

Shifting the Paradigm: Social knowledge and learning for Canada's future

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A simple idea, in four parts

- Social knowledge is key to good policy choices.
- Social learning is particularly key in moments of paradigm change.
- We are living through a moment of paradigm change.
- **Therefore**, we need to pay particular attention to what social knowledge now teaches and that social learning is enabled, not hindered.

Une observation empirique

- Depuis les dernières décennies, des changements ont eu lieu
 - changements démographiques
 - changements technologiques
 - changements économiques
- ceux-ci impliquent des modifications de pratiques:
 - au foyer
 - en milieu de travail
 - en ville

Un constat

- Ces modifications structurelles et dans les comportements sont importantes

MAIS

- elles ne nous amènent aucune conclusion politique de façon automatique
 - les choix sont incontournables
 - notre avenir dépend de la qualité des choix
 - à savoir, l'avenir dépend de l'apprentissage social et du savoir social fiable

Un paradigme sociétal

Après 1945

les politiques au Canada émergent du savoir social, composé de :

- valeurs fondamentales
 - le libéralisme et l'équité sociale
- prémisses fondamentales
- des visions
 - de foyers types
 - des milieux de travail types
 - des villes types

Key premises after 1945

- Space was defined by national borders
- The public and the private were distinct. The state and the market are autonomous but interdependent.
- Workplace and home were two distinct locales. Therefore, workers arrived at work “unencumbered” by family ties.
- Families were responsible for intergenerational well-being. The state would intervene only when there was a “breakdown” of provision.
- To the extent possible, markets and families would distribute well-being.



Foyers types

- Le foyer type se composait de deux parents, de plusieurs enfants, parfois d'un parent âgé et d'une femme au foyer.
- Le foyer type s'occupait lui-même de ses enfants, au moins jusqu'à ce qu'ils aillent à l'école.
- Quelques foyers ne comportaient qu'un parent et il s'agissait d'habitude de veuves ou de mères célibataires qui avaient droit à l'aide sociale pour leur permettre d'éduquer leurs enfants.
- Quelques foyers comptaient des femmes âgées vivant seules et elles avaient droit à une pension.



Milieux de travail

- L'entreprise employait des gens sur place ; les gens quittaient leur domicile pour aller travailler.
- Le milieu de travail type était constitué de travailleurs à temps plein qui gagnaient assez pour se maintenir, eux et leur famille, au-dessus du seuil de la pauvreté.
- Les épouses restaient au foyer pour s'occuper des enfants, d'un parent âgé et de la maison.
- Le travailleur type était quelqu'un qui était « au travail » et donc, se différenciait nettement de ceux qui étaient « sans travail », de ceux qui « n'étaient pas des travailleurs », des étudiants, etc.



Villes

- Les villes étaient des points sur la carte du Canada. L'espace le plus important était « le Canada » parce que les conditions pancanadiennes allaient définir le bien-être des citoyens.
- Les villes étaient des lieux où l'activité économique et la vie de famille « se passaient ». Donc, elles étaient moins importantes en soi que ne l'était l'activité économique ou la vie familiale.
- Les villes étaient entourées de banlieues et une grande partie des nouveautés survenait dans les banlieues.



Challenges to societal paradigm

By the 1980s / 1990s structural changes and behavioural modifications brought

- more variation
- greater diversity
 - in homes
 - in workplaces
 - in cities

These brought challenges

- **to several key premises of existing social knowledge:**
 - That the public and private realms can proceed as if they are distinct
 - That markets and families will successfully and sufficiently distribute well-being, including intergenerational well-being, with the state stepping in only to be provide a safety net, and
 - That national borders alone capture the most important spaces of economic, social, and political life.
- **Therefore, we face choices; nothing is given in advance**



4 options for the Future :

- Work-Life balance *or* Life is only at work
- Shared responsibility *or* back to the family
- Life “without work” is ok *or* everyone *must* work
- Acting as if “space matters”
 - ... two examples

Work-Life balance *or* Life is only at work

Changes :

social knowledge teaches that:

- homes are becoming workplaces
- many women are in the labour force but still have responsibility for care work
- stress is undermining employee's health and happiness
- time crunch is endemic



Work-Life balance *or* Life is only at work

- *Consequences / Choices*
- For labour markets for domestic service workers, child-minders, indeed all kinds of services. Will demand increase sharply and a return of a “servant class” occur or will people provide for more of their own needs?
- For gender relations and family formation. Will child rearing become easier to combine with employment or will childbearing be shelved in favour of work, and therefore the birth rate will fall even more?
- For communities. Will available time for voluntary work increase or shrivel up?
- For pension and disability schemes and the distribution of the costs of these. Who will pay for burnout? Who will absorb the costs of reducing working time?



Shared responsibility *or* back to the family

Changes:

social knowledge teaches:

- that bean-pole families mean that fewer family members share responsibilities
- that fewer women are available at home full-time for caring work
- about the importance of early childhood education
- that older children take longer to achieve autonomy, because of costs of education and housing as well as difficulties in finding employment

Shared responsibility *or* back to the family

- *Consequences / Choices*
- *for labour supply.* Demand for labour is in areas traditionally filled by women. There might be shortages.
- *for pension programs.* If workers are encouraged to withdraw from the labour force to provide care in the present, longer-term consequences will arise. Reduced contributions will affect the sustainability of pension regimes, as well as patterns of poverty.
- *for the future labour force.* A commitment to shared responsibility has been expressed in the form of public investments in early childhood education to foster development and school success, beyond what parents already provide. Reinforcing family responsibility leaves the future in the hands of current families.



Shared responsibility *or* back to the family

- *Consequences / Choices*
- *for gender equity.* Although men are more involved, women and men do not equally share caring tasks with the immediate and extended family. Therefore, when governments accept that they share responsibility for intergenerational well-being with families and put into place programs for quality child and home care, women are not forced to choose between providing good care and earning their way.
- *for the distribution of wealth and resources.* Sharing responsibility with families would imply levelling the effects of original endowments via public investment in education and affordable housing.

For additional information:

<http://www.cprn.org/cprn.html>

“Shifting the paradigm: Knowledge and learning for Canada’s future”

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