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ABSTRACT From 2013–2015, I was a Mitacs Elevate postdoctoral fellow with Mozilla. The program of research aimed to foster digital literacy capacities among youth and informal educators in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and specifically examined the extension of the Mozilla community’s free and open source software production practices to build a digital literacy network called Hive Toronto. This article presents results from a document analysis (n = 21) of applications, blogs, and other materials revealing how the people, challenge, practices, and results associated with social innovation unfolded through research with Hive Toronto. Based on these findings, the article demonstrates that tensions linger between industrial and social innovation funding, but that there is space for critical and activist research when building such partnerships.

KEYWORDS Internet; Social innovation; Open source; Socio-technical; Participatory media

Introduction
The media often publish stories to share unique technological “solutions” innovated by researchers in Canada working across academia and industry (e.g., Bitti, 2016; Otis, 2015; Withers, 2015). These newsworthy research projects are sometimes funded by

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Mitacs—a not-for-profit organization founded to encourage “applied and industrial research in mathematical sciences and associated disciplines” (Mitacs, n.d.-a, para 2). Mitacs opened its programs in 2007 to support all academic disciplines, and describes itself as working “with 60 universities, thousands of companies, and both federal and provincial governments … [to] … build partnerships that support industrial and social innovation in Canada” (Mitacs, n.d.-a, para 1, emphasis added).

Whereas industrial innovation is historically closed and conducted within a firm to develop intellectual property or services to be sold (Chesbrough, 2003), social innovation aims to improve the lives of people (Grimm, Fox, Baines, & Albertson, 2013; Mulgan, 2006; Westley & Antadze, 2010). Frances Westley and Nino Antadze (2010) define social innovation as “a complex process of introducing new products, processes or programs that profoundly change the basic routines, resource and authority flow, or beliefs of the social system in which the innovation occurs” (p. 2). Although Mitacs supports both industrial and social innovation, funding for non-profit organizations is a recent development, as they became eligible recipients for Mitacs funding only in 2015 (Mitacs, 2015b).

This article contributes to building an understanding of what a social innovation partnership may entail in critical and activist communication studies research, drawing on a case study of a project that engaged the non-profit sector to enhance digital literacy. From 2013–2015, I was a Mitacs Elevate postdoctoral fellow (PDF) with Mozilla and the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Information, with the objective of fostering digital literacy capacities among youth and informal educators (e.g., youth workers and librarians) in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Definitions of media, digital, and Web literacy stress that people require the capacity to create digital media and participate online (e.g., Belshaw, Smith, & The Mozilla Community, 2014; Buckingham, 2010; Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012; Steeves, 2014). However, there still remain gaps in programs and policies to address the digital divide in Canada (Clement, Gurstein, Longford, Moll, & Shade, 2012; Geist, 2012; Hackett & Anderson, 2010) and thus my project emphasized enabling young people to become creators, not just consumers, of the Web.

Mozilla’s ability to support Web literacy emerges from its structure and mission. As an organization, Mozilla functions as a “self-sustaining social enterprise”; it contains both a corporation and a non-profit entity (Mozilla, n.d., para 3). The Mozilla Corporation, which makes “Firefox and other open source tools,” reinvests “money earned through its products” to support the open Web (Mozilla, n.d., para 3). My PDF with Mozilla involved Web literacy, one domain that Mozilla considers critical to fostering the open Web. In my role I used participatory research with Mozilla to build and animate a digital literacy network called Hive Toronto, which is similar to other networks that Mozilla stewards in Chicago and New York City. Hive Toronto currently has over 60 organizational members, mainly from the non-profit sector, including public library systems, museums, and after-school programs.

During the bulk of my fellowship, Hive Toronto was supported by a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) to enable it to become established in the GTA and the province. Throughout most of my PDF, I worked closely with Kathryn Meisner, a Mozilla employee and the director of Hive Toronto. A blog post from Hive Toronto
described the network’s accomplishments as engaging over 4,000 youth and educators in digital literacy, facilitating partnerships for 20 youth-oriented events, and initiating 13 projects ranging from social justice media production workshops to wearable technology (Meisner, 2015b, para 5-8). Through projects, events, and partnerships, Hive Toronto reaches both informal educators and the young people they serve.

One of the goals of Mitacs is to catalyze innovation in the non-profit sector. This article argues that Hive Toronto is an example of such social innovation. It explores practical efforts to build digital literacy skills in the community and reflects upon my role as a researcher conducting work to support digital literacy. This article explores the collaborative efforts required to build a partnership for social innovation in the digital literacy field. This work contributes toward a better understanding of how to “port,” or best translate the practices associated with free and open source (FOSS) software “to other aspects of life, such as ... education” (Kelty, 2008, p. xi). While digital literacy and citizens’ capacity to effectively use information and communications technologies (ICTs) is of ongoing interest in Canadian communication studies (e.g., Clement & Shade, 2000; Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012; Steeves, 2014), research on the collaboration of organizations to foster digital literacy in a FOSS setting can expand upon this work in ways that are critical and activist.

Within the Mozilla and Hive Toronto communities, I found colleagues that shared an ethos compatible with critical and activist communication studies. Critical research in communication studies can examine inequities and power relations in media systems and society (Hamilton, 2010; Smythe & Dinh, 1983). Indeed, critical scholarship blends with activism when it challenges dominant power structures associated with communication and communities (Fuchs, 2014; Lent & Amazeen, 2015). Recent examples of such critical communication activism in Canada include policy interventions, fostering participatory media, and alternative media production (e.g., Hackett & Anderson, 2010; Shade, 2008; Uzelman, 2011; Waugh, Baker, & Winton, 2010).

My research at Mozilla considered digital literacy within the bigger FOSS project of building and maintaining the open Web. My everyday contacts and colleagues included frontline youth workers who delivered digital literacy programming in underserved communities, as well as Mozilla staff who contributed to software and social programming as alternatives to a proprietary-only version of the Web. Consistent with critical and activist approaches to communication studies, my collaborators were on the frontlines of challenging the status quo of power relations surrounding the Web. This article argues that while social innovation research funding opportunities are set within a milieu where industrial innovation is dominant, social innovation funding windows may prove compatible with critical and activist scholarship. Utilizing the available innovation funding windows may prove useful, particularly for junior scholars who need to leverage available career-building opportunities.

The article begins with an overview of the rhetoric about the imperative for innovation, situating it within the structure of Mitacs funding objectives. Next, it reviews major elements of social innovation and considers the research context of Mozilla as a Web literacy and open Web proponent in relation to other critical, activist traditions
in communication studies. Finally, it introduces results from a document analysis of a purposive sample of texts \((n = 21)\), informed by institutional ethnography (Smith, 2006). The sample of texts consisted of application and reporting materials, reports, blog posts, and an interview transcript with Meisner at Mozilla. Drawing upon Dorothy E. Smith (2006), this article considers social innovation as a concept that appeared in analyzed texts and that became further institutionalized during my tenure at Mozilla. Additionally, this article demonstrates reflexivity about FOSS-situated practices for enhancing digital literacy.

The innovation imperative and Mitacs

Michael Harris and David Albury (2009) describe an “innovation imperative” where societal problems are “being exacerbated by the recession” (p. 6). Following the 2008 economic crash, numerous countries updated their innovation strategies seeking to support businesses in the ICT sector (e.g., Canada, 2015; Government of Australia, 2016; Innovate UK, 2015). As demonstrated by their government policy documents, these countries are encouraging the commercialization of innovations and simultaneously seeking to equip their citizens with digital literacies.

Many critical scholars are concerned that the concomitant design and use of ICTs is dominated by neoliberal logic that prioritizes efficiency, profit, and accumulation (Barney, 2005; Fuchs, 2014; Harvey, 2005; Mosco, 2014). These scholars have raised concerns about the failure to adequately represent social values in the development of the internet and also in the drop-off of support for community access programs, which are critical for connectivity and digital literacy (Clement et al., 2012; Geist, 2012). Social innovation funding is an opportunity to further critical and activist work in Canada, but exists within a setting where the internet is highly commercialized and industrial innovation continues to receive primary support.

Mitacs

Mitacs is a not-for-profit organization that facilitates research and training in Canada in support of both industrial and social innovation. Mitacs was founded as part of the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) in 1999 (Mitacs, n.d.-f), and in 2011, it began operating as an independent organization (Annan, 2014). Mitacs now runs four partnership programs (Mitacs, n.d.-d). The flagship program is Accelerate, an internship that creates paid research opportunities for graduate students and junior scholars (master’s, doctoral, and postdoctoral fellows) within organizations. The Elevate program for PDFs was launched in 2007. It offers two-year PDFs that “focus on management training, while completing a collaborative research-based project with a partner organization” (Mitacs, n.d.-b, para 1). In addition to Accelerate and Elevate, Mitacs operates an international internship program and also funds research and development (R&D) for small and medium-sized enterprises (Mitacs, n.d.-d).

At the time of writing, Mitacs had funded 4,859 projects through these four programs (Mitacs, n.d.-e). Fifteen percent of these projects were based in the social sciences and humanities, which Mitacs targets for potential social innovation research collaborations (Mitacs, 2015b, 2016a). While Mitacs encourages partnerships with nonprofits, which it positions as a mechanism to facilitate more research in the social sciences and humanities, it assesses such projects “for economic or productivity
orientation[s], such as creating jobs, reducing costs, or increasing productivity” (Mitacs, 2015a, para 4). The place for critical and activist social innovation research may thus seem challenging to navigate with Mitacs or other funders, but the Mozilla FOSS community demonstrates one place where it has been feasible.

**Social innovation as a process for activist ICT research in Canada**

The FOSS community occupies a potentially significant site for communication scholars in Canada, and its software products may support various forms of social innovation. As one example of social innovation, open access publishing serves as a solution to the commercialized publishing models that challenge many scholarly communities. When the *Canadian Journal of Communication* was being established as an open access publication, Rowland Lorimer, Richard Smith, and Paul Wolstenholme (2000) argued that FOSS helped facilitate the opening up of knowledge for scholarly communication. Indeed, FOSS software demonstrates a resistance to the commodification of knowledge as it is used to open up knowledge to diverse communities (Coleman, 2009; Kelty, 2008; Milberry & Anderson, 2009).

A socio-technical understanding of FOSS that is compatible with social innovation and communication activism inspired my research with Mozilla. In relation to free software, Christopher Kelty (2008) orients the focus away from the software product and states that it “is all about the practices” (p. x). For Kelty (2008), practices such as making source code available, or using an open license, are what is actually significant about open source. This interpretation is important to the social innovation field where there may be an attempt to build upon the collaboration successes evident in FOSS projects. The critical idea to take away here is that the process of collaborating for open source is potentially more significant than the technology itself.

Although social innovation can include the design and use of ICTs, the critical literature on this topic is very clear in stressing that such innovation is not oriented solely toward creating new technologies (Dawson & Daniel, 2010; Mulgan, 2006; Westley & Antadze, 2010). Focusing innovation efforts beyond the design of technologies creates opportunities for socio-technical research, such as mobilizing a community or building capacity. From a communication activism perspective, Stefania Milan (2016) describes that technology can act as “the backbone of the struggle of emancipatory communication activism” but also emphasizes the importance of social practices (p. 109).

My research with Mozilla and Hive Toronto was conducted in alignment with socio-technical approaches to innovation from FOSS, social innovation, and communication activism. Mozilla as an open source software community, which also stewards a digital literacy network in Toronto, is an excellent case study to explore the processes and practices of FOSS as a form both of social innovation and activism. Patrick Dawson and Lisa Daniel (2010) present a provisionary framework for social innovation, which includes the *people, the challenge, the process,* and the end *goal* or resolution to the challenge. Within their framework, the *people* refer to the spontaneous or organized collaboration of individuals striving for change. The *challenge* is the “problem or opportunity for the group” (p. 17) to address. The *process* is “complex” and “contingent on context,” and finally the *goal* is not necessarily a technology, but “rather, achieving resolutions to social challenges that will advance social well-being” (p. 17). Dawson
and Daniel’s framework, as well as the idea of practices relevant to building a better society and internet, will be used to present the results from the document analysis relevant to my postdoctoral research.

**Social innovation with Hive Toronto: Results and discussion**

**The people**
As described in Dawson and Daniel (2010), the people involved in social innovation can be individuals or can be part of “formal, informal, or spontaneous group(s) that are linked by special interests, common goals or shared agenda(s)” (p. 17). In my original application to become a Mitacs PDF, I described myself as “an ally of the Mozilla mandate to promote an open Internet.” A blog post I wrote for the Hive Toronto community describes my initial involvement as a volunteer during the formative period of the network (Smith, 2015).

During my PDF, the Hive Toronto community formalized and grew from a voluntary association of individuals and organizations running events to a network with over 60 organizational members who aligned to enhance digital literacy opportunities for youth in the GTA. The network developed to include a variety of forums for collaboration, and I assumed some management responsibility in relation to all of these activities in close coordination with Meisner, and later with my colleague Simona Ramkisson:

- **Meetups**: in-person meetings, typically oriented toward fostering digital literacy skills among members or collaborations between organizations.
- **Community calls**: conference calls utilizing an open source system for collaborative note taking.
- **Minigroup**: a by-invitation discussion group for members (website now defunct).
- **Professional development sessions**: workshops for educators on digital literacy.
- **Youth-facing events**: digital literacy skills-oriented gatherings (often called Hackjams or Maker Parties).
- **Collaborative community projects (CCPs)**: initiatives receiving funds or resources to catalyze digital literacy learning opportunities for youth.

The methods for collaboration used by Hive Toronto also overlap significantly with Hive New York City (see Santo, Ching, Peppler & Hoadley, 2016). From the social innovation literature, Robin Murray, Julie Caulier-Grace, and Geoff Mulgan (2010) note the significance of organizational forms, such as networks, in fostering innovation, but the processes for joining together are not always well understood. In a Hive Toronto blog post by Meisner (2015a) some of the mechanisms of the network locally were described to be “cultivating a community of practice” among educators, “facilitating professional development,” “acting as a conduit” (e.g., to other organizations or funders), and “seeding collaborative partnerships” (para 4–7).

During an in-person interview with Meisner, she discussed how the network came together on an ongoing basis: “Every member, what they have in common is … commitment to integrating digital literacy into their youth programing” and “members vary
where they are on that spectrum.” Meisner continued, stating that organizations that were members of Hive Toronto had to feel comfortable that they could both contribute to and take from the Hive in ways that “make ... sense for [their] organization and [their] capacity.” Many Hive member organizations made use of Mozilla’s open source, digital literacy-oriented software as a resource. Networking was not, however, limited to the Web and had numerous social dimensions, such as in-person collaborations.

As the membership of the Hive Toronto network became established, it was also evident that Mozilla was not the only organization influencing practices for social innovation among its members. Six of the Hive Toronto member organizations are listed as members of the Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto, which is known for offering locations for co-working in Toronto and for its broader vision of supporting social change by bringing innovators together. Additionally, the MaRS Discovery District, an innovation hub for entrepreneurism and with social innovation in its mission, is a Hive Toronto member.

The challenge
As noted above, Dawson and Daniel (2010) describe that the challenge in social innovation is the “problem or opportunity for the group” (p. 17) to address. Hive Toronto’s challenge was expressed in numerous places, including on the network’s website and in a Hive blog post by Meisner (2014), which stated: “How might we move youth from consumers to creators through learning opportunities that ... integrate the culture, mechanics and citizenship of the web?” (para 1). This question was described as the “the compass for Hive Toronto” in its first year of establishing a network (para 2).

The challenge of enhancing digital literacy opportunities for youth in the GTA was addressed by facilitating collaboration across organizations, predominantly in the non-profit sector. In describing the ongoing process of scoping out the activities that were of mutual interest to Mozilla and Hive Toronto members during our interview, Meisner cautioned that the latter “are organizations that never have enough time.” Collaboration is, she said, a “Venn Diagram” with overlaps between “what we at Mozilla want to accomplish in the world, and [here] in Toronto” and Hive’s desire to help members “deliver their mission.” Meisner also explained that, “Hive is ... a dance between what we’re offering and what members need and ... that dance seems to never end.”

In all of Hive’s activities designed to create digital literacy learning opportunities, Meisner was clear that we must recognize the practical challenges facing its member organizations. In describing one of the initial conversations she had with the network at a workshop, she stated that the members “were really open to talking frankly about their needs, be it financial resources or human resources, or skills,” and that they were enthusiastic about collaborating to ensure they had the resources to execute digital literacy focused events and projects effectively. As expressed through a Hive Toronto blog post by Meisner (2015b), there was a sense that collaboration among “Hive Toronto member[s] ... partner[s], volunteer[s], funder[s], and colleague[s]” was needed to address digital literacy challenges (para 25).

The process
The process of social innovation is the manner in which a group responds to a challenge, which is dependent on context (Dawson & Daniel, 2010). At Hive Toronto, the
network aspired toward a social innovation model, which was described to include a “working open process” by Meisner during an interview. The working open process built upon the open source culture of Mozilla. In their research on Hive New York City (NYC), Rafi Santo, Dixie Ching, Kylie Peppler, and Christopher Hoadley (2016) also grappled with how best to work openly. They found that for Hive NYC, working open constituted “a set of social practices around innovation” that encompassed five main elements of “public storytelling and context setting,” “enabling community contribution,” “rapid prototyping,” “public reflection and documentation,” and “creating remixable work products” (p. 281). These five practices resonated with the Hive Toronto community, but emphasis was also placed on openly licensing work products to facilitate the remix of projects and curricula and to foster co-design practices.

For the Hive Toronto community, a working open process was critical for sharing experiences from events and for launching initiatives such as the collaborative community projects. As Meisner explained in our interview, “the idea of sharing your process, sharing early, sharing often” is critical to Hive Toronto’s success, as is “working in iterations, not just waiting until … you’ve produced a final product to share with the world.” She suggested that in working open, there is “value in the iterations” and an organization can form its own “successes and challenges,” but also share those with “the rest of [the] Hive.” Open licensing is of specific interest here. According to Meisner, in the future, it would be advantageous to require that the resources produced with Hive Toronto funding be placed “under Creative Commons licensing” to facilitate reuse and remix. During our conversation, I added that making Creative Commons licenses a “granting requirement” for deliverables was starting to occur in the non-profit sector and may become more familiar over time.

Co-design was another process-oriented interest of Hive Toronto members as a component of their collaboration and social innovation. During my fellowship with Mozilla, discussion at Hive Toronto about the people, challenge, and process demonstrates that there was not a myopic focus on designing technology; rather, the network pursued multiple tactics to promote and enhance digital literacy. At the local level, the Hive Toronto network functioned to enhance digital literacy by building a community of supporters and practitioners in the GTA that implemented events, projects, and enhanced collaboration in the informal learning sector. As expressed through a Hive Toronto blog post by Meisner (2015b), the activities in Toronto also echoed at the global level by interlinking Mozilla’s Web literacy commitment with various Hives and other Mozilla programs around the world.

The goal (results)
In describing social innovation, Dawson and Daniel (2010) argue that it is important to “place the social dimension first, with innovation as the variable and technology as optional” (p. 12). During my fellowship with Mozilla, discussion at Hive Toronto about the people, challenge, and process demonstrates that there was not a myopic focus on designing technology; rather, the network pursued multiple tactics to promote and enhance digital literacy. At the local level, the Hive Toronto network functioned to enhance digital literacy by building a community of supporters and practitioners in the GTA that implemented events, projects, and enhanced collaboration in the informal learning sector. As expressed through a Hive Toronto blog post by Meisner (2015b), the activities in Toronto also echoed at the global level by interlinking Mozilla’s Web literacy commitment with various Hives and other Mozilla programs around the world.
My experience with the Mitacs Elevate PDF program was that it was receptive to various achievements or outputs that were consistent with social innovation. In my interim report to Mitacs, I responded to the form’s prompt about the “advancement” that I was “trying to achieve with this internship” as being a contribution to both “products” and “processes or services” in terms of the Hive Toronto network and related software and curriculum. In my final report to Mitacs, I described the outputs of the research to be a participatory effort with Mozilla that included multiple elements, a selection of which are described here:

- To build and sustain “Hive Toronto membership from a baseline of 20 to over 60 member organizations over a 2-year period.”
- To make “contributions to the design and development of Mozilla’s open educational software and learning products.”
- To deliver “over 15 training or workshop sessions” in the GTA or globally.
- To prepare “presentations and publications to share Mozilla’s contributions to universal web literacy.”

Although Mitacs was receptive and supportive of my project, which entailed social innovation in association with non-profit organizations, some indicators demonstrated an ongoing interest in industrial innovation. An evaluation survey from the Elevate program (Mitacs, 2016b) highlighted that 13 percent of projects led to patent applications and 26 percent of projects led to new or enhanced processes. With patents being celebrated, it is clear that for Mitacs the production of proprietary knowledge is valued as an output of industrial innovation. My research sought to mobilize knowledge in a community through a social innovation process, which was antithetical to the production of patents. Research in this context raises many critical implications pertinent to expertise, industrial/social innovation tensions, and labour, which are relevant to future activist scholars from communication studies guided by social innovation. These critical insights will be shared in advance of the conclusion.

**Critical implications**

**The community as experts**

My experience with the Hive Toronto network, and with Mozilla more broadly, was that major accomplishments were infrequently attributable to an individual. Achievements such as the FOSS development of the Firefox browser or the creation of the Hive Toronto network, demonstrate that collective efforts need to be mobilized to challenge dominant forces in society. As Mitacs and other funders in Canada facilitate social innovation research, metrics that count the achievements of groups and networks, where academics are not sole innovators, will need to be developed to recognize community expertise.

**Industrial/social innovation tensions**

Upon reflection, I am convinced that Mitacs approved my research collaboration with Mozilla because it could be aligned with productivity and economic goals. In my initial application to Mitacs, I had to articulate how the research would benefit industry. Although I conducted many research activities to involve the community first, the
knowledge garnered from digital literacy initiatives also led to insights that were applicable to software, websites, and the development of technologies.

The project I conducted with Mozilla was also made feasible because the organization had sufficient resources to act as my host organization and could provide the requisite matching funding that Mitacs requires. While large for-profit organizations and social enterprises can be expected to have budgets for research and development (R&D), some smaller non-profit organizations may struggle to participate in this model. Where R&D in industrial models may lead to profits, social innovation projects may not always be realistically positioned to generate economic value. And, while social innovation funding may prove useful for some critical and activist work, matching funding models will not assist projects where no financial resources are available. This remains a significant barrier for social innovation that pertains to problems that are not already receiving funding or attention.

Labour
In considering the implications of a Mitacs-funded PDF (or internship) as a mechanism to promote social innovation, the labour considerations of the positions should be of particular interest to critical and activist scholars. In most instances in this article, I referred to myself as a postdoctoral fellow, but occasionally as an intern. The term intern was printed in some locations on the template for my Mitacs application and reporting documents concerning my fellowship. In critical communication studies, numerous concerns have been expressed about the practices associated with unpaid internships for undergraduate learners (Rodino-Colocino & Beberick, 2015; Salamon, 2015), such as gendered labour and exploitation. Similarly, postdoctoral fellows can also face various forms of precariousness amid the lack of tenure track job postings (Mitchell, Walker, Annan, Corkery, Goel, Harvey, Kent, Peters, & Vilches, 2013).

A PDF/intern role with Mitacs can represent a strong opportunity for a doctoral graduate to pursue a research project with funding. As a participant in Mitacs Elevate, I found the $50,000 “stipend/salary” (Mitacs, n.d.-c) to be a highly positive feature of the program. The stipend/salary enabled me to remain on the academic job market and await my next career opportunity. It should be noted, however, that it is common for PDFs to lack “clear administrative or employment status” (Mitchell et al., 2013, p. iii) at Canadian universities. The ambiguity over whether compensation for PDFs at Mitacs is a salary or stipend stems from the flexible positioning of junior scholars by some universities. Personally, I was not categorized as an employee at my university and would have faced significant financial challenges if required to interrupt my position for a pregnancy or parental leave.

Mitacs is involved in executing and disseminating research that documents the labour challenges (e.g., compensation levels, leaves, benefits, etc.) experienced by PDFs across Canada (Mitchell et al., 2013). While the attention Mitacs has given to the challenges faced by PDFs is commendable, it simultaneously promotes the flexible, temporary, and efficient terms of employment (or engagement) of PDFs to host organizations. According to one program benefit for organizations that host a PDF/intern, “Mitacs Elevate is affordable and offers organizations a low-risk, longer-term means to access university-based expertise while evaluating a potential employee”
Additionally, Mitacs states that its awards “are administered by universities rather than companies, so that head counts are not affected and employee benefit contributions are not mandatory for a company’s participation” (Mitacs, n.d.-c, para 2). While the Mitacs Elevate program proved a useful stepping stone in my career, I remain conscious that a skewed emphasis toward profit and accumulation is precisely what troubles many critical communication scholars about the development of technology in Canada (e.g., Barney, 2005; Mosco, 2014). Situating a critical and activist PDF oriented toward social innovation for digital literacy within this terrain is feasible, but certainly not without a set of contradictions and challenges.

**Concluding thoughts on social innovation partnerships**

As illustrated by my PDF at Mozilla with Hive Toronto, the people, challenge, process, and goals (or end results) of social innovation can be developed through a research partnership. Funding for social innovation in Canada exists within a funding landscape where the Web is highly commercialized, but where alternative innovation ends can still be pursued. I argue that critical and activist researchers may need to strategically locate themselves in FOSS and emerging networked social groups in order to study and participate in social innovation endeavours.

Participating in the Mozilla Hive Toronto community was engaging to me as a critical communication scholar because the organization does not focus solely on technical innovation. While Mozilla is renowned for the open source Firefox Web browser, the organization believes, and demonstrates through its programs, that people and the social aspects of innovation are critical to support the future of the open Web. Moreover, I found that members of the Hive Toronto community embraced working openly as a network of educators. Continued efforts by this network to contribute to the open Web through openly licensed content remains an ongoing possibility. The process of participating as a scholar ally of the network was influential to me in demonstrating that many sectors of society, including non-profits and academia, continue to share in the same struggles to enact processes to make knowledge and innovation more open and accessible to diverse audiences.

**Notes**

1. Mozilla positions the open Web as a key infrastructure for humanity’s future. Web literacy emphasizes the Web as a platform, while the terms media and digital literacy are broader and include other technologies and media forms.

2. All cited Hive Toronto blog posts are authored by Kathryn Meisner, unless otherwise noted. Meisner consented to participate in this research in an attributed way. The blog posts quoted in this article are: “Growing Hive Toronto, Together” (Meisner, 2014), “Moving on from Hive Toronto” (Meisner, 2015b), and “Transforming Learning with 21 New Hive Toronto Member Organizations” (Meisner, 2015a). Additionally I quote myself from “New Role and Next Steps in my Hive Toronto Journey” (Smith, 2015).

3. As examples of the greater institutionalization of social innovation, some universities are establishing social innovation spaces (e.g., Ryerson University, Concordia University, OCAD University, Simon Fraser University) and governments are utilizing the terminology.

4. I offer thanks to Mitacs and Mozilla for supporting this work. All opinions are my own. Special thanks to the Hive Toronto community and to Kathryn Meisner, Simona Ramkisson, Chris Lawrence, Angela Plohmian, Mark Surman, and Leslie Regan Shade.
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