*Milan, Italy*). We build a bubble around ourselves, seeking reinforcement from games and gadgets while becoming more mistrustful of people (*Hungary*). We look for superficial relationships, swiping left on Tinder to pass time on the toilet (*Hungary*).

It's as if we are cocooning ourselves, in the womb (*UK*) or in our own private bubble (*Peru*). Instead of building a bridge, we build a wall (*Turkey*). Our dominant preoccupation is now with ourselves: 'Under the bright sunshine, everybody takes care of his own life' (*Taiwan*). We pursue fantasies of escapism to escape from the here-and-now (*South Africa*). We lose ourselves in consumption, pursuing small bliss and bargains (*Taiwan*); or we distract ourselves (*Canada*) with celebrity weddings (*India*) and world events to avoid what is happening on our doorstep (*South Africa*).

We unplug ourselves from propaganda and focus inwards (*Hungary*). We are locked in an egocentric framework (*Frankfurt, Germany*), concerned only with our own interests (*Faroe Islands*). We are too impatient to build trust so we look after our own wellbeing with short-term happiness boosters (*Hungary*). We are more interested in creating inner harmony than outer harmony (*Hungary*). This is a sort of magical thinking that does not cure us of our sense of loss and isolation (*UK*).

These are ways of staying in our bubble (*Milan, Italy*), distracting ourselves from reality by new obsessions and addiction online (*Hungary*) where we can shield ourselves from the sharp edges of reality (*Milan, Italy*), block out the turbulence in society (*UK*) and our deep disconnection from it (*Milan, Italy*) Inside the bubble, we can idealise ourselves as heroes in a game (*South Africa*), dream of building a new country (*South Africa*), retreat to memories of childhood idylls (*Milan, Italy*) or recall past recipes for success (*Israel*).

But this puts us on the verge of dementia (*Israel*). We self-defensively lock ourselves up, hiding a depressed feeling (*Hungary*). We feel the absence of people to think with (*Peru*), which gives us a sense of abandonment and helplessness (*Peru*). But the silence impairs our thinking process and slowly turns it to despair (*Israel*).

Theme 3: Desire for repair

Flux in society

Society is liquid (*South Italy*) but this comes at the cost of social bonds, order and boundaries (*Milan, Italy*). We are a split society, divided between those who like to make a display of themselves and those who don't (*Hungary*). Public opinion is in crisis (*Denmark*). We feel as if the world is shaking (*UK*) and falling apart (*Milan, Italy*) as it approaches some monumental change, as if we are approaching the sound barrier and are about to be destroyed (*UK*).

Society is like a sick baby whose condition we discuss urgently but without administering treatment (*Berlin, Germany*). No one touches the deeper level of the problem (*Turkey*). We have become accustomed to precariousness (*Spain*). Threats are mentioned and, in the same breath, toned down (*Berlin, Germany*). There is the widespread sense of the end of an order (*Milan, Italy*). We cower in the face of a tsunami of change over which neither we nor our leaders have control (*UK*). This may be the moment when the internal and external orders have to be revised (*Milan, Italy*). The wheels are about to come off (*UK*).

The trouble is: the whole system is flawed (*UK*) and incompetent (*Milan, Italy*); we have forgotten to develop democracy further (*Finland*); we are surrounded by unscrupulousness and inhumanity (*Berlin, Germany*). Politics has become dirty, manipulative and unstable (*India*). Politicians have lost credibility because they live in a culture of constant confrontation (*Spain*). It is showing its hairy underbelly (*Finland*). Politicians behave like children, apparently making it up as they go along (*UK*). We want a new national anthem so we can stop repeating the same history and reinforcing the old patterns (*Hungary*). Trust has been eroded in the state, the law, the civil service and international agreements (*Denmark*). We continue to uncover corruption in places such as banking, politics and the church (*Spain*).

As society has become polarised, energy is drawn to the fringes, leaving moderates empty (*Sweden*) and uncertain (*Canada*). The more uncertain we become, the more willing we are to become followers of those with a stark message, scapegoating others to create a common enemy (*Hungary*). We are all so busy that we do not stop to rebuild basic values (*Spain*). We are

torn between looking for a strong man to restore law and order (*Milan, Italy*) or giving up on politics and taking direct action ourselves (*Berlin, Germany*). Systems are breaking down yet are prioritised ahead of humans (*Denmark*). The political class is the most ignorant and incompetent in our history (*Milan, Italy*).

We lack mediators of meaning: governments, schools and unions are not doing their job (*Milan, Italy*). We are becoming educationally and culturally weaker (*South Italy*); and we have run out of ideas and vision (*Milan, Italy*). We have lost faith in education as a means of protection against future dangers (*Spain*). Schools are unshakeably anchored to old paradigms (*Milan, Italy*), becoming factories of standardised knowledge. Schools are based on scores, tests, competition but real life is based on social and emotional learning (*Turkey*). Teachers have lost all desire and motivation (*Milan, Italy*), looking upon their students with a mixture of empathy and incomprehension (*Hungary*). Religion, science and occultism seem to have converged on social media (*Denmark*). There is a loss of faith in the Catholic Church, because of its concealment of abuse and corruption (*Chile*). Only a third of the expected number turned up to see the Pope (*Ireland*).

Facing an environmental catastrophe

It is as if the world is falling apart (*Milan, Italy*). We see proof of climate change in floods, tsunamis and other natural disasters (*India*) and are waking up to the fact that it is real (*Finland*). But is it just the personal consequences that we fear (*Spain*)? The climate crisis is taking up more space in conversation (*Denmark*). We are increasingly worried about an environmental catastrophe (*Spain*). As a species, we – and even more so our children – are in trouble if we can't find a way to save our planet (*Ireland*).

This is a modern problem, though – we used to be more respectful of the environment (*South Italy*). Survival requires sacrifice (*Serbia*) and a collective consciousness that the planet belongs to all of us (*Denmark*). Can we really rely on Mother Nature to recycle our garbage and waste into beautiful things, and to create new species to replace extinct ones? (*Serbia*). Around us, we see indifference and negligence towards the environment (*South Italy*) as other people continue their destructive (*Finland*) and uncontrolled lifestyles (*South Italy*) and unlimited consumerism (*Ireland*). We are interfering in the balance of nature – ruining the lives of indigenous tribes and filling the sea with plastic microparticles (*Serbia*).

Some of us are shamed into stopping flying (*Sweden*), choosing healthy nutrition (*Spain*), taking up veganism and joining in clean campaigns and waste control initiatives (*India*); and we pursue ecological correctness with almost religious fervour (*Frankfurt, Germany*). But this leaves us feeling angry and exhausted that our individual efforts are not enough to make a difference (*Finland*). But it's hard to get government or media attention when we try to protest about it (*UK*). We can't trust public institutions to deal with these problems nor can we rely on technology to provide solutions (*Canada*).

Searching for renewed purpose

Scratching the surface of our modernity reveals us as carrying true, ancient good within ourselves but also as hideous repulsive cockroaches (*Serbia*): We have lost all innocence, sinking into corruption and sexual and social perversion (*Israel*). We are surrounded by stabbings, suicides and drug warfare (*UK*). Business runs on power not ethics (*Milan, Italy*). The past is no map to the present or future (*UK*); how do we prepare for a future we can't even imagine (*Ireland*)?

We have lost a common purpose (*Peru*). We have been sold the idea that we must change ourselves first before anything else can change – forgetting the idea of community (*Spain*). We see the point of creating value through our work as fading (*Hungary*). We no longer seem able to distinguish beauty from ugliness, good from bad, the sacred from the profane (*Milan, Italy*). There are question marks over everything (*Ireland*): the need to recover a sense of purpose (*Israel*); to become tolerant of mistakes; to entertain facts that don't support our opinions, and to find security in social identities (*Frankfurt, Germany*). We see that basic values have been lost and that human relationships are becoming less human (*Spain*).

There is demand for a new discussion about values from many quarters (*Frankfurt, Germany*). Everything that is happening outside is a reflection of what is happening inside us (*Turkey*) We are afraid of losing the values that bind us together, and the stable relations with others that keeps life predictable and safe (*Faroe Islands*). Critical thinking about ethics has become harder (*Canada*); there is not so much a crisis of values as an absence of them (*Milan, Italy*). In prioritising our economic well-being, we have relegated the importance of nature and humanity (*Finland*). We feel frozen and stuck from repeating patterns around us. (*Turkey*)

We need to recover a sense of purpose (*Israel*): we are focused only on material gain (*Serbia*) and personal advantage, without a sense of community and sharing (*South Italy*). It is up to us to create the space for open and constructive dialogue (*Serbia*). It is for us to shake off our 'undesire' and decide for ourselves what is work of real value (*Milan, Italy*). We are more spectators of scandal than activists of change (*Spain*).

Personal responsibility is the keystone for taking action (*Milan, Italy*). As citizens, what are our roles, how do we show up and what we can shape or really control? (*Turkey*). We cannot outsource the threats to our way of life entirely to countries such as China (*Taiwan*) and Russia (*South Africa*); we need to clean up our own back yard (*Serbia*). This means not allowing fear of failure to stop us standing up to violence and aggression (*Milan, Italy*). Turning dreams into reality takes time, care and effort. We have to accept the slowness of construction (*South Italy*) instead of struggling with speed (*Milan, Italy*). It is not possible to be local or national without also being global. (*Turkey*).

For decades, we have become resigned to the inevitability of social decline (*Peru*). But if we are serious about achieving change, we need to have a conversation with our own internal extremist (*Serbia*). We must confront our own aggression (*Milan, Italy*) and be willing to rebel against convention (*Serbia*). The problem is in us, in our interior design. We must repair ourselves (*Turkey*).

To appreciate new possibilities, we must examine both old and new systems (*Sweden*). Can we let go of old, disruptive dynamics that don't serve us anymore and open space for the new, constructive side of life? (*Turkey*) This means mobilising ourselves to build a new 'platform' society (*Sweden*) that somehow promotes values over protocols, empathy over algorithms, community over connectivity, intimacy over interactions and meaning over metadata. These are the values that we share and express through Listening Post.