

## What about the future?

Our world is changing faster than anybody expected. 20 years ago we lived under communist regimes. There was no free media and free and fair elections were only a dream. 15 years ago we didn't really know cell phones and emails. 10 years ago there was no google. 5 years ago there were no social websites. Now we can not only vote, but - thanks to new technologies - very easily gather, **find supporters** and have direct influence on social and political life. Never in history communication and participation has been as easy as now. So how do can we use it better? What will **shape** the relationships between various actors within the public sphere, how can we **anticipate** new trends and what will this mean for our future work?

**Igor Janke (moderator):** All of my friends were deeply frustrated under the undemocratic regime in the 80's, we didn't know what to do with our lives, and one day just a few months later in 1989 communism collapsed. We woke up in a completely other country, we had a new government, and a few months later I had a job in a normal independent newspaper. I could write almost anything I wanted, I could influence, I could do some things for my country - in one day I became a completely different person. I woke up in another reality and this was the first revolution in my life. But the newspaper I worked for looked like a 19th century factory, we used old type machines, and to prepare the layout of the newspaper we used scissors, glue and paper. The headquarters looked very ugly, was smelly and [remained] deep in the previous time.



The revolutions of '89, internet, Google and web 2.0

And then came the second revolution, a few months later an investor came and bought [everything] completely new, the most modern equipment, he rented a new office, we moved, and a few months later we were one of the most modern newspapers in Europe! He employed an excellent designer who prepared the new layout for us, and a few months later we had one of the most modern and I think beautiful newspapers in Europe - and it was just 3 years after the reality of 88. The investor raised our salaries 3 times and I bought a computer and a car, and again I was in a different reality.

Then again a few years later came another revolution, because we got internet, email and cell phones and it changed completely our style of work. It changed my life. A few years later came another revolution with Google etc - which has also changed for many of us: our work, our way of life. Then came web 2.0 and we could all of us create our own media and my work again looked completely different. We are just 20 years later than that moment when I was a very sad student with no future in the communist state and during one-two years I jumped from the 19th to the 21st century and now I run my own website and I can do it here from my cell phone - all that happened in 20 years.

So now let's talk what will happen in the next 20 years, and I will ask Julian first, he knows the outcomes of an inquiry into the future made by Carnegie UK Trust, discussing some drivers of change in Great Britain, and we would like you to comment on that.

Revolutions happen more and more often

**Julian Popov:** One very interesting thing that Igor said was that there were several revolutions recently, so probably the first trend as we are starting to talk about the future we should realize that revolutions happen more and more often. So instead of thinking that the world will be looking the way we know it, we should probably be looking at the next year, and probably the next year there will be two [revolutions] if the space between them is becoming so close.



I also remember from this morning or last night a joke from exactly the time that Igor was describing, about a guy who is traveling in a bus looking at another man and asking - excuse me are you not Chinese? And the other man says no I am not. At the next stop he asks the man you are Chinese aren't you? The man says I am not. A minute later he says you must be Chinese, and the man says: no I am NOT Chinese. Later he asks again and the man says: ok I am Chinese then, [and the first man asks] but why are your eyes not like that then? I think that we have a little bit of a problem that we create Chinese all the time and we chase them about their eyes, we ask people: you are a socialist, you are a

nasty socialist and then we ask them if you are a socialist, why don't you look after the poor. We have another situation in which I think it is quite relevant - especially for me as a Bulgarian - the good intention but corrupting influences of our European Union membership [in terms of] agricultural subsidies - which I don't personally support, I am a minority in that sense. I don't think that Bulgaria needs agricultural subsidies just because some French farmers insist to have them. Agricultural subsidies have a massive corrupting influence on a country that is not completely resistance to corrupt practices, and nonetheless the European Union insists on having these agricultural subsidies, well why don't you use [the money] in the proper way?

I think the same Chinese syndrome we have when we discuss civil society and we root our ideas about civil society and what it should deal with to exactly these very exciting years of '89, none of us will live again so we have to accept that. That is the most exciting time in my life and in everybody's life and it is not going to happen again - such excitement and such belief in the future! I tried to look at something that is probably not so exciting, but will probably define the problems of civil society in the next 20 years - and I think that the main problem that will define civil society and will determine where it goes, will be our ability or inability to deal with the growing world wealth. We often - including in the Carnegie inquiry - define the problem as the growing divide between the poor and the rich. I think the problem that we are facing is exactly the opposite, or it is not a problem it is a huge challenge, and this is the narrowing gap between the poor and rich, and the fact that there is a growing population which is growing wealthier and wealthier. The world is not capable of dealing with that at the moment, if we continue to develop and live in the way we live and run an economy like the one we live in today. In this case I can give you lot of examples of economic growth of China and I think that anyone who want to know what will happen to civil society and NGOs in 10-15 years should look into what is happening in China every day, what the tendencies are there. It is the growth of population, but also the wealth of population, which is putting incredible stress on the resources that we use. If I try to be more specific I think that the main challenges and the main problem that we face in the next 20 years will be 1) climate change and energy security in one sort of package and 2) advance of medical treatment.

**The problem  
of the growing  
number of well-off**

**Life expectancy**

Children born today could very realistically expect to live 450 years. Just imagine what a mad prospect that is. Last year in England, quite seriously people were discussing the possibilities for real immortality. I would give you one other statistics, US spends 18% of GDP on health services - which is a staggering amount and Obama wants to change somehow the distribution of that. Half of these 18 % [of GDP, that is spent on health services] are spent on the last year of people's life. So that gives some indication of how ageing population and the advance of medical treatment - and the cost of medical treatment - will put additional pressure on resources and society. And the greatest injustice and unfairness e.g. in Britain appears to be exactly in that world: the distribution of advanced medical treatment. If you have cancer for example, some people can be cured with more advanced treatments and some other cannot be cured with more advanced treatments. This [injustice] is going to grow and if you live until you are 150 years, you can do the math and see that it just doesn't work out if you are to put all these resources into looking after a 150 years old person.

### Resource usage and preservation

The other problem of course is climate change and energy security. We very often don't think and talk about that as a civil society, but it is a huge problem in the current economy, and the environment is not capable of coping with this rate of change in climate. We will have to expect another revolution of the type of revolution that Igor described and mentioned earlier [dealing with] the pressure that climate change is putting on the world. The climate change science - not the change of climate itself - and the political consensus over climate change will inevitably lead [be a top priority] in the next few years, not even [talking about] 20 years but fewer. Revolution in the car industry, revolution in transport [systems] and many other things. We most of us saw a few years ago, how the 100 watt light bulb disappeared, and we were not engaged in this problem, we don't know why it happened. But this is just one little single [piece] in a massive chain of events that will follow, which will force us to change our way of life and our dealing with resources and problems linked with climate change. Climate change is a very bad term by the way, it points at something that is very unclear.

One thing that linked with this, is energy security and the energy security of the world is under severe threat because of the expected peak of oil usage, ending of oil reserves, and this will be very soon - according to some predictions already in 2013. The demand for oil has become much higher than the discovery of new oil reserves, [the finding of] the last big oil reserve was around the mid 70s and since then all other oil reserves [found] has been smaller and smaller and smaller. The pressure that this will put on international relations and on international negotiations could also be quite severe. So I will stop here so that we can have some time for discussion, but I think this narrowing gap between rich and poor will have to be investigated very closely in order to analyze what will happen in the next 20 years, how society will work and how we will react to these changes.

**Igor Janke:** Now Ivan is to comment from our CEE perspective



**Ivan Krastev:** There is an American former vice president, who is not very famous for his intelligence but he is famous for saying the future is not what it used to be. And I do believe that this is very important because one of the major things when we talk about the future, 20-30-50 years ago the future was a project. E.g. if you were living in Bulgaria in the 1960's we knew how the future was going to look like. We didn't know when it is going to come, but we knew what it was going to look like. The problem is now we are starting to think about the future the way the insurance companies think about it, it is very much about risks and how you calculate risks and opportunities. And I think in this kind of way, we central Europeans have one kind of advantage and Igor made it very clear. We have seen in our personal lives how certain things that looks as kind of obvious by nature, can collapse. There is a good title of a book of an American sociologist about the last communist generation which was called "everything was forever – until it was not anymore" and I do believe that this is very important, because we should try to mobilize this type of experience that we have.



### Expect the change

I am just going to put 3 drivers that I believe are really important. One is that demography is really going to be much more important than democracy as the main d-word in the next 10-15 years. Just to give you some statistics to imagine the scale, there are more people living in the world now than the number of

people that have ever lived. Imagine, for the whole history of humanity, for the first time there are more people alive than people dead. This is a huge scale, many of the things that we are talking about; we are still trying to figure out based on the experience of a totally different sized population.

### Ageing

As a second part of this driver, there is ageing and ageing is a very special problem for Central and Eastern Europe which are among the countries that most quickly are ageing, Ukraine and Bulgaria and CEE in general are in the lead. Why I am saying this? All the civil society organizations have been obsessed with the idea of the young – you are talking about youth, it's about the young. In 20 years there are going to be many more old people and people getting older and older. This is going to influence the political process and the public imagination, and I agree very much with Julian: it is not so much about income inequality, but it is very much about health provision inequality – this is going to make our societies equal or unequal. Equality is not about simply consumption the way we are thinking today, but it is very much about access to health, and when you are dying and how you are dying. This is of course going also going to change the family structure and I do think this will become critically important.

### 10% of Bratislava are immigrants

The second driver I believe is going to be immigration. There is one major difference between Eastern and Western Europe today - and this is not that we used to be communist and they did not - the major difference is that they have a huge flow of immigrant population already and CEE doesn't. We have traditional minorities which is different. Look at Western Europe, and see to what extent it is becoming shaped by the flow of immigration and you are going to see the future. All this talk about tolerance, intolerance, xenophobia etc are going to look quite different when in the city of Bratislava, 10% of the population is black or Muslim. And this is not going to be the Muslim that you know from the 15th century, but ones that come from places to which you normally do not want to go. I do believe that this is going to be important and it is kind of irony that 20 years after Dahrendorf wrote his book "Reflections on the Revolution of Europe", a book with the same title was published this year by a quite well known American social critique Christopher Coldwell - and it was about the islamization of Europe. The book itself is not what I am recommending you, but you can see from this how much the perspective has been changed.

### History doesn't matter anymore

The third thing that I very much want to put into our discussion is the internet and some of the unintended consequences of the internet. One of them is the rise of extremism. There is a great study being done by Hassan Stein and others about group polarization and they make a very simple point. In internet communities more and more you have likeminded people talking to each other. I know it was also discussed in one of the groups about the media; the fact is that people becoming much more extreme in their views. This [becomes a] type of extremization and radicalization of the opinion within societies, the fact is that we have less and less in common, because the state is losing its monopoly over socialization and education. See what happened with history and knowledge about history. In a funny way Fukuyama was right, history ended in 1989 because history does not matter anymore. If you try to check the historical knowledge of students today, you are



going to see that no matter that they can Google history here and there, they don't have a historical knowledge through which they go through experiences. They don't have a real interest in the experience of the people who were living before them because they are not on Facebook. On Facebook we don't have people who have died. I do think it is very important to think about this type of unintended consequences and how they are going to shape and form organizations and actions.

**Citizen acting like on the consumer market**

My last point has to do with the mode of action. This is something that has been said many times by many important and much more intelligent people than me - what we see is that the consumer experience is becoming the shaping experience for the next generation. Basically this way is where you learn how to decide, what decisions mean and what you are doing and not doing. One of the important and dominant modes of consumerism is that if you don't like something you can simply shift and buy something else. When you have for example a shampoo that you don't like, you are not trying to reform it you simply go for another brand. I am using this famous division between exit and voice which Hirschman developed, because we have more and more citizens that act the way they are acting on the consumer market. They don't have patience anymore to change things - they simply go for something new. Just to give you an idea from the political process of my own country, in Bulgaria in the last ten years, twice a new political party formed outside of the parliament have been getting majority [in elections]. Basically more than 60% of the people have been changing their vote during a single election. People don't have time anymore to change parties, to press and reform the party for which they use to vote. They just ask for the new thing. Think about how difficult it is to live and be governed in a society where there is no patience for change.

I do believe all of this has something to do with the civil society and what is going to happen in the future. And there is something more to think about the future - in 20 years there is not going to be the American funding for CEE NGOs.

**Igor Janke:** Vida, you talked to the leaders of the 6 roundtables discussions, please tell us what they found out.



**Vida Ogorelec-Wagner:** Thank you. My task was actually to prepare a summary of the roundtables from yesterday afternoon which was an interesting task really. Two footnotes, one is that my presentation is very personal and creative, it is by no means objective and scientific. In some way it builds on what Ivan was saying, in the past the future was very simple. For the future it used to be communism, and then it was democracy and then the EU and NATO integration - so from that point of view we were all aligned and travelling in kind of the same direction. Civil Society and NGOs were included in this. Today the future looks very different, there are different visions of the future, there is no common vision of where we want to be or a common vision of where we are going to be. There is also a lot of fragmentation within civil society - we are not in the same boat anymore, we don't share a vision for the future. When faced with the question what is the future going to look like in 15-20 years time, a very common response is a big question mark; this was a common thing between all of the groups.

**There is no common vision of the future**

**Business as usual**



When we go beyond that a little bit, the majority of the expectation is that the

future is a projection of the present to a large extent. Business as usual is plan A.

### Techno-optimism

There was also a plan B which is a more optimistic scenario, composed of two branches. One is the techno optimism which constitutes e-democracy - technology is going to solve it all, primarily with an IT focus. The other is the social optimistic vision of society - in 15-20 years we are going to be a participatory, open society and democracy with aware, involved and empowered individuals. Both of these optimistic alternatives have something in common, and this is that the role of the NGOs is going to be that of a facilitators and catalysts for democracy in society.

### EU funding, business as a social actor and NGOs bypassed by direct citizen action

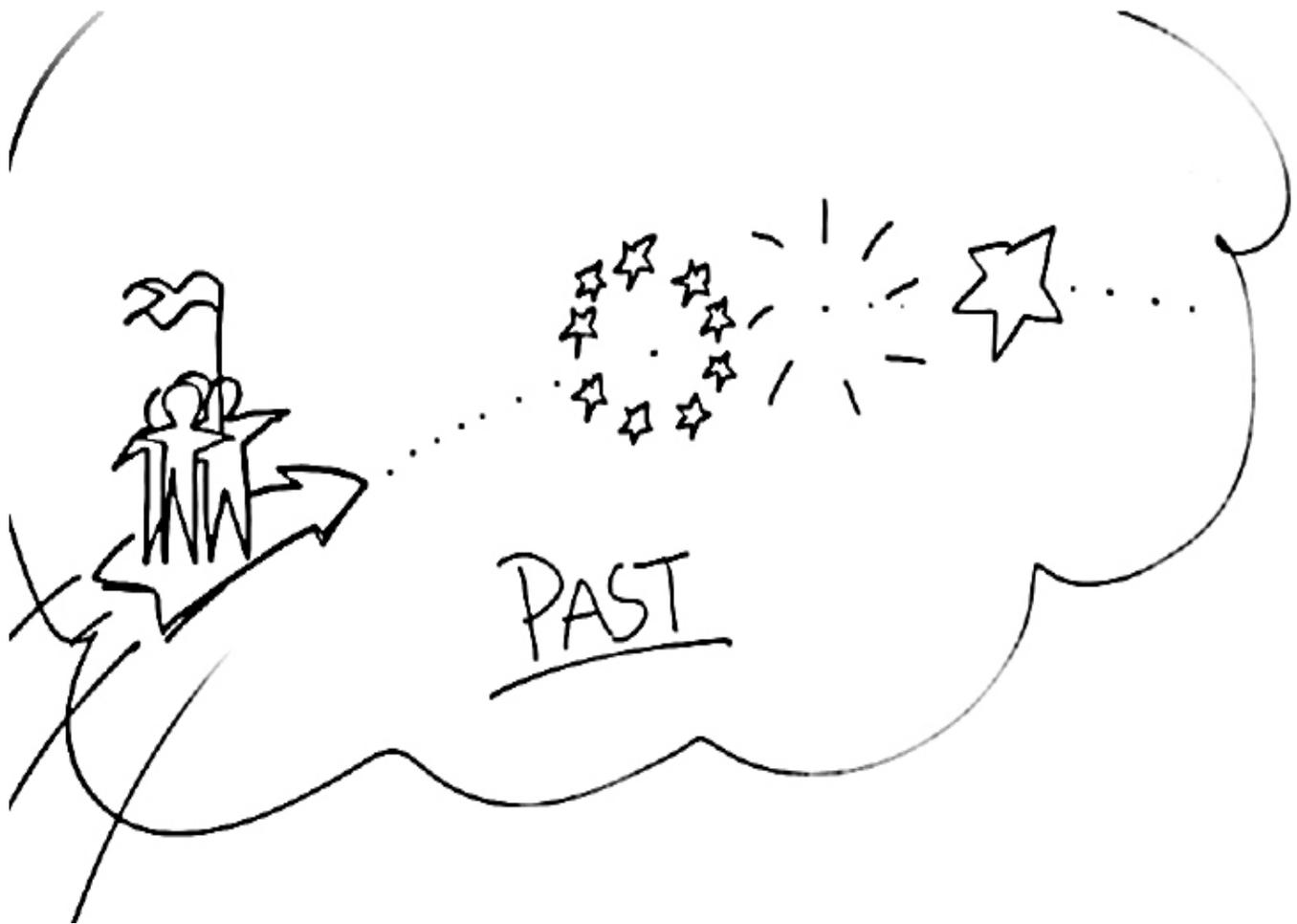
Plan C – the third scenario - is a pessimistic one. This consists of 3 branches, one is about the EU funding and how this is going to transform the independence and operations of the sector as it becomes more and more bureaucratic and politically instrumentalized. The second one is that of business entering the field of social responsibility, either competing or partnering with civil society, with their new enterprise funds. And the third one is that NGOs might actually become a thing of the past, which I think the previous session from the SIC was a good indication of. There is not going to be any more need for NGOs, they are going to be bypassed by the public acting directly because technology allows them to. So that is on the pessimistic side.

### Forces of change - nationalism, demography, virtual alternative to the real world

When we talk about the future – it is about the direction in which we are moving, we can talk about visions, we can talk about scenarios. The other things we can talk about, is the forces of change that will be shaping the future, and whether these are trends that we can detect now. I have pulled out from the groups some possible trends or drivers, some of them a repetition of what we heard already. One cluster is obviously demography and population, one is communication and growing self awareness of individuals, the next cluster is nationalism and intolerance - and here again we are talking about 15-20 years into the future. One big chunk that Julian also described is the issue of resources, energy and climate change. Then there are also two growing gaps. One is a gap of parallel experiences, some people experience a very optimistic future of a more integrated, engaged and elevated society of individuals, while the other part of society - whether on global or local level - is completely marginalized and excluded. This is one of the gaps that are emerging. The other interesting gap is that between the virtual and the real world, and the relationship between the virtual interaction and reaction and real action, especially with a young generation which really live in a parallel world. So this is kind of a summary of what the groups came up with.

### Is the future like the weather or can we influence it?

I would like to conclude with a question – do we as NGOs and as part of civil society understand the future like the weather – something that comes and the best we can do is to carry an umbrella with us? Or do we want to understand the future in a way that we engage with it, we co-create the future and try to influence it, and how can we be best be prepared to do so? One thing I forgot to mention for the discussion, is that talking about the ideas we have - what can we do to be better prepared? There is something in that image, the currency that we hold, which came up in quite a few roundtables, and this is trust. It is a very abstract word, but we have to make it real. There were some ideas that we have to start looking at our results in a much more serious way, we have to become more accountable and transparent about them, more like business



in a sense - but this is something that we desperately need on our way into the future.

**Igor Janke:** I would like to ask Anna how we may anticipate future trends?

**Anna Giza-Poleszczuk:** There is always value in discussion and debating – especially if the debate is quite broad. Let me start with a story. We are talking about drivers of change, but quite often - more often than not, we are immediately thinking about the big things like global warming or ageing of the population and so on. We are very high on the macro level and all these drivers look to us like some objective and independent force that are changing our lives. We are small and helpless, things are happening around that we have to deal with and this challenges us. I am sociologist, and we also love this kind of generalizations, we love to talk about secularization instead of talking about more and more people losing their faith. We are masters of developing labels that are very general and very romantic in the majority of cases. I started to read a lot of books written at the very famous Cambridge School of Historical Demography - so these are humble guys who study parochial registers for years just to decipher what was the certain birth rate in a certain county in Great Britain. One of the most famous of the Cambridge School, David Levin, starts his book about growing of the cities and factories in 19th century England with mocking sociologist saying that when he reads sociologists it looks like urbanization and industrialization are kind of god's hand suddenly stroking people and forcing them to leave their beautiful villages and to come to the cities and everyone was so unhappy because this objective destroyed their beautiful lives. Then he says: look guys, the situation is totally different because these are masses of independent individual people who over time decided to quit their community and look for better lives and look for luck in growing cities. It is not that urbanization just happened and forced citizens to leave their community, these were humble peasants looking for better lives, quitting their families and decided to go work in a factory. So the thesis I wanted to put on the table is that in a sense drivers for changes is always people and their individual decisions, and the whole thing is to try to understand and to notice what they are doing in the first place, what decisions they are making and why they are making these decisions. I think this is very crucial because it changes the way we look for drivers of change, I will come back to this in a second. Just to summarize what Levin says: what we see in statistics is just the accumulated effect of dispersed independent actions of individuals, families, groups of people and so on. The true question is why are they doing this and what are the consequences?

**Trends don't just appear, what is reason?**

**Emotions are the drivers of change**

The key thing that I would like to put on the table is that not only people are drivers of change, but inside people there are drivers of change - emotions and values which are more or less eternal. In a sense people always want to have good lives and not suffer, to have children and for their children to be happy, to be loved and belong - these are eternal dreams of humanity and they are the true drivers of change. The question or the issue is, in different environments and with different tools and means, people have to change their behavior, but again in order to obtain the same values. This is my first point and the first conclusion would be that instead of looking into matrixes of data and running correlations, logarithms, regressions and going for all kinds of econometrics, we should listen to people, we should watch people. We should use our imagination and also our hearts to really see what is going on, what people are doing and why



they are doing these things. For example, people always dreamt about immortality, like Faustus. Modern medicine gives them new tools to achieve the same goals. Of course it creates some challenges for the state budget and so on. So using this first point - listen to people, be close to people - most probably if we did a nice process maybe we could come to much better conclusions than the economists and sociologists sitting in their ivory tower?

**Experts are  
no better than  
others to tell**

The second point that I would like to make, is logically stemming from the last point. It is that we should not give away thinking about our future to experts. It is not true that only people with a professor's degree and very good in running all kind of statistic packages are able to tell us what will happen. We are able to tell it ourselves because this is the logical [follow-up] of the first thesis. We are making the change, people are making the change - paradoxically in business they understood this long time ago. In business but not in the social domain, they have very nice and simple indice, what do you plan to buy? And from that they can predict the demand. They do not ask economists what people will be buying in 20 years, they ask people themselves - which we should also do! What happens as well is that people who were excluded from this debate and in a sense may feel humiliated - you are stupid, you cannot tell us anything of value, we will tell you what will happen to you. I would say that this is a process that we can watch in European history for at least two centuries, first people were deprived of their competency in producing material things and they were told you need a manager, you need this and you need that. They were deprived of their competency of bringing up children, because now you can't do anything with your child without having to have three books and a few experts telling you how to love your own children. And we were also excluded, I am afraid, from social sciences, from the debate about society and what a good society means. Now we are told that we are not able to organize our society, our small communities without help of nongovernmental organizations, or without the help of local government. So my second point is that we should really not believe that. We should really try to speak our own voice, not being afraid that we are stupid, because we can be stupid - why not? We can learn from our own stupidity, we can try at least.

**Captured  
language**

Which leads me to the third and last point. Let me tell you again a meaningful story, a few of our colleagues went to the very famous event for polish youth which is called Woodstock, to which many young people come to listen to music, you all know what Woodstock is. Our colleagues had workshops with these young people in a very unobtrusive way, in our new foundation shipyard we hate classic scientific research and we avoid it as much as possible. So these workshops with young people were exactly about the future, and we asked them: please imagine yourself in 20 years time and tell us what could help you and what could stop you from achieving what you want. The story I wanted to tell is about language, it's about words. These young people were talking very much about tolerance, and because the term tolerance is formed or shaped in the public debate on a very high level, when the word tolerance is used, immediately they would think about black and Jewish people and about gays and lesbians. They were talking about tolerance anyways, and then 5 min later a boy was talking about a teacher in his school who hates when boys are not appearing masculine enough, so our colleague said: so your teacher is intolerant? Then the boy was totally astonished and he said no no no, why are you saying he is not intolerant? Our colleague answered yes he is intolerant because he

### Listen to people very carefully

does not respect these boys. The meaning of this story is that the language has been taken away from us. In Poland, if you are not Jewish, black, gay or lesbian, you cannot be the victim of intolerance. Tolerance is very narrowly reserved to certain phenomena, which is a real problem for human rights [activism] because these guys did not perceive intolerance in their own experience. [The same goes for] lack of democracy, because democracy is about voting and political parties, and again they do not perceive their own school as a space for democracy, they are very astonished if somebody tell them that if you don't have pupils' self government in a school it is actually a violation of your right. Human rights are about Alicia Tysiac (a very famous story in Poland) or about people in Chechnya, but it is not about my own stupid teacher screaming at me every single day. I think this is a real issue for the so-called civil society, because maybe we stop being meaningful due to the way we put problems on the table, we should start looking and listening to people very very carefully, because it is amazing what they can tell us. I think this is beautiful metaphor not only for Poland. One young anarchist in the workshop was trying to describe metaphors describing Poland, and told something that for me is 100% true: Poland is a squat but without common vision. And I think this is something that tells us more about future than the huge labor force survey made each year.

**Igor Janke:** Thanks

