



## **PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES**

### **Quotes and Images from the first part 1:**

Armageddon

We are hiding in bunkers, and coffins are falling from planes

Not how I went through the year, but how the year went through me.

When you sleep with a woman, she wants it, and you are afraid of something. That someone will break into your apartment and beat you up, and you can't reform because of that fear.

The clash between cultures, between civilizations, between East and West. That front, that split, goes practically all over the world.

Liquid Evil (Bauman)

A schizophrenic situation. Schizophrenic communalism.

Territorial or religious conflict?

"Fucking Capitalism"

Paralyzed creativity

A small community is a reflection of our society. There are total paranoids out there, even though you thought your community was golden...

Global evil is coming.

## **PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES**

### **Theme 1. Not how I went through the year, but how the year went through me.**

"How have I walked through the year, and how the year went through me? That's a bit different."

Personally, the year has been as good as ever, with participants talking about positive changes: some quit drinking and started exercising, some began personal therapy and worked on themselves, some weren't afraid to stay where it's uncomfortable and to talk about it, some shared experiences and dreams, some contributed to the reconstruction of Ukraine. But the world events, the wars, and the global context generate fear and anxiety: "a lot of confusion, that everything is fine in theory and logically, but in practice I don't feel good".

### **Theme 2. Fear and insecurity due to context and external pressure.**

Like the last one, it has forced us to choose between different values this year.

Relatives and friends pressed to create families and have children: "you're 29, so when are you going to have children?"

It is evident to me what Bauman had in mind when he spoke of liquid evil. When it seems that evil permeates everywhere.

The year 2024 will be the year of elections in Lithuania and the USA; it is uncertain how they will end insecurity at the global level.

It is no longer clear what to expect from the future.

The big fights in the world are about borders/borders. Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Gaza, the United States and Mexico, all border movements have and will have global consequences and will affect Lithuania as well. Crisis, economic recession, inflation, increased Euribor and loans not only in LT

but all over the world, organizations around the world are reducing the number of employees to survive or maintain or escape.

In permanent paralysis, taking a loan, buying a house, or starting a business is impossible. It is necessary to live somehow, but creating is impossible.

There are a lot of online scams; it is unclear which messages can be trusted and which are scams, and how to distinguish the real from the fake.

### **Theme 3. War was the leading theme throughout the year**

The war in Israel, a new phenomenon, fear and panic, is back; now, it could be something, and there is no end.

Armageddon scenario, what next? Pakistan-India, China-Taiwan?

This war is a clash between cultures, religions, civilizations, East and West.

That front that split goes practically all over the world.

The war between Israel and Hamas has brought another split in society between who supports Israel and who supports the Gazans.

When such large forces' movements occur, Lithuania will be eaten by Russia. Well, now, we really won't be interesting to anyone.

### **Theme 4. Women and men, younger and older, experience the threat of war differently**

On New Year's Eve, seven guys are sitting and talking: which way should we run to defend ourselves when they attack here? What to do?

They are not celebrating and dreaming but thinking about how to defend themselves in the event of an attack.

The son (a young guy) didn't stay to dream about what he was going to do here, but went out to shoot in the cold.

A middle-aged woman: what can I do now? How can I contribute? How can I prepare? I'm here at my age; I'm not a doctor or anything. So I can make delicious food if I need to get together somewhere.

Older Man: There's not a lot of confidence that we're ready here; we're just still talking.

Middle-Aged Woman: I think we must be ready to defend ourselves. My only question is how? And what can I do now? Is there any first-aid training I can sign up for?

The older generation's fear for children: the son (18 years old) will have to go to the army, but there are still three daughters. I was somehow calmer because of my daughters, but I remembered that there are these people who rape girls too...

Young men: and complete ignorance of how to create, plan your actions, and career. I am terrified of an invasion from the east. I don't even start with any prospect of ever having a family. Well, I guess, at least, that's what I think now before we get attacked. I think I will go to the front and touch the blood myself.

### **Theme 5. Artificial intelligence raises fears**

AI - what is this new entity, and how to deal with it?

Is it a friend or foe?

Although we thought we knew how to use technology, we realized that we needed to catch up and that the available knowledge and competencies would not be enough.

Ours is a generation where computers are already here, obviously, at home and everywhere, and I understand that I don't want to learn, but I understand that inevitability.

Teenagers already use AI, do their homework with the help of AI, they are fine, they are not afraid, they watch tutorials. It's scary for parents, but not for children.

People who know how to use artificial intelligence, manage it, understand it and work through it will be valuable now.

To what extent is artificial intelligence a tool for me, and how much I will become a tool for him in the sense that I will no longer be able to do anything?

In that sense, it will help me so much in my life that it will take away my freedom etc.

I wonder, why will we need people if artificial intelligence can do everything?

### **Theme 6. Deliberate withdrawal and detachment**

Since the time of the pandemic, I have deliberately distanced myself from the dissemination of information about politics and other decisions.

I don't participate in the daily life of a scroller.

I consciously disconnected for a long time, maybe ten years, I don't watch TV, I don't watch the news, I don't read newspapers, I don't absorb that information,

Because a lot is happening in life anyway, why dig deeper into all those terrible things?

Retreating and limiting myself to my small community: We live in a small town near Vilnius, and I feel that my village community is ultimately enough for me. I know my children's teachers, the seller, the tailors, the knitters, and the dentist.

### **Theme 7. Contradictory feelings towards communities**

Communities are supported through state programs. And politicians' priorities are given to communities.

However, we hear about communities most often when they are involved in some kind of conflict or oppose: the cutting down of an oak tree, the remodeling of a street, the opening of communal care homes for children or persons with disabilities.

A community, like a family, or like any small or large group, has its own stages of life: the honeymoon that passes, the stage of conflicts: "from that amicable community where we celebrate together, cook barbecue, where we dance and sing, and celebrates everything, drove them to the point that they can't even talk to the lawyers there."

A small community is a reflection of society; it contains all kinds of people with different views and values.

The only way to not oppose the community, the family, is to accept those differences in attitudes and values: your loved one is more than his attitudes and values, and you will still love him; maybe you will fight, but after that, you will hug again and cry together.

### **Theme 8. Criticism of politicians and capitalism. The relationship with authority is reflected in the attitude towards politicians**

It's sad and funny that so few politicians decide the issues in such a small country and can't agree.

Politicians are arrogant, ambitious, and chasing popularity; they don't care about people and their well-being: e.g. although the Presidency was aware of the circumstances of the child's removal from the family, it still published a message on FB seeking popularity and offending the public, accusing social workers. And then he never once called and asked how the child or the mother was feeling.

Politicians simulate concern: during public meetings, while the media is filming, they show interest and ask questions, and when the filming stops, they leave and continue not to listen to answers.

There are people in Lithuania who think in a communist, left-wing way—those who genuinely believe that capitalism is bad. Some of the younger generation feels terribly unhappy in Lithuania now and wants a revolution, a coup.

There are people in the regions who think that there is nothing like that, maybe it would even be good if the government of the Soviets returned, because the way it is now is no longer good, because people and students in the regions do not have the same, equal opportunities to get an education. There are no teachers like in Vilnius, there are no private schools like in Vilnius, teachers in the regions are as they are, they don't know how to use the freedom given to teachers to choose textbooks and create teaching content themselves.

In capitalism, some people can afford a lot for themselves and their children, while others cannot. And that separation is starting to hurt a lot and there is that longing that in the days of the Soviets everything was clearer, everything was simpler, smoother.

## **PART 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION**

"How have I walked through the year, and how the year went through me? That's a bit different."

Personally, the year has been as good as ever, with participants talking about positive changes: some quit drinking and started exercising, some began personal therapy and worked on themselves, some weren't afraid to stay where it's uncomfortable and to talk about it, some shared experiences and dreams, some contributed to the reconstruction of Ukraine. But the world events, the wars, and the global context generate fear and anxiety: "a lot of confusion, that everything is fine in theory and logically, but in practice I don't feel good".

The war in Israel has compounded the ongoing war in Ukraine. And what next? What about possible military conflicts in other countries: Pakistan-India, China-Taiwan? The war between Israel and Hamas is a clash between cultures, civilizations, East and West. There is a feeling that the front or the split is global and goes practically across the world, an 'Armageddon' scenario with no end in sight. With such major movements, Lithuania will be left to its fate. The French would not come to its defence, the Spanish would not come to its defence, perhaps the Poles would help... and then Russia would "eat it".

In addition to war, other contextual conditions generate fear and anxiety. The crisis, the economic downturn, inflation, increased Euribor and credit spreads in LT and globally. Businesses worldwide are downsizing, looking for ways to survive, staying in business, or maybe escaping or relocating to another cheaper, safer country. Economic stagnation is paralyzing. It primarily affects young, emerging people because they cannot take out loans, buy homes, start businesses, or build their lives. Worrying about the future; 2024 will be an election year in Lithuania and the US, and worrying about how it will end, with its implications for international relations and world security issues. It is not clear what else we can expect, what we can expect from the future.

So, insecurity and fear have been going on for years: three years of pandemics, then a war, then a second war. We want to build a life: a business, a family, a home - we want to make everything, we want to live, but it is as if we are stopping ourselves. It's as if we are asking ourselves - is it possible to live yet? We are stuck in the in-between, in a schizophrenic situation: on the one hand, we want to live, to create; we want normality and positivity, and on the other hand, we feel the need to defend ourselves, to prepare for the fight, to run, or to hide. We have to go both ways at the same time.

AI - what is this new entity, and how do we deal with it? Is it friend or foe? Will it make my life easier or, on the contrary, take away my freedom? Will it be a tool for the people, or will the people become its hostages because they cannot make things and live without AI? The people (workers) who know how to use the AI will now be valuable. If AI can do everything, then why do we need people? Internet scams abound; it is unclear which messages come from trusted sources and which are fraudulent and how to distinguish the real from the fake. Bauman's thoughts on the liquid evil take on their meaning. The evil permeates everywhere, all parts of the world and all areas of life.

Men and women, younger and older generations, react differently to the threats of war and AI. In response to the threat of war, older men do not trust the government and question whether Lithuania is ready to defend itself or is still discussing the need to prepare. Middle-aged women are wondering how they could prepare and what they could do in case of war. They could go to first aid training, cook, or organize something. Older generations are worried about their children and grandchildren because boys will have to go to the army, and girls may be subjected to violence. Young men don't dream or celebrate; they think about how they would defend themselves in the case of war or maybe run away... Some are postponing or not creating professional long-term projects, while others are delaying starting a family or having children because they are unsure if they can take care of them and defend them.

AI is scary for the older ones because they thought they already knew how to use the computer equipment, But they realize that they will have to learn all over again, that something is coming that they don't know or understand. They are happy for their children but also fear that the younger generation will overtake them as they learn and become proficient with innovative technologies more quickly. AI will change the playground. If I cannot use AI, I will lose competitiveness in the labour market. Inequality and exclusion will increase in society in general.

People disconnect from media sources (TV, newspapers, social networks). They deliberately distance themselves from bad news about war and other horrors from negative information. They also disassociate themselves from or avoid specific unpleasant and uncomfortable topics which cause confrontation and controversy. Those who crave positive connections seek them in small groups and neighbourhood communities. Others retreat into self-discovery and the search for the real 'me', change their habits, and go to therapy.

People disengage from social networks and the media, not least because they dilute the colours and increase the divisiveness of society. The media and individuals on social networks write about the most immense conflicts, the worst deeds and the worst news in pursuit of ratings. Everyone, from ordinary citizens to the President, is involved in this search for ratings and followers.

In a sense, people are forced or feel forced to be conscious readers and conscious users of social networks because it is not always clear where the truth lies. On the other hand, they feel social pressure to choose between supporting Russia or Ukraine, Israel or Palestine. Because if you choose one, it is immediately apparent that you are against the other, and you cannot be on both sides. This choice generates confrontation and conflict.

Communality is publicly promoted but personally difficult to realize: a public value we do not necessarily experience as goodness, peace and tranquillity. Communities are supported through public programs and prioritized by politicians. But we usually hear about communities when they are involved in a conflict or when they are opposed to something:

The cutting down of an oak tree

The redesign of a street

The opening of a community care home for children or people with disabilities.

A community, just like a family, or like any smaller or larger group, has its life stages - the honeymoon phase, which passes, then the conflict phase comes: "from that amicable community where they used to celebrate together, where they barbecue, where they used to dance and sing and celebrate everything, comes to the point where they can only communicate in the presence of their lawyers ". A small community reflects society, with all kinds of people with different views and values. The only way for a community, a tribe, or a family not to clash is to accept those differences in attitudes and values: your close loved one is more than their attitudes and values, and you will still love him/her; you may scold, but you will hug again and cry together.

There is a public critique of politicians and capitalism. It is painful and ridiculous that so few politicians deal with issues in such a small country and cannot reach an agreement. Politicians are arrogant, ambitious, chasing popularity, and do not care about the people and their well-being. Politicians simulate concern: during public meetings, while the media are filming, they show interest and ask questions, and when the filming stops, politicians walk away and do not continue to listen to the answers. There are people in Lithuania who are genuinely communist-minded, left-wing, who genuinely believe that capitalism is terrible. They feel unhappy in Lithuania and want a revolution, a coup.

There are people in the regions who think that it is no big deal; maybe it would even be good if the Soviet regime returned because the way things are now is no longer good because, in the regions, people and students do not have the same, equal access to education. There are no teachers like in the capital city. There are no private schools like in the capital city; the teachers in the regions are what they are, and they don't know how to use the freedom given to the teachers to choose the textbooks and develop the teaching content by themselves. In capitalism, some people have a lot and can afford many things for themselves and their children, while others have and can afford very little. And that exclusion starts to hurt a lot, and then there is a longing for the recent past, for the Soviet times, when everything was more transparent and straightforward, smoother, better.

## **Hypothesis:**

The ongoing and new wars and economic stagnation, or even recession, and the fear of threats - both justified and unjustified - by the AI generate feelings of insecurity, danger and anxiety about the future. Everything seems to be going well; life is going on as usual, but we still feel and observe worrying signs and feel external pressure. We are not only afraid of war and of our children's future, but we are also afraid of falling behind in the competition. The inequality between those who know how to use new technologies and those who do not, young and old, is widening between those who live in cities and those who live in regions where there is less access to freedom of choice in terms of education and health services, because there is nothing to choose from, either in terms of money or in terms of the number and variety of service providers.

In a situation of danger and insecurity, we yearn for an authority that protects and cares for us. We long for a leader with a clear position who can make decisions that will save the country and its people and who knows what to do in this situation of global danger. A mature view of reality is the ability to endure uncertainty and cope with contradictions. Still, the pressure to choose between two opposing positions (splitting) is so great that we cannot withstand it and succumb.

That is why people consciously seek to distance themselves from evil, biased news, limit the flow of information, and retreat into themselves, their families, and their communities, but even there, it is not always safe because the views of family members, relatives, and neighbours differ on value issues: which of the two warring sides should be supported, which system - capitalism or socialism - is better, and what is more important - personal liberty or collective equality.

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