



An Organisation for Promoting
Understanding of Society

LISTENING POST

Chile at the Dawn of 2019

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.

PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

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

Dilemmas of social diversity: feminist movement, fantasies of political redemption and their risks.

LP participants coincide, in an unusual consensus, in perceiving that in 2018 Chilean society was affected by problems, conflicts and tensions in social diversity associated to dilemmas of the feminist movement, of not having effective answers on how to face the dialectic manifestations of inclusion-exclusion, equality-inequality, individuality-collectivism, solidarity-competition, among others.

In their concern regarding diversity dilemmas, participants communicate explicitly, with almost unanimous complaisance and valuation, that feminist social mobilizations have had tremendous and unprecedented effects in the public awareness of how in Chilean society, discrimination, inequality, punishment and extreme violence towards women have been institutionalized. In feminist mobilizations, individuals recognize that collective action has enabled initiatives that constitute signs of change processes to correct discrimination, on women. This collective act is felt as having the nature of an "event", of a new occurrence that transgresses limits, confuse citizens with respect to their gender identities. It is considered that both men and women are affected in their gender identities by the bewilderment that is produced in them by that "event," complex

to understand, and even more by not knowing how to behave in this new respectful and egalitarian treatment between men and women. Institutions, historically rooted in a masculinizing identity, were also shaken by "the waves and tsunamis" of the feminist movement, finding themselves asked to embrace the transformation in their current gender cultures, which harm and cause suffering, particularly to women.

The complaisance and appreciation of the May 2018 feminist movement is featured in the LP especially by younger women, who raise their voices communicating the strategic effort that has been demanded of them in their participation, organization and execution of the protests and public resistance that such "event" has meant for them. Older women in the LP support in anonymous silence, what the younger women report about feminism. The men at the LP join in the anonymous support, with some voices that explicitly support the feminist movement's progress and what its circumstances have meant for society. In those male voices there are even questions about the challenges and vulnerabilities that they will have to face in the exercise of their roles as citizens, in a new treatment to women, whether in public spaces, work, family, couples' relationships and in assuming shared responsibilities in their household chores. The feminist "event" is considered a political action, which reveals, fights and resists, nationally and internationally, the power of groups and governments of right-wing, fascist and extreme neo-liberalism ideological orientations, which openly intend to accentuate the gaps of inequality and the isolation of mainly vulnerable sectors, through the articulation of authoritarian regimes who pretend to assume global control. Trump and Bolsonaro are remarkable examples of government leaderships that constitute a definite threat to feminist emancipation projects if they are replicated in Chile. In this area, religion is also considered in a retrograde, conservative role, particularly in different forms of Christian fundamentalism.

In the dynamics of complaisance and valuation of the feminist movement that takes place at the LP, a discursive atmosphere predominates stimulating communications, and the silence of the spectator audience, to converge and strengthen the positive appreciation of feminist activism and its achievements.

Dilemmas of social diversity: migrations and migrants

At the LP, participants unanimously concur in highlighting the importance of the dialectic dilemmas of social diversity with respect to migrations and migrants during 2018. In general, there is discomfort and anger because of the way in which society and the State have addressed that issue, with the absence of clear public policies that allows effective solutions on migration and the treatment of immigrants.

LP participants show feelings of guilt for the incompetence shown by society in giving a fair and humanitarian treatment to immigrants. Blame is mainly attributed to the State for having extremely wavering postures in the management of migrations and in the incorporation of immigrants. In some

periods, the State has shown an open border and sheltering policy to immigrants, while, more recently, during the current right-wing government leading the country, migration policies have taken a turn aimed at border control with respect to those entering the country and the deportation of immigrants who don't certify regularized permanence and insertion into society. The most embarrassing of immigration policies was the recent government's decision to sponsor air flights, financed and executed by the State, to transport Haitian immigrants back to their country of origin. Migrants are envisioned as disposable beings, without recognition of their human rights.

During their communications at the LP, participants showed a dominant discourse of apparent positive appreciation of migrations and migrants, emphasizing that they contribute to the social diversity of the country in the composition of races, origin of provenance, talents, religions, languages and cultural contributions of various kinds. This speech exalts the disposition, supposedly fluid, embracing and spontaneous of Chileans in their welcoming of immigrants; however, there soon arise stories of experiences that question the validity of that appreciation. Those stories suggest that Chileans perceive immigrants according to a hierarchical stratification depending on their nationalities: some are a prestigious elite, while the valuation of others is relative, subject to the qualitative characteristics of individual actions. Haitians are the ones least appreciated, due to their being black, having difficulties with the Spanish language, having low occupational qualifications and being especially vulnerable to poverty conditions. Among the LP assistants some perceptions also arose in reference to the "usurpation" of jobs by immigrants, thus postponing Chileans from being able to access sources of paid jobs, considering that they have priority rights in getting those benefits, in relation to immigrants. This "usurpation" arises much anger in Chileans, who feel postponed in their access to employment, indicating that immigrants are willing to work for lower wages than Chileans, sometimes without contracts and without social protection, in order to insert themselves economically in society. Something similar happens with the access to health and education: Chileans resent that immigrants have rights to these attentions because they consider it as a postponement of their own needs.

The perceptions, judgments and experiences expressed at the LP, is interpreted according to the following hypothesis.

Immigrants arouse much empathy, understanding and positive appreciation because they bring a human diversity that is very promising of valuable contributions to enrich the development of society. Together with that empathy, LP attendants also experience anxieties caused by the shame, sorrow and distress felt when they see the States' incompetence to establish effective public policies providing human treatment, dignified and equal to the immigrants who seek asylum in the country. The State and its agents become targets for the anger of these individuals, due to their lack of expertise, and especially because their erratic policies imply fluctuations in the support of migration and the fact that they subsequently adopt regulatory measures that limit immigration and

the application of mass deportations. These fluctuations awaken unconscious anxieties that affect citizens because they don't know for certain what to expect in relation to immigrants within the framework of the State's institutions and their agents.

On the other hand, LP attendants show enough evidence of how the acceptance of social diversity in their lives, in relation to immigrants, is conflicting, causing tensions and complex anxieties, difficult to blend with inclusion. This is partly because Chileans unconsciously assimilate stereotyped and prejudiced images of immigrants, which mobilize towards exclusion, distancing and rejection. It is telling that Chileans categorize immigrants, valuing some and disqualifying others. In general, the link with immigrants in direct or indirect dealings, brings up contradictions that are difficult to address with discernment. The diversity of foreigners frightens, produces anxieties, which, with some frequency, leads Chileans to protect themselves from the unknown through projection, splitting or idealization defenses. In this sense, it's not only the State's impersonal and bureaucratic agency and its agents that show and incite hatefulness towards migrations and migrants, it is also the citizens, who are imprisoned by stereotypes and prejudices, who trivialize ill-treatment towards immigrants. In this context, the question arises of whether the citizens, together with the State and its agents, will be able to develop interactive thoughts so that migration and migrants can be understood from a human, fair and solidary perspective.

3 The need for meaning, trust, and protection

Under the influence of the floating concerns at the LP abovementioned, there are people who recall that 2018 was marked by the tragic corruption in the institution of the Catholic Church and, very recently, by the corruption of the police force in the violent treatment of indigenous ethnicities.

Individuals at the LP refer to the discomfort and distress that Catholic believers and society have experienced, learning about the many cases of psychological and sexual abuse committed by priests to Catholic parishioners. Perpetration of these outrages was experienced with horror, above all because in general the victims were children and youngsters without the possibility of discerning the wickedness that inspired the priests, an evil that has been very traumatic for the families of the outraged victims. Public disclosure of the vexations opened a flow of hundreds of complaints in civil and ecclesiastical justice that are in the process of research, and simultaneously there are cases in which guilt was determined and the culprits received severe punishments. In general, there is distrust towards the Catholic Church, which also experienced disrepute, in the face of the forceful evidence showing that the high ecclesiastical authorities had an active part in an institutional plot aimed at concealing and keeping silent the corrupt acts that violated the trust of believers in priestly authority. The citizens are perplexed, angry and hurt, not knowing how the corruption will be resolved and whether there will be a possible reparation for the losses and traumas that affected thousands of Catholics and society.

Similarly, LP participants showed discomfort and anger at the corruption affecting the Chilean police institution, which has revealed dark and unscrupulous set ups to hold indigenous peoples accountable for the violence occurring in the south of the country, thus providing legality to the police to deploy their presence and fire power, supposedly to restore peace against provocations by indigenous terrorists. The Police institution's disrepute is felt vividly by the public opinion, and this feeling was recently increased by the murder of a young indigenous man, who was attributed participation in firing against the police in the conflict zone. Those accusations have been totally devalued recently as being false and originating in a network of justifications by Police officers. The deceptively corrupt situation of that case has revealed a great credibility and leadership crisis in the Chilean Police institution, which has had destabilizing political consequences in the current government and widespread rejection from the citizenship with respect to the lack of ethics in the behavior of the Police Force.

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.

Considering all the above, the following interpretative hypothesis is formulated.

The movement is very positively appreciated in the Chilean society for its activism, which is perceived with the nature of collective redemption, which enables correcting the many and extreme outrages that have affected women. This redemption idealizes the activism of the feminist movement, which, in its collective amplification, is internalized by citizens as a liberation of individual responsibilities and their concomitant anxieties felt by every man and woman regarding the discriminatory vexations towards women. Likewise, redemption prompts not recognizing how each citizen should have to face the challenges and anxieties, unpredictable as to their contingencies, to achieve new, fair and respectful treatment from men towards women, of women among themselves, and of men towards men. Redemption is internalized as a collective defense against the anxieties of plural interactions that are impossible to predict as to their contingencies, actions and consequences. To collectively internalize the feminist movement in its redemptive activist dimension blurs the imperative need to think individually about that movement, in order to avoid being caught by a triumphalist atmosphere.

The following hypothesis is formulated with respect to the two newly described issues that arose at the LP. Both issues account for serious institutional corruption in Chilean society during 2018, citizens are intensely moved because

both cases mean loss of credibility and trust, feeling the corrosion of loyalty, of not knowing who to believe in, whether they are people or institutions. In this lack of belief and distrust, there is a weakening of the spiritual and pragmatic sense to confront the uncertainties of human existence, which is a source of various anxieties. In the face of this, a distress takes hold caused by a lack of individual recognition, of assurances that offer solidary humane protection that would effectively ensure the common good of the citizenship. Faced with the losses, LP participants realize that it was possible to gestate a constructive reconstructive response to institutional breakdowns in society. Firstly, because it was possible to bring all corruption cases to the public consciousness, and secondly, because it was also possible to realize that political and judicial institutions mobilized effectively to take corrective measures in the face of such transgressive acts of citizenship welfare. What remained to be inquired at the LP, were the difficult challenges that each person has in the exercise of their citizen roles to create a world that will welcome the human diversity and overcome individual indifference and individualism focused only on personal interests.

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