

AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY (OPUS)

Peru 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, at universities, 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.

Part 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

In Part 2 the aim was to collectively identify the major themes emerging from Part 1. We have identified the following themes:

Theme 1: The story of a group of monkeys, a staircase and a banana: the violence of the status quo.

Group members expressed the loss of sense of personal authority over collective institutions which violently imposes its conditions ("*... we dedicate very little time to think about the choices we make and have little ability to think as an individual unit, while there are no institutions that safeguard what it should be*"; "*... the only way to reach some kind of stability is who is the strongest, and again is that the only option out there*"), and where personal responsibility about the decision is lost either because fear, lack of strength or comfort ("*... no person has the authority to say that this is wrong or support the person being affected in this case*"; "*... belonging to a group means that you are already losing something because you mould to it, but how you do something in the group in order that it does make good and not evil?, depends on the stronger one?, in that the others allow it?*"; "*... Many ones let the environment make them, so they relax and let them do what they always do*"). With these thoughts in mind, emerged in the group the symbolic image of a familiar story: a group of monkeys idly watching a banana hanging under a ladder. When the arrival of a new monkey and in their attempt to take the banana, the groups of monkeys beat him until he stopped trying, then the beaten monkey become part of the group and start hitting another new incoming monkey trying to catch the banana.

The conversation led the group to reflect on the need for violent experiences as triggers for important personal decisions ("*... The status quo often grasps you and something strong has to happen in order to start rethinking how are you carrying your decisions*"; "*... There are strong situations that do not happen to you but in fact move you, I think they exist and don't have to be fatalities, they move the floor behind you and in some way lead you to think things through*"), where the ability to reflect in the present is missing ("*... being aware of the here and now, of what I am currently living, I think is being lost in many ways. Is in this here and now where you realize of such violence*"), and whereupon is proposed that the only way to respond to violence is with other violent acts ("*... We had such violent times in the past that we thought that the contrary must also be violent, to be this bad, but in reverse: good*"; "*... The only way to understand an improvement is throwing all*").

Finally, the discussion in the group about the violence and the status quo headed to the current political situation (due to the upcoming presidential elections). In the face of the traditional political parties' proposals, there have been two new candidates that gathered the preferences in surveys: one that displays an unethical profile and moves with impunity but has a lot of business success ("*...There is an issue of impunity, what is the penalty for this candidate, beyond a moral sanction impose by us?*"), and another candidate who has no political experience but is shown as the saving option but regardless of the consequences ("*... In the political view, the people are trying to make a change and always is with an outsider*"; "*... About the others, I know how they are, there is corruption, and then come this person, which I don't know, and hope that will not be the same, what comes next doesn't matter*"; "*... It's like a vicious circle, because the people want to survive in their daily basis, and there is no reflection about who I choose that will give me a better life in the long term, instead they are thinking what these candidates offer me now, right now*").

Theme 2: How I disappear? Sacrifice and survival as responses to change.

The group explored the experiences related to processes of change in the different systems that they form part, finding that the options that presented involve personal sacrifice ("*... But just these people who have the opportunity to study a career that can contribute to the growth of that sector, end up leaving because they don't find a development*"; "*...The only way to make people understand the proper way to drive, is immolate myself, throw myself in front of the cars in order that they can realize this*", "*...The only way to be in this space is if I sacrifice myself, don't have what I want, what I need, sacrificing these*"), and where the need for independence is mistaken as an abandonment of the group for something wrong ("*...At some point I touched this subject, it was like - if you have your home, why do you*

leave, it's easier to someone rape you because you are going to be seen alone, guys are not going to take you seriously, and, are you leaving because we are a dysfunctional family?"; "...Well, if you want to go, you can go, but you're going to live in the same status as we are, or you're going to suffer?").

Finally, the group associated adaptation with the need to survive abandoning the personal desires and interests in order to be part of the group ("*...Eventually you become your environment, letting myself to be adapted, the environment suited me, is not that I adapt to it. I am not delivering something to my environment, instead is that I am stop being myself in order to be that"; "...I'm adapting to the bad things, but this is wrong, I am doing something that is against the rules, this is a way to adapt to something, you leave out your own ways of being in order to adapt, and that is something that we should not be doing when it doesn't go with what you want"; " ... Maybe is not the fact not knowing how to decide, what it's the right thing to do, you know, why I will do what I know I have to do if this not bring benefits for me, why I have to respect all the rules, if the others don't and everything is fine with them, all end ended up falling into conformism")*), but where the differences end up disappearing and with that, the person itself ("*... a form of sacrifice is taking off everything, disappear myself, that's a degree of fatality, you disappear in order to change or you disappear in order to be maintained, there is no intermediate option")*).

Part 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the members were working with the information resulting from Parts 1 & 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 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

Analysis: The group is experimenting with different images related with an institutionalism that reflects the inertia in order to maintain the status quo, but with the presence of a lot of violence around this. In response to the questions, what can represent this violence? and how is it related with fatal events? It is mentioned that the only way to being well is with the resignation and leave the system which forms part ("*...Then I'm going to a place where I can enjoy or do what I can think of*"), that in our historic past only violence beats violence (the years with terrorism), that only in the front of a fatality (the possibility of dying) in a violent

incident there is an opportunity to rethink your life, and that you can see violence as an institutional need in order to have an impact in the context.

Hypothesis: Because the distrust for the current political and socio-economic model, and in their quest to solve the problems they experience and anxiety related, members of our society chose to escape to the near past in order to survive, bringing to mind the violence as an option to generate changes in the status quo, or to escape the system itself as an alternative, abandoning the hope of making a change from within ("*... I've been there but I left because I find no development, and if I want to eat and grow and raise a family, I cannot stay there. So those people are gone, but they are the most needed in that circle. until more people assume that and, at some point, the circle is complete so I can be happy with it*").

Analysis and Hypothesis 2

Analysis: The relationship between change and adaptation through a personal sacrifice, would be the result of a exhaustion of the proposals ("*...More of the same does not work, historically has been seen that more of the same is negative for us, this is something that is filled up*"), which would give rise to the search for a leadership that generate dependency ("*...It's expected that the change comes from another person, another will do it*"), and would be preventing the people to assume roles that generate changes ("*...What we are doing is not taking our individual role, I say that if I'm going out and doing the rights things and when I return here and stop doing that, I am not assuming correctly my role*").

Hypothesis: Given the growing insecurity caused by the failure of traditional political choices and the lack of clear leadership in the proposals of the presidential candidates, members of our society are looking for the emergence of a leader who cares about them and who has the enough power to change the status quo, that have the authority to reject what exists and also to lead everybody to a better future. In this image, the personal authority of the members is sacrificed, they reject individual responsibility in changing this status quo and stop assuming roles that make a difference in the context ("*... I cannot handle that level of uncertainty, I will not create a political party, I adapt to what is, then I vote for anyone who does not represent anything of what is*").

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