Post-Industrial Governance: Designing a Canadian Cultural Institution for the Global Village

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The cultural portal is an initiative currently under development at the Department of Canadian Heritage. The portal will be accessible in April 2002 through the Department of Canadian Heritage's website at www.pch.gc.ca.

Pilot projects are underway to identify best practices and lessons learned to facilitate online dialogue between Canadians, and between Canadians and government. Canadian Heritage, along with the Centre for Collaborative Government, is committed to strengthening relationships between Canadians and their government.

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Introduction

There is a sense in liberal democracies today that something very fundamental is changing—that representative government is at a crossroads. Increasingly, the claim is made that we need to "modernize" or "rethink" citizenship, especially in culturally and regionally diverse countries such as Canada.

Most discussions about "rethinking citizenship" seem to be a way of saying something about the need to redefine citizens' relationship to these institutions, to the processes of governance and to one another—especially in light of globalization.

This view is not usually meant to suggest that citizens have rejected representative government or liberal-democratic citizenship. Rather, they have become more circumspect about the foundations on which these concepts rest and the institutions that embody them. Most discussions about "rethinking citizenship" seem to be a way of saying something about the need to redefine citizens' relationship to these institutions, to the processes of governance and to one another—especially in light of globalization. The growing interest in citizen engagement may be a broad, intuitive gesture toward a solution.

This paper considers such issues. It does so partly through the lens of an ongoing effort by the federal Department of Canadian Heritage to respond to such concerns through the development of CanadaPlace, a new electronic institution. CanadaPlace has three distinct components. First, it has the ambitious and visionary goal of creating a new kind of liberal-democratic, political institution for the 21st century—a so-called **digital commons**. Second, it contains a **digital auditorium**, a kind of electronic theater for artistic cultural expression. Finally, it provides Canadians with more and better information through the creation of a **digital archives**.

It should be understood that CanadaPlace is still in the early stages of development. In many respects, it is still as much an idea as a reality. Nevertheless, as the focal point for a discussion of post-industrial governance, it is an idea worth considering.

The paper has five sections. Section 1 locates the ambiguous roots of CanadaPlace in its commitment to two distinct tasks: service delivery and citizen engagement. Section 2 is a mainly descriptive account of the conceptual design for CanadaPlace, as things now stand. Section 3 provides an account of the broader conceptual vision behind CanadaPlace. It explores the question of what such an institution is supposed to achieve from a public-policy viewpoint. Section 4 suggests that CanadaPlace has a larger historical mission: helping Canadians to explore some key questions concerning identity, diversity, citizenship and the future of representative government. Finally, Section 5 raises this discussion to yet a higher level—the global village—and examines the implications for Canada, Canadians and, indeed, the nation-state.

1.1 From Service Delivery to Citizen Engagement:

The Evolution of E-Government

There is currently much talk of e-government in Canadian policy circles. Only a decade ago, the term was all but unknown. The discussion took off in the early 1990s when government kiosks and websites were created to put some services online. Suddenly, Canadians were able to search job postings or renew licences at local malls, and file their income tax or access government documents from their home computer. Government planners spoke confidently of a new era in service delivery: the Age of the Internet.

Hundreds of electronic service delivery initiatives have been launched across the country. The Government of Canada's Government On-Line project (GOL) is the most comprehensive and probably the best known.

Since then, hundreds of electronic service delivery initiatives have been launched across the country. The Government of Canada's Government On-Line project (GOL) is the most comprehensive and probably the best known. It aims at making as many federal services as possible available to Canadians by 2004 through a single, secure, government-wide channel. This ambitious project will radically change the look and feel of the federal government.

Recent work on initiatives such as GOL has made it clear that the road to e-government must cross more swamps and jungles than was first thought. Such is the way with revolutions. Nevertheless, the movement not only marches on, it has fanned out. The new technology is occupying new territory.

In the last few years, **citizen engagement** has become almost as prominent a feature of e-government discussions as electronic service portals. This follows growing recognition that information and communications technologies (ICTs) could change more than how governments provide information and services. They could change, and perhaps are changing, how governments learn about what citizens are thinking—their needs, values, beliefs, desires, priorities, preferences, vulnerabilities, hopes and aspirations.

The implications could be far-reaching. For one thing, changing how governments learn about what matters to citizens could cause a shift, perhaps a huge one, in what matters to governments: it could change what *they* think. It may also have an impact on the very thoughts that citizens are having about governments and public policy, which governments are seeking to plumb. So-called "deliberative polling" exercises are one example of a process that is designed to achieve just such a result. Groups of citizens spend time together working through an issue. A "facilitator" helps them listen to one another, evaluate each other's arguments and reasons, look for acceptable compromises and adjustments along the way and, hopefully, arrive at agreement on how to manage the issue.

Processes such as these go far beyond conventional opinion polling. They aim at more than just finding out what people think—or think should be done—about this or that issue. They are **collective learning processes** and **collective decision-making processes** that aim at helping citizens to work through, understand, and resolve issues together.

Many in the e-government debate are optimistic about the new possibilities for citizen engagement. They believe that ICTs could greatly expand government's capacity to involve citizens in a variety of collective learning and decision-making processes. This is not a minor point, as we shall see shortly. If they are right, it suggests that e-government could steer societies such as Canada toward a new stage in the relationship between citizens and governments, one that strengthens the commitment to democratic values and practices.

In the coming years, the spread and development of ICTs could lead to exponential growth in citizen-engagement initiatives. These could include, for example, consultation processes, town halls, deliberative polling exercises, and referendums. The new technology has impressive potential to enhance such processes. The Internet can sustain many ongoing conversations, involving many people, engaging one another at various levels of detail and depth, over short and long periods of time. Governments could use this capacity to significantly expand Canadians' participation in public discussion and debate.

1.2 The Road to E-Government

E-government thus has at least two faces: service delivery and citizen engagement.

E-government thus has at least two faces: service delivery and citizen engagement. If the service-delivery crowd is focused on improving government's capacity to complete transactions, the citizen-engagement crowd is focused on strengthening democratic debate and the policy process.

A majority of e-government initiatives now under way or being considered fit quite comfortably into one or the other of these two categories. For example, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency website that allows Canadians to submit their income tax forms online is a clear case of electronic service delivery. It aims at simplifying and speeding up a transaction between citizens and their government.

By contrast, if the federal Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) were to consult with stakeholders and citizens through interactive websites on, say, Organization of Americal States (OAS) trade policy, no one would regard this as a service in the same sense. The focus is not on completing a transaction but on exploring and learning about competing interests, values, goals and priorities. The objectives are linked to policy development, not service delivery.

A major challenge facing e-government today lies in identifying policy issues, programs and services where ICTs can be used to improve government's performance on one or the other of these fronts, and thereby strengthen its relationship with citizens. Because these two fronts are distinct, the goals and strategies will be different.

1.3 The Challenge of CanadaPlace

This conclusion notwithstanding, the distinction between service delivery and citizen engagement is a less than perfect one, and the separateness of these two compartments less than watertight. In fact, ***citizen engagement processes often do involve a transaction in the form of an exchange of information***. This is usually to ensure that the parties to a discussion are well informed. Where this is the case, ICT strategies to improve government performance can become complex and confusing, as GOL-type approaches and goals converge or overlap with those of citizen engagement.

Key responsibilities of the Department of Canadian Heritage seem to fall into this category. It has a mandate to promote Canadians' understanding of, and foster participation in, their society—more specifically, their shared culture, heritage, identity and citizenship. What does this imply?

If Canadians are to understand their country and their place in it as citizens, they need reliable and authoritative information about its institutions, laws, practices, culture and history, as well as of their roles, responsibilities, rights and privileges as citizens.

On one hand, if Canadians are to understand their country and their place in it as citizens, they need reliable and authoritative information about its institutions, laws, practices, culture and history, as well as of their roles, responsibilities, rights and privileges as citizens. On the other hand, participation in Canadian society implies far more than an authoritative knowledge of such things. It implies an ongoing exploration of the meaning that this shared history, identity and citizenship has for each Canadian, as members of a larger community. Consider the following.

It is of the essence of democratic citizenship—and hence of my citizenship as a Canadian—that no one but me has the authority to declare what my membership in the Canadian community **means to me**. Democratic citizenship is based on a recognition that each citizen occupies a unique place in the world, and so has a unique perspective on the society to which he or she belongs. It is my right—perhaps even my responsibility—to use the personal space that my citizenship establishes to explore, define and declare (within the limits set by citizenship rights) what Canada means to me and to make choices concerning how I will participate in it. That is the basis of our liberal commitment to individual freedom and of the right to a private life. Indeed, it is the basis of our commitment to democratic politics.

Being Canadian is not just about having a private life; it is about having one within a community.

Although such a task requires moments of solitary reflection, it cannot be undertaken in complete isolation: being Canadian is not just about having a private life; it is about having one within a community. Arriving at a personal vision of Canada and of my place in it should be as much the result of discussion and debate about the meaning that Canada has for others as for myself, and of what we share in common as Canadians—what makes us a community.

In such debate, each voice must be treated with respect—as an equal with scholars and prime ministers. Authoritative answers to the question 'What does Canada mean to Canadians?' are as likely to be heard on street corners and in coffee shops as in universities and legislatures. But if such discussion is to be perceived as meaningful public debate, not only must it occur, there must be a reasonable ground to believe that it is being heard beyond the coffee shops.

CanadaPlace is an effort to respond to the challenges of democratic citizenship in a changing world. It aims at providing Canadians (and others) with reliable and authoritative information relevant to the understanding of their country, history, identity and citizenship.

CanadaPlace is an effort to respond to the challenges of democratic citizenship in a changing world. It aims at providing Canadians (and others) with reliable and authoritative information relevant to the understanding of their country, history, identity and citizenship. It also aims at engaging Canadians (and others) online in a collective exploration of their common identity and the meaning of their common citizenship at the dawn of the 21st century. Finally, it understands the exploration of social, cultural and political change to require more than the conventional tools of democratic discussion and debate. It expands the theater of contact to include artistic expression as part of the basic language of collective and personal discovery.

From the e-government perspective, CanadaPlace is thus an organizational hybrid that straddles the line between service delivery and citizen engagement. On one hand, it is an innovative tool for delivering services. On the other, it is an instrument of governance. Integrating these two roles within a single, well-designed portal is a challenging and ambitious task. **A delicate balance must be struck between emphasizing the long- and short-term visions, distinguishing between the long- and short-term goals, and developing and executing the long- and short-term strategies to build CanadaPlace.**

Consistent with these conclusions, CanadaPlace is being developed in phases. Moreover, some parts, such as the Digital Commons, may need to be developed in relative isolation from other parts and integrated at a later date. Finally, from the long-term perspective, it should be said that CanadaPlace is a project that can never be completed. Like Canada, it is a perpetual work-in-progress that will develop and change with the times. The challenge for its designers today is to lay a solid foundation, both as a provider of information and a forum for debate, on which to erect a dynamic institution.

2.1 Introduction

CanadaPlace is an organizational hybrid, straddling the line between service delivery and citizen engagement.

We have claimed that CanadaPlace is an organizational hybrid, straddling the line between service delivery and citizen engagement. This section describes the three basic components of CanadaPlace and provides a sketch of the conceptual vision and architecture behind them.

First, CanadaPlace is an Internet portal where Canadians and others can learn about Canada by accessing authoritative information on a wide range of topics and themes relevant to its past, present and future. As such, CanadaPlace is an electronic version of a traditional public archives—a **digital archives**—that is intended to provide an important public service.

Second, CanadaPlace includes a virtual theatre where artists can assemble to present and experience artistic works, ranging from musical recordings to poetry readings. As such, CanadaPlace is a **digital auditorium** for the expression of Canadians' artistic cultural life.

Visitors can enter there and engage one another on issues and themes they judge to be of public interest and concern, and, in the process, contribute to collective awareness and understanding of what it is to be Canadian or what is currently of public concern.

Third, CanadaPlace contains a forum for public discussion and debate—a **digital commons**. Visitors can enter there and engage one another on issues and themes they judge to be of public interest and concern, and, in the process, contribute to collective awareness and understanding of what it is to be Canadian or what is currently of public concern. As such, CanadaPlace is an innovative instrument of governance and an expression of democratic citizenship.

For many, the idea of a digital archives will be the most accessible of the three. Its purpose and design are described immediately below. By contrast, the idea of a digital commons is a relatively unfamiliar one, the purpose and structure of which require more careful consideration. The Commons is sketched in this section and then considered at length in Section 3, which is given over to a philosophical discussion of its whys and wherefores. Finally, examination of the Digital Auditorium is postponed until Section 4.4. It will be easier to see why CanadaPlace accords a special role to cultural expression through the arts after the discussion of the Digital Commons.

2.2 The Pre-eminent Source for Information on Canada

CanadaPlace will quickly become a rich source of digitalized information on Canada, beginning with key reference sources such as the Canadian Encyclopedia and the Historical Atlas of Canada.

As a public archives, CanadaPlace will quickly become a rich source of digitalized information on Canada, beginning with key reference sources such as the *Canadian Encyclopedia and the Historical Atlas of Canada*. At its launch, CanadaPlace will also include information from the National Archives, the National Library, the CBC, and other members of the Canadian Heritage portfolio. All material will be indexed to facilitate easy access to the most relevant information on cultural or social topics. CanadaPlace will also be linked to a wide range of other sites to provide users with easy access to additional information and sources.

Taken together, the Department of Canadian Heritage and its portfolio members[1] constitute a vast storehouse of information on Canada. Much of this is of authoritative or reference quality. We have seen that GOL-type initiatives aim at improving the delivery of government services by facilitating transactions, including the exchange of information. Reliable, authoritative information is a critical resource in the Information Age. Putting the storehouse of material from the Heritage portfolio online through CanadaPlace will liberate it.

The material will be integrated, aggregated and assembled, using a set of indexing standards aimed at retrieving the most relevant material. A national advisory board will oversee the process. In addition, Canadian Heritage is funding a variety of organizations, including members of the portfolio, to ensure that the process of digitization conforms to indexing standards.

This kind of access could hardly be imagined a decade ago. It sets a new standard for user-friendly access to authoritative information on themes, issues, events, places and persons with a particular relevance to Canada.

Canadians (and others around the world), ranging from genealogists and historians to journalists and school children, will be able to access documents, film-clips, tapes and other archival material, using their home computers. This kind of access could hardly be imagined a decade ago. It sets a new standard for user-friendly access to authoritative information on themes, issues, events, places and persons with a particular relevance to Canada.

The quality and volume of information that will become available through CanadaPlace can be expected to have a major impact on Canadian businesses and activities, ranging from entertainment to education. For example, it will add value to a wide range of products for the knowledge-based economy; provide a key learning resource to help Canadians (and others) understand our history, laws, institutions, culture and practices; and support informed public debate on key public-policy issues.

A central goal of the mission of CanadaPlace is to become the preeminent source of authoritative information on Canada, and especially on Canadian cultural content. In this regard, the Digital Archives may prove to be a peerless service provider.

2.3 A Dynamic Experience

Research and past experience suggests that even a portal that provides the best or most relevant information may have difficulty attracting and holding large numbers of regular users.

We have sketched a vision of CanadaPlace as an electronic archives with a mission to provide Canadians with high-quality, authoritative information about Canada. This is a vital service in the Information Age. Nevertheless, research and past experience suggests that even a portal that provides the best or most relevant information may have difficulty attracting and holding large numbers of regular users. To become a destination of choice for many people, a site must be an exciting place to visit. It should be a dynamic, interactive experience that leaves the user feeling that each visit is an event and that the site itself is a meeting place for visitors. CanadaPlace will have several ways of achieving this, including:

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[1] Some 20 organizations and agencies comprise the Canadian Heritage portfolio, under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Canadian Heritage. Each contributes, in their area of activity, to the promotion of Canadian culture and the various facets of our identity. These include:

- seven departmental agencies: The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) (an independent regulatory agency), the National Archives of Canada, the National Battlefields Commission, the National Film Board of Canada, the National Library of Canada, Status of Women Canada and the Parks Canada Agency; and
- ten Crown corporations: the Canada Council for the Arts, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Canadian Film Development Corporation (Telefilm Canada), the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Canadian Museum of Nature, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, the National Arts Centre, the National Capital Commission, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Canada Science and Technology Museum Corporation.

- opportunities for cultural expression,
- a virtual mall,
- the provision of cultural services ,
- personalization of the website, and
- the inclusion of a digital commons.

First, the Digital Auditorium of CanadaPlace will provide tools, opportunities and a public space that allow Canadians to experience or engage one another through artistic expression, using a variety of media, including facilities to record or listen to music, online auditions for artistic roles, and opportunities to engage in other performing arts. Canada-specific Internet radio stations provide an example of one form that cultural expression will take.

Second, CanadaPlace will contain a **virtual mall** where users can shop for cultural and artistic materials. For example, products that are available from our cultural industries and our institutions in the gift shops at the Museum of Civilization and the National Gallery will be accessible in the CanadaPlace virtual mall. Tickets for cultural events will also be available there. Finally, not only will artists be able to engage in cultural expression online, they will be able to make their works available for purchase in the mall.

Third, CanadaPlace will provide a number of **cultural service*s***. For example, authors will be able to get copyright clearance online, and an online calendar will provide users with a current list of upcoming events in a variety of cultural arenas.

CanadaPlace will contain a virtual mall where users can shop for cultural and artistic materials. For example, products that are available from our cultural industries and our institutions in the gift shops at the Museum of Civilization and the National Gallery will be accessible in the CanadaPlace virtual mall.

Fourth, just as America Online (AOL) provides weather reports that are sensitive to the location of the user, CanadaPlace will allow **personalized access** to many of its features for those who choose it. For example, users will be able to identify topics or locations that are of particular interest to them. CanadaPlace will then search information or links that may be relevant to these interests.

Thus an individual who has identified himself as a citizen of Ottawa with an interest in ballet and Karen Kain will receive information from CanadaPlace that is different from the information received by someone who has identified herself as, say, a resident of Kamloops with an interest in contemporary music. The Ottawa user may be shown recent articles on Karen Kain or invited to see a film-clip of a performance. If a ballet is scheduled, it will show up on the calendar of events and tickets to the event will be available for purchase in the virtual mall. If discussion forums on ballet or Kain are created, the user may be automatically informed of them.

2.4 The Digital Commons

The Digital Commons is perhaps the most innovative part of CanadaPlace. It exists to enrich public debate and thereby strengthen the public policy process and governance.

The Digital Commons is perhaps the most innovative part of CanadaPlace. It exists to enrich public debate and thereby strengthen the public policy process and governance. It will also provide an important opportunity for citizens to contribute to the development of Canadian cultural content—and hence to defining Canada. The Digital Commons is a public forum in which Canadians can engage one another and explore their diversity through online discussions. As such, it is the principal vehicle for realizing the citizen engagement goals of CanadaPlace.

The Digital Commons will be designed to build and support interactive, self-directed communities—particularly across cultural lines—in order to promote intercultural learning. Real-time discussion will be key, including audio and video conferencing. User communities will be able to conduct ongoing discussions on topics of interest to them. They will be able to share documents, stories and pictures. They will be able to locate other communities

that might be of interest to them, and network with those communities. They will be able to invite other people they know to join their community. In short, through the Digital Commons, users will have access to all the features currently available on most electronic chat and collaboration sites.

How, then, is the Digital Commons different from a regular online discussion group, and what does it contribute to the goal of intercultural learning? At least five features distinguish it.

The purpose of interaction and collaboration is to build links between socially and culturally diverse communities or networks.

1. The **purpose of interaction and collaboration** is to build links between socially and culturally diverse communities or networks. The Digital Commons will seek to engage a wide variety of communities that share a commitment to social and intercultural learning through dialogue and discussion. They will be easily accessible to one another. Through personalization of their access point, individuals who join the Digital Commons through a particular community will be presented with links to other communities that may be of interest to them. This is one way in which the Commons will facilitate intercultural networking and learning.

2. **Digital Commons communities** (and individuals within communities) **will be able to publish information and documents** relevant to their internal discussions. This will happen on several levels. By posting information to the community, users will be able to share their work with others in the community. However, they will also be able take this a step further and make it accessible to the users of CanadaPlace. Communities will have access to a publishing function allowing them to make relevant and important cultural content developed within the community more broadly available through an association with the CanadaPlace search engines. The publishing feature is a way of ensuring that the Digital Commons is truly focused on citizens. It allows them to contribute to Canada's on-line holdings of cultural content by sharing their ideas and information, including items such as photographs and memorabilia. It will promote dialogue and debate, and the sharing of diverse perspectives. Communities will be required to moderate items posted to the site as well as those submitted for for broader publication.

3. Users of the Digital Commons will easily be able to **access authoritative or reference material from the Digital Archives** that they consider relevant to a discussion. Moreover, they will be able to do so without breaking off the conversation. The experience will be as if users were able to summon an expert from the National Archives or CBC to join the discussion and provide information, testimony or perspective that enriches and informs the discussion.

   This real-time linking of the Digital Commons and Digital Archives is one of the most important features of CanadaPlace. It will help ensure that discussions within the Commons are well informed from both an authoritative point of view and in terms of the diversity of views held by other Canadians. The source of the content will be displayed at all times, making it clear to users whether it comes from, say, a government agency, such as the National Archives or National Film Board, or another Digital Commons user who has published a paper or film-clip.

4. The Government of Canada will encourage use of the Digital Commons to explore social and cultural themes of importance to Canadians' understanding of their community and its future. For example, the Digital Commons should become a rich source of Canadians' views and perspectives on the implications of globalization for their identity and citizenship, on how Canadian society is evolving to meet those challenges, and how

Canadians and their government should respond. As such, the Digital Commons will serve as an **instrument of governance that will help Canadians and their government to define Canada in the 21st century.** This aspect of the Digital Commons and its mission will be discussed more fully below.

5. As an experiment in institution building, it will contribute to Canadians' understanding of the kind of structures that are needed to **institutionalize intercultural learning**.

It is intended as an essentially self-governing institution, operating under a governance charter comprising basic standards and a code of conduct for all communities and individuals. Consenting to abide by the charter will be a condition for joining the Digital Commons.

In order to establish the Digital Commons, efforts will be made to identify and seek out communities with a clear interest in using it. It is intended as an essentially self-governing institution, operating under a governance charter comprising basic standards and a code of conduct for all communities and individuals. Consenting to abide by the charter will be a condition for joining the Digital Commons. Each community will be required to identify a moderator to serve as the authoritative point of contact in the event that a community or a publication fails to respect the conditions set out in the charter.

Finally, a national advisory board will provide oversight and direction on standards, content, and portal development. Although key decisions regarding the portal will require ministerial approval, the board's recommendation on such matters is expected to carry considerable weight.

The discussion in this section provides some thoughts on what the Digital Commons is supposed to do and how it will work. But the picture is sketchy at best. Many questions remain to be answered: Why do we need a digital commons now? What makes us think that it will be successful? Is there a clear vision or public-policy purpose behind it? The remainder of this paper concentrates on such questions. It is an effort to provide a philosophical account of CanadaPlace— more specifically, the Digital Commons—and to position CanadaPlace as a potential agent of democratic change.

Conceptualizing the Digital Commons 3

3.1 The Idea of the Commons

The concept of the **commons** has a central place in modern democracy. In early-modern France and England “commons” referred, first, to the “common people” (i.e. the non-aristocracy). This is the historical origin of the “House of Commons” in parliamentary democracy.

These public spaces, from town commons to the common rooms of bars and clubs, not only encouraged discussion, debate, persuasion, choice and action about community affairs.

But the term has a richer history than this. It was also a physical space, usually in the centre of a town, where people met, such as a town square or a market (les communaux). These public spaces, from town commons to the common rooms of bars and clubs, not only encouraged discussion, debate, persuasion, choice and action about community affairs. People also gathered there to become acquainted, celebrate community events, and share their stories, memories, hopes and aspirations.

The physical commons was a locus of information and learning, support and solidarity, friendship, commerce, entertainment and connectedness—what today might be called “social capital.” It fused social, cultural and political aspects of community life. As an institution, the commons was a portal into the community that, in hindsight, gives a particularly rich meaning to the term “public space.”

Although Canada’s Lower House of Parliament has inherited the title of Commons, it was not designed to foster or support this kind of democratic participation in community life. The institutions of parliamentary democracy are representative, not participatory. Indeed, today “the commoners” are scarcely even involved in the affairs of Parliament. Their role is largely confined to that of audience. For most Canadians, it is a distant place, captivated by high-level politics and decision making.

As the 21st century settles in, institutions such as the Commons look increasingly anachronistic—as do the old nation-states they represent. Public discussion and debate in the Commons plays only a marginal role in communicating, sharing, celebrating or exploring community life as it is lived and experienced by citizens.

The CanadaPlace Digital Commons is a new kind of institution for a new era, an electronic version of the old town square or marketplace.

The CanadaPlace Digital Commons is a new kind of institution for a new era, an electronic version of the old town square or marketplace. It is designed to help recreate the public space where citizens can assemble, meet, discuss, debate and explore their community, their membership in it and their common interests.

3.2 The Internet and Culture: A Transformational Opportunity

Some writers have called the Internet a **transformative technology**. They mean to say that its impact on society will be on a scale similar to that of technologies such as the printing press or steam engine. A transformative technology not only has the power to perform existing tasks far more efficiently (the way, say, an adding machine was an improvement over the abacus); it also has the power to fundamentally change a community’s way of life by changing key social relationships that serve as institutional lynchpins. One example can be found in European history: the invention of the printing press. As a result of this invention, what at that time were authoritative texts—such as the Bible—suddenly became available to commoners. This undermined the monopoly on scriptural interpretation that had been enjoyed by the aristocracy and the Church, leading ultimately to the collapse of the feudal state.

Like the printing press, the Internet alters citizens' basic capacity to communicate with one another. In considering why and how, it is illuminating to compare the Internet with three other electronic technologies that changed communication in the 20th century: telephone, radio and television.

The telephone was a spectacular advance over previous modes of communication, such as letter writing, because it linked two individuals in instantaneous and direct communication—a conversation—across great distances. Radio and TV were also instantaneous, direct and could bridge distance. But unlike the telephone, their application did little to enhance one-to-one communication. Despite initial efforts to use radio for person-to-person communication, its widespread adoption followed a "broadcast" model that enhanced one-to-many communication. Individuals as different as Adolph Hitler and Jack Benny used the remarkable power of radio to achieve a new kind of public presence. Television spread according to the same paradigm.

Whether the democratic promise of the Internet fades remains to be seen. Governments can play a role in shaping the future function of this new communications medium, and help to realize its promise.

Like telephone, radio and TV, the Internet is instantaneous and easily bridges distance. Like the telephone, it can link individuals, one-to-one. Like radio and TV, it can also link one-to-many. Finally, unlike telephone, radio and TV as we know them today, the Internet also allows large numbers of individuals to **network**, linking **many-to-many**—and at extremely low cost. Whether the democratic promise of the Internet fades (as did earlier visions of social transformation through mass exposure to quality cultural product via public radio and television) remains to be seen. Governments can play a role in shaping the future function of this new communications medium, and help to realize its promise.

As a communications tool, the Internet has no real precedent. It combines the power of the telephone, radio and TV along with a new third dimension: the ability to facilitate many-to-many communication. Perhaps the closest analogy is the commons. Within the traditional marketplace or town square, communication assumed all three forms: one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many. The difference, of course, lies in scale: the numbers of people involved and the distances that can be bridged. The natural range of human speech and mobility defined the reach of the commons. As a result, it could include only a relatively small number of people—the townsfolk—and could reliably broadcast or network in an area not much larger than the town itself.

The limits of the Internet are as yet unknown. It is a tool unlike any other. Still, evidence is already abundant that its communications and organizational power is extraordinary

By contrast, the limits of the Internet are as yet unknown. It is a tool unlike any other. Still, evidence is already abundant that its communications and **organizational** power is extraordinary. We have seen it at work in situations as diverse as the anti-globalization protests, the move to integrated, single-window service delivery by governments, and the emergence of the new global economy. All are fundamentally dependent on this technology.

Nevertheless, even if the Internet is vastly different in scale, its flexible communications structure gives it a deep affinity with the traditional commons. As a result, the Internet could be used to provide an open, public and inclusive space where the people of a much larger community—for example, a country such as Canada—could assemble, meet, mix and create new intercultural understandings and norms. How would a digital commons work?

3.3 Designing the Digital Commons

Like the traditional commons, a digital commons would be an inclusive, public space where citizens engage one another as members of the same community, moving back and forth as need be among three levels of interaction: one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many.

If designing and implementing a digital commons on the Internet is a complex and technically demanding task, the idea itself is quite simple. Like the traditional commons, a digital commons would be an inclusive, public space where citizens engage one another as members of the same community, moving back and forth as need be among three levels of interaction: one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many. It is not an abstraction, conjured up out of pure ideas that are unrelated to social practice. The Digital Commons will grow out of the day-to-day interests and activities of Canadians. It will evolve and expand over the years. How will the Digital Commons be organized, and what will be the role of government?

The traditional commons was a public institution. Citizens could not use it to engage in slander or other illegal or illegitimate activities. Public maintenance of the physical space was also required. Beyond this kind of basic policing and maintenance, however, it was largely a **self-organizing and self-governing institution**.[2] The rules of interaction, etiquette, relevance and fair play were determined largely by customary practice that reflected established values. For example, if we asked how a topic of discussion was decided or who was to be included, the answer would be that, when people met and mingled, they self-selected, placing themselves in personal conversations, small "chat groups" or the audience of a speaker, according to what they found interesting and relevant, or off-putting and immoral, like gossip. Different groups developed in the commons according to internal rules that went beyond the common law that applied to the whole commons. In short, the commons had its own "culture." It belonged to the commoners who determined their participation and local rules through their involvement.

The Digital Commons is certainly about citizen engagement, but it is not just or even primarily about government engaging citizens. Rather, it is about citizens engaging one another—the many engaging the many.

The Digital Commons will be a public institution and so must be inclusive and open. Comportment must comply with basic standards of respect and decency. Nevertheless, as with the traditional commons, activity in the Digital Commons should be largely self-directed and self-organizing. While some groups may need to be able to exclude those who persistently disrupt their lawful discussions about a particular topic, members of various groups can often benefit from interactions with other groups holding divergent points of view. Thus it is far more than a government website where citizens can get authoritative information (although such information would be available). Nor is it just an "interactive" website—a facilitated chat room or forum aimed at "engaging" citizens on current issues. The Digital Commons is certainly about citizen engagement, but it is not just or even primarily about government engaging citizens. Rather, it is about citizens engaging one another—***the many engaging the many***.

Nevertheless, the Digital Commons will not be just a political institution. In the initial stages, at least, it is perhaps best regarded as a cultural one. It will be a place where citizens can share, explore, celebrate and create a sense of membership in a common community.

We can put this another way by saying that the digital commons will be a **democratic** institution. It will support reflective participation in public discussion and debate that is inclusive, open and uncontrolled. Nevertheless, the Digital Commons will not be just a political institution. In the initial stages, at least, it is perhaps best regarded as a **cultural** one. It will be a place where citizens can share, explore, celebrate and create a sense of membership in a common community. This reaches beyond an examination of public policy issues to a discussion of the common values, beliefs, history, customs and practices, themes, events, aspirations and concerns that distinguish their cultural community from others. If the new institution is to contain such a discussion, citizens must see in it a reflection of their own democratic aspirations. In particular, they must be free to set the agenda for discussion, control its flow and choose the level at which they wish to engage one another. Government's role is, first of all, to design and maintain the common space in a way that allows citizens to congregate into spaces within it in an environment of security, trust and mutual respect.

[2] Hence the modern idea of economic markets as self-governing institutions.

These comments notwithstanding, there is no reason that government cannot be a presence in the Digital Commons. A key challenge facing designers will be to create a public space where government, if it is present, does not distort discussion. It must remain accessible, open and responsive, and hierarchy and control should be minimized.

The vision behind the Digital Commons is one in which government, if it is present, sits down as an equal with citizens—as do others representing corporate interests. The challenge is to create a culture and practices in which democratic engagement is the rule rather than the exception. Everyone is treated as one among many, whether citizen or corporate representative.

In this spirit, government could play a number of roles. It may be the facilitator of a discussion, a participant in a discussion, a partner with others in initiating a discussion, an observer to a discussion, or perhaps just absent from a discussion. The Digital Commons aspires to such a demanding vision of equality.

The idea of a digital commons reflects a broader vision of the direction in which liberal democracies appear to be going at the beginning of the 21st century.

More generally, the idea of a digital commons reflects a broader vision of the direction in which liberal democracies appear to be going at the beginning of the 21st century. To be more clearly understood, this vision should be set against the backdrop of globalization, and the impact that it is having on the institutions, culture, identity and citizenship of countries such as Canada. It is within this larger historical context that CanadaPlace and, more specifically, the Digital Commons finds its larger democratic mission. The remaining two sections provide a sketch of this context, and the mission that it defines for such an institution.

4.1 The Networking Model

The Fathers of Confederation conceived of Canada's key institutions as monolithic, self-contained and autonomous agents. According to the thinking of the day, institutions—like the nation-states they were intended to represent—should be designed to keep their functions, roles and responsibilities as separate, self-contained and autonomous as possible.

Thus the country itself was subdivided into separate, relatively autonomous levels of government (federalism), which were then further subdivided into separate, relatively autonomous departments, which were subdivided yet again into separate sections, etc., all the way down to the defining of specific roles for each employee. The various pieces were organized hierarchically, with ministers at the top of the departmental pyramids, the Prime Minister at the top of the Cabinet, and the Monarch acting in concert with the two houses of Parliament as the supreme authority.

As a result, interdependence is replacing independence as the point of departure for new policy trends in economics, politics, administration and governance.

With the global communications revolution and the emergence of the global economy in the late 20th century new linkages of all sorts are proliferating among governments, multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations and citizens. As a result, **interdependence** is replacing **independence** as the point of departure for new policy trends in economics, politics, administration and governance.

Networking and Internet technologies are the basic infrastructure of the knowledge-based society. As they spread and develop, interdependence increases. We have begun to see the effects in the private sector. So-called "just-in-time" delivery provides a ready example. Efficiency is increased by organizing the production of goods around a tight schedule of the delivery of products and services from one business to another. This is only possible in a highly integrated environment. At the same time, reliance on such an approach only accelerates the trend to deeper interdependence. Thus the old "self-contained corporation" is being replaced by a new vision of "corporations without boundaries" in which mergers, alliances and partnerships are standard business practice.

Governments are taking a similar path. The picture of the nation-state and its institutions as monolithic, self-contained and hierarchical is increasingly anachronistic and misleading. Neither the idea of individual states nor of national institutions has been rejected, but citizens are far more circumspect about the scope of their autonomy and independence.

A new post-industrial vision of the democratic state and its institutions seems to be emerging. It downplays the traditional view that sovereignty is an absolute power, exercised by a single body of elected representatives.

A new post-industrial vision of the democratic state and its institutions seems to be emerging. It downplays the traditional view that sovereignty is an absolute power, exercised by a single body of elected representatives, within clearly defined territorial boundaries. Instead, it rightly emphasizes the increasingly important roles played by other social, political and economic actors, and the high degree of interdependence between them and governments. A useful model for thinking about this change in outlook is the peer-to-peer information network.

Such networks are based on principles quite different from those that define conventional institutions. In particular, they can be far less hierarchical and monolithic. In peer-to-peer information networks, authority is diffuse—perhaps better described as **de-concentrated**. Many such networks allow members to join, leave and rejoin of their own accord and for many reasons.

Each member connects in a variety of ways with other members of the network, sharing and receiving information from them in ways that change easily and often. No single individual or authority defines or controls the flow of information in the network or terms for membership in it.

Networking relationships are thus characterized by dialogue, persuasion, and consensus-oriented processes. Organizations of all sorts are evolving networking characteristics as they become more interdependent and partnerships of all sorts become the norm. This trend will almost certainly continue in the coming years and decades. Because the Digital Commons will operate on similar principles, it should help Canadians understand and adjust to such arrangements.

By contrast, conventional institutions are hierarchically organized so that they are managed from the top down. Strict rules govern the delegation of authority to lower levels and the flow of information is centrally controlled. Such an environment is not conducive to the production of new or innovative knowledge. That requires the free exchange of information, ideas and experiences.

If Canadians are to be good at learning—they need a peer-to-peer network at the societal level. It must connect them directly with one another and permit the free exchange of information, ideas and experiences.

If Canada is becoming a knowledge-based society and Canadians are to be successful knowledge-workers and knowledge-producers—if Canadians are to be good at **learning**—they need a **peer-to-peer** network at the societal level. It must connect them directly with one another and permit the free exchange of information, ideas and experiences. A digital commons could be a crucial part of the cultural infrastructure that would support and extend such an evolution of Canadian culture for Canada's new knowledge-based society.

4.2 Canada as a Learning Society

Information and communications technologies and globalization are accelerating the pace of change. As a result, private- and public-sector managers can no longer plan or implement as they have in the past. They must build a kind of "openness" to change into their planning and management practices.

Becoming more open to new and different ways of looking at things requires a cultural shift in how people and organizations think and work. Both must be constantly aware of, looking for, and responding to new ideas and opportunities; experimentation should be encouraged; individuals must be allowed to make errors and learn from them. Individuals and organizations must be able to learn from past experiences and new situations.

As we saw above, existing institutions, such as Parliament and the public service, do not lend themselves easily to this kind of learning. Despite many well-intentioned efforts over the years, cultural change is needed. The Digital Commons would establish a new institutional presence on the Canadian landscape, one in which learning is integral to the institutional culture. This would provide an important counterbalance to the traditional, hierarchical, command-and-control culture of existing institutions, and might contribute to their transformation. Not only will CanadaPlace be an institution that encourages a learning society, the institution itself will change in order to accommodate what people using it learn about its strengths and weaknesses.

While CanadaPlace without the Digital Commons would help Canadians to deepen their understanding of themselves and their diverse history, the Commons will have a special role to play in creating a learning society. By encouraging Canadians to meet and understand other Canadians who are unlike themselves, and providing the opportunity for Canadians to take valuable lessons from others into their own lives, Canada's cultural diversity and Canadians' respect for each other can contribute to Canada becoming a learning society.

4.3 Identity and Diversity: The Canadian Experience

Because of the de-concentration of authority and the relative lack of central control in peer-to-peer networks, their internal and external boundaries are more dynamic and less clear than those of traditional hierarchical institutions. Indeed, different networks overlap, merge and separate as boundaries shift and change. As a result, diversity, complexity, interdependence, collaboration and change are fundamental characteristics of a learning society. What then prevents the network from simply being absorbed into a larger global network?

Under the model of the 19th century nation-state, citizens were supposedly united by their participation in a common, homogeneous national identity. This distinguished them from members of other societies. The nation-state was conceived as a kind of fortress for societies that, ideally, would be self-sufficient and culturally homogeneous.

If the central task of the old nation-state was to promote the unique cultural identity of "the nation" and shield it from outside forces that threatened it, the challenge facing democratic institutions in the 21st century is to secure and maintain some unity-of-purpose amid the rising tide of interdependence and diversity.

The world has changed. Today, most states clamor to be integrated into the global economy. Socially and culturally they have become remarkably diverse—certainly this is the case in most advanced industrial democracies. If the central task of the old nation-state was to promote the unique cultural identity of "the nation" and shield it from outside forces that threatened it, the challenge facing democratic institutions in the 21st century is to secure and maintain some unity-of-purpose amid the rising tide of interdependence and diversity.

One response to this challenge is to appeal to national identity. For example, the challenge that European Unity now poses to states on that continent is to strike the right balance between, on one hand, keeping domestic control over roles and responsibilities that underpin their various national identities and, on the other, allowing those that underpin shared economic interests to move to the European Parliament. By preserving control over the language, values, traditions, customs, practices and cultural history that constitute their national identity, countries like France hope to ensure the kind of cohesiveness needed to keep the cultural community integrated even though it is merged into a larger shared economic space. Will this strategy work in Canada?

In the last quarter of the 20th century, Canadians engaged in a number of full-scale debates over their national identity—or lack of one. Two of the most intense were triggered by proposed reforms to the Canadian Constitution: the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords. Although the accords had as much to do with the assignment of roles and responsibilities to different levels of government, for many Canadians they were first and foremost about another issue: identity. Discussions around how to recognize and accommodate regional, linguistic and cultural diversity forced Canadians to confront some very fundamental questions about their political community: What is Canada? What defines us as a community? What distinguishes us from other political communities and binds us together? Can we encourage high levels of diversity and still remain a single, integrated community?

In hindsight, it seems obvious that the right conclusion to draw from such debates is that Canadians do not have a national identity in the traditional sense. They have no single, homogeneous culture that can be separated, say, from citizens' more generic interests in economic union with Americans, Mexicans, Europeans or Asians. Thus Quebec nationalists argue vigorously that the Québecois constitute a people, distinct from that of "English Canada," with their own language, culture and identity. Many Aboriginal groups have advanced similar claims. Even most English-speaking Canadians now insist that "English Canada" is not a single, homogenous entity, but a series of regional and cultural communities.

Although these debates have not been easy, through them Canadians have pushed the limits on conventional thinking about what binds a community together. In particular, they have asked, debated, reflected on and tried to describe what it is to become part of a single, integrated, political and economic space, while retaining high levels of cultural, social and regional diversity.

Any effort to construct a 19th century-type pan-Canadian national identity out of the culturally diverse timber of Canadian society will fail.

It now seems clear that the right response to these tensions does not lie in yet another nation-building project of the traditional sort. Any effort to construct a 19th century-type pan-Canadian national identity out of the culturally diverse timber of Canadian society will fail. Nevertheless, it does not follow that Canadians have given up—or should give up—on the idea of a Canadian identity. Rather, they have begun to rethink what it means to have a common identity.

Since the constitutional debates, Canadians seem increasingly comfortable with the idea that identity need not be "monolithic" or homogeneous to sustain a distinct political community within an increasingly interdependent global village. Underlying this new confidence is an **emerging consensus that respect for diversity is a fundamental Canadian value**. The more Canadians reflect on and explore this commitment, the more they begin to speak as though diversity itself were a defining feature of the Canadian identity.

This is a bold, visionary and innovative idea. Through much of history, national identity was assumed to stand in opposition to diversity. The claim that an identity could incorporate diversity as a fundamental characteristic shakes the old view of national identities—and, indeed, nation-states—to its foundations. It involves a clear shift away from the **exclusivity** of national identities and toward the development of a different kind of identity based on **inclusiveness**—what we can call a "network of cultures." It demands a fundamental rethinking of collective identity and its role in shaping public policy. Canadians' experience with diversity and multiculturalism has moved them a considerable distance in this direction.

4.4 Canada as a Network of Cultures

Our society and identities are increasingly heterogeneous rather than homogeneous, diverse rather than monolithic, civic rather than national, inclusive rather than exclusive. Such an identity (and such a society) is not a product of ethnic or cultural homogeneity.

The clear conclusion from the last section is that Canada and Canadians are changing. Our society and identities are increasingly heterogeneous rather than homogeneous, diverse rather than monolithic, civic rather than national, inclusive rather than exclusive. Such an identity (and such a society) is not a product of ethnic or cultural homogeneity. Few if any Canadians would regard themselves as solely a Muslim, Jew, Englishman or Marxist. We recognize that our identities, like our society, are diverse. Someone can be a Canadian, Albertan, Muslim, Pakistani, environmentalist, musician, teacher, father, liberal and disabled all at the same time. Each of these "partial identities" may be quite different from the others.

Far from being monolithic, **such an identity is akin to a network**. Its constituent parts crisscross a variety of cultural and social subgroups. In a socially and culturally **networked society**, each individual is a member of many such groups. Identity is a constellation of such memberships; it is a unique set of nodes in the larger collective network.[3]

In the 21st century, citizens' identities and the societies they live in likely will be increasingly networked and heterogeneous—and, correspondingly, less monolithic and homogeneous—especially in democracies such as Canada. More and more, citizens will be connected to one another in diverse and complex ways, through participation in dynamic social, cultural and

[3] The idea of a networked identity and of Canada as a network of cultures is explored at length in *Leveraging Our Diversity: Canada as a Learning Society*, by Donald G. Lenihan with Jay Kaufman, forthcoming in the Changing Government series, from the Centre for Collaborative Government. Also available at www.collaborativegovernment.com.

economic networks. **New institutions are needed to build and support these changing patterns of social and cultural organization.** A key task is to create the kind of public space that will encourage and facilitate citizens' efforts to engage one another in ongoing, meaningful exchanges—networking—to discuss, debate, explore and share their unique perspectives on the community: its history, significant issues and events, the aspirations of its members, and the nature and differences of its constituent communities.

CanadaPlace, and especially the Digital Commons, is intended to be this new institution, this new public space. As the Commons evolves, it could become a vast open space where Canadians can explore and forge new linkages between the different cultural currents within their society. This would expand the limits of individuals' personal experience as Canadians at the same time as it would consolidate the sense that there is a single Canadian community. The result would not be the construction of yet another homogenous national identity, but the emergence of a new kind of "networked identity" based upon individual citizens' experience of their participation and membership in the Canadian **network of cultures**.

A society that has learned to make accommodations—and even flourish—in the midst of cultural diversity, has already taken a giant step toward developing the kind of learning environment that produces creativity and innovation. In such a society, citizens regard their cultural history as a common resource for building and sustaining networks of all sorts. It is a potent source of new ideas, attitudes, visions, perspectives, challenges and opportunities. A digital commons that promotes the formation of cultural networks could make an important contribution to transforming Canada into a learning society.

4.5 Cultural Expression and Intercultural Learning: Enlisting the Arts

Great change often inspires great art, theater, literature, music, politics and philosophy. The rise of liberal democracy in the 18th and 19th centuries is a case in point.

Before ending this section, a few words should be said about the special role that CanadaPlace accords to cultural expression through the Digital Auditorium. Great change often inspires great art, theater, literature, music, politics and philosophy. The rise of liberal democracy in the 18th and 19th centuries is a case in point. Suddenly, citizens began to distinguish between a public and a private life. This was a radical idea that changed basic social relationships, ranging from membership in the family to membership in political parties. An explosion of creativity followed, as artists tried to fathom the implications.

For example, literary works such as *War and Peace* helped formulate the moral and political dilemmas of modernity. In *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens exposed and savaged the ethics of unfettered capitalism. Authors such as Jane Austin and E.M. Forester mocked the veneer of civility in Victorian society. By providing insight into the challenges, opportunities, risks, conflicts, and possibilities of the new social order, these authors helped their contemporaries explore and evaluate key elements of the new liberal philosophy, ranging from the ideal of the rational pursuit of happiness to the new theories of political economy.

If countries such as Canada are in the midst of another phase of social, cultural and economic change, reflection and investigation of the new structures and relationships is needed. And, indeed, the work has already begun.

An exploration of the possibilities and perils of creating and managing a “networked” identity is proving to be fertile ground for a new genre of literature based on the experiences derived from intercultural contact and learning. What sort of society is best suited to such persons? How will this change affect existing value systems? How “networked” can personalities become and remain manageable? Could entire classes of dysfunctional personalities emerge? What impact would this have on social, political and economic life?

Music is another domain where changing social relationships are raising new questions. For example, in the past, performers often spent a lifetime specializing in a particular style of music. Would the emergence of a cultural network affect their sensitivities? Might it open them up to a wider range of styles and genres? Would they slip in and out of styles more easily by relating them to other aspects of their personalities? Would it lead to new syntheses of existing styles and genres? An excerpt from a recent publication by The Task Force on an Inclusive Public Service is suggestive here:

> In the early part of the twentieth century, popular music, as almost every institution, was dominated by white musicians. Non-white music was confined to the margins—produced, bought, performed and sold by the same people. But the mainly white, popular-music culture changed radically when it widened its scope and began to be influenced by the music formerly on the margins. Specifically, note the advent of rock ’n roll and the way it owes much of its creative origins to the influence of African Americans or more to the point, the old “Negro spirituals.” The musical revolution spearheaded by Elvis Presley, for instance, was all about transforming music to incorporate these influences. People old enough to remember the early years of Elvis Presley will recall that the establishment was initially scandalized by the notion of mixing white and non-white musical forms. Clearly, that was a bit short-sighted. Cast ahead a few more decades and look at the experimentation that took place in bringing the voices of Celtic, Asian and even poor urban youth into the mainstream. Was this a change for the good in popular music culture? Most people would say Yes.[4]

Contemplating the emergence of Canada as a network of cultures, or of individual and collective identities as “networked” rather than homogenous, opens vast new possibilities in the arts. In a networked society, individuals have a kind of freedom they have not had before. They have the opportunity to forge an identity of their own out of the cultural matrix. **In the old view, identity was essentially an inheritance. By contrast, the new view of identity is that it is an act of creation. It is itself a kind of work of art.**

The arts could make a powerful contribution to helping Canadians understand the social, cultural, political and economic changes under way and their impact on identity. Moreover, artistic creation is itself a quintessential example of a learning experience. In the quest for an original encounter with a subject, artists strive to penetrate the layers of assumptions, attitudes, dispositions, beliefs and feelings that have accumulated since childhood—to recreate the “openness” through which they can experience things anew. Such openness is a cornerstone of the learning society.

This is not merely colourful speech. Openness is a genuine human experience, a way of engaging and encountering the world. It is a skill that must be developed and refined as we strive to transform Canada into a learning society. CanadaPlace aims to contribute to this process through the creation of the **Digital Auditorium**, a virtual space where artists can explore the changes under way in Canadian society and contribute to the broader discussion by making their insights and experiences available to other Canadians.

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[4] The Task Force on an Inclusive Public Service, Focus on Dialogue pamphlet, a workbook used to provoke discussion of diversity among public servants.

5.1 Shifting Paradigms

What we now call a "paradigm shift"—was the fundamental change in people's understanding of how they belonged to their society. In particular, the concept of the individual as a private citizen—a concept that we now take for granted—evolved at this time.

If the nature of collective identity is undergoing a transformation—at least for Canadians—it is worth noting that this is not the first time that such a change has occurred. An essential part of what made the period of the late 17th and early 18th centuries revolutionary in the historical sense—what we now call a "paradigm shift"—was the fundamental change in people's understanding of how they belonged to their society. In particular, the concept of the individual as a private citizen—a concept that we now take for granted—evolved at this time.

Before the American and Industrial revolutions, individuals were subjects beholden to a sovereign. The sovereign-subject relationship was the defining political relationship. In the modern world, individuals were redefined as citizens whose basic relationship was to a state. The citizen-state relationship became the new overarching relationship in terms of which the rights of individuals and the roles of institutions would be defined.

Within this new relationship, citizens were understood to be free and equal. Each citizen had a right to choose his religious beliefs according to his conscience, to speak freely to others about their political and religious views, and to gather together, assemble and organize to achieve political and other ends. From the idea that individuals had rights came **the distinction between a private and a public realm**. Liberalism—the philosophy of limited government—rested on a firm commitment to define the scope of the private life and to protect it by declaring the state's exclusion from it.[5] In the old sovereign-subject paradigm, individual freedom, equality and privacy were anything but the norm.

Liberal-democratic government is thus about balancing the idea that individuals have a private life—personal freedom—with the idea that they also share common interests. It rests on the premise that free individuals must consent to be governed and that, in such and arrangement, everyone's interests must be treated with equal concern. It is, in short, a philosophy of what it is to be an individual and a member of a community. It is a political theory about how to manage the relationship between personal and collective identity.

Over the last two and a half centuries, the liberal nation-state was the ultimate response to the challenge of striking the right balance between individual freedom and collective interest, private and public. From an historical viewpoint, it is the result of a curious blend of 18th century liberal individualism with 19th century romantic nationalism, an effort at synthesis that more than one writer has regarded as oxymoronic. Nevertheless, it is an institutional form that has served the world well.

As a result of globalization and the spread of information and communications technologies (ICTs), however, the future of the traditional nation-state is not clear. In modern liberal-democratic states such a Canada, identities are less and less homogeneous—less and less "national"—at the same time that the economy is becoming global, and transnational movements and organizations of all sorts are emerging.

[5] The word "liberalism" is used here to refer to the political philosophy rather than to a particular political party. In Canada, virtually all major political parties are a part of this tradition.

A key part of the democratic challenge facing them in the 21st century will be to redefine key terms that have defined the nation-state for over two centuries—including, national sovereignty, citizenship and national identity—in light of globalization.

Although it would be rash to conclude that liberal-democratic nation-states are about to disappear, their role and structure clearly are changing. A key part of the democratic challenge facing them in the 21st century will be to redefine key terms that have defined the nation-state for over two centuries—including, national sovereignty, citizenship and national identity—in light of globalization. An institution such as CanadaPlace and, in particular, the Digital Commons could provide a useful model for international forums that may help accomplish this task. Certainly, it could serve as a forum for Canadians to debate these questions.

The remainder of this section sketches the historical context in which the larger mission of CanadaPlace—discussed in Section 4—should be situated, and in which it may find yet an even larger mission.

5.2 Globalization Yesterday and Today

Globalization is transforming economies and societies around the world. As borders disappear, trade flows rise. Populations are increasingly mobile. Millions of feet of tiny fiber optic cables lay buried under cities, prairies and on mountainsides. Satellites shower the earth with electronic bursts, making communications instantaneous. If Marshall McLuhan's image of the world as a "global village" was only a vision in the age of TV, it is becoming reality in the age of the Internet.

But if globalization is now a startling fact, it is not a new occurrence. The last wave washed over the world more than a century ago, during the reign of the British Empire. Its high-water mark was in the late 1800s. An impressive system of international trade and commerce, supported by British military, political and legal machinery—and, to a lesser extent, that of France and other European colonial rulers—connected countries and economies around the world. The system was powered by the steam engine, on land and sea. What is different about globalization today?

The new vision of globalization is of the world as a village rather than an empire. Multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the G-8 or the United Nations are supposed to be part of an evolutionary process, inching nation-states toward a new non-authoritarian or non-colonial system of international governance.

First, the Empire is gone. Although America has become a "superpower," it is neither the author nor the enforcer of a military, political and legal framework for globalization. America may be enormously influential but it does not rule the world. Recent events have underlined the need for even Americans to build coalitions in the international arena. Empires are no longer respectable. Instead, the new vision of globalization is of the world as a village rather than an empire. Multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the G-8 or the United Nations are supposed to be part of an evolutionary process, inching nation-states toward a new non-authoritarian or non-colonial system of international governance.

Second, globalization is powered by ICTs, not the steam engine. In the 19th century, economic development meant building factories that turned raw materials into manufactured goods. Major powers such as Britain relied on the global trading system to sell their goods and on the steam engine to get them to market. Today, the real value added results from knowledge and information. The steam engine has disappeared. Unlike textiles or tractors, "information services" flash through cyberspace like bullets. The richer the global economy becomes in new knowledge-based products, the more traditional manufacturing becomes the trademark of antiquated economies.

A third difference lies in the ubiquitous reach of the new global system. In the last round, it was designed and managed by statesmen and industrial elites. Today, globalization stretches all the way down, involving small businesses, NGOs and even household planners. Huge numbers of people participate in the system directly—as consumers on Amazon.com or eBay, members of an international academic community, participants in a global information network, casual visitors to

a chat room, or members of the environmental movement—all through the Internet. Borrowing some jargon from economics, we can say that **globalization today is as much a micro as a macro phenomenon**.

These three points combine to underscore the huge difference between globalization in the 19th century and today. In the first wave, it was really a system of nation-states that operated much like chessmen on a board. Each playing piece (nation-state) had its separate territory, identity and powers. Like chessmen, they differed greatly in these characteristics but, through common practices and their position on a single playing board, they formed a system.

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By contrast, a global village would be far less clearly composed of separate or autonomous pieces. The vision behind it is of a single, integrated whole that contains many communities. Within the village, communities overlap and merge with one another in myriad ways. It is more like a system of systems, or a network of networks, in which the players' **interdependence** with the others replaces their **independence** as the point of departure for defining who they are and what matters to them.

Thus, while residents of the cities of Toronto and Vancouver may belong to the same national political community (Canada), increasingly they belong to divergent economic communities, or perhaps different economic streams, within the global economy. Who they are as Canadians—what they share through their common citizenship—may say little about their respective interests as participants (and perhaps competitors) in the global economy. Public policy must be sensitive to such points of divergence and convergence.

The difference between the old and new approaches to globalization is profound. The old system was simpler. It assumed that the task of designing and managing the system involved a few key corporate actors, such as states, institutions and large businesses. The strategy was for senior representatives to negotiate solutions to problems or common rules of action. They, in turn, would impose the results on the individuals that they represented. The model is thus one of elite accommodation. Rules or solutions are negotiated at the highest level and then implemented from the top down, through command-and-control organizational structures. This worked well in the 19th century. It will fail in the 21st.

5.3 Toward a Post-Industrial Model of Governance

The village is not a collection of players. It is a web of relationships that is too intricate, vast and complex to be adequately represented by traditional lists of key corporate leaders, who are then expected to implement decisions from the top down.

In an interdependent system such as the global village, we must be far more circumspect about identifying the "separate pieces"—the corporate actors—that make up the system. The village is not a **collection of players**. It is a **web of relationship*s*** that is too intricate, vast and complex to be adequately represented by traditional lists of key corporate leaders, who are then expected to implement decisions from the top down. Such an approach assumes that the rest of the citizenry will comply with these decisions, which in turn assumes that the decisions will be regarded as legitimate. This kind of deference to elites is disappearing.

In the global village, individuals have too many links with too many other—possibly competing—communities or corporate entities for leaders to assume that a simple command-and-control approach will carry such legitimacy. It is no longer enough for them to appeal to the loyalty or trust of those they represent, whether as citizens of a state, members of an organization or employees of a firm: in the global village, too often individuals will lack the kind of undivided loyalty or deference to authority that such an approach requires.

Citizenship in the global village must be supported by a new post-industrial vision of democratic governance. At the international level, this vision downplays the traditional view that

sovereignty is an absolute power, exercised by a single body of elected representatives, within clearly defined territorial boundaries. Instead, it emphasizes the increasingly important role played by other transnational social, cultural, political and economic actors, and the high degree of interdependence between them and governments, as well as between governments. Domestically (within nation-states) it emphasizes the increasingly complex nature of citizens' membership and participation in a variety of social, cultural, political and economic communities, many of which are transnational.

Under this new model, governments encourage citizens to engage one another and assist them to organize into "communities-of-interest" or "networks" in which they can debate, explore and pursue key concerns, goals and values. Such networks play a key role in the development of public policy, and the design and delivery of public services.

Under this new model, governments encourage citizens to engage one another and assist them to organize into "communities-of-interest" or "networks" in which they can debate, explore and pursue key concerns, goals and values. Such networks play a key role in the development of public policy, and the design and delivery of public services. The idea of such networks is a much richer one than the so-called "stakeholders" of traditional public-policy consultations. For example, networks tend to be more inclusive, less formal, self-organizing and will often transcend national boundaries.

From a public-policy viewpoint, the idea that we are in "transition" from one kind of system to another poses pressing—and worrying—questions: What happens to nation-states such as Canada in the global village? Will they dissolve? Will the word "sovereignty" remain a meaningful part of our political vocabulary? What is the relationship between nation-states and new multilateral institutions that are supposed to govern the global village? Are such institutions democratic? What adjustments to domestic institutions and practices might be needed to help Canadians respond effectively and democratically to the challenges? Are new institutions needed? If so, what might they be like? What are the implications for key political categories such as citizenship, leadership or democratic debate?

5.4 The Current Debate over Globalization

Over the last few years, the debate over globalization has gained momentum, largely as a result of the remarkable energy and organizational success of the so-called "anti-globalization forces." These forces are commonly portrayed as a collection of anarchists, radicals, old-style leftists and luddites. Many commentators dismiss their opposition to international trade as the product of an antiquated ideology. But as the "movement" finds its voice and begins to articulate its purpose, the message coming from some quarters is more forward-looking than the conventional wisdom suggests. Indeed, characterizing it as an "anti-globalization" movement seems quaint, if not misleading.

Increasingly, certain spokespersons point out that **they are not opposed to globalization**. On the contrary, they may be among its strongest advocates—especially those from the environmental or anti-poverty movements, both of whom have argued for years that global solutions to environmental threats or world poverty are the only viable ones. The real issue, they say, is not whether globalization should occur or whether it is desirable. The answer is yes on both counts. It is not as though these people pine for a return to the 19th- or 20th-century world of sovereign nation-states. Their real concern is over the form that globalization will take. More specifically, if new multi-lateral institutions such as the WTO, G-8, World Bank and UN are emerging as key players in global governance, to whom are these institutions accountable? How transparent are they? Who decides what authorities will be transferred to them from nation-states and by what process?

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In short, these anti-globalization activists claim that their real goal is not to block globalization, but to ensure that it evolves out of a democratic process in which their views and interests have been adequately represented. At the moment, they maintain, the process is one of elite-accommodation. It is a product of the old model of globalization, and is dominated by a relatively small number of corporate players. Not surprisingly, they raise the objection that the organizations steering globalization, such as the WTO or G8, reflect the interests and viewpoints of these

corporate players, often at the expense of key aspects of national sovereignty, the environment or the struggling economies of less-developed nations.

Establishing multilateral institutions at the global level will almost certainly involve a redefining of the roles and responsibilities of governments in nation-states such as Canada—perhaps a radical one. A real concern within some quarters of the anti-globalization movement is over a potential loss of democratic control and accountability—over a loss of "public space." What is the role of nation-states and national governments in the global village? Who should decide and by what processes?

A key challenge facing governments as we move into the post-industrial era will be to create institutions, policies and programs that foster the kind of open and informed debate that will be needed if Canadians and others are to rise to the challenges posed by globalization.

The new information and communications technology has enormous power to transform public processes of debate and discussion. Unlike radio and television, which broadcast in one direction, the Internet is essentially interactive. But nothing in it guarantees that this interactive capacity will be used to engage citizens. It could as easily be used to monitor and control them in ways that upset the balance between personal freedom and, say, collective security. The future is undecided. A key challenge facing governments as we move into the post-industrial era will be to create institutions, policies and programs that foster the kind of open and informed debate that will be needed if Canadians and others are to rise to the challenges posed by globalization.

CanadaPlace could play a significant role in facilitating and informing such debate. It aspires to be both the archives of our democratic heritage and a great hall where citizens can assemble, meet, propose, discuss, debate, research, create, organize, reflect and learn. It could be the first truly post-industrial institution of the 21st century, if the will and leadership are there.

Conclusion

Over the past decade, e-government has evolved in a series of fits and starts that has landed us at a turning point. The road ahead poses challenges but also provides opportunities. The increasingly multi-ethnic and multicultural nature of most advanced industrial democracies will make intercultural learning a critical part of strengthening democratic institutions and societies in the coming years.

Innovative ideas that seek to facilitate and enhance intercultural leaning should find a resonance in Canadian society. Developing them will be a key challenge as we move forward. CanadaPlace, and the Digital Commons in particular, can help not only to move the yardsticks on service delivery and citizen engagement but more broadly to put identity, citizenship and culture at the forefront of government thinking in the next decade. Perhaps no other country is as well positioned as Canada to act as a laboratory for experimenting with new ways of understanding these concepts. Canadian Heritage could play a critical role in this next step forward.

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