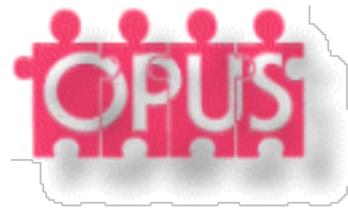


AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY (OPUS)

Chile 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:

Analysis and hypothesis 1: Complex society and vulnerability

The complexity of current Chilean society hinders individuals from participating in and feeling integrated to it; the speed with which changes occur, the commercial logic of work, the weakening of the State's protectiveness and the influences exerted by powerful national and international economic conglomerates, among other factors, generate much uncertainty to face everyday life and to find formulae that will allow obtaining the most basic needs. In this uncertainty, reasoning ability is soon overcome and people find themselves wrapped up in chaotic, irrational and bewildering social dynamics in which it is very difficult to find meanings that justify the actions that are undertaken. In the midst of all this, people feel very vulnerable, lacking care and support to be able to overcome the vicissitudes of existence, unemployment, health, housing, education and social protection. If people do not have the resources to acquire insurance and to have savings, they are definitely in an extreme helplessness, which is common in Chile. The State has for a long time stopped working under the logic of dependence that protected and provided security by meeting the needs of citizens. Today the State has a subsidiary, regulatory role, with very limited social protection. Independence is today's value, whereby people are autonomous in solving their needs, they have to "scratch and scrape with their own hands", without

expecting gratuity, compensation for acquired rights, it is necessary to fight for what one needs, be competent and compete with others in order to have access to what is wanted or needed. The medullar means to address personal vulnerabilities is work and the efficient exercise of the labor role, in order to keep that job absorbing the resulting emotional exhaustion because it causes fear to show vulnerability and run the risk of being left outside the employment circle. With all of this, mental health deteriorates, and people must rely on drugs to cope with the emotional vicissitudes of work and thus prevent collapsing and the risk of losing their jobs. In summary, current Chilean society is complex because it does not provide certainties as to how to participate in it in a continuous and safe integration, which simultaneously solves the various vulnerabilities afflicting the citizens. It may be that achieving certainty means that citizens need to move forward from the transit of relations of dependence and independence, to the establishment of interdependent links where individuals can create intermediate groupings capable of solving individual and collective needs in community and solidarity. The vulnerability experienced in Chile today questions the meaning of life, people function as "zombies", robotized, apathetic, and waiting for miraculous external interventions to heal their ailments.

Hypothesis: "People who attend the Listening Post bring to the consciousness and elaborate the difficulties faced by reason of their membership, with the current Chilean society, whose complexity holds much uncertainty and vulnerability. The uncertainty exceeds the people's thinking capacity; they are shocked to realize that they do not know how to understand what is happening or how to proceed in these circumstances, all of which causes much anxiety and desolation. The people in the group get an insight on the dilemma of being a member of the society overcoming obsolete relations of dependency, which means that individuals with autonomy may build interdependent relationships that enable more certainties and more protection according to specific contingencies. In that discernment, however, the group knows very clearly that there is no release whatsoever of the uncertainty and that they necessarily have to deal with anxieties. Ultimately, there occurs in the group connectivity with the depressive state associated with the complexities of current Chilean society, there is contact with experiences, with their associated anxieties and it is possible to think about the matter".

Analysis and hypothesis 2: Conflicts and social maturity

In recent years in Chile, there has been an opening to make public all the discomforts and conflicts that were silenced in society for many years, making it impossible for such discomforts and conflicts to be discussed and thought, with a view to possible solutions. Today that situation seems to be changing when society as a whole, and across different groups, has acquired a certain condition of maturity to bring

to public awareness issues that for decades have been suppressed. The most significant case is what happened with the recent anniversary of the forty years since the military coup that resulted in Pinochet's dictatorship with its totalitarian aberrations and to human rights. On the anniversary of the coup there was an amalgamation of memories that made remembrances occupy a space in social reality that cannot be circumvented or silenced, they are a plurality of voices that are remembering and that question those who were guilty and responsible for the coup, its causes and consequences, with which, to some extent, the controversial social and political order post dictatorship is also questioned. The acts of remembrance that occurred in Chile during 2013 have much of a subversive and emancipator nature, because they symbolize the move away from "the authority of the owner of the country estate" historically rooted in society and in Chilean politics, where the "owner of the country estate" dominates the "tenants" without counterweight, that is to say, the citizens. Chilean society is apparently moving towards greater awareness and collective maturity to understand and deal with the various dilemmas of contemporary life in common. Citizens are no longer passive vis-à-vis the needs and problems afflicting them, nor are they dependent on the efforts of the authorities, they have the capacity for organization and mobilization, demanding, protesting and making proposals: the tenants have emancipated from "the authority of the owner of the estate ". However, the emancipation actions have "brakes": people tend to be wrapped in an accommodative inertia that tolerates and accepts the "authority pattern" because it has offsets associated with submission; there is stability, order, and promises of welfare. Ensuring access to consumption and consumerism is a fetishistic attraction to support and legitimize political actions of the old-style. Citizens mobilized by the rebellion against "the authority of the estate owner" seek participation in the community to invite others to join the empowerment and undertake projects of social relevance. In these initiatives, they find that people resist being part of the creation of power to form a more equal and effective social order. There is a fear of the disorder and chaos that empowerment could bring, which is a legacy of the repression that occurred during the dictatorship. It is also thought that the current democratic regime in Chile is misleading because it gives the appearance of a political order based on law that guarantees citizen participation in the election of authorities, but that, on the other hand, allows that the political authorities, once chosen, to distance themselves and no longer care for the community that elected them. The democratic system also gives the feeling of a fiction which gives the impression of tolerance to participation and conflict in society, but that everything is under the control of anonymous powers that guarantee the maintenance of the status quo in the long run. The opening of the Chilean society to deal maturely with conflicts and tensions is ambiguous because it assumes that individuals have to deal with tensions that are not of easy conciliation. On the one hand, daring

to exercise power and authority, while taking the risk that the actions to be undertaken have uncertain outcomes which are sought to be achieved but do not have the support of citizenship. Perhaps the most complex aspect of facing the conflicts is being aware and developing the individual complicity that may be attained in the differences, misunderstandings and regrets.

Hypothesis: "People in the Listening Post are pleased by the supposed maturity evolution that Chilean society would be showing in openly addressing conflicts that have historically been omitted from social reality for the purpose of protecting against anxiety. The metaphor of the "estate owner and the tenants" acutely symbolizes the concept of authoritarian domination rooted in society and its institutions, where citizens are functionally subjugated in such domination. In a first instance, the people in the Group idealize the society's greater maturity to solve conflicts by assuming that such maturity is advancing in a uniform, penetrating and widespread manner in society. Subsequently, people in the Group are able to question this idealization by considering that the maturity to address conflicts is a capacity that individuals have to develop by participating in groups. In that capacity it is essential that people are able to handle themselves in the ambivalence of group relations, individuality and the membership, the Working Group and the Group of basic assumptions, ambivalence that provides many anxieties in collective participation. That Chileans learn about the ambivalences in group participation may be the foundation for incorporating such learning in institutions that have greater maturity to approach the conflict and are less prone to use social defenses against anxiety".

Analysis and hypothesis 3: Binary thinking

In the Listening Post, participants express binary thoughts that govern relations in society: participation-individualism; optimism-pessimism; trust-mistrust. Every one of these thoughts constitutes polarities where each pole, in its univocal and exclusive manner, influences people's behavior and social relations. Thus, in Chilean society there would be dispositions to participation or to individualism; to optimism or pessimism; to trust or mistrust. Binary thinking also considers valuations and ideological preferences: to be participatory is considered active commitment to groups and society, while being individualist involves adhering to neo-liberalism, privileging personal interests; optimism implies believing in progress, on the contrary, pessimism is being wrapped up in despair; to trust considers accepting the risk that others are reliable, while mistrust is the impossibility of collaborating towards common interests. Thus, binary thinking with its polarities outlines an idealized pattern and a demonized pattern of thought and action in society. In the Listening Post it is deemed that the idealized pattern is the one that will take transcendent force with the change of Government in which Michelle Bachelet will soon assume the

Presidency; this will mean the reinstatement of a reliable political project, with participation and that will improve the living conditions of the majority. The change in Government also means the end of political control exercised by the conservative right, which has exalted individualism and personal well-being above the solidarity and the common good. The young people are considered specially gifted to virtuously embody participation, by having energies for change, optimism and having capabilities to create trust relationships. It is deemed a good thing that "the old" go, and that young people arrive, occupying public spaces, exercising representative offices to implement new projects, to organize and mobilize the people. However, it is also noted that the binary thought is misleading in the idealization that it makes young people to take responsibility of social leadership; young people have shown abilities to mobilize people, to make requests, but then they face the limitations of not knowing how to implement the projects, with which they inevitably fall in pessimism and immobilization. The processes in society are very complex, of much uncertainty, in them becomes evident the appeal of thinking in dual terms, white or black, action or inaction, trust or mistrust, optimism or pessimism, however rather than dichotomous thinking, the integration of polarities is essential.

Hypothesis: "People express the binary thoughts that operate in Chilean society, which allow a simplistic thinking of the reality with which people obtain protection against anxieties associated with conflicts, uncertainties, inequalities and abuses. In binary thinking one can observe an ideological and values Manichaeism which affects social relations, allowing the inclusion of those with whom identity is shared and excluding those who have a different or ambiguous identity. The simplistic thinking is rooted in the schizo-paranoid mental state which distorts the understanding of social reality by means of splitting, projection, and idealization. People in the group become aware how simplistic thinking is poured, idealizing youth as an expression of leadership, vitality and confidence with which the responsibility to take charge of conflicts in society is unconsciously shifted to young people. On the other hand, the figure of Bachelet is also idealized as an expression of change and well-being. The political right and the current Government are scapegoats that concentrate the blame for all ills, conflicts and inequalities that exist in Chile; supposedly, with the political reversal of the loss of the Presidency by the right, the country would have the conditions for the installation and implementation of a vigorous and progressive thinking. The group, to some extent, can measure the irrationality of the binary thinking and its role in avoiding contact with the conflicts of social reality and its anxieties"

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