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“Neither regulators, investors, businesses, including start-ups, nor communities, can respond alone to complex, multifold, interconnected crisis. Cross-fertilization is very much needed to incubate global solutions and devise local responses.”

– Maximilien PELLEGRINI, SUEZ, Paris



Image Source: Water-tank service in the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya. Image by Nicolas J.A. Buchoud, all rights reserved ©.





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### Interconnected crisis and systems need new value propositions

Europe in the end of the 19th century was a region of intense, rapid, unequal urbanization, from Paris to Berlin to London, as industrialization was flourishing. World-famous paintings from the impressionists not only depicted nature, flowers and sunsets but also changing landscapes and how new infrastructure networks were transforming life. The very time of the construction of the Eiffel Tower and of the steamy world exhibitions is also when scientists such as Louis Pasteur discovered the huge role of... the tiny microbes, especially active in humid and water environments.

From the invention of hygienism to the rational, large-scale planning and delivery of energy or water networks and other social infrastructure in the post World-War II era, bringing the benefits of comfort and well-being to all, major industrial and engineering innovations have been inseparable from wider societal and scientific transformations,

not to mention profound disruptions and disasters, be it the Spanish Flu of 1918 or wars that torn nations and people apart.

In the era of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, utilities and infrastructure networks are now undergoing another generation of change at all scales, locally and globally.

Rural-agricultural landscapes remodeled by growing global food demand, digitalization, poorly designed urban/rural linkages, the acceleration of soil and ecosystem degradation, global warming, poor air quality affecting the health of millions in expanding metro areas, are questioning inherited knowhow as they also provide good reasons to invest into a better future. Such interlinkages or intersections are among the most complex for private companies and governments alike to manage, notwithstanding underlying changing social demand and needs.

Shaping sustainable infrastructure systems that do effectively contribute to a low carbon and even a net zero economy requires a new generation of triple bottom line approach combining responsible entrepreneurship, sustainable territorial development and place-making, and large scale environmental innovation backed by secured sources of sustainable finance.

Going beyond corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental and sustainable governance (ESG), quality partnerships between public and private spheres are man-

datory to foster long-term sustainable development trajectories and a new sustainable economy. As the COVID-19 crisis pandemic highlights the many fragmentations within our societies, among regions, across neighborhoods, this calls for open dialogues and trust. Neither regulators, investors, businesses, including start-ups, nor communities, can respond alone to complex, multifold, interconnected crisis.

Cross-fertilization is much needed to incubate global solutions and devise local responses across climate, health and economic priorities, all closely depending from the other. Circular economy and resources management, creative economy and labor transformations, the delivery of the 2030 Agenda in times of expanding geopolitical divides, are as many areas that require urgent action. The success depends on our collective ability to create and implement paradigm shifts internally within our companies and at a wider economic and social scale.

For all these reasons, INTERSECTING represents a strong and durable value proposition, which we are delighted to have contributed to and to support. It stands out as a reservoir of ideas and connections. We see it as a fruitful and promising attempt to overcome blunt contradictions and instead create favorable conditions to think differently, to put the COVID-19 pandemic crisis into perspective and to refine our understanding of future challenges and policy options.