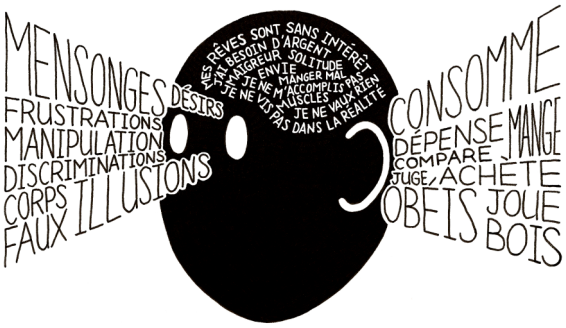
Résistance à l'Agression Publicitaire

MANIFESTO AGAINST THE ADVERTISING SYSTEM

PERVASIVE

No one living in a social environment escapes advertising. Every individual receives, on average, between hundreds and thousands commercial messages a day, depending on the studies. Estimated between 800 and 1000 billion US dollars would have been spent on advertising worldwide in 2024. But there is more: never ending intrusions using ever more deceptive strategies; billboards and digital screens in public spaces, television, radio, telephone, internet, public transport, giant tarpaulins, etc.



Numerous scientific disciplines (psychology, neurobiology, sociology…) and creative resources are used to increase advertising, which is a powerful vector for standardising thought and behaviour: it imposes its models all the more effectively as it penetrates the intimacy of families.
But not content with just entering the home and influencing children early on, advertising is gradually making its way into schools (through branded teaching materials, partnerships, drinks sales…). Sponsorship alters the spirit of sport and intrudes dangerously into culture.

DOGMATIC

Advertising spreads damaging ideologies: sexism, ethnocentrism, cult of appearance, instantness, competition, materialism, conformity, violence, thinness, and ageism. It doesn't hesitate to play on our impulses, pains and frustrations to sell us deceptive recipe of happiness only through consumption.

Advertising generates violence both among those who have the means to crush others with their purchasing power, and those who are excluded from this power, but remain convinced that buying is the only key to happiness.

Humiliated at not being able to achieve media's celebrated "lifestyles", people experience frustration. Advertising drives people to consume, with total disregard for human, ecological and social realities.

LIBERTICIDAL

Advertising messages are sent in one direction with no possible response. It monopolises expression in the public space, which it privatises through its omnipresence. It imposes itself on passers-by, who are deprived of their freedom of reception.

Advertising financially binds mass media to the demands of corporate advertisers and companies. It pushes and reduces them to pursuing ratings, instead of encouraging a critical mind and quality. It also creates a danger for information: with the threat of budget cuts, which the media depend upon, powerful economic players become untouchable and endanger the independence of the media.

The technical tools of digital communication – the internet, advertising screens, mobile phones – are the eyes and ears of the advertising system. After decades of visual aggression, advertising now feeds on our personal data to increase its manipulative twist. Organised by a handful of large multinationals, this widespread, centralised registration of the world's individuals is very difficult to protect oneself against, as it mostly escapes national regulation. Never before in the history of humanity has there been such a well-informed, global registry; it exceeds what totalitarian states had tried to impose so far.

UNFAIR

The current advertising system allows only those with money to permanently communicate on a massive scale. A big company can easily build up a positive image and sell, even if its products are of poor quality and its behaviour irresponsible. Whereas a small producer with good products and ethics may, by lack of means, go unnoticed.

Advertising is the fuel of the liberal and industrial economy, shamelessly exploiting the resources of poor countries while claiming to help them, reinforcing inequalities and reserving wealth for those who already have too much.

Advertising is massively at the service of a handful of hegemonic multinational companies that use it to stifle all competition. In 2019, in France, fewer than 500 advertisers alone accounted for two-thirds of advertising expenditure in the national media. In relation to the 3 million French companies, this means that no more than 2 companies out of 10 000 have the capacity to be widely visible to the general public.

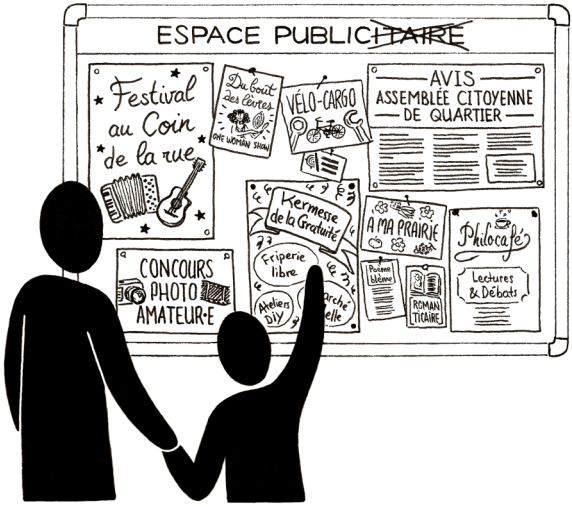
The so-called competition system it promotes produces a world where it's not really the best who wins, but the wealthiest. Pressure groups and lobbies (nuclear, car, alcohol, tobacco, etc.) spend millions on propaganda, regardless of the risks to the environment and the repercussions on physical and mental health.

COSTLY

Advertising and its services are always charged, whether in public spaces (street furniture), in the media or elsewhere.
As its cost is covered by sale price, it is paid for by consumers. Advertisers spent €34,1 billion in 2023 in France (the equivalent of €498 a year per inhabitant).

Advertising creates false needs and leads to unnecessary spending and over-indebtedness. The myth of happiness, the frustration and the continual disappointment of consumerism generated by advertising are a never-ending circle of dependency.
By encouraging superfluous and pointless consumption, advertising contributes to the depletion of resources and the creation of waste that is as polluting as it is costly. As taxpayers, we pay for its reprocessing, as well as the long-term consequences for us as citizens, on our health (obesity, anorexia, cognitive overload, etc.), society and environment. The 25,2 kilos of leaflets that go in each of our letterboxes every year, and then generally directly in our rubbish bins, illustrate well the pollution and waste generated…

GETTING OUT OF THE ADVERTISING SYSTEM



Advertising is only aimed at consumers, to the detriment of enlightened and responsible citizens. Rather than advertising, we value culture, landscape and the arts (which beautify our environment and entertain us with no commercial motive), philosophy, poetry, humour and literature, associations, politics and social initiatives, free, individual expression.

The only acceptable form of advertising is the one which is voluntarily consulted in good conscience. Its role must be neutral, non-aggressive and purely informative; it must be contained, localised, equally accessible and not imposed. Directories are a good example of egalitarian, non-aggressive advertising.

The characteristics and manufacturing conditions of advertisers' products are often analysed by consumer associations or human, social and environmental rights groups. These provide an independent critical analysis and investigate to uncover the artifices used by advertisers to influence and attract potential consumers.
Ad-free business models yet exist: in the media, with newspapers such as "Le Canard enchaîné" and Mediapart, or websites such as Wikipedia; in cities, with the landmark example of Sao Paulo; or in the metro, of which Stockholm is a prime example.
There are also viable and frugal economic systems where demand works directly with supply. For example, the "Associations de Maintien de l'Agriculture Paysanne" (Associations for the Maintenance of Small-scale Farming), where consumers and producers communicate and exchange directly.

LET'S RESIST!!

Far from neglecting individual means of resistance to advertising, however limited they may be ('No Ads' stickers on letterboxes, registration on anti-prospecting lists, Internet advertising blockers, etc.), it is important to note that collective resistance is already being organised! Playful, creative and non-violent actions, legal action, questioning of elected representatives, political thought and raising awareness in the media and the public…
Participation of any sort (moral, active, financial) is welcome. Everyone at its own pace, with its own potential.

OUR MAIN DEMANDS

- **Guaranteeing freedom of reception in public and personal spaces**
  - Public spaces and those open to the public: reduce the size of billboards (50 x 70 cm) and the devices density (1/2,000 inhabitants); ban digital advertising screens
  - Personal space: generalise the opt-in option prior to any commercial offer, telephone canvassing, physical letterboxes (list and "Yes Ads" sticker) and apply the laws practice of bulk unsolicited messages, so-called spams
  - Guarantee the informed consent of Internet users and their right to refuse advertising and advertising surveillance
- **Put an end to the omnipresence of advertising by protecting sensitive sectors**
  - Make schools and youth spaces safe to protect them from exposure to advertising
  - Protect landscapes and historic monuments from advertising
  - Guarantee the neutrality of the public service regarding the commercial sector, by prohibiting advertising funding in the public audiovisual media, schools and hospitals
  - Limit the role of sponsors and advertising in the arts, culture and sport; ban so-called "naming"
- **Guarantee public regulation of advertising content through legal channels**
  Ban advertising for goods and services that are harmful to the environment (e.g. polluting transport) and public health (e.g. alcohol, junk food)
- **Guarantee independent regulation of advertising content**
  Establish of a truly independent and public authority to control advertising
- **Guarantee the independence of general-interest media, by:**
  - Ensuring public transparency on media advertising funding
  - Linking media subsidies to maximum advertising funding thresholds
  - Requiring sufficient diversity in each media's advertising portfolio

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All the sources, figures and arguments put forward by RAP in this document are referenced online at the following address: antipub.org/sources-tracts/

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