Wendy McGuinness and Sally Hett

Cīvitās: aligning technological and sociological transformation

This article is dedicated to the late Dr. Ranginui Walker, a member of the Constitutional Advisory Panel, had personally asked the McGuinness Institute to pursue the recommendations of the panel's report.

The Latin word, *cīvis,* which, according to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, has the primary meaning 'a fellow citizen, fellow countryman' and the secondary meaning 'a citizen, countryman, considered in his relationship to the state'. The nature of that state is aptly described by the word *cīvitās*, which means not only 'an organized community … to which one belongs as a citizen', but also 'the rights of a citizen, citizenship; … the gift of citizenship to single persons' (Glare, 1983, p.330). In their semantic travels and transformations through Latin, Old French, Anglo-French and Middle English, *cīvis* and *cīvitās* have reached modern English in an abundance of forms, including 'civic', 'civil', 'civilian', 'city' and, of course, 'citizen' (Simpson and Weiner, 2001, pp.249-56).

Cīvitās plays out in the real world in terms of how we work together as a family, a tribe, a community, a country and as stewards of the planet. Success or failure can be judged by how well we are managing, or not managing, a diverse range of issues, such as poverty, climate change, the refugee crisis and corruption in the banking system. Hence, civil society should not be measured by the quality or quantity of our knowledge, but rather by how we use that knowledge. It is demonstrated in our actions – the way we live.

'A healthy democracy requires active citizens' (Hayward, 2012, p.139). This necessitates not only a well-informed society in which all citizens have access to meaningful and reliable information, but also a society in which each citizen possesses the necessary tools to respond to that information and make their voice heard. If, as many suspect, sociological transformation is at least as important as technological transformation in catalysing growth (Haldane, 2015, p.7), New Zealand needs to carefully consider how best to shape, guide and, where appropriate, invest in citizenship in the 21st century.

Andrew Haldane, chief economist at the Bank of England, suggests that sociological transformation tends to happen cumulatively, in an evolutionary fashion, whereas technological transformation happens spontaneously, in sudden and significant ways (ibid.). The sudden acceleration of technological change at the intersection of civics and media is a case in point. For example, the first known use of the word 'news' was in the 15th century, 'town crier' in 1602, 'newspaper' in 1670, 'civics' in 1886, 'radio' in 1887 and 'television' in 1907. The first known use of the word 'media', as used today to describe agencies of mass communication, was in 1923. Remarkably, the first known use of the term 'social media' was only in 2004, the year Facebook was launched (Merriam-Webster, n.d.; Phillips, 2007). Just over

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Figure 1: Illustrating the extent of the disruption and the need for alignment
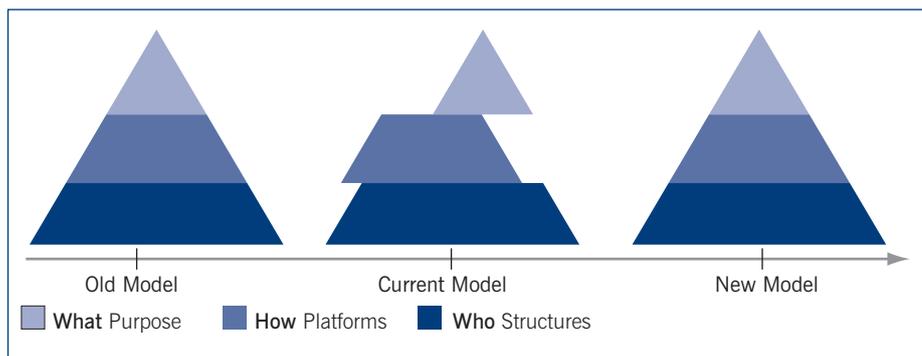
ten years later, on 24 August 2015, 'one billion people used Facebook in a single day' (Zuckerberg, 2015).

Facebook and other such innovations have given citizens a significant new form of mass communication – a technological transformation that delivered sudden, significant and global change. In many ways the internet has given citizens a more accessible world, but further technological

Civics is evolving slowly but surely
The workshop discussions illustrated a change in the perception of the overall purpose of civics. We have moved away from a fixed curriculum in which civics is taught at school (i.e., teaching the rights and duties of New Zealand citizens and the role of government) and at church (the importance of God and country). Instead we are seeing a move towards

embedded in our bicultural history.'
– Dame Claudia Orange, head of research, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
• 'We don't need to reach a complete consensus, because if we do, it will make life hard for those who live outside it. The power of New Zealand's diversity drives our public discussions.' – Sandra Grey, Tertiary Education Union
• 'Democracy must be "learned" by successive generations.' – Mark Jennings, head of news, MediaWorks

> There remains a lack of clarity as to who … will take responsibility for the delivery of civics education and the supply of trustworthy news content.

Media and news platforms are evolving fast and unpredictably
Of all the technological disruptors in the last 40 years, the internet has arguably been the most significant. It has resulted in the establishment of a diverse range of platforms for selling and sharing products, services and ideas via a wide range of delivery mechanisms (including film, photographs, dialogue and emoji). Only in retrospect are we able to fully appreciate how the arrival of the internet in the mid-1980s led to a revolution in the way we live.[2]

The following comments from workshop speakers illustrate the nature of the current challenges:
• 'Web browsers have embedded algorithms, which create unconscious echo chambers of news and information. Over time, our previous online searches begin to dictate the information we receive, which reinforces our biases.' – Siouxsie Wiles, senior medical sciences lecturer, University of Auckland
• 'Digital literacy is about more than merely using computers. As part of civic education, people need to be equipped with the tools to analyse the veracity of the information they are receiving.' – Peter Griffin, manager, Royal Society of New Zealand's Science Media Centre
• 'We need to teach transparency of reporting processes.' – Helen Sissons, senior journalism lecturer, Auckland University of Technology
• 'Digital media and changes in funding structures are simultaneously enabling enhanced performance

revolutions may bring more social tension and inequality.[1] Our interest is in aligning the slow and steady sociological transformations with the fast and unpredictable technological transformations, so that citizens are able to make informed choices about what they want.

This article is in two parts. Part one discusses observations from the three workshops that formed the Civics and Media Project, while part two suggests five public policy ideas for how New Zealand might support, guide and shape citizenship in the 21st century.

Part one: the Civics and Media Project
It is clear that a lack of alignment currently exists at the juncture of civics and media. In particular, the underlying purpose of civics, the technological platforms supplying news media and the resulting organisational structure are all undergoing change, as illustrated in Figure 1.

a broader purpose: enabling choice, empowering youth, embracing diversity and experiencing civics. This focus on social cohesion fits alongside the Treasury's Living Standards Framework (Treasury, 2015a, p.2).

The concepts of a national citizen and a global citizen are no longer mutually exclusive. Civics is no longer set within the narrow confines of a nation state, but includes how citizens will resolve climate change, house refugees and feed the world.

The following quotes from workshop speakers illustrate how expectations are changing:
• 'It is important for young New Zealanders to have an understanding of the histories and relationships of our country as well as of our democratic institutions. This will inspire a shared appreciation for our growing multicultural society,

and challenging the nature and quality of news, information and civic participation.' – Professor John Burrows QC

The organisational structure is in disarray
There remains a lack of clarity as to who, in the current disrupted model (Figure 1's middle triangle), will take responsibility for the delivery of civics education and the supply of trustworthy news content. Concerns expressed in the workshops included the lack of a baseline curriculum for young New Zealanders, the failure to provide a linear civics pathway from three to 18 years of age, and an inability to ensure that civics education is meaningful and relevant to those living in the 21st century.[3] In addition, a failure to provide effective civics education for immigrants, refugees and former prisoners was also of concern.

The following comments illustrate the current opportunities:
• 'Media organisations need to shift the focus at elections to policy issues rather than entertainment and the polls. Citizens need to be well-informed about these issues in order to engage with the election process and make a considered decision.' – Jane Wrightson, chief executive, NZ on Air
• 'The basic requirement of journalists is to hold power to account, and public service media must maintain standards across the news media ecology.' – Carol Hirschfeld, head of content, Radio New Zealand
• 'Young people are looking for their news in online and social media, so we need to match this demand with quality news in those digital spaces.' – Tara Ross, senior journalism lecturer, University of Canterbury
• 'Online participation might be able to act as a means for improving the accountability of elected officials to citizens.' – Karl Lofgren, School of Government, Victoria University of Wellington

As indicated above, traditional media suppliers continue to have a sense of responsibility to produce quality content in the public interest. However, that may not be sufficient to deliver to young New

Zealanders the information, skills and content they want and need. At best, social media may provide timely updates, but it struggles to deliver consistently reliable, investigative and comprehensive content. Furthermore, some would argue that journalism does not always operate for the public good. A student and young mother stated at a TacklingPovertyNZ event that:

> The media in New Zealand can perpetuate negative stereotypes when it comes to beneficiaries or people in poverty. The media are responsible for presenting facts; however, when it comes to the most vulnerable in society there seems to be less facts and more fiction – the idea that those needing assistance are 'bludging' or 'lazy' as opposed to doing the best they can with the circumstances they find themselves in.[4]

Given that social media is the 'social force' of the 21st century, it seems timely to reconsider the role and size of public investment and where the public policy opportunity lies.

Part two: five public policy ideas to explore
In November 2013 the Constitutional Advisory Panel recommended that 'the Government develops a national strategy for civics and citizenship education in schools and in the community' (Constitutional Advisory Panel, 2013, p.16). The 2010 Cabinet paper which recommended the establishment of the panel also recommended that a final report be prepared for Cabinet after public engagement concludes and that the government 'be required to respond to the final report within six months of receipt' (New Zealand Government, 2010, p.12). In 2014 the Ministry of Justice noted that a formal response was not produced, 'given the report's delivery was so close to an election year'. They go on to state: 'The Government could still provide an overall response to the report, including on the key recommendations to continue the constitution conversation and improve civics

education' (Ministry of Justice, 2014, p.23). The 2013 report provided a sound basis for making progress on civics education in New Zealand, and the Civics and Media workshop discussions added further weight to the report's conclusions. Below are some public policy suggestions for enhancing citizenship and civics education.

Revisit public investment in media
Media was initially understood as a combination of newspapers, radio and television. The delivery of the news became increasingly important early in the 20th century, resulting in the government establishing the New Zealand Broadcasting Board in 1932 and the National Broadcasting Service in 1936. By then broadcasting was seen as 'a social force' (McLintock, 1966). Currently, the minister of broadcasting is responsible for appropriations for the 2015/16 financial year of 'a total of nearly $132 million for purchasing public broadcasting services mainly from broadcasting Crown entities' (Treasury, 2015b, p.2). This figure has decreased by almost $30 million from the 2010/11 budget, when it was nearly $162 million (Treasury, 2010, p.2).

Given that social media is the 'social force' of the 21st century, it seems timely to reconsider the role and size of public investment and where the public policy opportunity lies. For example, is New Zealand better off: investing in Radio New Zealand or in Television New Zealand; alerting parents and children to cyberbullying or policing the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015; publishing in-depth news for mature New Zealanders or soundbites to engage young New Zealanders? The public policy opportunity is to think about the right

question before attempting to answer the wrong question correctly.[5]

Explore creative ways of improving civics
A conversation about civics is a conversation about individual rights and shared responsibilities; about balancing the rights of the individual with the duties of belonging to a community. The late physicist Sir Paul Callaghan explained this tension as a paradox: 'to live each day as though it were our last and, at the same time, to live as though we will live forever'. The first part of this favours a focus on individual fulfilment, whereas the latter favours 'an awareness of consequence, an appreciation that what we do here and now affects others and lays the foundation for future generations' (Callaghan, 2014, p.85). The public policy opportunity is to accept that a tension exists, and use this tension to explore innovative ways citizens

orientated model) (Bolstad, 2012, p.3). The study showed that 20% of principals in 2008 felt that 'civic and citizenship education is not considered a part of the school curriculum' (ibid., p.15). It would be timely to revisit this research in order to understand how the 2010 curriculum is affecting civics education. Several suggestions from speakers and participants at the Civics and Media workshops centred around the role of schools: teaching critical thinking to students from a young age to aid skills in reasoning and spotting unconscious biases; teaching a civics and leadership course at intermediate and secondary school; supporting meaningful student elections (to demonstrate democracy in action); and ensuring that schools create a space for children to have conversations in their peer groups and beyond about difficult issues.

Law, cultural and constitutional academics emphasised that New Zealand

our constitutional arrangements and our individual rights and duties).

The public policy opportunity is to work with educational organisations and the three branches of government to strengthen civic knowledge. Specific areas that are likely to be useful in building civic knowledge include constitutional law (e.g. the Treaty of Waitangi, the Cabinet Manual 2008, the Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Public Records Act 2005), government funding and expenditure (e.g. tax mechanisms and budget appropriations) and how the government foresees and manages public risk and uncertainty over the long term.

Recognise that civics education is for everyone
Civics education is not just for young people. Given that over 25% of people who lived in New Zealand in 2013 were born overseas[6] and that 51% of New Zealand's population in 2038 are projected to identify as Asian, Māori or Pasifika,[7] participants in the workshops wondered what mechanisms were in place to develop cultural capability and knowledge for the 21st century. Participants discussed whether the government could be doing more. For instance, could we work harder to showcase Wellington as New Zealand's civic centre, Waitangi as the place where the treaty was signed, or Gisborne as the place where Māori and Pākehā first made contact? Could we better welcome immigrants and ensure that they feel part of our society? The public policy opportunity is to develop an approach that enables all adults to strengthen their connection to New Zealand by living in accordance with Kiwi values and experiencing New Zealand's unique history and culture.

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can work, together or separately, towards a common good.

Look at ways young people might experience 'real' civil society
During the workshops it became clear that civics education requires further work. Although civics and citizenship education is arguably in harmony with the principles, values and key competencies of the 2010 New Zealand school curriculum, civics education is not prescribed (Bolstad, 2012, p.9). The results from an international civic and citizenship education study show that in 2008, Year 9 New Zealand students had a wider distribution of student civic knowledge than students in any other country participating in the study (Lang, 2010, p.6). Those at the lower end tended to be Māori and Pasifika males (ibid., p.9). The study indicated that the reaching practice in New Zealand year 9 classes aligned most with a personal responsibility model of citizenship (in contrast with a participatory model and, to an even lesser extent, a justice-

must work harder than most countries to inform young people about our complex constitutional heritage, including the Treaty of Waitangi, the unique nature of our unwritten constitution and the wider legal and political principles that govern New Zealand. Several suggestions from speakers and participants centred on the interconnectedness of the branches of government: the legislature (Parliament and the governor-general), the executive (Cabinet and ministers outside Cabinet plus government departments) and the judiciary, with a particular focus on how citizens might defend or develop our system of government over time. Ideas included broadcasting Supreme Court hearings, organising school trips to Wellington to visit civic organisations, and updating the 2010 New Zealand curriculum to establish a ninth principle, 'civics and citizenship', that would embody a belief that New Zealanders should understand the machinery of government (such as the three branches of government,

Cultivate civil society through relationship building
Relationships are created and built over time, not born or purchased. Civil society is not sustainable when parts of society are poor, silent, suppressed or ignored. When relationships become stressed and uncertain, society's thin veneer is more likely to unravel. The late Āpirana Mahuika said relationships are the driving force that will take us into the future; we need

relationships rather than partnerships (Mahuika, 2012). Although his point was about the treaty, and more broadly the dangers of entering into partnerships without having a good relationship first, it is relevant to all minority groups. What is critical is the process by which electoral and referenda options are determined. Hence we need to ensure that our majority voting system leads to the best range of choices; to this end it is the input and processes that will ultimately deliver the best outcomes. There are two public policy opportunities here. The first is to concentrate on relationship building early in the process in order to develop consensus over what the policy problem or opportunity is, identify the range of possible policy solutions and fully understand the potential consequences. The second is to ensure that dialogue is ongoing so that tools are created, knowledge is built and lessons are learned, rather than the discussion shutting down until the next election.

Cīvitās in New Zealand and the world has become broader and more complex, but also richer and more exciting. It is about strong relationships, relationships between individuals, between communities and between humanity and the planet. If our civic, business and community leaders are good listeners, they will demonstrate respect for those who hold different values, beliefs and ways of living and working. In this scenario, strong relationships will engender both social cohesion and technological innovation. Civics is the ink that will write the history of the 21st century.

1 For example, technology has opened up so many possible futures that our future will more likely be determined by what we say no to rather than what we say yes to. This is perhaps best illustrated by the author Yuval Noah Harari's assertion that the real question is not 'What do we want to become?', but 'What do we want to want? (Harari, 2011, p.464).
2 One person who did foresee the implications of the internet in 1999 was David Bowie (BBC Newsnight, 2016).
3 These themes were consistent with the findings from earlier McGuinness Institute workshops: see McGuinness, 2013, pp.36-40.
4 Karina Liddicoat was a participant at the McGuinness Institute and Treasury TacklingPovertyNZ workshop held in December 2015.
5 This point has not been lost on the government, which has introduced 11 new performance measures for NZ On Air in the 2015/16 budget (New Zealand Treasury, 2015b, pp.22-3).
6 'The percentages of people living in New Zealand who were born overseas were: 25.2% in 2013, 22.9% in 2006 and 19.5% in 2001' (Statistics New Zealand, 2014).
7 The *Superdiversity, Democracy and New Zealand's Electoral and Referenda Laws* report reviews the demographic transformation that New Zealand is undergoing and explores the implications for constitutional law and public policy (Chen, 2015, p.4).

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