



AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY

Perú and the World at the Dawn of 2017
Report of a OPUS Listening Post®
held in February 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.

PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

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

Theme 1: Self-isolation and determinism: the myth of Sisyphus

The members of the group expressed a feeling of withdrawal from other people, either by building barriers that avoid approaching others ("since I entered there was no visual contact, they took care of their things, and I couldn't fill my desire to use the space for a half hour talking, I felt that as a society we can no longer interact in a public space"), or by self-isolation of what is not close to them and is untrusty ("I have not seen TV for months, not hearing news, I refuse to listen in the kitchen the dramas that bring dead, injustices, diseases, accidents, I just go, I think it is not good for me and makes me isolate"), where the sensation of insecurity and fear prevail ("everyone has put an invisible barrier through insecurity", "I am a person who loves to talk, I like to know the experiences of anyone, we were three people, and everyone felt that sense of insecurity, I wanted to get closer to them, but I felt that they all put a barrier on me"), and that at the same time it would facilitate manipulation by the Other ("I no longer trust the other, but this makes me more manipulative because if I am well connected, if I know, and I trust, I converse, I speak, I communicate, it is very difficult for someone to push me in a direction in which I do not want to go")

The discussion led the group to recognize that relating to the other involves the risk of experience something new ("I also had that feeling that I could be insecure, but, because you dare and then handle what you obtain, you will find something related to you, if that's so... great, but at other times you will find a person who is going in other direction, and you say calm, ask for serenity, it is worth the interaction, but

you know that some things do not go as you wish"), but is very difficult to face something different because of the fear of change, even if what is known cause suffering, preferring to deny it rather than modify it ("the flood took their houses, but they re-installed in the same place where they rationally shouldn't be, there must be some deep emotion of wanting to be around, but that emotion is stronger than the pain of losing their houses, there are things deeper enough that we do not come through reason, and we deny them").

Finally, the group linked up that, in this context, what has previously been learned and lived ends up being the only available resource, but that would also lead them to a fatalistic determinism where the only way of life available is to repeat the past ("they prefer to die at home, half buried, thinking that they don't have alternatives", "they are suddenly installed in a mental and emotional situation where they are unable to get out of there, because the fear is so much that they don't even see that they can take this step, suddenly they couldn't imagine living in other place that is not this community, with these people who have known for a long time, for generations"), reinsuring with this the creation of barriers towards the Other ("I feel that these people don't want to change, that we are not preparing for change, even though they have been offered to relocate they don't want to leave because of emotional attachments, the fear of what is coming, I think this is one of the big factors that people do have rationality don't use it and prefer to stay there"). The myth of Sisyphus emerged in the conversation as an analogy about the perception of social behavior, where people are isolated and resigned to live a life of circular suffering ("but that leads to a total determinism, I am predestined that my life will continue in this environment and I must suffer repeatedly, the myth of Sisyphus")

Theme 2: The irrational rational crowd.

The group explored the emergence, both locally and globally, of large groups of people behaving like an irrational crowd ("some persons who were conducting a survey were accused of being the ones who stole human organs, I saw a lady who was saying... lynch them!, lynch them!, and a reporter asked her if she was sure, she said yes, because someone told her, not that she saw it, but because she read it in WhatsApp, or from a rumor, this people are capable of killing someone because of a rumor"), been a group of people capable of generating radical changes at all levels ("who has to deal with that?, there the citizens give an unexpected response, the case of Brexit, the case of Colombia referendum. It was assumed that it was going to be like this, but not"), but instead of improving society they end up generating uncertainty about the future of it ("this feeling that everything is a reality show", "supposedly it's a change, but they are taking you to something that you already lived, like the Brexit, or Colombia, that action is apparently taking you to a scenario that is not what it should be, or what you think is the one that should be better, and it was followed by a lot of people, there is a big amount of people who think in a radically different way from what I think... I'm scared").

The conversation led the group to reflect on the type of political, social and business leadership that is emerging in the face of these crowds ("and on the issue of power, do politicians really have power? Is it someone who directs the destinies of the world? Or is it something that has a dynamic of its own that is moving without knowing where the direction is coming from?"), which responds to the requirements

of these crowds either by lying, exaggerating or supporting radical changes in order to come to power ("the person who can play with fears, for example, Trump has a capacity for convincing, because to begin with he believes what he says, can be a Lie, but he believed it, and he tells you with such a conviction, so seriously, that there comes a moment that one says I have to look it better") , generating a social division with the argument "you are with me or you are against me", preventing the possibility of exploring common spaces and seeking integration with the Other.

Finally, the group explored the increase in the irrationality of large groups of people with apparent access to education and resources ("I am thinking that maybe the fact that we are more rational makes us realize how tremendously irrational we are, we are so sophisticated that we can noticed now"), and how this behaviour is infecting others ("this would be very curious, that irrationality has always been like that and the only thing that has changed is that we are receiving more and more stimuli that are saying: hey! realize that these movements in social life exist and some of them are not very rational", "I always say.. trust is built every day and destroyed in a second, as in the airplane, one person begins to laugh and we get relax and calm, if one gets nervous, it makes us all uneasy"), which would end up making the crowd more dependent on a leadership supported by populist proposals that offer solutions to the feeling of uncertainty ("In our case it is citizen insecurity, but in other cases we have the military issue, like in Korea about pushing a button and caused a global war, or financial insecurity, banks are ok, but suddenly the next day there is a chain crisis, the migratory issue, who is coming here, who knocks the door, we receive them or not, in politics, the Brexit theme, Trump's theme, all that generate a global insecurity", "maybe it's Because you do not see the airplane's pilot, maybe it's because you do not have control, maybe it depends on how close or how far are you from the person in charge, with the power").

Theme 3: The post-truth and the role of technology and the media

The group discussed the role of the mass media and technology as tools of information/disinformation and of social connection/disconnection. The relationship between the media and the problems that society is facing was explored ("bureaucratic structures go slower than what citizens need, they gather anxieties or frustrations about the state or society and the media form expectations in terms of equality and stereotypes, but at the end the people collide with a reality where the bureaucracy makes it impossible", "I think of the representation crisis that nations have, and the problems that we have with democracy in our country, it gave me the impression that the media have something to do with all these crisis", "this desire to kick the board I relate it with the media, for good and for bad. We haven't become accustomed to being patient, there are things that each one has in the head of what society should be, but we want it already, we want it right now"), how they media manage the information highlighting the morbid and the negative over the positive one ("I went through the newspaper stand and the news were this issue still doesn't come out, another news about what did they do in order to ruin it, played the morbid around the subject in order for people to buy, which is now more apparent because the news is on your phone or tablet", "The media wants to get the juice out of every nonsense, in an example that I hate... a movie actor stumbles, and the media says you do not know what happened to this actor, and that he stumbled"), developing illusions about a reality that does not exist or is exaggerated ("it also

feeds our mind and generates certain traumas, we even generate certain stereotypes with this type of news, we think that because this guy did this, this other guy will do it the same").

The participants ended up discussing how a post-truth was developed, a reality that is constructed from false facts or half-truths, that from being repeated or continually visualized in the media and social networks ends up being accepted as a generalized truth ("it is called the post-truth. You repeat so many times that ends up being the truth, and where our responses are not rational but emotional and is generated with the help of the media, which are also modeling the thinking of the readers, the media is really the 4th power", "in the Brexit was a politician who had made a calculation that if England left the EU they will stop wasting a lot of money, and people believe him, and after the elections they asked him, how he did the calculation? And he answered that was an imagination, everything was Imagined, wasn't real"), and where technology instead of allowing to separate the true facts from the false ends up spreading and validating the post-truth ("we are in a society of information abundance, but what kind and quality of the information we had? I wonder how the young people use that big amount of information, they are supposed to be better, aware of the decision-making, about the rationality, but we see things going the other way").

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 and Hypothesis I

Analysis I:

The group is experimenting with being overtaken by a flood of information, either by traditional means of communication, or through new technologies within social networks, that has an effect of isolation in the relation with the Other and is generating the urge to seek refuge in the known or with those who generate trust. From this perspective, a question was formulated: from all this many versions of reality, which is the true one? and the answer is to move away from the complexity (the diversity) and to look for the simple, fast and known (the homogeneous), all of that being represented by the modern leaders as a return to values and tradition, but that ends up reinforcing the social separation and the self-exclusion from the Other.

Hypothesis I: Due to the globalization of information and the increase of the flow of information through the new technologies, members of our society feel unable to process and discern what is true of what is not, which increases the feeling of insecurity, the fear about the future and the new, generating a regression towards

defensive positions, the dependence of a saviour leadership and a greater isolation within the society.

Analysis and Hypothesis 2

Analysis 2:

The relationship between the uncertainty of not knowing what will happen tomorrow, about what is the "correct" way to go, affects the ability of people to be aware of their freedom, the potential they have to create and what this can mean in their relationship with the Other, thus preventing the construction of a collective reality. The inability to feel represented in a larger social image generates a loss of institutionalism and social identity that prevents them to agglutinate expectations and dreams, generating violent actions that seek the exclusion of the collective towards the formation of groups of equals and stopping integration; so, which is known, seen and repeated throughout the world, generates a sense of fatalism that reinforces the inability to generate changes from diversity. This incapacity for integration is reinforced in the generational view, where the roles of the old and the new generation of people are questioned: the previous generation developed a social model that the new generation does not accept, and the new generation seeks to develop a model without considering the experience of the previous generation.

Hypothesis 2: Due to the constant global and local emergence of separatist groups with violent positions that seek to isolate from the larger collective and also have the convening power, members of our society experience the sensation of collapse and destruction of known social structures that generate stability and certainty, which increases the sense of a fatalistic determinism, reinforces social self-exclusion, relegates the previous generations to an observer role and assigning the role of change to the new generation, all of which prevents the integration of the different in order to learn from experience and to face together the uncertainty of the future.

Convener: Jorge Mendoza