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In December 2017, the Veolia Institute’s Board of Directors adopted a program covering the two years 2018 and 2019. The chosen strategy was to develop a leaner Institute, with working themes focusing on subjects related to Veolia’s activities and boosting its internal and external visibility, while remaining faithful to its commitment to objectivity and spirit of openness. The Institute’s team designed the two-year work program within this framework and undertook to carry it out with a significantly reduced financial contribution from Veolia.

This decision was rooted in the conviction that the plan was viable and relevant to the Institute’s essentially unchanged mission. As this activity report illustrates, the achievements since the beginning of 2018 show that the challenge has been met and that the model chosen has a long-term future.

Thus, despite the strict limitation of its human and financial resources, the Institute has been able to:

• Organize numerous events, often, but not only, based on these publications: conferences open to external guests and Veolia managers, talks specially for Veolia executives, etc.
• Give a new impetus to the meetings of its Foresight Committee, which benefited from the arrival of Lord Nicholas Stern, as described here by its Chair Pierre-Marc Johnson: they are now genuine workshops, bringing together high-level international experts and some of the group’s top executives, and producing results which are then disseminated.
• Increase its visibility both externally and internally.

All this could only be achieved thanks to the untiring efforts of the team, mostly newly appointed in early 2018, and we would like to express our gratitude to them. And none of it would have been possible without the trust Veolia’s senior management places in us, as evidenced by the financial assistance and material support agreements concluded for the two fiscal years 2018 and 2019.

It is this relationship of trust that we propose to build on over the coming years, underpinned by the same foundations.

The model chosen for a leaner Institute, faithful to its commitment to objectivity and its spirit of openness, has a long-term future.
Right from the start, the Veolia Institute established itself as an innovative instrument of foresight thinking at the interface of social and environmental issues. Thanks to its positioning, in tune with the academic world’s reflections and research, attentive to civil society actors’ approaches and actions, and at the same time close to a large and committed company working in sectors such as water, energy, waste and recovery, key to the success of the major changes our societies need, it has been able to provide all concerned parties with highly interesting insights for 18 years.

The Foresight Committee has been supporting the Institute since its creation. In 2017, when the question of reviewing the Institute’s human and financial resources arose, the Committee clearly expressed its support for the project presented by the Institute’s leaders, thus demonstrating not only its attachment to an organization it has helped to shape, but also, and above all, its trust in a team whose past achievements have demonstrated their ability to reinvent projects and find new ways of operating without betraying the Institute’s mission or ethics.

The Institute’s track record since the beginning of 2018 confirms that our trust was well-founded. This is reflected first and foremost in the quality of its Facts Reports review: 2017 publications on the impact of digitalization on the city (“Smart cities at the crossroads”, “Artificial intelligence and robotics in the city”), 2018 publications on the major challenges arising from climate change and damage to our environment (“Resilient cities”, “Reinventing plastics”) and 2019 publications in the pipeline (“Urban agriculture”, “Indoor air quality”). The high standard of its conferences, often organized around these publications, is also a strong sign of the Institute’s effectiveness.

Our Committee feels very positively about recent and highly constructive Foresight Committee meetings, on themes such as plastics and oceans, and the fact that their content was disseminated quickly and effectively, to our members as well as to a wider audience. The fruitful discussions between its members and the President of Veolia during recent meetings also revealed a convergence of concerns and approaches that the Committee found particularly valuable.

That is why I can only strongly support the proposal of the Institute’s leaders to extend its mission in the long term and in its current format: the chosen model has proved to be wholly relevant.

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The Veolia Institute
A platform for environmental & societal foresight

Designed as a platform for discussion and collective thinking, the Veolia Institute has been exploring the future at the crossroads between society and the environment since it was set up in 2001. Its mission is to think together to illuminate the future.

Working with the international academic world, the Veolia Institute provides multidisciplinary insights into a changing world. It analyzes the environmental and societal challenges of the coming decades, particularly those related to the evolution of urban lifestyles and sustainable production and consumption patterns (cities, urban services, environment, energy, health, agriculture, etc.).

A partnership-based and collaborative approach
As a platform for horizontal thinking, the Veolia Institute has built up a network of local, national and international partners:
• A network of scientists tasked with exploring major themes linked to the Institute’s mission;
• A network of practitioners whose specific expertise is called on to promote knowledge transfer and sharing of best practices.

The Veolia Institute has an innovative role: to act as a bridge between these networks and Veolia, making constructive contributions to the company while preserving its own independence and scientific rigor. This partnership-based mode of operation has fostered a resolutely collaborative approach.

The Institute fosters public debate while identifying and sharing tools for analyzing and understanding emerging issues with:
• The Veolia Institute Review - Facts Reports, designed to share the expertise and experiences of different actors such as NGOs, entrepreneurs, public authorities, experts, researchers and businesses, the reviews examine a given subject from a wide variety of viewpoints;
• Conference-debates that provide multidisciplinary insights into the themes explored in the reviews;
• Working groups for exploring emerging trends, such as the discussions on common goods (see page 18).

The Veolia Institute’s network of partners, as well as its publications and conferences, give it credibility and legitimacy as it pursues its mission to tackle global issues at the international level (see page 11).

Governance open to the world
The Veolia Institute is based on three pillars:
• The operational team, which runs the Institute’s day-to-day operations;
• The Board of Directors, which sets out overall policy and leads and oversees management of the Institute;
• The Foresight Committee, which advises the Institute and guides its development.

The team
The team suggests areas for study, establishes the broad themes and identifies priority topics and expert partners. It implements action programs, coordinates the network of contributors and circulates the results of the Institute’s work. The collaborative work they do is regularly discussed with the Foresight Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors
The board embodies the Veolia Institute’s positioning and the bridges it builds between the private sector, scientific circles and civil society. The members who make up the board – including Veolia representatives, members of the Foresight Committee and established outside experts – deliver balanced governance of the Institute.

Members of the Board of Directors: Laurent Auguste, Senior Executive Vice President, Development, Innovation and Markets, Veolia; Jean-Pierre Boisvin, Emeritus Professor at Paris II Panthéon-Assas University, Vice Chair of the Institute; Estelle Brachlianoff, Chief Operating Officer, Veolia; Antoine Frérot, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Veolia; Laurence Tubiana, President of the European Climate Foundation; Pierre-Marc Johnson, Vice Chair of the Institute; Olivier Grunberg, Executive VP and General Secretary of Veolia Water; Philippe Guiltard, Senior Executive Vice President, Central & Eastern Europe, Veolia; Claude Laruelle, international lawyer, former First Minister of Quebec, Chair of the Foresight Committee; Helman Le Pas de Sécheval, General Counsel, Veolia; Claude Mandil, former Director General of the International Energy Agency; Jean-Pierre Tardieu, Chairman of the Veolia Institute; Jean-Pierre Tardieu, Chairman of the Veolia Institute; Jean-Pierre Tardieu, Chairman of the Veolia Institute.

The consulting firm A2a also assisted the Veolia Institute in 2018 with various projects, including helping to prepare the “Resilient cities” issue of its review and the associated conference and to write the summary document on common goods to be presented in 2019.

(1) Starting in the 2019 fiscal year.

Team members (from left to right): Fanny Arnaud, Program Director; Nicolas Renard, Director of Foresight; Dinah Loubi, Executive Director, Sophie Soubré; Executive Assistant.
The Foresight Committee

The Foresight Committee embodies the solid scientific foundations of the Institute’s programs thanks to the expertise and international reputation of its members.

The Foresight Committee guides and steers the work of the Veolia Institute. At the Committee’s regular meetings, which began in 2001, it works on expanding the Institute’s networks and guiding its forward-looking mission.

Members

Harvey Fineberg
President of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, Former President of the United States Institute of Medicine

Pierre-Marc Johnson
International lawyer, former Prime Minister of Quebec, Chair of the Foresight Committee

Philippe Kourilsky
Honorary Director General of the Institut Pasteur, Biologist, Emeritus Professor at the Collège de France

Mamphele Ramphele
Former Managing Director of the World Bank, Former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town

Amartya Sen
Economist, Nobel Prize 1998, Thomas W. Lamont University Professor and Professor of Economics and Philosophy at Harvard University

Lord Nicholas Stern
Lord, President of the British Academy, IG Patel Professor of Economics and Government at the London School of Economics, Fellow of the Royal Society

A recognized legitimacy

For over 15 years, the Veolia Institute has developed an innovative approach that benefits both from Veolia’s hands-on experience and the objective input of its Foresight Committee. This twofold approach has enabled it to become a relevant and legitimate internationally recognized platform for exploring global issues.

In December 2015, the COP 21 Paris Climate Conference ratified the Veolia Institute’s status as an observer NGO under the terms of the United nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. This decision recognizes the Institute’s legitimacy as a contributor to understanding climate-related issues. The Institute’s status enables it to participate actively at COP summits alongside other parties (governments, negotiators, etc.), play a role as a source of proposals within civil society networks, and contribute to discussions in the run-up to negotiations.

This new status supplements other accreditations it obtained in previous years:
• Member of the Civil Society network of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs;
• Accreditation as a research organization by the European Commission under its 7th Framework Program for Research.
While 70% of the world’s population will live in cities by 2050, cities today face unprecedented challenges: climate change, natural disasters, health crises, loss of attractiveness, industrial decline, poverty, etc. How can we face these risks and enable cities to meet these challenges?

At the interface of social and environmental issues, the resilience of cities is a growing challenge for urban policy. The Veolia Institute has been studying this issue in greater depth for several years with the aim of understanding emerging concepts and identifying actors that are finding innovative ways to implement the concept of resilience in the field.

In September 2017, the Institute co-organized a conference on resilient cities at the Cerisy-la-Salle International Cultural Centre with La Fabrique de la Cité, a think tank dedicated to urban foresight created by the Vinci Group. Researchers, academics, students, artists, companies and civil society actors gathered for multidisciplinary discussions on the theme of “Resilient cities and territories.” The debate explored how cities and territories strengthen their capacity to adapt to risks such as climate change, technological breakthroughs, demographic change and migration, resource management, terrorism, and so on. The proceedings of the conference will be published in 2019.

The Veolia Institute followed on from the conference by organizing a meeting between various stakeholders (researchers, public authorities, NGOs, companies, etc.) to exchange thoughts and ideas and continue to explore the issue of urban resilience and the innovative solutions cities are adopting to meet these challenges.

In 2018, the Veolia Institute published an issue of its review on “Resilient cities”, which focuses on three areas:

- Understand the major challenges and risks, particularly environmental ones, facing urban areas and the consequences that this can have on their development;
- Analyze the main levers for action enabling a city to increase its resilience to shocks and risks, through a series of case studies, both in developed and developing cities, making it possible to identify good practices and innovative strategies in terms of resilient cities;
- Identify the conditions for the success and deployment of urban resilience on a global scale.

In December 2018, the Veolia Institute organized a conference-debate on “Resilient cities” in Aubervilliers to mark the publication of its review dedicated to the same theme.

Nicolas Renard, Director of Foresight at the Veolia Institute, introduced the conference by recalling that greater population density coupled with our ever more inter-related lives make cities increasingly vulnerable. Urban areas thus concentrate unpredictable events, natural or technological, disasters and chronic stresses that undermine social and economic ties.

Jean-Christophe Levassor, Director of La Condition publique, Guillaume Josse, urban planner at Groupe Huit and Wexity, Eric Lesueur, President of 2EI Veolia and David Ménascé, Director of Azao and Professor at HEC, then explored the main risks facing cities today and how they are preparing to face them.

As David Ménascé pointed out, urban resilience is based on four components: a strategic framework for action, a clearly defined reproduction process, a viable economic model to finance solutions, and people’s willingness to support initiatives.

For Jean-Christophe Levassor: “In Roubaix, which has been hit hard by the economic crisis, La Condition publique, a public institution in the European metropolis of Lille, hosts a creative and socially innovative community bringing together citizens in all their diversity. It provides a creative space that is part museum, part social center and part re-socialization center, rebuilding ties between local stakeholders. This innovative policy supports urban renewal and increases the resilience of the territory.”

Guillaume Josse, an urban planner at Groupe Huit and Wexity, talked about how cities in emerging countries are implementing more resilient and socially responsible solutions. In these cities, marked by their lack of infrastructure, maintenance and resources, including access to finance, resilience depends first and foremost on citizens coping with various shocks and stresses.

Eric Lesueur presented Veolia’s solutions in the domain of resilience. The Group is a partner in the 100 Resilient Cities initiative (Rockefeller Foundation), which provides support to over 100 cities around the world, helping them devise and roll out resilience strategies. Resilience is also strengthened by greater cohesion among all the city’s stakeholders: Veolia has created around 20 incubators to support entrepreneurs in the social and solidarity economy.
Plastics: The necessary reinvention

The oceans are an essential common good at the heart of our planetary system: they produce 50% of our oxygen and absorb one third of the CO₂ produced on earth. However, they are in great danger: about 8 million tonnes of plastic are dumped into the oceans each year and it will take hundreds of years for this waste to decompose.

**Foresight Committee meeting on the theme of “Plastic pollution of the oceans”, October 2018**

At its annual meeting, the Veolia Institute Foresight Committee, composed of high-level international personalities, discussed the subject of the problems posed by plastics in the oceans with a group of multidisciplinary international experts:

- Julien Boucher, Director of EA, an innovation and eco-design center, and advisor to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN);
- Patrick Labat, Senior Executive Vice President, Northern Europe Zone, Veolia;
- Andrew Morlet, Chief Executive, Ellen MacArthur Foundation;
- Maria Luiza Pedrotti, Researcher, National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) and Scientific Coordinator of the Tara Mediterranean Expedition;
- Romain Troublé, Executive Director, Tara Ocean Foundation;
- Lucy Woodall, Senior Research Fellow, Department of Zoology, University of Oxford.

It is clear that more data is needed to sharpen our understanding of the impacts of plastics in the ocean, in order to inform and motivate policy decisions. Research should be prioritized towards the most “worrying” questions, such as the extent to which plastics are toxic, and the potential for plastics to spread pathogens.

To facilitate this research, we need to rethink the way the scientific system is organized, for example, by developing standardized methodologies for measuring plastic pollution and its effects, ensuring rapid data-sharing, and encouraging citizen participation in this scientific work. With these objectives in mind, the Foresight Committee followed up the meeting by launching a call to action for research institutions, including the CNRS in France, to urge them to focus further research efforts on the impacts of plastics in the oceans.

- Establish an international body for regulating ocean pollution

In the same vein, an intergovernmental panel on oceans should be established to assess scientific data on ocean pollution. It would be similar to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and provide policymakers with regular assessments of ocean pollution, its impacts and future risks, as well as strategies for reducing the amount of plastic leakage.
The Veolia Institute Review - Facts Reports
“Reinventing plastics”

A century after plastic was invented, its properties – lightweight, strong and cheap – have swept it into every corner of our throwaway society, from food to health, automotive to fashion. Once seen as a symbol of modernity, plastics have been the subject of fast-growing and deep-reaching criticism worldwide in recent years, particularly because of ocean pollution. Can we imagine a plastic-free society? How can we transform our waste-generating society into a resource-based society?

The Veolia Institute has dedicated an issue of its review Facts Reports to the theme “Reinventing plastics”:

- Part I provides the background to plastics: yesterday’s hero and today’s villain. After exploring the history and variety of plastics, illustrating the central place it occupies in our consumer society, this section then delves into current debates about plastic pollution.
- Part II discusses the usefulness and limitations of plastics including exploring the importance of plastics in different sectors and presenting the impacts of plastics on the environment, particularly in the oceans.
- Part III features contributions on the future of plastics, addressing different themes such as initiatives in developing and developed countries to build a circular plastics economy.

- Accelerate deployment of a circular economy

In addition, immediate action is needed to “stop the bleeding”, and we have enough data to make a start. It is already clear that some countries have inadequate waste management systems and that the packaging sector is a major cause of plastic leakage. This can be addressed through eco-design of products and packaging, which would not only increase the efficiency of recycling, but also has the potential to influence behavioral leakage, such as littering.

Incentives are needed to encourage better consumer behavior and industry practices. Although it is unlikely that a majority of consumers will agree to pay more for an environmentally-friendly product, public awareness of plastics in the ocean can lead to changes in industry practices. Companies concerned about their reputation already have a strong interest in improving the design of their products and in showing that they are disposing of their waste and excess stock in environmentally appropriate ways, even when these actions cost more money. This incentive to preserve reputation could, and should, be supported by legislation and taxes on bad design. More importantly, a cultural change is needed to change consumption patterns and transform the “throwaway society”.

The full conclusions of this meeting are freely available on the Veolia Institute website.

The challenge of plastics in the oceans
Highlights from the Veolia Institute Foresight Committee’s 2018 annual meeting

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Common goods
Emerging concept explored by Veolia

The concept of common goods, while not new to economists, philosophers and political scientists, has seen a revival of more widespread interest in recent years. The Veolia Institute has conducted a study that brings together researchers from these disciplines and company managers.

The first step was to understand the meaning given to the notion of the common good:

- For economists, the definition is clear. These are goods whose consumption or use is “non-exclusive” (in other words, every member of a community has access to them), but where there exists a rivalry between consumers or users (in other words, consumption by one alters or reduces consumption by the others). This notion is illustrated by the “tragedy of the commons”, defined by economist Garrett Hardin as the ruin of a community by overexploitation of a limited resource. It underscores the need for appropriate governance and public regulation of how common goods are exploited, a central theme of all local and global environmental governance.

- Beyond the economic theory, a raft of further theories have emerged based on the common good (in the singular) and the commons as a collective approach to managing scarce resources. A major contribution to thinking in this field was made by the winner of the 2009 Nobel Prize for economics, Elinor Ostrom, who was for several years a member of the editorial committee of S.A.P.I.E.N.S, a review then published by the Institute. Some of these approaches reject the legitimacy of any intervention by private businesses in the management of common goods, while others advocate regulatory principles being imposed on each of the actors, whether public or private.

The Institute's work focuses on moving the debate away from purely doctrinal theories to concentrate on a few fields of particular importance for modern societies and which also impact Veolia’s activities. Workshops were held with researchers and practitioners exploring the following aspects:

- Conceptual themes for defining dimensions of commonality and listing the ways it is used today
  - Workshop 1 – Current thinking on common goods
- Operational themes using multidisciplinary situations to identify the way common goods are defined, and the impact of these definitions in various areas
  - Workshop 2 – Common goods and water
  - Workshop 3 and 4 – Common goods and energy
  - Workshop 5 – Common goods and business
  - Workshop 6 – Common goods and nuclear
  - Workshop 7 - Common goods and big data
  - Workshop 8 - Common goods and waste

In each of these areas, the research work sought to identify relevant concepts and data, suggest a framework for the role of business and corporate social responsibility, and identify a handful of concrete areas for further reflection based on experience in the field.

A summary report of the study and main takeaways was produced in 2018. In 2019, the Institute will continue to explore the theme of common goods, in particular by further developing its operational application within Veolia’s business lines.

The Veolia Institute Talks
Raw materials, artificial intelligence

In 2018, the Institute introduced a new format of talks for Veolia’s executives and managers, giving them the chance to explore ongoing environmental and societal changes with high-level experts.

Two Veolia Institute Talks were held in 2018:

- Philippe Chalmin, Professor at Paris-Dauphine University, President and Founder of Cyclope (Europe’s leading research institute on raw materials markets), presented the main trends on the global raw materials and commodities markets,
- Nicolas Mialhe, Co-founder and President of The Future Society, spoke about the issues arising from artificial intelligence in terms of resource and city management. He also discussed the impacts of this technological evolution for a company such as Veolia.
Outlook for 2019
Plastics, urban agriculture, indoor air quality

The Veolia Institute is continuing its various projects in 2019 in line with the work it has already undertaken.

1. Conferences on plastics
Following the publication of the review dedicated to the theme “Reinventing plastics”, two conferences are being organized on this issue:

• A conference in March 2019 at Veolia’s headquarters in Aubervilliers with: Laurent Auguste, Director of Innovation and Market Development, Member of the Executive Committee, Veolia; Eric Brac de la Perrière, Founder of Yoyo; Jean-Marie Julien, Materials Expertise Manager, L’Oréal; Maria Luiza Pedrotti, Researcher at the CNRS and the Oceanographic Laboratory in Villefranche-sur-Mer.

• A conference in April 2019 in partnership with Up Conférences, in Paris, with: Woldemar d’Ambrières, Director of Strategic Projects, Veolia; Alexandra Bordes, Coordinator of Projects of General Interest, Danone Fund for the Ecosystems; Carlos de Los Llanos, Scientific Director, Citeo; Romy Hentinger, Advocacy and International Cooperation Project Manager, Tara Ocean Foundation; Elisabeth Laville, Founder of the Utopies agency.

2. The publication of two issues of The Veolia Institute Review - Facts Reports on the following topics:

• Urban agriculture
Urban agriculture is emerging as one of the solutions to food self-sufficiency in an increasingly urbanized context and in the face of growing food shortages. This form of agriculture is proving highly successful and momentum is accelerating in both emerging and developed countries. A growing number of actors are getting involved: local authorities, supermarkets and the agri-food industry, architects and engineers, but also organized groups of citizens working on developing this type of farming, usually with the goal of revitalizing social ties and changing consumption patterns.

This issue of The Veolia Institute Review - Facts Reports aims to analyze the growth of urban agriculture, not only at the city level but also at the territorial level (urban and peri-urban agriculture), understand the dynamics at work and the diversity of the actors involved, show what types of challenges can be met by the different forms of urban agriculture, and identify the conditions for a step change.

• Indoor air quality
Unlike ambient air pollution, which is frequently covered by the media, the issue of indoor air quality is less well known. Yet, on average we spend more than 80% of our time in enclosed environments (home, workplace, transportation, etc.) where we can be exposed to numerous pollutants with potentially damaging effects on our health and well-being. Indoor air quality has been a concern for several years and has now emerged as a major public health issue.

The Veolia Institute Review - Facts Reports will focus on the following themes: the issues and representations tied to indoor air quality, digital and scientific developments benefiting indoor air quality, and the major challenges of tomorrow in terms of indoor air quality.

3. There will be publications followed by conference-debates that will highlight the issues related to these topics.

4. The annual meeting of the Foresight Committee in October 2019.

5. Further Veolia Institute Talks for Veolia’s managers and executives with high-level experts who will shed light on environmental and societal changes.
Promotion of the Institute’s work
Work freely accessible for all

The Veolia Institute’s publications and conferences are freely accessible so they can contribute to the dissemination of knowledge that feeds into debates on ongoing environmental and societal changes.

To increase the visibility of its work and its impact, the Institute ramped up its communication activities in 2018:

- Launch of a partnership with *The Conversation*, an independent media outlet that disseminates content from the academic community, to take the articles published in *The Veolia Institute Review - Facts Reports* and written by contributors from the academic world to a wider audience;

- Establishment of a partnership with "Place to be", a non-profit working to share information on environmental issues, in order to help the Veolia Institute strengthen its presence and visibility on social networks (Twitter and LinkedIn);

- Increased interaction with its network (including by sending out the newsletter) and dialogue with new stakeholders (including those connected to Veolia’s activities);

- Modernization of communication tools: new versions of its internet and intranet sites, creation of communication tools for presenting the Institute.
A platform for environmental & societal foresight

Thinking together to illuminate the future