

"Spain and the World at the Dawn of 2009"



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Part 1. THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

In this part of the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experience in their various social roles, be those in work, unemployed, or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood or voluntary or leisure organisations, or as members of families and communities. This part was largely concerned with what might be called, 'the stuff of people's everyday lives', that relating to the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

The first person that spoke was a family doctor that actually is unemployed and tries to use this time to solve some unresolved issues and problems at the same time she is looking for a job. Everybody knows that doctors are needed in our public and private health system, so she tells how she began to look for a job those places where job vacancies are advertised for the public health sector. The system gets her sick and confused because she finds lots of troubles just trying to ask for vacancies. She has to go to several places and she is told to look up in different web pages but the relevant information is hidden. Her conclusion is that in order to work in the public sector you need to know someone personally that informs you because he or she knows the process from inside, if not it will be impossible to get access to the real vacancies.

This person also talks about another situation that occurred to her in relation with Citibank. She received a phone call with no number to identify who was calling her. The person at the phone told her that in her bank account there were some movements of a credit card that she never uses and probably were a fraud. The person at the phone tried asked her personal information about her accounts but she didn't give her any information because the phone call and the speaker weren't correctly identified. Afterwards she realizes that has some movements in her account and decided to call her bank. At the bank office they tell her that nothing can be resolved by telephone and that she needed an official claim at the Police Station. When she went to the Police Station she couldn't do anything because the information technology system didn't work and she was asked to come back the day after with a letter of her bank. Similar problems or even worse you get when you are client of Telefonica (The biggest communications company in Spain). So the citizen needs to solve difficulties permanently in such a way that becomes really great full when he has just received what should be the service has paid.

Everywhere people tell that they are running with the sensation that they have no freedom, they can't choose anything and they are categorized. The system gets you confused and tired because forces you to go from one place to another trying that you give up and will not fight for your rights until you are defeated and give up thinking.

There is a permanent violation of your rights as citizen. The clearest example is at the airport were apart of being raped they do with you what they want. In this sense there is a moment when you loose the reference of what is normal and you accept things that are simply unacceptable.

A person that works as organizational consultant told that in a public organization, the information desk whose primary task is to help users with difficulties in relation with the processes of the organization, didn't realized that the information that they were giving was impossible to be understood by anyone, even the administrative managers that were delivering the information. They were unaware of that situation.

The preoccupation is that people doesn't know these things happens.

People forget about what is common sense. You have to be persistent in order to reach your objectives or what you think is fair, if not you give up and you don't mind.

Another person told a case of someone that found that its damaged computer got lost when he send by DHL to repair it. Time passed by and no one gave him any solution and finally he had to make an official claim. After that just in one week everything was resolved. Until you don't make an official claim it seem that you have no rights.

What we are living as citizens is claiming for popular rebellion, but the reality is that we are swallowing everything the system is giving to us. May be is because during the day there is no time to rebel ourselves against.

Someone speaks about a book called 'The elegy of the 'slow'' that explains that the slow movement affects our whole life, from how you eat to your job. The conclusion of that book is that you get involved in a situation of 'having things' and at the end this chain has no end.

There are few people that set the limits on what is their quality of life. Action prevents thinking, to make decisions and you can't organize your life. The city impose you a rhythm and to stop it is almost impossible.

It is also spoken about that if someone wants; can to slow down this rhythm. For example someone tells that in her day off she goes to spend the day placidly with her son and just enjoying the slowness and tranquillity.

There is a social crisis because this situation is unsustainable from a personal and social perspective. The important thing is how to learn from this situation.

There is a 'values crisis'. We have a selfish and individualistic society. The consumer society has brought us towards where we are, and now all hopes are that Obama will bring us a change.

However many people wants their life be controlled by others, because there is no sensation that a majority could be worried for changing the climatic change or other situations like that... in many aspects there is no perception of crisis, because there is many people that doesn't mind about what is happening now.

Someone speaks about companies that are competing with no profit organizations for the same projects, but these competition is unfair because the companies are dumping

prices, and in most of the cases what is valued of the project it is not the quality but the final price.

People spoke about that three Multinational car Enterprises that went to the US congress because they were in bankrupt. The problem is that they have to adapt themselves to the actual demands and needs.

People talk about the mortgages crisis, setting its origin out of Spain but in this crisis there is a mixture of what is from outside and what comes from inside.

People says that in Spain we have the same number of unemployed persons than in the whole US. Proportionally we can't compare figures, however in us they are really frightened about that and here in Spain we are not very alarmed yet. The difference is that maybe Spanish banks they have not folded but in other countries yes.

People make comments on the street protests against the Israeli's occupation of Gaza. The International community didn't do anything. As Obama don't say anything, everybody keeps quiet. Obama is a forward step for the American society regarding they have overcome the taboo of racism but there are no more hopes inside.

At the University young people has no illusions for anything, their only aspiration is just to have a wage for the rest of their lives, being a public servant 'funcionario'. Nothing helps for those who want to set up an enterprise; the only important thing is having the same salary every month and nothing more. This is connected with a Spanish term of the 16th century that is the 'Hidalgos' that were people with no fortune but without any wish to work.

In Panticosa (a small village of the Spanish Pyrenees with a ski resort) the council is pressing small land owners and farmers for get the land sold and built more houses for the resort. The pressing comes from the bank that is investing in the tourist resort and the construction of hotels, apartment buildings and houses, and threatens the municipality saying that they could close the ski resort that is the main wealth of the village. But now with the property crisis nothing built is sold and they are becoming short of money, then they rise the price of the forfeit to 36 € and people cross the border to ski in France by 18 € the day.

People speak about their fear to become unemployed even when the company works well. It seems that you can become unemployed even when you are doing a good job just because enterprises runs out of money because there is no consume. The consume machinery has broken down. In china people is coming back from the city to the country. Each nation has to look for what they have to develop.

Resources are beginning to scarce, and we are more people consuming nowadays. However the counterpart is that we can't produce more than the limit the European Community has set to the production of milk, fruits, and olive oil... because they will find us. It is incredible how world starvation exists while we are prepared to reach that everybody can eat. Instead of that we are dumping food.

The problem is that everybody wants to have all the same, and everybody can't access to it. If everybody wants to sky, then there aren't enough mountains for everybody to sky. We are 'phagocytes' of everything. There are no limits.

There is no social change if there is no individual change. If everybody wants everything that is impossible, because resources are limited, but we used them as if they weren't. Nobody wants to reduce their consumption, for example, 'reduce the time and the liter we used in shower'; although it exists recycle systems, we don't use them because it isn't interesting. It is used more electricity in houses, but we don't generate enough energy. Spain buys energy to other countries but this is more expensive, and we haven't many nuclear power stations, and those we have are closing. There is also Russia danger, which closes the gas, and people are die of cold, and it can also happen to us.

Now there is the idea of the self-consumption, with change markets in Madrid, where people are exchanging things, without money in the middle. There are villages in England that starts to work with self-consumption.

Some days ago, there was a headline in the newspaper where Obama was praising Spain renewable energy, but now there aren't sunflowers countries, but solar power countries or wind power, but it is useless, because it is not used.

Then between countries there is no help, for example, what happens with European Union if Russia close the gas to one of the countries members? We struggle for achieve some things, but not for others. Globalization is hypocritical because we only take care of those who are near us, but not care for those who are far. But it doesn't mean that we are insensitive. How to start with good values with close people, and then go to people who are far.

They talk about Israel and Palestine war, where Spain, US and other countries have sold them bombs. However, there is disproportion in their force in this situation. Israel attacks Gaza, but close countries don't say anything; their Palestinian brothers don't say anything.

Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

- Crisis: global, values and economic
- Lack of future vision
- Tendency to external attribution

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the members were working with the information resulting from Parts One and Two, with a view to collectively identifying the underlying dynamics both conscious and unconscious that may be predominant at the time; and developing hypotheses as to why they might be occurring at that moment. Here the members were working more with what might be called their 'psycho' or 'internal' world. Their collective ideas and ways of thinking that both determine how they perceive the external realities and shape their actions towards them.

Analysis and Hypothesis 1

Crisis: global, values and economic

Analysis: There is a growth process in all civilizations: they born grow and die or transform. According to this idea, all globalization process also has a decline. US

globalization has failed, so that implies the decline of the American empire, and that takes us to look for another new balance.

But we have to differentiate between globalization and being all the same, without any differentiation. However, the globalization has taken us to break our cultural identity, and here is when fragmentation begins.

The crisis is generated by decline of globalization's system that has tried to break the cultural identity, which differentiated us from others.

On the other hand, there is an unreal situation where people live over their real possibilities. We had pass from living in real and concrete life, with few things we had, to live in abstract or unreal life (what we dreams or wish to have) promoted by the mortgage. People ask for a mortgage so they can have what they wish although they don't have money. At the end, it is a perversion, where reality is broken, and the excesses of the consumption generate the crisis when you don't have the possibilities to do it.

Economic crisis is global, but values crisis isn't. It has failed our values in our culture. Other cultures being near ours have reinforced their selves to fanaticism.

Hypothesis: Because of globalization in the system, the members of the society are breaking up with their cultural identity to be all the same and have the same things, with the result of the decline of this system, which takes us to look for another balance, and it generates crisis.

Analysis and Hypothesis 2

Lack of vision of the future

Analysis: This theme is related with the theme before, where the lack of approach or vision of the future implies that we are very lost and that there is a lot of confusion.

We have made a denial of the possible lack of resources in the future (living very well, over our possibilities). So before having crisis here, we saw that the future was wonderful.

There is a denial to see the decline of this globalization's civilization, without thinking about the growth process (born, grow, die). We deny this situation so we don't anticipate and prepare to it. At the end there is a lack of vision of the future because we are denying thinking about the consequences of what we are doing. We are denying seeing it because of the welfare society in which we are, but nobody is conscious that we are mortgaging to 5 generations.

Hypothesis: Because of the denial in the society about their unreal excesses of consumption, the members of the society have passed from living in concrete reality to live over their real possibilities, mortgaging 5 generations, with the result of a lack of vision of the future which take us to a values and economic crisis.

Analysis and Hypothesis 3

Tendency to external attribution

Analysis: Their first thought talking about the tendency to external attribution is the Dependency Basic Assumption, where always is another person who has to save you, and anybody wants to see their own responsibility.

The next connection is with insensitivity. This situation is something very comfortable, and interested, because the cause and responsibility always is external.

During years we had a general paternalism that generates dependency. Instead of everyone takes responsibility for himself, people expects other person solves the problems, because it is the way for not to suffer, and also you don't have to see your darkest part.

In the past the vision of life has a lot of suffering, you had to struggle with many things, and put a lot of effort to achieve what you want... but now there isn't the same vision, although real life also is hard. However, we are in a very comfortable life position, we are anesthetized or insensitive.

Group talks about a book called 'Advise of 13 grandmothers', which tells the vision of 13 indigenous grandmothers about world situation from their vision of the history, tradition and spirituality. The conclusion is that if you don't look the spiritual part of life at the end you will have many problems.

There is a difficulty to manage the change, there aren't leaders, and the re-education hasn't started.

It is difficult to tolerate the discrepancy or difference because globalization and democracy are confused with being all the same.

Hypothesis: Because a tendency of the society to external attribution to all the problems, the members of the society are dependents, comfortable, insensitive and interested, with the result that nobody takes the responsibility of nothing, contrary to this, people used to ask responsibilities to others, expecting someone save them.

Convener: Beatriz Benito and Ignacio Garcia