

Group: Kate Rushton, Ryan Baker, Prabha Matta, Peter Nguyen, Julia Kosheleva

## Introduction

1. Main Thesis: Artifacts impose authority and power
2. Existing theories do not adequately address the issue of socio-technological change.
  1. Technological determinism is too rigid, and
  2. Social determinism does not pay enough attention to artifacts themselves.
3. Artifacts are political inasmuch as they
  1. Can be used impose order on a community, or
  2. Are inherently political in their design.

## Technical artifacts are a way to impose order on society

1. For example
  1. Robert Moses' bridges which limited access to racial minorities and low income groups to Jones Beach, and
  2. Napoleon's streets of Paris, which discouraged political protest.
2. To determine whether a technology falls into this category, you must determine whether the artifact was designed with these consequences in mind -- the motivation for the technology is separate from the object's intended uses.

## In contrast to artifacts that impose order as an (intentional) side effect, some artifacts are inherently political, for one of two reasons:

1. The choice of adoption is tied to a particular form of political life.
  1. For example, the design of steam engines *requires* a specific work structure that is rigid and authoritarian
2. Or the technology is strongly compatible with a given sociopolitical arrangement
  1. For example, a strong central government may be a prerequisite to nuclear power (though not technically required by the technology).
  2. In contrast, solar energy is more compatible with a democratic, decentralized society

## Conclusion

Technological artifacts provide means of enforcing social structure. We must consider context in order to understand the societal effects of an artifact, and designers of new technologies should take this into consideration.