

If we decide the target audience in some new communications strategy should be the opinion-makers and the members of the G7 club, that doesn't matter much. But if we wish to reach a broader constituency, some argue we should forget the Internet as a primary source of communication.

Well, again, what's true today may not be applicable tomorrow or next week or next month. In fact, telephone access is far more common than many believe. Satellite phones are coming into places (e.g., Egypt) where wires have been far too costly and, of course, the whole technology of wireless communication may make an even greater difference.

The *Globe and Mail* ran a photograph this past year that showed the side of an apartment building in a newly-democratized country in Eastern Europe. Years ago, it might have shown a rooftop with dozens of television antennae. In this photo, dozens and dozens of the latest mini-satellite dishes were all turned to the skies to absorb the latest in Western-style programming.

If we recall the speed with which the world's poor, often in remote rural areas, "found" the television, we might not be too sceptical in thinking they'll find ways to connect to the Internet very soon. And, perhaps, with more to gain than many of us in modern urban settings where we can tap into expert knowledge, they will be more motivated.

Too often we look around us at a given moment and use those observations to determine directions that we assume will last into at least the immediate future. Again and again, we have to ask ourselves, what could change? How might the rules and the conventions and the practices that we see around us evolve? How can we make sure that our decisions today stay relevant? Well, obviously we can't. But we can try to imagine the unimaginable and who knows, maybe we'll be more prepared for the next Berlin Wall to come crumbling down.

Digital, wireless, and satellite technologies will open up new possibilities for programming and communications on a global scale. At the same time, some of the more conventional forms of distribution are becoming more difficult to access as the "big-boys" merge and converge in order to stay in the game of de-regulated competition. For example, Newsworld International had originally intended to get a broader viewership base by being on some US cable services in addition to its single subscriber satellite base. Now, they're discovering that it is considerably more expensive than it once was, and the playing field is getting more crowded rather than less with the addition of new channel capacity. The CBC and Power Corporation had written up an impressive business plan — they were stepping into an evolving geography of channels and marketing and opportunity. But, in a few short years — the ground had shifted.

As mentioned, CNN's supremacy is being challenged, most prominently by Microsoft and NBC and others; the conventional networks are all hungrily eyeing cable, Internet, wireless and satellite possibilities as they branch out. And, of course, they're getting gobbled up by the Sonys and the Warners and the media giants in related fields.

The world of communications are now attracting some of the biggest megaplayers we've ever seen. And we're fools if we wonder why. Given their involve-