AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY

Italy and the World at the Dawn of 2017
Report of a OPUS Listening Post®
held in Calabria in January 2017

PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS & EXPERIENCES

In this part, the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experiences in their various social roles, be they: in work, unemployed or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood, 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': the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

The people who attended at the Listening Post (the fourteenth in Calabria/South Italy) have been 12. The age range of participants varies from 24 to 68 years, half of them is under 35. They come from different professional field: 1 lawyer, 2 educators, 1 journalist, 1 teacher, 1 advocate, 1 sports coach, 1 apprentice, 1 PhD student, 1 cultural mediator, 1 social worker, 1 accountant, 1operator of outdoor units. All of them were at the first experience of participation in a Listening Post. The group was composed by 7 women and 5 men. The Listening Post began 15 minutes late, one person came after 20 minutes. The rest of the time has been marked regularly and the break isn't extended. In the second part of the meeting the participants were divided into 3 spontaneous groups to identify the main themes which were then shared whit the whole group. The issues identified are essentially similar in three groups with some differences in details. All participant have taken the floor in the first and second part of Listening Post, just one person remained silent in the third part. Some of the participants have expressed interest in event and in particular in the working method

PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

In Part 2, the aim collectively was to identify the major themes emerging from Part 1.

Theme 1: Social Network and functional illiteracy

Almost all participants have highlighted the pervasive phenomenon of social networks and the fear towards the use that people make it today. The concern about the way in which the social network are used is because too often bring whit them high level of misinformation at cultural level, news and/or information in general that in Italy we called "Bufale" (is a neologism which means fake news), emulation, among young people, of self-destructive behaviour, spreading of

homophobic and racist ideas.

Social networks tend to exaggerate information and at the same time to minimizing the seriousness of some facts. For many participants it is clear demonstration of a high degree of ignorance in turn due to lack of depth and reading. Do not read means not being able to develop a critical sense. One of the main cause of "populism" it's the incorrect use of social communication.

Some participants highlight that the functional illiteracy is the consequence to the current power and government system. Furthermore it emerges the importance to staying and "return" among people, not only keep in touch through online chat because this tends to "monotonic relations" whit the risk of lack of recognition of others.

However, it's real the perception through whit if a person doesn't use the social network it's possible that will be considered like alien compared to this new communication model. In addition, the social networks allow to have thanks to the web success and popularity among their peers and others. This becomes visible whit the number of "likes" that are clicked on your profile, on your pictures or videos. Nevertheless, it highlights the theme of loneliness, of all those who are locked in a virtual world to the detriment of real life.

Your "being", therefore your existence is determined by the idea that "you are" only if "you have" virtual friends and "likes".

Theme 2: Widespread inability and inaction of young people

The concern for young people is high and some younger participants showed concern for their peers. They said that their contemporaries close themselves off and prove to be discouraged.

There arise some questions:

- How to stimulate young people?
- How to facilitate social relationships and be more creative?

Young people are afraid of not being able to put into practice what they have studied. However, There are claims that young people are also the ones that whether they have a job opportunity only accept if it is offered them some financial reward, showing less interest in the acquisition of practical experience.

Some participants say that young people are dependent on their parents and that their biggest limits are themselves.

Young people give the faults for their conditions to the parents, however, they fall into the logic of convenience according to different situations. For example in some cases they feel adults but in other cases they feel children and aren't focused on what they do.

It denotes a difficulty to take responsibility and to be able to plan and to project the

future.

However there is a general tendency to belittle young people in what they do and to judge them at the slightest mistake. This often leads to insecurity and immobility in the young people. They remain inert without being able to see a credible way out.

Theme 3: Earthquakes and natural disasters

Considering the current situation in Italy, it's possible to highlight that the participants feel high concern for natural disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, etc.). They feel very confused, frightened.

There is high confusion and great uncertainty for the present that's difficult to define, as well as for the future. The inability to govern these phenomena makes us even more vulnerable.

Theme 4: Politics and global security

One of the preoccupation detected pertains to politics and global security. The political landscape with the advent of Trump and everything that goes with it determines a strong perception of insecurity about the future scenarios.

There is concern about the way in which it manages the global security. Even the splits that are being created in Europe as a result of Brexit, lead to an inability of politics to contain the excesses underlying interests or unheeded needs.

Furthermore it is shown how much of news somehow are ignored, such as those taken from the Oxfam report in which emerges that 8 people hold the same net wealth than half of the poorest people in the world.

Nevertheless this information which refer to the theme of the failure security of many people to grow and to have opportunities for access to basic rights.

Theme 5: The loss of rights

The participants show also a deep concern about the loss of rights. The people to whom the rights have perception and awareness are violated. As if it were become normal not claim the rights.

The economic crisis has increased the level of non-recognition of the rights, due to a general lowering of those protections and rights that only a few years ago were very present.

Even in areas such as health, where some people do not make it even longer to get treatment, you are waiving any initiative and action of struggle.

Someone expresses a strong nostalgia for those years in which the people were fighting for their rights, but now it seems that the action of struggle on rights seems underpowered.

PART 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In Part 3, the participants 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, participants 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 1: The functional misinformation

Excessive worrying linked to the disruptive spreading of wrong information (fake) is noticed more often in people. Persons live these information as functional to the present social, cultural, political, etc. system. Such social network practice is considered operational and additional to the development of this phenomenon and It seems to spread populist and unfounded ideology, in spite of a "healthy" information, that allows to develop a critical thinking.
Young people are the undisputed "victims" of this system as this leads them to keep themselves out of the real life, limiting and discouraging them to deal with choices.

Hypothesis 1: If this new communication systems puts into question knowledge and information and affects young people up to make to the point to make them stuck, unable to move and unable to project future, so the misinformation is functional; however, functional to who?

Analysis 2: The fostered unreason

It seems that worry about security affects everyday people's life. One wonders how some political news are disruptive in people's lives and provoke concern and common anxiety effects, whereas others leave unresponsive.

Common anxiety "blocks" persons' energies and potentiality, that could be invested to escape from "deadlock" and "stagnation" situations.

Hypothesis 2: There is a clear intentionality to bring anxiogenous topic among people, to distract them from others. It's like a rational irrationality would be feed to "bewilder" minds and the possibility to research "ways out", preventing even to imagine common ventures that might produce and devise future paths.

Analysis 3: Other borders, other frames, other paradigms

Walls and borders are two sides of the same coin expressing anguish for unknown worlds and need of real traces on which define our daily realities and our inner lives. Man is between defence mechanisms and opening needs, so what does It mean about our identity and humanity?

We live in a world we can't contain, that oversteps the frames, the mental and physical borders we were used to, describing ourselves and our lives. Man is aware of the fragility and unsubstantial "walls" that we build up.

Technique, widespread information and technological researches' effects have brought us to an "uncontainable" world that crosses our minds. Today's society, even though has produced that technique, can't rules Its own development and power.

Hypothesis 3: If borders represent unconsciousness, frames, cultural and mental paradigms in which we read the world and our way being in It, If walls are "patched" buildings, weak restorations that can't offer us today substantial foundations, convincing grounds and interpretive theories, could that mean that we are looking for new boundaries, for new paradigms changes, for new life forms?

Conveners: