

Chapter 10

Global Technoethics and Society

INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Chapter Five, Technoethics and Society is a branch of Technoethics concerned with the ethical use of technology to promote the aims of contemporary society. This includes the study of local organizations (micro level) as well as the study of broader global structures and processes (macro level). Although this section focuses mainly on global technoethics (macro level), it provides a sketch of organizational and global developments to better situate the discussion. Since the beginning of the 20th century, work in organizational studies reflects a continually evolving research area within communications and other fields (human resource management, industrial relations, business management) since the contribution of early classical models of organizations. Classical models provided a new technology

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(technique) for organizational leaders to help manage increasing large contingencies of workers within a top-down communication structure geared towards maximizing organizational performance and efficiency. The coming of the information age and the development of sophisticated information and communication technologies (ICT's) provides additional technology for transforming society and the institutions within it. This was the start of the trend towards the modern day multi-corporation. Continuing progress through human relations and human resource approaches, systems theory, and ideological perspectives (critical, cultural, and feminist) on organizations have reinforced this core work. Rapid technological developments within organizational life, the increasing power of multi-corporations, and the faster pace of organizational change processes, have helped nurture in globalization

BACKGROUND: FROM ORGANIZATIONAL TO GLOBAL TECHNOETHICS

Technology and Organizational Transformations

Organizational technoethics focuses on how technological advances are redefining organisations and how they operate within an evolving knowledge economy. The shift of organizations to greater knowledge creation combined with the integration of technological advances has led to changing working relations. Beginning in the 1980s, advances in ICT's, have transformed the nature of information sharing within and between organizations while offering new opportunities and increased efficiency. This is particularly true in areas of the new knowledge economy dependent on ongoing technological innovation and scientific knowledge. The ability to classify and exchange multiple types of data (text, visual, audio) is now possible via the Internet. Because of the copy and paste capacity of Internet data exchange, it is relatively simple to create endless combinations of new data from existing data. The increased malleability of information within and ICT environment has leveraged knowledge creation and information exchange in many work teams dependent on knowledge creation (Wouters & Schroder, 2003). Wouters and Schroder (2003) provide up to date coverage of key issues and challenges associated with the use of ICT for data sharing. They draw attention to the new possibilities created by the institutionalized use of ICT for scientific data sharing:

Science once was about scientists creating knowledge by researching nature. As time passed science grew in size and complexity and became a more co-operative and cumulative affair. Science developed a Global Science System involving larger teams of scientists (human resources) using larger instrumental facilities (capital

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