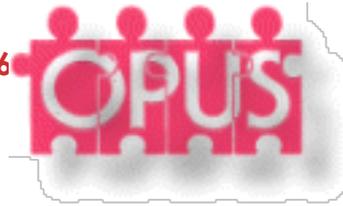


## AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY (OPUS)

### Italy (North)(2) and the World at the Dawn of 2016 Report of a New Year's Listening Post



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.

This year, the Listening Post in Milan was renewed: it was coordinated by a new convener (D.Cabibbe) and the composition of the group was changed with a dual purpose: improving LP as a whole and promote the generational turnover in order to spread LP method.

We have increased and diversified the sample more markedly by profession and age to get new input, obtain new ideas which better represent the society we live in.

The group was composed of 18 persons: 10 men and 8 women. The professions were: psychoanalysts, psychiatrist and the remaining; judge, lawyers, entrepreneur, manager, communications expert, organizational consultant, marketing consultant, a politician and two university students.

The first part of LP began with a cold and peremptory statement of the judge: "I have no worries, this is our time," she continues "we are part of the change, we must not be afraid to live, it's better to participate than suffer." She silenced the group. A psychoanalyst replies immediately: "At the Juvenile Court have removed Napolitano's pictures, but haven't yet hang Mattarella's ones".

Someone replies: "We do not know what to hang, hang a question mark!" There are no enlightened people that can provide the fundamental guidelines. Someone else says he hangs in his studio Guido Rossa worker of union leader assassinated by the Red Brigades in the Years of Lead and a lawyer adds: "Maybe we should hang the Apple "Logo", maybe it's the unique symbol recognized as value.

Time flies, the horizon getting shorter, tremendous upheavals, difficult to understand what's going on...confusion...system undermining. High competition, the innovation is not well implemented and based on previous old structures. Optimism occasionally emerges, maybe a way out is possible, but it'll raise serious question if it's just a fiction because insidious viscosity persists in relationships and in their management.

Social networks have become part of our daily lives and have changed our habits assuming an important role in our life, perhaps the only real powerful representation of the current reality.

Widespread terrorism is scary.

A lawyer, expert on relations with China, noted that our western society is "old": there is an Italian cultural seniority constantly incapable and powerless, resistant to change while in China, the terrorism is 1,000 miles away and it's a "young" country with incredible energy and an exponential development of technological innovation and has a high and unlimited hope for the future and change.

Life expectancy has increased considerably and old are not going to grow old and not able to transmit and teach causing youth poverty due to the absence of positive and proactive signs. Examples are only virtual no emotional, or unattainable. The memory of the past, the cross-generational memory is no longer transmitted. The story is forgotten and the young must reinvent the reality. The Western world is in crisis and young people cannot find work, there are no opportunities. The logical path breakdown: it's no more obvious that if you study and graduate you'll work. The links between systems scattered and dismay reigns.

From the ballistic society to intelligent missile; from the memories to a continuous forgetting and reprogram.

It's necessary to acquire a method to survive in this world overload with the information that we are not able to select, the speed is very high with the wrong perception of being any risk, is an Arianna's thread to be retrieved. Lacking of points of reference, of specific spatial-temporal framework, fact and fiction are often combined in a way that easily confuses, and also the physical laws and quantum theory already demonstrated are now called into question.

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

In the second part, the group was divided into four sub-groups that have identified the following emerging issues:

### **1. Theme 1: Progress and omnipotence**

A poem remembered by a participant well represents the first emerged theme: Andrea Zanzotto: "In this noose progress"

"in this noose progress  
I do not know if I get swallowed  
or I swallow"

A certain idea of progress and omnipotence is invading our life: the technological and economic evolution have convinced us to believe that we are more and more powerful. But conflicts, religious fundamentalism, terrorism, excess of the paradigm of historical materialism, the value of the "Logos" and the eclipse of the other social traditional values, climate emergencies and environmental crises, the loss of specific spatial-temporal framework, the issues of "which policy should be adopt?" are leading us to face new and difficult challenges, which perhaps we do not know how address. Progress, indifferent to ethics, could take us straight to self-destruction and system upsetting.

## **2. Theme 2: Technology, globalization and acceleration**

The speed of communication typical of new information technologies and the process of globalization have shaped the current network society. The acceleration of these processes is largely affecting the rhythms both individual and collective and profoundly affecting people's living conditions and even their lives strongly constructed by new media and this provoke a speed spiral should also implicitly result in frustration, short-circuit, unable to meet in real time the needs and find "method" and logic.

In reality also the "slowness" coexists both as individual or collective choice or as opposing bloc to "velocity".

## **3. Theme 3: Betrayed social process and memory**

"Old are not going to grow old" as rejection of external reality, in defending troubling invasions and intolerable emotions. The defensive system that refuses the approach of death invalidates thought development and the ability to transmit values.

The psychic processes should be extended to the next generation, however it seems that the new generations acquire from scratch their approach to life, starting fresh. The "Remember" which has always been an individual and social process that we share with others is now entrusted to "network". Internet does this job for us: a real attack on our ability to think, to our memory, to our specific quality of our human distinction, to

our identity.

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

*In this part of the Listening Post the members are working with the information resulting from Parts 1 and 2, 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 are 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.*

### **Themes 1 & 2: CHANGE SPEED AND ACCELERATION**

#### **Analysis**

Technological change, globalization and the Internet have changed the way we think, the way we relate and also how to develop new forms of communication. The concept of speed (which indicates a constant movement, then static), which was subsequently coupled with acceleration (as rate of change of velocity). The new world to which we are advancing urges us all doubts and hopes, expectations and uncertainties and we are faced with a complex system of feelings and a sense of disorientation. To be conscious actor in today's society, the individual must have knowledge, skills and complex cognitive tools, but also know how to evolve continuously dealing with a society and knowledge ever more accelerated, globalized and complex. The principle that was based on progressive and linear knowledge that should be transmitted to subsequent generations, it's now interrupted by new paradigms. Something extraordinary and unpredictable is happening.

#### **Hypothesis**

We feel that the linearity of history is developing in another dimension, that of cyberspace, which is not only a new model of society: it's also "a state of mind" different than in the past. The technologies of cyberspace are moving human history from a linear and continuous progression to a non-linear and discontinuous and the world in which we live will never be the same. A wider discrepancy between these two phenomena increases the risk of "discontinuous change", i.e. the radical quality change of our evolutionary history. So we have to radically reinvent our education system. The society is characterised by two well-known space-time alterations: acceleration and globalization.

The acceleration of change means that the number of events that we

have to take into account is growing.

The globalization regards space and refers to an increasingly strong interrelationship between events, processes and knowledge, regardless of their location, requires the individual to widen their range of awareness and action, and leads to relate not only to what is close but also to what is distant. Of course close and distant terms have meaning not only spatial, but also conceptual and cultural. The goal of our future is not the unlimited exponential growth of quantitative information, but the identification of a new planetary wisdom and the ability to redirecting a development process of their knowledge in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.

### **Theme 3: The memory**

#### **Analysis**

We all assist, more or less powerless against the loss of sense of our life, this loss of memory that has to deal with the end of the chance to narrate in a cross-generational dimension (Alzheimer generational). Young people don't address to the adults or to the elderly to get a straight story and facts and give meaning to their life, existence and build their future. There aren't role models. What will the contemporary deliver to posterity? What legacy without a past?

#### **Hypothesis**

The memory takes on different connotations: collective memory, individual, short term, long term or in computer technology RAM and contributes to our identity construction of our identity both on an individual and social level. It acts either factor of identification, as approval and belonging to a community: memory "incarnata". Living in a world that we know provisional, where the future is uncertain and the past quickly becomes obsolete, we operate in a time dimension essentially centered on the present and we can no longer count on the repetition almost of automatic passed down generationally models. We can no longer count only on permanent knowledge heritage appropriate to address all the situations, but we should be able to find, adapt or build the knowledge we need through creativity, problem solving, the capability to learn from the relationships with others and the ability to deal with the complexity.

The Web and Internet have become prostheses of the collective memory and it's necessary to develop new personal synthesis based on the creation of a new point of view or new forms of abstraction or generalization.

I mention an image of a participant: a "relay between father and son"

as a symbol of a trans and inter-generational transmission where the perfect synchronization between will probably be the unique solution to avoid our memories of the past sinking into oblivion and our regression . "The past is today, this is the future."

**Convener:** Daniela Cabibbe