

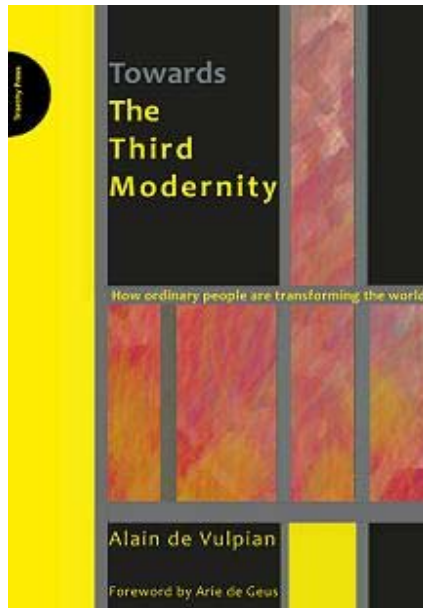
SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP  
IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

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# SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

There is a crisis in leadership and governance. In our research, we see the symptoms everywhere:

- More and more managers and administrators tell us they can see the direction their organisations ought to go in but also tell us that they can't set the necessary changes in motion; they are not, or are no longer, effective leaders.
- Others deplore the fact that they can no longer just give orders to their colleagues and collaborators but have to persuade and convince them at every step.
- We see major research centres that are struggling to come up with good innovations, while the solitary inventor in a garage is still managing fine.
- People regularly deplore the failure of the authorities to resolve social problems that lead to violence and crime.
- And many more deplore the inability of our social, economic, commercial and political leaders to come up with sustainable solutions to the problems of our planet.

A wave of modernisation is radically transforming Western society and the world as a whole. A better understanding of some of the dynamics of that modernising process can shed light on this leadership crisis and suggest what steps should be taken to resolve the problems. It can also help us to identify forms of leadership and governance that will be effective and contribute to the development of sustainable businesses in a sustainable world.

Let us look at three core aspects of this modernising process:

1. Because of changes taking place right across Western society, all forms of leadership and governance that remain hierarchical and systematically authoritarian are doomed to become increasingly ineffective.
2. The current general movement towards a more peaceful society is threatened by a number of dangerous long-term trends. Society needs therapeutic leadership and governance.
3. At the start of the 21st Century the planet faces ecological and geopolitical challenges that could prove fatal; we can only meet these challenges if we can rely on a multiplicity of leaders, leadership groups and systems of governance that are shrewd enough to take advantage of the more positive aspects of the modernisation process that is sweeping the world.

# 1/ Towards effective leadership in the West

Leadership is effective if it is able to influence the direction taken by the body or organism that it leads.

Western society today is radically different from the one of thirty or forty years ago in which most of today's leaders forged their mental models and ideas and practices of leadership. The changes that have occurred are profound:

- they concern our mental functioning, our habits and customs, and the social and technological fabric of the world we live in
- relationships between men and women, parents and children, young and old, bosses and employees, experts and ordinary people are changing
- new types of local and global organisation are emerging
- the organisation and operation of businesses is also affected.

By standing well back and observing the course of history over the past century, we can see that the process of modernisation which affected the West during the 20th Century occurred in two phases which partially overlap. They required different forms of leadership and governance.

**The First Modernity** covered the first three-quarters of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. After the convulsions of the two world wars, tens of millions of deaths and several attempts at totalitarianism, an individualistic society emerged. It was based on mass consumption and remained profoundly hierarchical. This society flourished between about 1945 and 1975. Relatively free individuals who were still profoundly influenced by the habit of hierarchy were manipulated by what remained of old ideologies (nationalism, socialism, the myth of modernity, etc.) and even more by a fascination with consumer goods.

In the First Modernity, the typical leader was a manager, a 'boss' or a fashion icon. The leader's task was simple because:

- Most people retained powerful hierarchical tendencies. They would tend to obey any order given from 'above'. In addition, they took as their models those above them in the social pyramid. People had a tendency to imitate people who were richer, more 'modern', more fashionable, closer to power or who knew more.
- Formal organisations occupied an important place in political, social and economic functioning. Such organisations had clear hierarchical ranks. Their troops tended to obey anyone with the insignia of rank – 'the top brass'.
- The individuals who characterised such societies, although relatively emancipated, were easily manipulated. They were inclined to identify with larger groupings (a social class, a trades union, churchgoers, etc.), and it was relatively easy for a leader to discipline them and encourage them to participate in the race for conspicuous consumption or get them to share the same mass ideology.

From this period the terms 'leadership' and 'governance' have inherited authoritarian and hierarchical connotations. They evoke a person (The Leader), a top-down command and control structure and a vision of the direction to be taken that emanates from those in the know.

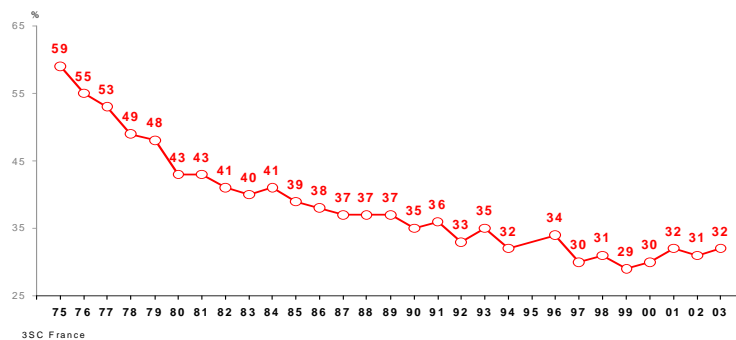
**The Second Modernity** was already visible in the 1950s: social observers witnessed a few people beginning to learn how to become aware of their own and other people’s mental processes and how to increase the amount of happiness in their lives. Progressively, year after year, they became both more autonomous and more rebellious. The Second Modernity signalled its arrival with the paroxysms of the Sixties (the Beatles, hippy communes, the convulsive summer of 1968, etc.). It became established during the 1970s and grew dominant during the following decades as people, the social fabric, technology and forms of governance all changed together.

Today, most people seem to experience and talk about their physical and emotional sense of self more acutely and more openly. But, at the same time, they continue to stand back, analyse their own and other people’s intimate feelings, and their interpersonal and social connections. They continue to develop more efficient ‘social radar’ and become more integrated individuals, able to direct their own lives in more informed ways than before.

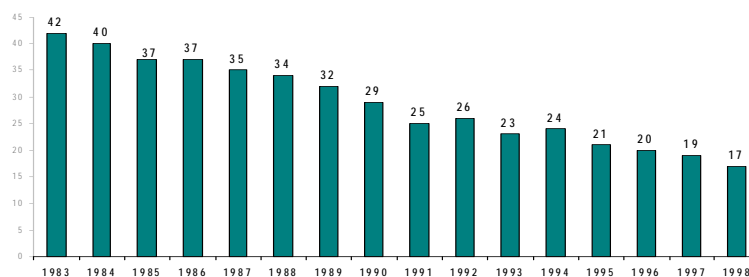
The hierarchical tendency has lost much of its grip. Confronted with an authoritarian command, obedience is no longer automatic; the reaction depends on a personal reflection that leads to a freely taken decision to obey or not. What’s more, people now take their models from anywhere, above, below, and particularly from their own level, instead of just imitating those above them.

The decline of the hierarchical tendency can be seen almost everywhere, but is more advanced in some countries. One good quantitative indicator that allows us to make preliminary comparisons is the proportion of people who agree with the statement ‘*The father should have the final say at home*’. Opinions are changing everywhere, but the decline is much more advanced in some countries than in others. For example, change is very pronounced in France and Canada:

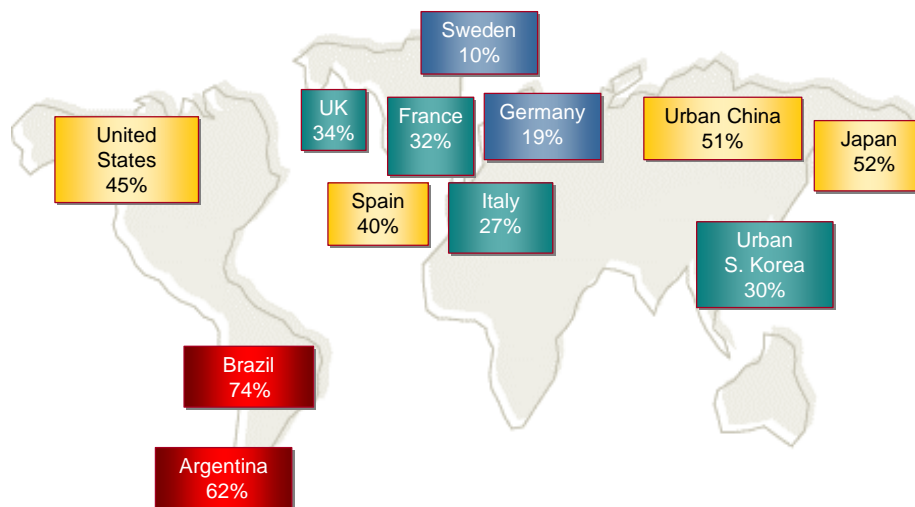
**‘The father should have the final say at home’  
(% who agree) - FRANCE**



**‘The father should have the final say at home’  
(% who agree) - CANADA**



## Around the world...



*'The father should have the final say' (% who agree - 2002)*

Throughout the first modernity formal organisations (businesses, public sector organisations, governments, political parties, trade unions, churches, etc.) had considerable influence over the way things were and the way people behaved. The situation is changing. People are less inclined to allow themselves to be trapped in formal organisations. A growing number of informal, self-regulating networks and socio-systems have emerged. New communications technology feeds this process. The way things are now depends less and less on formal organisations and institutions and more and more on informal socio-systems and civil society. A new social fabric is emerging: one that is infinitely more complex, alive, self-organised and self-regulated.

### **Leadership adjusts to the new society**

Faced with the untimely interventions of authoritarian leaders, this living fabric resists or reacts, often with results contrary to the intentions of the leader. In this context, new forms of governance and leadership emerge spontaneously. It is in families and in the new socio-economy that these new forms are most visible.

In little more than a century, the family has been profoundly transformed. We have moved from the arranged marriage to the idea of life-long marriage for love and, now, to the idea of a family (with or without marriage), linked by love, affection and the search for happiness – but only for as long as its members want to stay together and share these connections. In this new kind of biodegradable family, none of its members feels that they occupy a position superior to the others. In a survey by Cofremca Sociovision, in France in 2000 fewer than 20% of families with children had a clearly hierarchical structure. Approximately half of these were controlled by the father (and most of this group said the atmosphere was terrible, quarrels permanent and the children close to revolt). In the other half (in which the mother dominated), the atmosphere was almost as harmonious as in non-hierarchical families. In these non-hierarchical families, major decisions were reached by consensus. Often, different members of the household would temporarily occupy the position of leader depending on what skills and knowledge were needed.

During the 1980s and 1990s, a new socio-economy emerged: new networks, start-ups, associations, NGOs, consultancy groups... Field research carried out in France and the USA shows that within and around these new forms of organisation:

- everyone who participates becomes involved in their development
- added meaning takes precedence over added value
- the strategy is derived from the collective intelligence of the social body or is strongly influenced by it
- the organisation itself is a much flatter structure and the leadership rotates.

These new forms of governance and leadership appear to have four principal characteristics:

**Self-organisation and self-regulation occupy an important and often dominant position.** The organisation, group or social organism is horizontal rather than pyramidal. Most or all of its members, rather than a single, dominant individual, will be involved in deciding what direction it should take. We are no longer dealing with a government that governs but with a system of governance from which decisions emerge.

Of course, different combinations of self-organisation and of top-down organisation can be found: for example, the combination of a set of accepted formal rules with wide areas of self-organisation.

**Heterarchy rules.** Leadership passes from one person or group to another. Any participant in the system may find themselves, under certain circumstances, in a position to exercise a decisive influence over planning and future developments.

**There are more opportunities than ever to influence the direction that the organisation or organism decides to take.** Skilled members or participants can exercise this influence if they have a good, broad-based and long-range understanding of the system in which they are operating. They tend also to know how to act as catalysts, therapists, teachers and information sources. Their leadership generally remains 'low pressure'; they feel their way, intervene gently, remain attentive to feed-back from the organism and its environment, may have several irons in the fire at once, and remain ready to change course.

**The development of 'intraception' facilitates the emergence of these new forms of leadership.** 'Intraception' refers to a capacity to grasp the underlying realities of a given situation. We chose this word in the 1960s to describe a socio-cultural current that was emerging at that time. People are increasingly able to observe and interpret the weak signals of changes that are about to occur and to sense those future scenarios that could have their seeds in the present day.

The intrceptive leader combines several skills. He or she is empathetic (sensing and feeling the emotions of others) mentally proprioceptive (aware of their own mental states and those of others) and socio-perceptive (sensing the dynamics of the socio-cultural systems of which they wish to make use or which they wish to influence).

## 2/ Towards a form of leadership that nurtures society

The process of modernisation now under way in the West could lead us towards a more harmonious, more fulfilled and more sustainable society. But nothing is certain. For it to happen, perceptive leaders and leaderships must emerge at all levels and in all sectors of society.

### **Conflicting trends**

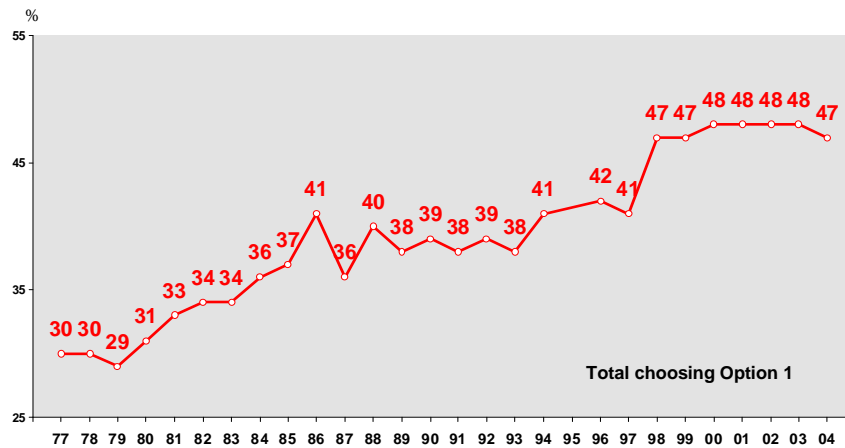
The complex and living society of the Second Modernity is in a state of flux. Underlying it are a number of contradictory trends. Some of them, currently dominant, are the harbingers of a society that is sustainable because it is pacific, harmonious and fulfilling. Others are harbingers of stress, conflict, ghettoisation and violence. If these latter processes prevail, they will seriously diminish our capacity for survival. A sustainable leadership must strengthen the former and deflect the latter.

We have identified some of these processes. If we remain attentive we will find others.

### **Some processes we should feed:**

- Over the past fifty years many Westerners have acquired good 'social radar': that is to say the ability to adjust to others in order to pursue their goals. Simultaneously, they have discovered that their own happiness depends primarily on the quality of their interpersonal and social relationships. They have understood that, in order to preserve their small daily happinesses, they must if possible avoid tensions, conflicts and stresses. Trying to create a peaceful life, they nourish the development of a peaceful society in which people tend to adapt to each other if they have things in common or, if not, try to avoid one another. This is a society in which people search for compromise rather than conflict.
- To maintain their autonomy, people have learnt that it is vital to multiply their 'social connections' within society. Effectively, a single connection makes them dependent on it, whereas several connections allow them to break with any that force them to live or behave in ways they dislike. Each person composes their own palette of social connections; no-one has exactly the same group of connections as their partner, siblings or work colleagues. These tendencies nourish the development of a complex society whose collective groupings are not only numerous but overlapping. These overlapping social structures maintain bridges between them that make them tolerant and relatively averse to conflict.
- Research in ethnology and social psychology show that the young people (and monkeys) raised in an atmosphere of emotional warmth and physical affection develop a strong need for affection and a highly efficient social radar that enables them - when they reach adulthood - to integrate harmoniously into surrounding society. It appears that, in the West, educational trends are evolving in this direction (see below).

**Would you prefer: 1. to have physical contact with your child (existing or future), to caress and hug him/her or 2. to teach him/her with words how to behave?**



(Survey conducted across the French population in 2004).

**Some pathological processes to be deflected or ‘cured’**

- Some young people are brought up with neither tenderness nor physical affection; some are ill-treated and abused. They often develop disturbed personalities and become the yeast of turbulence, violence and the return to intolerance.
- While the family as a haven of affection is one of the principal sources of happiness and has a remarkable capacity to compensate for the stress of daily life, in certain circumstances, harmonious and relatively durable couple relationships have difficulty in forming.
- One of the more damaging processes, and perhaps the most worrying, is linked to the increasing number of people in the West who encounter so much stress, so many setbacks and rejections that they despair of ever making a satisfactory life for themselves. They divorce themselves from a society that has deserted them and add to the growth of delinquency and criminality.
- Some social situations produce isolates, ghettos, fortresses of inward and outward aggression rather than open and overlapping collectives or groupings. They contradict the general movement of modernisation towards the emergence of an extremely complex and interlinked society that prefers peace to conflict. A good number of these isolates adopt countervailing and dissident values. Once they have been created, they resist attempts to dissolve them. Some of these, if they multiplied, could have an extremely disruptive and disturbing influence.

People, businesses, organisations and institutions that are in a position to exercise influence, should take care not to feed these pathologies but try to treat them, to prevent our society from falling prey to tensions and forms of paralysis that would make it incapable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

## **Some of our leaders and forms of leadership are ill-adjusted to the new opportunities**

While civil society is generally good at looking after itself, public authorities and big business are often not.

**Civil society takes care of itself.** The new style of emotionally warm, heterarchical family often manages to be happy and relatively durable. Such families are 'good' for society. Hierarchical families under masculine domination have the opposite effect, but their incidence in Western society is diminishing rapidly.

Many ordinary people are also good 'socio-therapists'. Most simply seek to pacify, to develop a happier and more peaceful life and to increase the happiness of those they like or love. Others are found joining more deliberately in networks, associations or NGOs that seek to remedy many of the world's ills.

Taken together, families, ordinary people, networks and associations exercise protective and curative forms of leadership. They constitute an informal system of governance that contributes to making our societies and our businesses more humane, more harmonious and peaceful. They are organising their own sort of social immune system to protect our society from some of its pathologies.

**Local and national governments and the public authorities** are making efforts to adjust to modernity, but they've got a long way to go. Most of their efforts concentrate on decentralisation, appeals for participation and attempts to 'listen better' to people. But these efforts are clumsy, inadequate, and often badly targeted. Attention is focused too much on 'homo oeconomicus' or on the opinions of voters and the population at large feels increasingly distant from the political class; we are all threatened by the growing disaffection with parliamentary democracy. Our societies are all waiting for leaders who will be pragmatic therapists, catalysing the emergence of a new democracy.

**Big business** sometimes works in harmony with this new society and sometimes not. Since the early 1970s, senior managers in some pioneering companies have sensed a radical change in their environment and sought out new forms of leadership. We have closely observed a number of these:

- Per Gyllenhammar, president of Volvo in Sweden, taking advantage of his workers' capacity for autonomy and self-organisation, replaced production line working with autonomous workshops: the design office set the production goals, but each team of workers was responsible for a significant part of the complete car and was free to recruit people and to organise and control itself as it saw fit.
- André Besnard, President of Royal Dutch Shell, developed strategic planning through the use of scenarios with Pierre Wack. These scenarios were constructed, not from econometric computer modelling, but from a fine observation of the dynamics driving society, the economy and geopolitics. This new strategic tool enabled Shell to react better than its competitors to the first oil crisis. It showed very early on that the company would have to behave like a living organism in a new social fabric, that western society was going to evolve towards liberalism and that ecological threats were going to assume growing importance.

- François Dalle, President of L'Oréal, drew the attention of his colleagues to the spontaneous development within the company of networks that he called 'parallel hierarchies' and the opportunities that they offered to senior management. Like Bernard Hanon, at that time Product Director at Renault, Dalle based product innovation on systematic research into future behavioural trends.

Others followed where they led. By doing so they nourished the process of modernisation and the sustainable vitality of their companies.

However, since 1990 and following the example of the USA, Europe has adopted the model of financial hypercapitalism and the ideology of the free market economy. With shareholders in the driving seat, especially in investment and pension funds, priority has been given to short term profit. Company managers have had to focus all their attention on short-term success and have ignored those slow and deep-seated transformations occurring in society. In such a context, globalisation and increased competition has led them to apply the worn-out recipes with which they were familiar: tighten the reins, crack down hard, control, merge, fire...

In a complex and autonomous society, top-down command, strict organisation and technocratic decision-making no longer produce the results that they used to achieve in the hierarchical society of mass consumption. Rather, they can produce disaffection and loss of involvement; stress; attempts to sabotage re-organisation; mergers that never come to life; brain drains and so on. In North America and Europe, the rift between big business and ordinary people is widening.

Nevertheless, changes continue: the personalities and behaviour of employees are changing, communications technology is revolutionising the way people work together, self-regulating social networks are springing up spontaneously in the interstices of organisation charts, informal change agents are increasingly influential. Even when senior managers remain focused on short-term profit, useful innovations emerge at intermediate levels. In 2008, in a climate of financial and economic crisis and general dissatisfaction with financial hypercapitalism, we may be approaching a tipping point.

### 3/ Towards a form of leadership that promotes peace and a new alliance with nature

Threats loom over the horizon. To overcome them, new leaders, leadership group and styles of leadership must emerge at all levels - from the most localised to ones on a planetary scale, from ordinary people to public authorities, including businesses, associations, think-tanks, and foundations. They will have to learn how to nourish the positive trends that can be found in the world today.

The two vital challenges to our world are ecological and geopolitical. To tackle the former, humanity has to discover the channels for a new alliance with nature and agree to make use of them. Geopolitically, now that nation states no longer have a monopoly on violence, it becomes increasingly important to pacify the planet.

#### **The geopolitical scene**

It is unrealistic to imagine that in a few decades we might find ourselves with a World Government heralding an epoch of global peace and with the authority to impose a policy of preserving the terrestrial ecosystem. Not unless we had first been obliged to cope with truly horrifying catastrophes.

So towards what sort of world configuration are we heading? After the collapse of the Soviet bloc it did not seem impossible that we were moving towards a unipolar planet dominated by the USA, the new world police, which would impose their values everywhere. Today, this scenario is no longer credible. In fact, by gambling on its absolute power, the United States has lost much of that power. Its adventures in Afghanistan and Iraq have shown the world the powerlessness of power.

And it isn't only the United States that have been put in its place. It is clear that the West is governing itself badly and is making little progress towards the birth of the forms of organisation, governance and leadership that are implied – and needed – by modernity. The West is losing its role as the model for the entire world, and its capacity to exploit the planet to its own profit is crumbling away.

At the same time, other actors are taking or recovering power and influence. Among them, two countries with very ancient cultures, China and India, have entered a stage of dazzling economic development. Their businesses compete strongly against ours, not only because of their low salaries but also in certain cases because of the excellence of their research and technology, and the quality of their management.

Thus it seems that we are destined to live on a planet that will be neither bipolar (as during the Cold War period) nor unipolar, but multipolar, or so complex that there will be no clear poles. One of the plausible scenarios, that of multipolar struggles in a world ruled by conflicting alliances and power fights, a world in which terrorism prospers and the strongest wins, would be catastrophic. Everything must be done to avoid such an outcome. A major objective is for a grouping of leaderships at different levels to encourage the emergence of a multipolar or a-polar world in which they collaborate to find and apply the creative compromises that would provide a response to the challenges of the age.

### **Leadership should rely on some positive processes**

The hoped-for emergence of a peaceful multipolar world seems to contradict the entire history of the planet. Nevertheless it may not be so improbable, if we learn to make use of certain favourable spontaneous processes that are actually at work now. Here are some of them:

- It is often said that one of the dominant characteristics of the human species is its aggressiveness. But anthropologists have discovered that the species owes its success not only to its combative instinct but also and perhaps above all to its sense of cooperation. It is this combination of instincts that enabled our ancestors to survive, for example by cooperating in hunting the mammoth and sharing the spoils without killing each other. We are now in a situation where the species' instinct for survival could mobilise its capacity for collaboration.
- For 10,000 years, since the beginnings of agriculture, cattle raising and sedentary living, humanity has, above all, emphasized territory: territories to defend, to extend, to conquer. A multipolar world that continues to be based on territories would probably be a violent one. But the existence of old national territories is attenuated by an immense movement that accentuates the role and value of (on a larger scale) the planet itself and (on a smaller scale) local communities.

Today, most people belong to several groups and networks that overlap and are contained within each other like Russian dolls. Many businesses have become not just international but global. International efforts are multiplying and increasingly involve

NGOs with a global reach. National leaders can visit each other easily, know each other personally and form networks: their face-to-face interactions and empathies contribute to global regulation. Attempts to remedy the financial crisis of 2008 are guided less by concerted dialogue between states than by an informal network of financial actors who find themselves in position to act. Social networks straddle frontiers. Around the world the Internet is helping civil societies to emerge and influence the course of things.

Wise leaders and leadership groups may find ways of making use of this movement to help in the birth of a world that will have so many poles (territorial and non territorial) and levels of regulation and self-organisation that it would be effectively a-polar.

- There is an opportunity to call upon ordinary people and their collective intelligence. For example for several decades, the threat to the environment has been brandished by extremist political parties and pressure groups without really changing the course of events. But recently, the collective intelligence of people in Europe, China, the USA and Russia has been mobilised by the need to act. The media, public authorities and businesses have seen how the wind is blowing and are trimming their sails accordingly<sup>1</sup>.

Similarly, those wishing to push businesses and public authorities to act differently will perhaps gain in effectiveness by acting in an indirect manner, by encouraging greater awareness amongst ordinary people.

- The modernising process was, at first, driven by the West, but it now tends to involve societies around the world, which are thus engaged in a de facto collaboration. This tendency can without doubt be made accelerated by wise leadership.

Today, many countries do not want to imitate the West. They want to modernise, but in their own way, according to their own cultures. Socio-cultural observations carried out over the past 10 years in China, South Korea, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran and elsewhere throw light on the presence in these countries of socio-cultural currents like those that we found in Europe and North America during the 1960s. But these currents emanate from different linkages and have their own particular accents. The Chinese middle classes, for example, who voraciously embrace modern life, have not widely adopted the European values of emancipation and personal autonomy. Nevertheless, the use they make of the products (cars, household comforts, holidays etc.), techniques and systems of communication and interaction that we have invented or commercialised, is transforming them at a deep level. The repeated use of these products and systems encourages their own search for their own forms of personal liberty, sexual freedom and free social interactions. The result is a multiplication and intensification of networks and socio-systems. These add weight and substance to a civil society that is earning its independence from the state or the Communist party. The Chinese, in their own ways,

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<sup>1</sup> For the effective exercise of this type of leadership, we must understand that our societies are less and less dominated by shifts in what used to be called public opinion, and more and more by waves of collective intelligence. 'Public opinion' was shaped by relatively stable intermediary institutions such as political parties, trade unions, established associations, and by membership of stable groups like social classes. Public opinion tended to structure itself into camps with clearly marked frontiers. Today opinions are more fluctuating; they are the fruit of personal deliberations that are in a permanent state of re-adjustment, influenced by messages coming from every direction, in particular through non-hierarchical networks, where information and opinion travel faster and change can occur overnight.

are thus becoming more individualist, and their social fabric is becoming more complex and less hierarchical.

It is also likely that new socio-cultural currents will be born of the meeting between modernity and the determination of these countries to rediscover the roots of their own cultures. These currents will return to enrich us in our turn.

- Europe is opening the way towards a new form of political governance. If it continues to advance in this direction, it could serve as a model. Once the archetype of bellicose and authoritarian national governance, Europe is now the spearhead of a slow transition towards the invention of a post-national governance that is both pacific and participative. It has not installed a sovereign Euro-State, but is cautiously feeling its way towards the birth of a new type of entity. This entity is not ruled by a government but has a system of governance that orients it; member states participate, and to a certain extent regions, unions, associations and companies do so too. If this form of governance succeeds in incorporating civil society and the collective intelligence of the peoples of Europe, the continent could give birth to a third, relatively harmonious modernity, and would then offer a model for other continents and peoples.
- The modernising process carries with it the development of a very emotional approach to spirituality and a resurgence of religiosity. This resurgence has encouraged the proliferation of highly personalised neo-spiritual practices, emphasising the syncretic and non-conflictual. However, under certain conditions it has also resulted in followers of the three great monotheistic religions searching for strong collective emotions and adopting combative fundamentalist attitudes that threaten the peace of the planet.

Jewish and Christian fundamentalism influence power in the United States. The American 'crusade' against terrorism and 'the axis of evil' has nourished the development of an aggressive Islamism around the world rather than reducing its influence.

The specifically European modernising process favours the resurgence of a gentle and tolerant neo-spirituality, encouraging Europe to pacify religious fundamentalism. Europe should be well placed, if it proves sufficiently adroit, to contribute to a modernisation of the way Islam is presented. Unfortunately over the past two decades it has tended to fan the flames by leading young Germans, English, French and other second generation immigrants to despair of ever being accepted, pushing them thus towards intolerant versions of Islamism.

In spite of this setback, Europe remains one place where a policy of civilisation may be conceived and tried out, aiming at the blossoming of the Muslim way in a modern context and, in particular, smoothing the entry into civil life of young people descended from immigrants, preparing a fruitful coexistence of Westerners with populations from Arab and other Muslim cultures.

- The search for confluences and bridges could make a marriage of civilisations possible. It might initially involve the West, China and India. The civilisations of China and India are as old as that of the pharaohs and they are still alive and well. They interest and attract the West. In the West, we should be aware that we cannot continue to impose our own values and paradigms on the world, and that the products, operational models, scientific discoveries and technical progress that will mark the future will no longer be invented only in the West.

It appears to be particularly important for us to deepen our understanding of the modernising process that is transforming China and India, so that we can seize opportunities for mutual understanding as they occur and contribute to the construction of a global, pacific civilisation.

Some signs indicate, for example, that a fortunate cultural confluence could be under way that will bring together China and Europe. Over the past fifty years Europe has broken with one of the ancient constants of its culture: its predatory and combative tendencies are progressively fading in favour of a culture of harmony and the search for a new alliance between man and nature. An analogous change, which augurs well for the future, seems to be beginning in China. Its civil society and its public authorities are increasingly aware of the gravity of the ecological situation in their country. There is a growing determination to put an end to the nature destruction that characterised the astonishing progress of the Chinese economy during recent decades. This socio-cultural confluence, if it is confirmed, could become one of the bases for collaborative understanding between our two continents. This is merely an example; there are no doubt many others that new leaders and leadership groups will need to search out and cultivate.

If the modern and wiser governance and leadership that we have outlined manage to emerge at all levels and in all sectors of our societies, this will steer us towards a Third Modernity, both pacific and harmonious. The multiplicity of these new leaders and leadership groups will be a mark of this Third Modernity. Failing that, our world will know turbulence and conflict on a scale that could open the way to catastrophic scenarios.

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This is a revised version of a paper prepared by the authors for the Society for Organisational Learning's Stockholm forum on sustainable leadership.

**Irène Dupoux-Couturier** is a historian and a member of the team that founded Sol (Society for Organisational Learning) France in 1998. In 1973 she co-founded CEFRI (Centre de Formation aux Réalités Internationales) which she then directed for 30 years, working for government bodies and international businesses (such as Royal Dutch Shell and Honeywell Bull) around the world.

**Alain de Vulpian** is a social anthropologist of modernity. After initial observation and analysis of changes in France and Sweden (which he then considered one of the principal laboratories of modernity), in 1954 he took the initiative with a few colleagues of creating Cofremca, a research and action team intent on understanding socio-cultural change and the various ways in which businesses and public authorities could make use of it. At the head of this team for some fifty years, he has collaborated as research strategist in the development of many international companies.

The methods of socio-cultural analysis that he perfected have inspired numerous observatories of societal change in Europe and America. The observations derived from this network constitute one of the bases for this article.

In his book *Towards the Third Modernity, how ordinary people are transforming the world* (Triarchy Press, 2008) Alain de Vulpian explores in depth the process of modernisation of the western world outlined in this paper. In the book, he shows how transformations in the 'core personality' of Westerners, in their experience of life, in the texture of civil society, in systems of communication and modes of governance and leadership, all interact, are mutually reinforcing, and become systemic.