REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OF RIO CUARTO

Presentation to AICESIS

A little over 10 years ago, representatives from various sectors such as business, commerce, labor, agriculture, religion, neighborhood, among others, came together to collectively brainstorm solutions to issues that the city was facing, issues that were relevant to all aspects of society.

This challenge first required political will, the vision of building solid foundations to guarantee the region's development. But also, and more importantly, it required human will, a deep desire to listen and learn about the reality of others, knowing that there are particular problems, but there are also possible solutions.

In a context of rapid changes (social, economic, climatic, technological, political), dialogue with each other starts to be affected, modified and even interrupted. Since the practice of dialogue requires not only listening but also physical, mental and spiritual presence, generating social spaces where listening can be held as a value for development becomes more and more difficult and at the same time essential.

There are many reasons why dialogue can be compromised:

First, one of the main challenges is the economic and social inequality that characterizes many countries in the region. The gaps between rich and poor, as well as the lack of access to opportunities, can generate tensions and distrust in society. Social dialogue is affected when different groups do not feel that their concerns and needs are being heard and addressed equitably.

Second, political polarization is another significant challenge. Ideological and partisan differences can make it difficult to find common ground and build consensus. In some cases, confrontation and divisive rhetoric can dominate public discourse, hindering constructive dialogue and cooperation between different actors.

The third challenge is related to the lack of trust in institutions. In many Latin American countries, there have been cases of corruption, abuse of power and lack of transparency in government and other institutions. This has eroded citizen confidence in the authorities and in the decision-making process. Without trust, it is difficult to establish a genuine and fruitful dialogue.

There is also a fourth challenge, triggered by modernity and technology, that is related to the emotional construct of society, where social media have played a leading role; the constant search for the reaffirmation of preconceptions (whether they are ideological, religious, or even emotional) in what we read, hear, and see. The low tolerance or acceptance of "what is different from me" has an impact on societies with extreme positions, with violence and few possibilities of achieving comprehensive development and social justice.

The working model of our city has some peculiarities that, in our view, can contribute to ensuring these spaces of active listening. The fact that they are composed of a large portion of social sectors implies that both the perspective and possible responses have elements from, for example, the business standpoint as well as from popular economies (informal economy, neighborhood-based, self-sustainable economy). This periodic exchange of completely dissimilar perspectives contributes to making the discussion or consideration of socially impactful decisions more complex and profound.

As Jean Piaget stated, "What we see changes what we know, and what we know changes what we see."

On the other hand, having a perception survey of the economic and social reality that encompasses 730 cases and analyzes everything from cultural preferences and education to socioeconomic conditions, and simultaneously, having a Regional Statistical Coordination Center that works with indices and research from various institutions both within and outside of this Social and Economic Council, enables us to have a more precise overview and diagnosis regarding the current situation, issues, and tools available within our area of influence.

Perhaps a fundamental part of the preservation of dialogue as a tool and its success has to do with guaranteeing this process in more limited areas of influence. Perhaps a model of departmental or city dialogue (depending on the size and population density) would be optimal so that the concordances by history, economy, social and environmental resources, among others, serve as a background in the synergy of the dialogue.

Notwithstanding the above, we request the AICESIS to implement the necessary means to petition the Economic and Social Council of the Argentine Republic to resume its operation as soon as possible and start working as a network with the various provincial and local councils and to tend to the creation or reopening of Councils throughout the country.

In times strongly marked by global policies and models, products of interests at times frankly contradictory to our possibilities of growth driven by the dignity of work, the unfolding of this theme involves highlighting a plane that calls for deepening: the construction of the DIALOGUE.

The constant search for relevant information for the elaboration of public policy proposals, whether through institutional dialogue, perception surveys or statistical analysis (as in our case), has become essential; having accurate data on socio-political trends and the environmental and economic realities of the communities we are part of is the main input for the projection of a future with human development.

In our opinion, it constitutes a privileged way to give a firm basis to social transformation, starting from our own conscience and giving meaning to the construction of social dialogue.

It is necessary to deploy other spaces that complement, that expand our chances of response and proposal both at the level of thought and action.

In other words, to recover and project, from our damaged social fabric, credibility, giving meaning to the culture of solidarity and, with hard work and determination, creating a synergy oriented towards the service of others and the common good.

One must go from dreaming to execution, because no one is fulfilled in a community that is not fulfilled.