Discussion 6B

Discuss how IoT can affect individuals and countries who cannot afford these technologies? What responsibility exists to make IoT technologies available to all? You must start a thread before you can read and reply to other students.

Cisco Systems provides a simple definition for the “Internet of Things” (IoT): “…simply the point in time when more ‘things or objects’ were connected to the internet than people” (see Resource 2). These internet-connected devices range from basic consumer applications to industrial and commercial systems. Basic consumer IoT devices generally exist to bring convenience to everyday tasks, such as a dog feeder which keeps track of how much your pet eats and lets you know when you need to purchase more food. Industrial systems, on the other hand, may provide a significant improvement in throughput, safety, and convenience. Consider a digital control system which monitors factory safety conditions, machine health, and performs hundreds of automated tasks instantly which otherwise might take several days for a human to complete. It’s reasonable to say that the IoT gives modernized factories and commercial facilities a competitive advantage, one that might not only shape a local economy but the world’s economy.

As of this year, the Earth’s population continues to close-in on 8 billion, and one report claims that there are over 4 billion internet users. Out of those 4 billion users, only perhaps half enjoy the daily convenience of smart technologies. Do the countries immersed in the IoT have a responsibility to make that technology available to all? My answer is summarized by two ideas: The “Free Market”, and Star Trek’s “Prime Directive.” The free market is defined as “an economic system in which prices are determined by unrestricted competition.” For the non-Trekkies, the Prime Directive is “…a guiding principle … prohibiting [interference] with the internal development of alien civilizations.” I’ll further aggregate with a well-known Chinese proverb which says “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” For an unprepared country, smart technologies could cause more harm than good. Once again, consider our factory digital control system which can perform hundreds of automated tasks, eliminating the need for human intervention. If such technology was “given” or “easily” accessible to a less-developed country, what might the consequences be? How many wage-earning, family-providing workers might lose their job to the machine? Do these individuals have the skill-sets needed to find work elsewhere? Would this sudden advancement in technology create an imbalance in that society? Would certain cultural aspects be lost? The keyword here is “unprepared.” Though its concepts may be debated, I feel that the free market more naturally allows countries to integrate into the IoT in their own time.

Resources:

1. <https://beebom.com/examples-of-internet-of-things-technology/>
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_of_things>
3. <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018>
4. <https://www.bartleby.com/73/484.html>
5. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Directive>