THE GREAT TRANSITION, Group 99
Katjawan Amélie 100210251
Hochart Valentine 100202808
Spery Cyriaque 100142256

NOTE OF INTENT

1. Problem

In regards of the massive steps in technology, the virtual revolution, the commodification of the society and other dynamics that reshape our human interactions, we decided to explore the issues around loneliness in our contemporary societies. Paradoxically, although means of communication have never been this diverse and efficient, virtual interactions cannot take over real human exchanges.

The French National Statistics agency published this year its latest report on human isolation and loneliness, and the findings are both particularly surprising and alarming. Indeed, we might feel that technology, mobile phones, internet and social medias made our world more "connected" than ever before, but we would be wrong to think so.

The study from the national statistics agency, INSEE shows that having frequent social relations is associated with better living conditions, increased security in case of difficulties, and globally, better well-being and health.

The study shows that loneliness affects different types of generations and not the elderly as we might think. In fact, in 2015, 3% of the population above 16 years were isolated from their family or non-familiar surroundings, in the sense that they dot not having any physical meeting or distant contact anymore every month outside their household.

Social loneliness is particularly associated with economic vulnerability, degraded health and last but not least a lower level of well-being. In addition to that, in case of difficulty, isolated people have 30% less chances to get help compared to non-isolated people.

Isolated people are logically less engaged in sportive activities or social ones such as volunteering. In addition to that, they tend to communicate less via social networks when there are they are equipped with internet. Finally, they tend to feel less healthy. Their lack of social links impacts their well-being even more rather than their "materialistic situation".

While urban areas are more and more crowded and gather a lot of the economical, business-related as well as social activities, rural areas tend to be more and more deserted. Indeed, the rural population in France from 2006 to 2018 decreased from 22,6% to 20%.

Even decentralization dynamics that try to integrate medium-sized cities appear to be leaving the rural areas left apart. Worse, there are many evidence of increasing isolation of the rural areas; many jobs or activities are disappearing from them. Cities are much more dynamic than villages due to their concentration of the cultural life, activities and infrastructure.

Cohesion comes from the Latin word "cohaerere" (to stick, to be tied together") and refers to

the sense community and the solidarity that could exist in a society. According to Tönnies (1887) and Durkheim (1897), a cohesive society can be defined as being: "characterized by resilient social relations, a positive emotional connectedness between its members and the community and a pronounced focus on the common good" (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2013: 12)". Social cohesion, or in other words, the tendency of individuals to connect with others and participate in civic, social and political activity, is a crucial component for economic performance and has direct repercussions on the quality of institutions, and thus economic growth. More importantly, being part of a society has positive impacts on individual well-being. Indeed, it has be proved that there is a positive relationship between overall social cohesion and well-being. (Delhey, J., & Dragolov, 2016). There is a growing belief that social cohesion is decreasing in Western developed countries, and even more in rural areas.

Therefore, we are facing two problems that are connected to one another. First, the marginalization of the rural areas because of a lack of infrastructure and activities as well as the increasing feeling of loneliness that affects the different types of generations living in the rural areas. So how could we assess loneliness in rural areas, knowing that rural areas lack of infrastructure to enforce cohesiveness between the generations ? More especially, the raising question thus are how can we create and provide entertainment that could answer the problem of evaporating real social interactions; how can we make rural populations socially active in real life, by developing real connections and social cohesiveness instead of virtual communication; how can we integrate people that are structurally isolated around cross-generation activities?

The idea that we came up with, knowing the constraint previously exposed, is that the answer would be at the core of the rural population, the answer is to foster communication within the existing rural community thanks to a mix of physical, cultural, problem-solving as well as technological-immersive activities. This issue matters to us because we want areas that are structurally more isolated not to be, in addition, cut from social interaction, especially within the community. We think that we can fight the loneliness of populations in rural areas by first developing real socially-cultural interactions among them.The problématique that came out from our reflexion is

"How can we assess the loneliness of rural populations, knowing that rural areas lack infrastructure to enforce cohesiveness among all the generations of one rural community?"

2. **Proposed concept**

We want to find a solution to social inclusiveness of rural population, by elaborating a concept that will increase their own cohesiveness. In order to do so, we thought of providing entertainment through activities, to keep it fun and making it attractive. These activities would require the participation of everyone, every generation, because they have different skills that would be required to complete the tasks, so that no part of the community would be left apart (for instance, some tasks would require the agility of teenagers, others would require the knowledge of elders).

The activities will range from physical activities in teams to develop social cohesiveness to problem-solving activities based on cultural knowledge and reflexion. Indeed, we believe that with this mix of activities we can target properly the different generations living in the rural

areas, from children, parents, single people to elders.

In addition, in order to enforce cohesiveness and create a real feeling of belongingness, the idea is to make compete two different villages, so that each community share the objective of winning. The use of new technologies such as AR, VR... is a great tool to simultaneously connect two villages. Moreover, bringing these new technologies to rural areas has the purpose to include these isolated places in the digital and virtual revolution, making these populations friendlier with these technologies.

Eventually, in order to provide this service, we thought of a mobile entity. Therefore, two buses/trucks that would travel from villages to others seems like an appropriate way to reach out to the villages (as it is inspired by circus, fairs...). The bus would help us reach out to these places, and would contain all materials and technology required to do the games. Thanks to this mobile entity, the rural population will have the opportunity to discover and participate to new activities without moving.

We have decided to name this project "Acti'village", to lay emphasis on "activity" since we are bringing entertainment to the village, and also on "active" as this is a participatory process that brings people together.

Our solution seems effective as it will bring a fresh, new initiative to isolated areas and our game requires the participation of all the different types of people to achieve the tasks, therefore collaboration is a necessary component, and hopefully outcome of the activity. It is original as no other initiative looks similar to ours. There are some attempts to bring culture or entertainment to isolated areas (such as the mobile museum), but our main focus really is to gather an entire village, make them have fun together with our game, so that they will have a much stronger cohesiveness. Eventually, it is logistically quite simple so it seems totally feasible (an important initial investment is required to acquire the materials: two trucks, VR and AR technology devices for the games and to connect the two villages, and an event tent).

3. Expected positive impacts

The major positive impact that we want to reach is to increase social cohesion among the village's community, therefore reducing the feeling of loneliness by developing new in- real-life interactions. By reducing loneliness, we will then increase the well-being of the rural population which will to merely better living standards and health outcomes. We also see our project as being a way to bring more activity and life for everyone in the community, and doing so by providing entertainment and fun.

There is also an educational/cultural impact to our project. Indeed, as explained before, the game would require the participation of every generation, ultimately creating a dynamic of shared knowledge (elders would transmit their general knowledge to teenagers; teenagers would share their technological knowledge with elders for instance), that could also help reduce existing knowledge/cultural inequalities. We believe that "Acti'village" will stimulate intellectual curiosity at any age. Finally, since we will rely heavily on new technologies, the game could also be seen as a sort of VR and AR training, giving rural populations a direct access to use and experience them.

By bringing people together and enhancing cohesiveness we wish to create communities where people want to live and to stay. The different activities will potentially to enhance the talent of the rural population and help them to succeed. Furthermore, our solution may leverage assets to develop a strong business climate in the rural areas thanks to networking for example.

The solution is sustainable because the dynamics driving activities out of the villages are still vivid, meaning that the communities will keep on being disconnected from social life, maintaining the need to build a strong community and feeling of belongingness. When it comes to the content of the activities, we could create different versions of the game in order to keep on sparkle interest.

4. <u>Major risks and actions to reduce them</u>

Since we provide a mobile service, the temporary and hence perishable nature of a movable entity may fail to create a long-term impact or be sure that the game has been effective on increasing cohesiveness, we might then have to think of some kind of follow-up. The first step could be survey, asking each participant to evaluate Acti'village and how they feel about the outcomes.

Another risk would be that there is not enough awareness for our service and/or a lack of motivation from communities to take part in the game, individuals that have no interest at all in new technologies (although we want to sparkle the interest), or even proponents that would be refractory to have external intrusion into the community. Working along with the local representants seems like a way to make sure there is a strong, beforehand, connection with the community and it is also a way for our team to meet the expectations of the community. We should also make sure to respect the local environment and the village so that villagers wouldn't feel like being bothered by our activity, and for us to make the best possible impact.

It will also be difficult to target and engage people who are the loneliest. They would not feel integrated at first and therefore would not be implicated in the process. They could also be too shy to take part in such a social gathering and too scared to try something new. This is our role to communicate clearly that we want to create a fun and safe place for everyone to participate. To reduce the risk of not being able to target the people that are the most likely to benefit from Acti'village, having the help of the local councils or village associations for instance would be nice, as they often know all the members of the community.

There are also more tangible and logistic risks such as any power shortage, or a technology default risk that would completely make our activities impossible. In addition, we will need agreement of local authorities (police) for our event to happen in the public space. Eventually, since we are a movable service and we would use 2 trucks, there is an undeniable ecological negative impact that cannot be avoided

5. <u>Deployment strategy and major milestones</u>

Since we will promote ourselves as being a movable game, the first step is to create content, meaning that we have to create the different games that would be used in VR and AR. Some of the tasks would require more intellectual games, other would be more about general

knowledge, some would require physical skills and abilities.

Acquiring all the necessary material is an essential step in the process, as we rely mostly on our two trucks and on the VR and AR technologies. In addition, we would also need an event tent to create a more proper space to use the technology to do the game and complete the tasks.

The communication is also a crucial step in the process as we need to be known and recognized by the villages. We will need to network with the local communities to motivate them to take part in the activity. A strong marketing campaign seems necessary to create a strong brand image and brand awareness, and therefore position ourselves as pioneers in this market.

Eventually, in case of success after the implementation (first 2 years), we could create a kind of "national competition", where each winner of a "fight" would compete with another winner, until there is only one village left (that would be the ultimate winner).

6. Return on investment analysis

The initial investment would be the most important part of the costs, as we need to acquire two trucks and embellish them; VR and AR technologies for both trucks, and event tents. There is also the cost of creating the "video games" that will be used along with the VR and AR technologies. We also need to run a website for marketing and booking inquiries.

Numerically speaking, the two, embellished, trucks would cost 300,000€ each. Creating the video games would cost 200,000€, the technological tools (VR / AR masks, TV screens, tablets) would cost 100,000€. We also estimated the diverse furniture to cost us 10,000€. Considering these fixed costs, the initial investment would be around 1,000,000€.

There will also be variable costs, such as toll gates fees, gasoline or insurance for the materials, as well as labour force salaries. We will also have to invest greatly in marketing in order to gain recognition in isolated areas which could be a challenge.

Our benefits would mostly come from participation fees of players. We insist on making them affordable, so that price is not a factor opting-out any participant. Therefore, we estimated that the price should be 10€ per participant.

7. Organization

As explained before, the partners we need are essentially the local councils (Maire du village), village associations, or even schools, as they would act as intermediaries between us and the population before our arrival. Their role would also be to motivate villagers to participate, and advertise us to segments that are harder to get to through common channels.

Regarding sponsors, we could hope for the help of the Conseils Départementaux or even Conseils Régionaux, to promote our service or financially help us - as we are providing both entertainment and a socially responsible service to communities that are under they governance but that are most likely to be left apart.