



Société québécoise de science politique

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Author(s): Roger Gibbins

Source: *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Dec., 2000), pp. 667-689

Published by: Canadian Political Science Association and the Société québécoise de science politique

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3232659>

Accessed: 21/11/2009 10:25

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Federalism in a Digital World¹

ROGER GIBBINS *Canada West Foundation*

He was the boy of this place, of these woods, these beaches, the boy who smelled like this forest. If identity was geography instead of blood—if living in a place was what really mattered—then Ishmael was part of her, inside of her, as much as anything Japanese.

— David Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*²

We live in a world of explosive change in information and communication technologies (ICTs).³ Companies advertise cell phone rates that apply to calls anywhere within North America, trumpeting that North America is now a single “neighbourhood.” E-mail puts us in touch with friends and colleagues around the world as easily as it does with neighbours or colleagues in the same department. We phone individuals rather than, as in the past, a place, hoping that the person we are calling is “home.” Home is where the cell is, and not the heart. News-groups create virtual communities unbounded by territory. In general, ICTs appear to reduce dramatically the importance of geography, territory and distance. Thus if “living in a place” is what really mattered for identity in the recent past of Guterson’s novel,⁴ the scope and pace of this technological change should have a profound effect on identities. Simply put, ICTs have the potential to erode, and erode rapidly, the territorial foundations of our lives.

1 Presidential address to the Canadian Political Science Association, Quebec City, Quebec, 2000.

2 David Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 206.

3 I will be using this term very broadly to include telephone, television and computer technologies, the digitalization of all three, and their increased inter-connectivity (or convergence) through cable TV, cell phones, e-mail, satellites and the Internet.

4 Most of the book takes place between the late 1930s and the early 1950s.

Roger Gibbins, President, Canada West Foundation, #1102, 425-1st Street SW, Calgary, Alberta T2P 4L4; rgibbins@cwf.ca

Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique
XXXIII:4 (December/Decembre 2000) 667-689

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There is no reason to presume that the territorial dimension of politics will be immune from this transformation. Change relating to information and communication technologies *must* have an impact⁵; the only questions are where that impact is most likely to occur and what magnitude the effect will be. Some of the answers to these questions can be teased out of a rapidly growing literature on the impact of ICTs on digital democracy,⁶ e-government and the changing nature of the public service in the “information age,”⁷ the regulation of cyberspace,⁸ policy implications of a “wired world,”⁹ the “digital divide” between the technological haves and have-nots,¹⁰ and the creation of virtual political worlds and communities.¹¹ However, and despite the gentle nudge given by Ed Black’s 1983 Canadian Political Science Association presidential address,¹² political science literature has ignored the

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- 5 T. Becker maintains that ICTs have the potential to facilitate a “quantum leap” in democratic politics (“Governance and electronic innovations: A Clash of Paradigms,” *Information, Communication and Society* 1 [1998], 343).
 - 6 Barry N. Hague and Brian D. Loader, *Digital Democracy: Discourse and Decision Making in the Information Age* (London: Routledge, 1999); Jon Katz, “The Digital Citizen,” *Wired* (December 1997), 68 ff; and Roza Tsagarousianou, Damian Tambini and Cathy Bryan, eds., *Cyberdemocracy: Technologies, Cities and Civic Networks* (London: Routledge, 1998).
 - 7 Christine Bellamy and John A. Taylor, *Governing in the Information Age* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998); “A Survey of Government and the Internet,” *The Economist* (June 24, 2000), www.economist.com/editorial.
 - 8 Brian D. Loader, ed., *The Governance of Cyberspace* (London: Routledge, 1997).
 - 9 Cynthia Alexander and Leslie A. Pal, eds., *Digital Democracy: Policy and Politics in the Wired World* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998).
 - 10 N. Bowie, “Equity and Access to Information Technology,” *The Annual Review*, Institute for Information Studies (1990), 131-67; A. Gillespie and K. Robins, “Geographical Inequities: The Spatial Bias of the New Communications Technologies,” *Journal of Communications* 39 (1989), 7-18; and David Leiberman, “On the wrong side of the the wires: America’s digital divide,” *Money* (October 11, 1999). See also the Center of the New West’s conference report on the Fifth Annual Regional Forum on the Digital Divide, Albuquerque, New Mexico, January 6-7, 2000.
 - 11 John Markoff, “A New Outpost on the Far Fringes of Cyberspace,” *The New York Times*, June 4, 2000, Y8; and H. Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (London: Minerva, 1995). The more robust cybernations include the Principality of Freedomia (www.freedomia.org), the Republic of Lomar (www.republic-of-lomar.org) and the Kingdom of Talossa (www.talossa.com).
 - 12 In his forward-looking address, Black posed the following question: “What will be the intergovernmental consequences of Ottawa’s rapidly escalating conversion to electronic data processing and decision making? We should remember that Ottawa’s policy making in the postwar period was more than casually related to its demonstrated superiority over the provinces in many areas of technical expertise” (Edwin R. Black, “Politics on a Microchip,” this JOURNAL 16 [1983], 681).

Abstract. The explosive growth of information and communication technologies (ICTs) threatens to erode the federal nature of the Canadian state and its underlying territorial identities. ICTs challenge both the importance of territoriality in political life and federalism's preoccupation with boundary maintenance. This challenge is brought into bold relief by the promise of a single electronic portal through which citizens will be able to interact seamlessly with their local, provincial and national governments. The forecast is that federalism as a system of government is increasingly at odds with the *information age* that ICTs are fashioning. This forecast, however, should not be seen as a lament for federalism as new forms of e-government and freedom from territorial restraints are likely to be embraced enthusiastically by Canadian citizens.

Résumé. La croissance exponentielle des technologies de l'information et des communications (TICs) menace d'éroder la nature fédérale de l'État canadien et ses identités territoriales fondamentales. Les TICs remettent en question tant l'importance de la territorialité dans la vie politique que l'attachement du fédéralisme au maintien des frontières intérieures existantes. Ce défi est mis en lumière par la perspective d'un portail électronique unique qui permettra le développement d'interactions directes entre les citoyens et leurs gouvernements locaux, provinciaux et national. Il est prévisible que *l'ère de l'information* et la popularisation des TICs feront du fédéralisme un système de gouvernement de plus en plus anachronique. Il ne faut pas, toutefois, voir dans cette prévision un regret du fédéralisme, puisque les nouvelles formes de gouvernement libérés des contraintes territoriales que feront naître les TICs seront probablement adoptées avec enthousiasme par les citoyens canadiens.

potential impact of ICTs on federalism.¹³ This oversight is surprising because federal systems, with their emphasis on territoriality and boundary maintenance, are particularly vulnerable to the impact of ICTs. The following article is directed to this lacuna in the literature and, more specifically, to the possible transformation of Canadian federalism in the wake of the revolutionary change in information and communication technologies.¹⁴

The Nature of Federalism

Federalism is a loosely defined concept in political science, and federal states are marked at least as much by their striking differences as by their structural and constitutional similarities. However, the federalism challenge posed by ICTs relates directly to two common features of federal states: an emphasis on territoriality, and thus territorial iden-

13 For example, Alexander and Pal's comprehensive volume, *Digital Democracy*, contains no references to federalism even though the policy discussion throughout is emphatically Canadian.

14 My focus on ICTs can be seen as an expanded treatment of a relatively small slice of David J. Elkins, *Beyond Sovereignty: Territory and Political Economy in the Twenty-First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995). For a rich treatment of the relationship between territoriality and globalization, see Zdravko Mlinar, ed., *Globalization and Territorial Identities* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992).

tities, and a preoccupation with boundary maintenance between constitutionally defined orders of government.

Although territoriality is a feature of all nation states, it has particular relevance for federalism. Federal states rest on territorial foundations; they bring together territorially delineated communities into larger, more complex, national communities. In so doing, they reinforce the political relevance of territory. As E. E. Schattschneider stated 40 years ago, political institutions reflect the "organization of bias,"¹⁵ and in federal states that bias is towards territoriality. Alan Cairns and many others have pointed out that citizens in federal states are defined by their place of residence with respect to some of the most important political institutions including provincial and state governments, upper chambers and constitutional amending formulae.¹⁶ Canadian national electoral boundaries do not cross provincial lines, and even appointments to the Supreme Court are apportioned by territory. While federal institutions may not always reinforce territoriality,¹⁷ Canada provides a striking example of how parliamentary institutions and electoral systems can elevate the place of territoriality in political life. Territorial conflict trumps other potential lines of division within the electorate, such as class and gender, which lack territorial definition. Those which do prevail, such as language, are reinforced, rather than cross-cut, by territoriality.

Hand-in-hand with the emphasis on territoriality comes an emphasis on territorial identities, nurtured by political institutions and highlighted in political conflict. Non-territorial identities, such as *French Canadian*, are supplanted by territorial identities, such as *Québécois*. Territory becomes a marker in political discourse for a broad range of values, attitudes and policy preferences. Territorial identities become the shorthand by which we define ourselves and others define us.

Federal systems are also characterized by the emphasis they place on boundary maintenance. This emphasis stems directly from a constitutionally defined division of powers and the creation of two constitutionally entrenched orders of government. It is not surprising, then, that a good deal of federal politics involves aspects of boundary maintenance: intergovernmental relations, court challenges and competition

15 E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960).

16 For example, see Alan Cairns' presidential address to the Canadian Political Science Association, "The Governments and Societies of Canadian Federalism," this JOURNAL 10 (1977), 695-725.

17 The United States Senate provides an example of a federal institution which in many ways transcends territoriality more than it reinforces its effects within the national political system. See Roger Gibbins, *Regionalism: Territorial Politics in Canada and the United States* (Toronto: Buttersworth, 1982), chap. 3.

among governments for political credit and responsibility. To stress this feature is not to blind us to the many advantages of federal governance, including policy competition, greater sensitivity to regional interests, and increased sensitivity to minorities; rather, it is to highlight an aspect of federalism that, like territoriality, is vulnerable to the corrosive impact of ICTs.

The Nature of the ICT Challenge

There is little question that at the beginning of the twenty-first century we are in the midst of fundamental social change in information and communication technologies. Although not everyone is fully “wired” or routinely cruises the Internet, the spread of ICTs is accelerating. The following fragments offer evidence of a heavily wired society:

- A March 1999 poll of 700 respondents showed that 37 per cent of Canadians five years of age or older use the Internet, 40 per cent of Canadian homes have at least one person using the Internet, and 25 per cent of Canadians have their own e-mail address.¹⁸
- Angus Reid Group surveys show that in 1999, 58 per cent of Canadian adults have access to the Internet (December), as do 79 per cent of Canadians aged 12 to 30 (April).
- “In America, the European Union and Japan business spending on [information technology] is growing at an average annual rate of 12 per cent, much faster than overall investment.”¹⁹
- “Spending in the global public-sector information technology market—for equipment, services, infrastructure and communications—is expected to reach \$84.5 billion by 2002 in the U.S. and \$188.6 billion worldwide.”²⁰
- “Two billion Net-based machines are expected to be in use around the world by 2003, compared with 600 million personal computers.”²¹
- In its June 24, 2000 comprehensive survey of “Government and the Internet,” *The Economist* ranked Canada fifth among 34 industrialized countries in the percentage of the population with Internet access at home. With 43 per cent connected at home, Canada ranked behind Norway (the most “connected” country), Singapore, the US and Sweden.

The point to stress is not only the degree to which ICTs have penetrated current societies, but also the inevitability of their rapidly approaching

18 “Canada leads world in surfing by cable,” *Calgary Herald*, May 13, 2000, A4.

19 “Internet Economics: A Thinkers’ Guide,” *The Economist* (April 1, 2000), 64.

20 Joan Walters, “E-voting? Electronic-election business campaigns hard,” *Gazette* (Montreal), May 18, 2000, C3.

21 Juan Rodriguez, “Speed, time and cyberculture,” *Gazette* (Montreal), February 13, 2000, C3.

the rates for telephone and television penetration. If the ICT world is not yet fully upon us, it is pounding at the door.

As *The Economist* ranking illustrates, there is ample evidence that in comparative terms Canada is near the forefront of Western democratic states in the uptake of ICTs. Perhaps because of its size and geography, Canada has a relatively high degree of investment in communications infrastructure.²² A well-educated and generally prosperous labour force, high cable connectivity, and the broad penetration of computer technologies make Canada a good case study for the potential impact of ICTs on political behaviour and institutions. The fact that Canada is a federal state is an added bonus.

Not all ICTs, of course, are identical, and we cannot assume that cell phones will necessarily have the same political effects as the Internet. However, there are some common features of ICTs that relate directly to their potential effects on federalism. As noted in the introduction, ICTs challenge the significance of territoriality for many, perhaps even most forms of human interaction.²³ Not only can we be instantly in touch with people regardless of where they live, and at very little cost, but in many cases it is truly irrelevant where people are. Admittedly, territoriality has a residual importance when it comes to the location of our homes and where we walk the dog. Nevertheless, the dominant ICT message is that territoriality is increasingly irrelevant for consumer behaviour, patterns of association and political behaviour (the flood of politically related e-mail that comes across my computer screen, for example, has very little to do with my location within a specific province or indeed, a specific country). The corrosive effects of ICTs on territoriality are not only readily acknowledged but applauded; individuals are no longer constrained by the territorial communities in which they live but are free to construct, or at least participate in, new virtual communities unlimited by space.²⁴

The impact of ICTs on territorial identities can be placed within the general framework defined by American inter-governmentalism authority John Kincaid:

22 As Kevin Lynch, deputy minister of Industry Canada, pointed out in a 1998 speech, "Among G-7 countries, Canada has the lowest residential telephone charges, the second lowest business telephone charges, and the lowest Internet access charges" ("Connecting Canadians for the 21st Century—Building on a Canadian Advantage," presentation to the Spectrum 20/20 1998 Symposium, Ottawa, December 2, 1998).

23 As Elkins notes, "challenging territoriality is an *incidental* feature of the technologies" (*Beyond Sovereignty*, 71).

24 Elkins argues that the academic research community is a good example of a community unlimited by space, though by no means one restricted to virtual interaction. (*ibid.*, 175).

The global spreading of democratization, human rights conventions, market economics and consumerism is gradually liberating persons from both peoples and places and creating identity opportunities based on personal achievement and lifestyle choices. . . . Global integration is highly corrosive of the cultural glue that has held identities of persons to the peoples and places of their birth.²⁵

More dramatically, David Elkins argued in 1995 that “the territoriality of political, economic, and cultural life has been shattered in recent decades.”²⁶ If anything, this shattering has been increased by the growing impact of ICTs. Although their impact on the territorial identities that underpin and ultimately sustain federal states may still be difficult to document,²⁷ the direction is clear: ICTs will further erode territorial identities and create new spaces for nonterritorial identities. No argument is being made that territorial identities will disappear; as the opening quotation from *Snow Falling on Cedars* suggests, some forms of territoriality are deeply rooted in the human experience. Nonetheless, while we may live in an era of identity politics, the mix of identities is in constant flux and territorial identities, in particular, rest on rapidly shifting ground.

If territorial identities are being eroded by ICTs, federal values, practices and institutions will not be unscathed. For example, the importance and profile of territorial identities in political life will decrease relative to those based on ethnicity, gender, ideology or class. It is commonly asserted that ICTs provide pathways and integrative networks for new social movements such as environmentalism and feminism, both of which incorporate political identities. Protests staged in 2000 in Seattle against the World Trade Organization and in Washington, DC, against the World Bank are not unrelated to transnational political identities that exist more in a virtual world than in a territorial one. ICTs also provide powerful media for pulling together ethnic diaspora, thus strengthening transnational and, in some sense, transcendent ethnic identities.²⁸

25 John Kincaid, “Cities and Citizens in Flux: Global Consumer Integration and Local Civic Fragmentation,” in Peter Karl Kresl and Gary Gappert, eds., *North American Cities and the Global Economy* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995), 82-83.

26 Elkins, *Beyond Sovereignty*, 15.

27 Pioneering work has been done in this area by Carey Hill and Katherine Harmsworth. See Carey Hill, “New Technologies and Territorial Identities in Western Canada” (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1998), and Katherine Harmsworth, “Global Flows and Local Spaces: Identity and Community in a Globalized World” (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, 2000).

28 David J. Elkins, “Globalization, Telecommunication, and Virtual Ethnic Communities,” *International Political Science Review* 18 (1997), 139-52.

This challenge to territoriality and territorial identities is only part of the challenge that ICTs pose to federalism. They also have a proclivity towards horizontal communication, and to the erosion of barriers to horizontality. Networks effortlessly cross provincial and national borders, although not so effortlessly when borders are reinforced by linguistic distinctiveness. More basically, ICTs challenge any boundaries to the flow of information. We need not go as far as the assertion that the Internet is “the closest thing to a functioning large-scale anarchist society that human culture has ever seen”²⁹ to realize that ICTs pose a threat to the highly structured character of conventional federal politics. Federalism is largely about maintaining jurisdictional boundaries and serving territorially defined communities; repeated references to the “division of powers” and “orders of government” reflect core federal values. ICTs, on the other hand, move information past and through boundaries with minimal disruption. At best, borders are irrelevant³⁰; at worst, they are obstacles to political visions built from notions of citizen empowerment and cyberdemocracy, access to information and expanded personal identity space. In short, ICTs give federalism the dated look of a concept designed for a territorial and segmented political world that is rapidly disappearing.

Compounding Effects of Globalization

The anticipated impact of ICTs on federalism is reinforced by the more general impact of globalization; although the two are not one in the same, their effects are intertwined. Part of the corrosive impact of globalization on territoriality, and on federal values, comes from its purported homogenizing effects. Globalization promotes convergence in consumer patterns,³¹ modes of work and social behaviour. If federalism is a configuration of political institutions designed to protect distinctive communities, its rationale is weakened as community values converge on a common global trajectory. Federalism and the jurisdictional walls it erects around territorially defined communities make less sense in the context of a global village knit together by ICTs. As Kenichi Ohmae notes, the distinctions between “us” and “them” become blurred as borders go down, but it is precisely this distinction

29 J. Kinney, “Anarcho-Emergentist Republicans,” *Wired* (September 1995), 94.

30 Matthew Horsman and Andrew Marshall, *After the Nation-State: Citizens, Tribalism and the New World Disorder* (London: HarperCollins, 1994), 176.

31 As Jennifer M. Welsh observes: “The exponential growth in E-commerce, which makes purchasing a truly borderless experience, will only add to the globalization of consumerism” (Welsh, “Is a North American Generation Emerging?” *ISUMA* 1 [2000], 91).

that federalism is designed to protect.³² Although the emergence of quasi-federal structures in Britain and Europe suggests that the protection of cultural distinctiveness may co-habit with increasing economic integration, the conclusion that federal structures are therefore *necessary in the face of globalization* may carry less weight in Alberta and Saskatchewan than it does in Scotland or Catalonia. While the federal impulse to protect the local will persist in Canada, it may be directed to new and less conventional federal targets.

Globalization has been associated with “hollowing out” nation states as powers are transferred upwards to international organizations, devolved downwards to more local governments or dispersed to markets. This leads to significant federal effects. As the traditional economic powers of the national government become less important or less effective, the locus of government shifts more to the traditional domain of provincial and municipal governments. This, in turn, may tip the jurisdictional balance towards provincial governments (and the municipal governments embedded within provincial governments), not by increasing the weight of the provincial jurisdiction in an absolute sense, but by diminishing the weight of the national jurisdiction. However, it may also lead to greater national government intrusions into provincial jurisdictions, such as health care and early childhood development, as the central government struggles to assert its primacy in the political hearts and minds of citizens. To the extent that this orientation of the national government is harnessed to the internationalization of rights and growing judicial intolerance of regional variation in their interpretation, globalization will corrode federalism by bringing into question the logic of maintaining jurisdictional walls around less and less distinct communities.

Globalization also reinforces the horizontal flows that are characteristic of ICTs and the *information age*. As Ronald Deibert explains, “states are evolving from ‘container’ to ‘transmission-belt’ organizations designed to facilitate flows of information and capital and to provide an interface between multiple and overlapping spheres of authority.”³³ If federal states are becoming less container-like, what does this imply for the already permeable provincial containers within the Canadian federal state?

Above all else, globalization is associated with the reduction and increased permeability of international borders. Individuals are less constrained in their personal mobility, political associations, consumer behaviour and identity space. We can move not only our capital but

32 Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economies* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 8.

33 Ronald J. Deibert, “Altered Worlds: Social Forces in the Hypermedia Environment,” in Alexander and Pal, eds., *Digital Democracy*, 40.

our minds freely through space. It is this erosion of borders that ICTs reinforce and accelerate. They make it possible for a company “to operate in various parts of the world without having to build up an entire business system in each of the countries where it has a presence.”³⁴ As Anna Malina explains:

With more people connected to speedy forms of information and communication, there are increasing opportunities for developing, selling and buying services anywhere in the world. Large-scale commercial service providers sell access to a virtual world of fast, easy, electronic information and communication. On entry to commercial zones, customers are assembled at the electronic portals. Subsequent movement between links is mediated by the mercantile nature of virtual architecture.³⁵

Although national borders are being eroded by the joint effects of globalization and ICTs, they still remain robust when compared to borders *within* federal states. Conventional federalism debates about the ebb and flow of jurisdictional control between the federal and provincial governments seem increasingly dated in the new globalization framework of a “borderless world.” As borders come down, the distinctive communities that federalism seeks to protect become less and less distinct. As Zdravko Mlinar notes, “With the growing *spatial mobility* of people across local and national borders, developing into a global flow, it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine whether or not particular individuals belong to a specific local or national unit.”³⁶

The Canadian Case

The argument to this point is that a basic tension exists between federalism and ICTs, a tension reinforced by the effects of globalization. ICTs challenge the territorial foundations of federal states and the preoccupation of such states with boundary maintenance. The argument is that federalism as a system of governance is increasingly at odds with the *information age* that ICTs are fashioning. I now turn to a more detailed description of the Canadian situation and how ICTs may recast the conventional federal community in Canada, give greater weight to local communities and their governments, and increasingly blur jurisdictional boundaries. The net effect should be both to dimin-

34 Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State*, 4.

35 Anna Malina, “Perspectives on Citizen Democratisation and Alienation in the Virtual Public Sphere,” in Hague and Loader, *Digital Democracy*, 27.

36 Zdravko Mlinar, “Individuation and Globalization: The Transformation of Territorial Social Organization,” in Mlinar, ed., *Globalization and Territorial Identities*, 26.

ish the importance of federalism and to redefine its constituent communities.

Redefining the Federal Community

The weakening of territorial identities will undercut the general importance of federalism as a set of organizing principles for political life. If place comes to mean less in the overall scheme of things, then we are less likely to support political frameworks designed to reinforce the importance of space. While in theory newsgroups, chatlines and other forms of virtual communities could be organized around territorial communities such as Manitoba or western Canada, there is very little evidence of this taking place (cities, however, are another matter, discussed below).³⁷ ICTs do not reinforce the provincial communities from which federal states are formed. In addition, they may shuffle the relative importance of various territorial identities, weakening some and thereby strengthening the importance of others. While the corrosive effects of ICTs should be felt across *all* forms of territorial and spatial identities, some will be more resistant than others. National identities, for example, may be more resistant to corrosion than are provincial identities given the greater symbolic, economic, cultural, political and affective weight of the national community for most Canadians outside Quebec.

Admittedly, there is no evidence that identity space is necessarily limited, that the competition among political identities is zero-sum. We could, for example, become more attached to the local communities in which we live without becoming less attached, *in an absolute sense*, to our province or our country. Similarly, we could develop new global identities without necessarily shedding existing provincial and national identities. However, while the identity space of individuals may be unlimited, the political agenda is not. There is real competition for news, and for the participation and interest of citizens. As a consequence, it is difficult for new identities to grow without displacing older ones in whole or in part. At some point, the competition between territorial and nonterritorial identities approaches the zero-sum case.

To appreciate the potential importance of ICTs in weakening political attachments to existing territorial communities, it is useful to recall Benedict Anderson's description of nations as "imagined communities."³⁸ The impact of the digital revolution will be to broaden our imaginations by loosening the grip of territorial con-

37 Deibert's discussion of "global civil society networks" and his description of the huge number of environmental organizations on the Net contrasts sharply with the limited number of regional sites ("Altered Worlds," 32-35).

38 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991).

straints: with the Internet, it becomes much easier to imagine a truly global community. As our imaginations and identity space expand, provincial communities and identities will most likely take the hit. National identities will be buttressed by passports, distinctive currencies (at least for now), symbols such as the maple leaf, and international athletic competitions. Provinces lack many of these, or have more limited versions. For example, I am much more likely to notice how Canada does in the Olympic Games than I am to notice how Alberta does in the Canada Summer Games.

This focus on the relative strength of national and provincial identities is still too restrictive for our discussion of the impact of ICTs. It reflects a dated style of federalist discourse that fails to consider the global community and to recognize the growing importance of local communities.

Local Communities in the Canadian Federal State

At first glance, the corrosive effects of ICTs appear to be felt across all Canadian territorial identities and communities. If territorial boundaries are eroded by technological change, we should expect this to apply to communities *within* federal states as much as to federal states themselves. If the technologies weaken my ties to Canada and Alberta, there is little reason why the same effect should not be felt on my ties to Calgary or even the neighbourhood where I live. However, a closer examination suggests that the corrosive effects of ICTs and the processes of globalization within which they are embedded may not be uniform, and that local communities may be a case apart. As Manuel Castells explains, even though place begins to lose its meaning in a new world of networks and spatial flows, in the context of a world economy “local governments may have more importance than national ones.”³⁹

Glocalism is a term that describes the growing importance of locality (as opposed to territoriality in general) *as a consequence of globalization*.⁴⁰ Local communities are becoming the staging grounds

39 Manuel Castells, *The Informational City: A New Framework for Social Change*, Research Paper 184 (Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, 1991), 1. Castells may have been overly optimistic when writing this in 1991; national governments have not passed from the scene. Nonetheless, he effectively captures the *direction* of change.

40 The lineage of glocalism or “glocalization” is far from clear. Some claim that it stems from a Japanese automobile manufacturer’s description of global marketing in local contexts. Early scholarly users of the term include Thomas J. Courchene (“Glocalization: the Regional/International Interface,” *Canadian Journal of Regional Science* 18 [1995], 1-20; and Courchene and Colin Templer, *From Heartland to North American Region State: The Social, Fiscal and Federal*

from which we engage the global community, and/or the grounds upon which we can exercise some effective control in the global community; Judith Garber refers to local communities “acting as enclaves against or as junctures with outside forces.”⁴¹ While participating in the global community is often intoxicating, we still need a home base, somewhere to raise a family, walk the dog, and talk to friends over a beer, coffee or the fence rather than over the Net. As Raimondo Strassoldo explains in more detail:

Modern man/woman has created a global system which has many advantages and values but which is certainly too complex to survey and manage, even though only intellectually. Post-modern man/woman, just because he/she is so deeply embedded in global information flows, may feel the need to revive small enclaves of familiarity, intimacy, security, intelligibility, organic-sensuous interaction, in which to mirror him/herself. . . . The possibility of being exposed, through modern communication technology, to the whole infinity of places, persons, things, ideas, makes it all the more necessary to have, as a compensation, a center in which to cultivate one’s self. The easy access of the whole world, with just a little time and money, gives new meaning to the need of a subjective center—a home, a community, a locale—from which to move and to which to return and rest.⁴²

In this sense, the local and the global are complementary and mutually reinforcing, two faces of the same globalization coin. With a secure local base and ready electronic and air access to the global community, we may have less need for other territorial communities, such as provinces, that stand between the local and the global.

If the local and the global are two faces of the same coin, the thickness of the coin between the two faces may be shrinking, getting thinner with each technological advance. Just as cellphone rates are beginning to erase the cost differential between local and continental calls, the space between local and global political identities may be similarly compressed. Several authors have suggested that ICTs allow individuals to

Evolution of Ontario (Toronto: Centre for Public Management, University of Toronto, 1998). For a related conceptual discussion, albeit one that does not use the term glocalism, see Horsman and Marshall, *After the Nation-State*; Castells, *The Informational City*, 20-1; and Caroline Andrew, “Globalization and Local Action,” in Timothy L. Thomas, ed., *The Politics of the City: A Canadian Perspective* (Toronto: ITP Nelson, 1997), 139-50.

41 Judith A. Garber, “Frameworks of Enquiry: Local Government, Urban Politics, and Social Movements,” in Thomas, ed., *The Politics of the City*, 42. In a similar fashion, Castells states, “If they want to control me, they have to come to my neighbourhood some day, so I’d rather control my neighbourhood, then I would have a grasp on my life” (*The Informational City*, 18).

42 Raimondo Strassoldo, “Globalism and localism: Theoretical reflections and some evidence,” in Mlinar, ed., *Globalization and Territorial Identities*, 46-47.

connect both locally and globally, and therefore strengthen the local-global axis that underpins glocalism.⁴³ The virtual world may be particularly appealing to local governments, providing them a degree of “digital autonomy” far beyond the very limited straightjacket.⁴⁴ It may also be at the local level that the democratic potential of ICTs is most easily realized,⁴⁵ although here the empirical evidence is far from conclusive.⁴⁶ Manuel Castells in particular underscores the potential mix of ICTs and local communities, of individuals working both locally and globally, although he cautions that this mix may deepen social divisions within local communities.⁴⁷

Glocalism may reflect another facet of globalization: it is commonly asserted that globalization weakens the role of the nation-state as an intermediary or buffer between its citizens and the global environment. If the nation-state’s role is diminished, cities may come to provide the key strategic link between the national and global economies, a role that will increase as globalization advances.⁴⁸ Citizen identifications with the nation-state, and with provinces within federal states, may also weaken. Horsman and Marshall suggest that the result will be a shift in loyalties: “Local attachments are likely to grow wherever the nation-state abdicates its role as the prime mediator between the citizen and his nation. As a consequence, the ‘nation’ will find other means of expression, led perhaps by a reliance on smaller units of political affiliation—as small as the local community in which the citizen lives.”⁴⁹ It is worth noting that Horsman and Marshall do not see this development as benign; for them, the two faces of the glocalism phenomenon are globalism and tribalism.

The growing importance of the local is not only the product of ICTs or globalization; it is reinforced by other trends that make cities more important in the economic, social and political lives of citizens.⁵⁰ The offloading of service delivery by the federal and provincial gov-

43 Hague and Loader, *Digital Democracy*, 12.

44 Brian Loader, “The Governance of Cyberspace,” in Loader, ed., *The Governance of Cyberspace*, 10.

45 See Trevor Locke, “Participation, Inclusion, Exclusion and Netactivism: How the Internet Invents New Forms of Democratic Activity,” in Hague and Loader, eds., *Digital Democracy*, 211-21.

46 Matthew Hale, Juliet Musso and Christopher Weare, “Developing Digital Democracy: Evidence from California Municipal Web Pages,” *ibid.*, 96-115.

47 Manuel Castells, *The Informational City* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

48 Richard V. Knight, “City Building in a Global Society,” in Richard Knight and Gary Gappert, eds., *Cities in a Global Society* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1989), 327.

49 Horsman and Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, 181.

50 It is not difficult, although it may be contentious, to fit Aboriginal governments within the more general context of glocalism.

ernments to regional and local boards and governments parallels a more sweeping trend towards devolution and subsidiarity among federal and nonfederal states alike. Across Canada, regional health authorities are playing an increasingly important role in shaping health policies and health services. Added to this is the steady urbanization of Canadian society, and the growing assertiveness of highly stressed municipal governments.⁵¹ Immigration and the cultural changes which flow in its wake are primarily urban phenomena.⁵² Finally, there is fragmentary evidence that younger Canadians who are most exposed to the ICT revolution “are exercising their civil and political rights at a local level, where they are much more confident that they can have an impact.”⁵³

All of this suggests a gradual but significant shift of citizen loyalties and identifications towards local communities, a shift likely to be reinforced by the broader and deeper penetration of ICTs into Canadian society. Toronto mayor Mel Lastman’s ruminations about Toronto as its own province, an international city state on the global stage, is more visionary than his critics may have realized. What remains to be seen, however, is whether the local face of the glocalism phenomenon will adhere to provinces, as Thomas Courchere and Colin Templer suggest,⁵⁴ to the regional economies identified by Ohmae,⁵⁵ or to municipalities, as Mayor Lastman suggests. If Courchere is correct, then glocalism will strengthen the provinces and thereby reinforce conventional federalism. I suspect that most Canadian provinces are too large, complex and abstract to meet the criteria of local, and that glocalism will be marked by the increased profile of municipalities and the diminished profile of provinces.

Blurring jurisdictional boundaries

A good deal of federal politics, and particularly intergovernmental relations, addresses issues of boundary maintenance. While this does not preclude intergovernmental co-operation, and indeed may stem in part from co-operation, it does mean that provincial governments are eternally vigilant about federal intrusions onto provincial turf. It would be difficult, for instance, to understand many aspects of contemporary public policy without taking into account the boundary maintenance aspects of the health care debate within Alberta (Bill 11) and the ongoing

51 See Casey Vander Ploeg, *Cities @ 2000: Canada’s Urban Landscape* (Calgary: Canada West Foundation, 1999).

52 Earl H. Fry, “North American Municipalities and Their Involvement in the Global Economy,” in Kresl and Gappert, eds., *North American Cities*, 27.

53 Welsh, “Is a North American Generation Emerging?” 90.

54 Courchere and Templer, *From Heartland to North American Region State*.

55 Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State*.

nationalist debate within Quebec. The substantial fiscal flows from Ottawa to provincial and territorial governments, and the mass of inter-governmental agreements in place as a consequence, do not obviate boundary maintenance; they simply make that task more complex.

The interesting thing about ICTs in this context is that they are hostile to boundaries in any form. Technological change is seen to have a liberating effect as walls come tumbling down between countries and within our minds. ICTs encourage the instantaneous flow of information across boundaries wherever they arise, and thus work against the silos of federal governance. Their potential in this respect is nicely illustrated by the rapid evolution of government-on-line or, as it is sometimes called, e-government.

Government-On-Line

An important outcome of the revolution in information and communication technologies is the ability of governments to go “on-line,” to use websites and the Internet to provide better citizen access to government information and services. This is not yet anything close to cyberdemocracy; improved access should not be confused with enhanced democratic control. Nonetheless, e-government should be attractive to citizens and a source of greater efficiency for the public service.⁵⁶ What may be less clear is why government-on-line should be of interest to federal scholars.⁵⁷ The interest comes from the inevitability of linked government sites enabling citizens to surf through an apparently seamless array of programmes, services and agencies. Seamless, that is, in a *federal* sense, for the linked sites will span federal, provincial and municipal governments.

By their very nature, ICTs are hostile to the partitioning of the political world which is so important for federal states. While federalism emphasizes the jurisdictional boundaries between orders of government, ICTs and e-government undermine the partitioning of information. As Bellamy and Taylor explain, “electronic networks can permit the *integration* of data which are held in different computer files, in different information systems, in different places and, even, in different

56 The Government of Canada intended every department to have an on-line presence by December 2000. The UK government is committed to having all dealings with government being capable of electronic delivery by 2008. See David Cooke, “Information Age Government in Britain,” *Canadian Government Executive* 2 (2000), 18-20.

57 It is not unfair to argue that Canadian federal scholars are more prone to view federalism through the rearview mirror of past events (the 1982 *Constitution Act*, the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords) than they are to engage emerging challenges.

organizations or jurisdictions.”⁵⁸ David Cooke, director of the Central Information Technology Unit of the Cabinet Office in the United Kingdom, speaks enthusiastically about “dismantling the barriers to coherent, joined-up services.”⁵⁹ It is difficult to square this enthusiasm and technological potential with a federal vision of government.⁶⁰

Potentially, a single ICT portal or window⁶¹ on all orders and levels of government would provide citizens with the opportunity to cut through the jurisdiction tangle which, to many, is not only frustrating but unnecessary. As *The Economist* notes, “Increasingly, governments are coming around to the view that they will need to construct Internet portals, similar to consumer portals such as Yahoo that can provide a one-stop shop for all of a citizen’s needs.”⁶² The final stage “is a portal that integrates the complete range of government services, and provides a path to them that is based on need and function, not on department or agency.”⁶³ Nor, we might add, is it based on the federal division of powers. All government services could be accessed through a single site, within which all governments are nested and linked.

In a May 2000 address to the Assistant Deputy Ministers’ Forum, Mel Cappe, clerk of the privy council and secretary to the cabinet, looked forward to the day when he could stop in the lobby of the National Arts Centre after an evening performance and verify his income tax calculations with Revenue Canada [a federal responsibility], renew his driver’s licence [a provincial responsibility] and e-mail a complaint to his local councillor.⁶⁴ However, this would not happen without significant implications for federalism; Cappe’s vision rests on a single portal in which the federal division of powers would be invisible and irrelevant to users. If services are no longer accessed and delivered through physical institutions, draped with the flags and symbolism of their respective order of government, it will be less clear which order of government is in fact delivering the service. Indeed, clients may not even care; e-government makes the territorial segmentation of government which is intrinsic to federal states increasingly

58 Bellamy and Taylor, *Governing in the Information Age*, 28; emphasis added.

59 Cooke, “Information Age Government in Britain,” 19.

60 Singapore’s eCitizen site, one of the most advanced government sites in the world, was designed “to ensure that the public sector operated, and was seen to operate, as a single entity” (“Government and the Internet,” *The Economist*, 17).

61 In theory, a single window or wicket could also be provided through a telephone number or physical office. However, thinking about e-government has leapt ahead of these more prosaic options.

62 “Government and the Internet,” *The Economist*, June 24, 2000, 9.

63 *Ibid.*, 10, 13.

64 Mel Cappe, “Making Connections and Meeting the Challenge: E-Government and the Public Service of Canada,” address to the Assistant Deputy Ministers’ Forum, Ottawa, May 3, 2000.

irrelevant. As *The Economist* notes: "The citizen does not need to know about the organisational complexity behind the scenes because the portal will take him smoothly to where he wants to go."⁶⁵ Thus government-on-line will blur jurisdictions and diminish both their saliency and importance for citizens.⁶⁶ It will diffuse political responsibility and credit. The impact to date of the spending power pales beside the potential impact of all government services clustering on a single website or even linked websites. Although the Internet may not be a conventional constitutional head of power, it is laden with federal significance.

We are, of course, a long way from e-democracy. However, as more and more government activities go on-line there is a strong possibility that e-democracy will be *less federal* than current democratic politics. Whether this loss will be mourned is another matter. My guess is that most Canadians would happily trade in sections 91 and 92 of the *Constitution Act* for a single electronic portal on all government activities touching their lives.

The Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA)

The injection of the Social Union Framework Agreement into a discussion of ICTs may initially strike many readers as strange. SUFA, after all, deals with the arcane world of intergovernmental relations, of ceaseless negotiations over programme integration, jurisdictional turf and political credit. Although this world has certainly been touched by ICTs—it would be hard to imagine contemporary intergovernmental relations without conference calls, faxes, cell phones and e-mail—its heart lies elsewhere. So why is SUFA important to the present analysis?

SUFA deserves a brief mention because it looks as if it had been designed for the new ICT world in which boundaries of any sort, including jurisdictional boundaries, are becoming irrelevant. Just as changes in ICTs tend to erode territorial identities and government-on-line will erode the distinctiveness of governments in a virtual world, SUFA blurs jurisdictional boundaries. At the core of SUFA lies the commitment of governments to work together and thereby ensure the optimal integration of federal, provincial and territorial programmes. To some

65 "Government and the Internet," *The Economist*, 9.

66 In the 1999 Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada stated that by 2004, it "would be known around the world as the government most connected to its citizens, with Canadians able to access *all* government information and services on-line at the time and place of their choosing" [emphasis added]. As Mel Cappe has observed, achieving this goal will necessitate partnerships with "other levels of government" (*Seventh Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada*, 5).

degree, SUFA also draws directly on ICTs to harness performance measures to programme delivery and evaluation. In these limited but far from insignificant ways, SUFA can be seen as a corrosive influence on Canadian federalism, one that diminishes the importance of jurisdictional boundaries and domains. SUFA provides a way to handle better the inter-dependencies of contemporary federal governance, but in so doing it also diminishes the traditional importance of the constitutional division of powers.⁶⁷ As such, SUFA would fit *Wired* magazine's view of federalism, should *Wired* address such a stodgy concept.

Summary Impact on Canadian Federalism

The general expectation is that federalism, as both a system of government and a corresponding set of citizen identities, will be eroded by the onslaught of information and communication technologies. At the same time, territorial identities, or at least conventional identifications with provincial communities, will weaken in the face of technological change. This trend will be reinforced by the progressive implementation of e-government. The consequence will be diminished public support for federalism as a set of political values and operating principles. In short, federalism will seem less applicable to the world in which Canadians will soon be living.

Conventional regional conflict can be expected to diminish as provincial governments become less important in the general scheme of things. While this is not to suggest that the provinces will pack their tents and silently steal away in the face of technological change, it is to suggest that provincial communities will be less important in the political world of citizens. This should be particularly so outside Quebec, where federal values have more instrumental roots and also shallower roots than they do there. Regional conflict should also subside as ICTs erode the very notions of centre and periphery; if there is no centre to the digital world, can there still be regions and regional marginalization?⁶⁸ Can there be a periphery without a centre? In the global framework of the digital world, for example, how western Canadians connect to international markets will be more important than how they connect to the dated notion of a "central Canada." In many respects this suggests greater political integration and therefore

67 It should be noted, however, that the SUFA effects to this point have been all one way. The federal government has been invited, or has invited itself, into the provincial social policy tent, but no reciprocal invitation has been extended for federal programmes such as Employment Insurance.

68 The new "digital divide" is generally described in class rather than regional terms, although there is an urban-rural dimension to the divide.

a more cohesive political community, with ICTs replacing the railway ties of yore as the ties that bind. The catch, however, is that the networks and ties fostered by the ICTs are not confined to the national community; they may link Canadians to others as much as they do to one another.

As we anticipate the decline of provincial communities, the place of local communities in the general scheme of things will increase. If the glocalism hypothesis is correct, then the local communities in which we live should become more important as provincial communities gradually recede. Canadians may also experience a gradual decline of the broader national identities which underpin the current redistributive programmes of the federal government. Glocalism should promote asymmetry, although not a narrow asymmetry based on the recognition claims of Quebec. More generally, glocalism is associated with the fragmentation of nation states which, along with global integration, is part of the new world order.⁶⁹ While we may stop well short of a descent into tribalism, the emerging federal system will be more loosely knit.

This conclusion implies in turn a number of significant policy changes. While the good thing about glocalism is that regional conflict may recede, the bad thing is that it will also undercut public support for redistributive policies such as equalization payments among provinces or even equivalent programs within provinces, including those which transfer resources from cities to rural areas. For example, if to a Calgarian communities like Regina and Newfoundland become part of a global universe, indistinguishable in any significant way from Missoula, Montana, or Belfast, then support for equalization payments will wane. Support for such payments stems from the assumption that there is a significant national community which includes Regina and Newfoundland but not Missoula or Belfast. The digital world, and the local-global polarity of glocalism, will challenge the continued existence of the overarching imagined community that is Canada.

All of the above, however, will play out differently in Quebec than in the rest of Canada. The ICT effects outlined here are more likely to reinforce the country's linguistic divide than bridge it; they may make anglophones even more confident about the eventual global domination of the English language, and thus less interested in linguistic accommodation. If Quebec becomes the local pole in the glocalism polarity, a role more likely to be played by Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver than by Ontario, Manitoba or British Columbia in the rest of Canada, then the nationalist movement in Quebec will be strengthened rather than undermined. The voluntary exclusion of Quebec from SUFA will allow the corrosive effects of ICTs in the rest of Canada to

69 Kincaid, "Cities and Citizens," 73.

go unchecked by Quebec governments determined to protect the jurisdictional boundaries of Quebec. The more general isolation of Quebec from public policy discourse will facilitate a less federal approach to government in the rest of the country, an approach more compatible with the new world of ICTs.

If the impact of ICTs and globalization makes the rest of Canada less federal, the impact within Quebec may be to weaken rather than to strengthen ties with the rest of Canada. The Québécois identity, protected in North America by the fortress walls of a distinct language, is less exposed to the corrosive impact of the new technologies. Furthermore, in the lexicon of glocalism, Quebec is more likely to form the local pole than is Alberta or Ontario. Quebec is more likely to be the "local" for a resident of Trois Rivières or Montreal than is Alberta for the resident of Edmonton or Ontario for the resident of Toronto. If the logic of federalism is weakened within the rest of Canada while the threat posed by globalization to the "distinct society" of Quebec increases, it is not at all clear that a common federal solution exists for the two national communities. The logic that weakens the case for federalism in the rest of Canada may strengthen the case for sovereignty in Quebec. Thus a probable outcome is a less federal and more locally oriented rest of Canada, and a more distant, if not necessarily independent, Quebec; two contiguous but less integrated communities going their separate ways on the choppy seas of globalization.

All of this might mean the eventual formal transformation of the Canadian federal state, a restructuring that could recognize the diminished relevance of provinces to Canadians outside Quebec and the increased relevance of local communities. Canadian technology guru Don Tapscott asks: "Is it possible that the skein of networks surrounding the planet and the new challenges of the global economy should provoke countries, such as Canada, to rise above the fatigue of endless constitutional discussions and move on to fresh thinking about the structure and very nature of federalism?"⁷⁰ If we are able to shake off this fatigue, we may well turn to the suggestions of David Elkins for nonterritorial provinces to accommodate Aboriginal peoples and francophones outside Quebec,⁷¹ and to a renewed debate on asymmetry which recognizes the declining weight of federal values outside Quebec in the wake of the revolution in information and communication technologies. We may also be able to shake off what Caroline Andrew

70 Quoted in "How to use Web to govern," *Calgary Herald*, December 13, 1999, A4.

71 Elkins, *Beyond Sovereignty*, chap. 5.

has described as the “Canadian obsession with federal-provincial relations” and come to grips with the potential *federal* role of cities.⁷²

This line of argument must not be interpreted as a lament for the federal status quo. To argue, for example, that Canada outside Quebec will become less federal over time as a consequence of ICTs is not to argue that the lives of Canadian citizens will be diminished. Nor can we assume that a federal system that gives greater recognition to local governments and less to the provinces, is necessarily a bad thing. The case advanced here is one of significant potential change without necessarily any implication that the change is a threat to the long-term health and vitality of the Canadian polity.

Conclusions

This article is highly speculative and thus open to criticism as a form of technological determinism. It is important, therefore, to emphasize that the potential impact of ICTs on political life should not be exaggerated. As Bellamy and Taylor point out, “the information age is being shaped as much by the economic, social and political arrangements from which it has emerged, as it is by the technological innovations on which so much emphasis is placed.”⁷³ They later stress that: “Technology provides endless opportunities for hubris, for an overweening arrogance about human capability for establishing ever-increasing control over natural forces. The technologies of the information age are certainly no exception, with their apparently full-scale assault upon the natural laws which have governed the significance of time and space in human affairs.”⁷⁴ Their caution is particularly important when we consider the potential effects of ICTs on Canadian federalism. Federal governance is deeply rooted in the country’s history, geographical diversity and demography, including the primal importance of linguistic diversity. Institutions can be very resistant to change; the Senate, for example, has been untouched by the twentieth century much less the opening years of the twenty-first. Federal governance finds pervasive institutional expression ranging from the formal Constitution and the Senate to provincial legislatures, flags and licence plates. It is also manifest in a plethora of programmes and services delivered through differentiated governments. And, as Alan Cairns has reminded us, all of the above are reflected in federal identities.⁷⁵ Given

72 Caroline Andrew, “Recasting Political Analysis for Canadian Cities,” in Vered Amit-Talai and Henri Lustiger-Thalmer, eds., *Urban Lives* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994), 94.

73 Bellamy and Taylor, *Governing in the Information Age*, 19.

74 *Ibid.*, 147.

75 Cairns, “The Governments and Societies of Canadian Federalism.”

this, the potential impact of ICTs alone would be easy to exaggerate. Technologies are not deterministic. As Bellamy and Taylor conclude from their observations in the United Kingdom, “it is far easier to discern the deployment of the new technologies in the shoring up of old practices than it is to see that they offer profound challenges to established political institutions.”⁷⁶

ICTs alone do not have the capacity to rewire fundamentally the nature of federal politics. To again quote Bellamy and Taylor: “The heady images which are so often associated with ICTs, together with the technologically determinist expectations that they will transform the nature of relationships in and around governance, are balanced by the relative insusceptibility to change of the normative and assumptive worlds which suffuse political institutions.”⁷⁷ Federalism infuses those normative and assumptive worlds in the Canadian case.

Nonetheless, I would emphasize three basic points. First, it is difficult to believe that the revolutionary changes in ICTs will leave federalism untouched, particularly given that the territorial foundations and jurisdictional preoccupations of federal states are especially vulnerable to the transformative impact of ICTs. Second, it would be a mistake to dismiss the resiliency of institutions in our rush to embrace a new technological paradigm. The challenge is to find a balance and, in this respect, I can do no better than quote from Horsman and Marshall: “There are three mistakes that people make when trying to imagine the future. The first is to believe that it will not be constrained by what has gone before, that it will be entirely different. The second is to believe that it will be exactly the same, that nothing ever really changes. The third, and the worst, is not to think about it at all.”⁷⁸ For federal scholars in Canada to ignore the potential impact of information and communication technologies would be a serious mistake.

The third point is that the impact of ICTs on Canadian federalism will depend in part on which governments most effectively exercise political leadership in the *information age*. For example, we might expect different results if leadership is seized by provincial governments rather than by the federal government, or by municipal governments rather than by either senior government. To date, however, there is little question that it is the Government of Canada that leads the field. What remains to be seen is whether this leadership by the national government will protect or erode federal values.

76 Bellamy and Taylor, *Governing in the Information Age*, 116-17. Barry Hague and Brian Loader make a similar point: “ICTs are often used to augment existing practice rather than revolutionize institutions” (*Digital Democracy*, 6).

77 Bellamy and Taylor, *Governing in the Information Age*, 170.

78 Horsman and Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, 270.