

Emerging Spaces of Technological Citizenship: Politics and Everyday Life in the City

John Saunders, Ph.D. candidate Department of Geography, York University, Toronto

With the incorporation of information and communications technologies (ICTs) into city form and city life come new questions concerning what it means to act politically – to act as a citizen. If struggles over citizenship occur within the realm of the city, how are technologically informed claims for rights and recognition articulated? What are the spaces in which these claims are framed, contested and negotiated?

The provision of access to technology can be understood in many ways as part of spatializing strategies of advanced liberal governance. Public-private partnerships, entrepreneurial approaches to government, and more self-directed practices are but some of the ways in which contemporary approaches to technological citizenship have developed. Yet despite invoking a rhetoric of empowerment and individual choice, these approaches often reproduce or reinscribe power relations, limiting democratic participation.

This paper will examine the material conditions in which technological citizenship struggles occur, outlining some emerging sites for these struggles within the city: the library, the school, the community centre, the social service agency, the Internet café, the street, the home. These sites can be understood as spaces of domination and surveillance, but also potentially as spaces of appropriation and negotiation.