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

**Italy (South) and the World at the Dawn of 2016**
**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 are invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experience in their various social roles. This part is concerned with what might be called 'the stuff of people's everyday lives' that relates to the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants. Participants are invited to share their preoccupations and experiences as citizens of Australia, and to explore these from their various social roles, be these in work, unemployed, or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood, voluntary or leisure organisations, or as members of families and communities*

## Part 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

*In Part 2 the aim is to collectively identify the major themes emerging from Part 1.*

### Integration and fears of world dynamics

The concerns expressed by the participants reflect global fears and anxieties, especially in the light of the recent events. The threats of terrorist attacks and the ethnic conflicts are creating an effective climate of fear and doubt which is resulting in new behaviors of rejection. This places real difficulties for both:

- migrants, which after some shelter and support experiences encounter difficulties and obstacles that prevent a real process of integration into the local contexts;
- professionals (as mediators) who are working on a twofold level, supporting migrants in their paths and managing conscious and unconscious fears and resistances of the  local community.

Contradictions of the integration process are also emerging in the European countries, and this is visible observing the malaise behaviors of the migrants second generation; close to that is the profound discomfort of the native generations which live at the margins of the society.

The mass media play an important role in feeding high level of anxiety

and powerlessness in people's lives.

**The lack of participatory democracy**

While at the theoretical level the participatory democracy is considered and discussed as a fundamental principle/value, in the politics practices - European and national level - there is not so much attention for the democratic participation processes.

Participants at the event reflect on the fact that the more participatory democracy fails (or is not supported) the more certain social phenomena can degenerate.

The current process of centralization is taking place in several areas: at the politics level,  in the banks fusion processes, in some the bodies of cooperation, etc.

**Work and economic crisis: inequalities at the micro and macro level**

A real concern among the participants is the inequality which occurs at the macro and micro level. Inequalities in the world increase significantly as some OXFAM data clearly show. One participant notes that they are not just numbers and statistics, but real-life conditions.

One of the most important effect of such inequality is the lack of work, especially for the new generations; in this respect, the gap between generations in Italy it is incontrovertible. Young people have lost, unlike previous generations, the sense of possibility and the possibility to plan their future or make real their aspirations.

**Health**

Source of concern highlighted by a participant is the issue "health". The data available show an increase in the growth rate of certain diseases such as sexually transmitted infections and some types of cancer. In addition, serious is also the progressively ageing population in the south of Italy in strong countertrend in respect to few decades ago.

This situation is a shared concern as it reflects other phenomena such as the impossibility or inability to make family, the lack of work, the lack of autonomy for many young people who procrastinate their parenting life and the loneliness in front of a society composed by a large number of older people.

**School, cultural impoverishment and educational fragility**

It is felt a big difference between children and young in their relation

with school.

School is experienced by children as a place of entertainment, where you can learn new things; for young it is perceived as something of heavy, oppressive, a place/an institution that answers at the current changeable socio-cultural environment with a profound lack of creativity and innovation. The common idea is that the way of teaching in the last few years is functional to its destruction, and consequently to the destruction of the democratic society - of which school and family represent the main socialization agencies.

If the various educational paths are experienced in a negative way then the whole society is subjected to a cultural impoverishment, it is deprived of all its resources loosing the ability of being "thinking society".

At the cultural impoverishment is linked the education, where some critical points exist in the relations between students and teachers, due to the lack of trusty relationship between school and family that feed a mutual distrust.

**Values and systems crisis**
Comparing with the past, it is stressed a loss of shared values and identity expressed by a general "social and cultural barbarization" of the whole society.

There is not respect for "the other", there is not emotional competence or emotional intelligence to set any connection with other cultures or religions. Systems are not able to share; the feeling is that we talk about macro and micro systems with no a general connection;  we move into small closed systems, where everyone in centered on itself. This produces an increase of inequalities between people and countries, which also is an high imbalance of wealth. It 'important that laical values are shared and respected because they allow us to keep the different communities together and to maintain a given identity.

**Existential uncertainty**

There is a general absence of visions, society does not know where to go.
The economic crisis, the wars in some parts of the world (Arabic counties and Africa), terrorism and the inability of the current leaders to make decisions, are producing anxiety and fear for an uncertain future. We are "bare", without an ideal project that allows us to create common ideologies – differently from the past; that's why we are falling down!

There is a collapse of the "critical capacity" due to the new

technologies, which are so fast to destroy us mentally. We live in a state of suspension and dissociation that puts us in the "here and now" and does not project us into the future: not believe in anything (politics, society, culture, religion) leads us to not believe in ourselves. We are human being disenchanted, more oriented to the calculation and less willing to the comprehension of the world, of ourselves, of the "others" and  of the our capabilities. Always waiting for a "Messiah" able to lead us out of this "empty space", this loss of identity.

## Part 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

*In this part of the Listening Post the members are working with the information resulting from Parts 1 and 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 are 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: Conflict and Boundaries

**Analysis:** Discussion on integrations and conflicts requires to analyze those problems that concern the humanity. Migrations are posing conflicting issues and socio-political conflicts. We are torn between accepting or denying, between the fear of these foreigners/outsiders which are invading our spaces and our territories and the moral need to find suitable answers to this misery and human suffering.

These struggles profoundly touch the everyday life of individuals and communities. We can protect ourselves becoming blind and deaf supported by media and social networks, that help us in shallow, uncritical and suggestive analysis silencing any reason and ethics and acting out unconscious emotions.

It seems that these battlefields virtually and virally experienced (not face-to-face but through security and protection screens) simplify and distance those abilities to discuss, to open debates in support to ethics.

**Hypothesis**:

We need to transit. We need transit towards other existential boundaries, which are related to identity, culture and (geographical) space. We are becoming aware that our borders are permeable, and does not matter how many walls we build or doors we close: the permeability is inherent in the human and environmental existence. Seas and frontiers are crossed, and the walls cannot prevent the water

subterranean flows. Identities are not strictly the same, identities are constructed in the multiplicity of relationships, cultures, experiences. There is the need to govern the transit giving it sense. We need to look for tools that will help us to "manage" these boundaries, supported by reason and ethics.

**Analysis and Hypothesis 1: Good and Evil, the forces and the subterranean movements**

**Analysis:**

Good and evil are a constant presence at level of individuals 'life and society 'life, which are characterized in different forms throughout history. How to understand them, perceive them and interpret them without the well-known frames of reference? There is the real risk of interpreting important issues with categories very familiar to us. There are dynamics and subterranean relations that we may miss if we tend to interpret them with known codes. What are these dynamics that are moving systemically at the subterranean level?

While few years ago we were in a phase of "paralysis", now we are in a different stage, where we try to recognize, try to name things, issues about what is going on.

**Hypothesis:**

There are forces and movements, although in small groups, more aware of the need to work on ethical issues and to contrast destructive subterranean movements. We need to "keep a route" to safeguard humanity. Put into practice the hope of an humanity and make it active in the daily history, in a laical form.

Even these Listening Posts can be place of awareness, in collective form, and time for recognizing each other.

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