

# Opinion | Major challenges call for managers capable of managing in the unknown

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## Les Echos

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As the authors of this opinion have emphasized, just as the industrial revolutions were built on a managerial revolution, so too will overturning the "production-consumption-destruction" regime require a complete reinvention of the innovation model.

It's very hard to imagine sustainable lifestyles. It's even harder to create collective pathways to initiate the large-scale transformations required. An essential difficulty stems from the particular nature of the problems to be tackled; they concern the unknown, which differs from the uncertain insofar as it is not just a question of optimizing risks that have already been mapped out. Major transitions require us to create new opportunities, outside of the old paradigms of temporality, value, and the collective.

The Covid pandemic provided an example of this, with the implementation of a global vaccination campaign in just a few months, mobilizing a disruptive technology, the messenger RNA, combined with the power of digital platforms for accelerated clinical validation, industrialization, and logistics. Another example is the automotive sector, which is becoming an electric mobility sector at disconcerting speed, involving a new hybridization with infrastructures, territories, and software.

Just as the industrial revolutions of Taylorism and Fordism were built on a managerial revolution, so too does overcoming the "production-consumption-destruction" regime call for the reinvention of the innovation model, thus invalidating Joseph Schumpeter's "creative destruction". What is needed now is preservation-oriented creation; in other words, metamorphosis.

For a long time, managers have been equated with decision-makers facing sacrificial dilemmas: employment versus biodiversity, social peace versus the environment, mobility for all versus carbon-free motorization, and so on. Even new approaches such as open innovation, design thinking, proof of concept or agile methods often tend to confuse the unknown with the uncertain.

In the 2000s, the slogan "managing as designing" led to an overemphasis on individual talent. However, today's transitions collectively impact and involve citizens, patients, workers, entrepreneurs, etc., all of whom are now becoming co-designers. In the 21st century, managers catalyze their action by drawing on virtual worlds and the knowledge economy. A new relationship with time is possible, through the elaboration of

future scenarios. By combining modeling, simulation, data science and generative AI, the virtual world offers new spaces for collective exploration, combining science, industry, and the imaginary.

### **A new Bauhaus**

Around a hundred years ago, the Bauhaus movement emerged in Europe, bringing together design theorists and design practitioners, masters of form and masters of material. Today, we see the need for 21st-century Bauhauses to explore our unknowns in diverse fields: ecology, health, mobility, materials, energy, industrial sovereignty, information spaces, etc.; Bauhauses capable of mobilizing European networks of universities, companies, and public institutions, with a global mission, in response to global challenges.

The Bauhaus of Transition at Mines Paris-PSL, inaugurated on March 13, will foster the development of design-oriented management science, drawing on design theory and creative legacies to develop new forms of generative, resilient, and responsible collective action. Ultimately, a European School of Management in the Unknown will foster a profound renewal of managerial culture within companies and public organizations, by mobilizing a broad spectrum of sciences, including the humanities, and concrete experimentation on high-impact projects.

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