

AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY (OPUS)

Argentina and the World at the Dawn of 2014 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.

Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

In Part Two, the aim was collectively to identify the major themes emerging from Part One. From several presented these have been drawn together under the following interrelated themes:

Theme 1: FRAGMENTATION – LACK OF CONFIDENCE - VIOLENCE

LP participants begun with the exchange of views and experiences directing their attention to the current crisis of social values and the lack of transmission of these through the public education system. The group associate this with an image in a society in total harmony that could be constructed by a better or more valued oriented education system. The public education system is directly connected to the role of the government that is perceived in a parental capacity capable of putting order in society.

Hyphothesis 1

“Members of society perceive the President as imposing herself as a mother figure capable of single handedly changing society into more harmonic group. However, in doing so, she increasingly tosses aside other opinions and progressively excludes sectors of society, promoting mistrust and social fragmentation between followers and opposition. This is expressed in the increase in violence, isolation and a growing sense of oppression.”.

Theme 2: PRESIDENT'S RESIDENCE: HOUSE OF PERVERSION

LP participants manifested about the perversion of political and financial power that appeared as large mafia organizations. In that sense the group was very preoccupied with the future and what the future hold for next generations of citizens and how citizens can change or participate in changing the future. The group was quite conscious about the danger of managing risk and the big division in between the social and the private areas.

At the same time the group have observed the huge emphasis on the past from the government and the lack of concrete discussion of the future

Hypothesis 2:

"Members of Argentinean society feel stuck in the past, as they look forward to an unattainable future that eludes them. The future is a conversation that does not take place. A seemingly powerful political elite monopolizes public debate in an imperial, autocratic manner, and is seen as increasingly perverse. Unable to reconcile past and future people find themselves focused in the present and in their own personal lives and needs. The result is a reinforcement of the divide between the private and social spheres and growing individualism."

Theme 3: SOCIAL WELFARE STATE: DIFFERENCES IN BETWEEN TWO MODELS

The group of LP was particularly preoccupied with the widespread promotion and use of social welfare for helping the countries economically weak. There was a lot of discussion regarding the divide between the groups that want to divide and break the country, in opposition to lots of new and unknown different groups and think tanks that are thinking and planning how to innovate under the surface and not as visible as political parties.

Hypothesis 3:

"The everlasting focus on assistentialism social policies based on handouts to manage extreme poverty not only have been proven ineffective but have helped weaken the economy and are degrading (or maybe flatly wiping out) the previously existing work culture. However it has lead to the perception that the government might have strong support in those sectors that benefit with these policies. This has contributed to a social polarization (us vs them) and nurtures a sterile fight of political functions or parties, while simultaneously contributes to discouraging debates about the issues that really feed the anxiety of the people: economic impoverishment, lack of

innovation and the opportunity of embracing new ideas on what are the meaningful public issues, how to address them and how to manage them. “

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