

Working Paper Series

► On leadership, continuity,
and the common good



No. 1 February 2014

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About the Swinburne Leadership Institute

The Swinburne Leadership Institute (SLI) seeks to promote **Leadership for the Greater Good** across government, the private and not-for-profit sectors, and civil society.

Our mission is to enrich the understanding and practice of authentic, ethical and sustainable forms of leadership in Australia.

Leadership for the Greater Good can take many forms. It always needs to be locally relevant and culturally appropriate. However, in all cases it recognises the legitimacy of the individual as citizen, the reality of our shared interests, and the importance of judiciously balancing competing interests in ways that enhance the public good.

The emergence in Australia of a political, business and civil culture that elevates immediate private interests over long-term public interests is a worrying sign that the Greater Good and leadership in its service is insufficiently valued in our society.

It is a social and research priority to understand the meaning and the myriad manifestations of Leadership for the Greater Good so as to enrich the practice of leadership in Australia.

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Introduction

The public interest. The public good. The common good. All these terms describe ways of thinking about our collective selves and our shared interests that transcend our memberships of such groups as families, teams, and workplaces that typically inform our understanding of who we are and pattern our expectations and experience of the social world. Whereas groups such as these are 'concrete' in the sense that we interact with many of the members of these groups, know the group's defining features, and can recognise exemplary members, the community of individual citizens to whom concepts like the public good apply is more abstract. Indeed, we know such communities not through direct face-to-face interaction with their members but rather indirectly, through our imaginations. It is not for nothing that Benedict Anderson (1983) described such collective, temporally continuous entities as 'imagined communities'.

In this article, I explore the idea that certain of our current cultural ideals and practices may be inimical to our ability to imagine and experience ourselves as members of these imagined, enduring communities. In particular, I explore the idea that in our prevailing culture of flux, impermanence, and uncertainty, characterised by Bauman (2012) as 'liquid' modernity, we have fallen out of the habit of thinking about our ourselves as members of an imagined community of citizens with common interests who act with collective purpose in the service of these interests. Given that the type of imagined community necessary to overcome the kinds of problems that deform the public good is precisely the type of collective identity that is neither valorised nor cultivated in liquid modernity, we find ourselves less capable of acting in concert with one another to enhance the public good than we ideally should be. Notwithstanding this state of affairs, it affords us an opportunity to re-imagine the common good and to enact, entrench and expand the practice of leadership in its service. I explore this possibility in the third part of this article.

Before we begin, I hasten to add that in this paper, which is nothing more than a provisional sketch, I focus on global, latent trends that encompass and integrate a multitude of specific developments rather than on specific, circumscribed, and localised changes in society. Accordingly, my focus in this article is not on Australia specifically but rather on the nexus of Anglo-American countries and cultures in which Australia is embedded. Notwithstanding the important historical and cultural differences between nations like the Australia, Britain, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and the United States, there are also many similarities, which usefully expands our understanding of the types of general, latent trends that variously promote and thwart the public good, as well as the affordances for, and practice of, leadership in its service.

A further point to note is that my musings about the public good—specifically, the problems that thwart it and the leadership that promotes it—are premised on two assumptions. The first assumption is that *wicked* and *super wicked* problems—those that resist easy definition, cannot be cleanly delineated from other problems, and are neither resolvable via compliance with *experts* nor obedience to *authorities* (Grint, 2010; Levin, Cashore, Bernstein, Auld, 2012; Rittel & Webber, 1973)—are the types of problems that pose the greatest challenges to the public good.

The second, related assumption is that addressing wicked and super wicked problems requires the active participation of the individual and collective actors involved—not just experts and authorities (Kahane, 2004, 2010; Levin et al., 2012). In general, this necessitates that ‘we’, all of us, take collective responsibility for our collective problems, which is an approach to problem solving that is enabled by the judicious exercise of *leadership* (Grint, 2010).

Given the centrality of the concept of continuity to the arguments in this article about the public good, I begin with an overview of the ways in which we understand ourselves as entities that persevere through time. Next, consideration turns to how the experience of volatility, impermanence and uncertainty in the social environments in which we are embedded can disrupt our experience of self-continuity, the ease with which we can discern our shared interests, and our capacity to act with collective purpose in the service of these interests. Finally, I consider some of the conceptual and practical challenges that need to be met to enhance our ability to imagine, talk about, and act in the service of the public good.

Given that the type of imagined community necessary to overcome the kinds of problems that deform the public good is precisely the type of collective identity that is neither valorised nor cultivated in liquid modernity, we find ourselves less capable of acting in concert with one another to enhance the public good than we ideally should be. Notwithstanding this state of affairs, it affords us an opportunity to re-imagine the common good and to enact, entrench and expand the practice of leadership in its service.

Identity and continuity

One of the core aspects of the human self is the need to experience the self as a unity through time and space. That is, beyond the obvious physical and psychological changes that occur over the course of a lifetime, we tend to need to experience ourselves as essentially the same people as we were in the past and will be in the future (Sani, Bowe, & Herrera, 2008). This is called self-continuity and it is crucial for our psychological survival.

Although this need to experience a sustained sense of self through time is a generic feature of the human psyche, our understanding of who we are, were, and will be is constructed within a larger 'community of minds'—family, friends, colleagues—bound by a common language, beliefs, and identity (Bird & Reese, 2008; Nelson, 2008; Reicher, 2008). That is, beginning in childhood and continuing throughout our lives, we develop an understanding of ourselves as an entity that perseveres through time, in part, through the medium of talk with family and friends.

Further, through this sense of being situated in, and belonging to, social groups—some with which we will identify—we also develop an understanding of ourselves as members of temporally continuous social entities: families, tribes, nations. Indeed, such is the strength of our need to believe that the groups of which we are members are historically and culturally continuous that we perceive continuity even in the midst of change (Hamilton, Levine, & Thurston, 2008). Consider, for example, our perception of football teams as essentially the same groups over time despite membership changes, relocations to different cities and states, and name changes.

Our understanding of ourselves is thus characterised both by a sense that we are unique and distinctive from others, called the personal self, and a sense that we share attributes with others, called the collective self. Further, in the same way that we need to experience personal self-continuity, we have a comparable need to experience collective self-continuity—to believe that the groups of which we are members, and with which we identify, will continue to exist as essentially the same social entities over time. As decades of research attest, group membership plays an important role in a person's perception of who she is (e.g., Muslim, Australian) beyond her unique, idiosyncratic characteristics (e.g., extrovert, playful) and contributes to a person's maintenance of a stable sense of self over time (Iyer, Jetten, & Tsivrikos, 2008).

However, although self-continuity seems to be an inherent feature of the human self, the experience of self-continuity is not invariant over the course of a person's lifetime or across people (Sani, 2008). A lack of self-continuity is considered one of the most typical disorders of the self. For example, people who suffer from schizophrenia, neuroses or organic states may experience a sense of discontinuity or disconnection between their present and past or future selves (Sani, 2008). A striking example of what it is like to experience self-discontinuity was provided by the psychiatrist Oliver Sachs (1985) who described a man with Korsakov syndrome who, unable to maintain a genuine narrative of self-continuity, did not know, at any given point in time, where or who he was. However, it is not with such people that I am concerned here. Rather, I am more interested in the variation in self-continuity experienced even among those adjudged psychologically normal.

Perhaps most relevant to the arguments of this article is recent, albeit indirect, evidence that the experience of destabilising life events can disrupt the experience and expectation of self-continuity. To illustrate, in a study conducted by Bartels and Rips (2010) participants read about characters who undergo a series of small (e.g., acquiring an allergy, graduation from university) and large (e.g., religious conversion, kidnap) life-changing events at different points in their lives (e.g., 1, 10, 20 and 30 years from the present). After this, participants were asked to judge the extent to which the characters were essentially the same people—in terms of their personality, beliefs, likes and dislikes, goals, and ideals—after these events as they were before these events. Unlike the experience of small events, the experience of large life-changing events was judged to render the characters different people to the people they were prior to the destabilising event. That is, large life-changing events were adjudged to create such instability in a person's identity that they effected a disconnection between the selves

that exist at different points in time. Our ability to persist through time as a psychological unity thus is subject to the vicissitudes of life.

Further, although research into the consequences of self-discontinuity is in its infancy, the available evidence suggests that the personal consequences of experiencing weak psychological connectedness, specifically weak connectedness between our present and future selves, can be profound. To illustrate, compared with people who feel strongly connected to their future selves, those who feel weakly connected tend to save less (Bryan, & Hershfield, 2012; Ersner-Hershfield, Garton, Ballard, Samanez-Larkin, & Knutson, 2009), spend more (Bartels & Urminsky, 2011), demonstrate higher rates of temporal discounting (Bartels & Rips, 2010), behave less ethically (Hershfield, Cohen, & Thompson, 2012; van Gelder, Hershfield, & Nordgren, 2013) and cope worse with threats, such as job loss (Sadeh & Karniol, 2012).

The reasoning for this, which can be traced to the philosopher Derek Parfit (1986) and which has been corroborated empirically (Bartels & Rips, 2010; Ersner-Hershfield, Wimmer, & Knutson, 2009; Pronin, Olivola, & Kennedy, 2008), is that when a person feels disconnected from her future self—such as the self that exists in twenty years' time—the future self can seem so dissimilar to the present self that, at the extreme, she can be perceived as essentially a different person altogether. Understood in this way, the effects of self-discontinuity on our thinking and decision-making begin to make sense. If an individual perceives her future self as essentially a different person to her present self—in terms of personality or temperament, for example—then it does not especially matter if she spends all her disposal income in present rather than saving some of it for the future. After all, if the future self is regarded as 'not me', then saving for the benefit of the future self is akin to giving money to a different person.

One of the core aspects of the human self is the need to experience the self as a unity through time and space. Our understanding of who we are, were, and will be is constructed within a larger 'community of minds'—family, friends, colleagues—bound by a common language, beliefs, and identity.

The point of all this is to say that in order to act in ways that have wholesome consequences for our future selves, we must believe that the future recipient of our actions (i.e., 'future me') will be the same person who expends effort in the present (i.e., 'present me'). For example, in order to save for retirement, I must believe that 'future me', who will spend these savings, is essentially the same person as 'present me', who will create these savings. Experiencing and expecting self-continuity therefore partly undergirds an orientation to the future and provides an affordance for planning and action that enhances our long-term interests (e.g., regular, voluntary contributions to our superannuation account), even if it appears to damage some aspects of our immediate interests (e.g., eating out less often). The experience and expectation of individual self-continuity is thus a prerequisite for recognising that the identity and interests of our present and future selves are coincident, not incongruent.

The relationship between our present and future collective selves seems to work in a similar way. That is, in order to behave in ways that are in the interests of our future collective selves (e.g., future Australians), we must believe that our future collective selves will be essentially the same people that 'we' are now (e.g., present Australians). This seems especially important if we need to decide whether to act in ways that damage the interests of our present selves—personal and collective—in order to create benefits for our future

collective selves (e.g., paying higher taxes now to mitigate future 'structural deficits'), or to spare our future collective selves from bearing costs that ought to have borne by our present selves (e.g., pricing 'externalities' into the cost of goods and services). The experience and expectation of collective self-continuity thus partly undergirds the collective mobilisation that is required to enact joint projects for the future (Reicher, 2008), such as the creation of policies, institutions and social structures that promote the public good but which may 'damage' some aspects of our immediate private interests.

Given that: (i) the experience and expectation of self-continuity promotes an orientation to, and an ability to plan for, the future; (ii) the collective mobilisation to enact joint projects requires the experience and expectation of self-continuity, especially its collective variant; and (iii) the experience and expectation of destabilising life events can disrupt self-continuity, it is pertinent to reflect on our experience of individual and collective self-continuity and social and economic conditions and to ask whether the socio-economic and cultural context in which we are embedded sustains or, at minimum, does not disrupt self-continuity. Unhappily, our prevailing climate of volatility and uncertainty means that this question cannot be answered wholly in the affirmative. It is to this that attention turns next.

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Liquid modernity

According to Bauman (2012), who coined the term 'liquid modernity', the transition from 'solid' to 'liquid' modernity involved the shift from a time in which humans sought to create a well-ordered world of predictable, stable structures to a world in which the very ideas of order and stability no longer have any purchase. Nowadays it is a commonplace that to hear and read that change is the only permanence and uncertainty the only certainty.

Although it is beyond the scope of this article to provide a detailed account of the emergence of liquid modernity, some broad-brush outlines are nevertheless warranted. Given the centrality of the concept of continuity to the arguments I am making in this article, it is instructive to begin at time in the twentieth century when continuity, order, and stability were of primary concern to us; namely, the period immediately after the Second World War that lasted until the early 1970s—a period sometimes referred to as 'the Golden Age', although it was certainly not a gilded age.

In his 2006 Boyer lectures, former Reserve Bank Governor Ian MacFarlane characterised this period as one preoccupied with "the search for stability." Although MacFarlane's focus was on the development of an approach to macroeconomic policy that could ensure stable economic growth and full employment, the search for stability described, more generally, our response to our shared experience of vulnerability, instability, and insecurity throughout the first half of the twentieth century when the world, as we knew it, collapsed.

Although the specific stabilising policies and institutions varied from country to country, these stabilisers reflected a belief in the possibility and virtue of collective action for the collective good, as well as a significant role for the state and the public sector (Judt, 2010). Within nations, strong unions, collective bargaining and welfare provisions, which buttressed the perception that shared interests existed, contributed to this period of equality and stability (Sennett, 1999). At the international level, agreements, such as the Bretton Woods currency agreements—the system of regulations and institutions that regulated the international monetary system—were established, which effectively constrained, and thus stabilised, the behaviour of member countries. The search for stability was therefore as much a national project as an international one.

At the level of the lives of individual men and later, women, the bureaucracies of big national institutions, business and government, provided an important social context for the personal experience of order and stability. Although these bureaucracies were not regarded uncritically—evidenced, for example, by claims that they held individuals in an iron grip—these institutions did nevertheless possess the modest virtue of providing people with a relatively stable environment within which to construct their understanding of themselves and their life course (Sennett, 2006). Further, given that people could often expect to remain in these organisations for many years, perhaps all their working lives, and could expect to accrue skills, status and income slowly, but predictably, over time, these organisations arguably created the stable conditions that enabled the experience and expectation of self-continuity in its personal and collective forms. However, as the 1970s faded, the stable, ordered world within which these institutions were embedded—in which individuals were themselves were embedded—began to transmogrify into the world of flux, impermanence, and uncertainty we know today.

Considerable research attests to the significant economic and sociocultural changes that have occurred since the 1970s, especially but not exclusively in Anglo-American countries (e.g., Galbraith, 1994; Judt, 2010; Reich, 2008; Saul, 1995; Sennett, 2006). These scholars conclude that many of the institutions and policies that were established after the Second World War, designed to promote equality, stability, and order, were dismantled after the 1970s. In this transition from 'solid' to 'liquid' modernity, many of the stable structures within which people experienced, and expected to experience, their lives, melted away.

Two key changes were especially consequential. First, after the Bretton Woods system collapsed, capital could be transferred across the globe expeditiously (Bordo & Eichengreen, 1993; Mason & Asher, 1973). Second, because of improvements in communication technology, information about companies in other regions, integral to international investment, could be accessed readily (Sassen, 1998).

These two changes, in concert with other cultural developments, transformed the social and economic landscape. In particular, rather than invest in companies that may grow slowly but surely over an extended period, investors began to shift their attention more to abrupt increases in share prices (Sassen, 1998). To fulfill this objective, these investors frequently redistributed their capital across companies (Sennett, 2006). Investment in shares thus became an increasingly complex endeavour, demanding considerable expertise (Harrison, 1994), and these activities were primarily confined to enormous financial institutions, including merchant banks.

These powerful institutions began to dominate the management of companies (Crutchley, Jensen, Jahera Jr., & Raymond, 1999). Because these shareholders preferred short-term profits in share prices rather than long-term profits through dividends (Sennett, 2006), companies did not strive to evolve and to develop gradually and progressively. Instead, they attempted to exploit every opportunity that emerged (Sassen, 1998). These organisations began to respond swiftly to short-term, sometimes fleeting, changes in the market (Hamel & Prahalad, 1996). Products, services, brands, and processes were frequently refined or even transformed, and previous endeavors were often abandoned hastily.

In this volatile environment—half of the most turbulent financial quarters since 1980 have occurred since 2002—the strategies, values, objectives, and activities of organisations tended to change abruptly (e.g., Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994). To respond efficiently and adeptly to fluctuating demands, downsizing proliferated; the composition of teams and departments changed frequently, and temporary contracts superseded many permanent roles (Lawler, 2005). Rather than gradually ascend the corporate ladder, which was a characteristic of organisational life in the time of solid modernity, people frequently relocated to other departments, organisations, or even nations to secure attractive jobs (Sennett, 2006). This culture of volatility, instability, and compulsive change, which Sennett (2006) calls 'the culture of the new capitalism', soon infiltrated the public sector, smaller organisations, and society in general.

The influence of these social and cultural changes on the qualities needed to flourish in today's unstable, fragmentary social conditions has been profound. As argued by Sennett (2006) in his incisive account of the lived experience of individual men and women in the culture of the new capitalism, flourishing in these conditions seems to be contingent on an individual's ability to address three challenges. The first challenge concerns how to manage short-term relationships, and the self, while migrating, nomad-like, from task to task, job to job, and place to place. Without a long-term frame within which a person can make sense of her experiences, an individual may have to improvise her life narrative, or even do without any sustained sense of self; that is, self-continuity. The second challenge, according to Sennett, concerns talent; specifically, how to develop new skills as reality's demands shift. In the modern economy, the shelf life of many skills is short and many workers now need

to retrain many times throughout their working lives. The third challenge, which is related to the previous two, concerns what Sennett calls 'surrender'; that is, how to let go of ideas, skills, people, relationships, and even identities.

At this point, the challenges posed by liquid modernity to our experience and expectation of self-continuity start to come into focus. With respect to personal self-continuity, which inheres in the sense that we remain essentially the same people over time in terms of our personality and temperament, our sense of ourselves as a persistent psychological unity requires that we experience a relatively stable life course, unperturbed by major disruptions. The volatility of our prevailing social and especially economic environments, in conjunction with burgeoning economic (e.g., employment, income and labour market), physical and political insecurity (Judt, 2010; Standing, 2011), suggests that the threats to our experience and expectation of personal self-continuity are very serious indeed. Relatedly, the fraying of the social fabric of civil society (Putnam, 2000) and the ascendancy of the idea of individual responsibility for life's risks (Hacker, 2006) has deeply eroded our sense of ourselves as members of a community of citizens with shared interests and a common future, compromising our experience and expectation of collective self-continuity.

If the challenges posed by liquid modernity to our experience and expectation of *individual* self-continuity are profound, the challenges posed to our experience and expectation of *collective* self-continuity—in the sense of a disinterested, temporally continuous community of *citizens*—must be an order of magnitude worse. These propositions, in combination with the idea that collective self-continuity undergirds the collective mobilisation required to enact joint projects, leads to the propositions that, presently, 'we' are ill-prepared to take collective responsibility for the wicked collective problems that ail us and thwart the public good and, in consequence, provide little space for leadership for the public good.

As the 1970s faded, the stable, ordered world within which these institutions were embedded—in which individuals were themselves were embedded—began to transmogrify into the world of flux, impermanence, and uncertainty we know today. In this transition from 'solid' to 'liquid' modernity, many of the stable structures within which people experienced, and expected to experience, their lives, melted away.

Leadership for the public good

Given our prevailing climate of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity—liquid modernity—the challenges to imagining the public good and enacting, entrenching, and expanding the practice of leadership in its service seem profound. The range of perspectives relevant to an analysis of this state of affairs and how it might be remedied is vast. As such, I necessarily screen off a number of important issues and focus narrowly on a couple of conceptual and practical challenges.

The first challenge is conceptual. Specifically, what kind of collective identity and self-continuity undergirds the collective mobilisation required to enact public good-enhancing projects? As suggested at the beginning of this article, the type of collective identity and self-continuity required is most likely not the type gleaned from our experience of face-to-face interactions with those who belong to the same teams, clubs, and workplaces. Rather, the type of collective identity and collective self-continuity required is probably more akin to the abstract collectives known to us only through our imaginations, called imagined communities.

However, the type of abstract, ethically inclusive, temporally continuous imagined community to which concepts like the public good apply differ from the more concrete everyday groups of which we are members, such as work organisations, in ways more important than how we come to know them. In particular, the collectives that give concepts like public or common good meaning differ from collectives like organisations in terms of where legitimacy lies. That is, they differ in terms of whose interests are accorded primacy in deliberations about the shape of our world. In collectives like organisations, legitimacy lies with the group, which means that the interests of individuals are subservient to the interests of the group. By contrast, in collectives such as the disinterested imagined communities I am describing here legitimacy lies with the individual. More precisely, legitimacy lies with the individual citizenry acting as a whole (Saul, 1995).

What kind of collective identity and self-continuity undergirds the collective mobilisation required to enact public good-enhancing projects?

As argued by the philosopher John Ralston Saul in his 1995 Massey lectures, Western, especially Anglo-American, societies have witnessed a slow shift in recent decades in terms of where legitimacy resides from democracy towards corporatism. At risk of romanticising the past, the evidence does seem to suggest that it is harder now than it was even a generation ago to imagine, talk about, and act in the service of the public good. For example, the economist Ross Garnaut (2013) has argued that a new political culture has emerged in Australia that make it much more difficult to pursue policy reform in the broad public interest than it was two or three decades ago.

That such change has occurred conveys something deeply important: the way we think about our society and where legitimacy lies in it is an acquired condition, not a natural one. Indeed, much of what appears 'natural' today—our obsession with wealth creation, the cult of markets, privatisation and the private sector, the growing disparities between rich and poor—in fact dates from the 1980s (Judt, 2010). Our mindsets and worldviews are, therefore, malleable, which potentially affords us an opportunity to re-imagine the meaning of the public good and to re-discover the ways in which we may provide an affordance for, and expand the practice of, disinterested leadership in the service of the public good.

Given the ways in which our mindsets, worldviews and self-concepts have changed over the last forty years, the second challenge is practical. If legitimacy increasingly resides with groups, rather than with the individual citizenry acting a whole, how can we effect a shift in our understanding of leadership as a type of social action that is about more than the representation of, and advocacy for, sectoral or special interests? How can we enhance the value of disinterested—that is, impartial—leadership for the common good? This is, of course, an enormous

question and well beyond the scope of this article. Instead, I will focus on what senior figures in groups with narrow or special interests can do directly and indirectly to elevate the status of the public good, our ability to think about it, and our affordance for leadership in the service of it—if there is a will to do so.

To understand how the status of the public good can be ameliorated directly, I draw on the insights of the late systems theorist Donella Meadows about leverage points in complex systems. According to Meadows, although our judgements about the nature of problems in complex systems are often correct, our intuitions about how to solve problems in these systems are frequently misguided. To illustrate, the idea that ethical failures are central to understanding the causes of some organisational crises is basically sound. However, a typical intuitive response to solve the problem of ethical failure in organisations is to push harder, as it were, to increase the practice of ethical leadership. This might take the form of sending senior figures and management teams to expensive leadership development programs. A less obvious, but more effective and systemic response is to remove the factors that enable and sustain the problem in the first place, such as modifying the social structures and expectancies that trigger the unconscious biases that undergird unethical behaviour (see Bazerman & Banaji, 2004, for a review of these unconscious biases).

I would offer similar comments how senior figures could elevate the status of the public good and leadership in its service in their organisations. In particular, instead of advocating for more public-oriented approaches to leadership, which, in any event, may leave the status quo unchanged, efforts to ameliorate the legitimacy of the public good, and the virtue of action in its service, might be better served by removing the obstacles to these ends. How might this be achieved? An obvious

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place to start is by curbing or, better, ending the deployment of lobbyists and special-interest groups that seek to undermine the public good. As argued by Bazerman and Watkins (2004) in their perspicuous account of why leaders fail to act to prevent 'predictable surprises'—crises they should have seen coming—there are a number of individuals and special-interest groups that are highly skilled at corrupting the political system for their own benefit. The political activities of these individuals and groups play a crucial role in accounting for why we do not act on what we know.

If public good-promoting activities are enacted, or advocated for, by senior figures who are regarded as exemplary group members, which makes them powerful agents of continuity and change in their organisations (van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, & Bobbio, 2008), then such figures can begin to create a constituency, and thus an affordance, for leadership for the public good. However, given that the benefits of these activities may be delayed, and the possibility that the ultimate beneficiaries may not be the same actors as those who performed these activities, it is crucial that those exercising leadership for the public good experience and expect personal and especially collective self-continuity.

The indirect approach to our challenges is vastly more complex than the direct approach because it involves grappling with dynamic, generative, and social complexities that are an order of magnitude greater than those encountered in single organisations. To discern the broad outlines of what an indirect approach to these challenges might look like, it is helpful to draw on the ideas discussed earlier about

our need for self-continuity and the transmogrification of our systems. Specifically, these insights should give us pause for thought about how we ought to design our organisational, social, and economic systems to promote the experience and expectation of self-continuity.

As argued earlier, in order to behave in ways that are in the interests of our future collective selves, we must believe that our future collective selves are, in some essential sense, the same people that 'we' are now. This is especially important if we need to decide whether to act in ways that appear to damage some aspects of our immediate private interests in order to create benefits for, or spare costs to, our future personal and collective selves. How, though, might we begin to cultivate this ethically inclusive, temporally enduring sense of 'us'? I would make two remarks here about historical memory and wicked problem solving, respectively.

Although I would not necessarily advocate for a wholesale reprisal of the response we issued during our civilization's most recent experience of shared vulnerability (i.e., the various forms of social democracy we imagined and enacted after the Second World War), I would nevertheless argue that we would be remiss to deny ourselves the benefits of the insights of this historical period as we grapple with our problems. Indeed, I would go further and suggest that, especially in 'new world' Anglo-American nations that decimated and displaced their traditional owners, their First Peoples, we need to cast our minds even further back so as to construct an even more ethically sophisticated sense of collective identity and continuity. Failure to do so would not only deny us the use of useful memory, demeaning

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us to impoverished ahistorical rationality, but it would also deny us vital opportunities to cultivate the experience and expectation of collective continuity—the very psychological resources we need to enact joint projects for the future.

My second comment is about addressing wicked problems. Throughout this article I have highlighted our fundamental need to experience self-continuity, the ways in which self-continuity can be disrupted by the experience of volatility, instability, and insecurity, and the emergence and entrenchment of a socio-economic context, termed liquid modernity, which is characterised by flux, impermanence, and uncertainty. Wittingly or otherwise, we have created precisely the types of conditions that are inimical to the experience of self-continuity and our capacity to enact joint projects to enhance the public good. It behoves us to enjoin the insights we have gleaned through applied reason, our memory of who we are, and our imaginings of who we will be in our efforts to solve

our wicked problems. Specifically, it is imperative that we partly think and partly feel our way, in manner akin to design thinking, towards the discovery and cultivation of the ideas and, eventually, conditions that undergird the experience and expectation of continuity in both its narrowest and most ethically inclusive senses. To offer but one example, an idea like flexicurity, which attempts to resolve the tension between needs of individuals for security with the needs of organisations for flexibility, is illustrative of an idea that combines memory, reason, ethics, and imagination to balance competing interests in such a way that self-continuity and the public good is enhanced.

Leadership for the public good is plays a crucial role in enacting, entrenching and expanding the conditions that undergird self-continuity and promote the public good, but it is nevertheless incumbent on us, as individual citizens acting in concert, to help create an affordance for it. Happily, there are myriad opportunities to do so.

Leadership for the public good is plays a crucial role in enacting, entrenching and expanding the conditions that undergird self-continuity and promote the public good, but it is nevertheless incumbent on us, as individual citizens acting in concert, to help create an affordance for it.

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