

The rupture

This is the end of the world as we've known it.

But it isn't the end of the world

Kurt Andersen, Time, 6 avril 2009, p. 35.

A society is rupturing when its complexity changes to the point where its statistics become exponential. It is positioned at the edge of chaos between the fear of making choices without any reference point and the joy of the power to change its trajectory.

It is the concurrence of the emergence of crises of all kinds (*energy, climate, economic, political and generational*) that shows the current breakdown, this simultaneity is caused by rapid globalization in all areas.

Currently, most politicians and administrators have an easy excuse : *We did not see this coming crisis* or *The future is too complex to be anticipated*. Indeed, these boomers expect to retire and leave the future generations to resolve the coming crises.

Yet, long ago, several authors described this crisis that we are beginning to experience (see « The synthesis »).

Its many names :

Recently, various authors have described, in their own ways, the emerging rupture: *unique turning point, the Fourth Turning, decisive point, great discontinuity*.

- 2008 : Margaret Atwood thinks *that today's world is on the verge of a crisis more serious than it can conceive of... Today, people are like children who have not learned how live*. In *Payback: Debt as Metaphor and the Shadow Side of Wealth*, House of Anansi.
- 2009 : James K. Galbraith describes the crisis as *extreme* and for which the current models of intervention are exceeded, Washington Monthly, March issue.
- 2008 : Al Gore uses the phrase *turn upside down* in his book *An Inconvenient Truth*, Melcher Media.
- 2008 : Clay Shirky talks of *revolution* in *Here Comes Everybody*, The Penguin Press.

- 2008 : *A new world is in the process of being born*, announced Nicolas Sarkozy speaking for the European Union, September.
- 2008: Thomas L. Friedman, New York Times columnist, announces on March 7, *2008 will be the year when the Great Disruption began*.
- 2008 : it is not a clash of civilization (à la Huntington) but the *beginnings of a new world*, writes Jean-Claude Guillebaud in *Le Commencement d'un monde*, Seuil, page 48.
- 2008 : Parag Khanna talks about a *New Global Order* in *The Second World, Empires and Influences in the New Global Order*, Random House.
- 2008 : *We are facing an epochal economic and social shift, perhaps of an importance unsurpassed since the bourgeois revolution that gave birth to the capitalist economy that we have today*. Adam Arvidsson and Nicolai Peitersen, *The Ethical Economy*, on the Web.
- 1995 : in his book *Jihad vs McWorld : How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World*, Ballantine Books, Benjamin R. Barber describes the struggles which are unfolding between the Macdonaldised world (*global and in the clutches of large corporations*) and a more traditional world (*many forms of integration*). He concludes that there will not be a winner between neoliberalism and tribalism, and leans towards the alternative which is likely to be the development of participative democracies thanks to an active civil society.

This period has not been provoked by any isolated incident but rather by a number of events which have happened in a relatively short period of time, at most five to seven years

- 1995 : U.S. Congress passes The Telecommunications Competition and Deregulation Act, which prohibits the future formation of large consortia of information technology in the United States. A surge of multinational corporations rushes the market to meet the needs created by the inception of the Information Superhighway.
- 1995 : The emergence of the Web leads to :

- the banalization of computers ;
- the explosion of email ;
- and the dreams of electronic commerce.
- 1995 : The adoption of the Internet by industrialised countries reveals the concept of the planetary network.
- 2000 : AOL's acquisition of Time-Warner signals :
 - the beginning of international alliances between the large IT consortiums ;
 - as well as the debut of digitization of production and distribution chains mainly for economic reasons, not technological reasons.
- 2000 : The bursting of the dot.com bubble signals not a recession but a more disciplined reorganization of the economy.
- 2001: With the creation of Wikipedia, non-professionals (laypersons) can now contribute to the creation of web content, which was previously reserved solely for professionals (journalists, professors, experts, etc, is therefore an opportunity for anyone to become an active participant in the dissemination of information. (Three years later the Howard Dean campaign reveals the power of these public-driven tools and reaches a peak during the Obama campaign in 2008).
- 2001 : The terrorist attack of September 11 against the *World Trade Center* in New York reveals not only the vulnerability of the USA but over and above that marks the start of its decline as the planet's policeman.
- 2002 : The financial scandals (Enron, WorldCom, Adelphia, etc.) upsets the confidence of small investors and forces the financial institutions to reorganize themselves under the surveillance of the state.
- 2002 : The explosion of mobile devices (wireless telephone, GPS, WiFi, RFID, etc.) culturally modifies the notions of time and space for everyone.
- 2002 : The beginning of the emergence of digital natives encourages applications like *YouTube* and *My Space* and begins to create solid reasons for social networking.

All of this has as its background the consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, the implosion of the Soviet Union, the renaissance of China, the

affirmation of India and the construction of the European Union.

The passage from Internet 1 to Internet 2

This passage does not mean the disappearance of the first, but the development of a second generation in addition to the first kernel. This passage is as major by the technological advances it brings as by its impact on economic activities (*new clients, etc.*) and social activities (*appearance of social networks, etc.*). The point of no return for this passage was the first Web 2.0 conference held in San Francisco in October 2004.

INTERNET 1 :

Physical installation of networks (cable, telecommunications, satellites, etc.)

Computer networking

A world of personal computers, dominated by Microsoft.

Proprietary method

Users must, each time, first connect to the network.

Sales of personal computers modems, printers, software, etc.

Content created by professionals.

INTERNET 2 (Web 2.0) : ([postindustrial 7](#))

Mobile growth (RFID, GPS, Wi-Fi, smart phone, etc.)

Integrates computers, movies, television, cell phone, etc.

A web environment, dominated by Google.

Open-source method

The user is always connected to a network.

Sales of customized services by the Googlelization of advertising.

Content self-created by users.

- The transition from the predominance of micro-computing to consumer electronics will turn us upside down, from an era based on the use of micro-computers and software applications to an era based on networked applications (*Internet 1*) and eventually to networked applications and web services accessed using wireless devices resident on *Internet 2*. The point of no return was arguably the launch of the *iTunes Music Store* in 2003.
- Speaking first appeared on the Internet around 1990 with the appearance of *Forums*, *BBS*, and *List* in California. But it is not until 1997 that the word *blog* appears. The point of no return of this trend is the creation of micro-blogs, such as Twitter, in

2006.

- In 2007, we witnessed the first cyber-attack against another country : Russia against Estonia (though Russia denies the attack).
- In North America, at the forefront of the second industrial era, was the television and almost all citizens watched (75% of American households were tuning in to *I Love Lucy* in 1975). This era of popular TV shows designed for the greater public was an important factor in the homogenization of culture in the United States. Now these television broadcasts are watched by only 25% of homes. The post-industrial era restructures broadcasting around Internet 2 using narrowcasting (see figure p.13). Specialty channels, the Web, email, social networks, TiVo and DVD, etc. will now co-exist on the same digital platform. The point of no return from of this rupture was the finale of the series *ER* on April 2, 2009.
- The Web-TV marriage had its point of no return when Yahoo and 5 television manufacturers signed an agreement to insert content-management software into their own future devices on 11 January 2009 at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.
- According to *The Pew Centre*, one of the important emerging ruptures is the difference in reading habits between the 18-24 year old generational cohort who are not seeking to inform themselves, and the older generations whose use of traditional forms of newspapers and radio is migrating towards a more « mixed » model which increasingly includes Internet 2. (*The Economist*, May 16, 2009, p. 76-77).
- The explosion of information continues its mobile accessibility via text, audio or video to iPhone : the point of no return was reached when the Associated Press launched its *Mobile News Network* in May 2008. The next expansion will be that of mobile marketing and then the arrival of phones equipped with *Google Android*.

The analysis of several other phenomena also evidencing the rupture :

- During the first industrial age a first wave of globalization is outlined when promoters lowered the cost of communications

and transport. This had the effect, for example, of launching newspapers of wide circulation and low prices through its distribution via new steam trains (table p.10). During the second industrial era globalization overlapped with mass media. It developed around a single power vision and approach to competition from a superpower (*the U.S.*) through a hyper-culture (*the Hollywood Machine*) and a hyper-language (*Anglo-American*). Now that the emerging post-industrial era one can estimate that Internet 2 will become not only the planet's public square but more over a vehicle of globalization policy to come.

- During the first industrial age the changes are felt here and there but in the limited areas (see the catalysts for growth, p. 10). During the second industrial age, the changes have become the crises felt everywhere because they are amplified by economic globalization. Fortunately, these changes took place neither at the same time nor in the same place. Now, five major crises have erupted at the same time. They demand the attention of all governments who are not equipped to respond because globalization policies have not yet been put in place.
- The hyper-capitalism of recent years has created globalization. This was perhaps a blessing for the lower and middle class but it has, above all, created a new world much more sensitive to growing planetary crises : pandemics, terrorism, bank collapses, nuclear proliferation, etc. And as our world is becomes more complex, it is more difficult to manage.
- If the real economy follows relatively predictable models according to the laws the economists have more or less mastered, the financial market has its own set of laws that very few people know, let alone master. Where there is a disconnect between real and virtual finance, as is the case now, there is crisis.
- This current crisis produced a shift in the politico-economic environment. The second industrial era was marked by an influence of the right focused on deregulation, privatization and free trade, which created globalization. Now many countries have begun to reorganize with a stronger government presence in matters of the economy and tighter regulations particularly in the sphere of finance.
- With the emergence of the post-industrial era, various authors have begun to articulate that the world needs to be or will be multi-polar, and that we should use an approach based on

cooperation and diversity, from which has derived the concept of interwoven cultures and society.

- In the face of abrupt changes in environmental phenomena, the Geological Society of London has just reclassified our era. Due to the recent transformations made to the planet by man (species extinction, ocean acidity, carbon dioxide, etc.), we leave the *Holocene* age to live in the *Anthropocene* age. During its history, our planet has undergone five major extinctions; will man be responsible for the sixth?
- Only a few years ago a society defined itself primarily by its territory, its culture and language. All this changed with the arrival of the Internet, particularly in regards to language. Some countries use a single language identity (the Norwegian or Finnish for example), others follow a dual language (Canada and Spain), and others use several (India, etc.). With the advent of the Internet and the new global village, people now consider important to use, in addition to their identifying language, English to gain access to content and services on the Internet. They take this realistic approach to facilitate commercial transactions, cultural exchanges or their career, thereby forcing all societies to become more pluralistic. Now we employ a major and a minor language (English and French or Spanish and English, for example). With this, society henceforth becomes an environment that communicates in multiple languages instead of being defined by its sole identifying language.
- The difference between the young and the not-so-young generations of citizens also explains, at least partially, the importance of the unfolding rupture. The differences in behaviour will become more and more marked and apparent as the years go by, to the point where various authors are forecasting a generational conflict.
 - The older generations (the silent generation 1900-1954, the baby-boomers 1946-1964, Mature Generation, and partly Generation X 1965-1980, will form a predominant group in our society because of their numbers). Their time is calculated in minutes (« *time is money* ») *Etc. Now, they are beginning to move into their retirement years.*
 - Contrary to current research, the hybrid Generation Y, 1980-1990), will be the *génération charnière*.

- The young generations (netgeneration, Millenium Generation, the Web generation, the baby-burst). Their time consists of immediacy and they are at ease in cyberspace. Currently they communicate through and in social networks such as YouTube, MySpace or Facebook, focusing their interest in networks based on the groups to which they belong.

One of the first to analyse generations and their demographics was David K. Foot in *Boom, Burst & Echo*, in 2000. See also the researchers William Strauss and Neil Howe. Read *Grown Up Digital : How the Net Generation is Changing Your World*, by Don Tapscott, McGraw-Hill, 2008, to understand to what point the netgeneration is the antithesis of the baby boomers and how they may be able to (or will try to) change the world.

- After more than thirty years we are beginning to see and understand the influence television has had on writing (*novels, magazines, newspapers*, etc.) and sound (*music, shows*). What will be the impact of Internet 2, the media that integrates the digital and the interactive ?
 - We are beginning to see the new integrated styles appearing via blogs, text messages, DVDs and the ways in which meetings and events are organized and managed. But in 10 years ... certainly there will be a rupture with the traditional ways of the past.
 - The traditional styles will remain available and used, but new ways of expression will accompany the media tools and economy ... both current and future.
 - As much as the spontaneously interactive young generations will replace the much less spontaneous and interactive older generations, what we understand as « culture » will be profoundly changed.

In February 2008 the *National Intelligence Council* of the American government published *Global Trends 2025 : A Transformed World*. This group had already published *Global Trends 2010, 2015 et 2020*. Various facts and numbers indicate the importance of the emerging rupture. Other *Think Tanks* arrive at more or less the same conclusions: the *International Futures*, the *Pardee Center*, the *Toffler Associates*, the *Trend Research Institute*, the *Center for American Progress*, etc. :

- *It's more change than continuing* (p. 1)... *The trends suggest major discontinuities* (p. 18).
- *The next 20 years of transition toward a new international system* (p. 21) ... around about 2025 a global and multi-polar system will appear p. 17).
- the global population will go from 6.8 billion to 8 billion, and the majority of the growth will be concentrated in Asia and Africa 57 % of these people will live in 27 big cities, of which 8 will be new and located in Asia or Africa (p. 40).
- The leaders of the G8 are discovering the importance of BRIC - Brazil, Russia, India and China ; from that discovery will likely emerge an international G20.

Thirty or so *Think Tanks* influence the public debate in the United States and have arrived at roughly the same conclusions: the *International Futures*, the *Center for a New American Security*, the *Brookings Institute*, the *American Enterprise Institute*, the *Pardee Center*, *Toffler Associates* *The Trend Research Institute*, *Center for American Progress*, etc. :

The passages

The many passages, or paradigms, observed indicate the importance of the rupture we are experiencing. A paradigm is a new way to interpret a situation and it requires a new frame of thought to explain this new reality.

From the industrial era

to the post-industrial era

The technological paradigms

Internet 1 connects a network of computers

Internet 2 integrates computers, movies, television, cell phones, etc.

Internet 1 is an environment, mostly comprised of personal computers, dominated by Microsoft.

Internet 2 becomes a Web environment, dominated by Google

From passive analog

to interactive digital

Many to one

One to many

One to one

Many to many

From the physical (cable, telecom, satellites, etc.) (1G)

To mobile expansion (RFID, GPS, Wi-Fi, smart phone, etc.) (3G)

From the dissemination of the same message via various media

to a multi-platform approach

A preponderance of passive paper support	to the utilization of interactive screen images
From a wide-reaching diffusion	to a geo-specific diffusion

The economic paradigms

From Wall Street	to Main Street
From strategies oriented to the product	to strategies focused on the client
From the law of supply	to the law of demande
From mass production	to customized products
From consumers who buy goods with cash or cheques	to transactions carried out with credit cards accompanied by loyalty « points »
From a proprietary method	to open-source method
The sale of tangibles: micro-computer, car, book, CD, etc.	to the sale of customized services via the <i>Googlelization</i> of advertising
From an American locomotive	to a tripartite world: US + EU + China

The societal paradigms

From homo sapiens	to homo zappiens
From an insular society	to a ramified society
An authoritarian culture system	to the freedom of speech
From mass media (broadcasting)	to personalized media (narrowcasting)
From sparse data	to endless data
Infotainment which discourages solidarity	to a participative Internet 2 driven by the consensus
From a descending strategy (<i>top-down</i>)	to an ascending strategy (<i>bottom-up</i>)
Education and games	towards education by way of games
From digital immigrants (boomers)	to digital natives (the netgeneration)
From network user connect-per-use	to a user always connected to all networks
From content created by professionals	to content self-created by users
From <i>World.inc</i>	to <i>World.com</i>

And finally:

- The 8th day of the 8th month of 2008, two billion television spectators of the Beijing Olympics realised that we are moving from an unipolar (*American*) world towards a tri-polar world (*China, the USA and the European Union*).

- At 23h00 on 04/11/08 a new « rupture » appeared in the USA : Barack Obama was elected president. It signaled the end of the Reagan era and the apogee of the Boomer era.
- And, because in 40 years the majority of American citizens will be people of colour, the face of Obama was the initial announcement of a culturally mixed, interwoven America.
- December 12, 2008: the fraudulent \$50 billion pyramid scheme created by Bernard Madoff is the point of no return in the loss of confidence by the population at large.