



## COVID-19 Online LISTENING POST

**Part 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS & EXPERIENCES, PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES, PART 3: ANALYSIS & HYPOTHESIS FORMATION**

**South Africa, Johannesburg, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

### **Themes**

#### **Thinking feelings and experience**

fatigue, being tired (even to think / including about myself), feeling weird, uncertain, spontaneity is gone, feeling stupid, preoccupied, claustrophobic, in a dip, unready, unprepared, overwhelming, feeling low, depressed, forgetful, unsafe, ambivalent (to get involved), pressured (time is running out), denial of the horrible, reality that you might die, conflicting, abnormal, optimistic, opportunistic, getting into good trouble, courage, uncontained, unsure (not trained for this). Can't think, things are interconnected and separate, staggered stillness and business wanting to see the future, want to be hopeful the coffin is the place where all is buried

#### **Wearing masks**

for protection and being restricted

about visibility, being seen and not seen, becoming an us (inside) and them (outside)

we can now see what was not seen before

#### **Paradox of 2020 vision – Now you see it... now you don't**

Being confronted with the work that covid-19 has shone it's light on, the social decay, breaking down of family structures, the inequality, cannot hide anymore, mafia gets more at the expense of the citizens, outside ourselves but required to turn the lens around and look at ourselves, activism has been here all the time, Us and them split now clearer than ever. makes us look at ourselves. People having the same conversations around the world. Share the pressingness of the things we've been avoiding, what is whiteness, what people want whiteness to mean, otherness, racism, mafia is an insidious kind of virus, privilege that cannot protect and the call to sharing of privilege, right wing nationalism is growing, feelings of stupidity and incompetence. Denial of the work that we have done and that we've been busy with. Sci-Fi movies The Blob and The Birds.

### **Murder in the family - about the other (family / authority)**

missing loved ones (need to connection)

projections onto other countries for mismanagement, e.g. China

a need for an enemy – international competition

persecution, being punished for going on holiday

violence (murders) as outlet for the fear and anxiety

Intensity of the violence at the moment, persecution, intensity of violence with the alcohol, only cause of death is birth, depression – as violence going outwards Cutting mothers throat, attack on parent figure, mother to blame for everything, split throw away that which is closest, rejecting the mother, not able to connect old generation to blame, guilt projected rage, projection divided between over cautious and wild phantasy driven. Lying in state but moving, Covid-19 is the coffin, time is running out, time is out.

### **Rackets-Nationalist-Activist-Racist**

Authoritarian rule, curfew, let people out for elections, protests, did not last long, terror power safe at home, in state but moving, mafia taking advantage faces change, protection or restriction, protest against covid-19 illusion black market greater control than government, borders no spontaneity, world smaller, pride dangerous territory, us against them, repercussions land invasions activist vs racist, fascinating terrifying, trust vs distrust, see not see how to act if there is an invisible enemy, call to courage while feeling helpless. Things have become extreme activist vs racist Stupid is projected into government. Activist and racist – both terrifying and fascinating (they are not opposites), blaming activists as form of protection. Have and have nots, land and landless, poverty, splits in known groups with a history of not getting along, struggle for power, Irish – English Brexit split, yet a yearning at the loss, we are brothers and sisters, Israel – Palestine, Northern – Southern Ireland, unspeakable. Watching self and watching others on Zoom. Daughter in London, Son in Spain. Chasm between daughters and the boys they should be courting.

### **Systemic mistrust**

How much we mistrust our leaders and the system, difficult to know who or what to trust, covid-19 as an opportunity for leaders to manipulation of things, opportunistic manipulation, the black-market of booze and cigarettes and government as mafia, control – othering someone, underlying particular covert agendas. Trump blaming China. UK blaming Spain for mis-managing. Who is to blame for the death – ourselves and others who got us sick? We cannot trust what we see on the news. Protesting against government, electrifying atmosphere of young protestors in Israel.

### **Fragmentation vs Integration**

Society not prepared, defence against fragmentation, social defence, society splits fragments across fault lines, witness to mad fragmentation, cannot integrate, defends against fragmentation, profound helplessness, fantasy of borders as defence, united somehow in these threats in a bad way, universality of feelings, different responses, universality of feeling optimistic- fighting, nationalism Irish British separation, racialism ,how did this happen, danger violence, depression, manic rage, Melanie Klein be delighted, defence against authority, nationalism against anxiety, fragmentation follows along fault lines, when Faultline opens rage and violence contained in the fault line erupts, fragmentation results in polarisation, if we did get together we would achieve but what would we then need to destroy/ what would be lost, erupting with violence split in polarised opposites need for connection, need for separation, separation becoming comfortable, young vs old

### **Group Processes**

Participants were respectful, excited to see and connect to those they knew. Connections were made between Irish and British participants in the loss they both experience with Brexit.

### **HYPOTHESIS 1**

At the micro individual level, we are forced to wear masks which becomes a prothesis and a crux). It serves to (1) protect ourselves from the invisible danger – this provides a fantasy of safety, and (2) to isolate ourselves from ourselves and from the other – where we can deny the horrible as well as how unrecognised, disabled, distressed and stupid we are. We are caught in a regressive dynamic of blaming, pretence, and fantasy.

### **HYPOTHESIS 2**

At the meso South African level Covid -19 forced 2020 vision of the stifling fault lines in society containing envy and greed has resulted in an eruption of anger and rage uncontained and intolerable where any joy to be found is stifled and persecuted. Violent attacks against the mother in her various forms, provides evidence of the death instinct aroused by the virus, but which threatens to kill the mother and annihilate humanity. The threat of loss for some versus the actual painful real loss of life experienced by others, makes for extreme oscillation between denial, omnipotence, greed and corruption for some; and grief and the installation of the good object for the other. Like an infant in a game of peekaboo, humanity is in the grip of a ‘now you see it, and now you don’t’ game,

frightened at the disappearance of the good object into covert opportunistic agendas by those in power; and relieved at the re-appearance of the good object in human connections.

### **HYPOTHESIS 3**

At the macro global level Countries experience performance and persecutory anxiety about managing the pandemic correctly. This manifests as regression to infantile states of sibling rivalry, primitive rage and the perceived threat of annihilation. Defences of splitting the world, organisations and people, into competent and incompetent, introjection of competence, and projection of incompetence onto the other as scapegoat. Fragmentation as a defence takes place along the fault lines of society already in existence.

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