

Chapter VII

Business as Social Institution: Global Issues in IT

OBJECTIVES

This chapter aims to help you understand the following:

- The values that inform dominator economics and how the process for funding scientific and technical research in the U.S. guides those values.
- The shifts in global economic wealth (historically and today) and how those shifts have influenced the development of scientific and technical knowledge.
- The power that trans-national corporations (TNCs), many of which are wealthier than some nations, wield to influence changing fortunes in the global IT business.
- The relationship between economic globalization and global poverty.
- Why the global IT industry cannot afford to continue to operate as a dominator institution—the social costs.

INTRODUCTION

The global IT business as a social institution reflects the same dominator values as other social institutions in the U.S. Since IT is a large and increasingly powerful industry worldwide, the question of what kinds of values the business purveys

holds growing significance to our human community. Further, our ways of doing business are defined by the economic models that we adopt. The term “economics” can be used in two ways: (1) in reference to the academic discipline “that deals with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services”; and (2) in popular reference to describe “economic systems, policies and practices” (Eisler, 2007, p. 11). In this chapter, I refer to the latter—economic systems, policies, and practices—as we explore the following topics: (1) the dominator economic values reflected in the global IT business; (2) the relationship between postcolonialism and U.S. participation in dominator global economic development; and (3) the rising social and political significance of economic development in India and China with specific relation to the IT industry. I end this chapter with an in-depth example of a global IT giant to demonstrate the effects of dominator economic decisions on the Holocaust during World War II.

WHAT VALUES INFORM DOMINATOR ECONOMICS?

In *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics*, Riane Eisler (2007) explores the features of our current dominator economic systems.¹ “During the last five hundred years of Western history, different technological phases gave rise to different economic systems. Gradually, as we shifted from mainly agricultural to primarily industrial technologies, feudalism was replaced by capitalism and in some areas, socialism” (Eisler, 2007, p. 15). Capitalism emerged because it was preferable to the earlier feudal systems where nobles and kings owned most resources. Capitalism also contributed to the development of representative constitutional monarchies and republics and was a major factor in the creation of the middle class.

Marx and Engels developed their thinking about scientific socialism in the 19th century “when it was clear that capitalism was not fulfilling Smith’s vision of an economics that works for the common good” (Eisler, 2007, p. 142). Eisler (2007) demonstrates how neither the capitalist free market (envisioned by Adam Smith) nor the scientific socialism (envisioned by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels) could be realized in a dominator social system. “Smith’s assumption that competition would counter self-interest did not factor in the emergence of ferocious financiers, men like J.P. Morgan and Cornelius Vanderbilt, who ruthlessly used chicanery, bribery, and force to smash both competitors and union organizers” (p. 147). Similarly, Marx and Engels’ vision of a “just and egalitarian system” was also difficult to manifest in the midst of dominator values about control “by ruthless men from the top” (p. 147). In the end, neither economic system fully manifested their vision due to the “underlying dominator beliefs, structures, and habits we’ve inherited” (p. 117).

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