

Chapter 15

Epilogue:

Retrospective and Prospective Reflections on Change

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a brief reflection on emergent themes, issues, and problematic areas chapter authors have drawn to readers' attention to and tentatively indicates some potential future directions for research and development whilst recognizing rapidly changing social mores and culture is a deep river running through diverse channels in the Lifeworlds and Workworlds of leaders today. The heroic actions of medical personnel under severely stressed hospital and patient care systems in the current Covid-19 pandemic is noted. The authors have pointed to perceived gaps in leadership regarding the uptake and understanding of digital technologies and suggested that implications include new ways of thinking and new competences for changed ways of working in the networked world of business. Crucially, the authors reiterate that these are deeply human endeavors, and the complexity of the technology does not negate or overwhelm the interactive dynamic complexity of human relations between leaders and others who inhabit and view these conjoined worlds through many cultural windows.

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INTRODUCTION

We are in a new world of instant and relatively inexpensive communication devices and all organizations with access to the increasingly ubiquitous digital technology can interact globally from many formerly inaccessible locations. However, as we have suggested in various chapters in this book and in our previous books in the series (Smith and Cockburn, 2013,2014), the impact of such digital technology goes far beyond the confines of business organizations. Socio-digital media for example has not only increased business conferencing and interaction between distant colleagues but it can also be reasonably asserted with confidence that social discourse and human interaction in other realms has also grown massively as a result.

It has been estimated that registered users now exceed one billion people globally and that this will climb to 2.5 billion by 2017 including 93% of marketers, 70% of which also have a Google + and Facebook is a major presence globally and the USA leads the world in terms of average time spent online each day although 86% of their users are outside the continental USA (Smith, 2013, Jones, 2013, eMarketer report, 2014). In 2013 47% of Americans indicating in 2013 that Facebook is their primary influencer for purchases they made compared to 24% in 2011(Jones, 2013). Pandemic fears are likely to add greater impetus to the use of ‘virtual teaming’, and online purchasing assuming supply and distribution issues such as traffic queues at borders are resolved since drones are not yet capable of fulfilling all of the supply chain tasks.

Of course there are cultural variations and the preferences seen in many countries as to how such media ought to be utilized by people and businesses as well as differential access for people thus influencing penetration rates especially in emerging nations (Solis, 2012, Smith, 2013, Pew Research, 2012) . At present, Chinese social media is running closely behind USA and other developed countries but is effectively in ‘catch up’ mode (Smith, 2013; *eMarketer* report, 2014). The cultural impacts have been shown for instance in the varied reactions of users to service providers seeking their real identities before allowing them to sign up; the so-called ‘nymwars’ whereby users have resisted giving real names, instead preferring pseudonyms in certain countries.

Currently, GIS technology has been used to track the spread of Covid-19 pandemic and mobile phone apps have also been used in South Korea to track sources of infection, alert others to nearby ‘hotspots’ and even nearby people who have tested positive for the disease, thus prompting some ethical questions regarding privacy, surveillance and the impact on future societies as more pandemics are anticipated in future as the world becomes more urbanized and humans encroach on former wilderness areas (Machalaba, Romanelli and Stoett, 2019). This pandemic has caused major economic impacts resulting in some businesses going bankrupt and

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