

Various perspectives on the evolution of sustainable lifestyles and consumption habits

2014



Shifting our minds and behaviors to act differently?

The way we have been living for more than a century is obviously not sustainable. In addition, the fact that it has been spread all over the world through the various means of globalization is very likely to jeopardize the vital planet equilibrium.

This context has yielded an opportunity for alternative lifestyles patterns to emerge. Evaluating, measuring and investigating these trends more deeply appears then to be necessary in order to integrate the latter in the design and in the implementation of public policies on the mid- and long-term.

These changes in lifestyles and consumption patterns may have an impact on the ecological transition which is implemented in order to tackle our society major issues such as the adaptability of territories and of populations to climate change impacts, rapid deterioration of biodiversity, resources exhaustion and sanitary risks linked to environment; bearing in mind the rise in inequalities and precariousness. For these reasons, the French Ministry of Environment decides to address and considers these upcoming changes on different time scales, to better adapt public policies to the transformations of society. In this respect, two programs have been launched since 2010 dealing with future lifestyles: a foresight program called “Future lifestyles: thinking out of the box” (PAM – “Pensez autrement les modes de vie” in French) and a research program named MOVIDA. The latter aims at fostering researches regarding lifestyles transformation support towards sustainable lifestyles and consumption.



The objective of these two programs is particularly to give the Ministry some major elements to understand at best what is at stake and the related long term trends. The emerging but already genuine dynamics to better anticipate public action are also taken into account.

The importance of lifestyles

Future lifestyles: thinking out of the box: The years 2008 and 2009 underlined to what extent the economic crisis can yield adjustments in people's way of living. The weakness of purchasing power, the exposition of households to fluctuating prices of energy and natural resources, changing values of citizens as well as negative externalities due to the actual prevailing economic model, are outlining new lifestyles in a brutally transformed societal context. Here are considered "micro-breakdowns" that can sometime reorientate individual lifestyles, thus designing in 2030 - 2050 truly different lifestyles from the ones we currently know. In this context, the French Ministry for Environment is trying to emphasize the transformational factors designing future lifestyles that will be in continuity or in disruption with current lifestyles. This foresight exercise is aimed at anticipating related public policies.

MOVIDA: If technical progress is considered to have a high potential towards the green transition, our choices in terms of lifestyles have also a sizeable impact on our global ecological footprint. If we want to divide by four our greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 in France - as committed by France among other countries - we now know that many shifts are needed in our ways of living. Therefore, it is quite essential to help emerging a dedicated scientific community working on sustainable lifestyles. This research will contribute to nourish the insights of stakeholders concerned by the accompaniment of change, more specifically regarding the consumption patterns' field.



Which major striking trends are at stake?

MOVIDA: Through the study of various aspects of our everyday life (housing, mobility, food, energy consumption, our relation to time and citizens' initiatives...) researchers are enlightening us with regard to what determines our individual and collective choices but also study the cultural and even ethnic identity dimensions of our behaviors. These interdisciplinary research teams are mainly working in humanities - Economics, Marketing, Sociology, Psychology, Political sciences - and thus help us to better catch the complexity of our motivations in order to develop a more systemic view of our lifestyles.

Future lifestyles: thinking out of the box: The emergence of current trends and bringing change trends in a mid-long term (10 to 20 years) have been identified thanks to the work of a foresight group. Its results are gathered within **three volumes: a new society problematics' notebook, a weak signals' notebook and a foresight observatory of lifestyles notebook.** A final publication will gather the triptych along with a synthesis by the summer 2014. As a complement, a panorama of French, European and world institutions has been done, about the level of consideration regarding citizen lifestyles to shape public policies. It indicates an emergence of a certain interest from public policies on this matter.

From this work comes out a feeling of great creative activity shaking the world. A new world, between crisis and mutation, seems to be embodied by an ongoing inventiveness with new ways of thinking, producing, consuming or living... whose dissemination has been eased by new technologies.



Therefore, society's verticality inherited from the industrial era coexists with the horizontalness of networks' society, with a relative capability to evolve towards a more innovative, autonomous, participative, collaborative and supportive society.

What are the next stages ?

Future lifestyles: thinking out of the box: These unique reflections will be promoted through four debate workshops that will take place between 2014 and 2016, They will allow to benefit from the insight of world researchers, policy makers and persons from the civil society regarding lifestyles. These debate workshops will be at first opened to informed audience and should introduce and reinforce the new trends towards a more cooperative society.

MOVIDA: In 2014, the MOVIDA research program will carry on its explorations of sustainable lifestyles by launching a new call for projects with a focus on collaborative practices. If foresight officers are foreseeing a more collaborative society, new sharing practices are already impacting today's society. By these new means of access to goods and services, **citizens are giving the priority to the use rather than to property**, and these new practices are now highly important as far as certain key domains of the economy are concerned: tourism, mobility, food... It's thus important for the Ministry to promote such research programs to push back the frontiers of knowledge on such phenomena and of their impact on environment. Researches are underway and a publication named "ecological transition, consumption and lifestyles" is expected for the 2014 mid-year. The final stage will be a major conference by 2015 that will gather researchers, public policy officers, consumers' associations and citizens, since it is a matter for every one of us as individuals.

For more information :

- ◆ www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/Les-programmes,33465.html
- ◆ www.programme-movida.fr

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