

# Press Review

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## **Hi, Mom, I'm in Nepal :**

This text is taken from the Newsweek magazine dated 5 of March 2001.  
It deals with education and specially with foreign studies.

First of all, in the end of the nineties, according to the Institute of International Education, overseas studies has gone up more than 45 percents.

In fact, even if, most of the times, Americans students who study overseas always choose Europe, it appears that more and more they are willing to go in exotic places.

Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East are these new destinations.

What are the reasons for such a turn over?

One of them may be the expansion of the market in developing countries. Undergrads want to have an experience in these places.

And often, most of them had already seen Europe with school or with their own parents, and they simply want to see something more exotic.

Moreover, many American students go to countries listed by the State Department on warning lists (1,268 during the 1998-1999 school year).

Even some tragic events in these places can't discourage them.

I choose this article because it deals with a phenomena which is growing more and more in the mind of undergraduates students : the will to go abroad and see a different culture.

The fact that new destinations are chosen is interesting.

In fact, Europe and the US have many points in common, their culture are not so different.

I understand that exotic places may be chosen. And specially those in developing countries such as in South-East Asia, where the market is opening to liberalism. These places will be the next main places for business. More and more companies are looking to this side and the Chinese market is an object of lust for many.

The proverb says : 'Travel broadens the mind'.

I see as a chance the possibility to spent some month abroad by his own. Actually, it is a way to open his minded, and surely it helps to prevent some intolerant behaviours.

In Europe a program called 'Erasmus' exists, whose aim is to help European students to travel through Europe.

It reminds me of the French film *'L'auberge espagnole'* which describes the life of a few students, coming from different countries in Europe, in the same flat in Barcelona, Spain.

But, even if the rate of those who have this opportunity is increasing, the phenomena is still limited as regards the whole population of students.

Moreover, the analysis presented in the article is quite old.

The 11 of September has changed all the data for the Americans.

In fact, I think that now no one may choose to go in a country on State Department warning lists. Then, even if now the crisis for the air company seemed to be passed, the rate of overseas study has surely dropped.

Nevertheless, now things are getting better, life goes on. The attraction of Asia or other places is still topical for business, and so is it for students too : more and more students in France are learning to speak Chinese.

Personally, I had never gone abroad by my own.

It may be an exciting experience, and if I could during my studies in ENTPE, I will try to go in a foreign country (but certainly not in a rogue state ! ), may be in North America, South Africa or Australia...

## **Beware a senior society :**

This text is taken from the magazine Newsweek Special Issues 2002. It deals with the problem of longevity. The author, Kim Stanley Robinson, a science-fiction writer, try to explain what may be the problems of a society in which human beings could prolong life.

The extension of our lives of some decades or even centuries could be disastrous. In fact, first of all, there is the problem of the mind : we may be able to conserve our health but the brain is far more complex than any other organ, and we don't understand the workings of memory, which makes us human. So we would create some sort of animals without any conscious.

Then our demographic balance would be altered by the increase of the senior population and, because of the lack of vital spaces on the Earth for more than 6 Billion people, this situation will create the need to control the birth rate. And the few people on the middle ages would have to face most the management of the world.

Moreover, such a treatment will be expensive and only the haves would be able to benefit of it. It will create two different species on the Earth like those described by H.G. Wells in *The Time Machine*. And so unavoidably some clashes...

But the fact it that it is in our nature to think of longevity. In reality, a successful longevity treatment is not bound to happen. Nevertheless, we should not consider this will as a desire to escape from death but as a sign of health.

In the world of science fiction, longevity and eternal life or invulnerability is an old dream. In fact, there are many legends speaking of ways to gain eternal life : the Saint-Graal, the water of eternal youth, the legend of Siegfried...

Here the author focuses on a medical treatment able to prolong our life keeping people healthy.

During all the History of medicine, human beings were trying to cure the diseases of his time : plague, cholera, tuberculosis... It is strange to observe that every time there were another important disease. Nowadays, we have to face the cancer and HIV...

So is the idea of invulnerability just a dream?

In a way, we may think that with the control of the human genome we could create new “races” more resistant just like the GMO, or else find new vaccines to preserve everyone from any virus... I don't think it is something realistic. Our cells have a limited length of life, it is normal that the regeneration introduce more and more errors in the transcription when we become older : our eyesight decrease, we become deaf ... The ‘machine’ get rusty along the years.

Then we may think of any treatment able to slow down this phenomena. But even with such a treatment I don't think it would prolong significantly our life time. (and anyway it doesn't solve the problem of diseases and accidents...).

I agree with Mr. Robinson about the brain. The cells which compose our brain are responsible for the working of our memory. Brain is what makes us different with animals. Without a brain and a memory, a human being is just a sort of animal...

Will the prolongation of life create a gap between two divided species?

H.G. Wells described, in *The Time Machine*, how, from the unique race of human, in the future, two different species were born... One, the Eloi, coward and weak, the second , the Morlock, strong and predator for the Eloi...

I think it may be a possible consequence, because prolonging the life time we would probably do with changing the genes of these persons ...

Nevertheless, in a way the scenario of Robinson is happening. The context is different but it is a fact that our society is becoming older : we live longer and the birth rate is decreasing. Then I think that the consequences are valuables for example concerning the burden for the middle aged people.

Finally is longevity something really desirable?

Actually, from a generation to an other generation the way of living change, youngsters are more able to use technology; in a laboratory, it is known that after an age a researcher is no more efficient... The fact is that if life is too long it may raise some problem of renewal at all stage : from politics to research ... I think that it may create a lack of innovation. And by the way, people will live longer during a period in which they will not see more changes that in a normal life time. Perhaps they will not have the impression of the length of their life or else they may see it as insipid...

So many hypothesis that an entire life may not be enough !

I chose two funny articles about food taken from the magazine Newsweek Special Issues 2003. After a summary of each of them, I will try to make a commentary on this subject.

### **Bilateralism on a bun :**

It is interesting to know that several national cuisines are now blend with American fries in fast-food restaurants. This concerns particularly foreign countries in which local franchise owners offers special dishes with local tastes. But even in the US, 'new tastes' , which blend different traditions, are proposed on the menu board. J. Hugh McEvoy, a professional menu developer, calls it "Nuevo global" cuisine.

It represents 5 to 10 percents of the worldwide restaurant sales. For some people, American fast food is revolutionizing the food industry : the concept of eating fast is exported from the US, even more than its own food.

Moreover this "Nuevo global" cuisine can be seen to be a counterargument to those who say that American food is polluting local traditions with high-fat fried food. These new dishes are often made without tons of fried food. So, they are often healthier than the habitual menus such as "double cheese burger with bacon" – as long as the restaurants respect the size of a portion and don't add fat, which is responsible for the rate of obesity in the US (64,5 % of the population is overweight or obese).

In fact, the main problem in fast-food is not due to the ingredients but above all, it is due to the way it is prepared and the gargantuan portions which are sold.

Finally, what is worrying the World Health Organisation is that in foreign countries, the population is moving away from more healthy meals to eat more meat... in a way adopting the bad US habits. But, the main concerns about health is not really more obesity in the world than underweight.

## **Slow-Food Revolt :**

An Italian couple wants to turn America's obese on to the "Slow Food" movement, which main aim is to promote an other way of life than the hurry life.

According to them, their movement already counts seven thousand members in the US.

They want to promote a complete culinary lifestyle linked with an ecological dimension. They consider that Americans have to rediscover the pleasure of leisurely meals, conviviality and conversations during the meals.

This movement was launched in 1987 in Italy when the first Italian McDonald's opened. Now it counts 70 000 members in 46 different countries.

In the US the movement is growing very slowly, except in California, where some influents chefs support the "Slow Food Revolt".

The aims of this organisation deal with warning against the side-effects of cheeseburgers, taking the time to have convivial leisurely meals, helping local farmers to produce fresh locally grown food...

But can this movement and his lifestyle be successful in the land of fast-food restaurants and hurried lives?

First, the majority of the population even ignore the existence of such an organisation, and then, as Walt Riker, spokesman of McDonald's, explains people are free to take the time they want in his restaurants and be as convivial as they need.

So, the answer is no.

It is a fact that obesity is one of the main plagues of our society.

There are two main factors to explain the growing rate of the obese population (now, 64,5 % in the US) : one is the fact that our meals are too fat and often disproportioned, the second is the fact that in our occidental society there is a lack of physical activity.

Most of the time, the designed offenders are the fast food companies such as McDonald's. Here we have two original points of view.

In the first, text "Nuevo global" cuisine seems to be a compromise between the US fat aliments and the traditional dishes. It offers some different ways to prepare the meals. And often the new dishes are healthier. So, we may see there a solution to the problem of obesity. (Well, only if the size of the portions is realistic.)

In France, there have some new dishes like these in our fast-food restaurants. But, the fact is that often they have nothing to do with the culture they claim to come from. It is a fact that these burgers are different from the classical ones... Well, the beef is replaced by chicken, the burger has another shape, but in fact they are all made with the same model and served with French fries and a big glass of sugared drink. I consider this just as a new practice of advertisement, a way to renew their menu... And certainly it has nothing to do with the fight against obesity.

But, we may wonder if obesity is really always linked with fast-food.

It seems sure that an excess of fast-food menus lead to obesity, but even good diet can be responsible of obesity. In fact, obesity is a illness whose causes may be very different from one case to another : genes, physiological causes (people don't have the feeling to have eaten enough), too fat meals, too big meals, ...

Then I consider that obesity is not just a consequence of fast-food, it comes with an off balance or a too fat diet.

Then we should tackle the second point : the lack of physical activity.

I remember some documentary on TV which shows the entire population of a town, even the mayor, doing some physical exercises in the streets.

In our comfortable lives, we are not used to make physical hard work. So, we may have to replace it by a regular practice of sport, in order to spend some of the energy we eat in each of our meals. People have to rediscover the sense of an equilibrated life and the old Latin and Greek precepts of temperance.



In front of this, the second text offers an other view, which is certainly closest to the French point of view considering meals. In fact, France is considered to be the first country for the food traditions, and what we told “le bon gout”. But, it seems that the concept of dinner promoted by the “Slow food” movement, leisurely meals, is incompatible with the American way of life. In fact, “Time is Money” and in the land of capitalism, people can’t loose their time eating, specially at lunchtime.

But, even in France, the sanctuary of good taste, the country of José Bové, fast-food is really more and more important. There is still new McDonald’s or new Quick restaurants. And many youngsters are attracted by these restaurants.

In fact these restaurants offer in a short time a quite cheap meal, which personally I find quite tasty. So it attracts many students, and workers who don’t have the time to eat a real complete meal at lunchtime.

Nevertheless, some studies showed that it was not really a threat to the French cuisine. In fact, we may see fast-food restaurant as a complementary to the traditional meal.

For me, it is not **bad** to go to a fast food restaurant, if only it is occasional. Of course it is not French cuisine, but I consider that, from a dietetic point of view, there is no difference between a hamburger and a sandwich.

The fact is that it concerns above all the lunch. For dinner, most of the French people take the time to cook a good dish for all the family. And certainly dinner is the most convivial meal of the day, anyone can speak of his own work during the daytime...

Finally, obesity comes above all from bad habits concerning the way we eat and the way we live. Even if we stay still far behind the US, the threat is growing in France. If we react now, we may be able to reduce the rate of obesity in France.

Certainly, we have to rediscover the former diet, which were often healthier and certainly which spread the savours.

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## Vocabulary :

### Hi mom, I'm in Nepal !

a lung infection = infection pulmonaire

the beaten path = les sentiers battus (to drive someone of the beaten path)

far-flung

to fling = lancer, jeter

lust = convoitise (désir ardent, luxure)

a proverb

les voyages forment la jeunesse = Travel broadens the mind

topical = d'actualité

### Beware a senior society :

akin = apparenté, proche

dim = faible, vague

a burden = un fardeau

whack

### Bilateralism on a bun :

a bun = une brioche aux raisins

meanwhile = pendant ce temps

to blend = mélanger

a dish = un plat, un régal

unavoidably = inévitablement

eyesight = la vue (le sens)

deaf = sourd

to get rusty = rouiller

### Slow-Food Revolt :

a diet = un régime alimentaire

a backlash = une répercussion, un contrecoup

a slow-rolling idea =

rolling = roulant, ondulé

a culprit = an offender = un coupable