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A common complaint of those who study emerging media is that the dynamic nature of these technologies and the practices they mediate makes committing observations and analysis to print a risky business. Digital technologies, and what people do with them, change so rapidly that claims about the current state of things have a very short shelf life. Politicians these days worry that video evidence of past indiscretions surfacing on YouTube might thwart their campaigns for elected office; scholars of emerging media worry that even *mentioning* YouTube will date their work such that no one will take it seriously a year from now when the platform has gone the way of Napster, replaced by some other "revolutionary" new application. Emerging media are not just emerging; they are also *emergent:* ever unfinished, characteristically unstable, and always in process. This suggests that all claims regarding these media are provisional at best and invite refutation by technological change and the unpredictable choices made by the people who take up with it.

The Democratic Audit volume C*ommunication Technology* was published in 2005 (Barney). It began by referring to the 2000 Canadian general election, heralded at the time as the country's first "Internet election," and pointed out that, despite the affordances of digital networks, that election featured the lowest voter turnout in Canadian

history (to that point). Much has happened in the world of emerging media since that time. We have seen the proliferation of so-called Web 2.0 and social-networking applications that enable an unprecedented variety of user-driven multimedia content production, sharing, networking, and collaboration. This has been paralleled by the availability of an ever broader array of powerful portable devices for generating, distributing, and consuming information in various forms. By 2009, blogs, wikis, instant messaging, video sharing, podcasting, geo tagging, RSS feeds, and social networking made their way into the daily media experience of vast numbers of Canadian citizens and have been heavily integrated into the operations of Canada's political parties and social movements. It is as if the technical features of the early Internet, upon which brash promises of democratization and widespread political engagement had originally been built, have multiplied exponentially. Canadians have more convenient access to more, better, and more diverse political information, as well as more opportunities for interactive participatory communication than ever before. And yet, we can say the same thing about the 2008 Canadian general election as we did about that of 2000: it featured the lowest voter turnout in Canadian history to date.

Voter turnout is a complex and ambiguous indicator of politicization. Refusing to vote can be a political act signalling either satisfaction or refusal, and citizens might be engaged in a variety of political activities beyond the conventional scope of partisan electoral competition. Emerging technologies might be playing an enabling and sustaining role in relation to these other sorts of engagements, and these may have a bearing on the degree to which citizens experience political life as responsive, inclusive, and participatory. This is certainly the case when it comes to the diverse array of social movements, community organizations, alternative media providers, and citizen-journalists who continue to use new technologies to tremendous effect in organizing and executing their political activities. Nevertheless, historically low levels on this most basic measure of political engagement at least suggest the possibility of relatively widespread depoliticization on the part

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of a large number of Canadians whose daily lives are otherwise highly mediated by these same technologies. There are many possible reasons for why record numbers of Canadians are abstaining from voting (see Gidengil et al., Chapter 5 this volume), and this abstention potentially carries a variety of possible meanings. At a minimum, however, it suggests that the relationship between emerging technologies and a reinvigorated democratic politics is not as straightforward as we might like to believe. This was the premise of *Communication Technology,* and it still holds today, despite the significant technological developments that have occurred in the intervening years.

The Canadian Democratic Audit asks whether emerging media technologies are contributing to a more participatory, inclusive, and responsive democracy in Canada. Answering this question is difficult not only because the relationship between these technologies and political institutions and practices in Canada is constantly shifting but also because the sites at which we might locate politically significant implications of these technologies are multiple and proliferating. A wide variety of novel media technologies are put to a broad range of uses by a diverse array of mainstream and marginal political actors and institutions, including political parties, social movements and activists, agencies of government, and professional and amateur journalists. Already the phrase "democracy and emerging media" refers to a multiplicity of technologies, a multiplicity of uses, applications, and practices, and a multiplicity of actors. Due to their continually escalating importance as the basic infrastructure of everyday social, political, cultural, and economic life for most Canadians, emerging media technologies are also themselves the site of considerable political stakes, judgments, and contests between actors that are differently situated and have diverse, often competing, interests. When we consider that digital and network technologies also comprise the terrain of a range of important democratic political issues in their own right, the complexity of the phrase "democracy and emerging media" increases significantly. Furthermore, even when they are not deployed for directly or explicitly political purposes, the latest media technologies (and the way

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we think and talk about them) are also an important part of the broader material and cultural context in which the practices and prospects of democratic citizenship are situated.

The complexity of the field demarcated by emerging media technologies is such that the question of whether they contribute to an improved democracy in Canada would seem to defy a straightforward answer. This is apparent even before we recognize that the substance of the normative standard "improved democracy" is *itself* exceedingly complex and deeply contested. What, after all, would an improved democracy in Canada look like or demand? For some, democracy is a critical standard of radical egalitarianism and politicization whose realization demands fundamental restructuring of the economic and institutional basis of political life in Canada. With this view in mind, one could ask whether and how emerging media technologies and practices contribute to the struggle for (or against) a political order in Canada that is fundamentally transformed along strongly democratic lines. The answer to this question would probably be very complex and ambiguous. However, for others, improved democracy means enhanced functioning of extant institutions and structures of political power, along lines that are well within the existing normative self-understanding of Canadian democratic politics. In this latter view, democracy is not so much a radical critical standard that can be brought to bear *against* contemporary political arrangements as it is a principle of legitimacy toward which existing institutions and actors in Canada are already oriented, even if their performance in relation to this principle is not always perfect, or even adequate. From this perspective, one would be inclined to ask the sort of question posed by the Canadian Democratic Audit: do emerging media technologies contribute to making Canadian democracy more, or less, participatory, inclusive, and responsive? Bearing in mind the complexity sketched above, we find that the answer to this question is still unlikely to be unambiguous and universal. Approaching it requires attention to the various ways in which innovative technologies bear on the possibilities of democratic politics: as means, objects, and the setting of political engagement.

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Emerging Media as Political Means

When questions are raised about the political implications of emerging media, the default assumption is typically that the issue primarily concerns the ways in which various political actors or institutions *use* such technologies as *means* of communicating, or producing and distributing information. In this respect, the question is as follows: what are people doing *with* these technologies? Their status as instruments or means of engaging in political activity and accomplishing political goals is certainly central to any evaluation of their democratic implications. In terms of the Canadian Democratic Audit, the operative question is whether, across the vast array of uses to which these technologies are being put, they are mediating enhanced opportunities for political participation and greater degrees of inclusiveness and responsiveness than was characteristic of politics under previous media regimes. Are there ways in which these technologies are being applied that decrease opportunities for participation and undermine inclusiveness and responsiveness?

Communication Technology investigated the use of emerging media technologies by a range of political actors including government, political parties, advocacy groups and social movements, activists, and individual citizens. Little evidence was found to support the notion that mainstream institutional political actors – primarily governments and parties – are consistently using these technologies in ways that significantly expand opportunities for meaningful political participation by a broader, more inclusive range of Canadian citizens. This is a surprising conclusion, given the widespread adoption of these technologies by governments and political parties. However, despite what is generally acknowledged as the potential for emerging technologies to mediate enhanced citizen engagement, the priorities that have guided parties and governments in their deployment of them have tended in other directions.

For several years, the Government of Canada has characterized itself as among the world's most connected to its citizens, an image supported

by consistently high scores in international rankings of e-government preparedness. Canada's Government On-Line (GOL) project, inaugurated in 1999, has entailed a comprehensive effort to make government services and information available via the Internet, to the point of establishing electronic service delivery as the primary locus of contact between citizens and government. The government's priorities in these efforts have included realizing efficiencies and cost savings in the delivery of services, effective management of information privacy and infrastructure security concerns, and a "client-centred" effort to make electronic services accessible, convenient, and responsive to users. The Canadian government has also explored, somewhat more tentatively, the potential of emerging media to facilitate expanded, enhanced, and new forms of citizen engagement in the political processes of government, so-called e-democracy. This has included an endeavour to make increasing volumes of government information available on-line, as well as to integrate the utilities of new technologies in processes of public consultation between elections.

In relation to the criteria of participation, responsiveness, and inclusiveness, the outcomes of government's adoption of emerging media technologies have been ambiguous. On the one hand, it could be argued that on-line service delivery has increased government responsiveness and that digital technologies have made it possible to include more, and more diverse, citizens in the decision- and policy-making processes of government than ever before. On the other hand, one might argue that it is remarkable how little has changed, given the formidable affordances of these technologies and their normalization in other sectors of social and political life. The government's imagination of its relationship to citizens, as characterized primarily by transactions between a service provider and its clients, limits rather than opens democratic horizons, especially in a context where digital networks have also enabled the rationalization and privatization of many state agencies.

In a similar respect, the democratic significance of government efforts to make some forms of information available on-line must be measured against the broader trend toward increased commoditization,

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commercialization, and centralization of control over much government information and the ongoing escalation of state-led deployments of new technologies for purposes of civilian surveillance. In light of this, despite technologies that promise unprecedented access to information, critics have consistently described recent governments as carrying out an equally unprecedented narrowing of the scope of access to information in Canada, as well as a "securitization" of the public sphere, the combined implications of which are anything but salutary for democratic citizenship. And though emerging technologies have been deployed with some regularity in public consultation exercises – see, for example, the government's Consulting With Canadians web portal at www.consultingcanadians.gc.ca – consistent opportunities for citizens to participate meaningfully in transparent processes that are clearly linked to discernible outcomes remain the exception rather than the rule. Even as government takes tentative steps toward adoption of the hypercollaborative social-networking platforms of Web 2.0, emerging media will succeed in democratizing policy making only if driven by a serious shift in government's motivation for engaging in consultation in the first place. So long as consultation is understood as a strategically necessary risk to be managed, no technology will be able to independently produce more or better opportunities for meaningful participation. As always, the motivation of the particular agency, institution, or actor in using a given information or communication technology is more important to the possibility of a democratic outcome than the mere fact of the technology's use.

The same can be said of the application of emerging media by political parties. *Communication Technology* found that the parties had made relatively modest use of emerging media for purposes of substantial democratization. Several parties have sought to integrate emerging social media utilities into their on-line communications strategies, including social-networking applications, blogs, content aggregators, and user-generated content sharing. For the most part, the orientation of the parties toward these technologies has been entirely strategic. Efforts to capitalize on their potential to democratize decision and policy making within parties on an ongoing basis have

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been conspicuously absent. On the other hand, parties have made extensive use of these technologies for internal administration, fundraising, publication of party and campaign information, media and public relations management, and data gathering and analysis pursuant to crafting and executing highly agile and customized electoral campaigns. Indeed, it could be argued that this latter is the single most important impact that novel digital and network technologies have had upon the practice of Canadian political parties. As in most advanced liberal democracies, technologically mediated information gathering, processing, and management are now major elements of partisan electoral campaigns in Canada (Cross 2004). In the 2008 election, this activity reached unprecedented levels of extension and sophistication, as parties utilized powerful database and processing techniques to gather massive volumes of complex geo- and psycho-demographic information on citizens, combined with in-house and commercially available consumer and opinion data, to produce fine-grained profiles aimed at increasingly precise voter targeting and election day vote-mobilization strategies. In the 2008 campaign, it was reported that "the Conservative Party's campaign computers hold the most detailed electoral data on Canadians ever assembled by a political party ... enabling the Tories to run the most micro-targeted campaign the country has ever experienced" (Valpy 2008, A11). In fact, all five main parties were reported to be using a "micro-targeting voter-profile tool, which outlines people's ethnicity, social values, and income level, cross-referenced with their political support" (Jiménez 2008, A6). Perhaps one could argue that such tools simply make parties more closely responsive to the preferences and needs of broader, more inclusive swaths of voters. An equally plausible conclusion would be that we are approaching the moment when partisan electoral competition in Canada becomes purely technological not just in its preferred instruments but in its basic character.

The promise of emerging media to revitalize democracy through enhanced opportunities for more inclusive participation has been invested with greatest hope not in established institutions and agencies but rather at the level of individual citizens. In the midst of widespread

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diagnoses of citizen disengagement and disaffection, it is hoped that emerging technologies will mediate a revitalization of political participation in the democratic public sphere. It is certainly the case that individual Canadians have taken up novel technologies with great fervour, as evidenced by steadily escalating rates of Internet use, including especially among those already inclined to look for political information, as well as use of a broad range of related digital and networked devices and applications. Nevertheless, it is far from clear that engagement in politics – whether mainstream partisan competition or alternative non-partisan forms of engagement – accounts for a significant portion of the time most Canadians spend with emerging media technologies. Recent research in the United States reports that "political traffic is a tiny portion of Web usage. Traffic to political Web sites is sparser even than many skeptics have expected" (Hindman 2009, 131). Most statistical accounts confirm that, when it comes to how most Canadians use emerging media most of the time, politics ranks far below other forms of information gathering, socializing, consumerist, entertainment, and communicative activities. In this respect, these technologies would seem to reinforce, rather than reverse, the general depoliticization characteristic of the Canadian population.

The advent of so-called Web 2.0 applications, including social-networking utilities such as Facebook and Twitter, multimedia content-sharing sites such as YouTube and Flickr, aggregation and syndication services, "folksonomic" utilities for the tagging, ranking, and evaluating of on-line information, and, of course, the proliferation of wikis and blogs, have significantly altered the terrain of political communication in Canada. These platforms are all characterized by relatively easy facilitation of production and circulation of high-quality user-generated content, linking between sites and information items, and provision of opportunities for users to collaborate and comment. Comedian Rick Mercer (2008, F3) has observed that "ordinary Canadians don't spend a lot of time reading blogs because ordinary Canadians know that blogs are basically the domain of idiots, mad people and news anchors." Nevertheless, even more than e-mail and the basic web utilities that preceded them, applications associated with Web 2.0 have brought with

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them renewed hopes of a highly participatory and inclusive transformation of both politics and the mass media.

Whether these hopes are coming to fruition awaits the sober assessment of careful empirical analysis. It is clear that significant numbers of people use Web 2.0 applications to engage in politics, whether this takes the form of media consumption, organization of political action, or participation in the production and circulation of political information and opinion. Whether this constitutes a significant increase over the number of people who were already involved in political activity via other media is not at all clear. It may be that, though emerging media present powerful and interesting new instruments to politically engaged citizens, the overall quotient and distribution of political involvement is simply reinforced in this setting, rather than significantly increased. After a thorough empirical study of recent patterns of web use in the United States, Matthew Hindman (2009) argues that claims regarding the inherent egalitarianism and inclusivity of web-based political activity are difficult to sustain, given the persistence of existing hierarchies in the on-line environment and the materialization of new ones. Affirming that blogs have become a primary venue to which citizens turn for political commentary, and that active political blogs number in at least the hundreds of thousands, Hindman (ibid., 133, emphasis in original) nevertheless concludes "a small list of A-list bloggers actually gets more political blog traffic that *the rest of the citizenry combined.* Talk about blogs empowering ordinary citizens rings doubly hollow when the top bloggers are better educated, more frequently male, and less ethnically diverse than the elite media the blogs often criticize." It is possible that the Canadian blogosphere is different, but absent comparably thorough evidence, one would be hard pressed to come up with reasons for reaching this conclusion. At a minimum, we should be skeptical of claims that simply assume that the apparent proliferation of a medium such as the blog equates with significant democratic gains.

Parties and mass media have had to become more responsive to currents originating in the changed media environment. Bloggers,

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whether as quasi-partisan commentators or independent citizen-journalists, have come to play a prominent role investigating and scrutinizing the conduct and statements of public officials and candidates for office, and placing this information into wider public circulation. Sometimes, these items spread virally across the blogosphere and related media-sharing networks; sometimes they act as seeds that grow into major stories covered by traditional mass media outlets. In either case, political actors find themselves being held to account for their actions, statements, personal histories, and associations to a much greater degree than before. Early in the 2008 Canadian federal election cycle, major party candidates were forced to withdraw when "embarrassing" revelations about past statements and behaviour surfaced on the web. Partisan bloggers and activists also routinely produce and circulate media content that, though at an arm's length from official party campaigns, nevertheless compels candidates and mainstream media to respond. For example, candidates and mainstream news organizations alike now routinely find themselves in the position of having their claims "fact-checked" by a distributed network of bloggers and citizen-journalists. These same platforms and users also serve important networking and mobilization functions, as reader/contributors in the blogosphere and on social-networking sites such as Facebook can be quickly rallied to act on behalf of, or against, particular positions or actors. Such was the case in the 2008 election, when large numbers of voters were mobilized on-line to support the inclusion of Green Party leader Elizabeth May in the televised leaders' debates. This was an example of the participatory affordances of emerging media being taken up in a manner that prompted a significant official response that might not otherwise have been forthcoming.

Without question, these technologies have given formidable new tools to partisans and activists, and have changed the landscape in which governments, parties, and traditional mass media outlets operate. One way to describe these developments is to say that emerging media have presented individual political actors with an expanded range of participatory opportunities and that these in turn have forced

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institutional actors to be more responsive. Still, it remains unclear whether the character of political engagement mediated by these technologies is such that we should uncritically accept that their proliferation entails a substantive improvement in the quality of democratic participation. One need not be prejudicially dismissive of the potential diversity of forms of legitimate popular expression to wonder whether repeated opportunities to register opinion, to have one's prior partisan prejudices confirmed, or to click through to grainy video-clips of potential candidates skinny-dipping in their youth constitutes a democratic renaissance. The tools may be far less important than the motivation and imagination of those wielding them. In this light, those looking for pointers to the democratic potential of emerging media would do well to focus their attention upon those highly politicized social movements, advocacy groups, and independent and community media activists who inhabit the oppositional margins of Canadian political culture. These remain largely silenced in the mainstream mass media environment, and they have found in emerging media the means by which they might organize, mobilize, publicize, and intervene toward the end of a more egalitarian and just democratic politics. Here, emerging media appear as inclusive, participatory, and responsive because the actors using them tend to be committed to these norms regardless of the strategic utilities presented by the technologies themselves. However, as significant as these movements and activists are, and as encouraging as their genuinely democratic uses of emerging media may be, the brutal fact is that they remain a tear in a salty sea of highly privatized, strategic, and consumerist technological culture in Canada.

Emerging Media as Political Objects

As important as they are, instrumental questions about new technologies as means of political engagement should not exhaust our inquiry into their democratic status. These technologies are not just political instruments: they are also political objects, which is to say that citizens ought to be able to participate in making political decisions about them.

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All technologies are political in this sense. They are political because their development, application, and regulation are outcomes of decisions made in particular settings by particular actors (the Internet, for example, did not just drop out of the sky). Technologies are also political because their development, application, and regulation in a given context can influence the character of human relationships and the distribution of opportunities, resources, and power. This is especially true of emerging information and communication technologies because of the role they play as crucial infrastructures for a broad and increasing array of economic, social, and political practices. For this reason, we are justified in asking not just what people do *with* these technologies but also what people can do *about* them. The question here is whether the contexts in which decisions about the development, application, and regulation of emerging media technologies have occurred have been inclusive, participatory, and responsive enough to qualify as democratic.

Communication policy, regulation, and governance have historically been one of the most democratic areas of public policy in Canada, both in terms of the principles guiding it and the processes by which it is developed and implemented. For nearly a century, the public interest in accessible, diverse, and high-quality media systems occupied a place of prominence in the imagination of Canadian communication policy. And whenever technological changes – the development of telegraphy, telephony, and radio and television broadcasting – have prompted re-evaluation of the policy and regulatory framework surrounding communication media in Canada, the government has solicited broad-based public input from the diverse variety of stakeholders and communities whose interests are bound up in these changes. In the terms adopted by the Canadian Democratic Audit, it could be said that communication policy, regulation, and governance have historically comprised a domain where responsiveness, inclusion, and participation have been highly valued.

Communication Technology explored whether regulation and policy making concerning emerging information and communication technologies has conformed to this historical standard. This policy cycle

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began in 1993, when the Department of Communication was disbanded and Industry Canada took over responsibility for policy concerning the development of emerging media technologies in Canada. It included the establishment and privatization of the Canadian Network for the Advancement of Research, Industry and Education (CANARIE), the activity of the Information Highway Advisory Council (established in 1994, with reports in 1995 and 1996), the National Broadband Task Force (2000), and a number of important hearings and reports by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), the federal regulator of broadcasting and telecommunication. These latter included 1995's *Competition and Convergence* report (which paved the way for unprecedented media concentration and cross-ownership of telecommunication and broadcasting enterprises in Canada) and the *Report on New Media* in 1999, which exempted on-line activity and enterprises from CRTC regulatory oversight (Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission 1995, 1999).

In a departure from the tradition of modestly public and democratic communication policy making in Canada, the media policy cycle surrounding emerging media has been undemocratic in its processes and anti-democratic in its outcomes (Barney 2005). Processes have been characterized by systematic overrepresentation of industry interests, a routine lack of transparency, and a persistent denial of opportunities for meaningful public participation. An exception in the latter case was the CRTC, which is mandated to hold public hearings pursuant to major regulatory changes and to allow public intervention in licensing proceedings. The CRTC stood alone through this period in terms of providing opportunities for the considerable number of citizens mobilized by emerging media issues to participate in the processes by which decisions were being made. However, the CRTC's regulatory decisions – for example, its 1999 resolution to exempt new media enterprises from regulatory oversight – were not clearly responsive to the breadth and diversity of alternatives and interests generated through these public proceedings, opting routinely for measures that primarily reflected the private interests of a fairly narrow cohort of industry stakeholders. These decisions were consistent with government policy

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through this period, which viewed emerging media primarily through the lens of industrial development and economic competitiveness rather than placing priority on developing them as an infrastructure of Canadian culture, communities, and the democratic public sphere. Media policy scholars Marc Raboy and Genevieve Bonin (2008, 60) observe that, though the CRTC was once understood to be the guarantor of the public interest in communication in Canada, "somewhere along the way, it became an enabling mechanism for Canadian capital accumulation." The same could be said of Canadian communication and media policy more generally. The proliferation of digital information and communication networks in the 1990s might well mark the point "along the way" where the institutional structure for inclusive democratic participation in communication policy making and regulation, oriented toward outcomes that are responsive to the public interest, was decisively undermined.

The situation has not improved considerably in recent years. In 2005, the federal government created a three-member Telecommunications Policy Review Panel charged with recommending sweeping changes to the 1993 Telecommunications Act. Media scholar and activist Leslie Shade (2008, 112) has characterized the process as follows: "Public input into the process was minimal ... Two public forums were held: one in the Yukon Territories [sic] for public interest groups and the other in Gatineau, Quebec, mostly for industry groups. Dominated by industry and government concerns about issues such as competitiveness, productivity and deregulation, the Panel received 200 submissions totaling thousands of pages, but a content analysis revealed that Aboriginal, consumer, women's and community groups represented only 15.5% of the total submissions, versus 60.1% for industry groups." It could be argued that people just are not that interested in these issues. However, critical public policy scholars in Canada routinely report that the administrative and expertise burdens of monitoring and participating effectively in CRTC proceedings typically exceed the capacity of many of the constituencies that would otherwise be inclined to engage in these issues, especially in light of the consistently disappointing returns for doing so. In this case, the panel's 2006 report reflected both

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its mandate to approach telecom policy review from the perspective of securing the competitiveness of major Canadian firms in global markets and the vision for how to accomplish this that was endorsed by the industrial stakeholders with whom it primarily consulted. Its major recommendation was for less regulation and more reliance on market forces in order to promote accelerated growth and competitiveness of Canada's telecommunications industry. Shade (ibid.) reports that those community and public interest groups that did participate in the panel's consultations were "dismayed" by the report's neglect of the indispensable role of state regulation in securing the conditions of an accessible democratic infrastructure, the role played by community-based groups in supporting this sort of access, and the need for state support of programs aimed at bridging the various digital divides that continue to face many Canadians.

This is not the only example. Between 2004 and 2008, Industry Canada, without public consultation, moved to auction a significant portion of the radio spectrum, a move widely interpreted as a transfer of significant public resources into the private hands of major telecommunication enterprises hoping to use them to deliver a range of lucrative digital services. According to Graham Longford (2008, 99), these auctions "have led to the concentration of spectrum in the hands of a few, deep-pocketed firms, and threaten to place it further beyond the reach of Canada's citizens and communities. These and other developments constitute a regulatory clearing of the spectrum commons, and enclosure and expropriation of the public airwaves for private gain that ignores the interests of consumers and undermines public rights to the airwaves." In 2007, Ottawa introduced long-awaited legislation to enact changes to Canada's copyright regime in response to the proliferation of digital media. Bill C-61 was the result of considerable consultation with industry stakeholders, including major interests in the US entertainment and media sectors, alongside nearly total exclusion of public interest advocates and non-commercial groups with a stake in the legal framework surrounding intellectual property. The planned legislation would have imposed industry-friendly restrictions on the fair use, copying, and circulation of copyrighted materials, in a manner that many

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Canadian activists and scholars characterized as even more severe than similar legislation in the United States. The legislation was withdrawn, however, after an unprecedented public protest, mobilized with the aid of a range of social-networking applications, which has yielded an organization known as Fair Copyright Canada, a coalition of activists, critical media scholars, creative workers, and community organizations, with whom the government will now most certainly have to contend whenever it decides to remount its effort to reform the Copyright Act. Again, this is a clear example of a case in which political participation facilitated by emerging media provoked a response that would not have occurred otherwise. That this had to transpire outside the official framework in which the legislation was developed speaks to ongoing deficits of participation, inclusion, and responsiveness in those institutions charged with charting a policy course in relation to emerging technologies.

The role of the CRTC as a venue for democratic public consultation on new technological issues has been mixed through this period. On the one hand, as Richard Schultz (2008) has documented, 2006-07 brought with it an unprecedented degree of ministerial intervention in CRTC decision making, pursuant to enforcing the government's industry-friendly laissez-faire approach to the sector, in a manner that paid little attention to constituencies beyond industry stakeholders. On the other hand, the CRTC nevertheless continues to provide the most significant institutional venue in which Canadian citizens, community groups, and public interest advocates can participate in relatively inclusive processes related to media policy and regulation. In 2007, the CRTC commissioned an expert report, known as the Dunbar-Leblanc report (Dunbar and Leblanc 2007), which reviewed existing regulation and made over a hundred recommendations for reform. Simultaneously, the commission sponsored an unprecedented (for the CRTC) set of public meetings concerning the issue of concentrated media ownership in Canada. The Diversity of Voices hearings were held over several days in Gatineau, Quebec. Fifty-two parties appeared, and the commission received 162 written comments directly, as well as 1,800 comments filed as part of a campaign by the group Canadians for

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Democratic Media. In January 2008, the CRTC announced new restrictions on cross-media ownership, the common ownership of television services, including pay and specialty services, and the common ownership of broadcasting distribution undertakings. Although these restrictions fall short of reversing a decade of "blindly approving every mega-merger placed before it" (Raboy and Bonin 2008, 61), they do signal an openness to something other than the promotion of industrial interests and a potential shift in the balance of priorities for the regulator to include greater scope for public interest considerations.

Whether this is an anomaly or the start of a new trend is difficult to say. In 2009, the CRTC reviewed its 1999 new media exemption order, in which Internet content and services were exempted from broadcasting regulation. The consultation process elicited 150 comments, over seventy final submissions, and more than fifty oral submissions. Many of these called upon the CRTC to assert its jurisdiction over emerging media in a manner that leaves open the possibility of regulation in the public interest. Nevertheless, the CRTC decided to continue the exemption of new media enterprises from regulation, an outcome that reflected the priorities of the industry stakeholders, whose voices dominated the proceedings. Also in 2009, the CRTC undertook an investigation into network neutrality and the practice of Internet throttling, or traffic shaping, whereby major Internet service providers (ISPs) manage network traffic in ways that discriminate against certain types of content and practices by reducing the bandwidth available to them, thus slowing transmission and download speeds in order to reserve bandwidth for preferred content and applications. The typically cited example is deceleration of peer-to-peer file-sharing traffic, but critics worry about extensions of throttling whereby major providers might reserve preferred service for content and applications in which they have a business interest while reducing the bandwidth available to competing applications and content (Geist 2008). Such practices violate the long-standing principle of common carriage in telecommunications, whereby private owners of major infrastructure are required to provide equal access and service to all legal users of that

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infrastructure and to refrain from anti-competitive or abusive discrimination aimed at securing monopolistic advantage. In 2008, the CRTC responded to a complaint filed by the Canadian Association of Internet Providers against Bell Canada, challenging the company's right to manage the network traffic of its wholesale customers. The CRTC ruled in Bell's favour, finding that its practices were not discriminatory (it was doing the same thing to all its wholesale and retail customers) and therefore permissible.

Perhaps anticipating the controversy that would greet this ruling, and acknowledging the complexity of the issue, the CRTC simultaneously announced that it would undertake a comprehensive review of the question of network neutrality, complete with public hearings. In response to this, it received nearly five hundred comments and over thirteen thousand e-mail submissions from individuals, many mobilized by highly motivated activist networks and coalitions of social movements working in this area. At the oral hearing in July 2009, twenty-six presentations were made, and an on-line consultation initiated by the commission elicited fourteen hundred individual comments. The CRTC's decision was mixed. On the one hand, it placed real limits on the practice of traffic shaping: in response to consumer complaints, ISPs can be called upon to fully disclose and justify specific traffic management measures and their impacts on service levels, and are banned from using personal information gleaned from packet inspection for anything other than traffic shaping. On the other hand, critics have been unsatisfied with the tying of compliance to the trigger of consumer complaint and have interpreted these measures as merely setting the conditions whereby major ISPs can continue Internet throttling, as opposed to banning it altogether. Thus, the decision concerning network neutrality could be described as an instance in which the CRTC's mandate to provide for public participation in its regulatory processes, in this case made more inclusive by a highly orchestrated on-line campaign, resulted in an outcome that was responsive to a public interest defined at least somewhat more broadly than that of the telecommunications industry.

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Emerging Media as the Setting of Politics

A common refrain in contemporary popular culture is that emerging information and communication technologies influence or change everything. This signals the third way in which these technologies bear on the possibility of a more inclusive, responsive, and participatory democratic politics in Canada. Emerging media are means of engaging in politics, and also (at least potentially) the object of political engagement, but their political significance does not end there. Because these technologies are involved in an increasing array of economic and social practices, they also constitute an important part of the general setting in which democratic citizenship is situated and unfolds. The setting provided by emerging media for citizenship is equal parts material and cultural: we live in the midst of these technologies and also identify with the culture that surrounds them. In approaching emerging media as means of politics, we ask what people do *with* them; in approaching them as objects of politics, we ask what people can do *about* them. In approaching them as the setting of politics, we ask what they do to people as citizens and how this affects the prospects of a more inclusive, participatory, and responsive democratic experience.

Communication Technology investigated the relationship between emerging media technologies and globalization, and the implications of this relationship for the possibilities of an inclusive, participatory, and responsive democratic politics in Canada. The transnationalization of the capitalist economy and the restructuring of national sovereignty to accommodate it have had a reciprocal relationship with emerging media, whereby the latter have been crucial enablers of the various practices of transnational capitalism and have also developed under the conditions established by this economy and the state forms that attend to it. In this volume, I argued that globalization has made the problem of subjecting the development of these technologies, and the activities they mediate, to substantially democratic judgment and governance in the public interest even more difficult to solve, largely by defining communication as a commodity best managed under an

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industrial, as opposed to political or cultural strategy. I also suggested that the global media system, in which novel technologies play a crucial role, is one in which the private interests of massive transnational media corporations are increasingly shielded from regulation by, and accountability to, state-level institutions and the citizenries they represent. There have been some exceptions, such as the role played by civil society organizations at the 2003 and 2005 World Summit on the Information Society. Nonetheless, despite the mobilization of transnational activist networks and movements devoted to democratic media reform, international forums in which decisions affecting the global deployment and governance of emerging media are made do not embody the norms of representation, participation, and scrutiny that we typically expect from democratic political institutions (Raboy and Landry 2005). Ironically, Canada's subscription to the rising global media order has been supported by a consistent discourse of technological nationalism at the domestic level, whereby the country's future prosperity is staked to a commitment to technological innovation. The necessity of this commitment is so taken for granted that it – along with the various financial, regulatory, and distributional entailments supporting it – is effectively insulated from democratic political contest and judgment.

Communication Technology also examined the relationship between emerging media and the distribution of power in Canada, a relationship that defines the material and cultural setting in which citizenship is situated. If emerging media are involved in a substantial democratization of Canadian political life, we should find evidence of their contribution to social and economic equality in Canada. In this respect, the assessment focused on three issues: the digital divide, the political economy of emerging media and work, and emerging media and the democratic public sphere.

Although the digital divide, conceived in terms of basic connectivity to, and use of, the Internet, has narrowed significantly, important power differentials continue to exist, recognizable only if our understanding of the digital divide includes questions about how people apply this medium (as passive consumers or as active contributors), their capacity

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to employ these technologies in ways that contribute to, rather than diminish, their autonomy, and their ability to influence (either individually or collectively) the development, design, content, and regulation of the medium and its applications. The creation and popularity of Web 2.0 applications that provide greater degrees of user collaboration in the generation and circulation of content on the Internet have blurred the line between information consumers and information producers, and this has enabled a broader public of users to approach these media as agents rather than simply as an audience. That said, it is far too early to conclude whether the likes of blogs, YouTube, and Facebook have fundamentally altered the distribution of material (not just symbolic) power in Canada such that perennially marginalized and disadvantaged groups now experience Canadian society as somehow more inclusive, egalitarian, and just.

Much has already been said in this chapter about the relationship between emerging media and the consolidation of prevailing distributions of economic power in Canada. However, one of the most important domains in which new technologies affect the setting of citizenship is that of work. *Communication Technology* also considered the role emerging media have played in the explosion of non-standard, contingent, precarious work and employment arrangements characteristic of recent years in Canada. For some people, these are voluntary and are experienced as a source of relative autonomy and empowerment. However, for many, these non-standard arrangements, which are crucially enabled by a variety of networked technologies, are involuntary and experienced as a source of ongoing material insecurity and diminished leisure. In this sense, emerging media have been instrumental to an unequal distribution of the material resources of security and leisure in the Canadian economy, and so may undermine the prospects for citizenship for an increasing number of Canadians who work under these conditions (see Menzies 2005).

Finally, the question of the connection between emerging media technologies and the democratic public sphere as an essential setting for citizenship has been a favourite topic of scholars in media and political studies in recent years. This interest has been fuelled by a

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sense of the potential for emerging media to facilitate more informed, more intensive, and more interactive political discussions between citizens separated by great distances than were possible under conditions established by broadcast media such as television and the mass press. Although the participatory opportunities afforded by emerging media, especially in relation directly to political affairs, are considerable, *Communication Technology* found evidence suggesting that the opposite may also be true: these media enhance the construction of the public sphere as a site of entertainment, commerce, consumption, and surveillance rather than one of politicization and democratic citizenship. As discussed above, there are many highly politicized public realms and a great deal of citizenship activity mediated by emerging media, particularly in the context of social-networking and collaborative platforms, that make it easier for politically inclined people to organize, mobilize, and publicize. However, these are not necessarily characteristic of the broader relationship between emerging media, the public sphere, and the culture of citizenship more generally. Indeed, critical scholars are beginning to wonder whether the setting provided by these media might require us to rethink the status of the norms of publicity – information, communication, and participation – in light of the fact that these technologies appear to deliver on these goods so copiously, while leaving fundamentally inegalitarian and depoliticized structures of power and advantage not only intact but bolstered and legitimated (see Barney 2008). This prospect invites an unsettling, but perhaps necessary, question: what if emerging media succeed in making Canadian politics more participatory, inclusive, and responsive but, for all that, less democratic?

The hope for a better outcome is not at all technological: it is strictly political. It relies on the choices of influential actors and decision makers, and the distribution of power in the institutional and material settings in which these decisions are reached. To make emerging media technologies more democratic means of political engagement requires not only using them for abstract purposes of increased information and communication but mobilizing them in ways that are concretely tied to the democratic principle of equality as to power and

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resources. Obviously, this would entail a fundamental shift in the priorities and practices of partisan and government institutions, whose primary disposition in regard to these technologies remains almost exclusively instrumental and strategic. Imagining the possibility of emerging technologies being used to facilitate a radical equalization of political decision-making power in Canada does not require much in terms of reconfiguring these technologies on a technical level. It would, however, demand a transformation of conventional partisan and governing institutions such that would leave them barely recognizable. They would have to start thinking and acting more like cooperatives or democratic social movements. This is why very few of those who call for democratic "improvements" to existing institutions by means of emerging media technologies can be taken at their word. What they probably have in mind is that we had better be careful to manage the development of these technologies such that existing institutions, despite the inequalities upon which they thrive, might survive the onslaught.

The same basic spirit prevents the Canadian state from creating institutional spaces in which new technologies might be approached by citizens as objects of democratic political judgment. The development and regulation of these technologies, driven by the political priorities of powerful stakeholders in the Canadian economy, are simply too important to be exposed to the alternative political priorities that might arise from genuine engagement with those whose stakes in that economy are considered marginal. To actually democratize new technologies as objects of political judgment would require a shift in the political economy of technology that would potentially place Canadian capitalism in a very unstable position. Thus it is that technology and its development must be kept safe from democracy through highly inegalitarian institutional arrangements and through the reproduction of radically depoliticizing rhetorics of technological nationalism and innovation. Dismantling this cultural setting, whereby technology relates to democracy as some kind of fantasy, rather than as a demanding and radical material condition, is the first step toward the democratic outcomes we purport to want.

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