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GIVING FRENCH MANAGEMENT A CHANCE

by

Philippe d'IRIBARNE
Research director, CNRS
(*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* :
National Centre for Scientific Research)

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Report by Sylvie Chevrier
Translation by Rachel Marlin

Overview

Important French groups located abroad have to choose between converting to a management system which 'conforms to international standards' and preserving French practices. Converting to the former is made easier because 'good practices' associated with this style of management are described in management books and can consequently be used by others. International management, which is in fact American, poses problems due to certain limitations which Americans themselves recognise, and also because of its lack of suitability in many other cultural contexts. Therefore, the best way forward would appear to be to come to terms with the special features of French management methods, which have certain merits, notably with respect to client relationships. Consequently, it is essential to clarify these management methods which do not exist in any books, and to abandon some of the techniques which do not translate easily into other cultures.

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tel : 01 42 79 40 80 - fax : 01 43 21 56 84 - email : ecopar@paris.ensmp.fr - <http://www.ecole.org>

TALK : Philippe d'IRIBARNE

I have been working on the capacity of management to adapt to diverse cultures and contexts for nearly twenty-five years. Together with a team, I have worked in about forty countries in collaboration with important French groups. In many of these countries, French companies have built a solid reputation for their technical abilities. However, the same cannot be said of their managerial skills. Internationalisation is handled very differently from one French company to the next. Some, like Bouygues Télécom, demand that all managers within the group speak French, whereas others welcome American professors to their in-house company universities in order to convert their managers to American practices and adopt English as the work language at a more senior level.

Is American management universal ?

The universal adoption of American management is problematic. Experience has led some companies to doubt its suitability in China as well as in other Asian countries.

On a political level, the difficulties experienced by George W. Bush in Iraq lead one to think that in terms of people management and the establishment of institutions, American solutions are perhaps not suitable for the rest of the world.

American management, whether it is a question of management control or marketing, has been established and is taught in business schools throughout the world, thereby allowing non-Americans to make use of its techniques.

The limits of American management

However, American management has both merits and limitations even in the United States. For example, the American car industry is going through a difficult time both at home and abroad because of the management of its European subsidiaries.

At the time when Japanese management methods were reaching the height of their success in the 1980s, Americans were questioning the very foundations of their own practices. Doubt was expressed about dividing the company into 'centres of responsibility' ranging from the global company to the individual, where each person has quantifiable and measurable objectives and clear responsibilities, and is judged on his achievements.

In the introduction to their book on reengineering¹, Michael Hammer and James Champy tell the following story. An aeroplane has broken down at an airport and the mechanic who is able to repair it is in another town. The profit centre, to which the mechanic belongs, suggests that it is more economical for him to come to repair the aeroplane during the day rather than spending the night there. As a result, the profit centre waits until the following day to send the mechanic to repair the aeroplane even though the costs of keeping an aeroplane grounded are far greater than the cost of putting the mechanic up for the night ! Bearing this in mind, the authors suggest a different way of managing the process, which goes to prove that Americans themselves also question the benefits of such a management method.

The deep-rooted culture of American management

The most thorough analysis of American practices, especially those which relate to the division of responsibilities, shows that they are more related to the way in which relationships between the individual and society are seen in this country (in other words the American political tradition), than simple considerations of efficiency. From the very beginning, the United States linked the idea of freedom to regulatory and legal aspects. Opposition between freedom on the one hand, and slavery and dictatorship on the other, corresponds to the

¹ Michael Hammer and James Champy, *Reengineering the corporation* (pub. Collins, 1993).

difference between the person whose job is defined by regulations and a clearly defined contract, and the person who is dependent on the whims of the 'boss'. Man is free, thanks to his clearly defined tasks which protect him from arbitrary authority. This idea is peculiar to the United States, where it is essential to define in detail the basis on which each person will be judged.

Heated disputes have been known to take place between Japanese managers of Japanese companies which have established themselves in the United States, and their American subordinates : the American employees want objectives to be clearly defined and the Japanese managers are offended that the Americans do not understand the company's objectives which are linked to the company's philosophy and its method of integration within the community.

An important French group, which exists in more than seventy countries, wanted to unite its employees around certain common principles of action. These principles were firstly written in English by French staff who had substantial experience in the United States, and then translated into French before the finishing touches were made by native English-speakers for the English version. A comparison of the two versions written by the same people is interesting enough in itself, but what is even more interesting is the outcome of these principles when they were introduced in numerous countries. A section of the principles was added because of the American influence. These principles included the capacity to recognise one's faults and to learn from them, to ask for advice in order to improve one's performance, the ability to deal with conflicts, daring to defy one's superior, and so on. In Jordan, despite the fact that all the Jordanian managers were trained in the United States and some even had an American passport, the translation of the principles into Arabic simply did not take into account this part of the text. There are other interesting aspects to the translation of the text : the English version states '*Our goal is to strengthen this leadership position by being the best, through our commitment to be the preferred supplier of our customers...*'. Here, it is a case of being the best by making use of the fact that we are our customers' preferred supplier. However, the literal translation of this from the Arabic version is '*Our aim is to be in the position of leader in order to be the preferred supplier of our clients...*'. This is a radical reversal of perspective as this version suggests it is necessary to be well integrated in society and in order to do this, one must succeed fully. When the staff were questioned about their interpretation of the code, we noticed that this was essentially linked to the local context. Outside of the United States, making use of relationships as a means to an end can meet with resistance.

The implementation of American principles

Do the French really apply American principles when they say they do ? In another important French group with which we work, we asked the English and Polish partners their opinion. They said that they did not understand French management at all and particularly the decision-making process (which they found unclear) which was a part of meetings, and this despite the fact that these meetings took place in English. Even if one applies American management methods, it does not necessarily mean that they are really applied, and often there are only outward appearances... Furthermore, a very French interpretation of the development of American management emerges in the higher echelons of the company. The new interpretation of the distinction between the proletariat and the "elite" which persists despite the revolution is as follows : the "elite" are the modern executives who speak English having escaped very French parochialism, and the proletariat, who are those who continue to work in French using French methods.

There are certainly specific successful conversions to the American model, but this does not mean that the whole company is converted. The introduction of international management methods adapted to a French group, ought to have its origins in variations of French management styles rather than basing itself on American management.

French management

Does French management exist ? There is no book which describes management control *à la française*. There are a number of random studies such as a dissertation by a professor at the HEC (*Hautes Etudes Commerciales*) business school comparing management control in France and in England, but general conclusions cannot be drawn from such observations.

Because there is no written account of French management, this makes it difficult to understand for non-French people. However, if one looks at what happens, it is clear that a French style of management exists, in particular when the French are dealing with non-French people.

Delegation and control

A French director of an American company who has been living in the United States for a long time and understands the relational style necessary when dealing with Americans, still faces criticisms from his subordinates whose work he has assessed. The French director presumed that he was dealing with a departmental head who knew his job and that it was not necessary to hold his hand to tell him what to do. The American subordinate's interpretation was that he should do what was necessary to reach the objectives which had been fixed for him and that he would be judged on these objectives alone : to him, it was very clear that judgement on anything which had not been made explicit was unfair.

One of the foundations of French management is the importance of the profession itself but this often produces catastrophic results with non-French people. Firstly, the French manager gives the impression that he does not know what he wants and that he is very interventionist because he discusses things which have nothing to do with the chosen objectives. However, if one considers this method of working from a technical point of view, it can be efficient. For example, Schlumberger, which sends people to various countries to face situations which are unexpected, thinks that French employees are the best because they do not need to be told what to do, they simply deal with the situation. This model has its merits, but it may appear alarming when it is not properly understood.

The customer relation

To the French way of thinking, the supplier resolves the customer's problems, as would a general practitioner. He tries hard to sort out the problem, and if he is unable to do so, he refers him to a specialist who is more expert in the area, to find the best solution. Sales people prescribe the best solutions in the context of a true partnership ...

This medical metaphor is seen in other countries as a sign of French arrogance and a refusal to listen to clients. Yet this approach may produce results, including in the United States.

The decision

Why are the French very happy at the end of a meeting, whereas Swedes, Germans and Dutch are furious as they think that nothing important happened ? A French decision-making meeting is part of a process in which each side takes part in analysing the problem, determining the elements which are not feasible, identifying the additional people necessary to integrate into the process, and so on. When these points have been made clear, the decision is generally entrusted to a manager who finalises it and defines what needs to be done. French workers are satisfied with such meetings as this allows them to improve their understanding of the problem and to help change their outlook in a productive way. Carrying out the decision is not judged to be very important, especially since the process of brainstorming may continue after the meeting and the decision may well be modified.

The opposite is true for the Dutch who see a decision as a solemn agreement between the people at the meeting, and that the meeting is the opportunity for each person to agree to

make concessions in order to arrive at a compromise. It is not the ideas which are sacred but the collective agreement. Seen from this point of view, a meeting in which no decision has been reached or, worse still, in which one thought that a decision had been made and was then changed, is scandalous.

However, in some situations, the context may change, and making a decision prematurely is not necessarily a good idea.

French management has special features associated with its advantages and its limitations, but there are three problems :

- the French do not explain what they do ;
- they do not explain the basis for their conception of work or the relationships between people who are behind French management ; and
- they do not explain the circumstances when such management is beneficial for the company.

Solutions to the situation

It would be as absurd to suggest that French management is the model on which the world should be based as to say that it is totally worthless.

What has to change

There are a certain number of French characteristics which are not capable of crossing international frontiers and have to be changed. The first characteristic is the implicit nature of delegating work (« *do your job* », without explaining what is 'your job') which is not understood in most other countries. It is important to explain to colleagues throughout the world what is expected of them, without having to delegate *à l'américaine* with financial objectives, and so on. In many circumstances, one can explain one's expectations in a qualitative way.

A second characteristic is the level of verbal aggression which in France is an indication of the fervour of the person speaking. In many countries, it is hard to say that an idea is totally useless without incurring animosity or long-term resentment. A 'softer' approach is to highlight contradictions in other people's work : in France, such a strategy is a positive sign that the document has been carefully read, whereas elsewhere, this approach is not seen in a favourable light.

Finally, one should avoid making fun of moral leadership (the company culture, George W. Bush's moral overtones, etc.). In countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia, there is a very strong expectation of moral leadership, in other words, there is a manager who declares what is good and what is bad. In the French context, it is just necessary to have exemplary behaviour ; anything which has to be added is derisory and makes one lose credibility. Elsewhere, one should say what 'exemplary' means, as it is impossible to recognise it unless it has been defined.

What can be encouraged

Factors which are likely to produce positive results, even in the United States, include the way in which one treats the client, the obligation to give advice, and the expertise which cements the client relationship.

However, when the use one makes of these methods is diffused in work relationships between French people, it is extremely hindered in an international context. A blurred image ought to make way for a clear transmission and representation of French management.

DISCUSSION

Language and practices

Question : *Does one have to speak English in order to adopt American management methods ? Can one practise French management in English ?*

Philippe d'Iribarne : It is true that language and procedures are two different things.

Q. : *It is not necessarily the case that the management practices of high-performance American companies comply with what is prescribed in management books and business schools...*

Ph. d'I. : Even if the reality does not correspond to the working paradigm, the link with the theory is still strong especially regarding the distribution of responsibilities.

Control

Q. : *The one thing that the French should take from American management is that one should not be satisfied with the noble, intellectual part of work but one should develop control.*

Ph. d'I. : The difficulty in France is finding the means to control without saying outright that the other person is not doing his job properly.

Nuclear power stations and small cars

Q. : *National cultures highlight different aspects. With reference to La logique de l'honneur², French society could be described as a monarchic, aristocratic and caste-structured society, where influence plays a very important role. Incidentally, there is a typical French expression 'if you don't stop bothering me, I'll apply the rules'. The French have another idiosyncrasy : the graduate general engineer. He is an athlete of noble descent who knows a little about everything. This sort of person does not exist in the United States, but he is admired : a person who does not know anything yet, but who asks how something works. These French engineers may lead us to catastrophes when very clearly defined formalism is essential but they may also lead us to important successes such as small cars and nuclear power stations. In a small car, the bonnet is small and one inevitably uses other people's ideas to design it. In the United States, it is impossible to make small cars : those responsible for the engine, and those for the wiring do not work together. Each one keeps to his own contract which details his job description. In France, one has a lively discussion on a car production line and the result is a Twingo. In a nuclear power station, there is an hierarchical system at work : the prestigious, official government body is in charge, the Council of State protects, and the result is power stations which operate correctly.*

Q. : *In their book Management in France, Barsoux and Lawrence³ emphasise that French advertisements require qualities such as the ability to be succinct, a quality which has no meaning anywhere else in the world.*

Q. : *At Dassault, the genius of French management was represented by a strong 'esprit de corps' and constant dialogue within this tightly knit group. In one of his books, Theodore Zeldin claims that the French invented the art of conversation and have the capacity to create groups and conversation. Companies based on this model have an advantage in innovation, which depends precisely on conversations between managers from the various areas of expertise. It would appear that the Americans are progressively turning to this model to make important companies such as IBM function by opening up the dialogue. In France, the*

² Philippe d'Iribarne, *La logique de l'honneur* (The logic of honour) (pub. Seuil, 1989).

³ Jean-Louis Barsoux, Peter Lawrence, *Management in France* (pub. Thomson Learning 1991).

opposite is true : we import professionals depending on a particular contract. It is time to rediscover the roots of our wealth.

Culture shock

Q. : *At an international conference in Sweden, a well-known American who lectured on ethics, asked each participant to turn to his neighbour and ask him what he had done in the past week which was good. The astonished reaction of the French participants to this request shows that such an approach does not cross cultural barriers very easily.*

Ph. d'I. : Every society is founded on fantasy because society has to resolve impossible problems. Democratic societies highlight freedom whereas it is order which is required. Similarly, these societies advocate equality whereas there is a great disparity between individual situations. These fantasies have striking differences. When an American company lays off workers, the situation is not alarming as long as the methods are respected : the employees are treated as citizens in their own right, based on a contract. By contrast, a French company which makes employees redundant is seen to be treating its staff like merchandise... Once we have accepted what constitutes the boundary between a free man and a man who is maltreated, it is difficult to do anything else. Even if we can understand on an intellectual level the other person's method, applying it to one's own circumstances is difficult to do.

Q. : *The meeting of cultures gives rise to sparks. Edward T. Hall's⁴ book shows that we have cultural differences, and it is this which makes the meeting between an Englishman and a Brazilian difficult when each nationality has not been warned in advance. The Brazilian is very exuberant and welcoming whereas the Englishman is much more reserved and would feel uneasy about such 'Latin' behaviour. However, this situation does not last very long. In Airbus, where people from different countries work together, there is always an initial 'shock' period, but it quickly wears off.*

Ph. d'I. : I am currently working on the handing over of the Tripoli water management system to a French company. Everything was done by the book with a signed contract which had been devised by a well-informed consultant who knew how to iron out any difficulties. Despite this, things have not been going very well for the past four years and the Lebanese group even asked recently if the person in charge of the French group could be sent back to France. If people are really determined to co-operate and impart the same meaning to their actions and gestures, this will generate goodwill between groups which is seen to be so. However, regarding the French and the Lebanese, certain goodwill gestures on the part of the French were interpreted as aggressive by the Lebanese, and vice-versa. As a result, each side reacted aggressively and this escalation led to growing divergence of the parties.

French diversity

Q. : *France itself is very diverse but there is a uniform pattern to the way in which this diversity is controlled.*

Ph. d'I. : The Corsican problem shows, however, the extent to which diversity can be overcome in France. I carried out research in Corsica and I noticed that work relationships there are not at all like those in mainland France ...

The adaptation of American companies

Q. : *What can French practices bring to American management ? How do American companies, established in France, handle the cultural mix ?*

Ph. d'I. : Interviews conducted with those in charge of companies (such as IBM, HP, Xerox, etc.), at which staff assessment policies were discussed, were carried out by professors at the

⁴ Edward T. Hall, *The silent language* (pub. Doubleday, 1959).

HEC (*Hautes Etudes Commerciales*) business school. Initially, all these managers rigorously applied their company's policy, but as the interviews proceeded, we discovered that, for instance, one manager was late in carrying out his assessment reviews, and that another carefully dissociated the review period from the announcement of salary increases, and so on.

In general, American companies abroad certainly put financial control systems in place which are often led by an American director, but they usually use a local employee to manage the personnel. They do not necessarily know how the manager organises things locally.

Learning the local language

Q. : *You have presented the American and the French model, but there are other models. The Scandinavians claim there exists a Scandinavian model which has also shown itself to be successful. The advice which you give to French managers – write things down more and be more precise with your instructions – seems to me to be the perfect way to fail in Scandinavia where people are very able and well-trained. In order to succeed, one has to try to get to know the local culture and especially the language, which is the key to efficiency.*

Ph. d'I. : Having studied Franco-Scandinavian relationships, I totally agree about the specificity of Scandinavian management in comparison to American management. Each time we study a country, we come across a unique form of management. People who are familiar with Scandinavia even say that Norwegian management is not the same as Swedish management. In this talk, I only had time to discuss American and French management. When I advise people to make things clear, this does not necessarily mean an extremely detailed explanation but simply to make explicit what is expected. In every individual context, one has to adapt and explain things with varying degrees of detail, but, generally speaking, one must state the basis on which people are judged. As far as learning the language is concerned, I agree that it is an essential factor for success. In Latin America, the French learn Spanish and are accepted more than the Americans who often only speak English.

Being exemplary and avoiding ridicule

Q. : *The company bosses who are remembered are the ones that stand out. As I see it, being exemplary is trying to apply to oneself what one asks of others. It is not even necessary to speak. If we do not begin by applying the rules to ourselves, then it is almost ridiculous.*

Ph. d'I. : Ridicule is a hallmark of French judgement. In the United States, one does not create categories where something ridiculous is the opposite of something which is not ridiculous. Bill Clinton repented after his transgressions with Monica Lewinsky and said that he had learnt his lesson in order to be a better President. In this instance, he is exemplary in recognising his faults. A Frenchman could not do the same without appearing to be ridiculous. In France, the best way of not being ridiculous is to show a superficial form of behaviour compared to what one does in reality. Rousseau in *Les confessions* admits his surprise that Parisian women, who appear to be flirtatious and superficial, are involved in charitable organisations without ever mentioning it. Talking about it would indeed be ridiculous, but that's French logic !

Management as a political act

Q. : *I find your approach to be too much of a caricature. There are all manner of people in England, France and Germany and I may feel close to some English or German people than I do to a number of French people. I do not share the approach which consists of making the national character the discriminatory factor for management practices. One shares the same profession and one can be distinguished by one's professional qualifications. Indeed, some English and German people resemble their French neighbours.*

Ph. d'I. : The national characteristic is important in terms of management because management is largely a political act. It consists of getting human beings, who have to share the same rules of the game, to live together. They also have to share principles on what is

acceptable and what is not, and so on. The way in which people react to the rules laid down by management is not different from the way in which they react to institutions and policies in their country. The national and political constructions are the same as those which govern a company's practices. In former Yugoslavia, URSS or certain African countries, people do not share the same idea of the rules of the game which allow one to live together irrespective of differences. However, in countries where the political society has remained stable for long periods, people share the same ideals of freedom, equality and respect. This does not alter the fact that in many other areas, there are differences within a country.

Q. : *A company chooses the people it hires, and in so doing, it forms a company culture which is more important than the national culture.*

Ph. d'I. : In several countries such as Mexico, Morocco or Cameroon, I studied companies which had cultures which were very different from those which one normally finds nationally. In these companies, there were non-conformist practices of authority and function although the employees interpreted these according to their national culture. Culture does not refer back to a pattern of behaviour which depends on individuals and company managers : it reflects reference points where situations take on meaning, and reference points are shared irrespective of differences in age, profession and other factors. I have still not come across a French company in which the profession is not important or in which the relationship between 'cadres' and 'non cadres' is not significant.

Towards culturally integrated management ?

Q. : *Today, the French speak English, or rather, its 'globish' version (a mixture of 'global' and 'english'). In twenty years' time, will companies function according to culturally mixed and toned down management practices like this globish language ?*

Ph. d'I. : If I could predict the future, I would not expect the world to change to the American model. In post-Napoleonic Europe, many countries were inspired by French institutions, notably Germany and the Netherlands, but gradually these countries reverted to their own ways of doing things. A similar change took place in post-war Japan which was strongly influenced by the American presence, but nevertheless it retained its originality.

Fundamental notions of freedom and equality are very different and result in mutual perceptions which are too negative for there to be any hope of a radical conversion. Some people can eventually manage this conversion without too much difficulty, but this would appear to be difficult at a group level. Nevertheless, human beings are capable of putting into place practical *modus vivendi* which enable one to work together abroad. When we are creating these *modus vivendi*, we should try to take advantage of French practices.

Q. : *Is a modus vivendi necessarily poor ? May it not be a source of richness for everyone ?*

Ph. d'I. : There are two questions which need answering here : How should foreign companies go about managing French subsidiaries ? And, secondly, in very international companies, what types of *modus vivendi* can we put in place to take advantage of French qualities and to avoid misunderstandings ?

Q. : *Is American management more likely to succeed in China than French management ?*

Ph. d'I. : French companies experience difficulties in China because Chinese partners do not know what their French counterparts expect of them. In China, the working relationship is very confined. Neither the profession, nor the contract, nor the consensus constitute solid reference points in China. The Americans encounter difficulties as well, but at least they explain what it is they expect.

Q. : *What form of management do the most efficient French companies practise ?*

Ph. d'I. : There is no homogeneity in the practices of companies in the CAC 40 (Paris Stock Exchange index). Some are very French, others display discretely some methods which are taken from the American model. Other declare that they are completely converted to American management practices, but one still has to look closely to see how this is expressed in practical operations.

Q. : *Is charismatic management practised in all countries ?*

Ph. d'I. : Charismatic management exists everywhere but it is not always evident. The charismatic leader plays a different role depending on the social systems in which he finds himself. In Morocco, the charismatic leader of a company played the role of a saint, a well-known figure in Moroccan culture, but which most certainly would have no meaning elsewhere⁵.

Making French management clear

Q. : *Is it possible to make French management clear ? Would the French themselves tolerate it ? Are 'unspoken words', expressed once, acceptable ? Finally, supposing we are able to explain this management, could others appropriate it for themselves simply because they have understood it ? Surely Pascal Baudry's thesis⁶ suggests that education shapes people from the youngest age, thereby making adaptation difficult later on ?*

Ph. d'I. : In the adaptive process, creating a code which allows people with very different backgrounds to interpret correctly what others are doing would be very useful. In addition, some practices are transferable even though they have a different a meaning. Similarly, the quality approach, which was originally Japanese, is of general interest and may be interpreted and adapted in different ways. Likewise, some French practices may be put in place in the United States. Finally, the project is not so much a matter of convertng subsidiaries to French management, but giving the non-French executives who are on the executive committee of the group the same information concerning management which the French have used.

Following the failure of the European referendum in France in May 2005, I published a book which tries to explain the French way of working by referring to founding myths. We will see if those people who agree to read it are shocked by it...

Q. : *The logic of honour provides explanations for difficulties faced by women who seek access to power in France by comparison with other countries. It is more a matter of traditional attachment to a tacit model than mere competence. In what ways does the French model constitute an obstacle or is it the vector of positive elements in order to encourage access for people from diverse backgrounds to gain power ?*

Ph. d'I. : I know virtually no studies which link cultural models and diversity. However, one can suppose that the Scandinavian model, in which everyone has the right to speak and no-one is allowed to impose his point of view, is more favourable to women.

Efficiency and cultures

Q. : *It is useful to carry out studies to understand the culture of a country where one is working, and to improve management practices and the techniques of negotiation. One has to know the different methods of reaching a compromise between personal loyalty and respect of the law, ideas about what constitutes a good meeting, and so on. I think that a decoding manual would be very useful.*

⁵ Georges Auguste, *Le spectaculaire renouveau de SGS-Thomson Casablanca* (The spectacular revival of SGS-Thomson Casablanca), *Les Annales de l'École de Paris*, Vol. V.

⁶ Pascal Baudry, *French and Americans : the other shore* (pub. Village mondial/Pearson, 2005).

Q. : *Pierre Noël Giraud⁷ maintains that people who are involved in the world of economics can be classified into three categories : people who are competitive, people who do not take risk, and people who are endangered. The endangered, like the head of a French textile company faced with Chinese competition, are doomed to disappear. The people who do not take risk are, for example, museum attendants who have not yet been subjected to competition from Polish workers. The increasingly ferocious world of the competitive people will become a warlike world made up of massacres, victories and defeats. I think that humanist companies, which we discussed this morning, are close to extinction. The trend which is starting to appear is that we are no longer polite to the staff. The only standard – efficiency – will be maintained, and even if culture has a link with efficiency, there will be no further place for sentiment.*

Ph. d'I. : I do not feel that I am in a situation of sensitivity and non-risk takers. Even the Mafia have a culture and do not kill at random as this would be dishonourable. I agree with you about the evolution of the world. The adaptation of management has virtually no importance in a dependent situation but it is important in a competitive world where it is essential to mobilise staff.

Q. : *Mobilisation takes place by recognition and respect for local culture. In an important French group which started speaking in English, a young engineer remarked that the subsidiaries which had the best results were those which worked in their own language, notably the inhabitants of Quebec, the Catalans and the Brazilians each of whom used their mother tongue as opposed to those who worked in English.*

Presentation of the speaker :

Philippe d'Iribarne : ingénieur des Mines, research director (CNRS). He created and manages Gestion & Société (Management and Society). His publications include *La logique de l'honneur* (The logic of honour : pub. Seuil, 1989), *Cultures et mondialisation* (Cultures and globalisation : pub. Seuil, 1998), *Le Tiers-Monde qui réussit* (The third world which succeeds : pub. Odile Jacob, 2003), *L'étrangeté française* (The French oddity : pub. Seuil, 2006).

Translation by Rachel Marlin (marlin@wanadoo.fr)

⁷ Pierre-Noël Giraud, *L'inégalité du monde* (Inequality of the world) (pub. Gallimard, 1996).