

**"Portugal and the World
at the Dawn of 2010"
Report of a Listening Post
held in January**



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 2 the participants were invited to identify in small groups, the major themes, which emerged in part one. From several presented these have been drawn together under the following interrelated themes:

Group 1

1. The production of social illusions in Portugal, such as the official certification in adult education and qualification of competences by governmental agencies, is felt as only having lip-service and without real substance.
2. Pessimistic social expectations concerning employment and well-being.
3. There is an alienation of the people in respect to important social topics and problems.
4. There is the production of illusory and unrealistic texts and narratives by the press and mass-media.

Group 2

1. Reality versus illusion in the social expectations created by various social sectors (health, employment, politics).
2. Truth versus lies in the social communication.
3. Preoccupations with environmental destruction.

Group 3

1. Feelings: fear, mistrust, insecurity, skepticism.
2. Attitudes: consumerism, over spending, immediate satisfaction.
3. Education: Deficits in the quality of education in Portugal

All these themes generate an atmosphere of insecurity and paranoia (social lack of trust)

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the members were working with the information resulting from Parts One and Two, 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.

In Part 3 there was an attempt to create describe and analyze three different hypotheses.

Analysis and Hypothesis 1

One of the themes that appeared throughout the listening post concerned the recent economical crisis in Portugal and the unemployment numbers. There was a constant mention of the difficulty in finding jobs.

The social and economic crises that have happened recently generates in the individuals worries and fear that the availability of basic goods for survival may be at risk, which leads to pessimism, skepticism and a deep-seated preoccupation.

Analysis and Hypothesis 2

Another aspect concerned with dependency and illusions. It was mentioned how people are more and more connected than ever before through internet networks and very sort, but at the same time the feeling of loneliness is greater.

It was also mentioned by participants with experience in adult vocational training courses, that give adults higher ones through training, that this programmes do not work but they need to grant them certificates due to pressure to fulfill targets.

There is an increasing paradox in the society, which is represented by the fact that people are more dependent on others than ever (social and economic networks) and at the same time people are more individualistic than ever. This paradox is very hard to conciliate, and is illusorily solved by alienation. This paradox generates tension, anxiety and pessimism.

Analysis and Hypothesis 3

Throughout the final part of the Listening Post there were lots of mentions to Portuguese cultural aspects, such as quoting Pessoa, one of our most famous poets, or Gil an important contemporary philosopher. Portuguese cultural identity is very much based on messianic ideologies, many connected with myths of a former king whose death in Africa led to the Spanish rule of sixty years, very focused on the past, very resistant to change and to innovation. In a way our cultural values are not focused on productivity and we strive in order to adapt, as a society, to the contemporary values dominant in the western world and to whom we are comparing ourselves with.

There is also an increasing level of people being in debt. Not only do our houses belong to the bank and we pay them for 40 years, but there is also an increasing use of credit.

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