

The Internet of Things (IoT) simply refers to physical devices connected to the internet or a computer network. Individuals who have devices connected to the internet or a network are directly impacted by the IoT. Some examples of devices within the IoT can include: smart watches, phones, computers, etc. The primary purpose of the IoT is to allow devices to communicate with one another and with the internet. For example, in a home computer network, devices are able to communicate with one another through a router or a switch. This setup allows the mentioned devices to “talk” with each other without exposing the devices directly to the internet. In this paper, I will discuss the ethical implications of the IoT through various research articles and videos provided in the assignment for this week.

In the commentary titled, “Alternative perspectives on the Internet of Things” by Jack Karsten, Karsten reviews multiple opinions from various scholars on the potential of the IoT and implications on policy governance, innovation, and various applications in different fields. The resounding theme between the various authors is that while the IoT gives way to growth and innovation, it can also raise serious security, privacy, and other ethical concerns. For example, in the perspective titled, “Implications for surveillance” Susan Hennessey notes that the Director of National Intelligence, James Klapper, testified in Congress that “[i]n the future, intelligence services might use the IoT for identification, surveillance, monitoring, location tracking, and targeting for recruitment, or to gain access to networks or user credentials.” Nevertheless, the IoT is an extremely complex entity, and Hennessey notes that “the intelligence community will have to develop new methods to isolate and process the magnitude of information.” Moreover, another roadblock to using the IoT is that “Congress and the courts will have to decide how laws should govern this type of access.” Because of its complexity, individuals may consider the value, if any, of future regulation and policy intervention. In the opinion “IoT governance” by Scott Andes, he

disassembles this notion with two key ideas. The first, he claims, is that advances within next-generation computational power are nowhere near deployment. This point is significant because in his perspective this gives lawmakers time to “catch-up” to revolutionary technology. The second point he asserts is that “even if the necessary technological advancements of IoT have been met, it’s not clear the U.S. economy will be the prime recipient of its economic value.” He clarifies that the global economic race in technological advancements can be won with sound science policies. Some examples of the policies he gives are accelerating basic engineering research, helping that research reach the market, supporting entrepreneurs’ access to capital, and training a science and engineering-ready workforce. These short works from the above scholars are not only pertinent to my analysis, but they have given me a better understanding of the potential and drawbacks to the IoT.

Thus, the Internet of Things (IoT) represents a significant advancement in technology, facilitating communication and connectivity among various devices on a scale never seen before. However, as explored through the perspectives of scholars like Jack Karsten, Susan Hennessey, and Scott Andes, the IoT also brings forth a myriad of ethical considerations and challenges. These opinions provided an avenue to critically think about how IoT not only affects society in general, but also the individual. From concerns about security and privacy to implications for surveillance and governance, it is evident that the widespread adoption of IoT technologies requires careful deliberation and proactive measures to address risks.

References

Alternative perspectives on the Internet of things. (2016, July 29). Brookings.

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/alternative-perspectives-on-the-internet-of-things/>