DOES TECHNOLOGY HAVE VALUES?

INSC 543/CSE 599P
Value Sensitive Design

For Class: Wednesday, September 30

Does technology embed human values? If so, in what ways? Or do human values stand a part from technology, perhaps shaped by institutions, social structure, or culture? Might some sorts of technology in some contexts be value-neutral but not others? We'll take up these questions and others in our first class meeting this Wednesday.

To prepare for class, we'd like to ask you to do two things.

I. One way to begin to think about these questions and to develop your intellectual intuitions is to examine your own experience. Thus, over the next few days, we'd like you to keep a "technology and human values" journal.

Here's the idea: When in your daily activity you interact with a technology, step back for a moment and consider the ways (if at all) human values are implicated in your use of that technology. Record (a) a 1-sentence description of the technology; (b) what you used the technology for; (c) what values seem relevant and how they might be implicated in your use of the technology; and finally (d) features of the technology that support or do not support the values you have identified. Do so for a minimum of three technology interactions, at least two of which should be with information or communication technologies. Please bring your "journal" entries to class on Wednesday.

II. Please read the following two articles. You can find them on e-reserve (you can access e-reserve through the course website under the heading "Readings" : https://courses.washington.edu/insc598s/index.shtml). As you read these articles, keep in mind the following questions (similar to those you used to approach the technology and values journal): Where do the value implications associated with technologies come from? Do they reside within the technology itself? In the social interactions, structures, and institutions that surround the technology? Or? How does Latour answer this question? What is Orlikowski's perspective? Whose answer do you find more compelling? Why?

Latour, B. (1992). Where are the missing masses? The sociology of a few mundane artifacts. In W. E. Bijker and J. Law (Eds.), *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change* (pp. 225 –258). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Orlikowski, W. J. (2000). Using technology and constituting structures: A practice lens for studying technology in organizations. *Organization Science 11*(4), 404-428.

WRITE a question that you would be interested in discussing which follows from the readings. Keep in mind that a good discussion question is one that (a) builds on or challenges arguments presented in the readings, (b) calls attention to a particular problem posed by the readings, or (c) extends the readings in an interesting way. Please bring your question to class on Wednesday. We'll use these to structure our class discussion.