Manifesto –
Participate in Your Democracy Now!

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Why this Manifesto ?

Citizens of societies everywhere on the planet are sensing that those societies are in the midst of major, epochal change. In an important sense, all of us are like explorers seeking a new continent, but without any maps to guide us.

We understand that it's the wealthy who are now managing the planet, not those we have elected; and that it is the economic model of that rich elite (.. **profit at all costs ...**) which is making our societies so dysfunctional. We also realize that the television, which the rich and their corporations control, is being used to tell us all sorts of stories rather than for informing us fully on the important issues.

We no longer have complete confidence in our political and economic elite, and we know that they are leading us into a dangerous cul-de-sac. Those who are trying to foresee strategies for the future are doing so with the mentality and the tools of the industrial era whereas *in fact* we are tumbling quickly into a post-industrial era. We realize today that we cannot pass on to our future generations that which we were fortunate to receive .. a future holding out hope and the promise of a better quality of life.

The current wave of techno-scientific optimism promises marvels (for example, interactive cities, homes controlled by software, or wearable computing). However, the true changes which will define the post-industrial society will be the creation of a new model of access to knowledge using information as the fundamental element of development for an emergent world. That's the real revolution (in the sense of an *accelerated evolution*) to come.

In two or three years or so, when the current conditions (wherein each individual experiences her or his own messy transition to a post-industrial society) become experienced and felt on a much more collective and widespread basis, we will have to make choices. But, what mechanisms will we have available ?

Societies progress from one era to the next

During all epochs of the past, societies adapted to their political, economic, and climactic challenges by developing new tools for communications. For example, the alphabet permitted the birth of the first cities and the first empires, printing, the unfolding of the Renaissance, television and the cinema, and the arrival of the Industrial Age.

Today our societies are facing a collection of inter-related crises because our societies are essentially globalized. Many of the key elements of each society depend upon the effective functioning and goodwill of other people in other societies.

Also, we are beginning to develop a new global tool, the Internet, which integrates the written word, sound and images .. or in other words, the existing networks of computers, telephones and television.

For the first time in history Internet 2 (or Web 2.0) will permit citizens to exercise and amplify their voices. So, they are able (if willing) to create a participative democracy with which to respond to the series of current and sure-to-come crises. Internet 2 will become a place where we will battle with each other (with ideas, opinions, facts and organized activities) in order to change the word.

At this point in time, we are living in new situations that are difficult to evaluate :

• The solutions to our problems will not be technical or economic (as the media suggests to us) but mainly cultural. The changes in behaviour which will required of all people will be very difficult to accept for most, and even more difficult to carry out and sustain.
• We are not facing several isolated crises but rather an ensemble of interrelated crises. To date, we have not responded to these crises with effective tools or developmental initiatives.
• But if these situations seem full of threats and general menace they also offer much opportunity for new and inovative solutions.

What are the mechanisms that we must learn and use if we want

to create and live in a society which is becoming much more complex that the industrial society which preceeded it ?

In other words, our societies evolve at the speed at which the behaviors of its citizens change, which is clearly too slow to respond effectively to the series of rolling crises we are experiencing. That observation has caused several important thinkers to believe that we are enrolled in a race between catastrophe and education.

The tools and dynamics of educating citizens and communicating effectively with them will make all the difference with respect to our collective future. That is why this document is concentrated on the tools and information that make up Internet 2.

The Ideas

This document was conceived from a foundation built on four key ideas:
- Our societies are currently undergoing an important rupture with the past.
- The understanding of this rupture and the subsequent mutation of society requires an analysis and synthesis of information from three main sources, which reveals the major battles yet to come.
    - The *technological filte*r : the battle for credibility of content and effectiveness of services.
    - The *economic filter* : the battle about demand, and thus territories and markets.
    - The societal filter : the battle for culture and language.
- The Internet will become the public place space wherein we will negotiate power. This will involve the convergence and use of networked computers, the television shows we watch, new online markets, smart and interconnected mobile devices and ubiquitous social and military information networks
- The principal characteristic of this new and emergent society will be the speed with which innumerable citizens engage their voices. This will principally occur via the Internet, in social networks, and will involve them expressing their frustration and concerns vis-a-vis the incompetence of the political elite and the arrogance of many of the current economic elite.

The crises we can anticipate

Currently, five interrelated major crises are in one or another stage of development. These crises unfolding simultaneously are creating *the perfect storm* or *the alignment of the planet*s, whereby everything seems to happen at more or less the same time :

• The current financial and economic crisis
• Peak oil, the BP spill and the overall energy crisis
• Global warming, climate change and the ecological crisis
• The massive geopolitical conflicts of which the wars in Iraq and
    Afghanistan are but a part of the overall scene
• The generational crisis, wherein baby boomers continue to hold onto
    positions of power and relative economic well-being whilst
    generations X and Y have had to adapt through various means ..
    delaying careers, living at home for much longer periods, etc.

The new mechanisms

Throughout history, societies have progressed from crisis to crisis by both creating and evolving new means and mechanisms for adapting. Her are several which are on the scene today :

• The mobility-enabling architecture of Internet
• Social networks
• New forms of consumer electronics
• The ubiquitous use of smart mobile devices
• The increasingly bottom-up modes of communications that people
    are insisting upon
• The fact that millions of citizens are finding ways to use their voices
• The growing impatience of the Internet-savvy younger generations
    and their ability to seek, share and synthesize information in
    ways very different to those brought up without the digital
    environment.
• Geo-location and the surprising essential uses to which that
    capability is put
• The economic model of proximity
• Mass customization and the appearance of numerous niches of
    economic activity

The proposed utopia

We are increasingly fractious, anxious and agitated citizens of Spaceship Earth. We seem to know that the perfect storm of major change is upon us, and that we are living on borrowed time when it comes to economics, energy and our collective environment. Increasingly we realize that in order to satisfy our immediate desires we are borrowing our prosperity and our current quality of life from the futures of our children and grand-children.

Individually, people feel frustrated. They've had enough of being told half-truths by the mass media and of seeing the rich global elite lording it over them in place of their elected representatives. But collectively, the future is unfolding more and perhaps too slowly. In two or three years, the majority of citizens will seem so frustrated that 2012 may well be the year in which a collective miasma or degree of anger results in the point of no return .. the rupture with the known and relatively comfortable past will be well and truly underway.

Pay Attention ! The major battle is starting and the elites in place are beginning to vacillate.

We are all going to be living in an *Information Society* in which the convergence of all the various networks and mechanisms of communicatin will become a *public place* in which a veritable tsunami of dreams, lies, and unvalidated informations. It is in this public place that the leaders of our societies will try to convince the citizens of those societies about the validity of their proposals, and where these leaders will encounter the push-back and rejection of citizens who are beginning to say *No, that 's not appropriate, that's not what we want or need* .

This public place .. the Web .. is becoming the battlefield where we will work at coming to terms with a wide range of contradictory opinions, or in other words the place wherein we will all negotiate the shifts in power in our societies. The biggest, or most important, danger we face is not so much economic meltdown as the manipulation of the means of communication and the commercialization of culture by corporations seeking profit rather than undertaking projects and services which contribute to the betterment of society.

The utopia we are proposing requires that we change our current models of society, culture and economy and how they operate. We want *to develop a participative democracy* that includes markets and their economic forces and impacts, based on citizens taking responsibility and giving voice. This will require some form or other of negotiation with the existing leaders of the political and economic classes, and the civil society.

This text has been written in the form of hypotheses concerning the medium-term future – from now through the next seven to ten years. These hypotheses are yet to be confirmed or validated. They are, in effect, *early weak signals* on a path that is being be created in the chaos of major transition and a rupture with the known past.

Recently, the complete text has been published in France :

La société émergente du XXIᵉ siècle
(*The Forces and Choices Shaping the 21ˢᵗ Century*)
Michel Cartier et Jon Husband,
Dangles Éditions, 2010. (208 pages, 18 euros)

Photo

Michel Cartier   *Jon Husband*

September 2010

Michel Cartier

Professor in the Department of Communications at UQAM from 1975
until 1997, Michel Cartier taught students about television, multimedia
and electronically-linked commity members. He has acted as a consultant
to a range of diverse organizations in Europe and Africa in the area of new
information technologies and their impact(s) upon language and culture.
He participated in the early developmental stages of networks such as
Platon, Telidon an the Internet, and explored various uses such as distance
learning, e-govrnment, electronic publishing, etc. In 1992 he created the
strategic foresight network known as Constellation W.

Jon Husband

As a sociologist foused on new technologies, consultant and facilitator,
Jon Husband has a background and experience in the area of the future of
management (in interconnected environments) and organisational change /
transformation.

As a SeniorPrincipal consultant with Hay management Consultants in

Montreal and subsequently in London, U.K. From the mid-80's to the mid-90's Jon provided advice and support to various multinational companies with regards to human resources, organisational design and organisational change challenges. Over the past decade, he has been researching and analysing the social and organisational dynamics created by and within social networks and social computing in the knowledge-based workplace, and has posited the emergence of a new organizing principle for the networked age that he calls **Wirearchy**.

Don't remain alone and isolated !
Create or join a group capable of thinking
and talking about our future

Pass the message along to others.   Be part of the solution !