



Smoothing the way for the sociocultural revolution in major long-established companies.

The role of networks and circles of influence operating within the society of ordinary people.

For several years now Le Club des Vigilants and Sol France have carried out field researches and reflections on the desirable and probable emergence of a new socio-economy. This work brought the two networks into close collaboration, and led them to organize a colloquium on the subject at the Paris Chamber of Commerce last April. Working groups were set up. In the monograph below Alain de Vulpian resumes the position we have currently reached in our reflections, and considers different paths of development that could follow. We would be interested to hear your opinions .

The field research and reflections undertaken since 2007 by the Club des Vigilants and SoL, the discussions at the colloquium of 14 April and their sequel, have brought us to a better understanding of the enormously toxic effects of the hyper-financial short-termist version of capitalism that came to dominate the West over the last two decades, resulting in a ruinous financial and economic crisis. There is an urgent need to pave the way for the emergence of a new and more harmonious socio-economy.

The networks and circles of influence arising from within the society of ordinary people can be effective here. Three roads for intervention can be perceived :

- exert pressure on governments around the world to establish new rules governing economic and financial interactions on a world-wide basis, disciplining financial activities and putting them once more at the service the global economy,
- accelerating the emergence of a new form of governance for economic and social development that would be at once local and global and adapted to the complexities of the modern world, that would avoid the more serious losses, disequilibria and tensions,
- assisting long-established industries, at once the vehicles and the victims of short-termist financial capitalism, to lead and manage their own socio-cultural revolutions.

We have chosen to put our emphasis on this last point, because changing the way these large companies live appears to us to be both urgent, within our grasp, and liable to have tangible effects within only a few years. We shall see that we do indeed have levers through which to act.

In this note we shall start by summarising the principle toxic effects of hyper-financial and short-termist capitalism (1). Next we shall see how new enterprises and organisations develop spontaneously, outlining more harmonious ways of managing relations between the economy and the society of ordinary people, showing us, in fact, the road to follow (2). Following from this, we shall see that major companies with widespread financial linkages are now in positions from which they can implement their own sociocultural revolutions, following and building on the examples of the front-runners previously described (3). Finally, we shall outline a reflection on what our organisations are doing and could do to aid large companies to carry through their own sociocultural revolutions (4).

(1) A toxic form of capitalism

In the West, governments, short term oriented and animated by a “laisser-faire” ideology have largely left the world of finance free to act in the pursuit of its own goal, financial gain. The result has been to allow financial actors to develop ways and means of enriching themselves at the expense of the general economy, the tail wagging the dog, in fact, so that in many companies financial profit over-rules all other considerations.

Companies blinded by the fascination of short-term financial profits

Financial actors have encouraged numerous long-established large companies to behave like machines for making as much money as possible as quickly as possible for their shareholders, rather than behaving like living organisms in search of healthy and sustainable development. The dream of profit has led them to concentrate on the very short term and thus to lose their capacity of anticipation. It has pushed them to tighten every screw through the implementation of rational organisational principles, ignoring the realities of human and social life experience and treating their employees like rationalised individuals, *homo economicus*, pawns, resulting in the production of discomfort and disillusion, and loss of efficiency. In the process, a large number of these companies have also put increasing pressure on their subcontractors, leading them in turn to exert pressure on their personnel.

Focused on maximum profit in the short term, such companies have considered employment to be another adjustable variable, delocalisable at will and have decreased their investments for the future.

They have often taken the challenge of ecological adaptation as an opportunity for sound-bite communications that express what they consider people want to hear, not the reality of given situations.

In many large companies, concentration on finance and business plans has encouraged a sort of "virtuous inertia" that deadens sensitivity to human experience and emerging social change. The sufferings and loss of meaning felt by the personnel passes unnoticed. The new demands of ordinary people, which requires companies, associations and public bodies to take care of the people, have been neglected. The same applies to consumers dreaming of products and services that could really improve their living conditions. Such companies have often used indicators that at first glance appear reasonable, but which in practice have led to social developments that run counter to the standards so proudly waved for the valorisation of human resources, priority to the consumer, the meaningful nature of the company...

The maximum profitability model has in many cases become so dominant that it has often induced companies that are not in fact subject to financial pressures to mimic them and their search for profit as a priority...

Crippled vitality

The majority of large, long-established companies have been both the victims and the vehicles of the short-term financial outlook. Such companies have perhaps made comfortable financial returns, enriched their shareholders and extended their fields of activity and influence, but they

have also lost or severely damaged their vitality, their powers of forecast and anticipation and, finally, their life expectancy.

Today, as we emerge from the crisis, many large organizations perceive that they have not prepared the products and services that will suit the new markets of the next few years, nor the methods of production that will meet the growing demands of ecological awareness. Sections of their employees and their managers, increasingly stressed and increasingly less concerned, grow away from the senior management and its goals, and tend to save their capacities for reaction, cooperation and initiative for activities outside the company, thereby reducing its resilience and survival chances. More or less dissident networks abound, often damaging company control of its own internal functioning. By imposing organisation charts and function procedures that are supposedly rational, senior management has frequently provoked the growth in the crevices of informal social structures that produce effects contrary to what was intended. The social capital, popular confidence, optimism, have by this means been widely damaged.

A suffering society

Unlike the thirty years of glorious growth after world war two, the last quarter century, hyper-financial and short-termist, has profoundly damaged the economy, the cultural cohesion and social health of the leading industrial countries.

Wealth has been diverted from the budgets of the middle and working classes, from social budgets and from investment for the future, to the benefit of the financial and speculative sector. The states, that is to say the citizens, have had to fill in the immense holes left by the financial crisis. The result is increasing tensions and a weakening of the potential energy constituted by optimism and dreams for the future. The economy, steered neither by ambitions for company development nor by government strategies, but by the opportunistic interests of finance, has run into a morass of relative economic stagnation and high unemployment, in particular among the young.

Work has lost its value : it is associated in the popular imagination with words such as stress, suffering, insecurity, burn-out, harassment, suicide, etc. Companies not only fail to contribute sufficiently to the treatment of social pathologies and suffering, but participate unconsciously in the aggravation of some of these factors. Furthermore they hesitate to commit themselves to safeguarding the planetary ecosystem.

The crisis which is upon us is not only economic and financial: it is a serious crisis for society at large. The major source of our troubles is the crevasse that has opened between a society of living people in the full flood of evolution on the one hand, and on the other, a society of long-established power bases that resist change. Major companies, blind to the current flow of evolutions because focused solely on a rigid, rational form of organisation in the service of finance and short term gain, are among the principal actors in this drama.

Our western societies, enfeebled and disturbed, do not succeed in steering their way through the complexities of a world suddenly become a global village. They are losing both economic weight, and their cultural and civilising influence.

It is primordial and urgent to assist in the emergence of a new and more harmonious socio-economy. This ineluctably requires a sociocultural revolution in the majority of large, long-established companies whose situation we have just broadly outlined.

(2) A new socio-economy is emerging spontaneously

During the last two decades, numerous companies have developed using a completely different model.

Emergent companies.

Emergent companies, groping and hesitant, have come into being and self organised their own existence. They are in the process of sketching out what could become another, an alternative socio-economy in phase with the society of ordinary people. They were born during the past two or three decades, exploring new technologies, new markets and new activities. The customs and rules of the dominant economic models have neither aided their birth nor helped their development. Many start ups have been strangled by finance. Other have survived. Some, that have remained small, only achieve their full capacity by networking. Others have met with prodigious growth and success.

The founders, the managers and the personnel of these companies are bathed in the rivers of modernity. They attach themselves spontaneously to the new expectations and new mentalities of people and often succeed in bringing them real improvements in their lives. They are attentive to the demands of the ecology. Their employees often find a meaning in their work which encourages them to get involved and collaborate with their colleagues to the hilt. They tend to adjust flexibly to the evolutions of society.

The increasing weight of a social economy

For the past twenty years social entrepreneurs have been multiplying and creating associations and NGOs which, at local, national or world level, try to do good to people and to society, to relieve certain forms of suffering, to change the course of certain pathological processes. Their intervention is therapeutic.

Numerous new enterprises call themselves "social businesses", companies that aim to develop themselves durably and to increase their vitality, but which are less focused on profit than on the social utility of their action.

An even newer phenomenon is the cooperation that develops between different organisations that together aim to produce increased vitality and social improvements. In this category are companies, associations, foundations, public bodies, local authorities. They come together in cooperatives with defined objectives for intervention.

For example, under the impulse of Clinton's Climate Initiative, the biggest towns in the world have set up their own cooperative network to reduce, all together, their carbon emissions, their use of fossil energies and their pollutions. Together they learn lessons from the progress and the set-backs of each of them. The biggest ports on the planet have imitated them. Major

world-wide companies with shared affinities have allied themselves in pursuit of the same objectives.

Similarly, companies work together to discover management methods that are both humane and effective. Others aim to improve their relations with their subcontractors. Some form cooperative networks with local authorities and associations to find the means to reduce unemployment in their catchment area, or to increase youth employment or reduce violence.

Companies, foundations and NGOs have come together to encourage the development of a finance that will serve the economy and society. In France, the Transilien (SNCF) has got in touch with local authorities, farmers and market gardeners to ensure that travellers can buy fresh fruit and vegetables produced in the neighbourhood in a number of stations in the Ile de France, without going out of their way or losing time.

These different types of emergent enterprise are without a doubt part of the hesitant groping towards of History towards a new socio-economy that will be sustainably viable.

But some long-established companies were not blinded

During the 70s and 80s, a good number of long-established companies, often under the influence of a visionary director, developed a good sensitivity to the socio-human side. This sensitivity included alertness to the experiences and relationships of the employees, intuitions about new market expectations and opportune innovations, presentiments of what would have future significance for the company. These remained relatively lively and reactive.

Later, during the 90s and the first decade of the new century, the increasing power of finance together with the inevitable changes in senior management effaced much of this progress, except among a very small number of companies, which have not only maintained but have since enriched their awareness in these areas and their overall competence.

These few companies are particularly interesting cases because they show the paths that could be followed by others.

They have succeeded in protecting themselves more or less effectively against the perverse influences of financial obsession with the short term. To achieve this some have developed their cultural cohesion and upheld a *de facto* complicity between employees and managers, thus increasing their ability to resist external influences. Others have adroitly organized their equity structures and their relations with their shareholders. Some have invented anti-takeover measures.

In these various ways they have all maintained or developed a human and anticipatory culture (a precious intangible capital that has enabled them to maintain contact with the changing socio-human reality), so that they are better prepared to confront the uncertainties and complexities of the next decade.

During the last twenty or thirty years, their evolution has taken the form of a hesitant systemic process rather than a planned action. They have confirmed, not only in their communication but through their actions and their structures, that anticipation and the socio-human dimension are pre-eminent. They have sketched the outline of a strategy for the development of sustainable vitality, and they do not hide it...

Proceeding by trials, errors and corrections, these companies have given managers and employees the opportunity to develop their human sensitivity and their empathy. They have enabled them to learn to develop a feeling for the evolutionary tendencies of living systems, probable futures, significant scenarios. In these enterprises, life has established and continues to establish, through spontaneous auto-adjustments, a wide variety of useful practices.

They have developed a new culture, radically different from that of the majority of their peers. The best of these companies act like living organisms operating within a complex ecosystem on which they depend and which depends on them, in the knowledge that all its elements interact. They make use of their collective intelligence and are self-regulating in the maintenance of the reactivity, vitality and resilience of the whole. They sense the coming evolutionary trends in the system and use this knowledge. They sense the expectations and discomforts of their employees, whom they treat as living persons rather than pawns. They feel out and explore possible futures for their activities. They refuse easy-use gadgets and invent radically new products and services which really do improve the lives of those who use them. In the fields in which they operate and in their natural activities they try to contribute to the well-being and harmony of society and the biosphere, to find solutions for what is not going right.

(3) The sociocultural revolution in major long-established companies.

There is a radical difference in culture, sociology, organisation and daily life between the long-established major companies intoxicated by finance and those (new or old) that we have just described. If they are to be properly effective and at ease in the world of today and contribute to the development of a new and more harmonious socio-economy, the former will have to find out how to align themselves on the latter. They must be able to carry out rapidly a real sociocultural revolution which would convert them into living, reactive enterprises with a real grip on a complex and changing world, rather than museum pieces, locked into the carcasses of out-worn structures, procedures and control, splendid yet remote, like a 19th century belle in her corsets, incapable of further movement.

Nature of such a revolution.

Very diagrammatically, this would take place in six dimensions of transformation :

- from the priority of finance to the priority of the sustainable development of the company's vitality,
- from a concentration on short term results to piloting through vision and awareness of circumstances (awareness in a single sweep of present circumstances and those on the horizon at 5/20 years),
- from emphasis on command and planning to emphasis on piloting and feeling one's way,
- from profit for the shareholder to care for the companies' ecosystem,
- from rational analysis to sensitivity to living systems and processes (socioperception),
- from solitary action centred on competitive survival to action in cooperation with partners.

This implies transformation :

- of the management and the lifestyle of the companies,

- of the company strategy, no longer guided by blind financial avidity but by the constant search for healthy development of vitality,
- of the relationship with the social ecosystem,
- of the relationship to the planet's ecosystem.

We are talking of revolution because this is a question of a radical transformation. But it is an operation that can be neither abrupt nor minutely planned. The sociocultural revolution of a business is rather a movement animated by a strong and constant determination, but open to all sorts of gropings and rectifications. It is also, once begun, a living process that feeds and enriches itself, catalysed by its own reactions.

The sociocultural revolution can make use of a number of levers

Although sociologists have taught us that you cannot change a culture by decree, we do not think it impossible to carry out serious sociocultural changes quite quickly. The fact is that the third modernity, today's world, has in fact quietly penetrated a large part of the most ponderous and best-established companies, although neither their daily life nor their strategies nor the essential thrust of their management have yet been radically changed; and this penetration has begun, quietly, to transform them. We have five levers to hand.

1° Growing awareness of senior managers. Under the influence of mental impregnation by modern society and the shock of the current crisis, numerous senior managers have come to realise over the past two years that the reform of their enterprises has now become a vital necessity: prolongation of the usual patterns has for many become a trajectory towards disappearance. Senior management gurus such as Klaus Schwab (Davos) or Maurice Lévy (Publicis) have stressed the need for radical mutations. Young graduates from the best business schools in the US have made their own version of the Hippocratic oath ("First, do no harm..."), to give priority in their professional responsibilities to the welfare of society rather than company profit.

2° Expectations of employees. Many employees would rather see their senior managers thinking less in terms of finance and shareholders and more in terms of professional activities, innovations, and new developments. They give a favourable reception to such changes in orientation and are ready to participate.

3° Proliferation of agents of change. Like anyone else, employees of large companies today are tending to become increasingly socioperceptive.

By *socioperception* I mean a sort of instinctual clairvoyance, probably characteristic of the human species, but which had been repressed during other stages of our social development and which started to develop once more in modern societies from about the middle of last century.

This form of perception appears to be supported by the slow but continuous transformation of a number of personality traits in a growing proportion of our contemporaries, signalled by observatories of sociocultural change in Europe and North America.

Ordinary people are becoming less blinkered by the collective affirmation of the primacy of cold reason and clarity of thought, and have developed a more intimate connection with their bodies, their sensations and their emotions. They have developed their capacity for empathising. More in contact with their own interiority and that of others, those who are most advanced along this road have a more highly developed feeling or sense of the interactions they have with other people and that others have with them. To a certain degree they have a

premonition of the complexities, potentials and tendencies in the evolution of the social systems in which they swim, which improves their capacities for influencing changes around them and piloting their lives in a wiser manner.

As one generation replaces another, the socioperceptives have naturally increased in number in business as elsewhere. In companies whose culture makes them globally blind to the human and social dimension of business, many employees or managers exercise a nascent socioperception only in their private life. But they are, without a doubt, the vehicles for a potential human and social sensitivity intimately bound up with the capacities for anticipation and steering that could be exploited by their companies if they should decide to awaken. Furthermore, field research recently carried out by SoL show that already in many companies a good many socioperceptives already step outside the bounds of reigning mental models and become in fact humanist and pragmatic agents for change, seeking simultaneously fulfilment and efficiency. This makes the company or the sector or department in which they work more sensitive to its own proper functioning and its relations with this or that aspect of the surrounding ecosystem. Their intervention can be crucial because they introduce living energies into systems frozen by the impervious nature of bureaucracy and the rigidities of control.

Here and there informal networks of agents of change develop spontaneously in the crevices of organization charts and develop considerable influence. Some head offices and senior managements have not perceived this emergence; others have begun to make deliberate use of this natural source of growth. By making a company progressively more socioperceptive, it can be an essential tool for necessary mutation.

4° Multiplication of humanist consultants. In Europe as in North America, many socioperceptive, humanist and pragmatic managers and specialists, finding no satisfactory position in various industrial giants have set up on their own. They have launched their own liberal activities or started small companies. Some have become established as independent consultants thus turning into professional agents of change within large client companies. Each by himself is of small influence, but there are many of them, and the outcome of this fresh input can be decisive.

5° A self-sustaining process. For the change process to get into gear, it is necessary for sensitivity to emerging social systems to awaken or re-awaken, leading to a process of adjustment. This awakening sometimes occurs spontaneously at one point or another in the company without anyone being aware of it for the moment. However, in other cases it is the decision and initiative of a senior or middle manager that triggers the process. In spite of inertial resistances, which will last a long time, it appears that beyond a certain threshold the process of continuous adjustment to society as it changes can no longer be halted (auto-catalysis).

(4) Facilitating the socio-cultural revolution in businesses.

The natural interplay of social processes will very probably continue to select positively for companies that find out how to adapt to a society in constant transformation, and negatively for the rest. But the process can be slow, painful and produce considerable losses.

The networks, circles of influence and think tanks such as SoL, the Club des Vigilants and many others, all issuing from civil society, can try to facilitate and accelerate this process. A wide diversity of intervention paths lies open to them.

A. Assisting senior management awareness.

The intuition that a cultural mutation is of vital importance for their company, is frequently found among senior managers. This intuition can be enriched and their intention to take action strengthened by an abundant flow of information and discussions. A shared vocabulary, words for describing different aspects of the mutation, needs to be developed and implanted. A profusion of examples of ways of advancing and modes of effective organisation can stimulate imaginations and action plans.

The belief that it is enough for the CEO to decide for reality to change is difficult to eradicate. A good many managers still believe that it is enough to take the decision to prioritise the abolition of stress for the objective to enter the bloodstream of the company. Can this illusion be dissipated by systematically instructing managers on the role of agents of change within the company, and on the use they can make of them to produce effective change in living realities?

A competition can be organised between companies, focused not on financial performance but on vitality performance. The idea of arousing a spirit of emulation between companies by creating a prize or a distinction has been entertained on several occasions.

In the Club des Vigilants, the Bascule working group (reflection and enquiry among managers) has assisted the increase in understanding of the perverse effects of short term concentration on financial aspects and the spontaneous character of the switch to another form of socio-economy. A report has been published and a number of elements from it have found their way into blogs.

SoL has published a special issue of its "Cahier" (N°11/12), covering the results of its research "Ten years of learning how to learn", which puts the accent on the emergence of a new business socioculture.

The confluence of the two streams of thought led to a collaboration resulting in the colloquium of 14 April at the Paris Chamber of Commerce, and then to the start of a steering group for the continuation of actions assisting the emergence of a new socio-economy.

Further consideration of what could be a communication and an intervention aimed at encouraging the commitment of managers to a project for the transformation of their companies' cultures is desirable.

B. Protecting business from short-term financial pressures.

One of the Clinton foundations has taken the initiative of bringing together companies, banks, foundations, philanthropists etc. to found a responsible financial environment. Some fifteen European companies have got together to found their own investment fund. Investment funds with social and/or long-term objectives are being created. Do these initiatives have shred connections between them ?

The Club des Vigilants is creating a reflection group, mainly bringing together financiers centred on a new approach to finance for a new model of growth.

A working group could push the study of ways and means in which a company could protect itself against a toxic financial influence or come to an agreement with a financial source oriented towards the long term. It would produce a sort of manual of financial self-defence.

C. Supporting humanist and pragmatic agents of change.

Agents of change, employees of a company or individual consultants, often find themselves alone and facing strong resistance. They need reinforcement, discussions with colleagues about the problems they encounter, the means to make progress in their skills.

SoL is a space where agents of change, humanistic and pragmatic socioperceptives who operate as company managers or directors, consultants, or researchers, meet, network, and stimulate dialogue.

SoL is there as an area for learning and improvement, particularly centred on systemic sensitivity and thought, which are the alternatives to the command and control way of doing things. SoL encourages collective intelligence, shared vision, anticipation, and personal development. It is fully in phase with the trend towards emergence of a more harmonious socio-economy.

SoL organises inter-company seminars on the fundamentals of learning organisation (FOA) several times a year.

Recently SoL has organised meetings, seminars and discussion days for agents of change (open to non-members of the association), on subjects such as dialogue, leadership, sustainable development, collaborative networks within companies, soft capital, the construction of scenarios of the future, etc.

In general terms, the networking between agents of change that operates through SoL could be amplified.

While members of the Club des Vigilants may be agents of change, they focus on strengthening their political, geopolitical, economic and societal awareness through breakfasts and reflection groups (accumulation of threats, Middle East, new socio-economy, future of American policies, etc.).

Société Rêvée has formed a watch group "Weak signals and major trends" which periodically brings together agents of change who locate and analyse together those social or societal events that can be signals of continuities, emergences, fluctuations or bifurcations of the evolutionary currents in our societies. For these researchers this is an exercise that maintains and refines capacity to sense emerging systems, and which keeps them in contact with some of the major sociocultural evolutions that are under way. Their periodic bulletin is distributed with the intention of directing direct readers' attention to the relations between current events and the shaping trends in social and societal evolution, and sharpening their socioperceptive capacities.

Various associations organise experiences and seminars for the improvement of socioperceptive skills, for example training in Rogerian empathy or the practice of coaching.

How can such initiatives be given greater scope and visibility?

D. Direct assistance for companies.

Companies may need assistance, quite apart from their agents of change or other internal resources. They may need four types of assistance:

- (1) participants who know how to catalyse changes within the company, in life, in modes of operation, in ways of being, in leadership,
- (2) consultants on the global management of their sociocultural revolution,
- (3) sociologists to help them develop awareness of the lived reality of their internal and external functioning, which is often very different from what they imagine,
- (4) visionaries who can bring them a fine perception of current major trends, and scenarios of the future that they should take into account in the development of their strategy for the healthy and sustainable development of their company's vitality.

Today the majority of heavyweight consulting firms do not have these skills. Can existing networks or new initiatives supply them? It is probable that new teams are in the process of forming, either as businesses or as associations.

On point (1), one of the reasons for the existence of SoL is the transformation of behaviours and relationships in management and in the lives of companies and other bodies so as to infuse them with greater vitality. Sol offers the services of a network of agents of change able to carry out interventions in business. Senior managements and middle managers of international companies have recently turned to SoL France for this purpose. This probably signals the existence of a need that is not currently finding its proper response. Examples are the development of collective participation and intelligence, the development of more advanced perceptions and understanding of the world among senior managers, reaching a new conception of the life and business of the company and organizing its implementation.

On point (2), there are consultants specialising in the conduct of change. Do any of them have experience of a global sociocultural change? Could they be brought together to draw conclusions from their experiences? Could SoL of the Club des Vigilants or other bodies seek out such people and put them in contact? What relationships would they develop with business?

On point (3), the majority of specialists in the sociology of organisations have experience of university research rather than managerial research. Sociologists who study, not the organisation itself, but the systems of interaction between the company and its environment are few and rare. Sol or the Vigilants could consider contacting various sociologists; sending this monograph to a few of them might awaken vocations for intervention.

Je change le début de ce paragraphe qui devient : Le point (4) concerne les visions d'avenir qui vont nourrir la stratégie de développement de l'entreprise, l'évolution éventuelle de la conception de son métier et de ses méthodes de production ainsi que sa politique d'innovation produits, services et systèmes. Des entreprises, qui ont été centrées pendant vingt ans sur le très court terme, n'ont plus, si tant est qu'elles les aient jamais eues, les collaborateurs ni les services internes pour ce faire. Elles ont intérêt à appliquer l'intelligence collective de leurs personnels dans la production de ces visions et à se brancher simultanément sur des think tanks qui pressentent les avènements vraisemblables à 5/15 ans de la planète et de la société. A number of researchers, analysts and consultants reflect on trends, tendencies and scenarios of the future.

SoL has organised two information sessions on scenarios of the future. Société Rêvée distributes a regular bulletin on "Weak signals and major trends" to a small circle of readers. It seems to me that there is a real need that is not meeting with a response: this is the need for improvements in perception of the dynamics underlying our companies and the world in which they operate, anticipation of their probable futures and the connection of these perceptions to the strategic planning of the companies concerned.

E. Carrying out inter-company research on key points in the sociocultural revolution among companies.

We lack research oriented towards actions that could help companies manage their evolution better. Some examples :

° The increase in the number of socioperceptives among company employees and senior management, and the organised development of socioperceptive capacity seem essential elements in the management of a company's sociocultural revolution. It would be desirable for research to be encouraged (anthropological, sociological and neuro-biological) into socioperception, the human capacity to sense potential futures in living systems. This should improve our ability to answer such questions as: How can we locate and evaluate the different types of socioperceptives? How can we help human development of the socioperceptive capacity? What bodies should be created in a company to improve its socioperception and its living adjustment to its environment? What are the principal resistances to developing the exercise of socioperception within a company? etc.

° Ignorance of the problems surrounding the role and activities of the company within its social ecosystem in the Europe of 2010 is considerable. Where is the company causing harm, to whom, and in what manner? Where could it do good, and to whom and how? An exploration of the way the problem arises for a few companies would be of help to many.

° Continuous research within a variety of companies on the emergence, progress or flowering of their own sociocultural changes could produce lessons of great value, both for the companies concerned and for others.

In this perspective, field researches carried out by our networks with whatever means were available have been useful but insufficient.

The Club des Vigilants ran an enquiry among senior managers on hyper-financial capitalism, which has thrown light on the switch towards a new socio-economy.

Sol has carried out two programmes of research and action. One concerned innovation in informal networks. The second, which has just ended, focused on observation of transformations that have occurred in big companies over the past ten years. It brought to light the role as catalysts of change played by socioperceptive, humanistic and pragmatic employees, and contributed to the enrichment of previous analyses. The results of this research have just been published in the Cahiers de SoL, and widely distributed in a number of companies.

It is probably part of SoL's vocation to carry out such research, but if they are to be taken further the work of young researchers in the field will have to be funded. Where will such financing be found?

The idea has been put forward that a number of companies sharing the same ethical sensitivities should come together to participate and contribute to the financing of a research programme run by the Club or by Sol.

F. Catalysing cooperative intervention groups.

Cooperative interventions self-organise to promote life enhancement, relieve social suffering or turn away pathological processes. These are spontaneous emergences which probably facilitate the opening of companies to healthy interactions with their social ecosystems and the emergence of sociocultural change. Their cohesion is often facilitated by the input of a catalyst who takes the initiative, sells the idea and may even oversee the development and effective functioning of the cooperative group and monitor the results of the action. Associations, consultants, foundations and former senior managers can well be suited to this role.

A sub-group of consultants and researchers at SoL are preparing propositions for actions to assist companies, organisations and local authorities to cooperate in putting together socially therapeutic or life enhancing actions.

G. Stimulating and feeding public conversation.

The countries of the West bask sadly in the contemplation of their past glories or their present sorrows and ruminate on a future coloured by catastrophe, whereas the majority of emerging countries invest in positive dreams for their futures and act to build them.

Among us, political conversation (in the street, in the media, on the Internet, in books, in power breakfast circles, in companies, dinners, villages and suburbs is sad and impoverished. It centres on the present and the short-term: the popularity or otherwise of leaders, the chances of this or that person at the next elections, the grimy face of political manoeuvring, the possibility of change in the economic environment, events, scandals, crime statistics, etc. And when the conversation turns to the future it is in terms of climate catastrophes, energy catastrophe, demographic, geopolitical or other catastrophes.

And yet, when we come to examine the serious thoughts and meditations of ordinary people, we find a climate that is totally different: we are evolving nicely, we are becoming wiser, less warlike, our society could evolve in other directions... but our leaders do not seize the opportunities that arise.

The networks and circles of influence of civil society can nourish a transformation in the climate of our public conversations which would help to orient it towards the major challenges and positive developments.

Let us once more become a society that looks towards the future and works to prepare it. Centre our attention on the future with a horizon of 10 or 30 years. Let us advocate life enhancing images, scenarios, theories. Underline the likelihood of positive scenarios. This does not mean refusing to examine negative scenarios or the possibility of catastrophes; it means looking for positive ways to guard against them.

Can we, do we wish to intensify our presences in this area?

H. Acting in a network.

It would be a good thing if all the networks and circles of influence in civil society who share a preoccupation with enabling the emergence of a new, more harmonious socio-economy, and

facilitate the sociocultural evolutions of long-established major companies could be connected and conversable. How should one go about locating them and beginning the conversation?

Concerning channels and methods of communication, immense progress remains to be made. We need to have outlets for publications, a better presence on the internet, and blogs and communications lists carefully constructed and well managed.

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