"Peru and the World at the Dawn of 2011"
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 aim was to collectively identify the major themes emerging from Part 1. We have identified the following themes:

1. Individualism as 'daily bread'

Participants were concerned about how Individualism is seen every day in the many scenarios they're in, and it's seen as 'daily bread'. One of the participants mentioned: "We see individualism everywhere, we're constantly told to make and make money for ourselves and spend it in ourselves", this comment was backed up by another participant who added "People have it as it's supposed to be all about them, acting in a mode of me, me and me".

One of the many faces of individualism takes place in the encounter with the other, and how we are lacking the capacity to care for others, "We have developed a capacity to 'ningunear' others." Examples were given in order to evidence this lack of caring. First, participants mentioned the lack of support to Ica when the earthquake happened, help for the victims didn't even make it to half of them and the help that got there wasn't enough and up to date some are still waiting to have a place to live after they lost their homes. After this, a young participant mentioned the impact of terrorism with Shining Path in our country, and this comment was followed by silence, and later on by a change of subject to social responsibility and how the NGO's are taking a big role into working with communities affected by natural disasters, and the NGO's mentioned were sponsored by European Countries.

Introducing the global context, references were made to Chile, Haiti and Europe in order to set the difference between 'us' and 'them' in terms of generosity and solidarity, and how they were being able to move from Individualism to co-creation and generosity while we were still in the same place. There was a special interest in Chile with the example of the 33 miners who were rescued from San José Mine, and also for the quick help given to the earthquake victims last year. On this subject one of the participants quoted Leslie Wolowitz by saying that "there's not much we can really do about natural

disasters, but there should be something we can do about man-made disasters and it certainly doesn't start with individualism."

2. *Authority void and unsustainable Leadership*
The group perceived a lack of positive and effective authority figures or authority entities in society, especially police force and government. "In theory, the police and the government people are authority figures we should respect and trust, but in practice we don't respect or trust them at all, who are we supposed to rely on?" There's also a void in the way the government takes up their authority towards the private sector and towards protecting the rights of communities. One of the participants mentioned a specific case of an Asian Mining Company in Ancash, that was suspected of contaminating the Conococha Lagoon. The community was misled by a 'cabecilla' who was playing puppet master with the community in order to get away with his personal interest: "Where was the government when these people where being tricked and brainwashed to react in a violent way?, this is tainted by corruption, and we can see it with scandals like this that don't make it to the news or the media, why? Because someone paid someone so it won't go public, and we find out sometimes through social networks like facebook."

There's also the issue of unsustainable leadership, and how politicians tend to make up short term projects, so they can own the work when it's done, instead of thinking in long term impact and having a sustainable leadership in the community.

3. *We don't speak. We don't see*
The group recognized the lack of ability to 'speak up' and to 'see' the other, especially if this other is different than me. One of the members mentioned that it's different to be a part of the part (when considering just our surrounding as Lima the capital or our own social group) instead of considering Perú as a whole and being part of it with all its different cultures, people, and even traditions.

We rather not speak up for ourselves because we worry about what the other might think. "Us Peruvians tend to not speak up and it all goes way back", to this, another member added "When we don't speak up and we pretend not to care about what's going on we become extremely passive towards ourselves, others, and even nature" to which a third member added: "We refuse to see how animals in the Andes suffer and how ecosystems are being affected by global warming, we'd rather possess a Vicuña fur instead of seeing it run free and we have little concern for the ecological reservoirs".

There's a lot of non-spoken frustration towards not finding spaces to connect with each other, to 'see' each other. A participant mentioned: "Even the public transport is designed for us to escape from gathering, they're all designed as escape paths". Escaping and avoiding seems to be part of our dynamics. It is perceived as to be very typical for Peruvians to live by the 'we're OK culture', "even when we've had the worst day and someone asks how we're doing we say OK and smile, and we tend to do the same with bigger issues". 'Bigger issues' as mentioned by the participant were addressed by two different members regarding terrorism and Shining Path but they were quickly silenced by the group to prevent from going deeper.

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the members were working with the information resulting from Parts 1 & 2, 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.

Analysis and Hypothesis 1

Analysis: Given that the people who are supposed to have the authority can't manage to step out of the corruption light and the unsustainable leadership path, there's a feeling that we can't act on our own, take our authority and defend our own rights. There is a fear of rejection when we speak up for ourselves, but there's a supportive environment when we speak up for "the other".

One of the participants mentioned a triangle, that would be something like this:

It is socially valid and accepted for one to speak up on behalf of the other who is, let's say, being victim of an injustice. It is more likely to have the "other others" back you up in this scenario. When it comes to speaking up for our own rights, the "other others" look at us as if we're a 'bicho raro' (Spanish for 'strange bug').

Hypothesis: The loss of trust in authority figures such as people from the government and police force makes us wonder if there's anyone we can truly rely on, and we even question the possibility of relying in ourselves in order to act. Having this panorama, members of society tend to take up extremely passive roles and find it very hard to speak up and take up our authority to make a difference, and this passive position instead of bringing us further from individualism makes us accountable for feeding it's fire. It seems easier for members of society to be active and to defend the others' rights in front of the "other others", which at first can be seen as an altruistic gesture, but it can also be a subtle way of silencing the other and taking away their authority. Defending our own rights might be seen as 'strange' and put ourselves in a vulnerable position of being rejected.

Analysis and Hypothesis 2

Analysis: The resistance of participants to get in touch with a painful part of Peruvian history was evidenced in their interaction. Whenever a member would mention terrorism or Shining Path, they would collectively silence the member who mentioned it and after a pause they'd manage to change the subject and turn it into something 'nicer' such as social responsability. One of the members mentioned that it is very typical for Peruvians to live by the 'we're OK culture', "even when we've had the worst day and someone asks how we're doing we say OK and smile, and we tend to do the same with bigger issues".

There was also a mix up between the word alignment and alienation (words that in spanish sound very familiar and this alienation is closely linked with the term 'ningunear' previously mentioned, and this was an important part of the Shining Path era, where Ayacucho was struggling with violence and rage but Lima didn't 'see it' so it was not 'that important'. This mix up was a gift from the group's unconscious and opened a door for understanding what we collectively do with each other. Peru was described by one of the members as "different worlds within one" and the difference between what it's like to be a part of the part (when considering just our surrounding as Lima the capital)

instead of considering Perú as a whole and being part of it with all its different cultures, people, and even traditions (One of the members spoke about her experience in Colca Canyon located in Arequipa, and how she made an offer to the PachaMama (mother earth), but the subject was quickly changed as well, which in a way it is to alienate our heritage and culture of the Andean mythology.

Hypothesis: Given that we feel more like being 'part of the part' (Lima) instead of part of the whole (Peru), we tend to 'ningunear' those who are not part of our range of sight. We rather 'not look' and 'not be aware' of destruction whether it's coming from our inner or outer world. When confronted with man-made disasters such as terrorism (especially by Shining Path) we're lead to an amnesic state characterized by a strong repression of fear and anxiety which reinforces the 'we're OK culture'.

Analysis and Hypothesis 3

Analysis: The difficulty of acting alone was brought up by one of the members, saying that she wanted to "change the world but I can't do it on my own, I need others to back me up", as in depending on others in order to act. Everybody agreed they wanted a change but didn't exactly know where to start. The mentioning of other countries and their social achievements here is crucial, because all the possibilities of change and transformations are deposited on the foreign other (specifically Chile as an example of co-creation, team word and generosity). Local initiatives of social responsibility that were mentioned were financed by European countries. Also, the closing of Lima's 'Hospital de la Solidaridad' (which significantly means 'Solidarity Hospital') is a major concern between the members.

Hypothesis: Members of society have the desire to change, and find ourselves 'knocking on desires door' but are unable to open it and walk in because we feel we're not capable of doing it, instead of acting towards the transformation we rather admire and look up to foreign countries as agents of generosity and co-creation instead of recognizing this potential in ourselves.

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