POWER AND ETHICS IN THE MOTIVATION AND APPLICATION OF GREEN TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The information and communication sector is responsible for roughly 4% of global electricity consumption as well as the emission of 730 million metric tons of CO_2-eq or 1.4% of global greenhouse gas emissions (Cunliff, 2020). This research will investigate the intersection of power, ethics, and green technology. A primary point is to analyze the obligation of consumers and organizations to utilize information technology to help mitigate climate change contributions. Secondly, to what extent are governments obligated to create regulations for organizations in order to reduce their contributions to climate change? Finally, given that green technology can dampen economic expansion, is this an acceptable reason to slow or stop the implementation of such technology? Given the large scope of this study (individual to planet), the most appropriate framework for ethical analysis is discourse ethics. Discourse ethics employs three strategies: conceptual investigations, where different stakeholders debate the relative importance of particular values, empirical investigations of the actual context of use, and technical investigations of the extent to which available technology could in fact support or hinder particular values (Mingers and Walsham, 2010; Habermas 1992).

Keywords

Green Technology, Climate Change, Ethics, Power

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The information and communication sector is responsible for roughly 4% of global electricity consumption as well as the emission of 730 million metric tons of CO2-eq or 1.4% of global greenhouse gas emissions (Cunliff, 2020). Different approaches have been taken in an attempt to mitigate the effects of big tech corporations such as the EPA placing regulations on the amount of carbon they are allowed to produce. Some corporations have considered of regulating their carbon footprint unilaterally. An example of self-regulation is Apple pledging to be carbon neutral for its supply chain and its products. In a time where climate change is such a hotly debated subject and the effects of climate change are so evident, it is crucial that the optimal method regulating the environmental impact of big tech corporations is investigated.

This research will investigate the intersection of power, ethics, and green technology. The obligation of consumers and organizations to utilize information technology to help mitigate climate change contributions is a primary point of analysis. Information Technology has been used to help promote environmentally sustainable behavior in households as well as in a business space, but often it is at the expense of the business or individual. Another important question to be answered is, to what extent governments are obligated to create regulations for organizations to reduce their contributions to climate change?

These corporations have the resources to operate their businesses in an eco-friendly manner as seen from several companies pledging to cut down on carbon emissions and it is important to analyze the ethicality of mandates to reduce their environmental impact. The final question examines the topic from a broader economic aspect whereby the supposition that green technology can dampen economic expansion is a negative force on the implementation of such technology.

Ethics is a subset of philosophy, also known as moral philosophy. In simplified terms, the actions we conduct and choices we make on a daily basis are our ethical decisions (Gulcan, 2015). Ethics is often divided into categories, for example meta-ethics, which deals with the general nature of ethical theories, normative ethics that deal with ways in which moral conclusions should be reached, and applied ethics that considers applications in particular contexts (Mingers and Walsham, 2010). The three general approaches to ethics, consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics reside on a spectrum of ethics where the goodness of an action is determined to be the action itself or the consequences of said action (Donaldson and Werhane 1999).

The scope of this proposed research is broad and encompasses individual decisions at the micro level, larger organizational decisions, and finally macro level national government decisions. Given the enormous scope, the most appropriate framework for ethical analysis is discourse ethics. Discourse ethics employs three strategies: conceptual investigations, where different stakeholders debate the relative importance of particular values, empirical investigations of the actual context of use, and technical investigations of the extent to which available technology could in fact support or hinder particular values (Mingers and Walsham, 2010; Habermas 1992).

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