



France 2011, A society of “extra-lucids”

NOBODY'S UNPREDICTABLE*



France 2011, A society of “extra-lucids”

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[Lead-in]

Ipsos Flair: understanding to anticipate

Launched in 2005, Ipsos Flair grew from a desire to combine the six types of expertise Ipsos offers (Marketing, Advertising, Media, Opinion, Customer Relations Management, Data Collection, Data Processing and Distribution), with a view to presenting a vision of society founded on an observation and interpretation of the behaviors, attitudes and opinions of consumer-citizens.

The stance Ipsos Flair takes in relation to French society and the changes taking place is one — cherished by psychologists and by Freud in particular — of “benevolent neutrality.”

Ipsos sees research findings as symptoms, whose analysis helps define a mapping of structuring and emerging trends.

From this point of view, 2010 deserved its title of “no limits year” and its slogan “passion destroyed becomes passion to destroy”...

Most of the standards that govern normal relations between individuals, institutions, authorities, etc. were smashed with incredible casualness and ease: the French soccer team refuse to train during the World Cup, looting and setting fire to cars accompany victory, likewise for the defeat of the Algerian team, urban riots break out in Grenoble or Saint-Aignan as reprisals for police actions, the “mass aperitifs” made popular by Facebook reinvent the codes of social drinking, and so on and so forth.

After the vocabulary of denial and euphemism, the vocabulary of dysfunction and restructuring are no longer enough. So new words must be invented, words associated with a different perception of law and order.

One recent example is the notion of “supra-legal compensation,” which came to light after all French employees were granted several tens of thousands of tax-free Euros, notably obtained following the sequestration of management and executives.

We look forward to the “extra-legal” arrangements to come, in other words those transactions that come into play beyond the handful of outdated agreements (Constitution, Decrees, Civil Code, Work Code, etc.) that have governed labor relations until now.

Every year, the “results crisis” brings to light a new facet and a new spasm: nostalgia, desire to believe, skepticism, detachment, transgression...

Their common point lies in the distinction made between the collective and the personal. The collective becomes the world one is subjected to, the outside world, consisting in obligations and rules (what used to be called courtesy and politeness, for example). The personal is the chosen, free, ad hoc world (which explains the success of the social networks, which operate on the principle of co-optation or exclusion).

In other words, every one of us is all alone. Primarily because the acceleration of time and speed in society has made the return of a new, legitimized authority even more unthinkable. Consider the case of the US Commander of Forces in Afghanistan who, believing he was speaking off the record, gave Rolling Stone something it assumed was on the record and thus published, leading to the General’s resignation. WikiLeaks has now abolished this distinction between off-record and on-record...

Next, because the most famous predictions for the future are foreclosed. “The Lonely Crowd” has been one of the best-selling sociology books since it was first published in 1950. At the time, author David Riesman anticipated a dead and buried society by the 2000s. With the social networks and “friends” made through the Internet and Twitter, we have gone from a society of One + Several to a society of Egos in Overdrive.

The collusion of these two trends is establishing a global society in which speed hinders action and confiscates memory, where the promotion of the ego quashes the desire for collective projects. So we must learn to live at ease within this uneasiness.

Riesman was right, in that he anticipated a change in post-war society, in other words a move from an inner-directed society to an other-directed society, one where individuals are no longer the product of their own history, but the product of what they know about others.

His analysis has become outdated however, because now we can see everything and know everything about others, including their most intimate thoughts, should they escape through Freudian slips.

The decisive factor is the over-exposure and thus the over-inflation of the Ego... The key lies in being able to move from one world to the other without losing too many feathers in the process, to be as much at ease as you possibly can within the general sense of uneasiness¹, and to fare even better for claiming to be completely “lucid” about everything that is happening, the rules and the challenges.

That’s the editorial approach taken by Ipsos Flair 2011. The title “Société of extralucids” plays on the dual meaning of the French term “extralucide” (literally “extra lucid” and also “clairvoyant.”) We explore how the French, disconnected from the Authorities², now regard them as a spectacle and devote their time elsewhere, wherever they can get the biggest return on investment, wherever they can live most comfortably.

In other words, bracing themselves and pushing back in some cases, becoming smarter and more mobile in others, but always with the same objective: staying at ease in a world of increasing uneasiness.

Jean-Marc Lech

PS:

¹ Extra-lucid and mobile, the society of the future.

² By “Authority“, we mean any entity sending a message (brand, advertising, political leader, media...) intended for an audience considered a passive recipient of that message.

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[User's guide]

*“Perhaps happiness
can only be found in train stations?”*

Georges Pérec

[France 2010, no limit year]

From disappointment to detachment

The “results crisis” was not supposed to last, in theory.

Let’s remember, this crisis didn’t start three years ago, but long beforehand, as part of the defiance-based agenda that marked the grieving and nostalgia for the “Glorious Thirty,” with the tunnels of 1977, the “austerity turning point” of 1983, the Internet, real estate and other bubbles, the dashed hopes of Y2K and the 2007 Presidential election, the assimilation of the future with climate or economic problems, and so on.

After Lehman Brothers³ and the global economic crisis in 2007/2008, 2009/2010 went on to develop and systematize most of the risks, peaking before the summer: “recovery showing signs of weakness in the United States,” “Greek bankruptcy threatens Europe,” “the unstoppable domino contaminates Spain, Portugal, the UK,” leading to the question: “when will France’s turn come?”. Since then, 700 billion dollars injected by Barack Obama have generated hopes of a recovery starting in 2011.

The abandonment of the Euro and a return to local currencies have even been mentioned, within a context where 38% of the French population reject the single currency... and 69% miss the Franc⁴.

What meaning can the word “crisis” have when the Managing Director of the IMF, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, warns that “Europe could be facing several years of weak growth”?

How can what the word signifies, an unstable and isolated situation implying the need for decisive choices to get out of it (a ship that must change course *hic et nunc* in a storm, for example) be made to fit with a permanent and durable state?

No one believes any longer that society is being shaken by spasms or convulsions, exploding bubbles, random stops and starts, only to better return to its “previous” condition: everyone now understands that France has been experiencing a demographic, technological and moral mutation, with new rules, new values, new types of relationships, etc. “Austerity”, “debt” and – ex-taboo of taboos – “rigor,” are returning to the forefront, like so many answers and automatisms.

³ Of which Christine Lagarde would say: “in response to a journalist who asked me a few months ago about women’s strength in times of crisis, I smiled and said that if Lehman Brothers had been “Lehman Sisters,” today’s economic crisis clearly would look quite different”.

⁴ A clear split between the socio-professional groups: 59% of manual workers and 58% of white collars want a return to the franc, whereas 86% of professions and 62% of senior executives want the Euro to stay.

In the 70s, 80s, 90s... these terms seemed justified by the prospect of the industrial and social modernization of France and – above all – by the legitimacy accorded to those in charge.

Their reason for existence came as much from the new routes they were supposed to open up as from the fact that public opinion believed in them, was willing to play the game and have confidence.

They imposed sacrifice, effort, transformation with heavy consequences: regroupings, extensive farming, mine closures, steel and metallurgy centers, rural exodus, and so on. From Dunkerque to Fos via Creutzwald, the scars still run deep...

Today however, those words sound worn and the public has changed.

Gentle euphemisms for some (what is “weak growth,” a “contrasting recovery,” “purchasing power at half-mast”?) who derive little joy from explanations proffered by a School of Medicine or Academy of Fine Arts, or mantras for others, they add to the list of “dysfunctions,” “restructurings,” and other “renovations” expressing the schism between words and things, or rather the way things are perceived.

French sociologist Jacques Marseille⁵ tried to show that *“from the death of Emile Zola (1902) to the present day (2009), the annual income per inhabitant of France has gone, on a constant currency basis, from a little over 2,200 Euros to a little under 22,000 Euros. At the same time, working hours have been divided by two. In other words, the “proletarian” has seen his purchasing power multiply by ten while his working hours have been divided in half.”*

This may be a reality for economists, but the timescale is much too abstract for the public, since the notion of “proletarian” disappeared with the expansion of the middle class and the emergence of products (PC, mobile phone, Internet, digital music players, video games, online poker, etc.) that are shifting budget items around and pushing back the limits of desire. Nowadays, the public being addressed is a plaintive public, burned, skeptical and disabused, because their expectations are now so high that, as they see it, the promises have not been kept and the results are most noticeable through their absence.

⁵ *L'argent des Français*, Perrin, 2009.

[Help, model needed!]

How can we sustain the belief that France is a country where progress is shared, in an environment of domestic and foreign peace, where each individual can be emancipated and experience the national pride of a country whose voice is listened to worldwide?

It's difficult when, on a diplomatic level, the French **leadership** continues to regress, with a Foreign Affairs Ministry budget (1.25 % of the State budget, 160 Diplomatic posts) reduced by 21% in the past ten years.

Admittedly, France is doing everything it can to exist as part of the Middle East peace process, notably by appointing a diplomat to handle the Israeli-Syrian part; likewise, during the 25th Franco-African Summit, France committed to ensuring a larger representation of the African Union at the G20.

However, these moves were seriously rivaled by the European Union's decision to create a European department for foreign action, whose mission is to develop European foreign policy around its High Representative, Catherine Ashton. This department involves no fewer than 8,000 EU employees stationed in Brussels or in the European Union delegations of non-member states.

Which explains the symbolic importance of the French presidencies of the G20 and G7-G8 in 2011, the coordination of which was entrusted to Guillaume Chabert, project director reporting to the Head of the Multilateral Affairs department at the Office of the Treasurer.

Is an alliance of greatness and modernity, of monarchic principle and democracy the French model, is it the quintessence of this "national identity" that Eric Besson⁶ attempted to define as a reaction to the "resurgence of certain 'communitarianisms,' of which the Burqa affair is an illustration, with the goal of engaging all our fellow citizens in deep reflection on what it means, in this early 21st century, to 'be French'... and highlight actions that can reinforce our national identity, and reaffirm republican values and pride in being French"?

⁶ <http://www.debatidentite.nationale.fr>

Applications of the myth: the French victory in the Soccer World Cup (July 1998),

Dominique de Villepin's speech at the UN (February 2003), the election of Nicolas Sarkozy as President of the French Republic (May 2007).

Deconstructions of the myth: what has the good news been, what have the great French feats over the past three, seven, ten years been? What is the price of the myth itself?

It is no longer a question of "saving the model" within a context where demography dictates an unfavorable game and where these last few years have been described in France as the "Trente Foireuses," a play on words in which "Glorious Thirty" becomes "Lousy Thirty."

For the model to work, a balance must be ensured between subscribers and beneficiaries.

The number of beneficiaries is on the rise: upstream, from birth to first job, providing a tax resource, downstream, from retirement to death. To whom must be added all those with a right to all types of assistance: public, national, regional, housing, health, etc.

The weight that contributors must bear inevitably gets heavier every year, leading to unpopular reforms, such as the pension reform (which moved the legal age from 60 to 62 years by the year 2018 and raised the age corresponding to the full benefit rate from 65 to 67, regardless of how long the contributor had been paying in).

But other reforms are on the horizon: taxing households on their finances related to their expenses, which theoretically favors working people with children (who must simultaneously have access to housing, equip and maintain their household, cover education costs, etc.) and threatens retirees (particularly 65-79-year-olds, those with the lowest expenses, homeowners and empty-nesters).

Next, a little purchasing power is needed and there has been great disappointment in Sarkozy, the man who embodied the destigmatization of money, who restored value to work by recreating a direct cause and effect relationship between work and income, who wanted a France of homeowners... and who wanted to moralize political life.

The cancelation of 733,000 Euros for the July 14th Garden Party gave the impression of a State on the edge of a precipice, increasingly “squeezed,” like a household giving up on all non-necessities. It contributed to the idea that, since May 2007, there has been nothing but a steady stream of figures: radar figures, Baccalaureat results, illegal immigrants, jobs vacated through retirement and left unfilled... as though only the commercial value of things and the cost of people had meaning.

We shouldn't be surprised that this obsession with figures is coming back at us like a boomerang and that we all derive an evil pleasure from criticizing the price of cigars⁷ in some cases, of property and travel in others⁸, as far as the price of something that should go unchallenged: the plane used for presidential travel⁹.

The “fiscal packet” (TEPA), introduced when Nicolas Sarkozy became President as a measure symbolic of the value of work and family, was called into question after the electoral flop suffered by presidential majority party candidates in the regional elections and, in the name of austerity realism, by the Prime Minister.

Now we're at the “leveling out” stage, as the Prime Minister put it, with plane and file rushing to the rescue, taking a full 10% off 470 tax incentives, with the exception of those judged most useful to employment (working from home, personal aids, etc.).

The reduction in the French “cash for clunkers” program (500 Euros instead of 700) for a car ordered before December 31st has not helped the sector: -18.7% in raw data for October 2009 through October 2010, according to figures from the French Committee of Automobile Manufacturers. The Peugeot-Citroën group dropped 17.3%, while Renault and Dacia shot down 21.9 %.

Even when “greened”¹⁰, tax incentives aren't escaping the reforms: a drop in the tax reduction (50%) for the purchase of solar panels, a 10% drop in the sustainable development tax credit, restriction on the type of work eligible for credit (thermal insulation, heat regulation, etc.); biofuels subsidies will disappear, while renovation materials eligible for a reduced VAT rate of 5.5% will be restricted, something that is viewed very negatively in Brussels.

The elimination of deduction of interest on income tax loans for the purchase of a main residence, replaced by a zero rate loan¹¹ reserved for first-time buyers only, follows the same strictly accounting-based rationale.

⁷ The Secretary of State for the Greater Paris region, Christian Blanc, resigned following the News that 12,500 Euros of cigars were bought by his cabinet in the space of ten months.

⁸ Alain Joyandet, Secretary of State for Overseas Development, resigned the same day; he was suspected of receiving an illegal building permit to expand a house, and a debate was raging over his having paid 116,500 Euros to rent a private jet for a trip to Martinique.

⁹ 176 million Euros.

¹⁰ The verb “verdir” (“to green”) is used now for any measure or communications strategy that is based on an environmental message. In the first case, it comes with new taxes; in the second, it raises the question of the legitimacy of the advertiser. *Green taxing or green washing...*

¹¹ This loan itself is modulated according to income, place of residence, purchase of new or old housing.

[Of words and other things]

How can the French commitment to Europe be respected? How can the debt be managed?

On the one hand, the aim is to lower the deficit from 8% of GDP in 2010 to 6% in 2011 and 3% in 2013, which implies 100 billion Euros in savings by 2013. 2011 should see spending drop by 10% for the State, government organizations and the “social sphere.”

On the other, France’s public debt (State, Social Security and local authorities) represents 83% of GDP, as opposed to 80.4% at the end of the first quarter. It should reach 86.2% in 2011 and 87.4% in 2012, and forecasters don’t expect to see it drop before 2013 and 2014, with respectively 86.8% and 85.3%; a reminder of the ceiling established by European treaties: 60%...

When transposed to the population, this represents 24,500 Euros per French citizen. At the same time, the Social Security deficit reached 23.2 billion Euros for 2010 and its debt was around 54.3 billion in 2009.

Although it can be demonstrated that France gets five hundred million Euros further into debt every day, these considerations still have no hold over the public.

Despite the economic impact (notably the expected increases in all the existing taxes and the creation of new ones), all these sums remain totally virtual, and exist like a sort of invisible cloud comprising 1,591.5 billion atoms, or Euros, as preferred.

Which explains the disconnect, free of remorse or regrets, between the virtual language used by some and the actual management implemented by others.

Banking experts or small shareholders on the one hand, riot police or associations of victims of police violence on the other, they all take the same critical view – a paradox indeed!

On an economic level, **austerity, debt and rigor** sound as anachronistic as **unfailing determination, tough struggle, sensitive zone, republican order** do on a security level: they're all just words. They won't bring back the lost myth and they provide no answers encouraging us to imagine a better future ahead.

On the one hand, they are passed down within families like as many alibis for the powerlessness of leaders, which only anchors the sense of irony and frustration.

This **process** of handing down disappointment is under-estimated, as though family conversations were focused only on sport, food, vacations and the atmosphere at work. If, in February 2010, 69% of French people claimed to miss the Franc¹², then nostalgia is certainly intergenerational, with divisions linked more to income than to age.

On the other hand, with the Hertzian avatars of former French broadcasting corporation ORTF buried under the Internet and blogs, the move away from information can only become accentuated, while too much contradictory information is destroying critique.

The “buzz” has become the real thing, superior to the real thing even; the credibility of sources is fundamental, and sources suffice in order to understand. The rise of WikiLeaks is symbolic of the way public opinion now views the Authorities and the loss of confidence.

WikiLeaks posts secret documents of a legal, military, diplomatic, economic, etc. nature, and does so in the name of the general principles upon which its work is based: **“the defense of freedom of speech and media publishing, the improvement of our common historical record and the support of the rights of all people to create new history. We derive these principles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In particular, Article 19 inspires the work of our journalists and other volunteers.”**

All narrators, all critics, two watchwords that accompany a society in which each individual is his own producer, and where the truth is neither definitive nor structuring.

¹² As opposed to 39% in February 2002 and 61%, in June 2005

Barack Obama's detachment, despite being a champion of the social networks, has not been enough to curb this worldwide phenomenon: in May at Hampton University in Virginia, he paradoxically commented: *"With iPods and iPads and Xboxes and PlayStations, — none of which I know how to work — information becomes a distraction, a diversion, a form of entertainment, rather than a tool of empowerment, rather than the means of emancipation. All of this is not only putting new pressures on you, it is putting new pressures on our country and on our democracy."*

Meanwhile, information has become a video game and reality one of the possible scenarios.

It can never be said enough that the more visible the strings are, the more public opinion will lose interest in the show, unless that show has the splendor of a Berlusconi, a Chavez or a Putin, each of whom has a style that embodies a dominant myth, and provided he produces results and efficiency, which explains the crisis that Italy is experiencing in this respect. It also explains the disaffection expressed by French people with the President of the Republic's attempts to regain control and generate meaning, unless he recovers the Dominant hand, of course.

On January 25th, 2010, on channel TF1, Nicolas Sarkozy attracted 33.5% of the TV audience; seven months later, on July 12th 2010, in the midst of various "affairs" that should have captured public interest¹³, 29.6 % watched him explain the situation and his plans.

On November 16th, after the cabinet reshuffle, Sarkozy's speech on TF1, France 2 and Canal+ was watched by 12.3 million viewers (TF1: 6.4 million, France 2: 4.5 million, Canal+: 1.4 million), whereas the equivalent protocol in February 2009¹⁴ was watched by 15.1 million viewers, as opposed to 8.8 million in November 2007.

These figures show the possibly definitive divide between the Authorities and "the people," with each person living his own life with his own habits and resources, his own ways and customs, in parallel systems, which have no vocation to intermingle.

The demonstrations in October and November against the pension reforms were interpreted as much as an anti-Sarkozy referendum as they were a mobilization of unions, with figures varying to an extraordinary extent, from single to triple, according to the source, police or demonstrators.

¹³ Accusations of: conflict of interest (the wife of Eric Woerth, ex-Minister of the Budget, Minister of Work and Treasurer of the UMP was wealth management consultant to Mme Bettancour, daughter of the founder of L'Oréal and main shareholder), hidden financing of political parties, concealment and tax fraud, sale of national heritage properties at a loss, etc.

¹⁴ This time on TF1, France 2 and M6.

Despite perturbing transportation and the free circulation of goods, hindering the French people in their day-to-day lives through the occupation of refineries and fuel depots¹⁵, and complicating business travel and vacations, for a long period the blockades and strikes enjoyed public support.

More than 2/3 of French people expressed their sympathy, but their support gradually eroded, and from one poll to the next, we saw a turnaround that became sharper as the impact of the strikes became more direct¹⁶ and it was clear that the law would be voted through in both Parliament and the Senate.

Promulgated by the President of the Republic, law no. 2010-1330 of November 9th, 2010, pertaining to the reform of pensions thus instituted the deferment of benefits: from 60 to 62 years for the legal age of retirement, and from 65 to 67 years for the age limit eligible for a full pension.

Indifference and resignation thus won the day; the atomization of conflicts, the absence of a unifying community of interest and of any leader with a viable alternative, prevented the movement from crystallizing: pension reform did not become a revolutionary issue...

[Chosen community versus imposed society]

The reaction was simple, once this detachment was stated: divide between those who depend on me and those who don't, to take a leaf out of Epictetus' book.

The former exist within an evolving network of friends and contacts, who live and travel with the person, are always available via wireless, augmented reality, geolocation... communicating between alter egos using their own codes (clan, community, ethnic, religious, geographic, cultural groups...): this is the chosen community. And it does not exclude monetization. Even the Pope decided to charge a fee for public appearances during his trip to the UK in September; 12 or 30 Euros were required to attend the masses and concerts. The Indulgences making a comeback, perhaps?

¹⁵ Whereas a major terrorist threat was supposed to loom over France during the same period, the ease with which the twelve French refineries were blocked is surprising, and one can only imagine the consequences of a determined action against them.

¹⁶ 40% of inhabitants of the Paris region consider that the movement is having an impact on their everyday life, as opposed to 29% of the general French population.

The latter (elected officials, educators, police and military, etc.) embody a community imposed upon the individual in the name of rules and codes viewed increasingly as an intrusion on privacy with all its tiresome constraints.

In *Ubu Loi* (2008), Dominique Lansoy and Philippe Sassier describe the burden of 10,500 laws, 120,000 decrees, 7,400 treaties, 17,000 community texts with tens of thousands of pages for sixty-two different codes.

Of course, as the French put it, “**ignorance of the law is not acceptable.**” Today’s judicial fiction makes it more a case of “ignoring” than “ignorance,” however.

This is not about unfamiliarity with the law, but rather an absolute disdain for its content and proscriptions.

Knowing and scorning in other words.

Giant aperitifs were the media phenomenon of the first half of 2010: gatherings like these, which imply problems in terms of disorderly conduct and group intoxication, are theoretically banned. That posed no problem either for the organizers, or for the participants, however.

The recipe is simple: on Facebook, invite a maximum number of people to come out and party, armed with alcohol, at a pre-determined spot in the city. At the prescribed time, like an alcoholic flash mob of a whole new kind, people gather together and drink.

The mission of law enforcement agencies is to “supervise” such an event, which must be extra-legal, too, only reinforcing the principle that coming to an arrangement is now the rule and that order exists nowhere.

These libertarian “Facebook aperitifs” correspond to one of the no-limit scenarios of Ipsos Flair 2010, living it up and spreading the Carnival spirit to broader society. But after the death of one participant in Nantes in May 2010, the rules were tightened up, while the Minister of the Interior affirmed: “*a general ban is simply not conceivable, and I would add not desirable even. Our goal is not to kill the conviviality of these events*”

However, the event planned for the Champ de Mars in Paris, just to prove that Paris is still the capital of France and affirm its alcoholic supremacy as part of the inter-city competition¹⁷, was banned, as were the ones scheduled for Boulogne-sur-Mer, Berck, Reims, Lille, Nice, Cannes, etc.

¹⁷ A record to beat: 50 people passed out in Nantes due to intoxication. Countless others threw themselves into the Loire river and had to be rescued by the fire department.

On the road, the lower price of fuel has sparked a desire to travel by car (traffic increased by 5% in 2009); and driving more frequently means wanting to drive faster, leading to lesser observance of speed limits.

This constant increase in speed on the roads is one of the explanations insurers give for increasing their rates, with more accidents with material damage (+2% in 2009), to be compared to the increase in the average cost of serious bodily accidents¹⁸ and of repairs (bodywork and mechanics)¹⁹.

With a difference of just 2 deaths, as many people were killed in France in 2008 as in 2009 with 4,273 deaths, and most significantly, the consistent drop in road deaths over the previous seven years was brought to a halt.

Another taxed and regulated area is tobacco, whose higher price is having a decreasing impact; in 2009, cigarette sales grew by 2.6 %. Despite measures to ban smoking in public places, the cost²⁰, the announcement of increased lung cancer rates in women²¹ or the 60,000 deaths a year directly linked to smoking, smokers represent 28.7% of the population.

We can therefore envisage a development in cross-border trade in proportion to the current and future increases, and also an increase in consumption if smoking becomes a status-related gesture with downright expensive brands, like Sobranie in Russia which, at 175 rubles, costs 3.5 times more than the standard Marlboro pack.

¹⁸ Multiplied by three in ten years.

¹⁹ + 3% to +4% per year.

²⁰ The sum to be paid out for the standard packet has multiplied by four in 20 years.

²¹ +20% in five years, very soon the leading female cancer ahead of breast cancer. France is the European country with the largest proportion of pregnant women who smoke.

The phenomenon can be related to the collapse in sales of anti-smoking treatments (- 21.5%), patches (- 46,1%), with nicotine substitutes in oral form now prevailing (57.3% of market share, but on a generally decreasing market). The next attempt at influencing smokers will consist in shocking images on cigarette packs...

As for HIV, the systematic use of condoms is dropping, despite innovations by brands (flavors, tastes, textures, etc.) to boost this market, and reduce risks and lassitude.

This is in a context where the number of people living with the virus in France was around 144,000 in late 2008, while 31,000 had reached the AIDS stage; after 873 deaths in 2001, 358 deaths were recorded in 2008.

This led to the “Plan Sida”²² (AIDS plan) 2010/2014, which is centered around screening. 50,000 people are apparently infected by the virus without knowing it, which implies that “each person must be aware that he might be concerned.” More than five million people agreed to do the test, doubling the current figure.

In mainland France, the priority is to “reinforce action targeting the most vulnerable groups (homosexuals, migrants, prostitutes or drug users²³) who will be offered yearly screenings. Overseas, and notably in Guyana, where the infection has reached epidemic proportions, screening should be general.

Helping oneself

For the past five or six years, paying has become something of an oddity, with free offers, special deals, garage sales, online sales, bartering, etc. competing to show that the same object can have ten different prices, depending on the sales channel.

The “don’t see, don’t get” trend is becoming widespread, where least expected, a natural consequence of the process: as long as the right conditions are provided, the illusion of a good-natured atmosphere will do the rest.

Nature Capitale transformed the Champs-Élysées into a “plant work of art,” with lawns, vegetable plantings, flowers, greenhouses, etc., replacing the usual paving stones and tar.

After 1.9 million people visited it on May 23rd and 24th, rather than the romantic-naturalist-style grand finale expected, the ending translated into a series of lootings and violent acts, with many people brazenly tearing out the plantings to decorate a balcony or liven up a dinner. After all, five fruits and vegetables is one of the State’s recommendations, and organic is still expensive...

Organizing an in-store picnic, helping yourself from the aisles, stealing copper cables from railway tracks, these are all just more or less intense expressions of a French saying: “*you can’t have fun if you’re watching your manners.*”

²² www.santesports.gouv.fr

²³ The HIV rate is 200 times higher among homosexuals than among heterosexuals, 18 times higher among intravenous drug users than among others, 9 times higher among heterosexual migrants, according to the Plan.

Viewing Authority as a hindrance is a major step towards its ultimate delegitimization, with the prospect of increasingly tense power struggles, far-removed from an ideal of non-action, but echoing the immediate reactions of wounded Narcissists scorning any notion of otherness.

[Stay in the game or take your ball away?]

²⁴ After the demonstration by 8,500 Chinese and Asians on June 20 in Belleville, in reaction to the assaults and threats they have been subjected to, a request was made to the Prefect to organize a private guard with the task of defending them.

²⁵ In France, *Academia* now follows around 100,000 students every year with a network of 25,000 teachers distributed across 106 agencies, for a turnover of 37 million Euros in 2008. In the public system since 2008, 40,000 jobs have been eliminated following retirements, with the State also intending to increase the number of students per class to reduce the number of teachers.

²⁶ In Italy, expulsions of Roms and Africans seeking asylum have multiplied, in some cases because they are “*a danger to public safety*,” in others to “*intensify the fight against clandestine immigration and all types of illegal traffic*.” (<http://www.interno.it>).

²⁷ Since the State privatized highway companies in 2005, highway tolls have increased by +11.07% in the case of Autoroutes du Sud de la France and +7.79 % in the case of Cofiroute, with the State raking in 14.8 billion Euros when capital was opened up.

At this new stage, collective regulators exist like extras in a play, whose purpose is definitively absent from the theater. Among others, this raises questions about the justification of taxes as a monetary contribution required of individuals via the authority, definitively and without any return, just to cover public spending.

But what spending? For what public? To do what?

The notion of calling on private militias to replace the police force in protecting people and property²⁴ is entering into norms.

The main motivation for frequenting private education systems is more the impression that National Education has failed²⁵ than that the children themselves have failed, in a remarkable reversal of success factors.

The guilt-free stigmatization of the unemployed, tax evaders, immigrants, etc., as in Greece or Italy,²⁶ raises the question of how much they cost, and their responsibility in burdening the tax system.

As for transportation modes, tollbooths, water services, parking lots, tunnels (the most famous being the Eurotunnel), bridges and other public works, these are the domain of private companies²⁷, which can give the impression of hidden arrangements and overlaps between local, regional and national taxes, VAT, etc.

An opportunity for reactionary, conservative, “neo-Poujadist” political spin that could prove useful in 2012...

Politics and marketing: reject or set ablaze?

2010 was no exception when it comes to the gradual crumbling away of the credibility of Authorities of all kinds. Efforts to contest policies, companies, brands... have existed for several years now, and we have commented on them in the most recent editions of Ipsos Flair. But this corrosion is continuing and worsening in terms of how the consumer-citizen perceives it, every time a promise is not kept or elites are caught red-handed in the act of deluding the public or supposed incompetence.

A year on a gunpowder barrel

The citizen and the consumer may interpret the past year in a very acerbic manner.

It started with a huge flop on an international scale. Orchestrated and promoted by the major global economic powers, the Copenhagen Summit, which was supposed to be a major turning point in contemporary history, a groundbreaking convergence of history, economics and ecology, ended with mumbling declarations of principle, empty of any content accessible to ordinary citizens. Cutting off futures, it was an admission of powerlessness or rather of the excess power of individual interests over collective interest, of short term over long term. Three months later, at the Paris Agriculture Show, the French President commented "ecology is starting to get tiresome." The ecological plan, which we believed still had the power to coagulate selfish desires and unite energies, has thus become questionable for some, foolishly utopian for others... And eco-lassitude is setting in. A world perhaps dying, and watching itself die while wallowing in its immediate comfort, its short-term luxury, its passion for pleasure satisfied in the here and now. Copenhagen should have brought a confession, a collective penitence and a redemption. Instead, it turned out to be just another High Mass, with a drab sermon, simply sending the faithful to the next mass... One year later, at the very last minute, the emerging countries saved the Cancun Summit from an identical fiasco, but in our societies, the collective ecological design is collapsing. Slowly. In France, meanwhile, movements based around political ecology entered into a strange dance, consisting in mergers, door slamming and outbursts.

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In early 2010, in a public trend survey published by the La Croix newspaper, we observed a general rise in concern among the French: the only subject seeing a decrease in concern was the environment and pollution. The citizen is becoming detached.

There was no lack of solemn announcements in 2010. Another summit, the G20, was supposed to open the way to a revision of aggressive, expansionist monetary policies. A few days before the summit opened in the USA, the Federal Reserve did the complete opposite and injected 600 billion dollars into the US economy. Once again, the summit boiled down to an acknowledgement of disagreement and a postponement to the "Next time." In France, the President announced a cabinet reshuffle in late June. The news leaked through the Twitter account of a member of Parliament received at the Elysée Palace. The reshuffle dates kept coming, as did potential candidates to the post of Prime Minister, and with them an expectation of something new arose, only to see the suspense end five months later, with a surprise cast... in terms of its total absence of surprise. For citizens, there was an overwhelming sense of "all that for this." The President's popularity, measured in the Ipsos Le Point barometer, reached a low point.

In politics, the effects of the announcements multiplied, while the effects on real life became increasingly rare. Leaders sometimes lost all common sense, denying the empty fuel tanks in gas stations or the hundreds of kilometers of icy roads. Communicating to feign and mimic control over an uncontrollable situation... to the point of absurdity?

In economics too, citizens might engage in sarcasm on opening the newspaper. Banks returned to record profits, astronomical bonuses reappeared, two years after the financial world almost caused a collapse of the global economy. The very same banks are playing the role of deficit police, pressuring States that over-spend. And citizens too. Economics moves faster than politics. Speculative trends have appeared again. 6,680 Euros for one square meter of housing in Paris! Of course that figure made headlines in the press early in December 2010, for at least three reasons. First because it objectivizes a reality: at this price, only one third of residents of the Paris region currently have the means to buy housing in the city that corresponds to their needs, and that proportion falls to 15% among renters with no property to sell to constitute an asset itself benefiting from this huge rise in prices²⁸.

²⁸ Study by economists from the "City and Real Estate" Chair at the University of Paris-Dauphine, carried out for Crédit Foncier.

Out with the young families, and long live the Navigo five-zone transport pass! Next, because this figure quite simply marks a maximum as historic as it is alarming, just two years after speculators of all kinds were brought briskly back to reality. Finally because, as all the newspapers have pointed out, 7 to 8% of property buyers in Paris are foreign²⁹, usually extremely wealthy, and are making a significant contribution to the rise in prices, alongside the effects of the drop in interest rates. Speculation, globalization, inflation... are we headed in the same direction as “before”? And what is the government doing about it?

Fast world, slow politics.

The question of a fast-moving economy and the obligation of politics to follow it blindly is theorized by Hartmut Rosa in “Acceleration,” or in a more enviro-organic-Zen version by Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber (“Trop Vite” [“Too Fast”]). Hartmut Rosa: “there is also a desynchronization between the political and economic systems. Democracy, with its process of dialogue and decision, takes a lot of time. Each participant must express his arguments, and a consensus must then be sought. The more pluralist and complex a society is, the more time is needed to reach that consensus. Technical progress and economic transactions are happening faster and faster, the way our democracies operate has become too slow.” Another reminder that the advice given by researcher Dominique Wolton in 1997, almost 15 years ago, is hard for politics to apply: “the more we operate live, the more we need to introduce some hindsight³⁰.”

The acceleration of the system is, on the contrary, causing panic among elites, or an obsession with communication designed to give the illusion of control, within a media system that is deforming and expeditious. Perhaps leading to the disappearance of some of the tenets of Democratic Politics, or even the capacity for any real reform. In his Memoirs published in 2010³¹, Michel Rocard makes a negative assessment: “the presentation of any reform project requires the presentation of a context, demands explanations that are often complex, calls for the presentation of contradictory opinions that are not always simple. The world of the image finds it hard to cope with these constraints, which TV station managers, editors-in-chief and above all advertisers try to sweep out of the way as much as possible (...). The world of political competition, politics viewed as a battlefield, on the other hand, is obviously “a piece of cake” (...). In the short term, day to day, the drift I’m describing brings a consequence (...) visible to the naked eye: half of the politician’s profession is disappearing. Administration is being chipped away in favor of competition.”

²⁹ See for example, *Le Point* of July 31st 2010.

³⁰ Penser la communication, 1997.

³¹ Si cela vous amuse, 2010.

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Except he forgets to add that the citizen is no fool, and will no longer be taken in. It remains to be seen what his reaction will be: abstention, or even protestation, rebellion or detachment.

Football: who's in charge?

The travesty of the French team's involvement in the Soccer World Cup also revealed much about panic among the authorities. Beyond the character of the players and their mediocre sports performance, the saga revealed a succession of authority figures who were either disobeyed or incompetent, interfering negatively in a maelstrom ideally formatted for a summer soap opera: a coach with no control over his players, a captain in league with his conspirators, a star player crying on channel TF1, begging for peace from the media two hours before starting a training boycott in front of cameras, a minister resented by players for criticizing the number of stars on their hotel, another lecturing incredulous players who she would later describe as "children" and "immature gangsters," a parliamentary commission expressing concern and hearing players behind closed doors, without disconnecting the Twitter account of one of its members, a President who let a deposed captain in through a little side door of the Elysée Palace... The Church had the good taste to keep quiet, and even there, perhaps I missed something?

Real authority, which stems from the legitimacy of the end result, no longer exists:

instead we get authoritarianism, arrogance, pretence. Viewing this spectacle, citizens are gradually becoming detached. The day before the French team's last game against South Africa, 75% of the French population wanted them to lose in a poll broadcast by channel France 2.

So, if all the authority figures are crumbling away, is this a time for transgression, eruption, rebellion, burning?

Detachment as the ultimate transgression

Alain Touraine ("Après la crise" ["After the Crisis"]), using similar observations and historical records as a basis, describes why "society no longer exists (...), the differences and relationships between groups no longer allow a glimpse of those large units which until now were referred to as social classes, and which corresponded to specific lifestyles and social relations."

In his analysis of capitalist society, he explains how power has slipped from the real economy to the financial economy, disconnected from any material reality, so that the manual workers suffering the consequences of financial crises in their flesh and their refrigerator know that their bosses are not really responsible for it, or may even be suffering just as much. Who should the worker present his demands to, if the boss really has no influence on reality? The Federal Reserve? The WTO? The IMF? The employer advice bureau?...

These acronyms are abstract, inaccessible, foreign to him. The model of a society that draws the increase in its wealth from technical progress, where two groups (workers on the one hand, who have the jobs, bosses on the other, who have the capital) fighting for a favorable balance in the sharing of the wealth created, with the whole thing moderated by a State pushing the sharing in one direction or the other, has disappeared. In a globalized and financialized world, worker demands can no longer access the real power.

What is the point in fighting? What is the point in exploding with rage? Except for adding to the negativity.

And so a detachment from the system becomes inevitable, especially since this system is carried by elites viewed as being as powerless as they are frenzied in relation to the media.

Detachment does not mean ignorance. It is a deliberate act, the choice to ignore the severity of certain problems, since no accessible authority is able to resolve them. This rationale favors the immediate over a preparation of the future, which nurtures the individual or close benefit rather than big collective designs. Arguments based on transgenerational benefits, whether it's about saving the planet, the public deficit or pension schemes, no longer have any weight.

Detaching oneself is a low-pass filter. Only problems of an immediate, familiar nature, involving personal interest, will generate interest: the Euro is thus becoming an outlet, due to the price increases attributed to it (examples can be found on the front page of newspapers) and which its macro-economic virtues can no longer counterbalance. Calls to abandon the Euro are no longer taboo, and are even becoming political options.

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In its Eurobaromètre survey, the European Commission shows that two European countries share the distinction of having relatively high deficits at the same time as a population that considers, more than in other countries, that the measures taken to reduce deficits can be postponed. Those countries are Portugal... and France! Detachment is cousin to “yes but later” for all forms of discipline, collective pain and individual sacrifice for the collective gain. There is occasional talk of the impossibility of reforming society: that is surely exaggerated, since reforms are happening. The citizen views them with detachment, doesn’t support them, expresses his mood but does nothing to prevent them. In Europe, it is in other countries such as Greece, the UK or Ireland that the most violent demonstrations against reforms have occurred, not France.

The pension reform is an illustration of this resistance through detachment. Basically, as shown in a cold-call survey published by Ipsos in December 2010, 52% of French people judge this reform as inevitable. They even agree that the system no longer provides the expected continuity, and 65% of French people think that the creation of a mutual pension scheme is vital. And yet, when discussing the reform, there was strong opposition, and several months later, half the French population are still talking about “anger.” This is the schizophrenia of those who can see the constraints, but reject them in terms of their practical consequences.

The electoral period that is starting presents a real question mark, since it must tell us whether a realistic political offering is still capable of mobilizing a society that has placed a great distance between reality and itself, to the point of limiting its support for any long-term collective project. It is at these times that political genius must be expressed. In their collections, all the analysts quoted above envision the impossibility of this support, which would thus lead from crisis to crisis to more violent reactions. And to disaster. They all see the solution in a regeneration of the collective political plan. 2012 will be a window opening onto that plan. But having political responsibilities is no fun at the moment.

Is it better to be in marketing?

Marketing: individual pleasures and detachment from brands

For 70% of French people questioned in November 2010, the “worst” of the crisis is still to come. In the consumer’s mind, we are far from the enthusiasm of stabilization or a return to growth. The crisis is still an enduring structural fact that determines certain behaviors. 53% of French people planned to tighten their budget for the end-of-year celebrations, i.e. more than in 2009 (49%).

At the same time, more than one person out of three can no longer find enough time to look after their own well-being. Yet the French view this as something important. Lack of time influences their “capacity to relax” (63% of quotes), “health” (47%), “emotional life” (43%) or even “self-esteem” (40%). If they had more time, they would mainly use it to do nothing, sleep and relax. Thus the king-consumer aspires to become the king-couch-potato, a hedonistic and individualistic form of detachment.

Between prudence and the need to slow down and look after oneself, opportunities for marketing inevitably arise.

As far as the first part is concerned, price has been a hobbyhorse for many brands since the crisis began. The crisis marked the end of a form of distribution bipolarity, with hard discount on the one side, nurturing an elliptical and efficient promise of competitive prices, while the other brands tended more towards choice, a broad product range, and associated services. The crisis blew the final whistle and the big brands raised up prices in their priorities (notably through the development of private label brands): the effect has been immediate, with hard discount losing customers, despite the opening of sales outlets and an increase in the size of stores³². However, things are far from simple for the other brands. The consumer is also moving away from consumption rituals and pilgrimages to outlying superstores. The latter are losing market shares in favor of more local formats. The most obvious case of this is the Carrefour group, whose hypermarkets lost 0.3 market share points, while the Carrefour Market local format, by gaining 0.4 points, shifted alongside the other brands using medium-sized formats. Leclerc and Système U were among the year’s winners.

³² Source of data on distribution:
Kantar Worldpanel
Référence Expert
2010.

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By adapting to price expectations and distribution formats better suited to smart time management, distribution brands are following strategies that are generally efficient and are bringing a return to growth: after the spectacular drop of 2009, household purchases at food supermarkets are on the rise again (+1.9% in volume, +2.5% in value), hence pushing back the specter of de-consumption that the crisis brought back into the spotlight, even slipping a few hedonistic treats into the shopping cart: consumption of foie gras increased³³ by almost 10% in volume during the 2009 end-of-year festivities, with stable prices, and wine sales are on the rise too (+1.2 % in volume in 2010), boosted by the cool summer rosés³⁴.

The combined search for price and anything that will help the consumer recreate a pleasure bubble or positive introspection seems to be a winning recipe for

marketing. And so we've witnessed a certain effervescence in marketing in this area, to the point of launching new and sometimes daring products during a crisis period (Nesfluid for example, which is totally in line with the protection and benefit values sought by a lot of consumers, like a symbolic windbreak against the harshness of the world).

Everything appears to be going well, you just have to come up with the right products, with the right benefits, at the right price and off you go on a new growth cycle. That's forgetting the detachment phenomenon, which the consumer has also activated in relation to brands and marketing in general.

One of the consequences of the crisis is probably the return of the product to primacy in the act of consumption. Because if the crisis reinforced anything, in the consumer's critical thinking, it is the importance of the product, both in its functional aspects and in its price. As we have seen, behavioral changes are not unilaterally dominated by a rationale of mastering spending in an uncertain economic environment. There lingers a definite, noble and sometimes enthusiastic taste for a return to useful products that are well thought-out and which bring a real benefit when used. The right product at the right price.

This return to the product and to the tangible is an expression of a basic trend and will doubtless mark the years to come. The consumer may be keeping his appetite, but he has moved away from brands (fewer people are willing to pay extra for brand names with no real justification in relation to the product), and above all shows a huge critical distance from marketing arguments that are too ethereal, disconnected from reality, favoring an aesthetic yet false discourse at the expense of a form of truth that is raw, sincere and realistic as to the product's nature and benefit.

³³ <http://www.lefigaro.fr/conso/2010/02/15/05007-20100215ARTFIG00504-pendant-la-crise-lesfrancais-aiment-le-foiegras-.Php>

³⁴ <http://www.lefigaro.fr/conso/2010/03/18/05007-20100318ARTFIG00781-en-pleine-crise-les-ventesde-vin-ont-repris-l-andernier-.php>

This ends up generating self-criticism among advertisers themselves in relation to the vanity of certain brand arguments, with Laurent Habib in mind: “getting rid of vain ideas precisely means measuring the damage caused by hollow advertising, emptied of any substance, which considers itself an object of contemplation.”

Generating approval and desire without going over the top, that’s the new challenge facing marketing, and advertising in particular, which is also confronted with its own major challenge in terms of sustainable development. With scarcely any exaggeration, we need a return, at least for a while, to the old-style “commercial,” the simple “product demo,” rather than attempting to drown the product in bizarre stories.

Not all communicators are aware yet of this requirement, which runs counter to a natural form of creativity and another revolution that has opened up to them and that they are eager to put to another use: the digital revolution. And yet, the emblematic iPad provides a concrete illustration of that requirement. It’s a product, establishing new types of use, and advertising on the product is simply a demonstration of those uses. It doesn’t say “welcome to the 21st century” or any nonsense of that kind, it shows what you can do in the 21st century.

Digital communication or taking humor, provocation and nostalgia as last resorts

The problem is that not all products have the functional genius of an iPad. While some are audaciously attempting a return to functional advertising (Ariel dares to show us the effect the powder has on dirty socks), most brands are still embarrassed by it. Meanwhile, every day communicators are discovering the flexibility of the digital media, which enable them to introduce new words into the vocabulary of campaign creation: viral, Flash, YouTube, specialized sites... as a complement or not to traditional sites. But the consumer, digital or not, just like the citizen, no longer wants to hear silliness, and is really only interested in himself and those close to him, the benefits that he can get from the product. Otherwise, he zaps.

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So how can we keep the consumer's attention? Whether deliberately or not, communicators have set up a fairly simple strategy based on a combination of two different approaches: humor, provocation and mockery on the one hand, nostalgia on the other.

More than a place for building a brand image, the Internet is a place of deconstruction, looting, dismantling through misappropriation. The misappropriation of advertising has become a huge hit, admittedly in bad taste sometimes, but altering if not the actual brand image, at least the work of those trying to present it. The Net as a place of easy transgression has probably pushed communicators and marketing to adopt some of its codes, since classic advertising has been rejected by the consumer, and sometimes taken to pieces by the "e-consumer." As a result, when reviewing the year and celebrating its successes, what do we find at the top of the hit list? Successes in terms of audience, yes, using all the agoras of the modern, globalized Internet (Facebook, YouTube,...) obviously, but invariably playing on notes of humor, provocation and mockery. One and a half million fans went to the Facebook page of the Oasis brand to elect "fruit of the year." Ramon Tafraise was the winner with the "fruitovernment" he created (any resemblance to...). Around the same time, at least 4 million websurfers were watching Tipp-Ex commercials and testing the ingeniousness of the creators of a campaign portraying a ludicrous hunter and an artificial bear, following the instructions given by websurfers. A global buzz ensued, to ascertain who would find the idea not anticipated by the designers of the campaign, and the whole world laughed at these funny little do-it-yourself films, the whole thing serving global awareness of our good old "white-out" revisited for the schoolchildren and secretaries of the 21st century. A more recent example comes from the USA: to launch its new Legacy model, Subaru reversed the codes of the automobile world and launched a major viral campaign presenting the absolute anti-dream when it comes to cars: Mediocrity 2011 (in the process, taking an old, characterless car made by its rival Hyundai), with extensive back-up from false advertising videos, and a website deliberately designed to be deathly boring and drab... The campaign took tongue-in-cheek to the extreme, but practically eclipsed the actual product.

There are many examples of these campaigns which, on the Web at least, are attempting to overcome the distance between consumer and advertising discourse, simply by making him laugh. The Web can thus become a huge Luna Park of ephemeral laughter, an industry based on irony and causticity, permanent surprise using all possible means, in good or very bad taste, to achieve regeneration. A permanent Internet happening that is turning into a “globalized prank.” And one moving further and further away from the product itself, or taking a little dig at it even.

A dangerous game, probably. Because winning the consumer back in the long term via brand names will surely not happen through repeated bouts of irony.

Of course, provocation and humor go beyond the framework of the Internet and are becoming codes in their own right, sometimes reflecting a transgressive flexibility in relation to codes and conventions. The Amaguiz campaign is one example, showing an old man doing exactly what he wants in a store. Cartoon characters the Raving Rabbits have also been placed in an MPV. The trend is an international one that is accentuated in many Anglo-Saxon countries, and due to the porous nature of the Web, we can expect that provocation to develop in France. The Diesel brand, for example, to promote its line of undergarments, is making and promoting undershorts and panties featuring suggestive comments: “tonight, I’m your master,” for him, “today, I’m your maid” for her. In Australia, an organization specialized in artificial procreation is doing a print campaign on the theme “don’t spoil your sperm,” being careful to stick the pages of the magazine together where the ad is located, complete with photo of a scantily-dressed woman. The magic of the Web and of creativity in general is opening the way to all sorts of transgressions, as if this were the only possible route to narrow the gap with the consumer.

Others are trying the more sensible, but no less exacerbated, strategy of nostalgia. As if the old couple formed by the consumer and advertiser were only staying together through a respect for the past, for the road they have traveled together. “Remember, we used to trust each other in those days...” Once again, it’s a worldwide trend. In Poland, Ariel echoes, with humor, the rampant nostalgia for the Eastern Bloc, showing that Ariel protects laundry so well during a wash that old sweaters “made in Yugoslavia” with a very “Iron Curtain” design still look like new.

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In France too, consumers are looking longingly to the past. In the October 2010 wave of the Ipsos Observatory on Consumption Modes, and concerning the periods of history which consumers would have liked to live in, most of the sample voted for the recent past (the 1950s-60s and, above all, 1970s-80s). Secondly, this look-to-the-past trend has been growing over the past three waves of the survey. With a fairly spectacular increase as concerns the 1970s-80s: 36% voted for them in 2006, 50% in 2010! The 1970s and 80s were viewed as the most innovative in another Ipsos survey on Innovation. "ABBA la crise" [a play on words combining "Abba" with "down with the crisis"] says an advertisement for the musical comedy Mamma Mia, clearly designating that era as a much fantasized refuge. Talking and innovating like they used to, in those years, in a way that is useful, simple and functional, would seem to be one possible code for reconnecting with the consumer. Some advertisers are going for it. We're seeing a return of Germaine and the extraterrestrials for Lustucru pasta, of Alain Delon in his heyday for Eau Sauvage, the return of legendary models for Renault, with a little wink at its place in the French heritage for the end-of-year campaign on the final days of the "cash for clunkers" scheme, and so on...

The advertiser-consumer pair could quickly lose step with each other, or feed on ploys to try and last a little while longer. This isn't about the consumer's desire either, that desire is still there. But the consumer is moving away from classic marketing strategies, having learned to decipher them over the years. It is hard to build an in-depth argument within this context, and to create the right conditions for a return to confidence. At a time when its technical resources are increasing, marketing is reduced to using the flashiest possible means to keep the consumer's attention, despite this detachment, and also the fragmentation of media consumption, which makes it increasingly hard to spotlight messages.

Conclusion: moving away from soliciting and populism.

The temptation to resort to soliciting in marketing, one that some brands have run with in their most recent advertising, is the equivalent of populism in politics. The Larousse dictionary states that populism designates "a political attitude aiming to satisfy the immediate demands of the people, with no long-term goal."

Within the context described above, this stance can be very tempting in politics, to the point of being explicitly endorsed on occasions (“Populiste moi? J’assume” by Jean-Luc Mélenchon³⁵) or on the contrary, become an object of debate (who is populist, who isn’t) and an insult (Nadine Morano to Eva Joly, for example, on the set of the TV program “A vous de juger”).

One might have thought, a year ago, that the crisis would further accentuate a right to transgression that the consumer had granted himself. That he was about to cross another line and express his protestation and loss of confidence in the authorities in a livelier, more radical or even more violent manner. 2009 produced the first signs of that violence. 2010 had everything needed to light the fire and yet, citizens and consumers took another route. One – almost worse – that involves abandoning struggle and adopting detachment, the “end of society” route, as Alain Touraine puts it, focusing back on short-term values and individuality. French society continues to move forward, but with cotton wool balls stuck deep inside its ears, so as to avoid any remaining hedonism being perturbed by the ecological or economic alarms going off all over the world. A gigantic “keep going, we’ll see... but later.”

The ground is slippery... and the slope steep. Steep for the politicians who will need to restore their credibility and offer a plan with a view to 2012, while avoiding a populism that is nevertheless very audible. Steep for the marketing people who, in a more open and more fragmented world, will also need to find the codes of brand credibility, in their capacity to offer “real” products and their ability to communicate about real content, taking the high ground above trivia and the impact created by humor and provocation. Whatever the case, it is the capacity of the elites and authorities to reduce the gap between them and the consumer that is in play.

³⁵ http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/melenchon-populiste-moj-assume_919603.html
[Roughly translatable as “Me a populist? Hell yes!”]

[Firing line]

2012

Electoral calendar permitting, on Sunday May 6th at 8 pm, the French will find out the name of their future President of the Republic, perhaps with the same tendency to confuse political program and miracle man (or woman).

In January 2010³⁶, 67% of the population claimed to trust neither the right nor the left to govern the country; 78% considered that the politicians in charge, in general, are little or not at all concerned about what people think. 65% also claimed not to trust the presidential institution, and 68% the Government.

Alongside this, 78% also thought that “*people can change society through their choices and their actions*,” which did not prevent abstention during the Regional elections from increasing from 22.1% in March 1986 to 53.5% in March 2010, whereas according to claims, local elected officials are the ones the French trust most...

Despite it all, one after another, candidates for investiture by their party announced their intentions starting November 2010, including, for the Socialist Party, Arnaud Montebourg, Manuel Valls, Ségolène Royal, etc.

These paradoxes and attitudes reinforce the skeptical and detached interpretations of a public constantly wanting to be more valued and recognized, who are counting primarily on themselves to get out of the crisis and who are left stone cold by the spectacle of personal ambitions...

[Scattering or regrouping]

Among the scenarios imagined by Ipsos Flair in 2005 to accompany disappointment, two might have taken shape collectively:

- Debating and criticizing in order to rebuild is the scenario driven by a **desire for opposites**: doing the contrary of what others are doing so that it works.

³⁶ Source : Cevipof, Edelman and Institut Pierre Mendès France.

This scenario is not looking good, since it lacks a spokesperson capable of rallying people, who has enough authority, skill, content and ideas; the simple act of being different is no longer operational. What political program can he come up with?

- **Becoming overwhelmed by frustration and violence, degenerating:** this is the famous *“it’s all going to explode”* heard for decades in every taxi in France. But **transgression** has limited itself to self-limiting communications operations primarily designed to obtain supra-legal compensation, and the authorities have given up on pursuing the troublemakers, as in Lyons, despite the forty buses set on fire with Molotov cocktails.

Ultra-violence, which we will be discussing further, isn’t transgression either: it surprises people, because it’s hard to imagine young girls as rioting demonstrators, but it remains traditional in its motivations: venting your frustration and helping yourself from looted stores.³⁷

[Society of “extra-lucids”]

The France now coming to light is a society of “extra-lucids.”

Extra, because the French are watching from the outside, the side, the top, are not projecting into what they can see but instead are observing, decoding, watching coldly, looking for the trap, believing that the advertiser wants to swindle them, most of all.

Lucid, because the cards and the territory are on the table, everything is perfectly clear when it comes to the economic and demographic situation, in the crisis used to justify the end of the Welfare State, the social, cultural and financial de-cohesion and polarization setting in³⁸, with a systematic comparison of prices, information, the advantages or frustrations of such and such a person.

Which is leading to increasingly radical splits, and the clashes that logically stem from that.

And the plural **s**, to illustrate the diversity of beliefs and values, of power struggles, of issues that unite or oppose generations, communities, working and non-working people, subscribers and beneficiaries.

³⁷ From 1990 to 2009, the number of delinquent minors increased by 118%, *“violence among girls”* by 97% between 2004 and 2009.

³⁸ Whereas the new President of Brazil insists on her desire to eradicate poverty based on growth higher than 7%, analysts quietly announce that almost one French household in eight is living under the poverty line, with an income of less than 950 Euros a month, with single parent families being the most affected, representing 13% of the total population

Note that in French too, the word “extralucide” has a second meaning: clairvoyant.

Some people have a thermometer culture, and associate a situation with each degree, as though the stages of life could follow a linear path, while others adhere to a barometer culture, which is more flexible since it is the deformation of the barometer that measures pressure and makes it visible on a dial! In other words, these people don't reason in stages, but rather in sequences to be experienced to the full.

Ipsos Flair 2011 invites you to visit the various aspects and expressions of attitudes within this fragmenting society, between those still attached to the values they have known or want to pass on, those who idealize the Welfare State or multiculturalism, those who are profiting and those who are improvising.

- **Got it. Next?** covers the contradictions and disappointments, the expectations and frustrations of the French population, the reasons for their psychological exfiltration and their detachment.
- **Extras** describes the new ways of consuming, communicating, positioning oneself, in a word... living, mirrored by tension and resistance.
- **Opportunities** examines the attitudes of consumers/citizens and the impact of the expected actions on marketing, corporate or advertising strategies.

[Got it. Next?]

[Return to basics]

How to be happy?

Our analysis presents a simple equation.

On the one hand, personal aspirations, which admittedly refer to Maslowian, perhaps slightly Balzacian, fundamentals: being comfortable and safe, eating well, being master of your own money, starting a family, being a homeowner, bequeathing a heritage, and contributing to your family's financial and cultural progress...

These human desires are simple and constitute an axis of stability, sedentary lifestyle and security based on notions of property, career and handing down.

On the other hand, the conditions to make that happen.

Either it's impossible, because there is no means of access and that's an unavoidable fact, as in the countries where the middle class has never existed, and where a split persists between the heirs in power and the masses at work.

Or it's possible, because the country is at a time in its evolution where it is changing and creating the economic conditions for access, with the emergence of an intermediary class that is discovering consumerism, brands and "goods," as in Brazil, India, China or Russia, like Europe after World War II with, in addition and simultaneously, the Internet and everything that it makes different and possible.

Or it seems more and more difficult. France has been at that stage for some time with, at the very heart of its identity, the "Glorious Thirty" years. The formula created by Nicolas Sarkozy, who wanted a "*France of homeowners*," appealed because it returned to those fundamentals, but the prospects differ according to demographic generations and their value systems, cohorts made more perceptible by the metaphor of a station and its trains.

[Turntables]

Three trains, in the station at the same time for the last time in 2012, and with some major differences.

In the first one, pulled by a Pacific 231, and fairly homogeneous, are travelers from the Catholic culture who – born between 1925/1935 – have heard of one world war and lived through the second.

For them, the Glorious Thirty constituted an extraordinary accelerator and mutation with a real before/after, the 1960s.

Often owners of their main residence and a second home, or even a pleasure boat³⁹, their purchasing power distinguishes them from the working people (cf. train no. 2) who are proportionally less affluent.

Politically, we will find two-thirds, or even more, voters for the UMP, National Front, in a word, “the Right,” and partisans of law and order.

In the second train, drawn by the most powerful electric locomotive of the 1960s, the *CC 6500*, are more heterogeneous railway cars and travelers representing the society born in the years between 1950/1965.

Here, we find a diversified society, whose votes reflect values and versatility: Olivier Besancenot, François Bayrou, the Greens, Eva Joly, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Nicolas Sarkozy, Ségolène Royal, Dominique de Villepin, etc. have captured their interest one by one but disappointed as quickly as they created hopes of a new and inventive approach to politics.

These are the “subscription-paying workers,” responsible for most of the contributions in favor of the growing mass of “beneficiaries”; they worry about their children’s future, they do not feel reassured by the social prospects.

Fewer of them own their primary residence or have bought a second home; the 150% increase in housing prices from 1997 to 2007 did not provide them with a favorable purchasing context to make all their dreams come true.

³⁹ Around 789,000 boats moored or in dry dock in 370 ports, including 500,000 in operation with an average of 28 hours sailing a year.

Despite the opportunity presented by particularly low rates, these dreams are still difficult to achieve when the price of old housing increased on average by 6% between 2009 and 2010, with Paris staying at the top of the increase list, doubtless due to the fact that the office / residential ratio is proportionally the opposite of needs.

Therefore, many people are nostalgic for the living conditions of the travelers in the first train and idealize the “Glorious Thirty,” sexual liberation, the major French creations; depending on their origin, they may adopt a radical stance in grieving for the France of the past as much as detach themselves and abstain if no political offering creates the desire to act or associates them with a project.

Born into an established consumer society, with its brands, distribution channels, advertising, etc., they are also the most critical and the most disloyal; the Internet often assists their detachment, with comparing the no. 1 motivation for calling prices into question.

They remain sensitive however to the charms of yesteryear, to old-style recipes, to equipment that revives the household arts and embodies them in a bread machine, a beer handle, a pod teamaker⁴⁰, a fondue machine, etc. Their homes feature a mix of Ikea and ethno-romantic decors displaying intellectual openness as much as a taste for sentimental coziness.

Their nostalgia grows stronger as their idols reach their twilight years, with some making a comeback (Adamo, Alain Chamfort, Dorothee, Jacques Dutronc, Johnny Halliday, Eddy Mitchell, Michel Sardou), while others have passed away (Joe Dassin, Michael Jackson), but they all accompany the same desire for revival, pending the return of Nina Hagen or the Red Army Choir, Suzy Solidor or Fréhel. The return of *Champs-Elysées* on France 2 in November 2010 or the anniversary of the death of Serge Gainsbourg in March 2011 prompted that same nostalgic regeneration.

As for the third train, it was born in the years 1985 / 1990; this is the one that will create the France of the future. To get a good idea of it, think in terms of the RER suburban trains, rather than the Venice-Simplon Orient Express, the emblem of no. 1 and the dream of no. 2...

Its passengers come from different communities, convictions, religions and cultures, organizing the cast for the next train and preparing France for the years 2025/2035.

⁴⁰ In September 2010, Nestlé launched Special T, the teamaker that uses a pod system made from aluminum it is sold exclusively over the Internet at a price of 89 € (129 € from January 1st, 2011).

They are nostalgic too, in the sense of regretting having to say that they will never experience the situations of the 60s/70s, because the words “unemployment,” “job insecurity,” “low-income workers,” “poverty anxiety,”⁴¹ did not exist then.

They have found and cherish the icons of those times: Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones, AC/DC, Led Zeppelin, Iggy Pop, Supertramp, Motorhead, Metallica, U2, Serge Gainsbourg, idols embodying an era of creativity, nonchalance and freedom, which seems long past, unreal even, but creates a link with their parents’ generation.

Those with a higher education understand that mobility is a condition for success, but this is an imposed form of mobility, presented from their college days as the new rule of the game; two-thirds of them also expect that, ten years down the line, their profession will be out of step with their training and they will be forced to engage in pragmatism.

The consequence is detachment and a disillusion that is even clearer for the fact that their own parents harbor the same disenchanting viewpoint.

Contrary to popular belief, there is in fact no opposition between working people aged 45/55 years and those aged 25/30: they all feel fragile in the face of possible relocations, the threat of a redundancy program or anticipated social breakdown, the fact that seniority is often neither a guarantee of a salary increase nor a guarantee of progression, and the gap between their income and their aspirations.

In the midst of this combat course, it is difficult for them to imagine a world based on the inconstant and the ephemeral, that’s why owning a home, getting married, having children, going on vacation, finding reference points in their social life are still current concerns. Leading to a certain traditionalism that is far-removed from the revolutionary desires of the 1968 protesters...

The revolution is elsewhere, in the gap between work/accomplishment.

The French are among the few employees or government workers in the world to identify professional activity with self-realization; the others separate the time spent at the company, factory or office, which provides resources, and their own personal life, consisting in something quite different, open to other experiences, situations, etc.

⁴¹ In 2010, 70% of high school students claimed to fear “*living in poverty one day*,” Observatoire des 4500.

An assumed disinvolvement expressed by disloyalty to the company. This is negative from the human resources department's point of view, a simple disconnect for the new generations who have switched software and are imagining other desires or other values.

As for those without diplomas, they feel increasingly excluded and can relate neither to the political offering, nor to a political program, nor even to advertising.

This gap between the majority of passengers in train no. 1, some of the ones in train no. 2 and a large group in no. 3 is big enough for notions of "national de-cohesion," "identity splits" to be on the agenda.

This is a global Western trend observed notably in the Scandinavian countries, Italy, the UK, or Germany.

The success of the book *Germany Abolishes Itself* (700,000 copies sold) by Thilo Sarrazin, an individual fired from Deutsche Bank for the book's xenophobic content, has opened up a breach in a system that, until now, was artificially consensual.

Angela Merkel followed on, stating: "*the multikulti⁴² approach has failed, totally failed,*" thus signing the death warrant for the German model of integration while 50% of the population claimed to "*have low tolerance for Muslims*" and 35% consider that "*Germany is submerged.*"

The development of xenophobia, or generally of alterophobia, is strengthened by economic and cultural fears that go way beyond negative anticipation.

In "*The Meek Monster: Why the West is Not Going Left,*" Raffaele Simone attributes this change to the development of a security-driven retraction on a European level against immigration and Islam, linked to the desire to preserve an illusion of comfort.

He quotes Tocqueville⁴³ anticipating a form of authoritarianism disguised as democracy, whose mildness "*would degrade men without tormenting them,*" turning them into "*a vast crowd of similar men who wander restlessly to procure minor, vulgar pleasures, where each of them, withdrawn, is like a stranger to the destiny of the others.*"

⁴² Multicultural in German.

⁴³ "*Democracy in America,*" 1835-1840.

Guy Debord⁴⁴ analyzes the soft consumer democracy in the same way, with a society of serfs *“exclusively attached to a company and its correct operation, while getting nothing in return, and especially because they are forced to live within a single space, the same, ever identical circuit of homes, highways, vacations and airports”* with one constraint that slaves did not have *“in the sense that they must provide for themselves.”*

The capacity to resolve tensions between the current social and economic components will be a decisive factor in the 2012 Presidential election. If nostalgia and rejection win the day and we see the burial of **“multikulti,”** the National Front and abstention will be the big winners in 2012.

Indeed, many passengers in train no. 3 do not recognize their own reality and concerns in the political offering or the spectacle of advertising, which act as if only train no. 1 were representative of the French in 2010... Fragmentation also stems from the disparity of incomes, with almost 1.5 million people visiting Secours Catholique, a charity catering to the homeless and poor, in 2009. 80,000 more than in 2008.

The novelty, which confirms the vulnerability of the working people on board our train no. 2, lies in the increase in the number of employees⁴⁵, whose resources are not enough to cover the constant increases in the basic things in life: housing, energy, water, insurance, taxes, education, transportation, etc. now represent 68% of spending on the base of a median salary evaluated at 759 Euros, non-inclusive of housing benefits.

So there will be much to do to recreate a credible, re-unifying orientation, an agreement on a collective destination, to ensure that the three trains find common points, in *“this country.”*

Recently, the abbreviated term *“c’pays”* (*“ce pays”*, i.e. *“this country”*), aside from being an expression of detachment, has become the means used by journalists, unions and the man in the street in referring to France. Proof that self-extraction is the key to lucidity or to indifference? This switch to abstraction, far-removed from notions of Homeland, Nation or Region, takes us to an extraordinary level of abstraction and disembodiment which soon raises the question of what to call those who reside and live in *“this country.”* Will the famous introduction *“Français, Françaises, bonsoir”* become ***“c’péiens, c’péiennes, bonsoir”***?

⁴⁴ *In Girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (*“We Turn in the Night Consumed by Fire”*), film, 1978.

⁴⁵ 62% of the people received are working people.

What are the striking trends in the world of media, content and new technologies?

One of the most striking phenomena has been the rapid rise of the mobile Internet. Until recently, each medium was not only associated with an object, but also with a particular place and time. Hence, for example, certain types of usage were mainly home-based, others outside the home. Access to the Internet from a portable terminal has gradually effaced that boundary, offering a continuum of “indoor” and “outdoor” uses. It is now possible to communicate, get informed, get entertained permanently throughout the day. One major consequence has been the permanent extension of “media time.” According to the Touchpoints study conducted by Ipsos MediaCT in the UK, an individual now devotes half his waking time to the media and communication.

And yet, the mobile Internet is in its early days. Only 10% of French people are mobile Internet users. They go online frequently, but in general for short periods. Uses related to information and entertainment are still under-developed. Email, instant messaging and social networks: the main usage concerns communication. The mobile Internet is primarily a means for a person to stay in contact with his friends and family, his community. Practical services using geolocation obviously offer vast potential. The 2010 edition of Ipsos Flair highlighted the contemporary culture of urgency, or even impatience. The mobile Internet pushes this logic to the extreme: when you’re on the move, everything is immediate and immediately useful. Commercial transactions should also progress quickly: an increasing number of users claim to be willing to use m-commerce. The telephone will soon be an order and payment terminal.

Will the mobile phone also alter the market research profession, particularly research on the media?

It does in fact open up some extremely promising prospects. First of all, it enables people to be interviewed “in situation,” in the heat of the action;

next, it contains a multitude of sensors that considerably enrich the data collected: microphone, GPS, motion detector, camera, video camera... Hence the mobile enables us to radically rethink the measurement of media audiences. Until now, this was based on claims made by individuals, and often on their own recall. Ipsos MediaCT has invented a solution transforming the telephone into a personal audimeter, capable of detecting all the sound-based programs (radio or television) a panelist is exposed to. Measurement becomes passive and instant, while its reliability is significantly improved.

To what extent do these trends affect the traditional industry of media and content?

For example, what about the print media and books?

The print media have been greatly impacted by digital technology, for almost twenty years now. Its readers have become more occasional, adopting the habit of accessing information on the web for free. In this respect, another finding of the Touchpoints study is telling: on the Internet, an individual devotes 15 minutes every day to “TV” content and 15 minutes to “print” content. That represents 7% of the total time devoted to television, but almost 50% of the time devoted to the print media...

Audience migration to the web is having an increasing impact on the advertising market, with advertisers shifting increasingly large financial sums to websites, whose efficiency is judged as faster and easier to measure. And so the challenge that print editors now face is double. On the one hand, they have to keep their “paper” readers, using the diehard assets of that format: newspapers and magazines are finished and enduring objects that give themselves over to the reader’s control and continue to inspire confidence in him. Simultaneously, editors must pull profit from their brands to reconstruct audience crossroads on the Web. Their brands must be strong and engaging enough to generate two types of income: the monetization of audiences on the advertising market, and of content targeting the most captive share of that audience.

Books seemed to be somewhat removed from this trend. More so than with the print media, their content seemed indissociable from the container, the text of the context. A music album can be divided into downloadable tracks, a newspaper into articles; that exercise seemed difficult with a book, particularly in the case of general literature.

INTERVIEW
Bruno Schmutz,
Ipsos MediaCT

In addition, the dematerialization of the book had until now been limited by the content available (limited and unknown) and above all by the media available: neither the phone (screen too small), nor the computer (which is used in a setting incompatible with the comfort required for reading a book) were appropriate for an activity generally associated with pleasure and long periods of time. As with music ten years ago, as with the mobile Internet today, I believe that the revolution in usage will come with the terminals.

Is this the much-awaited arrival of the digital book?

The notion of “digital book” does not have much meaning. The book corresponds to a precise physical object. As soon as content becomes dematerialized, it “re-materializes” in a new object, one which is not limited to being a replica of the original medium. Digital content is freeing itself from its initial container and is converging with other content towards a multi-purpose terminal. That’s why I don’t think that “single function” readers, in other words those exclusively devoted to reading texts, will occupy a significant market share.

The big break in terms of usage will come from digital tablets (like the iPad), which not only recreate a satisfying reading experience (the “touch screen” reintroduces a gesture, a sensuality close to leafing through a book), but simultaneously provide access to infinitely available services (messaging, web, music, photo, video...).

The high price of this tablet (600 to 800 Euros) could be a hindrance. However, 20 million iPads were already sold in 2010... and a probable subsidy from operators will enable this barrier to be lowered in order to definitively ensure a take-off in sales. With subsidy, the Samsung Galaxy already costs less than 300 Euros...

Are digital tablets also participating in this new generation of mobile media?

The announced success of tablets is based less on mobility than on the individualization and personalization of uses. We’re already seeing that 80% of mobile Internet users use their phone to surf the web at home. This proportion will be even higher for tablets.

They offer household members extra and instantaneous access to the Internet, and possibly satisfy a need for micro-mobility (from bedroom to living room...).

Their success comes mainly from their capacity to project the Internet into the world of entertainment. The computer, including the Netbook, is still associated with a certain form of effort on the part of the user: the use of the keyboard, the position facing the screen, imply an active and efficient posture. The digital tablet tends more towards relaxation, leisure, escape. MP3 players and mobile phones have opened the way, of course. But their functions are limited. Tablets really bring a convergence of all types of content and media on the same terminal, which is simple to use, fun and convivial.

Digital is thus moving into the world of play, pleasure and fantasy. And at the same time, it is bringing entertainment and all its magic right into our homes. Games consoles are becoming multi-purpose boxes (music, TV, Web...) capable of detecting players' movements without a control box (Kinect by Microsoft, for example). The final stage in this shift is of course playing out around the TV screen, now in 3D and soon to be connected to the Web.

The television, present in almost all households, is by nature the entertainment terminal. Until now, it enabled TV channel programs to be watched. These have increased in number and delinearized, but the interaction with the viewer remains fundamentally unchanged. The connected television, which has become a "smart TV," will radically alter the user experience. Using a state-of-the-art remote control - or a simplified keyboard, or a smartphone... - with one click it will be able to switch from television to the Web. The information available on screens will be greatly enriched, and its content extremely diversified: gateway to services, catch-up TV and especially video-on-demand services... ... The economic stakes are huge. On the Internet today, Google has managed to position itself in between editors and users, to capture the biggest share of revenue. In the future, who will control direct access to the user on the connected TV screen?

[Results and methods]

How can we get back to results?

In traditional style, for many years, the Authorities asked the public to trust them. This was the sequence that followed the “Glorious Thirty,” and it obviously generated disappointment with every failure, no light at the end of the tunnel, austerity policies, mad cow, the explosion of Internet bubbles, and so on.

In its previous reports, Ipsos Flair has described the stages and forms in this process, asserting that this mechanism is now definitively broken.

The “precautionary principle” is the final attempt by the Authorities to produce change or the impression that they are in control of things, like sending armored vehicles to the Paris agglomeration when the forecast did not predict snow for that area.

Born in Rio in 1992 during the Convention on Biological Diversity, in France the precautionary principle took form in the Barnier law of 1995 in the name of risk anticipation: *“an absence of certainty, given the scientific and technical knowledge of the time, should not delay the adoption of effective and proportioned measures aimed at preventing a risk of serious and irreversible damage to the environment at an economically acceptable cost.”*

The subjects concerned gradually spread from the environment and climate change to pharmaceuticals, transportation, cell phone towers, and diet.

Contaminated blood, mad cow, pandemics, financial and “toxic” crises, GMOs etc. all helped accentuate concerns and generalized the precautionary principle, to the point of creating extreme doubt about its validity, when public opinion felt the dramatization was over the top or researchers saw precaution as a counterproductive limitation.

In 2002, Jean-Pierre Dupuy⁴⁶ developed the idea that presenting the consequences of a future disaster would help avoid it, without people taking refuge in denial and disbelief.

⁴⁶“Pour un catastrophisme éclairé - Quand l'impossible est certain” (“For an enlightened catastrophism - When the impossible is certain.”) Seuil.

In contrast, four years later⁴⁷, Mathieu Laine came out against “the Nanny State” whose plan is to control and regulate everything, whereas it has less and less power.

This paradox between desire for control and powerlessness is the central theme of his latest book, “*Post-politique*”⁴⁸, in which he comes back to this gap: “*the law has lost itself in the details. Ideas have left the stage, leaving room for pragmatism and media-style short-termism. With competition coming from all areas, market, globalization, international bodies, Europe, the politician, deprived of resources, can no longer claim to be, in the future, what he was in the past. Far from refuting this, the financial crisis has only highlighted his agony. The State is less capable than ever of saving us, despite its old recipes, which are reassuring but outdated.*”

One of the latest books published on the subject, “L’inquiétant principe de précaution” (“The Worrying Precautionary Principle,” published by PUF), reveals much about the current climate... Gérald Bronner and Etienne Géhin see in it “*a major ideological fact [...], a situation that deeply implicates our democracies in the way they are organized and the now conflicting relationships that public opinion has with knowledge and its mediators.*” For them, this ideology “**not very far-removed from a new form of populism, has a name: precautionism.**”

The eleven to twelve centimeters of snow that fell in France, and notably in the Paris region, on December 7th and 8th, once again raised the issue of the relevance of information and precaution: tens of thousands of people were blocked in by snow in the Paris region and had to spend the night in emergency shelters⁴⁹, their office, airports, etc., abandoning their cars or taking one hour to travel one hundred meters.

TomTom, via HD Traffic, reported around five thousand kilometers of accumulated traffic jams in the region by the end of the day, with a peak reached between 5:45 and 6:45 pm, when offices were letting out, and a record peak at 6:15 pm, i.e. 4,971 kilometers of traffic jams and an accumulated delay of some 242 hours.

One explanation given was that the French weather service had underestimated the phenomenon, another was that issuing one orange alert per day ended up discrediting all alerts, and the third explanation was that the Government and cities were overwhelmed, unlike the other European countries where snow in winter does not paralyze people and the economy as much.

⁴⁷ “*La Grande nurserie : en finir avec l’infantilisation des Français*” (“*The Great Nursery: ending the infantilization of the French*”), Jean-Claude Lattès.

⁴⁸ Jean-Claude Lattès, 2009.

⁴⁹ The municipality of Vélizy alone announced that it housed over 7,000 people

Collateral damage, the link between the acceleration in the waves of cold and global warming of the planet, which reinforces the arguments of climate skeptics, will need to be justified...

If precaution is a detour, then you might as well go fast. That was the big change of the 2007 election, won by Nicolas Sarkozy. Speed was the condition behind the result⁵⁰. We won't go over the difference between the purchase power candidate of June 2007 and the President of a Republic whose coffers have been emptied, and whose unpopularity and problems convincing people are growing.

The risk with speed is that accidents can happen: the many Freudian slips that brightened up the last few months of 2010 alerted us to the concertinaing antics of politicians.

Rachida Dati suffocated by inflation⁵¹, Brice Hortefeux perturbed by files⁵², Hervé Morin seeming to insult a part of the nation⁵³, a journalist from BFM confusing Georges Marchais (former communist party leader, deceased) and Jean-Luc Mélenchon (head of the Parti de Gauche [Left]), Luc Chatel making an unfortunate slip, mixing two similar French words when explaining that *"the State must borrow to fart (instead of pay) pensions."* Christine Lagarde, confusing two sensitive notions with "we'll see the recovery when taxes are increased in France (instead of employment)," and yet they don't have the monopoly.

⁵⁰ "I start off at top speed and then I accelerate" are words attributed to Nicolas Sarkozy during the 2007 presidential campaign.

⁵¹ "When I see some people asking for a profitability rate at 20, 25%, with almost no fellation" (meaning inflation).

⁵² "There are two major files: the genital prints file, and the genetic prints file."

⁵³ To a question about the hostility of public opinion with regard to the French commitment in Afghanistan, the ex-Minister of Defense answered that "it's difficult to explain to idiots..." following up with "to men and women whose safety is partly being played out 7,000 kilometers away from their home."

⁵⁴ Oxford Dictionary elected it word of the year for 2010.

⁵⁵ Psychopathology of everyday life.

In Canada, the Federal Minister of Industry, for example, wanted *"more Canadian sex stories"* before correcting himself with *"success stories"*...

Sarah Palin was the big winner in the psycholinguistic contest⁵⁴ however with her comment on the opening of a mosque near to Ground Zero in New York, asking American Muslims to *"refudiate"* the project, mixing *"repudiate"* and *"refute."*

Listening to them, we're a long way from Baudrillard's analysis that *"every great thought is of the order of the lapsus,"* and closer to René Char's *"words know things about us that we do not know about them."*

Freud⁵⁵ deciphered the lapsus as a message that slips from the unconscious, like a wood **shaving** slipping out from under a lathe. Transgressing social, moral or other codes it cares little for, the lapsus reveals a hidden base, an archive, a message intended for the conscience mind.

In the case of a public personality talking in the media, the lapsus provides a glimpse of what makes him nervous or worried...

There's just one step between going fast and going too far, and transgression has manifested itself as another way of getting results.

The example comes from the top, with a President of the Republic and Ministers seemingly free of inhibitions, a long way from traditional interpretations of their post. Each one could be tempted by a personal or collective experience, beyond the rules and limitations.

Transgression has not had the expected results since it has never been pushed to its limit. There has been no need to blow up factories or poison rivers, since union/management negotiations have always appeased employees before reaching that point. The workforce has understood that by generating maximum media coverage of their threat to destroy the working tool, they could create enough pressure to enable "extra-legal" solutions to be found in their favor.

Fatigue is setting in too: the giant aperitifs, the Binge Drinking contests and alcoholism among young people, smoking... are becoming routine, with all the peripheral risks, rapes, abortions, ruined reputation, etc.

The purest example of transgression and liquidation of the superego also marked the failure of this particular method in the case of the French soccer team (aka "the Blues") during the Soccer World Cup.

A brief reminder of the story

Act one, the investigation into players Ribéry and Benzema for "solicitation of an underage prostitute" and the media buzz around the young woman concerned, Zahia; act two, after defeat against Mexico, William Gallas gives the finger to a journalist, after the match, Nicolas Anelka directs insults at coach Raymond Domenech (published by *l'Equipe*⁵⁶, and leading to a "mole hunt"⁵⁷) and his immediate exclusion.

Act three, the refusal by the French team to train in protest of the expulsion, decided upon by the French Football Federation France (there was much talk of a "Blues strike" or a "mutiny" in this respect), an altercation between the team captain Patrice Evra and the fitness trainer Robert Duverne, reading of the "players' statement" by their coach, Raymond Domenech, and the simultaneous resignation of Jean-Louis Valentin, Managing Director of the FFF, head of the delegation, declaring his "shame."

⁵⁶ On June 19th, the headline on the cover of newspaper *L'Equipe* was "*Va te faire enculer, sale fils de pute*". [*Go fuck yourself, dirty son of a whore.*]

⁵⁷ Cf. Patrice Evra: "*the problem isn't Nico, the problem is the traitor who should be eliminated.*"

Act 4, France is eliminated from the Soccer World Cup after losing 2 goals to 1 against South Africa, Raymond Domenech⁵⁸ is fired for “serious fault,” the President of the French Football Federation, Jean-Pierre Escalettes, resigns, the President of the Republic makes an appeal to “quickly draw the consequences from this disaster.”

Act 5, to be resolved: Raymond Domenech contests his firing and demands 2.9 million Euros in moral damages, the players’ demand their contractual bonuses (around 300,000 Euros) “in spite of everything,” counter to their claims made in July that these should be “*paid over to charitable associations and [...] do a good deed.*” What can we conclude from this spectacle?

The boom in racism on most press, radio and TV websites liberated so many xenophobes that moderators had to block comments.

The debate opened up by opinion specialists, “intellectuals,” politicians etc. on the mechanisms that produced this situation and what it was symbolic of, quickly arrived at input such as “*we dreamed with the team of the Zidane generation, instead today we feel more like vomiting with the Caillera generation*”⁵⁹, “*this sporting and moral fiasco is just an illustration of what is happening in Sarkozy’s France, a France where the rabble are imposing their own law, their own methods, their own words while the politicians stand back*”⁶⁰, “*there are clans and oppositions between whites and blacks, between Muslims and non-Muslims, between those who play abroad and those who don’t play abroad, with an incredible hatred, insults: it’s Beirut*”⁶¹.

And so they themselves consolidated positions or resorted to lines of division instead of duly noting the way this crisis operated as a sign of the deconstruction of a community lacking cohesion, in which everyone is taking charge, where everyone wants to be an authority, because there is no regulating tutelary authority, in other words, no coach.

⁵⁸ Raymond Domenech also refused to shake hands with the South African team’s coach.

⁵⁹ Alain Finkielkraut.

⁶⁰ Marine Le Pen.

⁶¹ Eric Zemmour.

Which is leading to a much more traditional form of theatrics, with a reinvented French team singing the national anthem, respecting their selector, trying to play together, wanting to win and “bring honor to the French colors.”

Is that the main conclusion to be drawn from this episode, *ordo ab chaos*, in other words?

The same logic can be found in the cabinet reshuffle of November 14th, 2010: while the appointments of Fadela Amara, Rachida Dati, Rama Yade, Eric Besson or Bernard Kouchner, marking a break from traditional political lines, were seen as either the spoils of war or signs of openness in 2007, the composition of the new Government, the election of Jean-François Copé as head of the UMP and of Christian Jacob as president of the UMP group in the National Assembly are now interpreted as the return of the “Chiraquiens,” or even of the “RPR State.”

Since speed cannot bring satisfaction, and transgression of the norms has shown its limits, slowing down tends to be seen as the antidote to pointless acceleration.

[Slow, please]

Slow is nothing new but its popularity is spreading... The principle is simple: speed is an economic and ideological diktat that helps you bypass the essentials, stresses you out, and feeds into the illusion of modernity. To get back on track and return to acceptable living conditions, you must switch to a different pace because going slower means going further and in more depth.

In 2004, in *Eloge de la lenteur* (“In Praise of Slowness”), Carl Honoré developed the idea that each person should “*find his inner tortoise*,” far-removed from Milan Kundera who, in his book *La Lenteur* (“Slowness”) describes speed as “*an ecstasy*”...

Slowness as a condition of interiority is also the core factor in the film *Des Hommes et des Dieux* (*Of Men and Gods*), which won the Grand Prix award at the Cannes Film Festival in 2010.

It is inspired by the murder of seven Trappist monks from the Tibhirine Monastery kidnapped during the Algerian Civil War, held prisoner for two months and then beheaded.

Critics have pointed out its length, pauses, silences, its reflections on faith, escape and death, or even its boring seriousness, and never imagined it would be seen by more than three million viewers in France or be selected for the 2011 Oscars.

The public found in the film a meditation on the values that drive them and their relationship with existential, essential questions on transcendence and religious extremism, materialism and hope.

We should not be surprised therefore that retreats are now being offered by tourist agencies, that religious tourism is developing⁶², nor that “going on a spiritual retreat at home⁶³” is a trendy theme.

Very far from the New Age where the sacred and the magical are everywhere, tried and tested protocols and rituals are now being used pit concentration and isolation against an outside world viewed as a source of agitation and dispersal.

The snail can expect a bright future; it became the symbol of the *Slow City* movement, another Italian creation, after the inhabitants of Greve collectively boycotted the opening of a McDonald’s, in the name of quality of life and the denunciation of fast food as a lifestyle.

By extension, the “slow” concept became a means to govern a city and unite some thirty towns, joined together in an international network⁶⁴ administered by the Mayor of Greve, Paolo Saturnini.

To become a member, first you must be a town with less than 50,000 inhabitants and commit to implementing the recommendations of the Slow City manifesto: *“enhancement of the urban heritage, avoiding the construction of new buildings, expanding green spaces, leisure spaces and pedestrian areas, priority given to public transport and other non-polluting forms of transport, development of local businesses, development of a true participatory democracy, preservation and development of local customs and regional products, exclusion of GMOs,”* etc.

Already, the slogan of the European Regional Development Fund, **“Give a new rhythm to the town,”** has stepped in line with this trend whose goal is to regenerate within its own environment.

In Strasbourg, during the “Assises du journalisme” in November, the debate opposed two approaches: the rapid flow of information relating to the latest news and low cost, or “slow information” described as journalism characterized by hindsight, long-term inquiry and more investigation, moving away from the emergency mode, and proposing a reflection rather than a superficial commentary. Jérôme Bouvier, a mediator journalist on *Radio France*, is setting the tone: *“quality journalism takes time.”*

⁶² <http://www.tourismeautrement.com/spiritualite.php> ;
http://www.fondationdesmonasteres.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=51&Itemid=80.

⁶³ <http://www.psychologies.com/Culture/Philosophieet-spiritualite/Pratiquesspirituelles/Articles-et-Dossiers/Faire-uneretraite-spirituelle-chezsoi>.

⁶⁴ <http://www.cittaslow.org/>, 140 cities in 20 countries.

“Slow information” echoes the theories of the “slow media,” developed in Germany⁶⁵ with the same goal: to reintroduce a sense of continuity, fight the scattering effect caused by multi-tasking, but “*provoke concentration,*” encourage “*prosumers, people who actively determine what they want to produce and consume,*” resist advertising pressure, but rather get distributed “*via recommendation from friends, colleagues or family members.*”

The same process is taking place in the publishing world. Born in Italy, *Slowbook Farm* is an online bookstore, one of the creators of which, Andrea Cortellessa, explains the principle: giving a chance to books that are not programmed best-sellers, supported by media campaigns or boosted by best-seller lists, since the quality of a book cannot be judged in a few weeks. For him, it is “*anti-pedagogic that bookstores belonging to the big chains display the ten biggest-selling books, near to the entrance, in piles. This is an invitation to conformism, to homogeneization.*” The label *slow-book* was thus created to highlight a whole category of books without the support of a literary prize or millions of copies.

Note that it is also in Italy that the Slow Food movement appeared, in opposition to Fast Food. The logo, a snail, sums up the project behind this international association⁶⁶, founded in Paris in 1989: “*fight the standardization of taste, promote a curious, indulgent and responsible attitude toward agriculture and food, oppose the harmful effects of industry and the fast food culture that is standardizing tastes.*” In addition, the aim is to “*promote a philosophy of pleasure, encourage a form of tourism that is attentive and respectful of the environment and solidarity initiatives in the food domain, work to protect and promote public awareness of culinary traditions and practices.*”

⁶⁵ <http://gigaom.com/2009/09/08/time-to-take-a-stance-on-the-future-ofjournalism/>

⁶⁶ French-speaking website: www.slowfood.fr

The Terra Madre Salon (4th one held in 2010) was visited by over 200,000 people in five days but was not free from conflict, for example between supporters of traditional agriculture armed with pork and deli products, and vegetarians denouncing the consumption of animals and advocating for a diet without livestock or slaughter.

Along the same lines, in Switzerland, the economist Jean-Noël Dupasquier is developing the notion of *Slow Work*⁶⁷, in reaction to the standardization of tasks and the routine of urgency inherited from industrial capitalism and pointlessly transposed to the world of services. While robots and relocations have replaced workers and the production line, intellectual and computerized production “comes with a worsening of working conditions and social relations within the company.”

Which explains the need to develop Slow Work, to “popularize all attempts to resist a work model based on speed and productivity, which forces us to ill-produce ephemeral products, that deteriorate fast and whose social purpose is dubious.”

For him, the context is even more favorable to a movement of this type with the European financial crisis and its social repercussions in Ireland, Portugal, Greece or Spain, amplifying the impression of a split between the interests of those who profit and the lives of those who produce. Deceleration is becoming a basic attitude, both in food and in tourism.

Created in Québec, *SlowCow*TM is “a relaxation beverage that helps in the improvement of concentration, memory and learning capacity without causing sleepiness;” unlike the usual stimulants or tonics, it contains “no calories, no caffeine, no sugar and no preservatives.” Its ingredients, chamomile, passiflora, valerian, linden and hops are indeed “acknowledged to help reduce nervousness”...

For 2010/2011, Italian stations are developing a *Slow Ski* product, also contrasting sharply with the challenges and competitions usually found on the slopes, in response to stress at the office, “for a moment to yourself,” explains Walter Galli, spokesman for the Breuil-Cervinia ski resort, in Val d’Aoste.

⁶⁷ http://es-es.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=444879386358

This is not just about skiing at your own pace, but about taking your time and making the most of it to get immersed in nature and gastronomy. In Alta-Badia, in the region of Trentin-Haut Adige, ten *Michelin* prizewinning chefs organized a “Skiing with taste” contest, doubtless with a view to combining various spins on the sublime, esthetic and esthetic.

Taking time again is the motivation for all those taking cooking classes, vaunting the qualities of home-made over microwaved, in the name of what is healthy and good, and especially of the slowness required for taste, flavor and culinary alchemy to operate and for pleasure to be born out of time rediscovered.

In consumption, this slowing down and prolongation of time are creating a new type of relationship with the product, one which questions the whole cycle from its birth to its future, from its source to its recycling. In advertising, brands such as Bouygues Telecom, Orange Open and Air France are updating the notion of slowness, creating ads with a soothing rhythm, a promise of spectacular results and effects.

The success of programs like *MasterChef* (TF1), *Un diner presque parfait*, *Top Chef*, *Chef La Recette*, *Miam* (M6), *Repas de famille* (France 3), *Hell's Kitchen* (TMC), *Les escapades de Petitrenaud* (France 5) testify to this search for the gastronomic and convivial Grail.

While this abundant programming is starting to encounter criticism, it can only be strengthened by the fact that “France’s gastronomic meal” was added to UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list. That had been on Nicolas Sarkozy’s wish list on visiting the Paris Agriculture Show in February 2008.

UNESCO’s decision was motivated by what the famous meal represents, it “*plays an active social role in its community and it is passed down from generation to generation as an integral part of its identity. Its customary social practice is intended to celebrate the most important moments in the life of individuals and groups, such as births, weddings, birthdays, successes and reunions. This is a festive meal whose guests, on this occasion, engage in the art of eating well and drinking well, with a careful choice of dishes from a recipe base that is constantly being enriched.*”

Other reasons: “the purchase of good products, local references; the union of foods and wines; the decoration of the table; a specific routine during the sampling process. And finally, “people recognized as being gastronomers, who have an in-depth knowledge of tradition and have preserved its memory, watching over the living practice of rituals and thus contributing to their oral and/or written transmission, to the young generations in particular. The gastronomic meal tightens the circle of family and friends and, more generally, strengthens social bonds.”

The life and bibliography of Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber are interesting from this point of view, in the way he has followed the changes in stakes and public concerns. Having been Editorial Director of the daily business newspaper *Les Échos*⁶⁸, of *L'Express*⁶⁹, and creator along with Jean Boissonnat of *L'Expansion*, he successfully initiated *Psychologies Magazine* with his wife, Perla.

His books show how society has gone from a positive modernity based on information and company spirit, to worry, a desire to stop in order to understand, give meaning to life and make the most of things in a different way. Just reading their titles is telling, from *Pouvoir d'informer* (“Power to Inform” - 1972) and *L'Entreprise à Visage Humain*⁷⁰ (“The Company with a Human Face” -1973), to *Vivre Content*⁷¹ (“Living Happy” - 2002), *Une vie en plus*⁷² (“An Additional Life” - 2005) and *Trop Vite*⁷³ (“Too Fast” - 2010).

This agenda accentuates the stages in the deconstruction of progress, like a dogma that is accomplished through the clear opposition of two rhythms: the chaotic, just-in-time, multiple rhythm of modernity, and another one, dense, coherent, meaningful, chosen. More difficult to name because it does not oppose the iPad and copper weighing scales, this other rhythm is essentially devoted to pleasure. That explains why instantaneousness is the rule in communications, where sms, mms, chat, and so on, are replacing the voice; faster and less intrusive (especially in class, at school or college...), they deliver an efficient, unlimited message, at no charge.

⁶⁸ Les Echos was created by his father and his uncle in 1908.

⁶⁹ L'Express was founded by his brother Jean-Jacques in 1953.

⁷⁰ Robert Lafont.

⁷¹ Albin Michel.

⁷² With Joël de Rosnay and François de Closets, Seuil.

⁷³ Albin Michel.

In addition to this, why is procrastination no longer a pathological trend which postpones to another day what could or should be done that very day, but rather an attitude of contesting modern values: risk-taking, perfectionism, speed, judged as sterile, tiresome, pointless. Is this the new dandyism, in a nihilistic art of living that wants to ignore the constraints?

The impression of “lacking time” is in any case the number one concern expressed by the French, whatever their situation and whatever their age...

INTERVIEW Dominique Levy, Ipsos Marketing

Nostalgia has not changed. Fashion is all about retro or “revival” marketing. Why are nostalgic ads or vintage products resonating so strongly and positively among the general public?

Nostalgia has become a powerful marketing factor. How can that be explained?

In France, we’ve always preferred history over geography. We’re very attached to our heritage. Especially within a context of globalization that, among others, is generating a real feeling of decline. Whether it’s about defending the Théâtre de Vilar or “French flair” in rugby, invoking the spirit of the National Resistance Council, singing the praises of French know-how in luxury and fashion, and notably, asserting one’s loyalty to a protective and threatened social system... There is a whole set of values, traditions, “assets,” and styles, which the country refers to and clings to. When we start to name our children Madeleine or Louis⁷⁴, like in the last century, it’s partly a way to “recover our culture of belonging and reclaim our history⁷⁵.” These are all feelings and facts that can be found in marketed expressions benefiting all sorts of products.

How can this “retro marketing” sell so well?

Because in a period of great uncertainty, the past refers the consumer back to safe values, to tried and tested recipes. The British newspaper The Daily Telegraph recently stated that opposition to the pension reform marked “a refusal of the end of the French art of living.” The period of the Glorious Thirty in France is viewed as an era of progress and prosperity. We cling to it. We select the good memories. And there’s an amusing thing too: we’re nostalgic for an era which had its eyes trained on us. In the 1950s-60s, there was constant production of science fiction, imagining what was going to happen in 2000⁷⁶. The future was a value. A fantasy. Remember the futuristic modernism of fashion designer Courrèges. There is a fairly surprising cycle effect that wants us to look in the rear-view mirror of a society that in turn was dreaming about us through the windscreen! Note also that this comes along at a time when marketing has created its own heritage. It’s striking, moreover, to note that, in a study conducted by Ipsos for LSA in October 2010, it was the 1970s (the apogee of the Glorious Thirty) which came out as the most innovative decade.

⁷⁴ L’Officiel des prénoms 2011* First Editions

⁷⁵ Nicolas Guéguen, “Psychologie des prénoms,” (Psychology of First Names) <http://nicolas.gueguen.free.fr/>

⁷⁶ <http://advertisingtimes.blogspot.com/2010/08/vo-yagez-dans-le-futur-graceau-passe-et.html>

INTERVIEW
Dominique Levy,
Ipsos Marketing

These were the main years in which mass marketing and mass advertising emerged. The ones when the mythology of the consumer society started to form (although Barthes' text on the subject dates from 1957). Certain big brands have a rich capital of history and images. They would be wrong not to exploit it.

Is this nostalgia marketing typically French?

No, it concerns several countries such as Germany, Japan and the USA. And that's where we get the famous series "Mad Men" which plunges us back into the 60s, right into the state of grace of the consumer society. "More than a series, Mad Men is a dream just before that dream was shattered"⁷⁷. There's something to revive the flame of our nostalgia. Brands such as Mattel and its famous Barbie doll⁷⁸ or like Vuitton⁷⁹ were not wrong when they adopted the "Mad Men" dress code. We could also cite Ferrero and its "vintage" candies in little metal boxes, launched in Italy. And this is doubtless only the start of the phenomenon.

How is this "retro marketing" expressed concretely?

It may be a vintage-style packaging, or a product re-vamped old-style. For example, Danone produced a limited edition of little "Danone Origines" pots to celebrate its 90th anniversary. A "revival" spirit can also be cultivated, take the example of Petit Bateau and its eternal sailor girl (currently reinterpreted by Tsumori Chisato), Vuitton's monogram canvas, re-styled by Murakami, or Adidas reviving the SL72 tennis shoe worn by Starsky in the famous 1970s American series. Or consider the neo-retro interpretations of legendary cars, with modern technology added. For example, the Mini and the Fiat 500, while with the DS3 car things were subtler: while signing itself "anti-retro," Citroën reminds those familiar with it of a French automobile legend, the DS, the revolutionary car par excellence. As we can see, communications play an essential role here.

⁷⁷ www.leparisien.fr/aboloisirs-et-spectacles/mad-men-bien-plus-quune-serie-16-09-2010-1070142.php.

⁷⁸ www.barbiecollector.com/shop/search.aspx

⁷⁹ www.louisvuitton.com/fr/flash/index.jsp?direct1=home_entry_fr

Certain brands such as La Laitière or Bonne Maman are well-known for positioning themselves on the authenticity niche and playing on a traditional image. Others use the nostalgia mechanism on a more occasional basis, as Danette did recently⁸⁰. The final avatar in this reclaiming of the wonderful world of the “before” years: the old-fashioned, customizable teddy bear, from the Parisian toy store “Le Nain Bleu” which was one of that institution’s best-sellers for Christmas 2010. What better way to propose to do something (very) new using something (very) old. And very expensively, as it happens.

Doesn’t this marketing exclude young people?

No. You can quite simply like an era or a style. No need to be 50 years old to like old TV programs. “Le Petit Nicolas” or “Le Petit Prince” speak to everyone, especially since they’ve been modeled in 3D and Saint-Exupéry’s hero has been teaching our children about sustainable development. It’s the idea of not looking backwards but of adopting the codes of an era and updating them to suit today’s tastes, fitting them into contemporary uses and issues. Look at the explosion of “nostalgeek” or “retrogamer” websites and blogs which take us back to the very roots of information technology, video games, cinema, etc. Then there’s the unexpected success of the “Muséo Games” exhibition (a retrospective view of 30 years of video games, at the Arts and Crafts museum in Paris)... Fnac has even opened up a new space (Fnac it!) at several of its Parisian stores to present its selection of gadgets and high-tech products with a vintage design. Generally speaking, the more or less ephemeral reclaiming of a brand or an old product as part of a fashion effect is something we know and that is not necessarily premeditated. Remember the Cacolac chocolate milk phenomenon, rappers wearing Lacoste polo shirts? At the moment, clothing by Saint-James or “BB” ballet shoes by Repetto have the wind in their sails. You also have totally new products that are adopting the codes of the old one. This all harks back to a symbolism that is reassuring for the consumer. It refers to the idea of a society that is better defined, or at least, that appears to be. It’s a vision of a society ad vitam that highlights through contrast the constant changes in our world today and responds to the anxiety that these generate.

⁸⁰ www.youtube.com/watch?v=suXVi9CXNZo

INTERVIEW

Dominique Levy,

Ipsos Marketing

Doesn't this taste for come-back have its limits?

Not if you know how to combine nostalgia with the demands for innovation and creativity that the consumer also expresses. No one wants to use a phone with a dial face that you can't walk around with. But 70s esthetics combined with the technology of 2010 made "fake-real" old telephones one of the desirable gifts at the end of 2010. Nothing prevents a legend from talking about the future. Today, we make things which, tomorrow, will be viewed as part of a happy past. The present nourishes the nostalgia of the future. Moreover, the pace of recycling is accelerating too. We already have fans of the first generations of mobile phones. It won't be long before we're nostalgic for last year, although somewhere the idea will persist that a golden age once existed.

[Something else]

More and more, questions such as “what is a successful day?” or “what is a successful life?”, “what is the meaning of your life?”, “how not to miss the point”, “how to save yourself so you last” are perturbing or denouncing routines, whether in a quiz, a forum, or the front cover of a magazine.

The success of Raymond Depardon’s exhibition “La France” with 800,000 visitors, can also be explained by interest in his method and what it shows, places symbolic of a rural period that contrasts sharply with the enraged hatred of the big cities.

Winner of the Cultural Personality Prize for 2010, he traveled 70,000 kilometers of small roads in a van over a period of six years, producing more than 7,000 shots using two silver emulsion chambers at 20°—25, like the earliest photographers.

His approach: focus on landscapes and not beings, on countryside and small towns and not the Paris region or the regional capitals, on the ordinariness of sites and not their picturesque or exceptional aspects.

The 36 “window views” that he selected refer to a retro image of middle France, as if everything had stopped in the 1970s, as if the 2CV were the car of the year and fishing items the no. 1 sellers.

To the public, they convey the notion of constant reference points in a life constantly on the move, with its stress, its pressures; they also implicitly raise questions about the point of progress if happiness is to be found in railway stations, stations serving as antidotes to the path of the cross that everyday life has become in the first eleven years of the new Millennium.

After Paul Virilio’s critique of speed, Hartmut Rosa⁸¹ developed a social critique of time and “late modernity” in which acceleration carries away everything in its path, democracy, values, identity, humanity.

His interview in *Le Monde* by Frédéric Joignot comes back to his analysis⁸²: “*Nowadays, time has wiped out space. With the acceleration of transport, consumption, communication, faster technical progress, the planet seems to be shrinking both on a spatial and a material level.*”

⁸¹ *Accélération, La Découverte.*

⁸² http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article_interactif/2010/08/29/le-mondemagazine-au-secourstout-va-tropvite_1403234_3224.html

Studies have shown that the Earth appears sixty times smaller to us than before the transport revolution. The world is within reach. Not only can we travel to all four corners, fast, at lower cost and without making much effort, we can also, with the acceleration of communications, and the simultaneity that it brings, download or order almost any piece of music, book or film from any country, in a few clicks, at the very moment it is produced.”

This speed and this proximity seem extraordinary to us, but at the same time each decision taken towards acceleration implies a reduction in options enabling us to enjoy the journey and the country being crossed, or what we're consuming. Hence, because of highways, drivers don't visit the country any more, and it is reduced to a few abstract symbols and standardized highway service stations.

Air travelers fly over the landscape at high altitude, can scarcely see the big city where they're landing and are often transported to holiday camps that have little to do with the actual country, where they will be offered an abundance of “guided tours.” In this respect, technical acceleration very concretely leads to an elimination of space, at the same time as an acceleration in the pace of life. Even on holiday, we must do everything very fast, gymnastics, a diet, leisure activities, whether we're reading a book, listening to music, or visiting a site. That's why we hear after summer vacations are over: “This summer I did Thailand in four days.” This acceleration in the rhythms of life generates much stress and frustration. Because despite everything, we are confronted with the incapacity to accelerate consumption itself too much.

While it is true that we can visit a country in four days, buy a whole bookstore in the click of a mouse, or download hundreds of pieces of music in a few minutes, we still need a lot of time to meet the inhabitants, read a novel and savor a much-loved tune.

But we don't have that time. If time is always counted, we have to hurry. That is one of the major stressors linked to a faster pace of life: the whole world is offered to us in a second or a few hours in a plane, and we never have the time to enjoy it.

We experience a real sense of guilt at the end of the day, feeling in our confused way that we should find time to reorganize all that. But we don't have it. Because our time resources are being inexorably reduced.

At the same time, is each episode of life being reduced?

Indeed, most of the episodes in our days are shortening or becoming denser, at work to start with, where the pace is accelerating, "rationalizing." But also outside of work. We are witnessing a reduction in the duration of meals, lunch, break times, time spent with the family or to go to a birthday, a funeral, on a walk, sleep even.

So, in order to get everything done, we must make these moments denser. We are eating faster, praying faster, reducing distances, accelerating trips, attempting to multitask, completing several activities at the same time. Alas, since our time resources are shrinking, this increase and this densification of the volume of actions is quickly becoming greater than the speed at which tasks are completed.

That is expressed subjectively through a recrudescence in the feeling of urgency, guilt, stress, anxiety about schedules, the need to further accelerate, the fear of "no longer being able to keep up." Alongside that comes the impression that we aren't seeing our lives go by, that they are escaping us.

We are witnessing, you say, a "compression of the present," which is becoming more and more elusive. Can you explain that?

If we define our present, in other words, close reality, as a period presenting a certain stability, a fairly durable aspect, in which we can conduct experiments enabling us to build today and the near future, a fairly long period of time so that what we learn can serve us and be handed down, and so that we can expect fairly reliable results, then we note a remarkable compression of the present.

In the age of acceleration, the whole present becomes unstable, shortens, we are witnessing the rapid wear and obsolescence of professions, technologies, everyday objects, marriages, families, political programs, people, experience, know-how, consumption.

In pre-modern society, before large-scale industry, the present would link at least three generations because the world scarcely changed between the grandfather's world and the grandson's, and the former could still hand down his knowledge of life and values to the latter.

In high modernity, the first half of the 20th century, this contracted to a single generation: the grandfather knew that his grandchildren's present would be different from his own, he did not have much to teach them, the new generations were becoming the vectors of innovation, it was their job to create a new world, as in May 68 for example.

However, in our late modernity, nowadays, the world changes several times in a single generation. The father no longer has much to teach his children about family life, which is being reformed constantly, about the professions of the future, the new technologies, and you can even hear 18-year-olds talking about "before" in describing when they were 10 years old, a young specialist "updating" an expert scarcely older than him. The present is shortening, escaping, and our sense of reality, identity, is dwindling in the same movement."

Acceleration and mobility, deriving absurdly from urgency, a dematerialization that causes concern about the enduring nature of things, sudden changes and anxiety... The three generations that coexist today fear this cultural diffraction, which explains their reaction: searching for anything that can bring them together and bring shared moments, simply: cooking, music, a walk.

Contestation among the liberal set also relates to this critique of modernity, with an educated demand for a critique of the dominant thinking, attraction to counter-cultures, sustainable products, recycling, as if flower power was an economic model on the rise.

[Extras]

[Playing personal]

Leaving the game

In a society where 34% are convinced that politicians are “not at all concerned about what people like you think,” and 44% “not very,” it is hardly surprising that abstention is on the rise as a basic attitude.

Abstention is the fact of not going out and voting.

But it conceals the Latin verb *abstinere*, which means “prevent oneself from doing something, keep your distance, not act.”

In *Taoism*, non-action (??, wu wei) is the founding concept in distinguishing when one should or should not get involved, react, respond, intervene, etc. in relation to a situation; this implies both study (exterior) and intuition (interior) which are born out of the situation itself.

The major benefit lies in not exhausting oneself trying to change things that are out of reach, are not worth taking part in, are not useful, etc., and developing a beneficial indifference to the surrounding environment when it interferes with the very essence of one's being, and thus in recharging one's batteries effortlessly.

When transposed to the context, this means the rise of a subject who is quietly desocializing, breaking away from the system that should be protecting him, and is no longer even concerned about it.

2010 was the last year of disappointment. Since then, a hurdle has been crossed, opening up broad horizons: detachment.

To be disappointed, you still have to believe that something is possible. That's what Ipsos Flair analyzed last year, juggling with the prefixes “de/dis”, suited to the mindset of an individual who is defiant, disabused, destabilized, distraught, dejected, on the defensive, etc.

In the last period, three cases largely helped consolidate the impression that those in charge had no grasp over reality, that they blow hot air and no longer deserve attention. Did the 360 billion Euros loaned to banks really save the French financial system?

Precautionary principle or over-dramatization, what became of the prevention campaigns for the H1N1 flu virus, which was supposed to decimate the world?

What happened to the cloud produced by the explosion of an Icelandic volcano that was supposed to change the European climate after getting 7,314 flights canceled?

Consequences: amplification of conspiracy theories, the fact that the public is increasingly willing to believe anything, permanent doubts as the very nature of the result.

For example, did the H1N1 virus have no impact in France thanks to the preemptive action by public health officials and the two billion Euros invested in vaccines, or simply because it in fact carried no real risk for the majority of the population?

Since fewer than 9% of the French population were vaccinated (as opposed to 3/4 of Canadians or 1/4 of Americans), it's not hard to guess the non-politically correct answer...

That raises the – much more global and worrisome – problem of the connection between decisions made by officials and their actual impact.

If the solution arises from the dissipation of the problem itself, then the intermediaries are pointless and their decisions boil down to dramatically acting out about a situation they have no control over.

After the Carnival, the Opéra-Bouffe⁸³?

Sudden changes in style and codes never go down well, as in the audiovisual media where using the formal “vous” for “you” is the rule, while using the familiar “tu” is the exception. When it does burst on the scene, it destabilizes social conventions, especially when politicians from opposing parties call each other “tu” or young unknowns use it in addressing a renowned expert.

“To be continued”... during political debates or whenever the Authorities are confronted with the French people.

⁸³The first “operettas” with the works of Jacques Offenbach ranking first among them, were created at the Théâtre des Bouffes Parisiens, built to replace the old Théâtre Comte, plays for children and magic, Passage Choiseul.

INTERVIEW Gérard Donadieu, Ipsos Observer

For several years now, we've been talking about the development of all types of access and media: press, radio, television, computer, etc. With the new generations of mobile phones, tablets, new channels are appearing; what impact is that having on data collection techniques?

Until not that long ago, there were media, channels, and each one was clearly identified as having specific uses. All those boundaries have now disappeared or are being effaced; the new phones can broadcast TV, web content, music, which is accelerating the possibilities for switching. This impacts our profession in several ways:

- 1. Everyone can access everything and permanently,*
- 2. Each person selects what interests him, with a range of choices that favors individualization and personalization,*
- 3. The product range is constantly adapting so that each individual can customize his services, leisure pursuits, access options, etc. to an excessive degree.*

The Smartphones mean hundreds of thousands of applications, which encourage divergence, customization, and self-expression.

These developments, this facilitation of contact have enabled / incited professionals to communicate more often with their prospects or clients for promotional reasons or satisfaction measurements.

Now we are dealing with a public who know that their opinion counts but who want to choose who they answer and why they are answering: what is in it for them if they answer?

I get the impression that people are starting to get saturated with questions, because they are constantly asked for their opinion, whenever they visit a site, whenever they reserve a hotel room, after getting their bike or car fixed, or whatever, satisfaction questionnaires have become commonplace.

Every little experience of everyday life is now the subject of a satisfaction survey!

We've gone from consumer to auditor / permanent evaluator?

If you put people in a posture that consists in constantly judging, and you increase the number of measures, then each person becomes everyone else's judge... So maybe they will no longer judge in exactly the same way when they have to give a mark to something. The perverse effect of this is the ultimate credibility of data collected in these conditions, where answering can represent a risk through projection!

To a certain extent and for certain research subjects, passive measurements, in other words, collecting information without questioning the people concerned, helps anticipate that risk; when that is possible, it's a good antidote for limiting bias in respondents' claims and rationalization.

There are several possibilities for implementing passive measurements.

Either you work in a laboratory situation with people who have agreed to participate in the experiment, or these are people on a panel, or they have agreed to have a little application installed on their cell phone, computer or other device, which enables their visits to be tracked, along with the way they surf, what they go and see, at what time, etc.

Using these so-called passive yet direct methods, we can measure audience or the impact of advertising: in London, Ipsos MediaCT combines panelist and GPS system: people are not questioned, but the movements of a sample of panelists equipped with key-ring-sized GPS are tracked from morning to night. At each advertising location, the billboard is configured according to the possibility of its being seen, which helps ascertain the campaign's impact, based on each person's daily route, on the one hand, and the probability of exposure on the other.

INTERVIEW
G rard Donadieu,
Ipsos Observer

Miniaturization is giving passive measurement a very positive future!

It is helping. Take the example of eye-tracking. In the past, you had to fit people with fairly heavy, bulky, uncomfortable equipment, and the people were in a room. Now, it's a pair of glasses no more bulky than the ones used for 3D movies. Eye-tracking has become totally nomadic. Today, to optimize the calibration of advertising spaces, all you do is equip a pedestrian, a passenger, a driver, etc. with a system that tracks his eye movements; you can determine exactly on a base of x people how many turned their head or not towards the billboard.

Another possibility, applications installed on the cell phone of volunteers to find out which radio stations the person listens to, whether they choose it, or are simply in contact with it, because the application can recognize the frequency being broadcast.

And as concerns studies that are neither passive measurements nor online studies, in other words telephone or face-to-face surveys?

In many cases, these are still an excellent means to collect attitudes and behaviors of consumers, users or citizens, and these methods are evolving too, even if they're older. In terms of putting together samples with the cell phone, wire, box mix... In terms of using different means of contact for the same project with an optimization of individual interviewed / means of contact, where online and face-to-face contacts can be activated simultaneously for example, in interview rooms or at home... All sorts of things can be imagined.

[Mockery]

Kerviel menu

In Le Havre, for several weeks, the *Taverne de Maître Kanter* offered the Kerviel menu, a tribute to a now-famous trader from the Société Générale.

This comic strategy to attract customers who are eating out less and less is further proof of the split between the institutions and the French people.

On Sunday, January 20th, 2008, at a summit meeting attended by Hugues Le Bret, Communications Director for the Société Générale, Daniel Bouton, C.E.O. of the Société Générale, Jean-Pierre Mustier, head of the investment banking unit, Frédéric Oudéa, Financial Director, and Philippe Citerne, Managing Director, they learned that one of the bank's traders, Jérôme Kerviel, had engaged in authorized trades in the Société Générale's name in the amount of 50 billion Euros, one and a half times the institution's own equity capital.

On Monday, January 21st, 2008, with no direct link to the trader's commitments but due to an accumulation of bad news, the market dropped by 8%. Bank management decided not to let the President and Minister of the Economy know until the Wednesday morning. Nicolas Sarkozy wanted heads to roll. From January 1st, 2010, Frédéric Oudéa, now appointed C.E.O., was thus assisted by three other acting Managing Directors.

The media let loose on the bank: 20,000 articles appeared on day one of the affair, yet the sum was so huge that the affair seemed exaggerated at first.

For the general public, Kerviel was “[the Che Guevara of finance](#),” a national hero compared to Albert Spaggiari, another individual famed for robbing the bank, but this time with forums, T-shirts featuring his image, a Facebook network, etc.

In October 2010, Hugues Le Bret published *La semaine où Jérôme Kerviel a failli faire sauter le système financier mondial* [*The week Jérôme Kerviel almost exploded the global financial system*] in which he goes over the bank's communications strategy: objectives, arguments, press conferences, lunches with journalists, terms to be avoided: “*Don't say liquidity, say cashflow, it's less harrowing. Liquidity is like a rabbit on a boat, it brings bad luck.*”

Five months earlier, in June 2010, Jérôme Kerviel published his book *L'engrenage, mémoire d'un trader [Caught in the System]*, describing the affair, the legal process and his 37 days of imprisonment in a Parisian jail. The former trader admits his mistakes but tries to show that the bank's directors were not as surprised as they claimed.

In October 2010, sued for “forgery, breach of trust, unauthorized use of the bank's computer system,” Jérôme Kerviel was found guilty on all counts. Sentenced to five years in prison (3 of them without parole), he was also supposed to reimburse 4.9 billion Euros in damages and interest to the Société Générale⁸⁴ – which ultimately spared him – and appealed the verdict while continuing to autograph photos for his fans. Once again public opinion was on the side of the trader, presented as a victim.

Lip-dub

Originally, *lip dubs* were designed to promote interaction between associates within a company, singing and dancing together, in playback, to express a good atmosphere, generate buzz, enhance the company image, etc. When transposed to politics, the two videos of the UMP and PS (Socialist Party) vied with each other in terms of failure, paradoxical misappropriations and irony.

The first video shows several ministers and personalities surrounded by young UMP members (Christine Lagarde, Xavier Darcos, Rama Yade, Patrick Devedjian, David Douillet, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, Chantal Jouanno on a bike, Eric Woerth, Xavier Bertrand, Nadine Morano, notably) taking turns to sing against a background of music by Luc Plamondon: “*Come and sing, come and dance / All those who want to change the world / Come walk beside me,*” with the prize going to Rachida Dati: “*I can hear the revolt brewing,*” while “*The future keeps starting over*”...

The second one, “*It's time,*” lists what it is time to do, in particular “*turn the page,*” “*choose the story you want to write.*” On the Inrocks website, the National Secretary in Charge of Communications, David Assouline, explained that this was in fact a “*socialist identity chant.*”

Since then, these experiments have apparently been halted, mainly to restore credibility to political players and reassure electors and activists who feel increasingly disconcerted.

⁸⁴ Whose financial results are recovering well, the Groups' net-share result was 2.15 billion Euros for the first six months.

What trends is advertising the expression or signal of?

The “Nostalgia” phenomenon is lasting and lingering; we identified it among the 2009 trends with the Alain Delon campaign for Dior, we’re seeing it again with Mad Men on TV, in fashion parades, with Vuitton whose image today is the image of the 1950s; Mars has revisited its seminary ad, with the story of the young man who wants to enter a seminary, eats his Mars bar at the last minute and returns to a normal life. Mousline has practically reproduced its 80s ad, but with updated music and a karaoke effect at the end of the film, Lustucru is bringing out its little green men, and so on: brands are searching for their fundamental characteristics, their core value, their essence, their values.

Is this nostalgia generational, you generally miss your youth, don’t you?

Not at all, it’s largely shared and that’s where its strength lies; 20-30-year-olds love Mad Men, Mousline mashed potato, Tagada strawberries, the little green men, etc., which were a part of every French person’s childhood! It’s what I call the “Blankie effect,” it’s the little cookie you can cling to... And there’s an esthetic aspect too, symbols that they can adopt, a way of dressing that you’ll see in street fashion, that even boys have adopted by wearing the Tibi, the little hat that gives that final touch, in the HiFi world we’re seeing the return of vinyl: these are not only retro symbols, they are symbols of a certain estheticism, a certain art of living and status. And that’s because young people have a different relationship with money, with very different priorities; they spend money on phones and high-tech items and eat up store brands, these choices are made on the basis of a good living criterion that is specific to them.

Any other changes in communications?

Yes, anything to do with belonging, nationalism, community of values. We can see it in the Halal phenomenon, but also in identity-based advertising, like the Opel ads in Germany.

INTERVIEW
Marie-Odile Duflo,
Ipsos ASI

It's an interesting brand posture, in terms of highlighting safe, powerful references, and so on, all that Germanic imagery, and beyond that, the group of belonging. We can find it in the cinema with the four films that enjoyed the most success, "Little White Lies," "Of Gods and Men," "Potiche," and the film about the virtual networks, "The Social Network": what they have in common is the belonging to a group, whether it's a religious group, family group, a group of friends, etc.

This notion of community is so important that it can destabilize clients if a brand touches upon something that relates to identity: Gap for example! The brand launched a new logo that triggered an outcry on the Internet and it was obliged to return to the "historic" logo to the delight of its customers. The navy blue square with the word Gap inside, as ordinary looking as it is, simply contained the brand's reference point, all its values, and its relational power... That proves just how much brands must understand what their fundamental practices (quality, rational, simplicity, etc.) and symbols (values, relations, etc.) are, what territory they are starting out from to build their information system and social network.

Yet, with more than 70% of French people surfing the web and the defiance society well established, can advertising still seduce people?

The brand has two aspects. The first is very rational, functional, embodied in the product it delivers, what you will find, what its visibility will be; and the second is much more irrational and non-perceptible. In it you find its values, the relationship it establishes with the consumer... and the Internet actually enables brands to express themselves in a different way, to create new relations with a lot more interaction between the brand and the consumer, where he is a stakeholder.

Take the example of Hermès which won the 2010 Stratégies Firstluxe.com Grand Prix for luxury for its website http://www.voyagedhermes.com/fr_FR/#/film; the principle was to ask people to suggest a dream voyage, Hermès then selected a number of them, and webservers voted for the dream they liked best and that Hermès had promised to make come true.

The brand must be present in all access media, whether it's the classic TV screen or the Internet, by moderating blogs, like Evian, which started out with the blog, which was then found on TV, on billboards, etc. The categories can't keep up with change! They need to be renamed, including in the Awards: what is film? Cyber? Different expressions of advertising are side by side and one on top of the other... Cyber is the space where the most innovation is taking place, because advertising is "letting loose" there more, on a medium that enables greater involvement and interactivity. We find that offbeat, humorous tone in brands starting out, like online games, WINAMAX, le PMU betting site with the jockeys in the rugby stadium.

A latest trend?

Freedom of choice, with Amaguiz being the most obvious expression! This almost unknown mutual insurance company with a weird name has imposed its own style, generated considerable buzz, and is well rooted in today's values: customization and paying for what you consume, no more.

Like nostalgia or creating a sense of shared identity, it's a way of seducing a consumer, citizen or person, who we know make their own choices, that they will instinctively go and seek information on the Internet, that they are surrounded by symbols, whose freedom of choice is immense. Brands would do well to tap into these phenomena.

[Ultras]

In the series of new words, after “radicalization” one or two years ago, “**ultra**” is the “in” prefix when it comes to taking realities beyond their limits: ultraleftists, ultrawealthy, ultraviolence, ultra-thin watchmaking, etc.

Unlike *slow*, this is about taking things to the limits, with no regard for whoever or whatever.

Ultra-Violence appeared as a means to designate a move up one extra notch; after **delinquency**, civil **disturbances**, **riots**, **war**, a new concept was needed, doubtless to make predictable social phenomena more abstract and more acceptable... Véronique Le Goaziou and Laurent Mucchielli⁸⁵ analyzed its appearance in 2000 in *L'Express* (*Teens, the spiral of ultra-violence*), which was covered in *Le Monde* six years later (*Gangs the spiral of ultra-violence*) and its establishment in 2010 with *Le Parisien* (May 26th 2010 - *The new face of ultra-violence*) or *Marianne* (May 29th - *Ultra-violence, the barbarians on the street corner*).

What characterizes ultra-violence is its level of brutality and cruelty, its gratuitousness, the disparity of the numbers involved, its disproportion⁸⁶, etc., as opposed to so-called “base” violence which has a more classic objective, such as theft.

In five years, the number of delinquent girls progressed by 27%; in 2009 for example, more than 33,000 were implicated in crimes or offenses, usually linked to romantic rivalry or “**disrespect**”⁸⁷...

⁸⁵ *La violence des jeunes en question*, Champ Social.

⁸⁶ Example at the Parc Astérix, where members of a family from the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region were beaten up by “youths,” after criticizing the fact that they did not wait their turn in line, with a savagery that the words “*deliberate violence with premeditation*” fall short of expressing...

⁸⁷ National observatory on delinquency and penal responses

Explosives and Kalachnikovs have come out of basements and into the daylight, as was the case on December 14th, 2010, in Aulnay-sous-Bois (Seine-Saint-Denis, Paris region); the explosives blew up the door of the safe in a branch of the BNP bank, seriously injuring two bank employees. The guns were used spray the street with bullets, and the robbers, when surprised by police, were quick to open fire on the cars and the officers themselves, before fleeing. And on the 15th, in Dugny, a car was rammed into an ATM before exploding.

Following a series of similar acts, the State affirmed several months earlier, in the person of the President himself, that it intended to wage a “*national war on criminals*,” a form of military and geographical rhetoric that Bernard-Henri Lévy described as “*the third mistake, because when criminals talk war, it’s provocation. But when States say ‘hell yes, war!’, that’s called civil war.*”

There's just one problem: acting as though violence, per se, were acceptable depending on its degree and its nuances, whereas the Civil Code does not allow for such sensitive considerations, defining violence as "*a deliberate or non-deliberate act, inflicting physical or moral injury upon the victim, comprising harmful consequences for the person or his property*"⁸⁸."

How can we socialize if no one is "normal" any more, if organizing a huge fight via Facebook has the same success as the mass aperitifs? In Rochefort, over one hundred teenagers, aged 12 to 15 years old, paraded through the town center in an improbable settling of scores following a "romantic quarrel" and an update on the Facebook profile of a junior high school student.

The comment from a police officer who witnessed the event is telling: "*We didn't know what to do to separate those kids, who by definition are fairly fragile physically, and who what's more absolutely did not care about our being there. It's the first time we've had to deal with a fight like that, very fortunately no one was hurt, but it was more than close.*"

Ultra-Wealthy is lighter and more festive, with varying interpretations. For the annual World Wealth Report (Capgemini & Merrill Lynch), these are people "*with a high net capital, and a minimum of thirty million dollars.*"

The first victims of the financial and real estate crisis, their numbers dropped between 2007 and 2008 from 103,000 to 78,000, i.e. almost - 25 %.

As concerns the mere "wealthy" for 2008, 29% were living in the USA, 16% in Japan, 9% in Germany and around 4.2% in China and the UK, 4% in France, with a drop from 396,000 to 346,000 between 2007 and 2008.

For *City Private Bank* and *Frank Knight* (2010 report on world wealth), the number of "wealthy people" was said to have decreased again by around 17% between 2008 and 2009, from 3,110,000 to 2,519,000 in the USA and from 309,000 to 266,000 in France.

⁸⁸ <http://www.dictionnairejuridique.com/definition/violence.php>

The period from 2007/2009 was a difficult one, but their situation returned in 2010 to a level equivalent to that of 2007.

That was an observation made in both the *Nouvel Observateur* (“Millions of millionaires in the world,” June 10th, 2010) and *Le Monde* (“Return to better fortune for the millionaires in the world,” June 12th 2010), with a 14% global increase in the number of wealthy people.

For the *Boston Consulting Group*, after analyzing responses from one hundred and fourteen international financial institutions, the “international fortune” (assets under management) represented 111,500 billion dollars (92,174 billion Euros) in 2009, i.e. an 11.5% increase compared to 2008.

Which explains the interest in their adventures, desires, escapades... whether it concerns sailing, high-watchmaking, hotels, art, etc.

The **ultra-watchmakers** (*Le Figaro*, June 5th, 2010) are designers of ultra-thin, ultra-light, ultra-waterproof watches... giving watches increasingly high performance.

A watch that can resist at -3,900 meters may not be an absolute necessity at the office, but it attests to the quality of the person wearing it, his desire for the highest standards, his taste for the exceptional. This ultra-profitable strategy enables brands to position themselves in relation to their original values: pushing back the limits of materials to master time and turn every watch into a mechanical and esthetic work of art, a distinctive, perfect creature, just like the client?

Ultra-prestige in real estate too where “*the market is exploding, the prices soaring,*” says Thibault de Saint-Vincent, President of the Barnes group, specialized in high-end products in Paris, Deauville, Biarritz, Cannes, London, New York and Miami. London is still the most expensive city with 80,000 Euros a square meter, but Paris is catching up pretty quickly with 50,000 Euros a square meter, at the same level as New York, ex-world champion in the field of exceptional apartments.

While Miami has lost 50% of its value, prices for luxury real estate have increased 300% in 10 years in Paris, where Americans, Russians, Italians, Brazilians, Qataris and Chinese are fighting over the finest apartments and town houses⁸⁹.

⁸⁹ A brightly lit penthouse: 22 million dollars in New York, a house in Neuilly-sur-Seine: 21 million Euros, an apartment in Cannes: 17.5.

A few days before the sixth general strike of the year in Greece against the austerity plan and the threats of **ultra-rigor** in Ireland, a book by Aymeric Mantoux, *Voyage au pays des ultra-riches (Voyage to the Land of the Ultra-Wealthy*, published by Flammarion) described the ways and customs of this population who are living out their passions while investing: wine-growing estates, works of art, castles only appear to be whims. As tax havens and mid-term investments, they follow bling-bling as strategic investments.

[Ultra-Sex]

In order to keep creating a bigger audience, motivate readership or clients, the taboos have to go, one after another.

Media buzz over their sexual preferences, coming-outs between men, women, both, etc. are now everyday affairs, while the French soap opera *Plus belle la vie* has no hang-ups about covering the bisexuality of Céline, an attorney in love with the criminal Myriam (who, to the delight of viewers, finally gets her to smile again), or the antics of *Skin Parties* in Marseilles...

On TF1, the program *Qui veut épouser mon fils? (Who wants to marry my son?)* is starting to enter into candidates' bedrooms, showing them kissing and stroking, or naked together in the shower.

Laetitia Halliday, shown naked on the cover of *Public* (no. 369) or of *Pure Saint-Barth* (no. 7) follows the same sales-boosting rationale, while standardizing such events.

While there is still no male version of *Sex and the City*, Carrie, Samantha, Charlotte and Miranda have been making sex toys glamorous and guilt-free for a long time.

But the industry is now attacking the men's sex toy market, notably with a product made by a Japanese company that is sure to revolutionize the world of adult toys with "an object that looks like a shower gel with red, black or gold stripes; ordinary in appearance, it contains a soft, lubricated cavity, whose grooves and curves promise hitherto unknown sensations⁹⁰," while other articles, with or without harness, can expect a bright future.

⁹⁰The Tenga masturbation cups launched in 2005 in Japan, have reached their sales goal with thirteen million of them sold in some forty countries, including 1.3 million in Europe.

In advertising, Giorgio Armani chose Megan Fox, the heroine from the *Transformers* saga and Cristiano Ronaldo, after Victoria and David Beckham. Their qualities: for Megan Fox, “*being young, sexy and very brilliant,*” and for Ronaldo, “*agreeing to pose almost naked, like the other male stars before him.*”

In tribute to the 1970s, being naked can also be an act of contestation; in Moscow, students from the journalism school posed in outfits described as “*ultra-sex*” to convey messages such as “*What’s the status of the investigation into the assassination of Anna Politkovskaia?*” and Ukrainian activists from Femdem undressed to protest “*Russia’s control over the Government.*”

The publishing world has opened up broadly to sex, whether it’s Virginie Despentes⁹¹ whose latest heroes are analyzed as “*the toys, from Paris to Barcelona, of a joyless sexuality between men and women but who are almost rescued from sordidness by lesbian love,*” Thibault de Montaigne⁹² with the story of a laboratory manager who creates a club in the south of France “*where coke, money and girls compete to keep his young mistress happy.*”

Jacques Abeille⁹³ tells the story of a woman who simultaneously converts to religion and prostitution, while Maria Luna Vera⁹⁴ in *Pute* (Whore) relates the adventures of two friends who drop everything and cross-dress to become gigolos.

For the insatiables, Karine Tuil⁹⁵ exposes her heroine to the claws of a Nazi sexual predator, and Martin Provost (*Bifteck, Phébus*) describes how the butcher André replaces the men from his village who had to leave for the front at the time of performing their conjugal duty.

Let’s end with a flourish with *Lea T.*, Riccardo Tisci’s transgender model at Givenchy, photographed full page in *Vogue* (August 2010); she represents a real turning point in the model industry according to an analysis by *Styleite*, a new international blog devoted to the fashion industry: “*contrary to those who believed the casting of a transgendered model was a gimmick, Lea T. has become a veritable fixture in the fashion world, walking in Givenchy’s haute couture show and posing in last month’s Italian Vanity Fair.*”

⁹¹ *Apocalypse bébé*, Grasset.

⁹² *Les grands gestes la nuit*, Fayard.

⁹³ *Odeur de sainteté*, Atelier in8.

⁹⁴ Buchet-Chastel.

⁹⁵ *Six mois, six jours*, Grasset.

[Ultra-Transgression]

In order to survive beyond pure artistic talent, you must come up with a spectacular way to put yourself on display; Beth Ditto, Lady Gaga, Amy Winehouse vie for attention in this domain.

Ditto, real name Mary Beth Patterson, sings in the rock band Gossip. Obese, she speaks out on her pro-LGBT⁹⁶ stance; in her interviews, she describes how she refuses to shave and wear deodorant, loves junk food, stuffs herself with hamburgers and likes to pose naked and be provocative in the name of “**body acceptance.**”

Lady Gaga, spiritual daughter of Madonna and David Bowie, reveals the same eccentric temperament; for example, during the *MTV Video Music Awards* in September 2010, her dress, boots, hat and handbag were made from raw meat⁹⁷, in protest of the US Army’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy. Her stage performances and videos are a powerful selling force⁹⁸, Lady Gaga was thus the first artist to reach one billion viewings on YouTube, after producing only two albums, *The Fame* (2008) and *The Fame Monster* (her semi-re-release, 2009), while *Born This Way* will be available in Spring 2011.

Her style, a skilful combination of electro dance, pop and glam rock, corresponds to her goal, because “*as an artist, [she wants] to write and make music that has something artistic and interesting to say. If I can reach a 4-year-old girl and a 25-year-old art student with my album, then I’ve done a good job.*”

⁹⁶ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered People.

⁹⁷ Twenty-three years earlier, the Canadian designer Jana Sterbak went much further with “Vanitas, Flesh Dress for Anorexic Albinos,” a patchwork dress made from pieces of meat worn by a fashion model.

⁹⁸ 70 million records sold worldwide (17 million albums and 53 million singles) as of December 1st 2010.

Lady Gaga’s look (the work of dedicated design office Haus of Gaga, she is wearing a long black wig and crying black blood on the inner sleeve of *The Fame Monster*) is designed to exclusively target the reptilian brain: “*I want them to feel like eating me and licking every part of me because of how striking the clothes are,*” while her lyrics echo the major themes of the times: alcohol or drugs, sex, love, solitude, truth and meaning of life, AIDS and death.

⁹⁹ Possession of drugs, use of narcotics, trial with the *Rock en Seine* festival due to its two cancellations, surprises in 2007 and 2008, overdose of heroin, ecstasy, cocaine, ketamine and alcohol, etc.

After a long series of legal problems and serious health issues⁹⁹, Amy Winehouse is preparing a new soul album and teaming up with the centennial UK brand *Fred Perry* for a retro, sexy, provocative collection (high-waisted mini skirts, plunging necklines, belts with huge buckles), with a predilection for pink and black that spice up the waist-hugging silhouettes in this new form of luxury.

What has struck you most about the development of lifestyles and consumption in 2010?

One of the most striking trends has probably been the confirmation of the search for “adjusted consumption.” We identified this trend as part of the Trend Observer, the Observatory of emerging trends. To grasp what is happening, you need to take a brief step back in time. The consumer society is changing. For several years we have been witnessing the entry into a new cycle.

In the 1950s/1970s (the famous “Glorious Thirty”), the priority for consumers was to have, to own: having your own refrigerator, washing machine, TV... The society of well-being came at this price. In that respect, France followed the same evolution as the other developed countries in Europe, North America or Asia.

From the 1970s/1980s, the emphasis was placed on searching for a better balance between having and being: the aim was no longer just to have, you also had to be able to fulfill yourself, develop your personality, live out your passions... Being yourself was now the issue. The 2000s have been a decade of transition.

What is new in the cycle is something that started several years ago and was confirmed in 2010, and that is the entry into the society of “having well.” Nowadays, “having well” means breaking away from the “more and more” rationale. Consumers are realizing that the accumulation of goods ad infinitum has not made them any happier.

Many research projects carried out by scientists have supported this impression. Careful though, “having well” does not necessarily mean “having less.” What counts increasingly is having what corresponds to our needs, our preferences, our desires. “Adjusted” consumption fits precisely into this rationale. It’s the very simple idea that you should make the most of what you have, which involves 1) knowing what you want, 2) taking the time to savor what you own, before thinking about consuming more...

INTERVIEW
Rémy Oudghiri,
Ipsos Public Affairs

What examples of adjusted consumption have you noticed?

One of the best – and one of the most global – examples of adjusted consumption is the “smart city.” In the near future, an increasing number of towns will be setting up smart management systems for their energy, water and means of transport, in order to optimize flow synchronization and avoid waste.

In the USA, South Korea and Japan, these systems are emerging now. They enable optimal adjustment of production and consumption. The Internet used to imitate reality. Now it’s reality that is imitating the Internet. There are major benefits to this. Of course, there is an economic benefit – you make substantial savings – but also an ecological benefit – you waste less – and, obviously, a benefit for consumers who adjust their consumption to come as close as possible to their needs. In the electricity domain, in the years to come we should be witnessing the generalization of smart grids in households: intelligent meters that will enable users to adjust their consumption based on forecastable consumption peaks, rates that vary according to the time of day, etc...

In fact, the very relationship with consumption is changing. We are less and less tolerant of the idea of paying pointless surpluses. We want to be able to maximize the relationship between usage and value. That’s one of the reasons behind the success of concepts such as Vélib’ in Paris or Vélov in Lyons. Instead of owning a bike, people prefer to rent. Bike consumption is adjusted to need, which might be using it for just a few minutes.

What’s the point of cluttering up your life? Another example: in some French cities, the concept of “smart parking” is being tested out. Parking spaces are equipped with electronic tachographs connected to a GPS system, which precisely measures the occupation time between the moment you park and the moment you leave. Result: you only pay for what you used...

The Amaguiz insurance company announced it in a blaze of publicity on TV this year: “only pay for what you consume.” Become “customizophile”!...

Many domains show how this trend is spreading. Take high-end men’s fashion, for example. Customization is making a comeback among the big brands. Brands are creating themselves on the Internet, offering to scan the body to adjust shirts or suits to the individual’s morphology, his waistline, his shoulder measurement, his physical make-up... It’s a way to offer him exactly what he needs.

Does this search for adjusted consumption only concern a fairly wealthy clientele?

No, not at all. It concerns all areas of the population. Adjusting consumption also means saving money, or avoiding waste. Take the current popularity of flea markets. Once again, consumers are adjusting their consumption. They go there to complement their purchases. It’s a way to put an end to “more and more new things,” and find less expensive products, that are maybe more in line with what they are really looking for. Products that have a history or particular meaning...

There is also the return of bulk bins in supermarkets, and which are a favorite with customers of organic stores. Here again, our consumption is being adjusted, through only buying what we really need. Say goodbye to standardization and waste! That’s the mindset we’re seeing develop. In the big developed countries, the Observatory of Well-Being(s) evaluated the proportion of consumers feeling guilty at the idea of wasting at 71%.

In this trend, isn’t there a secret wish for a step back in time, to the days before the triumph of the hyper-consumer society? Isn’t the success of flea markets one sign among so many others of that aspiration?

The latest wave of the 4500, Observatory of French Lifestyles and Consumption, carried out in June 2010, confirms this: nostalgia has set in for the long term in France. On TV, the success of Champs-Élysées this year is a sign of this. For just a few hours, TV viewers could dream of a France of the past... That’s what they constantly tell us when questioned: “it used to be better.”

INTERVIEW
Rémy Oudghiri,
Ipsos Public Affairs

Is this a symptom of an aging society?

Not just that. Young people are nostalgic too. That doesn't mean they want to live in the 60s. On the other hand, they are now convinced, wrongly or rightly, that the 60s were "easier" years. Their parents had fewer problems in their lives. Nowadays everything is complicated according to them, and they fear what the future has in store for them. 70% of French high school students are afraid of living in poverty one day! But the same people who claim to be nostalgic in surveys are the ones who use the new technologies the most: there is no contradiction between the two

Basically, we are witnessing the emergence of a generation of nostalgic technophiles.

The North American independent cartoon is full of these profiles (Seth, Joe Matt, Daniel

Clowes...). This is a multi-faceted nostalgia. There are those who will find more soul or more esthetic appeal in objects of the past; those who will love the old TV series because it takes them back to a type of imagery they have never known. Mad Men, for example, clashes strikingly with our own times where the notion of "No Clean Future" now prevails in people's minds. At the time, people drank, smoked, went out, lazed around... Far-removed from the current spread of the precautionary principle.

Especially since, in 2010, the French lived through two powerful experiences of the precautionary principle! The H1N1 epidemic, on the one hand, with only 7.5% of French people getting vaccinated in the end, despite the intense media pressure... And a volcano in Iceland that erupted, on the other, causing the cancelation of 7,134 flights! They said the cloud would change the climate...

You really can sense that the predominance of the precautionary principle is increasingly viewed as a burden. People feel a bit saturated... Although it's very difficult to go back in time... After all, people's heads have been filled with a bunch of norms, prudence measures and they're not going to be dislodged that easily. I'm thinking of the younger generation, for example.

Thirty-somethings pay great attention to their physical equilibrium and healthy living. They monitor themselves, they track their weight. They don't necessarily like doing it, but for years they have been subjected to public relations pressure based on the precautionary principle. It's almost become second nature for them. That won't be easy to dislodge... Just as it won't be easy to get a smoker to stop smoking.

I think that the precautionary principle has set in for the long term in aging societies wanting security. On the other hand, we're probably going to see reaction trends among people who want to totally let loose. They feel caught in the trap of the precautionary principle, and they want out... Those are the years ahead of us...

[Ultra-Thinspot]

Amy Winehouse's thinness was interpreted as a symptom of her drug addiction or alcoholism, and more broadly her addictions in general. This raises the bigger question of the norm, the relationship with outside stimuli, the view taken by society and the authorities in general.

This includes dietary disorders: orthorexia is defined as the "search for dietary perfection," the control of one's nutritional functions, of each food type and how it corresponds to the other foods (minerals, trace elements, daily intake...), chewing time, etc. Anorexia, often presented as an "obsession with controlling weight loss leading to heavy dietary restrictions," goes hand in hand with laxatives, diuretics, vomiting... leading to extreme thinness and life-threatening physical disorders.

In the study *Population and Society* published in April 2009, the INED underlines the fact that "French women have an ideal build that is smaller than their neighbors, perhaps the sign of greater pressure exerted on the body in their country."

In France, between 30,000 and 40,000 people are said to be afflicted with anorexia, and around 90% of them are women, with two critical stages: 12-13 years and 18-19 years. The only legal actions in this respect have been the prohibition of pro-anorexia blogs, while at the same time the fashion world has been introducing more "slim," "skinny," "skeleton," "thin," etc. lines.

Neither the State, nor laboratories, nor learned societies have commented on the subject, public health campaigns have remained allusive while the Internet – with all its possible drifts – features an increasing number of blogs such as "Thinspo", "Thinspiration", "Annadict".

[Ultra-Fat]

Bulimia, which has been better researched than anorexia, and is characterized by "excessive ingestion of food in a repetitive manner over a long period," is expressed by a tendency towards obesity and self-control crises similar to anorexic behavior, and also has dangerous consequences.

Freed from guilt by Dove advertising or magazines (*Grazia* “fat and glamorous”), the assimilation of fat with bon vivant, fulfillment, seduction outside the norms, is still an easy alibi.

The election of Vendée resident Marion Bogaert as *Miss Ronde France 2011* (*Miss Curvy France*), is typical of this type of depiction: at 19 years old, 1.70 m tall for a weight of 95 kilos, her BMI is 32.87; given her age and gender, it should be somewhere between 18.5 and 24.

So when will Miss Anorexia get her tiara?

A report¹⁰⁰ by the European Commission and the OECD shows that the obesity rate has doubled over the past twenty years in the majority of European Union countries, with 50.1% overweight, including 15.5% obese.

The obesity rate in France is 11.2%, as opposed to 8.1 % in Switzerland, 9.9% in Italy, but 24.5% in the UK, 23% in Ireland, 22.3% in Malta.

Almost 30% of children aged 11 to 15 years are considered overweight or obese in Malta, as opposed to 18.8% in Greece and Portugal, 18.3% in Italy and 16.7% in Spain; the European average is 13.3 %, with France’s at 10.5 %.

The pace of child obesity has accelerated: in 1965, 3% were overweight. That proportion has doubled every 15 years, to reach 6% in the 1980s, 10 to 14% in 1996 and 16% in 2000. According to international definitions, there are currently 18% of overweight children in France, 3% of them obese.

In France, over 5.3 million adults are considered obese. More than the actual number, it is the growth of obesity that is worrisome: according to the *Obepi surveys*, the proportion of obese people went from 8.2% to 11.3% between 1997 and 2003; as for the frequency of massive obesity, this doubled over those six years, going from 0.3 % to 0.6 %.

While this development is continuing on its path, France will count 20% of obese people by 2020, with risks in terms of life-threatening diseases, 50,000 deaths in France being linked directly or indirectly to obesity.

¹⁰⁰ “Panorama de la Santé : Europe”, Tuesday December 7th, 2010.

At the same time, the increase in diabetes is associated with the progression of excess weight and obesity: France counts 2.5 million diabetics, in other words almost 4% of the population (in this respect, the gap between 2001/2007 is 40%), which has caused the health insurance world to talk in terms of a “diabetes epidemic” in the developed countries.

[Ultra-Death]

The start of the 2010 literary year was not just marked by sex; death and suicide were on the menu too.

In “Le Coeur Régulier”¹⁰¹ the heroine, Sarah, younger sister to Nathan who jumped off a cliff, makes a sinister pilgrimage to Japan, wandering the bamboo landscapes and cedars to try and understand his action.

Discovering his father hanging from a beam as a child was the fate of Alexandre Lacroix who goes over this terrible shock in “L’Orfelin”¹⁰².

*Suicide Girls*¹⁰³ by Aymeric Patricot retraces the path of a young teacher fascinated by SG websites, showing women or men who are naked, tattooed and/or pierced, sharing underground culture and a deliberate stance social suicide through the non-observance of social conventions.

The company, changing or restructuring, also provides a setting for life-and-death crises, as described by Nathalie Kuperman (“Nous étions des êtres vivants,” Gallimard) or Philippe Claudel (“L’enquête,” Stock).

War, crimes and madness are the core factor in some ten books, “*L’insomnie des étoiles*” (Marc Dugain, Gallimard), “*L’ennemi du bien*” (Stéphane Denis, Grasset), “*L’homme mouillé*” (Antoine Senanque, Grasset), “*Otage*” (Elie Wiesel, Grasset). Chochana Boukhobza’s heroine in “*Troisième jour*” (Denoël) decides, almost fifty years later, to kill her Nazi tormenter.

Being dead isn’t an obstacle when it comes to getting published, as was the case with Nelly Arcand who committed suicide last year, after which Le Seuil published “*Burqa de chair*.”

¹⁰¹ Olivier Adam, Editions de l’Olivier.

¹⁰² Flammarion.

¹⁰³ Léo Scheer.

Nor when it comes to making your funeral a success: that was the subject of the Salon de la Mort (Death Show) which took place on April 8th-10th, 2010 at the Carrousel du Louvre and welcomed “*all those who contribute to the preparation of death and the resolution of the problems it brings, brought together for the first time at the same location, in a show for the general public.*”

Given that there are almost 550,000 deaths a year in France, one of the Salon’s objectives was to “*reach out to the general public and generate interest in its own finiteness,*” according to Dr. Régis Aubry¹⁰⁴.

Beyond the cultural and symbolic stakes, this is about not being dispossessed of one’s own funeral, preparing it like a wedding (there will be no talk of burying one’s life as a young man or young woman), giving it meaning (or not), managing one’s own way of thinking out and preparing the final exit.

In fashion and the world of art, the skull is a symbol just like a rose or camellia, one that luxury brands have been presenting in a multitude of creative ways.

Paul Smith is offering candles in the shape of a life-sized skull, Victoire de Castellane is making jewelry from fine stones featuring gleaming skulls for Dior, while children’s fashion has a growing range of skull and crossbones socks.

The exhibition *Vanity, Death, what do you want of me?* was a resounding success (800,000 visitors), sales of skulls are booming again, while macabre accessories provide the indispensable final touch. The trendy Christmas tree of 2010 turned out to be a black and silver pine tree adorned with skull-shaped balls hanging from its branches.

Unlike Mexico where eating sugar skulls is a symbolic community tradition, this change in the spirit of the festival marking the winter solstice and transformed into Christmas corresponds to a mindset of decorative denial.

Made in the family, the Mexican calavera accompanies the Day of the Dead, a pre-Columbian festival that takes place around the same time as Halloween and All Saints Day. It has a specific ritualistic meaning, as an offering to a dead person or gift to someone close.

¹⁰⁴ Head of the Palliative Care and Pain department - University Hospital of Besançon and President of the National Observatory on the End of Life.

It is animated by the *danse macabre* which brings together all generations and all social classes and features the character creations of Manuel Manilla, the early 20th century engraver and author of the famous Cavallera Zapata.

Far from denying death, it serves as a reminder of it; it is a *memento mori* that addresses the powerful, and to this day the tradition of *calaveras literarias* lives on in the form of ironic funeral poems, which are read in public and evoke the death of a political or media personality, still alive of course. One interesting detail, the sugar calavera can come in any color, except black.

In other words, it is by no means certain that the dark pine tree would have appealed to André Breton who saw in Mexico “the land of choice of black humor¹⁰⁵” and organized an exhibition in Paris in 1939 devoted to popular funeral objects.

Calaveras have been a big success for pastry-makers, but they have been treated as mere esthetic objects, emptied of their primitive meaning, extinguished, illusory from all points of view; pending the arrival of the tibia-shaped Yule log perhaps?

[Ultra-Offbeat]

A band of Snow Whites, armed with assault rifles, landing from a helicopter and invading the market in Rouillé, that was the unexpected art performance that disrupted the peace and quiet of this rural municipality near Lusignan in the Vienne department.

Commando Snow White was the creation of Catherine Bay¹⁰⁶, for whom the fairy tale heroine has become a commercial character symbolic of the global standardization of culture and tastes. “*I am repetition, Snow White tells us,*” alongside the Coca-Colas, McDonalds, Nikes, etc. that have imposed themselves upon the world.

The twelve Snow Whites in black wigs, yellow skirts and blue corsets, brandishing M16s, and infinitely reproducible, are a metaphor for the cookie-cutter formatting that threatens local distinctiveness and values.

After Paris, Berlin and Milan, they enabled Rouillé to experience its fifteen minutes of universal fame.

¹⁰⁵ Preface to
“L’Anthologie de l’humour
noir” [Black Humor Anthology]

¹⁰⁶ Mission Impossible no. 1
/ winter-spring 2006.

[All that to say what?]

Just that, as the level of impregnation and acceptance of the “**ultra**” progresses among the public, so does the level of tolerance of advertising codes, shock words and visuals.

While the older generations (our passengers from the 1925-1935 train) are still scandalized, the ones in the following train are getting used to or expecting promises that are radical (provided they are credible), divisive (the Swiss referendums provide an idea), direct, with the euphemism going out of fashion.

In advertising for example, that implies resolving through the esthetics and beauty of images, the aggressiveness and violence of the actual content; in Japan, *genki* is the code of perversions that floored chic porno and trash.

In politics, the ultras, in other words the extremes, are standardizing a form of populism that is proclaimed, the populism of a Jean-Luc Mélenchon or Marine Le Pen.

Supported by the media against Bruno Gollnisch, the President of the Front National assimilated street prayer, for example (notably among Muslims as in the rue Myrha in Paris’ 18th district) with an *“occupation, admittedly there are no tanks, no soldiers, but it’s an occupation all the same. Those who pray in the street are behaving like occupiers.”* At the same time, the Front National’s arguments have become more socially-oriented, with its proposals to *“expand funding of pensions to capital income, set up social and environmental customs duties,”* and *“in the longer term, promote a vigorous policy aimed at an increased birth rate to fund pensions, instead of resorting to costly, destabilizing immigration.”*

We will see in 2012 whether the gamble of creating the conditions for Marine

Le Pen to enter the second round of the Presidential election, since her rival is theoretically sure to be elected running against her, will be kept and won.

In contrast, Jean-Luc Mélenchon has adopted the watchword of millions of South Americans against liberalism. In *“Qu’ils s’en aillent tous! Vite, la révolution citoyenne”* (Out with the lot of them! All haste the citizen’s revolution” - Flammarion), he warns that *“in the future, millions of people will grasp the powerful by the hair, infuriated at seeing them devastate our country and condemn the population of the world’s 5th economic power to the withdrawal of all their social assets.*

They will do so, revolted by the arrogant ways of the friends of money, not only this President and his Government, but also [...] the overpriced bosses, the money sorcerers who turn everything human into merchandise, the financiers sucking the life blood out of companies, the media barons who have effaced ordinary people from the screens. The revolution I want is a citizen's revolution in the sense that it is rooted in the social movement, it is triggered and channeled by voting slips and elections."

For him, "The word 'citizen' indicates both the means and the ends to that action. In the citizen's revolution, the will of the people must be permanently active and obeyed. And not something exceptional and scorned, as is the case with the current regime."

Therefore, "the citizen's revolution is neither a cosmetic nor a facelift for the Old World. It is a complete turnaround of power. It takes power back from the oligarchy, the presidential monarch, and from sovereign money. It hunts them down. [...] the citizen's revolution is a revolution of institutions, of social relations and the dominant culture."

The question that remains to be resolved is the question of the "people."

Does this mean all citizens, in other words individuals with the power to vote, a community of destinies, of people present at the same time on a given territory, a group sharing a language, a religion, common values, or does it mean a specific social class, grouping together people of modest means, in opposition to categories privileged by birth, culture, fortune?

Cohesion, or Terror, in other words.

[Consequences]

[Moralities (2011)]

Entering into the thick of it

On May 10th, 1793, the Convention proclaimed the unity and indivisibility of the Republic, in response to the federalism inspired by the example of the United States of America supported by the Girondins.

Article 1 of the 1958 Constitution fits into this framework, proclaiming that *“France is an indivisible, secular, democratic and social republic.”*

The **uniform** application of the law to the entire national territory, the fact that no religion enjoys any special status within the Republic, the affirmation of the principle of equality with a view to fostering social cohesion, are fundamental principles that tend toward the universal: from the (geographic and spiritual) kingdom to the Republic (political category and high moral expectations).

Originally, the plan was to both involve people and have them participate in the state, with the ultimate objective of transforming the subject into an ideal citizen in the name of progress and the common good. What the State dreaded was a dissociation into particularities, the emergence of groups living out their traditions or convictions with no concern for the national fabric.

The banning of regional languages was one expression of this in the teachings of the 3rd Republic, echoing the statement made by Barère¹⁰⁷ in 1794 in his report to the Public Safety Committee: *“federalism and superstition speak bas-breton (referring to the regional language of Lower Brittany); emigration and hatred of the Republic speak German... The counter-revolution speaks Italian, and fanaticism speaks Basque. Let us break these instruments of harm and error.”*

Despite the fact that the Constitution considers that *“regional languages belong to the heritage of France”* (Art. 75-1), the Minister of Immigration and the National Identity announced in December 2009 that he did not want any laws pertaining to regional languages, because that would be *“contrary to the principle of indivisibility of the Republic and equality in relation to the law.”*

¹⁰⁷ A lawyer, he had “Terror placed on the agenda” on September 5th, 1793 at the National Convention

Likewise, France refused to sign the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and the framework Convention for the protection of minorities.

The Belgian crisis has given rise to arguments from this point of view, with the upcoming split between Dutch-speaking Flanders on the one hand, and Brussels and French-speaking Wallonia, on the other.

The Belgian legislative elections in June 2010 saw a fracture in the nation's identity triumph with the victory of the Flemish New Alliance and its clearly separatist agenda.

The Flemish authorities are setting up a discriminatory policy, only authorizing Dutch-speaking residents to purchase homes and land, excluding French-speaking residents from social benefits, banning billboards in French or the use of French among government employees, making Dutch the only language authorized in schools.

For their part, French-speakers are raising the stakes by requesting territorial compensation in exchange, such as the expansion of the Brussels region to the six, mainly French-speaking, municipalities around the capital, which would encourage a reunification with Wallonia.

The French would not be hostile to such an operation... In June 2010, 66% said they were favorable to Wallonia being joined with France, 6% more than in July 2008 and 12% more than November 2007.

In Italy, the success of the Northern League in March 2010 in the regional elections followed the same rationale, also winning the presidency of two regions, Piedmont and Venetia.

The party wants the creation of a new State, Padania, joining together the country's northern provinces, fiscal federalism so that, according to its formula, "*Northern Italians stop paying for the people in the South.*"

Xenophobia doesn't scare it either, its leader Umberto Bossi stated for example in Milan that housing should be "*allocated as a priority to Lombardians and not the first bamboula that comes along*"...

[Ignore or accompany?]

France is now in a paradoxical position.

On the one hand, in the name of Republican purism, anything relating to **distinctive identity** is deemed to constitute a threat to the country's cohesion, leading to a temptation to control it whenever its influence is viewed as dangerous for the community¹⁰⁸.

The ban on the full veil is the convergence point for all kinds of issues: women's dependency on those around them (emancipation), secularism and freedom of worship (religion), identification of individuals moving around the territory (security), reference to foreign customs and habits (integration), submission or personal choice (right of individuals), etc.

The fact that in April, when the debates aimed at banning the wearing of a full veil were starting, the Prime Minister inaugurated the Al-Ihsan Mosque in Argenteuil (3,000 m² with minaret¹⁰⁹) was a concrete example of this type of paradox.

Likewise, in mid-December 2010, following an appeal, the Court of Nantes canceled a fine imposed in April on a woman for wearing a face veil while driving, arguing that wearing a full veil leaving just a slit for the eyes does not affect the field of vision, because it "moves with the head," as her lawyer put it.

In contrast, the French Labor Relations board validated the laying-off of a former employee of the *Baby Loup* day care center (Chanteloup-les-Vignes) precisely because she was wearing a veil, in contradiction with the secularism principle.

And that's prior to April 12th 2011, the day when the law banning wearing of the full veil in public spaces is supposed to enter into force.

And all that at a time when research firms in France are still prohibited from posing questions considered ethnic or communitarian in surveys or recruitments, as if these would set the Nation alight. Advertisers and Agencies are moving ahead very quickly, much more in step with demographic and sociological realities than the anachronistic, custodial authorities.

¹⁰⁸ "In junior and senior public high schools, the wearing of symbols or outfits through which students clearly express affiliation to a religion is prohibited" (Law of March 15th, 2004). Six years later, the "project for a law prohibiting the dissimulation of the face in public spaces," a way of referring to the full-face veil worn by some Muslim women was adopted in June by the National Assembly

¹⁰⁹ In Switzerland, the ban on building minarets was entered into the Constitution following the vote of November 29th, 2009.

In 2009, the advertisement¹¹⁰ for Halal products by the Zakia brand, broadcast by national channels at peak viewing times during Ramadan, marked a major turnaround in advertising as the first commercial explicitly dedicated to a particular religious community. A part of the Panzani brand portfolio, Zakia Halal was already sponsoring the cooking program with the biggest viewing audience in France (“Un dîner presque parfait,” on channel M6).

In 2010, Reghalal, Isla Delice and Pierre Martinet amplified the marketing and advertising approach. A brand producing poultry and deli meats and the halal caterer for the LDC group (Maître Coq, Loué, Marie, Le Gaulois, Traditions d’Asie), Reghalal advertised from July 5th to 27th via 1,400 billboards in the Paris metro and free press, along with a few sites targeting the Muslim community.

Going even further, Isla Délice rolled out over 6,000 billboards in 150 towns eight days before the official start of Ramadan 2010; low-angle shots of a cow and a white hen, illustrating the tagline “proudly halal.”

These billboards came with another one, inspired by an Indonesian campaign, and showing a deep cultural complicity with the marketing target. It aims to respect the symbolic and psychological functioning of fasting and breaking fast, going well beyond the “Ramadan Moubourak” (“Happy Ramadan!”) that creates a link between the three media.

Fasting (? ??) involves abstaining from eating, drinking, smoking and having sex from dawn to dusk. Iftar (??? ?) is the evening meal throughout this period, which ends with the id al-fiṭr (?? ?? ??), corresponding to the definitive end of fasting for the month of Ramadan.

To accompany this daily rhythm, the billboard in question has a dual purpose, achieved by using backlighting as an optical effect¹¹¹: in the daytime, the brand logo can be seen along with a big white tablecloth spread over a table. During the evening and night, the logo and the same tablecloth can be seen, but as a backdrop spotlighting the meals traditionally associated with the iftar.

In the Ad Agency world, Ogilvy Noor¹¹² has also been making moves.

¹¹⁰ <http://www.zakia.fr/index.php?version=fr>

¹¹¹ Although it was only visible in Paris (16 Boulevard Montmartre, 75018), the flattering buzz that it generated doubtless delighted ad agency Herezie and billboard company JC Decaux.

¹¹² <http://www.ogilvynoor.com/>

Given that the world market of Muslim consumers alone generates 2.1 million dollars a year, that the vertical handing down of Islam is more stable in these households (atheism, agnosticism or conversions are rarer there than among Christians, for example), that the impact of the growth in the Muslim population can be expressed economically by 500 billion dollars every year, this is an exponential market.

The strategic response from Ogilvy & Mather has been Ogilvy Noor, in other words “*Islamic Branding*,” as an ad hoc solution for advertisers wanting to position themselves in relation to Muslim consumers, which implies (as we have seen with the example of Isla Délice) a familiarity with Muslim values, best practices, and cultural skills.

Pierre Martinet, the famous “*traiteur intraitable*” (intractable caterer), named his halal range¹¹³ after his wife who is of Turkish origin, with “*Les Recettes de Nurdan*”; his goal is to become the number one on the halal catering and delicatessen market as quickly as possible.

Ultra-segmentation is developing as a cost-effective answer, targeting identified communities, entering into collusion with them, which implies increasingly participative creation between brands and their customers.

This approach, which is very far from the notion of the “people,” aims on the contrary to de-massify, individualize and enhance as much as possible every specific characteristic or custom, whether religious, cultural, traditional, etc.

Micro as an antidote to macro; local as an antidote to international; the individual as an antidote to the general.

[Caring people]

Pampering the client, the consumer, or even the citizen was a watchword in 2010.

In the Socialist Party, Martine Aubry wrote into the socialist plan for the 2010 Presidential election the notion of “*care*,” retranscribed as “society of mutual care.”

¹¹³ <http://www.lesrecettes-de-nurdan.fr/>

The notion was created by Carol Gilligan in 1982 in her book *In a Different Voice*¹¹⁴ which establishes a link between ethics, care and feminism; eleven years later, Joan Tronto developed the idea of a society founded on looking after vulnerable people.

In *Moral Boundaries, a Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*¹¹⁵, she defines care as “A generic activity that includes everything we do to maintain, perpetuate and repair our world so that we can live there as well as possible. This world includes our bodies, ourselves and our environment, all factors that we try to link up to a complex network, supporting life.”

Joan Tronto explains how the same individual goes from non-vulnerability to vulnerability as a result of losing his job, aging, falling victim of a serious illness... or how others are predisposed to vulnerability due to their race, their social class, their gender, a handicap, etc.

Society must therefore anticipate the predictable vulnerability brought by the stages of life, the alternation of dependence / independence, autonomy / vulnerability and create a system able to manage the interdependence of individuals.

On a minimum level, we can talk in terms of “**personal services**.” When expanded into a social program and supported by an ethic, we can talk in terms of a political project. Indeed, the individual is viewed either as autonomous, or as an integral part of a structure.

The first prospect calls for financial resources on a par with individual vulnerability, the second one calls for greater equality in distribution.

In other words, in order to manage by **yourself**, you need a lot of money: to pay for health care, medicines, assistance, etc. Otherwise, a collective system is needed to avoid marginalization of the most fragile individuals.

That is the goal of “care”: criticizing liberal individualism or the consumer society and proposing to develop a new political ethic, based on the identification and recognition of types of need (*caring about*); once that is done, those needs must be taken in hand (*taking care of*) and ad hoc practical solutions must be found (*care-giving*).

¹¹⁴ Harvard University Press.

¹¹⁵ French translation by Hervé Maury, 2009, La Découverte.

But the recipient must play an active part in the process, which distinguishes “care” from simple charity or traditional morality. Care-receiving designates his responsible, involved and participative, conscious attitude.

Marie Garrau (“Care, justice et dépendance”) or Frédéric Worms in “Le Moment du soin” (PUF) discuss the usefulness and urgency of this line of thinking.

For Frédéric Worms, the historic moment that we are living through today, in this turn-of-century period, is characterized by new types of vulnerability. And so we must *“answer the most urgent problems facing us now and show that the idea of care reveals the most vital relations and splits between people.”*

Gilles Finchelstein, Managing Director of the Fondation Jean Jaurès, developed the idea of “care” so dear to Martine Aubry in an interview with L’Express¹¹⁶: *“the crisis of confidence that is sweeping over our country is a crisis of the social bond and of mutual assistance. In other words, there is a desire to give and a fear of not receiving. It’s about the employee who commits to his company, but fears being an adjustment variable. It’s the nurse’s aid providing home care, but whose social status is not recognized. It’s the young man who successfully gets through a tough education and is forced to start his professional life with an endless series of internships. That’s the very opposite of the care society.... This corresponds to the desire to promote a society gentler than the – very hard – one embodied by Nicolas Sarkozy, which seems to say to a maximum of people: “I don’t care”! In contrast, what Martine Aubry is saying is: “Yes, we do care!”*

Martine Aubry herself opposes the “**well-being society**” and the “**have-all society**” in which *“the frenzy to consume is making most people poor, enriching a minority, alienating everyone.”* Her plan for 2012 is to make it possible to *“live in a soothed society, have control over your life while really enjoying access to education, housing, health and lasting employment.”*

It is true that the feeling of vulnerability has developed even more with the precautionary principle, public health messages, TV programs and the TV news alerting the public to all sorts of threat that make them feel fragile: consumer products, GMOs, gaps between diplomas and jobs, pandemics, insecurity, global warming, etc. Hence, the more ordinary the product, the more serious the risk of danger.

¹¹⁶ http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/qu-est-ce-que-le-care-cher-aups_888146.html

Last June for example, a report, written by the Worldwide Water Foundation and David Servan-Schreiber, mentioned the presence in tap water of pesticides, nitrates, drugs that could cause cancers. Not long before, the documentary “Du poison dans l’eau du robinet¹¹⁷” was watched by 3.3 million viewers, ranking channel France 3 third in ratings for the evening with a 13% audience share, while the Ministries of Ecology and Health and the Water Information Center tried to be reassuring citing the 310,000 inspections carried out every year at every stage in the water circuit.

All this contradictory information creates a level of stress rarely attained, pushing

Jacques Le Goff to react¹¹⁸: *“The Middle Ages seem to have been a creative and innovative era which, from the growth of agriculture to Dante, via the universities and cathedrals, was a great moment in the construction of our European civilization. I will not conceal the fact that it featured displays of irrationalism that are totally outdated today, such as the fear of the Devil, fear of the Antichrist, or fear of the end of the world. Yet I think I am seeing and hearing in most media a renaissance of these backward aspects that I thought were long gone. Ecology, the fear of global warming, are giving rise to ramblings that produce trances and nightmares. May I highlight the fact that the fears thus generated, in an often irrational way, have the definite and verified consequence of hitting populations with a difficult and precarious existence even harder? The incredible assault on meat consumption is a big factor in the serious problems being faced by farmers, a social category upon which Europe was partly founded. The high cost of organic food has pushed the poor a little further away from the table of the wealthy and is adding to the problems of inhabitants of the emerging countries, ravaged by famine. I think that’s the type of problem that requires the energy of the affluent: fighting hunger, disease, death, to achieve social equilibrium, and help bring the emerging countries to the level of the developed ones. Let’s not forget either that an over-the-top approach can be counter-productive. Criticisms presented calmly and justified rationally are the most effective criticisms. How can ecology be reduced to an economic, social and political program acceptable to all parties in a democracy? Nowadays, confronted with these trances, I also feel like saying: we’re no longer in the Middle Ages.”*

¹¹⁷ France 3,
Monday May 17th, 2010,
8:35 pm.

¹¹⁸ <http://blog.passionhistoire.net/?p=5213>

To reassure and soothe, clients and consumers must be enveloped in solicitude and attention: that's what most brands have been doing in their latest slogans, such as "Carrément vous" ("Just you" - SFR), "Votre quotidien nous inspire" ("Your daily life inspires us" - M6), "Raison de plus pour faire mieux" ("Another reason to do better" - Areva), not forgetting "En faire plus pour vous" ("Do more for you") by Bouygues Telecom. In the corporate world, this role of assistance, providence even, is also an expectation in response to the anxiety of relocations or unfamiliarity with strategies.

This is less about a role as socially responsible company, in the ideological sense of the term, than about very concrete actions, taking into account the interdependence of its members, the direct consequences of management and decisions on the life of employees.

How can we evolve towards a more human form of capitalism after the financial crisis? At the Davos Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab pleaded the case for companies to take the notion of public good into account: *"if we want to prevent a total breakdown of our communities, we must show our sense of the collective good and our solidarity, the very bases of the stakeholder concept. What we need is a return to this stakeholder approach, on the level of Nations and the planet as well as on the level of the company."*

Beyond profits, the company's responsibility is to answer the needs of society, or even place economic performance at the service of the general interest. The slogan of Coca-Cola Entreprise communicates about its local involvement with "Made in France. With pride." Asda (subsidiary of the international group Wal-Mart, world leader in the Distribution sector) developed the "Aisle Spy" program: a series of cameras show the client what happens behind the scenes at Asda, whether it's the farm where the milk on its shelves comes from, the way the Board's decisions are made, etc.

Nobel Peace Prizewinner Mohammad Yunus, one of the pioneers of micro-credit, warns of the social responsibility of lending organizations that confuse micro-credit with simple consumer credit for financing everyday household purchases, whereas *"micro-credit should not be presented as an opportunity to make money. It must primarily be used to create business, to enable the most deprived to have a trade¹¹⁹."*

¹¹⁹ <http://www.la-croix.com/Le-microcredit-ne-doit-pas-servir-a-gagner-de-l'argent.../article/2448110/4079>

2008, 2009, 2010, three difficult years for the corporate world, with very negative media coverage: redundancy plans, suicides, relocations, crises, etc. How are employees coping with these?

The crisis has only confirmed and accelerated trends that were already present, it hasn't changed the situation: the issue of the employee/company relationship was already germinating. What is new, at least in France, is the sense of ill-ease among managerial staff, which was accelerating as described in our previous studies.

Demotivation is spreading among senior executives, regular executives, and to be more precise, among the main "managers." They're asking questions about their involvement in work, the recognition they get: almost 1/3 of senior and regular executives claim that their motivation is dropping.

And this is a phenomenon directly linked to the last two years, because the traditional managerial line among executives has been delegitimized, and employees themselves are reassured in the midst of that delegitimization by the fact that the crisis has indeed shown that there is no more solid managerial line. No one wants to state any more that "in five years we'll still be here." So, the manager's voice is no longer heard by employees.

And these "managers" themselves are finding it hard to hear the lines of argument coming from their CEO, which are leading to the creation of unpopular measures to save money and improve processes. They are between a rock and a hard place, and it's impacting their motivations levels today.

Note that the last defenders of the 35-hour working week today are executives, because the concentration of work falls on them and the balance between private life / professional life has become increasingly difficult. They are the most destabilized, with suicidal temptations emerging, which is also a new thing in this social category.

INTERVIEW
Antoine Solom,
Ipsos Loyalty

But isn't that linked to the very emotional relationship the French have with work?

Yes, the notion of "pleasure at work" is still as important, it was true before the crisis and it remains so. The French claim to be fairly happy at work, which has nothing to do with their satisfaction: they have a strong emotional investment in work, they try to find fulfillment at work, that's still true and the crisis has strengthened it. And because the crisis has had a very strong impact on employment, those who have kept their job are more attached than ever to it: in this respect, I would say that the crisis has further reinforced this emotional relationship that the French have more than others.

People are very attached to their work, still does that mean they're attached to their company per se?

I'm much less convinced of that because the relationship between employee and company has gradually cooled off over the past few years, but we shouldn't confuse distancing and disloyalty...

Hasn't the crisis made people want to think differently, develop their "mobility"?

On the contrary! France has modeled itself through thirty years of mass unemployment and the crisis has amplified the fact that mobility is viewed as risk-taking. Even in-house mobility can be a risk, which explains why many employees reject it. Work-value, as a form of security embodied by the company, is tending to wear away, whereas, as soon as you join a big company, you stay right there; in this respect, the turnover in these companies is very low; the percentage of employees answering a question such as "I'm thinking of leaving my company" in the affirmative gets lower every year.

For me, but I'm not the only one to say so, that corresponds to the slow but sure switch towards a Japanese model with, on the one hand, a share of employees highly protected because they are in large companies, and on the other, employees with very little protection whenever they are in small- or medium-sized companies. They are the ones who are acting as adjustment variables.

So, on the one hand, those with an open-ended contract in a large CAC40 group who will never leave their haven of security, and on the other the vulnerable ones, who work in small companies?

Yes, the paradox being that those who claim to be happier at work belong to the second category, the one where there's also the most risk. The protests against the pension reform showed that the French instinctively feel that a guarantee of employment, growth of purchasing power, a certain form of comfort at work... all that is changing. What's more, the mechanism of the pension system is not well understood, some over-55s even have no idea of the amount their pension is worth.

In the end, what do employees expect of the company?

Very simply, they expect to be heard and considered as a person in their own right, with their own specific characteristics, this expectation is still just as strong, it hasn't changed. Employees would like to be treated in a sense as consumers. It's schizophrenic... As consumers, they have all the rights, they are recognized in their individuality, whereas as employees, it's exactly the opposite! They aren't recognized as anyone, whereas their aspiration is getting stronger, with a line between private life and professional life that is increasingly vague.

Which explains the change in the questions that clients are asking us: in addition to commitment, now it's "well-being in the company" that concerns them. They study work-related stress, psycho-social risks, burn-out, the human aspects with, behind all that: "how do you take employees into account in all their individuality?"

This notion of "well-being" appears in regions as different as Europe and Asia, with strikes in Vietnam, Cambodia, the Congo, labor movements in China: it corresponds to a general aspiration, because it goes along with development and our clients need to anticipate.

[Dreaming]

Escaping to imaginary, perfect worlds in which harmony prevails, but which are themselves threatened, that's one of the consequences of the feeling of vulnerability.

The success of Avatar with fifteen million viewers in France, the enchanting, the magical, the New Age revival of the Angels in publishing are all part of this same search for antidote and escape.

The new Bouygues Telecom campaign portrays a fairy as the character imagined by a sales associate when recommending the Idéo all-in-one package, the whole thing backed by the Mamas and the Papas hit, "Make Your Own Kind of Music."

While nostalgia enables projection into a revisited, idealized past, the fantastic has the same function, but in a magical other-world where you can escape, regenerate and believe that happiness exists.

INTERVIEW Thomas Tougard, Ipsos France

What we can say, and that we already announced during the Oscars de l'Innovation in December 2009, is that the year 2010 would be the year of pleasure. But what does this notion of pleasure mean in a context of economic crisis? Let's return to the basics of consumer theory or the psychology of the individual. According to the traditional interpretation of human nature, the individual is constantly seeking hedonism. This search within a crisis context will first oblige him to use adaptation strategies: a re-entry into the household sphere (Homing trend), development of Do It Yourself, notably in the world of cooking and home improvement, compromises in relation to spending, ambivalence in purchases, between premium and low-cost, etc... The real novelty is that we think that the economic crisis should accentuate this quest for pleasure, leading to a reinforcement of individualism, already very widespread in modern societies.

However, this search for pleasure is never absolute, or exclusive. We know that concerns about well-being and good health have become key in the last ten years. The results of the last wave of the Ipsos 'innovation awards do in fact express a form of ambivalence between pleasure and health. The two winning new products in this wave were, on the one hand, the Pom brand, a new drink based on pomegranate juice, with many health-enhancing virtues and functional promises, and on the other, the new Tagada Pink strawberry, which promises pleasure, and pleasure alone... proof via A+B.

So on the one hand there is this search for happiness, and for personal pleasure taken to the extreme, and on the other, a form of health-pleasure ambivalence that is being accentuated. The Tagada Pink strawberry, with sparkling sensations, has been applauded by consumers, while the search for naturalness and organic products is stronger than ever. Keep in mind that before the fast-food brands started advertising about the nutritional and health-giving qualities of their ingredients, they were simply selling pleasure at the lowest price. The health-nutrition argument was already very widespread at the time.

INTERVIEW
Thomas Tougard,
Ipsos France

This is all about a need to regress and for conviviality at the same time, there are odors, the smell of French fries and raw materials, and I think that satisfies different types of mode. I think that today, people's "extra-lucidity" enables them to appreciate the mode they are in or abandon themselves to the mode. If you're in "we're with friends and we're going to eat McDonald's and we know we're going to gain weight but it doesn't matter" mode, that's because a detox mode will be provided by other products. We were talking the other day about a study on guests at a company cafeteria, on the one hand there's knowing what I'm eating, and on the other treating myself with candy, gummy bears, etc. We're talking about a different way of managing pleasure, I don't think it's transgression, you're not eating the gummy bear instead of the salad, you're eating the gummy bear and the salad, and that's what is incomprehensible today, there are no reasons to apologize, no taboos.

This is an ambivalence that is completely assumed and demystified! The zapper consumer is capable of going from extremely healthy foods, to 100% pleasure foods, and, why not, during the same meal. Consumers are trying to increase their experience, which might have seemed contradictory in the past. This suggests an abundance of new ideas, new products for companies!

You can be born into a microwave household and be a devotee of traditional cooking programs on TV, I don't think that blaming the parents... the sociological mistake lies in explaining that what people are doing now is what they weren't able to do with their parents. Moreover, today's mother uses the microwave in just the same way, because she's dealing with the same stress as her mother was 25-30 years ago, who already had a microwave, and she just wants to stay with real flavor, with tradition, with the good, tasty product. That's what clients are having a really hard time integrating because they have always reasoned in terms of a system of opposition, and I think that we've gone from EITHER to AND... except for the ultra-purists, but I think they're a minority, or they're among the "ANDs."

These are phenomena that we observed a few years ago with the development of hard-discount stores, which were only supposed to attract the most disadvantaged households. Customers of hard discount stores today come from all socio-demographic classes, even the most affluent.

You have to have a super-concentrated and super-powerful brand DNA to be able to include hyper-indulgent and hyper-healthy within the same product offering.

That's one of the stakes for the years to come. Brand stretching taken to the extreme, responding to a consumer who is increasingly volatile in relation to brands, but also increasingly fluctuating in his desires. Unless hyper-dietetics with no pleasure compromise, or extreme sensory indulgence with no health compromise, represent the new course to follow for future innovations.

[The winning scenario: egonism or regaining control?]

The two scenarios thus presented are Restoration and Ego Rules.

The desire for opposite leaves the stage

The desire for opposite has disappeared.

Its principle; doing the opposite of what has been done until now because that's the way to succeed; for example in advertising, moving from Top Models to more ordinary women, older, not as svelte, and so on.

The success enjoyed by Kate Moss, posing for dozens of brands¹²⁰, from Longchamp to Valisère, or Julia Saner (the new 1.80-metre, super-skinny winner of the Elite Model Look 2009 contest), the return of Brigitte Bardot (Lancel) or Alain Delon (Dior) as they were in the 1970s clearly show, on the contrary, the public's desire to identify with absolutes.

A combination of egoism and hedonism, **egonism** turns out to be a quest for exception and an assumed form of *carpe diem*.

The more the individual, as citizen, loses interest in the state and general ideas, the more he focuses on his own private sphere, in which he intends to be an active player and to enjoy himself. This explains the undeniable success of luxury brands, premium positionings, original launches, anything that distinguishes and individualizes, whether it's the 400,000 iPads sold in less than one year or the shortage of stocks of Nestlé's Special-T.

The attachment to brands is expressed by the popularity of the "logo game," a trivial pursuit with marketing sauce, where you have to guess the history of a given label, the founder's profession, the symbol of such and such a product. Being the first and only person to have an object or live out a unique and exclusive experience, here and now, is still a decisive motivation.

¹²⁰ <http://advertisingtimes.blogspot.com/2010/08/un-e-brindille-dans-lapublicite-kate.html>

The success of luxury concerts, at rare and select locations, is another demonstration of this: Liza Minnelli at the Opéra Garnier, Vanessa Paradis at the Opéra Royal at the Château de Versailles, William Sheller at the Hotel Crillon, Arthur H at the Louvre, etc., posed no problems filling the room at 200 Euros a ticket. The sophistication of the Apple Stores, of the new Hermès or Dior stores, of places where you can sample and buy, such as the Nespresso store, has the same objective: creating the conditions for a moment to oneself, one that is out of the ordinary, the final luxury being oneself.

With its new advertising campaign, the watchmaking brand Louis Pion echoes this market situation: it is structured around two main visuals (illustrating the male and female targets) and its slogan is no other than *“j’ai trouvé la montre qui me montre”* (*I’ve found the watch that gets me watched*). Even during protests against the pension reform, egonism had its own formula: *“Je lutte des classes,”* which takes the traditional term *“lutte des classes”* (class struggle) and adds an “I”, thus combining the personal and the collective.

The highlight is the liquidation of the superego, in other words ultimate satisfaction, beyond any convention, any monitoring, any rationality, any self-censorship.

It may be involuntary, like Gordon Brown forgetting that his tie microphone was still on and complaining to his aides after an interview with an elderly woman in Rochdale (north-west England) during the electoral campaign of 2010: *“it was a disaster – he says – they should never have put me with that woman. Whose idea was that? It’s just ridiculous. She’s just a sort of a bigoted woman.”*

Immediately, the scene was played over and over in the UK, and afterwards Gillian Duffy demanded an apology. Gordon Brown stepped up and called her in person, while his entourage tried to persuade public opinion that the Prime Minister *“was “relaxing in the car after a difficult conversation,”* but the harm had been done.

Within a context of unpopularity and bad opinion polls, Gordon Brown went on to lose against the Conservative David Cameron, and would postpone his resignation to Queen Elizabeth until May 11th, 2010 while immediately giving up his post as head of the Labour party.

The best is when this liquidation of the superego is voluntary, when S.A.D.¹²¹ (Sex, Alcohol and Drugs) follow on from *Skin Parties*, when eroticism shows spread to Paris, Mulhouse, Châlons, Reims... or when the media seem to delight at the inauguration of the biggest brothel in Europe in La Junquera (Spain), very close to the French border.

And for the shy and perverse among us, the mask is back, made of lace or leather, pierced or opaque, it is one of the high-fashion accessories at all the best parties and for any anticipated forms of excess.

Carpe diem is the slogan of this society with no superego and no plan; in that society, the Other is an object, you wear a mask, you speak with no taboos, because “*what used to be repressed, now speaks*¹²²” as the lapsus moves from impulse to implementation. This is the exact opposite of the marshmallow and the deferred reward to motivate children.... or adults.

The principle of the Marshmallow test lies in isolating a child in a room, placing a marshmallow on a plate, leaving the child alone for a while after telling him that if he hasn't eaten his marshmallow before you come back, he will get another one... Will the child manage not to succumb to temptation?

What a dream for the **Restoration scenario!** Imposing a Dominant/Dominated relationship as the condition for returning to a collective dynamic with hierarchies and clear values, notably because the Top knows better than the Bottom, can direct it and reward it as it sees fit. The trainer is the most obvious incarnation of this: unlike the psychologist, he doesn't necessarily explain why that doesn't work nor why failure is at the core of the subject, but gives instructions on how to get a result: how to ensure obedience from your children or your dog, how to seduce and get married, how to succeed with a recipe or decoration, etc.

2010 gave the French President the keys to his re-election.

On the economic level, every week drove home a new plank of disaffection, as failures came one after another in terms of deficits¹²³ and employment.

¹²¹ <http://www.facebook.com/pages/SAD-Sexe-AlcoolDrogue/122697947757565?v=wall>

¹²² Jacques Lacan, interview with Madeleine Chapsal, L'Express no. 310, May 31st 1957.

¹²³ From 20 billion in the second six months of 2009, the French trade deficit rose to 24.5 billion for the first six months of 2010.

The slightest positive information is therefore covered by the media to excess. Among the examples: the announcement of a 0.6% growth in the GDP in the second quarter (three times more than the first quarter), investments by companies (+0.8% following -0.9% in the first quarter) or household consumer spending (+ 0.4% after +0%, in January/February/March). 35,000 jobs were created in the second quarter (+0.2 %), especially in the service sector and particularly in temporary employment.

But much will need to be done to absorb the consequences of the 2,500 redundancy plans of 2009 and the 1.5% drop in salaried employment in France: 256,100 jobs disappeared, which places the number of employees in the competitive sector at the same level as in 1992. The industrial sector and construction are the most heavily impacted, the latter after eleven consecutive years of growth; on the other hand, temporary employment has grown by 1.5%.

Another taboo word returns in an analysis by the French Employment Office, which tries to justify the situation by comparing it to 1992, the “previous period of economic recession in France,” unequivocally indicating that 2010 is indeed a recession year.

That makes the routine of increases even more depressing, as if nothing was wrong: + 3.4% on average for electricity (+ 9% for the 500,000 households that signed up to Electricité de France’s “Effacement Jour de Pointe” program, which varies rates according to peak/slack periods), +15% for gas since January 2010, + 2.5% for Corail, Intercités and TER trains.

As in 2009, + 6.7% for a monthly metro pass for zones 1 & 2 (Paris and near suburbs), + 5.1% (zones 1 to 3), + 4.1% (zones 1 to 4), + 3.5% for a stamp, + 3 to 5% for car insurance premiums, etc.¹²⁴.

¹²⁴ Admittedly, interest on the Livret A savings account has moved to 1.75%, but this is more an indicator of a growth in inflation than a royal gesture of generosity

¹²⁵ The IRL has been rising consistently: +0.09% in the 1st quarter, +0.57% in the 2nd quarter, after + 2.95% in the 3rd quarter 2008.

Likewise, the increase in the price of fruit (+ 11.1%) and vegetables (+ 5.5%) is reaching new records (+ 42.8% for peaches, + 25,7 % for tomatoes), organic is smashing everything with an average price 68% higher than the same non-organic product.

As for the rent reference index, this increased by 1.10% in one year¹²⁵, with a continuous rise linked to its being inflation-indexed, with inflation itself rising 1.6% from September 2009 to September 2010.

These calculations remain indifferent to any idea of crisis, poverty, precariousness, etc., whereas official organizations calmly announce that 13%¹²⁶ of the French population has less than 949 Euros a month to “live” on and that one out of every two French citizens earns less than 19,000 Euros a year.

If we think back to Maslow, we will see that primary needs constitute the bases of most taxes: lighting, washing in hot water or heating food, getting around, living at a fixed location, etc.

The increasing number of people with financial concerns, despairing, selling one of their kidneys on Digg-France.com or Tomshardware.com is by no means unrelated to this situation. Fortunately, pointless but symbolic things have followed the same trend, an explosive one too¹²⁷: in ten years, the epicea pine tree has increased in price by 227%, foie gras (200g can) by 91%, the boudin blanc sausage with truffle by 48%.

In terms of domestic security, the announcement of tough repressive measures satisfied public demand much more easily.

The urban riots in Grenoble, the attack on the town of Saint-Aignan (Cher), the shooting in Villiers-le-Bel, etc. did not enable the President of the Republic to recover an Authority that is tending to escape him in the economic and diplomatic areas.

Following a hold-up at the Joa casino in Uriage-les-Bains on July 17th, 2010, one of the thieves was killed by the police; his death caused violent incidents with military weapons being used against the police, and cars and stores set on fire in the La Villeneuve district.

A few days later, Saint-Aignan was ransacked by some fifty travelers armed with axes and iron bars, to avenge the death of one of their own during a car chase with the police: trees cut down with a chainsaw, stores looted, cars burned, public places devastated...; neighboring villages (Couddes, Meher, Onzain) were then subjected to the same treatment.

¹²⁶ 7.8 million people, including 1.6 million single-parent families

¹²⁷ *La Voix du Nord*, December 4th, 2010.

On July 28th, Nicolas Sarkozy presided over a meeting at the Elysée palace devoted to “the problems posed by the behavior of some travelers and Roms” with the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Justice, the Interior and Immigration. On July 30th in Grenoble, the President stated: *“it’s a veritable war that we are engaged in with drug traffickers and delinquents. The authority of the law must be respected throughout the national territory.”*

Among the weapons planned for dissuading criminals, the forfeit of French nationality for any person of foreign origin who deliberately assaults a policeman or member of the military, a 30-year jail sentence with no possibility of remittance on the same grounds, the non-automatic acquisition of citizenship for a delinquent minor on reaching 18-years old, an evaluation of the rights and services which foreigners in an illegal situation can access, expulsion of illegal immigrants, the dismantling of non-authorized Rom camps.

An outcry arose among opposition leaders, the Ligue des Droits de l’Homme, the Cimade¹²⁸ (non-profit working with displaced populations), other non-profit groups concerned by the issues, etc., indignant at the underlying communitarian stigmatization, rejecting the anti-republican lumping together of immigration and delinquency, and the demagogic calculations inspired by the Front National with the 2010 Presidential elections in mind.

Yet public opinion agreed: 89% of French people approve of monitoring repeat offenders through the use of an electronic bracelet even after they have served their sentence, 80% the withdrawal of French nationality for French nationals of foreign origin, guilty of incitation to excision or of polygamy (62% of left-wing sympathizers), 70% the withdrawal of nationality for delinquents of foreign origin guilty of assaulting a policeman (50% on the left).

The generalization of remote monitoring also appeals to 67% who claim to be favorable to setting up 60,000 surveillance cameras between now and 2012.

¹²⁸ Comité Inter
Mouvements Auprès
Des Évacués.

Declarations such as the one made by Christian Estrosi¹²⁹: “*accept our laws or violate them, you have to choose. Frenchman or hoodlum*”¹³⁰, you have to choose,” move towards a radicalization of the protection strategy with risks of bipolarization.

But the public is not seeing any results: on August 13th, 69% of them (as opposed to 27%) thought that “*the domestic security policy in force over the past eight years has been fairly ineffective in fighting insecurity*”; 78% judge the fight against urban violence as ineffective, 72% the fight against financial delinquency and 69% the fight against assaults on individuals.

Those critical of the security maneuvers are having trouble rallying their forces: there were few demonstrators against the “pillory policy” on Saturday September 4th, the 140th anniversary of the proclamation of the 3rd Republic, and their criticism of the notion of splitting the French population according to origin, as suggested by

Nicolas Sarkozy, fell on mostly deaf ears. Which explains the increasingly radical action by the Authorities, with the expulsion of Roms with illegal status and living in unauthorized camps, generating much criticism and enabling Sarkozy’s challengers to position themselves on the territory of republican morality: François Hollande, Dominique de Villepin, François Bayrou, Manuel Valls, Ségolène Royal, Christine Boutin...

Whether a direct or collateral effect, on August 11th, the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination denounced a fresh upsurge of racism, with the notion of French citizens of foreign origin being most heavily criticized by its experts.

[Stop or encore]

¹²⁹ The Minister of Industry on radio station Europe 1 on August 9th, 2010.

¹³⁰ A word now on the front page of the magazine Marianne, concerning Nicolas Sarkozy, presented as “*the hoodlum of the Republic*” (July 31st to August 6th edition).

In both cases, the question of participation and registering on voting lists on December 31st will be decisive: 2011 will be the year of answers...

We are observing an alternative trend in public opinion going from detachment to interest depending on whether the supreme exercise of state power is recognized or not:

- Detachment when state power is called into question by fundamental trends that both surpass and relativize it: economic globalization, international financial crisis, supranational European laws... giving the impression that the President of the Republic has become an executor with no real power.
- Interest when the State puts on a whole show, and police repression is a clear example of this, to take back control and assert a protective Authority in line with the myth of the Welfare State.

If the former prevails, the candidate running in opposition to the presidential majority will be elected in May 2012, through a spirit of revenge, frustration and disappointment; if the latter prevails, Nicolas Sarkozy will be re-elected, narrowly, by those who vote to express their confidence and gratefulness: pensioners, senior citizens, non-workers, traditional right-wing voters and hard-core supporters.

The cabinet reshuffle of November caused a ripple down the lines, with a slight impact on Nicolas Sarkozy's recovery, after the end of the labor conflict against the pension reform, his popularity rating even went up among 18-24-year-olds and manual workers, whereas executives and white-collars remain apathetic. He has a big task ahead if he is to convince and please people.

In the USA, the Tea Party is an anti-authority, anti-Obama political party born out of the rejection of laws on energy, financial regulations and the health care reform.

The name refers back to the Boston Tea Party of December 16th, 1773, which symbolically marked the start of the American Revolution against the British monarchy.

Its acronym, Taxed Enough Already, refers to an approach that has garnered even more success for being supported by Ron Paul, Sarah Palin, the evangelical movement (60 million members), Libertarians and social conservatives, along with star Fox News presenter Glenn Beck. Its goal is to reduce the size of the State, which they claim has taken on powers that the Constitution attributes to the federated states; in late November, 54% of Americans considered that "*the Tea Party movement is a positive thing for the American political system*" and the party gained three senators and sixty of the eighty-three new Republican congressmen during the 2010 elections.

These conservative, popular reactions may very well exist in France, which explains the usefulness for Nicolas Sarkozy of reinventing his media profile and claiming back his stature, competence and leadership.

As concerns the media, Carla Bruni contributed to this strategy of restoration and seduction in late 2010, with a romantic visit with Nicolas Sarkozy to the Taj Mahal during an official trip by the French President to India. Bruni is now one of the heroines of an American comic (Female Force, Bluewater), which relates the lives of female leaders, and is exactly as Darren Davis, the comic's editor, describes her: "she has determination and ambition. Reading this, girls will see that they can do anything and become anything they want."

[Butterfly effect]

On a political level, the international dimension is also important, with the French starting to understand, if not accept, that their country is sensitive to butterfly effects, a metaphor expressing the basic phenomenon of sensitivity to initial conditions in chaos theory¹³¹.

Indeed increasingly, it is international protocols, such as Kyoto in 2005, Copenhagen in 2009, Cancun in 2010, Durban in 2011, that are establishing the new rules of operation. Even if their agreements are judged as weak, restrictive and ineffective compared to their ambition – fighting global warming – it now seems to be accepted that no country will be able to act alone with its own resources, whether in dealing with climate change or the financial crisis.

The rescue plans for Greece and Ireland have shown that the Euro zone is both a geographic and an economic reality, as summarized by Angela Merkel: "*if the Euro fails, then Europe has failed.*"

¹³¹ "For want of a nail,
the shoe was lost.
For want of the shoe,
the horse was lost.
For want of the horse,
the rider was lost.
For want of the rider,
the message was lost.
For want of the message,
the battle was lost.
For want of the battle,
the war was lost.
For want of the war,
Freedom was lost.
All for the want of a
horseshoe nail."
Benjamin Franklin

Since 2008, the butterfly effect has turned into a global domino cascade: the first one fell in the USA with the collapse of the Lehman Brothers bank, the most serious recession since 1945, and the deficit and debt spiral; the second in Greece, saved from bankruptcy by a 110-billion-Euro loan; the third in Ireland with a drastic reduction in social benefits, a drop in government worker salaries and a tax increase in return for an 80-billion-Euro loan.

The fourth was in Portugal, where the question of leaving the Euro came up; the fifth in Spain where the Spanish Minister of the Economy stated in December 2010 that the country's resources were enough not to have to request international assistance¹³².

The fact that the IMF is now having to intervene directly in Europe, whereas the so-called emerging powers are organizing universal expositions – the one in Shanghai
Shanghai welcomed 73 million visitors between May and November 2010 – will not be neutral when its President, Frenchman Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who may run in the 2012 presidential election, has to speak out in France.

¹³² "The capacity of the Spanish bank's restructuring Fund is 99 billion Euros, of which only 11 billion has been used until now. Given a loan interest rate of 7%, there is little risk that this mechanism will be used unless absolutely necessary."

In the Revue Civique (Autumn-Winter 2010), you return to what you call the French trapdoor of defiance and pessimism. That has become a classic theme, but is nothing changing?

The French defiance with regard to institutions and Authorities in general is not a new phenomenon, just like the collective pessimism that characterizes our society. This defiance – it was one of the cardinal points in Ipsos Flair 2010 – is rooted in an efficiency crisis: an authority that is no longer producing results is an illegitimate authority, which no longer interests people and that they turn away from. As long as it seems distant from people and merely concerned with its own power, whether economic, financial or political, we're going to see a swing towards rejection more than indifference. That was what ensured the success of Nicolas Sarkozy's 2007 campaign: by making action and results the trademark of Sarkozyism, the candidate reactivated a decisive promise and brought a new magic to the political sphere by opening up the range of possibilities again. And all the current disenchantment fits with that line of thinking: the perceived insufficiency, if not in the determination and energy involved, at least in the result obtained. However, and for the first time probably in 25 years, we are not seeing a return of the same but the end of a cycle, and the start of something very new.

From what point of view?

At least three phenomena have crystallized over the past few months. The relationship with the media and information, which at the same time is getting out there faster and more broadly while producing not better but less well. The way the French have been processing the 2008 crisis. Finally, the deep and currently renewed signification of the results crisis in politics.

In relation to the first point, we have to realize that we're experiencing the accelerated collapse of a positive belief that is anchored in the Century of Enlightenment then among democrats.

That belief was that the more information and culture progressed, the more people would be educated and would change and the more they would learn to know themselves, in a virtuous circle of increased tolerance and democracy, ever more elaborate and peaceful. And yet today we are observing the opposite. There is more and more information available; it's being exchanged faster and faster and among more and more people, via the Internet, the social networks and the 24-hour news channels. Meanwhile, xenophobic impulses and withdrawal are increasing in scope in Europe and worldwide, suspicion is progressing, the feeling of being permanently manipulated is growing, the most archaic theses, such as Creationism, are finding new life, and disguised as increased rationality, we're seeing a big return to, and valuing of, an emotional outlook. What does that mean? That in a society in which everyone can see everything and know everything about everything, the differences between individuals are becoming more visible and are creating not tolerance but increased tension. That is one of the terrible intuitions expressed by

Dominique Wolton but I think it's absolutely correct. A more striking and more noticeable "otherness" engenders the rejection of the other, rather than an understanding of him. Which explains this new appreciation of the local that we're starting to glimpse, where proximity and similarity become the Alpha and Omega. It also leads to these increasing attempts to recreate the conditions for a "stick together" approach rather than openness to the other: I'm talking about neighborhoods, occasional festivities but that are always organized around a common point, values that link us together, etc. Even the huge success of the film "Of Men and Gods" can be interpreted in that way: a society celebrating its own identity, its own community of values, including in sacrifice (Nietzsche would have talked in terms of nihilism...), in the face of a barbaric otherness.

However this phenomenon would be nothing if it didn't come hand in hand with a sense of vacuity. Indeed, information may be broader and faster, but the impression among French people is that "it's moving too fast," that the media in the broad sense surf from one subject to another, amplify, deform and, in the end, fail to create that extra knowledge that we might have expected. This has led to an initial crystallization, in the form of a valuing of slowness and the search for meaning. The pace must be slowed down, the French people are telling us, so that we can recover meaning and signification, "authenticity," "truth." In the end, the media, whose job is supposed to lie in mediation, which is the absolute condition for the creation of any meaning, have become rooted in the immediate, constantly copying and repeating. And wariness of the media, which was already deep-rooted, is now leading to its veritable desecration. A society that has that kind of relationship with the media is a different society.

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Brice Teinturier,
Ipsos Public Affairs

And we're in it. That also means, I think, the end of the very Sarkozyist paradigm of "saturation of the media agenda." Precisely, people are saturated with this saturation! Credibility is no longer channeled through strategies like that. We're no longer in the paradigm of the "24 hours" series and a Jacques Bauer who can save the world single-handed in an absolute emergency. It's quite the opposite that is being developed today, and that's a total reversal.

And yet globalization and the crisis are more present than ever and are clearly showing the speed of transformation and adaptation needed in order to survive?

It's true. But that goes precisely in the direction of this end of cycle: the French have now totally integrated globalization and its deep signification. But here again, something new has been created out of the old.

The old is the very French fear of globalization, viewed over the past decade as an absolute threat to employment. The Eurobarometer surveys leave no room for doubt in this respect: we are the country which, of the 27 in the European Union, most considers that globalization destroys jobs.

What is new is the way the 2008 crisis was digested: not only because this was a crisis that very quickly became globalized - unlike, for example, the 1973 oil crisis - and which is exemplary in that respect; but also and above all because having so hoped that something good would be born out of the bad, in 2010 the French made a cynical, and extremely lucid observation: the world after was just like the world before; there isn't really any more regulation; despite all the efforts and statements made by the President of the Republic, Governments have little room for maneuver. According to a survey that we conducted on the occasion of the Journée du livre de l'économie (Economics book day) in late 2010, more than ever the French think that the economy depends on large international corporations, financial markets and shareholders. Governing bodies come in very far behind. Now that tolls the bell for a story they have been told for the past 25 years, the story of "French-style determination." There was 1981, "the other politics" and the turning point in 1983; there was the "struggle against social breakdown" of 1995 followed by the conference of October 26th, which marked its burial; and lastly and to move on, the fabulous campaign of 2006 / 2007, and its "together, everything becomes possible," the last campaign exalting an exit from the crisis through solutions that are primarily national

and based on values: the reinsertion of work, effort, merit and responsibility and the denunciation of the spirit of May 68 were to enable a people giving itself over to a President himself determined to “seek out growth with determination,” to find a way out. Well that’s the story that has ended. Not that all that has disappeared or is seen by the French as false. It’s just that our “extra-lucids” now clearly know that reality won’t bend to determination alone. They saw in the Greek crisis an embodiment of what 2/3 of them think could happen in France in the future. So the question of action and result are still in one piece but it has been completely shifted and goes via globalization now.

It is in this respect that the success of Dominique Strauss-Kahn in opinion polls should be interpreted, not as an inevitable sign of success but rather as a symptom: we’re attracted to someone who we think has a proven knowledge of globalization and the way it works, because that’s where we hope to find real solutions. In the Ipsos / Le Point barometer of November 2010, DSK was in first position, but what else can we observe? That on the right, Christine Lagarde is stealing the limelight: the woman whose credibility is based on knowledge of the international and the economy is number 1 among UMP supporters, with 82% favorable judgments and number 6 in the general ranking!

**So, greater openness to globalization?
Globalization as a solution?**

No, of course not. But on the other hand, two attitudes prevail with regard to globalization, two Frances are emerging more than ever, they’re going to clash by 2012, and they’re the result of the media crisis, the crisis in political action and the way the French have processed the 2008 financial crisis. We can basically summarize this as follows:

On the one hand, the outside-the-systems – or rather the anti-systems: since globalization is the connecting point for everything, since national political action can no longer produce effects and changes within this context of globalization, the tables need to be turned and we need to get out of globalization.

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Those people are working on an idea that is strong in reality, the idea of sovereignty which, for a Nation, is nothing other than the possibility of acting independently. This idea should resonate more and more in the run-up to 2012 and take on many nuances in the way it is expressed: getting away from the Euro, and/or the Europe of 27, strong or weak protectionism in relation to national borders, European borders, etc. The Front National is one form of this, but just one, and which adds a specific component to it: Islamophobia. From this point of view, the stereotype that consists in saying that with the crisis, the FN "would rise" stems from an over-restrictive analysis. Instead, we should be telling ourselves that with the end of a 25-year cycle and the start of a new one, sovereignisms, which are reinventing themselves, will once again progress around the issue of actual margins for maneuver. The FM will progress too but not exclusively.

On the other, and this is newer, the global-systems: those who, on the right and left, have definitively accepted that political action will produce no result while ignoring globalization. They think that France can only succeed by dealing with problems relating to the competitiveness of French companies, innovation, education and research, and justice, just as much as fiscal efficiency. They no longer believe in national solutions, nor in posturing games, and will no longer allow themselves to be seduced by a simple "when you want to, you can."

What the 2012 vote will enable us to do is quantify these two Frances exactly. Of course without omitting the more classic manifestation of the "anti-systems," those who denounce the very possibility of any reforming action that is not accompanied by a revolution and who vote on the extreme left, or those who help to empty ballot boxes by choosing to abstain as a means of contestation.

But does politics still interest the French?

Yes! Just look at the viewing audiences for political programs such as "C'est dans l'air" or "A vous de juger" which, for example, has attracted four million viewers between 11 pm and midnight. The mobilization around pensions is another indicator.

Far from sinking into disinterest, distancing, withdrawal into the individual or family sphere, the French are still interested in politics. But these “extralucids” are aware that we can no longer tell ourselves stories, that the solutions are complicated and long-term, that they will be tough and in all cases will be linked in some way to globalization.

Can the public still believe in something in a context like that?

Obviously. The French want to be seduced: there is still an issue of desire, a game where people want to be seduced intelligently. But the French will no longer be fooled by anything. So they may agree to be seduced, but provided that they can perceive talent, effectiveness and proof. They aren't abandoning themselves and won't do so as they may have done in the past, on the mode of “I'm leaving it up to...”; they will agree to go along with it, but on condition, monitoring the situation. Just as they know that there is advertising and marketing behind brands and products, they are much more wary and demanding in politics. So there is not just a major issue of desire and seduction, but more deeply, an issue of credibility, perceived interest, need for proof and coherence.

[Permanent Reshaping]

There is no point in continuing to live in wait.

With that in mind, technological developments are increasing the range of possible choices for discovering, meeting or moving around, according to whim.

An increasing number of sites operate on the principle of elective affinities combined with geographical data; over the past five years, *OnVaSortir.com* has offered its members the chance to share in all types of activities, from hiking to the opera via board games, with people co-opting by profile, gender, age, desires...

Its members – “ovésiens” – announce their activities for the week and meet up for an outing to the movies or a car ride, to make friends quickly in a town or reduce the expenses for a given project.

This fluctuation based on occasional desires is creating new contact points between people, like a swarm that is permanently recreating itself, and whose members meet up based on the interest or usefulness of a given magnetic field: cultural, financial, sentimental, etc.

Car pooling, car-sharing, cooperative electrical appliances¹³³, room-sharing even (including among seniors), the pooling of leisure activities, buying groups, are all developments in this basic attitude: payment by the minute or for exactly what you consume, and no more, the invention of collaborative solutions to preserve what we have in our hands¹³⁴.

In consumption, the products offered by telephony operators are keeping in step with this development: SIM cards can be bought alone so as not to have to replace the phone, in a mindset of pure usage, recycling, rational analysis of needs, environmental involvement, reduction of expenses, disengagement without justification, with none of these motivations being contradictory.

It will soon be difficult to justify payment by the hour for parking places and we can imagine that renting furniture to change decor without worrying about reselling it at a loss will enter into habits.

¹³³ Washing machines and dryers are shared in a low-rent apartment building rather than the same equipment being individualized in each household, which means substantial savings and creates a bond between residents.

¹³⁴ Documentary by Mariana Otero devoted to employees of a lingerie company near to Orléans. Threatened with unemployment, they are have resisted by creating a cooperative: “through all the trials and twists and turns, they discover with joy and humor the strength of group work and solidarity and a new freedom.”

[Lucid consent]

Nowadays, more than one out of two French people claim that comparing corresponds to a real pleasure in their use of the Internet, just after exchanging emails and communicating on their network.

The search for cheapest has been stripped of all inhibitions and is now shared as a cultural attitude that has definitively abolished differences between generations.

Cheap doesn't mean a bargain or a smart purchase, but rather the right price recognized for a given object by the customer, who fixes that price himself; the notion of consent to pay has never been put to better use.

Consent to pay or consent to give, as proved by the drop in donation pledges for the latest Telethon whose counter stopped at 84,076,000 Euros, whereas the 2009 Telethon brought in 95.2 million Euros for research into genetic diseases, already 10% lower than in 2008.

Restaurant owners are starting to understand this phenomenon, offering discounts of 40% or 50% for clients who reserve online using the restaurant gateway site *LaFourchette.com* which covers 4,500 establishments, not forgetting *Restopolitan*, *RestoBookings* or *TableOnline*.

They are indeed the main victims of trade-offs, when a bottle of wine costs the price of a bouquet of flowers. The former will accompany a meal judged as increasingly expensive, with suspicions as to the origin of products and whether it is home-made (leading to the "Maître-restaurateur" label instigated by the Government to give value to independent establishments working with fresh products, without resorting to ready-made meals, and who renew their menus; there are 300 of them at present out of the 80,000 restaurants in France...). The second is the entry key whenever one is invited to dinner by friends or family.

Laurent Amar, President of Monceau Fleurs, was even very pleased at this development in an interview on BFM on June 2nd, 2010: *"in a crisis period, we tend to go to restaurants less and we invite each other more to our own homes, because it costs less. And there the ratio between amount spent and pleasure procured will play in our favor, because when you're invited, you're going to hesitate between three things you can give: flowers, liquor, chocolates or cakes. With our prices starting at 1.90 Euros for a bunch of roses, we have an amount spent / pleasure procured ratio that is pretty much*

unbeatable, because if you try to turn up with a cake or chocolate at that price, you're going to be talking discount brand chocolate bar. What's more, this product is kind of fantastic because you can be a millionaire, turn up with an orchid that you paid less than four Euros for and you won't be judged. It's an emotional product, it's a product that people don't judge. Today's crisis is affecting a lot of people, like I said, we are extremely advantaged during this period. You will never give flowers when you're invited to dinner at a restaurant."

This adaptation of *yield management* helps avoid empty tables in a sparsely populated room, which is not very appealing for the regular customer, as in air transport or the hotel trade, where it is more profitable to drastically lower prices than to have unoccupied seats or beds in a plane or hotel.

The problem here lies in explaining to the customer who comes in without using Internet pre-reservation why his meal is costing twice as much although he consumed exactly the same amount of food...

Remember the film "*La vie est un long fleuve tranquille*" (Life is a Long, Quiet River), this is like the return of the two-scoop ice cream in the Groseille family, heavily transposed to the stress caused by the global financial crisis, where people had to deprive themselves and thus fall back on the single scoop ice cream.

But the moment each player starts managing his situation, with the ice-cream maker managing his stock or the client managing his satisfaction, de-consumption stops, desire returns, finding pleasure becomes possible again and a sense of lightness returns.

[Experimentation]

We can also imagine a scenario in which the very principle of state sovereignty is contested, on the basis of its results, and another method develops for finding solutions. Nowadays, the laws set the rules, with the State unquestionably imposing decisions assumed to be in the general interest.

This approach stems from royal absolutism, based on the principle of the “plan,” whether on a five-year basis (as is the case in the French presidential system) or otherwise. But situations of failure, unemployment, delinquency, exclusion... are not always covered by the current decrees, leading to a temptation to amend or toughen them.

In “*Expérimentations politiques*,” Pascal Nicolas-Le Strat analyzes how another way of viewing the general interest is developing, born of the society itself and applied to very concrete situations: education, employment, security, company, environment, etc.

The goal of experimentation is to test scenarios locally, with a view to identifying which one is most effective in providing a solution to a problem, and the conditions for its diffusion on a regional or national scale.

This is a social, economic, educational, financial or even ecological transposition of “the scientific method that consists in testing the validity of a hypothesis through repeated experiments and obtaining quantitative data enabling it to be fine-tuned. Its description should be clear enough for the experiment to be reproduced in exactly the same way.”

It is the State’s job, once the best scenario has been selected based on its results, to implement and regulate it on a broader scale. Thus, the citizen reclaims a role through actual usage, instead of being passively subjected to arbitrary and theoretical decisions, whose effectiveness or usefulness have not been proved, making them infinitely contestable.

Neither the Welfare State, nor autonomous action, this is seen as “the demand for increased involvement by citizens in the management of public services, for greater control by users over the institutions that benefit them. It ultimately shows a more balanced vision of the respective roles of State and Society than theoretical positions might suggest.”

That might be the key to once again accessing results.

[Gravity]

A l'arrière-train du bus 14 comme à la remorque de la vie
In the back of the number 14 bus like a trailer hitched onto life
Je suis amorphe côté fenêtre
I'm amorphous on the window side
Les yeux assis dans l'vide, à n'surtout pas m'demander si la vie
Eyes seated in a vacuum, just don't ask me if life
m'considère comme un brave
considers me a good guy
Je viens d'un lieu où chacun se complait à être grave
I come from a place where we all wallow in being grave
Avoir la prétention d'être soi, on s'connait toujours trop peu
Claim to be oneself, we still know ourselves too little
Donner du sens, cette pensée me rend exceptionnel en ce lieu
Give meaning, the very thought makes me exceptional in this place
A m'demander si j'crois en la justice
Ask me if I believe in justice
J'dirais que je suis heureux d'être à ma place
I'd say, I'm happy to be in my place
Je viens d'un lieu où rien n'est jamais vraiment grave.
I come from a place where nothing is really grave
Rouler à fond sur l'autoroute de la vie, tellement éclairée
Speeding on the highway of life, so bright
qu'on en perd la vue, prendre son bain debout
that you lose sight, take your bath standing
Un problème, des solutions, n'en parlons plus
A problem, solutions, let's quit talking about it
Voir l'argent comme un moyen et non comme une fin, ça calme.
Seeing money as a means and not an end is soothing.
Je viens d'un lieu où rien n'est jamais vraiment grave.
I come from a place where nothing is really grave
Je n'suis pas de ceux qui considèrent être quelqu'un
I'm not one of those who think they're someone
Parc'que je suis né avec quelque chose
Because I was born with something
Je suis tellement égoïste que j'pense plus aux autres
I'm so selfish I no longer think of others
qu'à moi c'est drôle ...
just me, it's funny...
Avoir mal à la bourgeoisie comme Che Guevara
I'm sick with the bourgeoisie like Che Guevara
Se lever chaque matin sans réellement savoir pourquoi
Getting up every morning without really knowing why
Souffrir du non sens, une maladie qui n'épargne
Suffering from non-sense, a disease that spares
aucun personnage
no one
Je viens d'un lieu où chacun se complait à être grave
I come from a place where nothing is really grave
La gravité, mesdames et messieurs.
Gravity, ladies and gentlemen

Words: Abd Al Malik
Title: La gravité
Album: Gibraltar ©

[Forces of extra-gravity]

In high-watchmaking, the extremely complex watch still represents the most sophisticated possible mechanical outcome for achieving the very simplest result: telling the time. Perpetual date, lunar phase, internal temperature, chronograph, flyback, rattrapante, repetition of minutes, grand strike and small strike, cathedral gong, automatic winding, power reserve of over 70 hours... these are all challenges that watchmaking ingenuity has set itself, using the very rarest materials, and giving their creation the status of unique and ultimate timepiece.

At the heart of this system are one or more tourbillons (or one carousel, for even greater complexity), whose purpose is to counter-balance the effects of gravity, by rotating the balance wheel and the escapement inside a cage containing the watch's regulating unit and which makes a complete rotation in one minute.

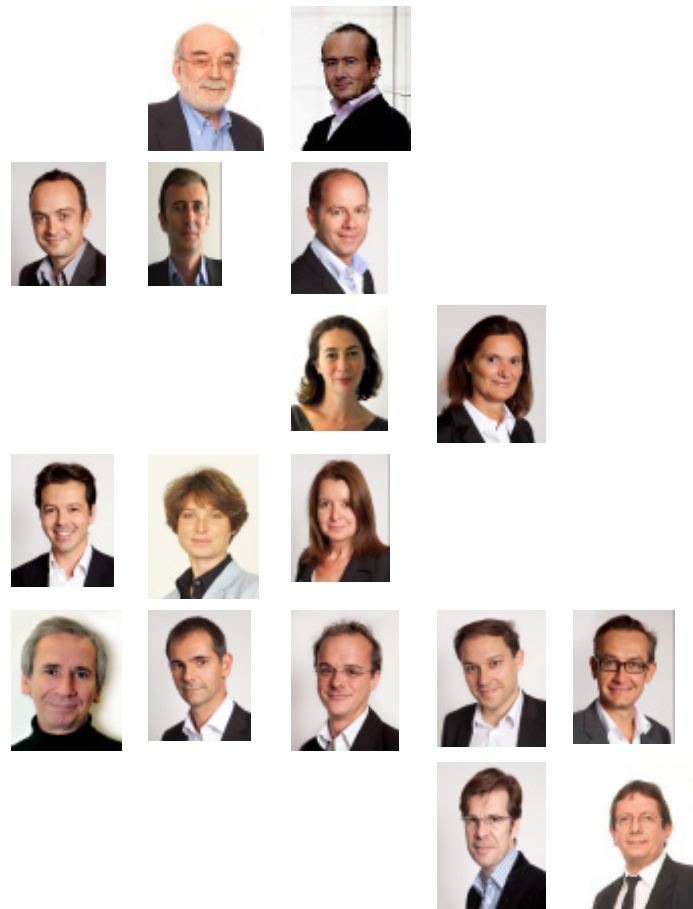
Greater mobility for a greater result, even less loyalty for ever-increasing satisfaction and personal happiness, a diffraction that is assumed in a society with no magnetic field, a fragmentation free of inhibition, a swarm of occasional convergences, accelerating or slowing down based on personal expediency, that's a self-managed society.

Predictable in its desire for desires, that society will be difficult to rally in 2012 if dispersion is the condition for its happiness, if the tourbillon turns out to be a centrifuge, if the constant cycle of liking and wearying governs its lifestyles, unless a pooling of intentions, desires and consent takes place.

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Our seventeen specialists present their sixth edition of “Flair.” In an open relationship, a new Facebook status, the one that best characterizes our experts, Profilers, Mentalists, Insighters, and most of all, Insiders.