



COVID-19 Online LISTENING POST

Part 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS & EXPERIENCES, PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES, PART 3: ANALYSIS & HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

Italy, Milan, 30th of June 2020 - 19,00/21,30 CET

Participants: 10

PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS & EXPERIENCES

All the participants to the ILP were Italian from different parts of the country, from South to North, with the only exception of a Serbian. The spoken language was mostly English.

The discussion started in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, enhanced by the apparently positive experience most of the participant declared to have had during the lockdown: many of them had big houses they shared with partners, some could get to their holiday houses close to the lake or on the seaside where they could experience nature while working from home. The feeling was of a privileged situation in which they could experience a sort of intimacy, they could give themselves a break from a stressing routine, even revive ancient memories, which made much more bearable the experience of isolation.

“I live close to Savona in the countryside, I’m a therapist and I could work with most of my patients online, I had the time to read and to walk in nature. My son was living with me and we could share the same intimacy we had when he was a young boy. Despite my age I had a good time”.

“I have to stay at home, it was very difficult to go around. Time was covered by doing sport, gym, watching tv, reading books. Not too sad for the situation. I appreciated the very few cars in the streets.”

Despite this initial idyllic picture however, anxiety and an unexpressed sense of guilt were lurking beneath the surface, suddenly revealed through a dream brought by one of the participants:

“I was walking a downhill road which led to the Marseilles harbor, a beautiful path surrounded by stone houses bordering the sea, when I saw a big sailing ship entering the harbor, it was empty, not anchored, it was rolling in the water with no people inside. I was scared by this emptiness”.

Contrasted feelings emerged after the dream:

- *I tried to protect myself through intimacy, to forget I was living in captivity*
- *I may have enjoyed the time at the beginning, but is difficult to say what will happen next*
- *Anxiety about the future and about my work are growing*
- *I worked a lot at the beginning of the lockdown but then I lost my temporary job and I spent most of the time sleeping on the couch of my father's house*
- *Working online all the time, longing for air and nature, is a huge split*
- *I lost my cousin and couldn't go to his funeral, since then I understood I lived in denial*
- *It's a suspended time, like being in a waiting room*
- *I had to stick to some scheduled activities, an inner anxiety for some kind of freedom I did not have before*

PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

GROUP 1

- 1) BEING IN PRISON, CAPTIVITY, LIVING WITH SOME PRIVILEGES (E.G. ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY), THERE IS A SENSE OF GUILTY, BEING NOT ABLE TO MAKE CHANGES OR BEING IN CONTACT WITH PEOPLE SUFFERING BECAUSE OF COVID
- 2) COVID EXPERIENCE AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO THINK ABOUT WHAT IS ESSENTIAL (SMART WORKING SHOWED MANY OF OLD ROUTINES ARE NOT ESSENTIAL)
- 3) CHILDREN EXPERIENCE IN COVID TIME, SOME OF THEM WERE CUT OFF, COULD NOT ATTEND SCHOOL, LACK OF RELATIONSHIP IS PATHOLOGIC
- 4) AFTER COVID PEOPLE CONTINUE TO DO THINGS AS BEFORE, IMAGE OF FLYES TRYING TO MASH TO THE WINDOW REPEATEDLY
- 5) WHAT IS THE CHANGE WE'RE TALKING ABOUT? IT'S SOME KIND OF ATTACK TO OUR PRIVILEGED COMFORT ZONE, IT'S BEEN ONLY SUPERFICIAL, difficult to do a turnaround, imagining future is impossible
- 6) LACK OF VISION IN POLITICS, IN ORGANIZATIONS, THE KING IS NAKED
- 7) WE ARE LIVING AS IF WE WERE INSIDE AN INCUBATOR, WE ARE LIKE VIDEOGAME PLAYERS

GROUP 2

- 1) FUTURE: we were forced in a situation we don't control, now we are afraid about the future, we are pretending to have the same thoughts but there is a huge generational gap between young and elder people, children experience separation, inequality increases
- 2) OPEN SEAS AND TRAVEL (DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LAKE AND SEAS): we are like a ship that can't reach the exit of the harbor, we feel protected in our houses close to the lake

but we are not able to navigate in the open sea, the ship has no captain but with no open sea there is no freedom

- 3) EMOTIONAL DISPLACEMENT: split of time (working/zooming too much / loosing job) and split of space (where are we? Solitude / virtual relations, longing for sea and travels but we are confined in a lake)
- 4) SHIPS THAT LEAVE THE LAND WITHOUT CAPTAIN: lack of leaders, impossible to find a captain to drive safely the ship in open seas
- 5) DIFFICULTY ON FINDING A LEADER (NO ANGRY VS THEM, WE ARE ALL IN THE SAME SHIP): leaders have the same insecurities we all have, being angry towards them is not possible, but empathizing with them is not an option either.

PART 3: ANALYSIS & HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

Participants express the anxiety of living in isolation, with limited possibility of movement, forced in a situation in which the **very idea of having a future is compromised**.

Making plans is impossible, we have no control on time and space, the entire social life is at stake, **we live in a suspended time**, only short term management is possible.

Lack of relationships, lack of leadership, lack of strategy and control, lack or delay in decision making, deep uncertainties about the future can bring **from anxiety to despair**.

Which is why **we find shelter in denial**, to protect ourselves from those strong feelings we hide in “**individual bubbles**” made of privileges, positive feelings, good memories; a **defensive use of the inner world** which is transformed in a consolatory dimension, somehow preventing further understandings and the coming to term with change.

Furthermore, those individual bubbles recall the “experience of living in a bubble” we had already detected in the 2019 Listening Post.

Conveners: Elisabetta Pasini, Cinzia Trimboli