Chapter 6
Socio-Political Considerations of Informing Technology in the 21st Century

ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses socio-political issues surrounding informing technology in the 21st century. The chapter begins by considering the role that computers and informing technology have played in US elections. The chapter then critically examines what prosperity informing technology and turbo-capitalism has brought society. Next, global indexes that measure human well-being are considered within the broader context of growing economic equalities. The role that trade unions play in such measures is also considered. The chapter next considers the relationship between informing technology and the deep web and dark webs as well as its relation to corruption. Attention is then paid to the relation between informing technology and democracy as well as the socio-political impacts of hackers. The chapter concludes by considering the role informing technology has played in dictatorships and its role in the 2020 coronavirus pandemic as well as the positive impacts of hackers.

INTRODUCTION

Informing technology in the 21st century must listen to the voice of the people to use its remarkable ability to process and manipulate information for the good of humanity. The development of informing technology is dependent on politics, which shapes the behavior of society and determines policies that will directly impact ethics, IT law, and the design of application systems (implemented by around 20 million IT professionals worldwide). Bad policies can be perpetuated, or they can be counteracted. This chapter will address the problems of the modern world, which at first glance will appear far from, say, database programming. However, this is an illusion, and is an escape from dealing with problems that a computer strategist needs to understand so that he/she can develop important and meaningful applications of strategic informing technology.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8036-3.ch006

Informing technology is a technology that is supposed to support various, if not all, socio-economic processes through which humankind develops and thrives. This includes supporting the use of information, the generation of data, communication with others, etc. Through informing technology, we learn about new information, evaluate it, and use it for ourselves, being a member in a family, group, institution, company, organization, and so forth. Nowadays, one has access to an incredible amount of information that can address a multitude of issues. Such quantities would have been unheard of in the times of Nicholas Copernicus, who, despite holding only a relatively "small" amount of information, was afraid of what he possessed. It was only on his deathbed that he agreed to hand over his manuscript about *the Rotation of Heavenly Bodies* for publication. This was not merely scientific information about the rotation of the Earth around the Sun, but it was, above all, political information that undermined the modern knowledge of the Church. Giordano Bruno, for putting forth similar information, was burned at the stake, and Galileo, following the Church's orders, had to abstain from advancing such ideas.

In the past, a lack of information was commonplace, even for state leaders who made key decisions. It is now expected that by 2050 all the information we possess about physical objects and people will be available *online*. Currently, people are involved in collecting data about everything. In the past, politicians had better access to certain domains of information; however, now, many people know how to get such domain-specific information better than politicians, and they can generate sound conclusions on that basis. This means many will be better versed than politicians, and they will be able to easily demonstrate the ignorance and poor decisions of political leaders; thus, such people are a significant threat to politicians.

Thanks to the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century, we understand the role of the atom in the construction of matter, which for the average person is understood as comprising tables, houses, cars, etc. In the Information Revolution of the 21st century, a similar role to the atom is being played by bits of information (basically the number 1 or 0), which comprises digital documents, newspapers, books, etc. The difference is that the universal digitization of information threatens to "end" civilization and all kinds of institutions, such as newspapers, publishing houses, universities, political parties, and even states. Why do we need politicians, if we live in one global village (McLuhan & Powers, 1989), informed and happy?

THE SIMULATION AND ALGORITHMIZATION OF DEMOCRACY[1]

In the 1950s, the first commercial computer in the world, produced by Remington Rand for the Census Bureau, was UNIVAC I. CBS News used it for election night, and the show's host, renowned journalist Walter Cronkite, called it the "miracle of the modern age, the electronic brain." This computer was supposed to predict the results before the final results were even known: "This is not a joke or a trick," said CBS journalist Charles Collingwood: "it's an experiment. We don't know. We think it'll work. We hope it will work." UNIVAC developers were able to predict early on in the evening that Eisenhower would win. Still, they were not brave enough to trust their computer and announce the expected result, for they sought to avoid being disgraced in the event of an error.

The pioneers of computer science also dreamed of a machine capable of performing fast calculations on large amounts of weather forecasting data. Atmospheric actions just boil down to physics, and the relevant equations were well known. John von Neumann claimed that computers would soon allow people not only to predict the weather but also control it. He believed there could be a degree of perfection that we now know is unattainable because weather is a chaotic system. Still, the methods he invented (such as