

Global Diplomacy Lab

Decoding Global Diplomacy: Balancing Power through Information Technology

**5th Lab
November, 3–6, 2016**

About the Global Diplomacy Lab

Background & Idea

The nature of diplomacy is evolving. It is no longer the strict purview of national governments and international organisations. The Global Diplomacy Lab (GDL) is a platform for exploring a new and more inclusive diplomacy that goes beyond traditional politics. Creative professionals from various fields are thus needed to explore new tools of communication on the basis of mutual trust and to re-formulate an agenda for collective action.

What should diplomacy look like in the future?

Which competences do we need in order to define our scope of action more precisely?

These are questions that the Federal Foreign Office, under the patronage of Federal Foreign Minister Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier and in partnership with the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the Stiftung Mercator and the Global Leadership Academy of GIZ, are eager to investigate with outstanding members of their networks from all continents.

The Global Diplomacy Lab is managed by a Secretariat based at the Federal Foreign Office. It is responsible for organising regular meetings worldwide and fostering a permanent dialogue between partners, members and external stakeholders, designed to lead to concrete actions to shape policy-making.

The bi-annual Labs

Around forty alumni of programmes run by the Federal Foreign Office, the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the Stiftung Mercator and the Global Leadership Academy are invited to apply for the bi-annual meetings of the Global Diplomacy Lab.

Together with the Global Diplomacy Lab's Dean, Ruprecht Polenz, Chairman of the German Bundestag's Committee on Foreign Affairs from 2005 to 2013, the members first gathered in Berlin from 13 to 16 November 2014 to sketch the multiple facets of trust in global affairs. The second edition of the Global Diplomacy Lab took place in Istanbul from 4 to 7 June 2015 and dealt with the issues of fragmentation versus integration, while the broad and complex issue of migration was the topic of the third Lab, which was held in Berlin from 5 to 8 November 2015. In 2016, the Labs focused on the Significance of International Law and Moral Standards in Diplomacy (Berlin, 9 to 12 June) and Global Diplomacy in the Digital Age (Montreal, 3 to 6 November).

From the Labs hosted so far, it has become clear that transforming potential into practice requires both an incubating and a sustainable impact-driven framework. Therefore, the 2017 Labs will take the form of a GDL Incubator from 18 to 21 June in Buenos Aires and a GDL Impact from 19 to 22 November in Tunis. These venues were selected by the Advisory Council through a competitive bidding process, reinforcing the Global Diplomacy Lab's members-driven approach.

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Pamela Goldsmith-Jones · Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Stéphane Dion
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Thomas Ledwell · Director of Communications, New Cities Foundation
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Monique Savoie · Founder and President, SAT

Foreword

Over the past decade, we have witnessed great social, economic and political transformations. The geopolitical world is becoming more complex, and the balance of power between national governments and non-state actors is undergoing rapid change, particularly through advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Governments and international organisations have been slow to adapt to the pace of technological innovation that has marked the new century. In this context, creative initiatives have an important role to play – be it by studying how technology is transforming international relations or by directly collaborating to solve problems on the ground. Creative initiatives can impart knowledge to government officials so that they can make better informed decisions on issues of local, national and global relevance.

For this reason, the Federal Government of Canada, the Province of Quebec, the City of Montreal, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and two Canadian Universities – Concordia University and the Université du Québec à Montréal – have cooperated with the Global Diplomacy Lab (GDL), supported by the Federal Foreign Office in Germany, the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt, the Global Leadership Academy of GIZ, the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Stiftung Mercator.

Montreal is the first North American city to welcome a Lab. Over four days, more than thirty GDL members from across the globe, working in international relations with governments, international organisations, universities, civil society organisations or private enterprises, met and interacted with Canadian diplomats and other experts.

The intense discussions, held in interactive formats, covered a wide range of topics, such as transparency and secrecy in cyber security, Internet democratisation, digital collaboration, the crossroads of the digital economy and the impact of these issues offline.

What already seems clear is the need to approach these challenges in a collaborative way and to embrace a new and more inclusive diplomacy that goes beyond traditional politics and actors. The Global Diplomacy Lab is such a platform and a concrete indication that new governance models will increasingly have to adopt multi-stakeholder processes to reach their goals. Stimulating dialogue and building consensus are therefore at the core of GDL activities.



The Smart City and the new role of cities as Digital Diplomats

Panel Discussion

Experts

Cathryn Clüver,
Harvard Kennedy School
Harout Chitilian,
City of Montreal

Moderated by

Louise Guay,
Montreal Living Lab

It is well documented that populations in cities are expected to increase. According to the United Nations Population Fund, “the world is undergoing the largest wave of urban growth in history. More than half of the world’s population now lives in towns and cities, and by 2030 this number will swell to about 5 billion. Much of this urbanisation will unfold in Africa and Asia, bringing huge social, economic and environmental changes”¹.

As the global population is projected to grow in numbers and density, as far as urban centres are concerned, citizens will be more connected than any previous generation – far beyond the physical space which they inhabit. Connectivity per se is, however, no panacea. Technology as such can be used for the most diverse and contradictory purposes.

Using technology in a smart and inclusive manner is the main challenge that 21st century diplomacy will continue to face, should it react responsibly to interconnected issues such as equal opportunities, freedom of movement and climate change. In view of this, diplomacy can no longer remain limited to conducting ordered relations in closed circles. Nor can it be solely understood as an activity restricted to diplomats. It will have to contend with greater demands for transparency, for tolerance of competing opinions and flexibility as far as secrecy is concerned. For in a world in which disruption is increasingly the norm, diplomacy as an act of relationship-building requires active listening and the engagement of citizens as its elementary political cell, as the most tangible level of policy-making.

In other words, foreign policy starts in the city and with the citizen. In this context, technology can function as an effective channel for fruitful exchange fostering integration and conflict prevention. Committed digital diplomacy therefore requires more inclusive policies, new and reformed governance institutions and strong partnerships with external stakeholders, driven by ethical principles.

¹ <http://www.unfpa.org/urbanization>

Welcoming remarks

Harout Chitilian,
City of Montreal

Speakers

Pamela Goldsmith-Jones,
Parliamentary Secretary
to the Minister of Foreign
Affairs

Christine Saint-Pierre,
Minister of International
Relations, Quebec
Government

Robert Proulx,
Université du Québec à
Montréal

Kyle Matthews,
Concordia University

The City of Montreal

According to Harout Chitilian, Chairman of the Smart and Digital City Initiative of the city of Montreal, Montreal has great potential to become a world-class model of the “smart city”, driven by its flourishing creativity and spirit of collaboration.

The Smart and Digital City Office was set up in 2014 with the goal of making Montreal a global smart city model by 2017. It focuses on five main areas of activity: urban mobility, direct services to citizens, quality of life, democratic processes and economic development.

In so doing, the Smart and Digital City Office aims to provide a framework for transformational projects that affect every aspect of life in the city, whether in connection with daily governmental affairs, infrastructure or social issues. In order for this transformation to reflect the real needs of Montreal’s citizens, the office has entered into a major dialogue with institutional and private sectors, municipal workers and the citizens themselves.

The idea is to make its communities the co-creators and beneficiaries of high-quality services and economic development. To this end, technology serves as an important driver. Through technology, people can make their needs and complaints known, and propose more effective and innovative solutions, giving them a direct stake in decision-making processes. In the economic sphere, entrepreneurial citizens are encouraged to launch services in the global market. These are expected to lay the foundations for the strategic development of Montreal as a smart city.

Is Digital Diplomacy just a new tool or a step towards a more balanced relationship between State and Non-State actors?

Preamble and Fishbowl

Speakers

Ryan Androsoff,
International Digital
Government Expert
Martha McLean,
Global Affairs Canada

Moderated by

Susanne Salz, GDL Member,
United Actors

Thematic Workshops

Advisors and Conductors

Daniel Ben-Aron,
Fastacash
Daniel Domscheit-Berg,
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WikiLeaks and founder,
OpenLeaks
János Kóka,
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New Cities Foundation
Natalya Nepomnyashcha,
GDL Member, eHealth
Africa, Netzwerk Chancen
David P. Fidler,
Council on Foreign Relations

The rapid pace of technology is redefining power structures. During the last decade there has been a major shift in this regard, among other reasons as a result of social media. However, most governmental institutions are still not sufficiently up to date to cope with the rapid pace of ICTs.

In the traditional diplomatic field, these changes have particularly defied professionals required to operate in a controlled environment. Whilst attempts are certainly being made for diplomats to keep up with the advancement of technology, many still only use social media in a traditional manner to issue press releases, promote projects and make announcements on behalf of their respective governments.

Thus, digital diplomacy requires, on the one hand, a new approach to the use of social media and of the Internet as a whole by traditional diplomats. On the other hand, it still has room for improvement with regard to enhancing interaction with citizens and other institutionalised non-state actors. This requires overcoming Internet illiteracy within the large population, increasing individual access and consequently diminishing the digital divide in our societies.

Nevertheless, although digital interaction may be an effective tool in bringing governments closer to non-state actors, and non-state actors closer to policy-making, it has not avoided isolationist or less collaborative approaches in the geopolitical arena, as shown by the referendums for Brexit and the peace agreement in Columbia, to name just a few recent episodes. Moreover, the Internet's scope as a tool to abuse democracy in authoritarian regimes should not be underestimated, where critical voices are constantly kept under surveillance or even banned and freedom of expression is denied.

Digitalisation has finally confronted the grammar of democratisation with new questions. This has direct implications for establishing a more balanced relationship between state and non-state actors. For instance, it has defied the simple difference between a social media "like" and a formal vote, or, more sophisticatedly, it attempts to identify the role of artificial intelligence in social interaction. From text to practice, digitalisation requires a whole new judicial apparatus as far as human rights conventions or the trans- and international regulation of large ICT companies are concerned. We live in an era where governments will not allow big banks to fail - but can they allow companies like Twitter, Facebook and Google to fail or have they also become too central to the global economy, diplomacy and to individuals?

Overall, it is clear that the topic of digital diplomacy and the relationship between state and non-state actors will continue to gain in importance and to shape the future of diplomacy. Whether or not digitalisation will work as a tool or a paradigmatic shift towards a better balance of power between diverse stakeholders will depend on collective efforts to distinguish between transparency, privacy and publicity. If democratic forces do not work to foster global dialogue to disentangle the opportunist use of language, other authoritarian and populist forces will strive to occupy this strategic position.



The role of Federated States in the Digital Diplomacy—an Open Situation Room

Open Situation Room Experts

Martha McLean,
Global Affairs Canada
Olivier Béliveau,
Ministry of International Relations, Quebec

Facilitated by
Nicola Forster,
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Vivian Valencia,
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Gabriela Canales,
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A situation room is a place where government officials gather in times of crisis to collect information and coordinate activities. Inspired by this example, it is also a location designed for debate and discussion, rather than for command and control. It is an 'atelier politique', an information centre and a meeting place for decision-makers, artists, students, analysts and journalists.

During the Open Situation Room in Montreal, participants undertook digital diplomacy challenges which Global Affairs Canada and the Ministry of International Relations and Francophonie in Quebec (Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie) face in their daily operations and policy planning. The thematic focus centred on how to improve collaboration across institutional and national borders, and how to design programmes and methods that go "beyond hashtags" to have a greater impact in the digital and analogue world.

The Challenges

At the Open Situation Room (OSR), two Canadian decision-makers, Martha McLean, Deputy Director on Global Advocacy Campaigns and Digital Engagement at Global Affairs Canada, and Olivier Béliveau, Advisor on Digital Solutions at the Ministry of International Relations and Francophonie in Quebec, challenged the Global Diplomacy Lab participants.

McLean's team works primarily in the field of campaigning with offices abroad. The digital component in the campaigns is fundamental and goes hand in hand with the team's activity on the ground. They have conducted campaigns covering relevant issues such as cybersecurity in Asia, the importance of women's participation in parliament in South-East Asia, and child marriage in Africa. At the Ministry of International Relations and Francophonie in Quebec, Béliveau searches for innovative solutions using available tools to help his organisation adapt to the digital space.

Both policymakers agreed that the digital space is a new territory with its own rules, cultures and communities. They are still experimenting with the potential to innovate and expand through the Internet. In the OSR, new ideas were generated to provide different perspectives and to offer creative proposals for the concrete challenges they face.

Global Affairs Canada: Strengthening Partnerships with Non-State Actors using the Tool of Digital Diplomacy

McLean presented her challenge as relevant for both her ongoing practices and long-term strategies. Her team is increasingly narrowing policy targets for implementing effective advocacy work and campaigns. In this context, engaging non-state actors (e.g. influencers, allies, and critics) needs to be a key component.

McLean's objective is to make faster progress in identifying non-state actors. She posed the following challenge: "What we are looking for is to be more agile in identifying partners, networks and voices. Many of them are algorithm-based and we are looking for real influencers that happen to be in the digital space. How do we find these voices and how should our partnerships evolve?"

Three groups responded to these challenges with the following ideas (pages 14-20).





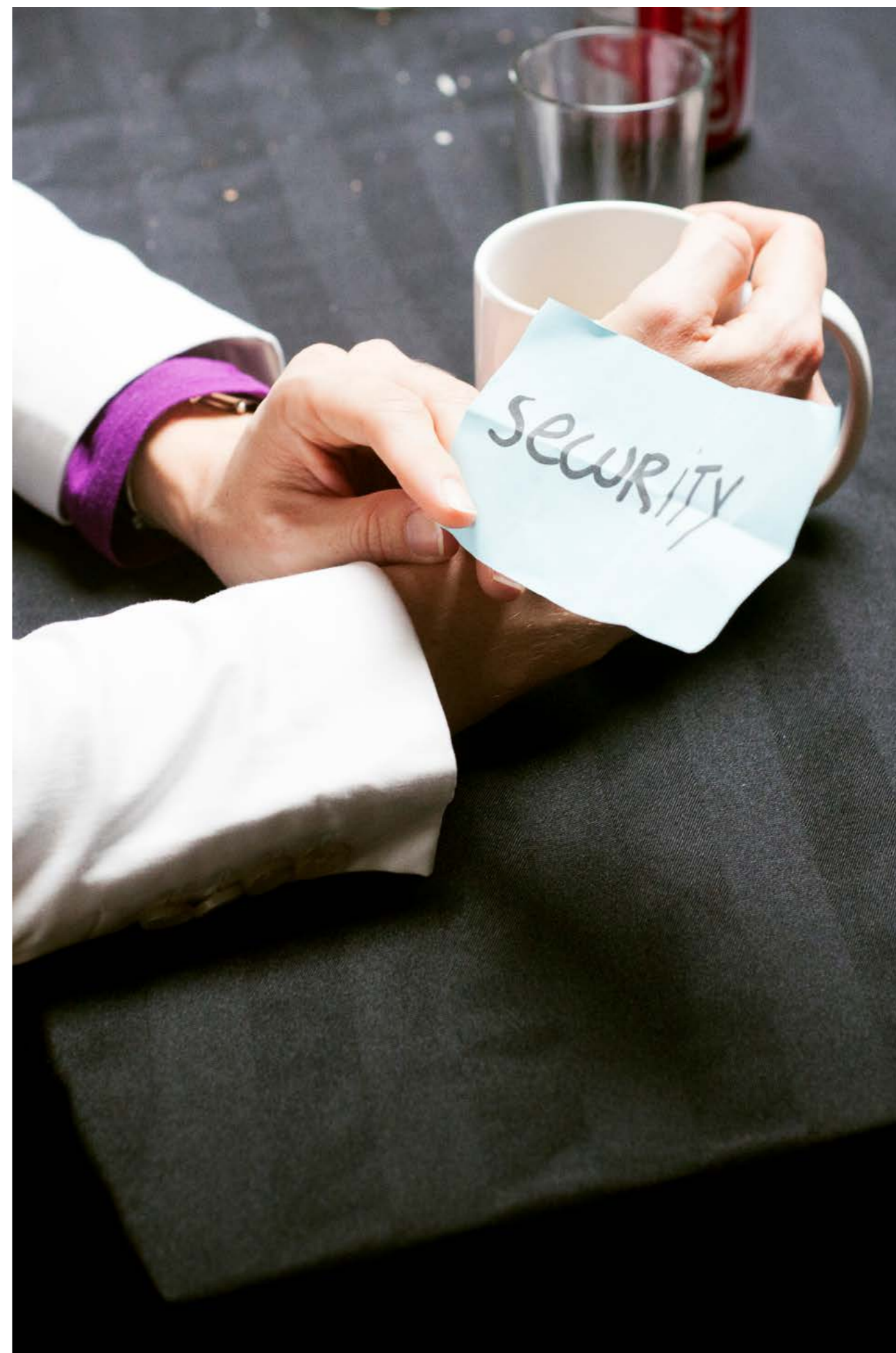
Engaging with the emerging non-state actors: Snowball Digital Algorithm

How do we define “emerging non-state actors”? As Global Affairs Canada is searching for emerging influencers abroad who might not have Internet access, but who can drive change, this group concluded that it is not possible to engage actors only through online strategies. Therefore, this group proposed the ‘On- and Offline Strategy: Snowball Digital Algorithm’.

The proposal consists of three components: identification, validation and engagement. Identification may take place online and offline via an initial set of already identified organisations that adopt the snowball strategy. Through this strategy, organisations with no online presence may be identified (offline) and validated through the initial network. A complementary online strategy would be carried out through an algorithm where additional organisations would be identified through online networks. According to the group, tools that allow the application of algorithms are starting to emerge, which facilitate identifying and processing useful information for policymaking.

Feedback from Global Affairs Canada

McLean liked the proposal, as it allows a framework to be identified through which offline actors can be engaged. She also emphasised the use of incentives, because people had to have a reason to want to engage with the government, particularly in countries where institutions face lack of trust. She agreed that it would be a really good model for Global Affairs Canada to build on in order to undertake more narrow identification of non-state actors, an ongoing attempt in her department.



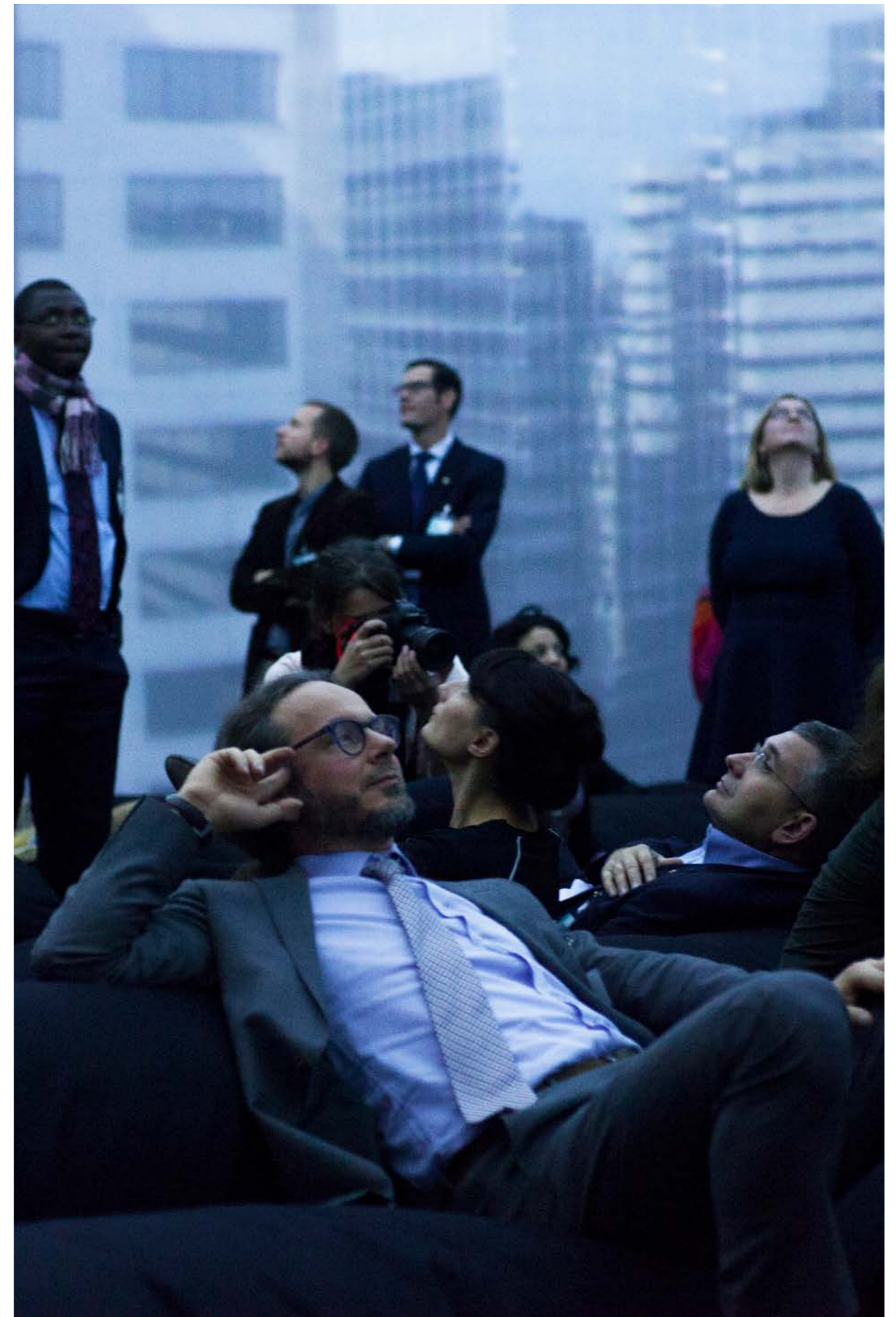


Infrastructure

This group proposed a reality TV show where citizens could submit infrastructure-related projects with a local focus. A jury consisting of local authorities, citizens, and local celebrities would choose three to four winning projects to receive funding. The reality show would follow the winning individuals as they develop and implement their project. This would result in a “storytelling” process of how local individuals participate and drive change in their own communities by having citizens themselves narrate their stories.

Feedback from Global Affairs Canada

For McLean, the value of this proposal is in giving guidance on building a community, and demonstrating the government’s openness to receiving inputs from local residents. Additionally, she highlighted that there was a lack of awareness of the funding opportunities provided by Global Affairs Canada for community-based projects. McLean believes that by opening up the process for community participation, government can be presented as an active partner for society. Finally, she proposed incorporating the “storytelling” method into some of the Ministry’s ongoing projects, as previous experiences in the field of development have proven to be successful.



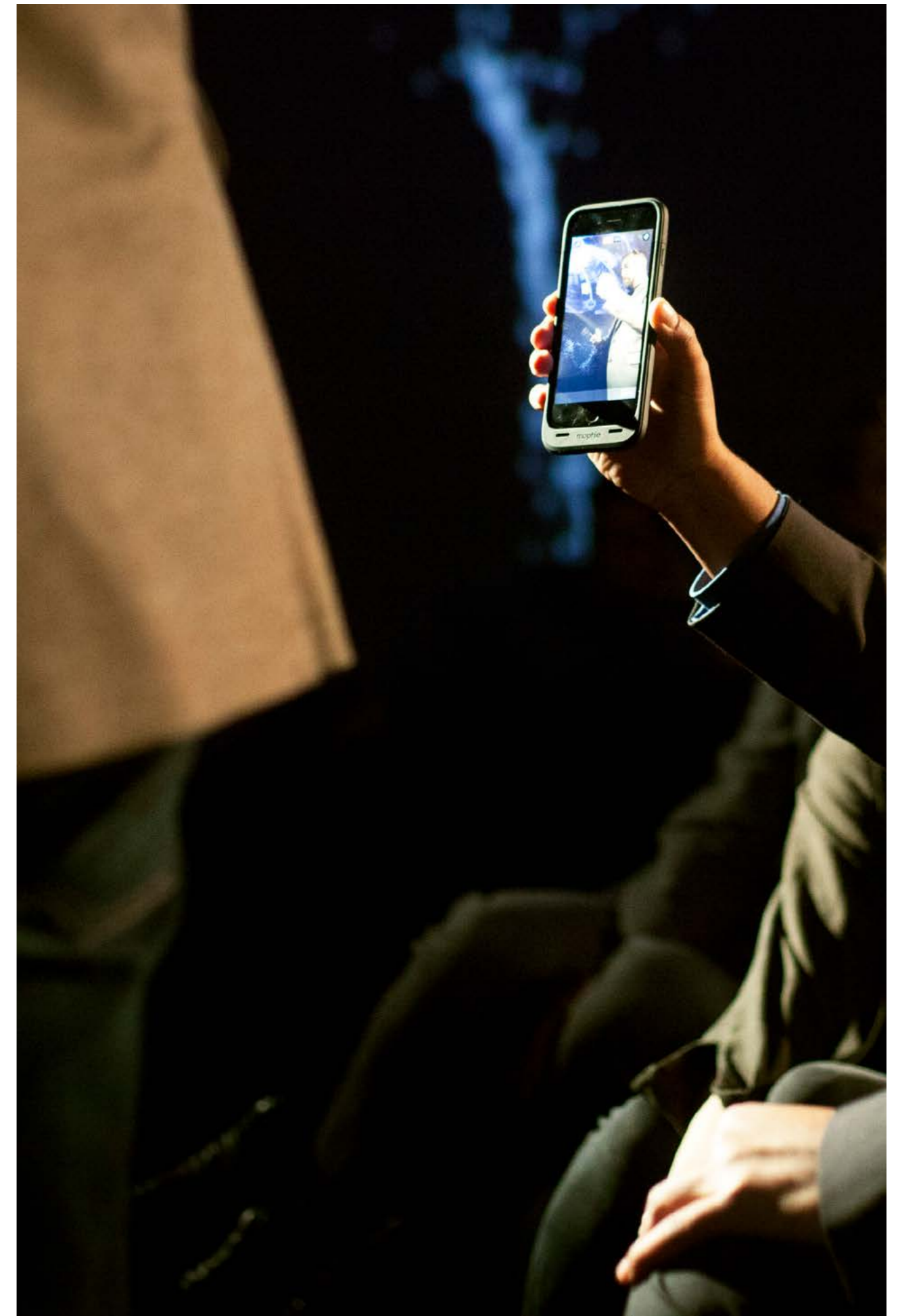


Citizens diplomat network

This group addressed the challenge of identifying and engaging emerging voices among non-state actors within Canada. The group proposed identifying diplomats among citizens such as activists, journalists, NGOs, artists, social entrepreneurs, bloggers, etc. with the aim of creating an agenda and a strategy together with this network. These networks of citizen diplomats would help to identify other networks of citizen diplomats abroad. Once trust was established, local embassies could facilitate contact and dialogue by encouraging regular contact between networks.

Feedback from Global Affairs Canada

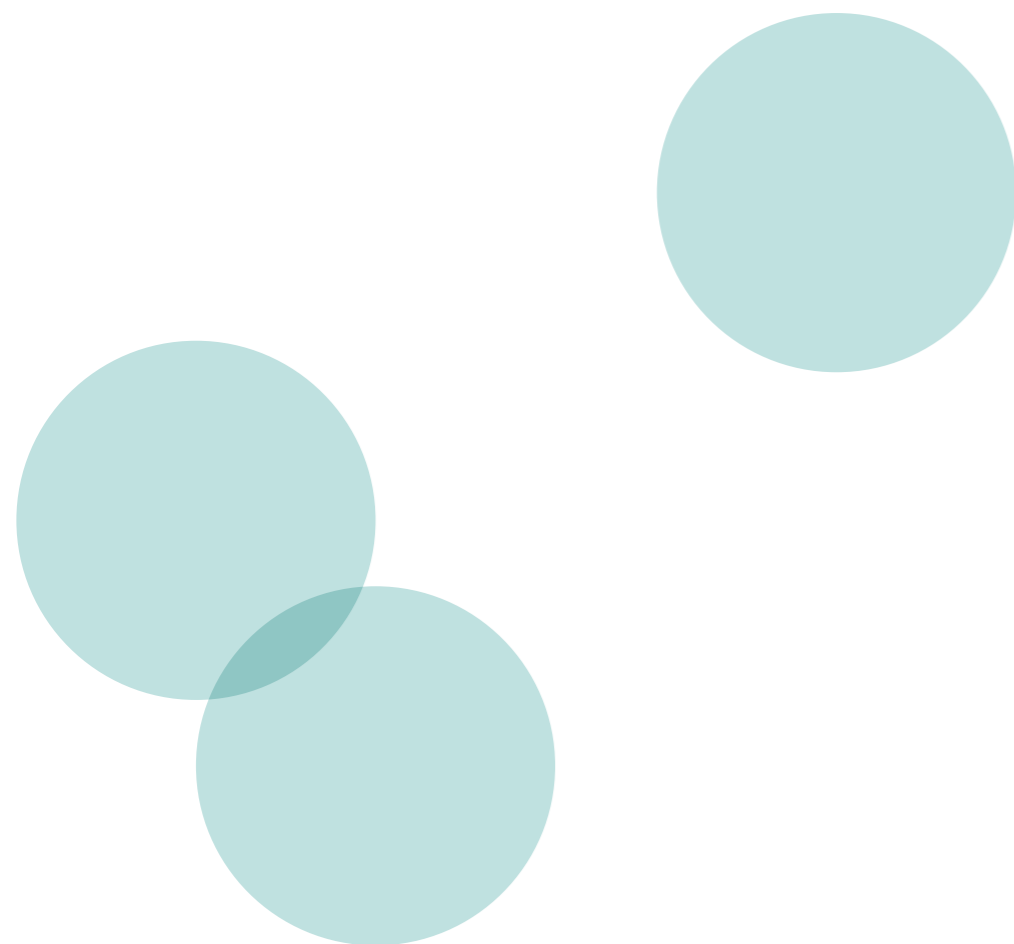
McLean supported this idea, as it highlights the potential to learn from best practices in Canada through local networks that are otherwise outside the Ministry's spectrum. Moreover, she mentioned the complementarity of such an initiative to the concept of twinning cities and underlined the benefits of going beyond this concept by "twinning citizens."



Follow-up from Global Affairs Canada

“Since the Lab in November, we have continued to progress and refine our work in developing and executing campaigns. The Open Situation Room working groups teased out interesting concepts and proposals that continue to percolate within our team and are being considered as we advance our work in supporting internationally oriented advocacy campaigns. In particular, work on identifying and engaging influencers has improved immensely and the idea of “validation” continues to be an interesting one. The acquisition and use of more powerful tools has proved beneficial.

Storytelling has also advanced considerably, through improved guidance and training for staff abroad as well as a renewed focus on the story journey and how digital assets and partners can play a vital role. There were many fascinating ideas provided during the Open Situation Room. As work evolves, our team will keep them in mind and look at how they can help advance the work of the offices abroad”.



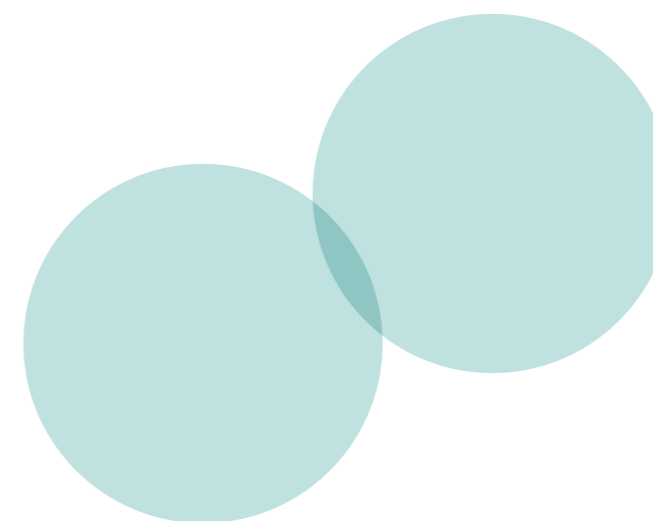
Ministry of International Relations and Francophonie in Quebec (MRIF): Creating a Digital Embassy

At MRIF Béliveau’s challenge is to establish a strong online presence that reacts quickly, appropriately and in the right place; one that is fully responsive, interactive, and interpersonal. Such an online presence would need to learn how to deal with an online crisis, negative comments or criticism.

To achieve this aim, a team of highly trained people would have to be publicly identified as specialists on the topics of relevance for MRIF. The members of the team would be able to speak in an official capacity, cover geographic territories of interest by engaging locals online, and ensure that enough capacity is available to rapidly respond to digital demands.

As there is no definitive guideline on succeeding in digital diplomacy, Béliveau suggested a digital delegation or a digital embassy as a concept to brand this specialised team. At the OSR, the concept of a digital embassy would need to be tested: “Existing online and sharing information is not using the digital space to its full potential. What if we create a digital embassy or delegation that could help us overcome some of the challenges that we have: adapting, being more personal, supporting the digital industry, engaging locals? How could this embassy exist online?”

Three groups responded to these challenges with the following ideas (pages 22-28).





MyQuebec.com

MyQuebec.com was presented as an alternative way for the Province and its cities to engage in actual conversations with those living or coming to Quebec, such as students, investors, celebrities and NGO leaders. Those living in Quebec would reach out to their own networks through their personal narratives via digital media. They would share their narratives in a personal way and in a cross-cultural context, highlighting the competitive advantages of Quebec based on the specific interests of the audience.

The portal myquebec.com would speak to its target audience through a personal approach in the following fields: trade, tourism, education, culture, civil society, good governance. The portal would be promoted by the bloggers, who could be supported by the GDL network and cooperating journals.

Feedback from Ministry of International Relations and Francophonie in Quebec

Béliveau responded positively to the idea, as it focused on offering people living in Quebec a channel to express themselves personally, and to communicate their experiences in Quebec to the rest of the world in a useful and meaningful way. For Béliveau, this project offers a bridge and a snapshot of the region to those outside Quebec. In other words, it portrays the Québécois as natural ambassadors who can link Canada or Quebec with other regions.





Digital Embassy: Uber for diplomats

The slow pace of the traditional diplomatic system and its difficulty in responding quickly to complex problems was the challenge approached by this group. How can the traditional notion of what a diplomat is be changed? And how would it be possible to involve Canadian people abroad to promote the interests of a foreign ministry? As one of the countries with the largest amount of expats in the world, Canada has a great chance to sensitise its population to international affairs.

The project aims to enable Canadian expats to represent Quebec and to serve as ambassadors on a specific issue for a determined period of time. As a tool, this group proposed an app like UBER, through which Canadian expats would sign up to represent Quebec abroad. In order to verify individuals, in addition to basic background checks, "crowd-sourcing" such as LinkedIn and a review system would be planned. This project would allow people to participate during their free time for as many hours as they wanted.

The app would attract Canadian expats through a series of incentives and possible rewards. Built on a rating system, the rewards would include employment prospects, monthly compensation or trips to Quebec.

Feedback from Ministry of International Relations and Francophonie in Quebec

Béliveau stressed that this proposal contained inspiring ideas, since it lifted the Québécois' potential to be natural ambassadors to the digital sphere, allowing people to be matched through crowdsourcing. Placing citizens' engagement at the core of this project was also perceived as an asset. Lastly, Béliveau underlined that such a proposal would enhance the Quebec government's tool box through the launch of its first app.





Culture

The team proposed a public diplomacy tool to facilitate Quebec's diplomacy. This project envisages three central components to enhance the role of diplomacy through regional culture:

1. A virtual tech incubator which would enable global projects to acquire local mentorship and gain visibility, launching Quebec's reputation as a centre of innovation;
2. A culture incubator, i.e. a platform to offer language courses free of charge aimed at improving communication skills. The culture incubator would include a guide through one of the Quebec cities, should pupils come for a visit;
3. Virtual festivals as an extension of festivals taking place in Quebec.

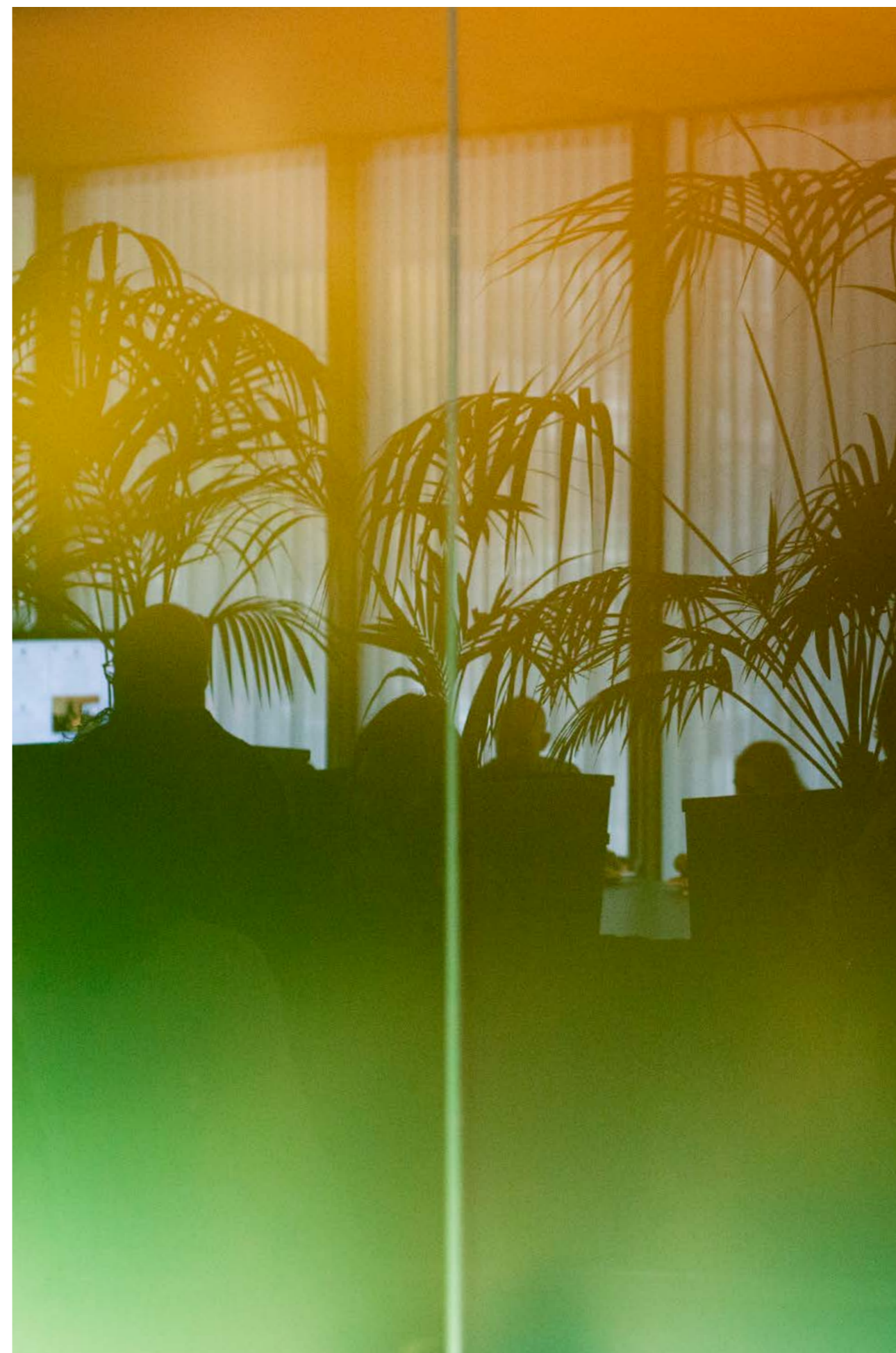
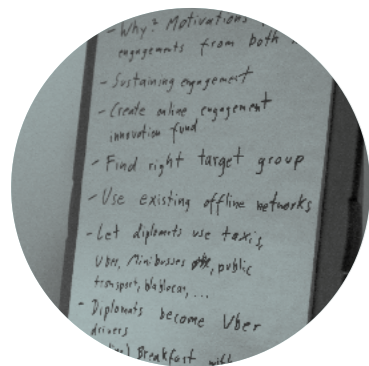
Feedback from Ministry of International Relations and Francophonie in Quebec:

Béliveau noted the innovative character of the proposal's title, as yet unexplored at the MRIF. The idea of linking the three components was perceived as an interesting road-map for policy execution which, according to Béliveau, could be rapidly propagated in the ministry as well as externally, with the support of its online followers, who comprise around 20,000. Béliveau's next step is to implement these ideas.



Follow-up from Ministry of International Relations and Francophonie in Quebec

"Building on the common ground we found between the ideas suggested by the GDL members, we submitted a project that is now officially part of Quebec's digital cultural strategy. It's a user-generated digital service giving our citizens and partners the ability to publish, on a dedicated website, the cultural activities they're doing abroad. We will then promote these submissions online and on the ground with our international network. A proof of concept has already been completed and we intend to publish the service before the end of 2017".



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Disclaimer

GDL Members participated in the 5th Lab in Montreal in a personal capacity. None of the views expressed in this document represent those of the partner institutions or the GDL members' sending institutions.

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