At the crossroads between technical innovation, economic mutations and social transformations, what "Digital Disruptions" will become central in the next few years?

In 2010, Fing, France's foremost independent Think/Do Tank on digital transformations, decided to open up the process through which it chose the topics on which it worked. During 1 day, it gathered 120 individuals coming from large firms as well as startups, public institutions and NGOs, from research labs or activist groups, design or artist communities... Their goal: To collectively and creatively identify plausible transformations, shifts, and disruptions that would likely become central in 1-3 years. Possibilities that need to be anticipated in order to make them happen, prevent them, get ready for them...

The resulting publication was quickly considered a reference by media, academics, as well as corporate and public decision-makers. So Fing decided to make it a yearly process, "Questions Numériques".

Tensions and Disruptions

After having worked in 2010 on "tensions", in 2011 we chose to focus on "disruptions": which discontinuities, which forking points... could radically alter the landscape in which an industry, a market, a community or a society functions? How could we anticipate these disruptions, and their consequences? How to turn them into opportunities?

In preparation for the workshop, Fing produced 19 scenarios [of which 16 were translated into English]. The participants selected 7 scenarios, then refined them, discussed them, and partly or entirely modified them in order to tell a story in which they could fit.

The process gave birth to a new publication, which received the same level of acclaim. Companies and public agencies used it in their own foresight exercises. Several media commented them. While "Questions Numériques" had until then been conducted in French, the Lift 2012 conference hosted a workshop in English, with great success.

It is now time to turn "Questions Numériques" into a co-operative European process – Working title: "Digital Disruptions".
"Digital Disruptions" in 2012

The "Digital Disruptions" process in 2012 is:

► A continuous co-production process and a community, mobilizing several hundred contributors from all origins: Research & Innovation managers, European and regional executives, entrepreneurs and designers, innovation clusters, activists, academics, journalists...

From 2012 onwards, this process will progressively become more European, and its ownership shared between Fing and other partners:

- In May, an online working group [in French – will become international in 2013] will initiate discussions on relevant topics and "foresight objects" for this year's edition.
- During summer, Fing’s team (and possibly other partners) will produce the basic material upon which the workshops' participants will be asked to work later on.
- In September and October, 3 co-production workshops will produce the content for the next publication: Amsterdam (PICNIC, Sept. 17-18), Marseilles (Lift France, Sept. 29), Paris (October).

► A reference publication [English/French, paper/online], available in January 2013, whose ambition is to become a yearly landmark and effectively compete with the raft of "predictions" that the likes of Gartner, Technology Review, etc., publish every year.

This publication:

- Will be professionally designed, both for print and the web [see www.fing.org/qn2012]
- Will be presented to the media in at least 2 European cities
- Will be freely downloadable and reusable, under a Creative Commons licence

► A set of tools, methodologies and basic materials based on which partner organizations, and their own partners, can conduct other foresight exercises: strategic seminars, public or restricted presentations, courses, events, etc.

"Digital Disruptions" will be funded by French companies in 2012. In 2013 onwards, we expect the process to be run in common with 1-2 partner organizations outside France, with corporate and possibly European Union funding to be collectively sought for and managed.

1 "Tensions" in 2010, "Disruptions" in 2011. In 2012, we intend to work on "Promises": What changes to society and the economy does the Digital promise? Does it deliver? How, under what conditions could it deliver? Are there new promises to make, old promises to forget/revive/update?... "Bottom-up", DIY, P2P, are among these promises, yet we're not there yet, at least at the scale of societies: What would it take to get there?
The "Digital Disruptions" workshop at PICNIC

The PICNIC workshop will be the first of 3 "Digital Disruptions" co-production workshops in September-October 2012. Its duration is expected to be 3 hours. There should ideally be between 40 and 100 participants (facilitation resources will be adjusted accordingly).

► At least 1 week before the workshop, participants will receive the basic materials on which they will work: 15-20 1-page "scenarios", among which they will have to choose 2-3 they would prefer to work on.
   The basic material for the workshop will come from 2 sources:
   - Initial work by Fing's team and the French "Questions Numériques" community
   - **An initial workshop in Amsterdam**, open to the PICNIC community, ideally hosted by the Waag Society (July)

► The first 20 minutes of the workshop will be dedicated to explaining the goal, the methodology, and to choosing the 4-8 (depending on attendance) scenarios that participants will effectively work on. Participants will be given 5 points to vote on scenarios. They can give between 0 and all their points to any given scenario. The 4-8 most voted scenarios will be elected for further elaboration.

► Participants will then split into subgroups, each working on 1 scenario. One facilitator will assist each subgroup. A specific methodology will be designed in order to facilitate the subgroups' work. Subject to possible modifications, it will probably unfold as follows:
   - Step 1: improve the scenario, make it more "plausible" – A story each group members would feel comfortable telling to their boss / / colleagues / associates.
   - Step 2: debate the scenario – Half the group plays advocate, the other devil's advocate. Then the whole group works on what actions should be undertaken in order to make the scenario a desirable one.
   - Step 3: project oneself into the future that the scenario describes. Participants will assess the opportunities and threats this scenario represent for them and their organization: Do we make it happen, resist it or adapt? What role do we play? How should we change?...

► 2 weeks after the workshop, participants will receive a workshop report. The workshop's content will then feed into the final publication.
Appendix

EXAMPLE SCENARIO 1: "SLOW DOWN!"

EXAMPLE SCENARIO 2: "THE EXECUTIVE CAMPER"

THE "QUESTIONS NUMERIQUES" PUBLICATION
1. EXAMPLE SCENARIO 1: "SLOW DOWN!"

- **2011:** The "Post-It War" spreads all over facades of Paris' business districts.
- **2012:** Massive wave of depressions within large corporations. Companies test all sorts of responses.
- **2013:** Governments and social partners initiate negotiations on speed and infobesity.
- **2014:** Business software suppliers create a "Cool Tech" label to distinguish efforts in the favor of greater control over time and speed.

It all started with the Post-It War of August, 2011 at La Defense, Paris' main business district. Observers were bewildered: how could such brilliant brains, hired at a high price by the biggest French companies, dedicate their time to decorating windows with Pacman and Mario Bros drawn out of Post-Its, before posting the pictures onto social networks?

Corporate think tanks scratched their heads. Their conclusion: work has become like a video game. Professional time spent interacting on social networks sometimes occupy a third of the day. Add to this emails, phone calls, text messages, instant messages, coming in and out constantly and at all hours... Today's executive spends his/her time running all over the place, responding to all kinds of stimuli, throwing balls to other overworked executives, and has lost sight of what his/her work is all about.

BankX6, the original seat of Post-It War, first reacted abruptly by severely controlling the use of social networks, with daily connection quota. Inevitably, rebellion ensued. The blockings were quickly overcome. BankX6 learned from its mistakes and changed attitude. It started by launching "happy hours@work", time slots dedicated to digital social interactions. At other, rotating times - so that most of the company stays in touch with markets -, computers have to be shut down, or meetings are forbidden.

This initiative produced spectacular results. Stalled projects picked up again. New ideas were born. Office neighbors found out they had things in common. Working at BankX6 is more pleasant than it used to be, and it shows in productivity indicators.
2. EXAMPLE SCENARIO 2: "THE EXECUTIVE CAMPER"

**2012**: The rise in land prices drives the average home-work distance in Europe beyond the 50 km mark.

**2013**: Traffic congestion and ever-higher oil prices result in exponential growth in the use of public transportation. However, the lack of public funds does not allow their supply to follow the demand. Public transportation prices also rise sharply.

**2015**: Recognizing the explosion of nomadic work situations, European labor legislation removes all reference to the "workplace".

April, 2012: Paris' La Defense business district wakes up with a dozen tents at the feet of its office towers. Emerging from them in the morning are regular office workers, not homeless people. Within a few weeks, this practice snowballs. After trying to ignore the phenomenon in order to prevent it from spreading, local authorities react. They summon La Defense's main employers and ask them to intervene with their respective employees. But nobody really seems to know what to do.

Confronted with clogged public transportation, ridiculous gasoline prices, reduced wages, as well as rising housing costs which inexorably push them further away from their workplace, employees explain to have no other choice if they want to go on working. By sleeping at the very foot of where they work, they save hundreds of Euros and dozens of waking hours every month. The benefits to employers are obvious as well, especially since, despite the constant lip-service paid to it, teleworking has failed to catch up among employers as well as employees.

Two workers' profiles appear.

The urban "workizens" choose precarious housing solutions near work at least a few days per week. Camping gear brands adapt by creating new lines of tents, among which fancy-looking yurts. A new market opens up for camping trailers in Europe. After a few rough months, employers, district managers and employees negotiate improvements to the improvised camping grounds. Showers, lockers and changing rooms appear in office buildings. Electricity, Wi-Fi and video surveillance are also installed in the spaces occupied by tents. "Workizens" also hack their corporate networks for their private use, forcing IT departments to brutally control access.

On the other hand, rural "placeworkers" spend most of their time working from home or from wherever they happen to be, progressively estranging themselves from the corporate community. On their resumes, they will notify that they own an all equipped home-office (specifying its level of performance, quality, and security). Far from being reserved to "knowledge workers", this arrangement is embraced by an ever-wider diversity of workers, including blue collars. Before making that "choice", most of them tried all sorts of intelligent, collective, mutualized transportation systems. They finally gave up, considering them too impractical.
3. THE "QUESTIONS NUMERIQUES" PUBLICATION

On paper (A2 format, 28 pages)

www.fing.org/qn2012

Contact
Daniel Kaplan (dkaplan@fing.org) / Renaud Francou (rfrancou@fing.org)

Les partenaires de questions numériques 2012-2013 :

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FONDATION INTERNET NOUVELLE GÉNÉRATION
WWW.FING.ORG • WWWINTERNETACTU.NET
8, passage Brulon • 75612 Paris • (+) 33 1 83 62 98 28 • Info@fing.org
CMC • 2, rue Henri Barbusse • 13601 Marseille • (+) 33 4 91 52 88 68