LISTENING POST
Italy at the Dawn of 2020

Italy, Lamezia Terme (South-Italy), 31 Jan. 2020

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PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

Introduction

This year, 13 people took part in Listening Post 2020 held in Southern Italy. The age range of the participants was of 30 to 55 years old. Among them: a cultural mediator, a psychologist, two young entrepreneurs, a journalist, a photographer, a communication expert, a National Civil Service young foreigner, a teacher, an agronomist, a philosopher/writer, and members of the Third Sector organizations and of the ecclesial world. Five women and eight men composed the group. It was the first experience at the Listening post for everybody. The Listening started 15 minutes late, in order to wait for three people who were coming from neighbouring areas of Lamezia Terme. A participant arrived 30 minutes after the activity started, but we were able to catch up by shortening the break.

All the activities, divided into three different steps, took place in the plenary session. No working groups have been pre-arranged as the whole group immediately found out cooperative ways to carry out the designated task, especially in the second part.

Everyone participates in the different phases by carefully expressing their opinion on the subject covered. The participation was active, and the discussion very animated. At the end of the meeting, many persons underlined how they felt in this event, appreciating the ways of working. That allowed them to create a space for reflection and comparison with themselves and with others. Some participants expressed great curiosity about the initiative: some of them kept on chatting after the conclusion of the Listening.

PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

In the second part of the work, were identified several main subjects that emerged in the first part. We can summarize four main themes:

1. Psychic dimensions and altered perceptions

2. Cultural and anthropological attitudes

3. Context (historical, political, economic, social)

4. Involution of the relationships and languages

5. Comparison between generations

A) Psychic dimensions and altered perceptions

At first, the concern is oriented to what that appear as intrapsychic variables. The prevailing narration of the context and the stereotype perceived within the community highlights morbid attention to primordial emotions: Anger and egoism seem to portray an individualistic society, resigned to the non-acceptance of what is different from itself. Some persons of the group don't understand why should be used this great reaction, the poisoned climate that is perceived fosters a pessimism that paralyzes the action. The association between mental disorders and perception and attention's disturbance could denote how much this is rationally attributed to some causes that are in the sphere of perception, storytelling, language, not in object/contextual data. Some new technologies and new methods of socialization through digital platforms are stigmatized in the dialogue. According to some, they are guilty of removing analogue experiences, by depriving new generations of an essential tool of communication. It is well known that some changes happened very quickly, whereas others are structurally slower to be accepted. In this scission, disappointment and resignation seem to contribute to the paralysis of action. The term psychosis is disconnected from the topic but is accepted during the re-narration of the themes: psychosis is the phenomenon for which rationality surrenders, instincts prevail and create confusion by summarizing all the terms and condensing them into a single irrational act. In this cluster, the concern seems to be oriented towards those features responsible of losing contact with reality, sociality, diversity, and all the fundamental elements for building healthy communities.

B) Cultural and anthropological attitudes

A very live issue regards Calabria and the effects of the cultural context on its inhabitants and their future life perspectives. Calabria seems separated from Italy and the world. The isolation that has persisted for a long time is increasingly growing. Resignation attitudes become more deeply rooted and widespread. The last political elections perpetuated behaviors and attitudes of submission to the forms of slavery existing in the area. Incapability and "unwillingness" persist as well as a sort of resistance to create and develop a "counter-narrative" against the way the region Calabria is seen. Some participants focused on the decline of the information and communication sector of the region, pervaded of atavic attitudes and visions: "Nothing can change". Instead to highlight the beauties, the attention is focused on the negative aspects. The lack of its own language, with its own identities, emerges as a significant concern. We are focused on "How is the South narrated?" instead of writing firsthand our narrations. The local mass media pursue others' tales instead of elaborating and producing new visions. We are led to statements as "It is always someone else's fault", and we don't take responsibility for the consequences. And what would happen if in Calabria we began to "think positive" and to accept the challenges for a cultural and

anthropological change? We should put our future energies on culture if we want to activate new narrations about ourselves and our region.

C) Context (historical, political, economic, social)

Among the most significant concerns, there is the theme of the context, of the territory in which we live, from an historical, political, economic and social point of view. The reflection stretched from the local to the global system, bringing out strongly what we live daily in the territories. The economic aspect, and specifically the lack of job development and of a more productive economy, affects the territorial and human growth: "Instead of tending to the beauty, improvement or growth, we see a screwing of the society on itself". From a socio-cultural point of view, "... we are the result of a long history ...", of what we have lived and we live constantly; and perhaps this is the reason why we don't have that comprehensive view allowing us to understand what is happening around us and to start new processes of change. The type of man emerging from this reflection is a man who "... measures himself in front of interest ...", he is a man "... selfish, who does not realize what he is doing ...".

D) Involution of relationships and languages

The regression of relationships and languages is one of the main concerns brought up by many participants. There is a screwing of society on itself, with few prospects of interest regarding the cultural and anthropological growth of human relationships. On the contrary, the social behaviour reflects the Latin locution of medieval origin "Mors tua vita mea", based on opportunism and cynicism in the relationships with the others. The failures and efforts of others represent satisfactions that gratify my daily life because they confirm my condition of well-being. We are facing a sense of decay and a decrease in human sensitivity. I can see the situations of suffering, but I keep myself away from the risk that they may impact my emotional life. On the contrary, I often entrench myself behind attitudes of detachment from reality: "it doesn't concern me", "what is happening concerns others", avoiding reflections that could highlight situations that will also impact on my life. Furthermore, actions and forms of belief are assumed that become theorized forms in which it is reasonable to hurt the other. Violent languages are adopted and transmitted from adults to children. Often in kindergartens and schools, children develop forms of violence in behaviors and languages that reflect their daily lives with their families and the absorption of messages through their intense exposure to the mass media. The relationship with social media is increasingly insistent and pressing, often one remains mentally "trapped", enough to determine massive effects on cognitive, affective, emotional and relational skills.

E) Comparison between generations

From the joint reflection, emerge clearly two different visions on the comparison between young people and adults. Some of the participants think that there is no dialogue with young people, "... they do not understand ..."; they are influenced by a strong sense of pessimism for everything around them and overwhelmed by "apathetic immobilism". They don't want to do anything; Other participants, on the contrary, think that there are young people who understand, who know who they are and what they want, but adults have a substantial prejudice against them.

In the first case, emerges the concern that there is no dialogue between young people and adults, between children and parents, between students and teachers. It is necessary for the development and growth of young people that the educational places reassume the role of sites of

transmission of history and culture and, at the same time, of locations from which is necessary to bestow "Fixed points" (understood as rules, sharing, respect towards the other) in the educational path. The transmission is essential because it is necessary to make people understand the mistakes of the past, "... the mistakes that have caused fascism ... "for example. We are aware that the themes regarding the race, the Motherland, the disrespect of the rules, tend to "fascinate young people" and these opinions prevail upon everything else, because of the real "... caesura between us and them [to whom] we have left (...) empty spaces, and we adults (now) have no more charm on them. ". The use of social and new technologies are not demonized; on the contrary, it would be important that the same was used to generate new learning, especially in the world of school. However, several voices highlight the difficulties that emerge, first of all, the lack of dialogue with young people.

In the second case, on the contrary, the position is clear: even if outnumbered, there is a strong desire to communicate between different generations. "It is wrongly thought that young people do not (want to talk) do not want to understand. But doing in this way, one falls into errors. "There is a kind of pessimism and prejudice around young people, young people with whom surely "… something has broken, ...". However, even if the adult left many empty spaces, it is hoped and it is believed"... that the dialogue can be reconnected ".

PART 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

Analysis 1

By analyzing the common points of the different topics, emerges a bleak picture and full of potentially destructive elements of the social context. The inability to communicate and to be understood, to listen and dialogue, to welcome, to accept the different. In other words, to have hope and trust in the other, in the future. Similarly to a depressive picture, an emotional divestment is evident that pushes away, isolates and certainly scares. The risk is that without hope, we may get stuck in the impossibility of becoming promoters of the desired changes. The crisis of the educational system, highlighted in the discussion, prevents new generations from pulling out precious dormant parts, anaesthetized by the depressive narrative of the socio-economic context. Likewise, the positive, inspiring adult models could be missing or poorly represented and narrated, dominated by negative models that resound powerfully.

Hypothesis 1

We can hypothesize that there is an inability to accept risk quotas, to face fears, to get involved, to go through difficulties, to start from oneself, to rethink the scales of values. If we are aware that conditions and situations that produce adverse effects exist , as well as destructive and disturbing processes and we don't want to face them in order to solve them, then what would be the risk to take charge of them and question ourselves? (act local, think global)

Analysis 2

Acceleration, screwing, separation, stalemate, slowdown ... The metaphor of movement, of travel, recurs often. Sometimes the concept of border recurs again as limit or obstacle. The expansion

without borders puts at risk the environment and the economy. Boundless technologies take over relationships, imposing communication boundaries that distort reality and move away, giving the illusion of approaching. Diversity seems like an impassable border. Contamination scares, but you are uncomfortable in a too rigid border as well, a border that traps you and from which perhaps you can only escape.

Hypothesis 2

The concept of "border" has more meanings, more ways of being: there are closed borders, impermeable borders. These borders separate, contain, trap, protect. There are also open, porous borders that let pass, regulate flows, allowing good proximity, contact, exchange, inclusion ... and so on. If we consider the multiple opportunities that a flexible border contains, what would be the impact of this awareness on people's lives and on the global dimension of the planet?

Lamezia Terme 31 gennaio 2020

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