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AGORA 2020 – Transport, Housing, Urbanism and Risk

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Sponsors: DRAST a scientific agency linked to the
'Department of Transport, Housing and Construction' of the French
'Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport, Housing, Tourism and the Sea'

Type: National foresight exercise

Organizer: DRAST with the cooperation of the French futuRIS program and at European level with the cooperation of
the ERA-NET initiative entitled 'ForSociety'

Duration: 2003-2005 **Budget:** Unknown **Time Horizon:** 2020

Purpose

Agora 2020 is a foresight exercise on the demand of research on transport, mobility, housing, construction, urbanism and risks, launched in spring 2003 by the DRAST - Directorate of Research and Scientific and Technical Affairs of the Ministry of Infrastructure, a scientific agency linked to the department of transport, housing and building. The project's aim is to build up a clear vision of middle and long term issues in the field of transport, housing, town planning to establish priorities and incentives for the next research programs in France.

Looking for Answers to Key Societal Questions

Today it is increasingly expected that research can provide answers to concrete societal questions. It is also expected that research can help enterprise, local actors, consumers, citizens and society anticipate their future needs. This expectation lies behind the recent proliferation of foresight exercises across Europe and the world. This recent rise of foresight is a response to a need for planners and other stakeholders to understand evolving social needs and build common visions based on an appreciation of emerging issues.

Perhaps more than in the case of any other ministry, research led by the Ministry for Infrastructure on Transport, the City, Housing and other accommodation, Infrastructure, Regional Development and Earth Observation is dedicated to the satisfaction of common needs.

So far however this work has not been embedded in a large consultation process equivalent to those conducted in other fields.

AGORA 2020 was launched by the DRAST - Directorate of Research and Scientific and Technical Affairs of the Ministry of Infrastructure - in spring 2003. This was done in cooperation with the French futuRIS program and with an ERA-NET initiative entitled 'ForSociety'. It aims to assess the future needs of society that fall within the remit of the Ministry for Infrastructure.

Its objectives are:

- To develop a common vision of medium as well as long-term societal issues and
- Formulate the key questions that need to be asked right now,



- Understand expectations for the future of the main categories of actors, as an input for the
- Development of strategic priorities for actions to be taken right now.

The overall approach was to involve researchers from relevant research centers, politicians and civil society in a series of seminars, workshops and surveys.

The exercise put a lot of emphasis on gathering background information and forecasts that would provide the basis for a rigorous and broad consultation process.

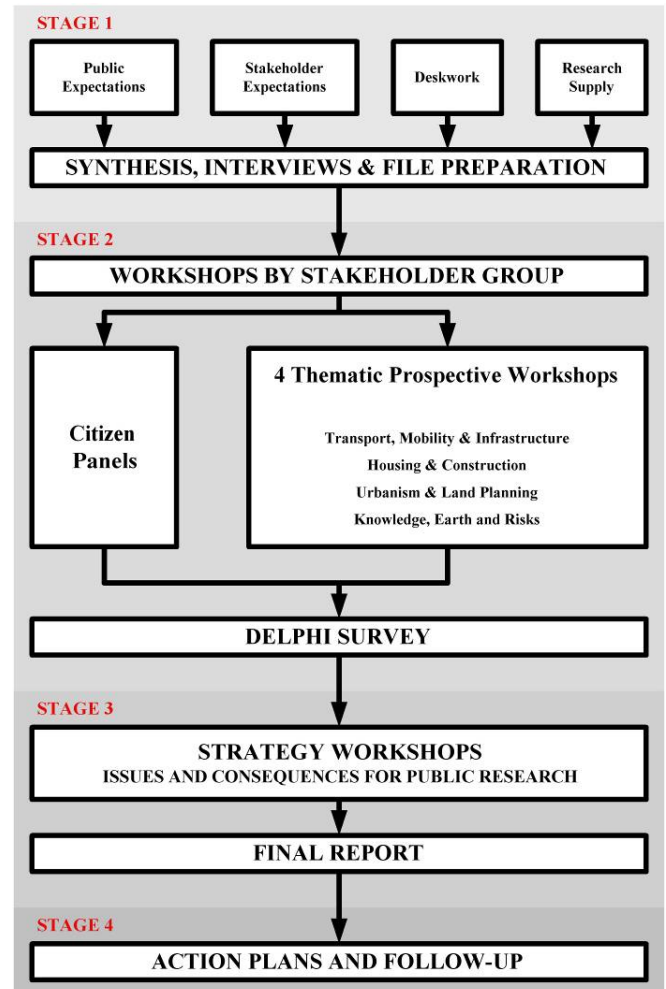
From Expectation to Innovation

The AGORA 2020 exercise was composed of four stages as indicated in the diagram on the right:

- The first stage was dedicated to the identification of the expectations of various categories of actors and their perceptions of major issues related to future of local and national infrastructure. These actors included companies and associations, experts from public administrations and local authorities as well as researchers from universities and national research institutes.
- In the second stage foresight material was provided to participants and discussed in order to pinpoint some key orientations and visions relating to selected questions. These orientations lead to specific requests for further information and analysis from the innovation and research communities. Expert workshops, fora and a DELPHI survey were conducted.
- The third stage aimed at translating the survey results into proposals and recommendations for more precise innovation and research projects.
- The fourth and final stage was dedicated to the uptake and exploitation of the results of the exercise and to the further elaboration of ideas to develop research and innovation strategies that had started to emerge from the stage 3.

AGORA 2020 is supervised by a Steering Committee chaired by Pierre Papon - General Director of the CNRS or Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique.

In addition to this an Orientation Committee and a forum composed of representatives of all the organisations involved in the exercise assisted the Steering Committee in the management and implementation of Agora 2020.



Territorial Issues at the Heart of AGORA 2020

The four stage process of Agora 2020 led to the identification of a number of priority areas for action. Although the final report and conclusion should be available in late 2005, some observations can already be drawn from the programme:

Identification of the Main Socio-economic Issues

Transport and Mobility

The expected increase in **price of oil and environmental regulation** raises questions such as:

- How to enhance the development of fuel cells?
- How to build a strategy in order to diminish numbers of cars on roads with the lowest possible social impact?
- How to change the behaviour of drivers?

The difficulty of building **new infrastructures** on congested axes due to NIMBYism as well as financial and environmental

constraints raises the question of how to improve public transport without tariff increases?

Globalisation contributes to strong evolutions in the functional and territorial organisation of productive activities and associated commercial and migratory flows. Its impact on transport and infrastructures choices is crucial. This raises questions such as:

- What are the forecasts about Asian development and tourism flows?

Drivers such as **new technologies, demographics** and the **desire for mobility** raise questions related to:

- Traffic regulation and transport security
- The mobility behaviour of elderly persons and their risk of exclusion,

Cities and Territorial Planning Issues

Questions arising here fall under the following main headings:

- **Demographic Change and its Consequences:** The living conditions of elderly persons, their needs in terms of specific housing and access to medical infrastructure, as well as the risk of geographic segregation between ‘young areas’ and ‘old areas’.
- **Social Exclusion and Precariousness:** This includes issues related to care for the homeless, those living in ghettos and related risk to the community.
- **Sustainable Land-Planning and Urban Development:** How to limit or manage the extension of peri-urban areas?
- **Multileveled Governance:** How to develop a country in a homogeneous fashion coping with territorial competition and heliotropism?

Housing and Construction

It is important to say that France currently faces significant problems with regard to housing due to an insufficient number of council houses. This situation has fuelled housing speculation as demand for housing is greater than the supply. Issues for the future include:

- **Energy Saving and Cost Reduction:** The development of new insulation materials, renewable energies for housing and low consumption equipments.
- **Housing Sector:** Market assessment and the problem of housing speculation.

Earth Observation and Risk Management

Issues for future research include:

- The development of tools and models for observation.
- Networking and data standards.

Trans-European Issues

Considering the international environment, five main trends or trend breaks were identified:

- The decline of Europe and the emergence of Asia as the centre of the world economy,
- A return to protectionism and local consumption,
- The impact of terrorism and its spill over effects,
- The construction of a ‘Wider Neighbourhood’ for Europe taking in countries from the Mediterranean Sea to the Ukraine.

Beyond these encompassing issues, inhabitants and members of non-governmental associations expressed structuring ideas about technological trends whereas most of institutional actors followed the ‘official point of view’. A great number of trends and trend-breaks were identified and these can be classed into three groups.

Technological Trend Breaks

- The design and commercial development of clean vehicles radically different from those already available.
- The impact of the Galileo system on technical applications and on current life.
- The development of intelligent systems that could alter human behaviour such as speed limit and guidance systems for cars.
- New materials such as biomaterials and nanotechnologies applied to construction and housing.
- New concepts in urbanism and the emergence of submerged and off-shore cities that use domes to protect against sunlight.
- Eco-buildings and ecological cities development.

Territorial Trend Breaks

- Concentration and polarisation of economic activity.
- Urban exodus and the repopulation of rural areas.
- The decline of the suburbs and outskirts of major cities as well as major crisis in these areas.
- Restrictions or limitations on the use of private cars.
- The expansion of teleworking practices.
- The importance of urban regeneration and social mix policies.

Environmental Trend Breaks

- Acceleration of climate changes, multiplication of natural catastrophes;
- Depletion of oil resources (for geological and geopolitical reasons);
- New wave of health risks and diseases.

Change Can Provide Opportunity

All throughout the AGORA 2020 exercise it appeared that there were important differences in perception about the definition of trend breaks. For example key messages drawn from the two first phases relate to highly contrasted,

sometimes opposed perceptions of the world and the modern society.

Opinions diverged for example on the future of immigration, on the place for elder people, on values about mobility and on the use of the precaution principle.

Trends in values however were mentioned by a majority of people. These included the right to have access to housing and transport or the development of a communitarian society.

Trend breaks on these issues would signal a dramatic change in thinking by French citizens about society. Scientists and other experts consider these issues as sectoral perturbations or asymmetries, whereas other actors see them as opportunities that provide scope for action. Residents of houses for instance, have experienced trends or trend-breaks on issues that are already occurring in their immediate environment. Therefore, their perception of trends and gaps, in relation with environmental, territorial planning or housing issues are seen as opportunities to improve their living conditions.

The Results of AGORA 2020 in the Field of Transport and Environmental Education

Issues considered as priorities illustrate an emerging shift from a traditional perception of dynamics towards a more encompassing approach that mixes variation due to technological and societal forces for change.

Themes are now more closely related to spatial and socio-economical issues rather than to purely technological ones.

The output of the AGORA 2020 exercise is an input to help decision-makers. As the scope of study of this exercise is very wide, policy inputs are mostly emerging issues that should be taken into consideration when drafting new policy guidelines.

For example AGORA 2020 results were taken in account for the elaboration of guidance on ‘financing infrastructures at the horizon 2020’. The French government has also used the results of the project in discussion about the objectives of the European Commission Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development.

It is interesting to note that this exercise is followed closely by planners and policy experts in other countries in European such as Finland or Germany.

The AGORA methodology has been used to evaluate qualitative and quantitative future challenges in the area of environmental education and to establish criteria and indicators for evaluating and developing this domain.

Sources and References

Sources

The Center for Prospective and Technological Monitoring of the Ministry for Equipment:
<http://www2.equipement.gouv.fr/recherche/pvs/CPVS6/actualites.htm>

References

The ‘AGORA 2020’ mid-term synthesis report, published by the CPVS – Centre for Foresight and Scientific Monitoring, and DRAST in December 2004: 40 pages and annexes.

‘Urban research: What social demand? in ‘Crossed perceptions of habitants, local authorities and experts in future urban issues’ by the CPVS. November 2004. 10 pages.

Reports and prospective cases drawn from the following specific workshops and published by the CPVS:

- ‘Earth Observation and Risk Management’ in May and October 2004
- ‘Transport and Mobility’ in May and October 2004
- ‘Housing and Building’ in May and October 2004
- ‘Cities and Territorial Planning Issues’ in May 2004
- ‘Administration’ in October 2003
- ‘Local Authorities’ in October 2003
- ‘Associations’ in October 2003
- ‘Enterprise’ in October 2003

Synthesis of prospective workshops’ outputs, CPVS, December 2003.

Report on first and second Orientation Committee meetings published by the CPVS in June and December 2003.

About the EFMN: Policy Professionals dealing with RTD, Innovation and Economic Development increasingly recognize a need to base decisions on broadly based participative processes of deliberation and consultation with stakeholders. One of the most important tools they apply is FORESIGHT. The EFMN or European Foresight Monitoring Network supports policy professionals by monitoring and analyzing Foresight activities in the European Union, its neighbours and the world. The EFMN helps those involved in policy development to stay up to date on current practice in Foresight. It helps them to tap into a network of know-how and experience on issues related to the day to day design, management and execution of Foresight and Foresight related processes.