



## Italy at the dawn of 2018

### Report of a Listening Post held in Milan on 19 January 2018

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#### **PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND 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.*

After a brief round of table for the presentation of each individual participant in the group, the convener recalled the LP process and how the meeting would take place.

It begins with a long silence, then a member of the group begins to speak decisively about her daily work in which she faces the painful issue of immigration and has great difficulty responding to the requests of young immigrants who do not find their own identity and a own country. The large and growing army of people who are deprived of their ways and means of survival.

Our society is broken by increasingly devastating fragmentation and the need to quickly learn how to recompose a constantly changing puzzle in a world without borders, where emergencies multiply and besiege us. Everyday. And can explode at any moment.

Then the descriptions of the facts and feelings experienced begin and immediately a climate of mutual trust and confidence born that gradually leads people to manifest important parts of themselves. The participants experience a closer and more direct human contact, much stronger than all the other LPs in which I participated.

Even the incipit of each intervention resume the contents of the previous intervention by creating links and associations without discontinuity. As if the relationship and human contact were the most important thing to live in the here and now. The empathic understanding was authentic and profound. Feelings and emotions could express themselves freely and spontaneously.

The group was compact, coherent and animated but tidy discussion on widely shared and unanimous issues.

The females have brought "high" themes and little has gone into individual events or facts that have occurred in society in this last year. It was expressed in the name of values: the responsibility to create a new life approach life, to banish prejudices, the need to create a new and real integration and communication, research and need for "beauty" in the most generative sense of the term, not underestimating anxiety and fear that something serious could happen (a nuclear explosion). The Beauty is represented by Pope Francesco and his help to a woman fall from a horse, a sign of help and love for people in need.

Instead, the males has faced more concrete facts: unbearable supporters, the lack of future prospects for a policy that is incapable of having a long-term vision by managing only the present and the short term. The impotence of not finding a playground in which to play one's game, the impossibility of finding a space where one can reflect and find oneself and one's own coherence.

All then stressed the deleterious effects of technology now widespread, often misused by Social Networks: information too much, confusing, alarmist, distorted, violent and "fake". The consensus or mass dissent increasingly incardinated on untruthful information, if not deliberately falsified, but which are considered true despite their demonstrable groundlessness.

Politics is increasingly mixed with suggestions, impressions, something that evokes emotions and rancor, prejudices and symbols, but little, very little actuality incapable of having goals and plans for the future.

The 2 gender subgroups felt the same emotions, the same feelings, the same fears: social uncertainty, insecurity, strong fragmentation, personal restlessness, sense of "loneliness", of precariousness, anxiety, but in spite of everything they perceived both that something is moving, that something is changing with the hope that a new world can be born from chaos.

The females have produced 2 very significant metaphors: the Undergrowth and the Chimerization

The first is a land that grows spontaneously, covered by sight but extremely fertile, as a symbol of a responsible, industrious and creative civil society that does not make news but effectively works to solve everyday problems by finding the strength to not fall down from the facts that happen.

And the Chimerization process used in medicine that prevents rejection in transplants, as a symbol of the possibility of recomposing a future as a puzzle, of rethinking the processes of globalization with new categories and reconsidering democracy and freedom with new paradigms.

The males has brought the metaphor of the Kintsugi equally and very dense of meaning: the art of embracing the damage and not being ashamed of its

wounds. Breaking, the ceramics takes new life through the fracture lines to the object, which becomes even more precious thanks to its scars.

The group cohesion that has immediately established itself seemed to be a defense against anxieties, a desire for the security of preservation of the identity of the individual. The group illusion represented well the progress of the meeting. To the threat of "outside" of this crazed society, a salvific and reassuring "inside" was established, but then I perceived something more: an innovation of being together that concerns the ways of social creativity: the possibility of integrating, of offering a widespread contribution because change cannot be delegated.

## **PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES**

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

The subgroups were 3. Only one group managed to identify specific themes. Of the other 2, one identified only one theme as a set of contradictions and opposing paradigms and the other immediately started with hypotheses and even Prognosis.

This "lack" of organicity in the individuation of the themes, even if LP process was clearly explained in the introductory part of the meeting, seemed to me a concrete representation of the fragmentation, prevalent theme of the first part, and a perhaps too anxious research and panting in the identification. That anxiety which has been discussed so much, that takes us when creativity starts up.

**Theme 1: fragmentation - limits and boundaries**

**Theme 2: beauty - creativity and commitment**

**Theme 3: communication - distortion amplification violence**

**Theme 4: illegitimate institution and growth of spontaneous relationship**

## **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.*

## **THEME 1: FRAGMENTATION - LIMITS AND BOUNDARIES**

### **ANALYSIS THEME 1**

Our social life is characterized, differently from the past, by profound instability of events, sudden and unpredictable changes, by the existential uncertainty of individuals, by the fragmentation of their identities. All these elements mean that it is no longer possible to use the same categories that have been used in the past. The boundaries are no longer visible, the physical limits so far known are overcome and therefore the identity is lost.

In the situation of the refugees they add up in an extreme form and, therefore, more evident the characteristics of the liquid-modern life, such as the permanence of transience and the socio-political void. We need to rethink the processes of globalization with new categories. Fragmented society is a society whose members find it increasingly difficult to recognize themselves as a community in their political society. Fragmentation is directly proportional to the degree of lack of identification in the political community.

And here the metaphor of the Chimerization emerges as a symbol of a new ability to know how to compose the pieces of the puzzle. It is the "discovery of complexity" and offers us an answer in the resolution of contemporary disorder, it "disposes" us towards an "awareness" and a new conception of being together. The sense of being is to produce a new body-organ through a re-design, a re-modelling of the body.

### **HYPOTHESIS 1 - MUTATION AND HYBRIDIZATION AS EVOLUTION**

The sources of insecurity have moved "out of" our daily lives, our ability to control. They moved elsewhere. "Outside" from our borders, also because borders can no longer delimit our lives. And when the tragic events, which generate fear and anguish, take place within our borders, we are dealing with facts that are beyond our comprehension. This is why the sense of insecurity, compared to the recent past, seems so ungraspable. Because it has no boundaries nor times nor foreseeable places. The boundaries are no longer visible, the physical limits so far known are overcome and therefore the identity is lost. Hence the possibility of rethinking the social as an environment in which humans in their multiplicity and the artefacts interact forming various levels of reality. The mutation becomes the centre, the engine of diversity and the beginning of the process to make an evolution possible, no longer of the species, but of the plural and hybrid trans-species. Cohabitation creates the fusion of behavioural models, where acquisitions-contaminations become emancipatory tools of society

## **THEME 2: BEAUTY-CREATIVITY AND COMMITMENT**

### **ANALYSIS THEME 2**

In a society so besieged by banality and tragedy, the human being is driven by his own nature to look for signs of something worth living for. A generalized insight to find something that excites us.

The banal beauty hides a question of beauty that gives more meaning to life, and it is a question that also requires a social reorganization. The experience of Beauty as an experience of values and in young people there is a great desire for beauty that we adults do not notice.

Pope Francis as a symbol of Beauty, Love and Help, descended from the Popemobile to assist a police officer fallen from his horse during the passage of the papal convoy, has proved to be a skill in being able to make everyone understand his great heart and to work in front of the faithful to give value even to small things.

That's why even a small gesture can give love and a great desire to engage publicly

### **HYPOTHESIS 2 - BEAUTY TO KEEP TOGETHER THE OPPOSITE, THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE**

The Beauty of making the invisible, visible. And here the metaphor of the Undergrowth, beauty as the ability to make it emerge. The wounds are the condition of our being, but there is beauty in the wounds. There is a need for a constructive vision of creativity that finally gives a positive sign to our life that goes from the relationship between personal individuality and political community to the ethical dimension of human experience. The ethical dimension of responsibility: the educational responsibility and the responsibility of doing, of creating.

The overcoming of individualism through the re-understanding of the social and political sphere proposing its thinking as an invitation to overcome the fences and to construct something new. A shared awareness: being able to speak a universal language, which only beauty can express, which is a powerful reminder of harmony and unity.

Beauty does not take away from reality, but on the contrary, leads to a comfort and confrontation with everyday life.

## **THEME 3 - COMMUNICATION - DISTORTION AMPLIFICATION VIOLENCE**

### **ANALYSIS THEME 3**

Social media today, act as amplifiers of problems, everyone can see everything, talk, criticize, judge, share. An exponential multiplier of violent attitudes.

So we live in an era in which the overdose of information, the difficulty of their verification, the rapidity of the spread of the news, favour the proliferation of the fake news. On one side they spread polarized opinions that favour the opposition rather than the mediation. On the other, they only aggregate those who think the same way, discouraging a real comparison between different positions. In the first case the Socials exalt the expression of a widespread resentment in the ways of an even violent protest. In the second case act as a filter, they close us inside a bubble in which everyone thinks like us.

In this framework, the public space of reasonable dialogue no longer exists; public space does not exist at all. Only words; news without control, insults and fake news crowd the non-spatiality of communication.

### **HYPOTHESIS 3 - COMMUNICATION - CHALLENGE OF A NEW POLICY**

After the crisis of great ideologies and strong narratives such as Europe and globalization, this is a nation in transition, fragmented, without a social agenda shared by a majority, pulverized by smartphones, social networks and the web, increasingly used to expressing their interests.

We are facing the loss of authority, credibility, ability to certify, all those who have also represented, always and in any case, an anchor for the community in terms of points of reference.

From a vertical dimension of communication to a horizontal, where everyone - equipped with a mobile phone and an Internet connection - thinks to be able to produce information.

In front of this, putting new rules, even if we are trying, it does not help much. We need real communication, we live in an Information Society that has to invent new cultural and social models, interpreting the real possibilities, starting from the strategic use of the media as an enabling opportunity. In this sense it is possible to overcome the communication complexity by constructing a relationship based on values, ethical meaning and culture, understood as exchange and collaboration in the development of a new social organization.

### **THEME 4: DELEGITTIMATE INSTITUTION AND GROWTH OF SPONTANEOUS RELATIONSHIP**

#### **ANALYSIS THEME 4**

By now it is unfortunately evident that all these expressions and supporters do not serve to build anything but, on the contrary, to destroy everything, they are unnecessary to us as citizens, they have the unique purpose of exalting the narcissism in the perennial fight. Impotence opens the door to the waste of our intelligence, our relationships, our well-being, and even our citizens' rights.

The absence of Politics and of the Institution, contribute to nourish our insecurity. They deprive us of a system of mediation between us and the world, depriving us

of objectives to project "our" expectations and "our" hopes. The solitude of the global citizen.

This short-term vision leaves no room for the creation of a vision. Because we are crushed on everyday life and ordinary administration. But this does not allow us to cultivate great ambitions and great projects that necessarily arise from a public overview, in which we can then insert ourselves. Perspectives are missing! And faced with this obscene spectacle offered by politics, the reaction is essentially one: repulsion.

But there is a good element of civil society: its flowering from below. An undergrowth. The existence of a plurality of social subjects capable of autonomous action and of regulation of individual behaviours and oriented to solve problems or satisfy common needs.

How to increase the interconnection between civil society and political society? The good practices, which exist and are very many, but are still struggling to become culture.

#### **HYPOTHESIS 4 - SOCIAL INNOVATION: THE RESILIENCE**

The divisions and the splits, the contradictions, the fragmentation are also projections of ourselves.

A "fragmented ego", the subject can no longer feel unique. We have lived by impulses that are not lived but are left to live. One is faced with a series of present times not connected to each other. The pressure of external stimuli is stronger than our ability to digest them through inner consciousness.

But there is a new ability to repair themselves and to be able to reorganize their lives positively despite difficult situations and here the metaphor of *Kintsugi*: the art of precious scars, not to be ashamed of their injuries. Overcoming adversity and becoming stronger is a step that even we Westerners must do to get in touch with all the strengths and resources we have gained thanks to the tragedies we suffered.

The breaking of an object no longer represents its end. His fractures become precious. One must try to recover, and in doing so, one gains. It is the essence of Resilience. In the each one life, we must look for ways to positively cope with traumatic events, to grow through our own painful experiences, to value them, to show them and to convince ourselves that it is precisely these that make each person unique, precious.

There is a social innovation that concerns worlds and ways of social creativity that are tracing a path of clear reconfiguration of predefined patterns of social organization. The intelligence of the system will be implemented only through communities that will be able to translate their connective intelligence into value, based on the exchange not only of information but of practices.

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I close by remembering the film, which is swarmed in the head of all of us during the discussion: "La Grande Bellezza" by Paolo Sorrentino: an élite is overwhelmed by the great beauty of the Italian culture of the past, unable to react and be productive, as every beautiful thing has already been produced and the only possible way is fatuity. The sterility and the castration produced by the super ego of a country blocked by the fear of making mistakes and the satiety induced by the ancient messages from which it is convulsed.

The group on the contrary, referring to the Beauty, has produced a completely opposite thesis: despite the complexity and extreme fragmentation in which we live and the wounds we have, we feel the need to overcome the fear that all this gives us, to understand what we are part of, take on new youth and experience something totally new that perhaps never lived.

**Convenor: Daniella Cabibbe.**