**AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY (OPUS)**

**Peru and the World at the Dawn of 2015**
**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, at universities, unemployed, or retired; as members of religious, political, neighborhood 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:

## Theme 1. Big Brother and the extension of adolescence.

Group members expressed how difficult it is to live in a society where, using arguments relating to security, economic development and the need to follow the rules, its members are forced to give up their decision-making capacity ("we have created a system where they do not know me or my value, I disappear in the system performance") and the freedom to live according to their personal beliefs ("We have given up our freedom, we are supposed to be sovereign and not even have the freedom to singing and dancing in the street, we have to ask permission and also there is an authority that can deny it"), and where anyone who can pay the procedure, the ticket or a fine, is finally allowed to participate.

The discussion led the group to recognize that a fear of terrorism rebirth is still living in the present ("the overprotection of parents to their children has increased and this creates a greater dependency, and now everyone assumes - whom I have to ask permission for something"), leading to social distrust that is evidenced in the reported cases of spying to politicians and the public exposure of private life through social networks, whether permitted or not by the same person. This ends up being used this as a source of information for government and businesses to know how one really behaves ("the big brother that the state was before now is the company. You must be careful about

what you say and do, what not say what to think and what not to think").

Finally, the group linked the excessive controls and government, municipal and corporate impositions as a denial of the persons' ability to innovate and change, which influencing them to lose their ability to critique and analysis ("It is an extension of adolescence or is starting early, there are young adults who do not take their role as adults, taking responsibility for their decisions", "there is a contradiction, you want to contribute to your society but the institutions put so many limits that won't allow you to act and think for yourself"), and ending giving the power to be somebody to someone else, being the company, the state, or the university. The collective response to the regulator imposition is taking the streets demanding to be heard (Pulpín Law - the jargon name for a labor law for the youth; which was made by the government, approved by the congress, and ended up banned by the same congress after several youth street protests and motions.), which also increases the uncertainty about the role of the regulator in society.

## Theme 2. Having to die in order to survive.

The group explored the social need to define what is normal, what is accepted, as the right thing to do, and where social patterns end up being defined not by a majority but a minority that has the resources to define them, whether these are related to power, money, status, etc. ("as the issue of bullfighting, the majority is against, but the power minority elite is in favor, so then we all have to accept it, is not even our tradition. I think that economics is always present."). Additionally they discussed the desirability of having a rule or pattern to follow as a way of reducing uncertainty, the fear of the unknown ("the unknown is scary, whenever we have a rule know what will happen, whether we keep it or not we deliver"), and that those who do not follow these patterns end up suffering a degree of social exclusion or rejection, and where money is the main indicator of how close or far you are from this standard ("fear of being rejected the others, if you have not studied, and you don't have a good job then you don't have money, if you have no money you cannot support your family", "what is normal, what you can afford. I'm not afraid because I have money, if I need money that means I'm not normal").

Finally the group associated the last with the need to surrender personal interest and desires in order to be part of the collective, and in order to avoid such social rejection the differences are hiding or deny: the individual disappears in the collective ("It is very conveniently be no different or to cause problems for the system, however it works, if you are a person a little different, problematic, you ask questions, you'll be uncomfortable for a system", "the person is at risk as an individual, in order to survive you need society, but to be part of the society you

have to be like the society. At the end, what is left of you when you join society?")

**Theme 3. The impact on the other.**

Finally emerged in the group the concept of the impact on the other, as a source of rejection, because you cannot control what the other feels about one ("it's not my responsibility, about the things he is thinking about me, it's his responsibility"), and as a source of personal accountability, which allows to have new perspectives and alternatives as a result of exploring new realities ("I do not want anything, nothing to do with society, but I have to worry again because I care for this person, I am a kind of model to her, this is troublesome, because if I want to exist I need to be part of it"). The group talked about the experience in social networks: that their purpose is to generate greater visibility and dissemination of the individual, where success is measured in number of "likes" obtained ("I can take a photo on facebook, upload it and just have a like, for that person that can be a complete failure. You end up looking to be supported by others, the picture, the car you have, which makes that your actions are directed to live for others"), but without assuming the responsibility that this impact generates in others.

This feeling of not being able to control the impact of each other was related to how easy it is to replace the "whom" with "what": objects or things that you can control, which end up replacing human relations with material things, turning the person into a thing that consumes things ("I cannot control whether or not they love me, reject me or not, want me or not, then we stop doing the hard work and make the easy way: buy things, we replace the human life with things").

**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**: The group is experiencing different images related to the disappearance of the person as an individual within the collective, and that if someone doesn't follow the social patterns, is putting at risk the

job, the monetary safety, friends and family relations. When asked what this disappearance represents? What is this death? What is dying? They mentioned: the death of dreams, to do something greater than oneself, what is beyond, our inner greatness, to be better, the critical and reflective capacity to think for oneself. The social systems (state, business, university, family) are seen as the principal agents that avoid the social and economic change, where everybody is talk of changing the system, but still offer the usual and same alternatives and options: the social response is to move to the streets in anti-system marches and demonstrations.

**Hypothesis**: Due to the increasing economic and political insecurity, members of our society are seeking new spaces and opportunities to express their fears of an uncertain future and propose actions for change; however the options offered by the traditional representative organizations, rather than working in partnership with its members to co-create this future, end up eliminating or reducing individual rights and freedoms, increasing the tension within the individual and collective dimensions ("what happens when I don't like the public and authorized options, from the state, from the companies, what happens when you don't want to play that game, that role, that you think its immoral, improper, unfair, what do we do?").

**Analysis and Hypothesis 2.**

**Analysis**: The relationship between the fears of not knowing what will happen tomorrow, and what is the "right" way to go, affects the ability of the members of society to be aware of the differences between them as potential resources to create a common future. They see the other as a part of daily processes at work/university/family lives, nearby technologically but separate virtually, and where social attention is demand in relation to personal goals but without the responsibility inherent: its not taking into account the uniqueness of the individual, its capacity for innovation and change, and the necessary interdependence in order to transcend.

**Hypothesis**: Due to the uncertainty created by the loss of confidence in the standards established by the traditional and representative social actors (state, companies, university and family), members of society feel helpless and take selfish positions, incapacitating them to create with others, which are seen as "objects" to be used for individual purposes (they are mirroring their relation with greater systems between themselves). As a result of this, the social distrust and the indecision as a natural state of the person are enhanced, the sensation of feeling lonely despite being surrounded by people is increased, and the renounce to take responsibility for others is reinforced.

**Convener: Jorge Mendoza**