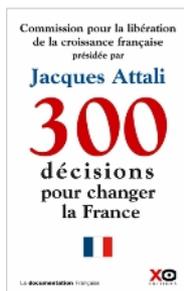


## How to change a country?<sup>1</sup>

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For those of us passionate about change in organisations, looking at change outside the enterprise is a learning treat. Social and political change is no different from organisational change. The only differences are the context, the scope and the interdependencies between individuals/players. What they all have in common is that human beings are the protagonists of change. Though it is unusual for me to write about non-organisational change in this blog, I am making a pleasurable exception today.

Imagine a politically conservative head of state asking a Marxist philosopher to gather 'brains' from all over (inside and outside the country), including all views and all political, social and technical positions. And then asking them to make suggestions on how to change the nation and create growth. This is not political fiction, nor fable, social experimentation or a PhD in democracy. It is simply France in 2008.

This remarkable process took place between July 2007 and January 2008. The head of state, of course, is Sarkozy; the Marxist philosopher is Jacques Attali and the invited brains consisted of 43 people from academia, consulting, finance, enterprises (big and small), journalism, etc. The outcome is published in the book **300 décisions pour changer la France. Rapport de la Commission pour la libération de la croissance française**. (XO Editions, 2008, ISBN 978-2-84-563-373-5 - see also [www.liberationdelacroissance.fr](http://www.liberationdelacroissance.fr))

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<sup>1</sup> Initially posted on [www.viralchange.net](http://www.viralchange.net), March 2008

300 proposals have become de facto 'decisions', as the President of France indicated that he is in a hurry and that everything needs to be implemented by October 2009. The proposals are fascinating to read, whether you agree with all of them or not. Incidentally, the 43 invitees signed off on all the 'decisions', even if some of them may not have been their real cup of tea, all in the interest of the common goal: to get France back to full employment and growth and change for good. Several lessons can be drawn from this for us as change evangelists/addicts/infectors:

1. **Timeframe.** It is possible to generate high quality change proposals in a shorter period of time. Six months for the above task is pretty good. They did not just sit around a table and chat, but they had numerous consultations with people and institutions, all documented in the fascinating final written output.
2. When the **goal is worth it, challenging, exciting**, etc. people roll up their sleeves and set aside tribal loyalties. And I often wonder how many 'projects' in our organisations have an element of excitement, discovery and 'destiny' (even with a small 'd', as I described in [The Leader with Seven Faces](#)). Many 'activities' are only geared towards changing the oil of the organisation instead of towards true transformation. Also, how many tribal discussions and turf wars jeopardise projects worth doing?
3. There is **public commitment**. The president has set public deadlines and has put a mechanism in place to make sure that they will be met. According to the report, this is a sort of 'Delivery Office' copied from Tony Blair. There is no hiding from it.

I think that this process is a model for many things, for example energy behind exciting goals and leadership (Attali is a fine, well-respected mind and author. His latest book is [Une brève histoire de l'avenir](#))

The process and the report are not change per se, just like a massive communication programme within an organisation is not change either. But this is a good, impressive start. To the French: *chapeau!*