Designing the Public Sphere with Intelligification

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Source:

Designing the Public Sphere: Information Technologies and the Politics of Mediation (pages 117 – 227), Peter-Paul Verbeek

Assignment:

How should markets, businesses, groups, and individuals be regulated or limited differently in the face of diminishing state power and the intelligification (Verbeek, p. 217) and networking of the material world?

Designing the Public Sphere with Intelligification

In "Designing the Public Sphere," Peter-Paul Verbeek addresses regulating markets, businesses, groups, and individuals amid diminishing state power and the "intelligification" and networking of the material world. He argues for a nuanced approach, focusing on critically integrating smart, interconnected technologies into society rather than struggling to accept or reject them (pp. 222, 223). Verbeek makes that conclusion because "Our material world is [rapidly] developing into an active, intelligent, [and augmented] counterpart, rather than a mute, stable and functional environment" (p. 218).

For markets, regulation should shape how technologies embed into society in good ways rather than mere permission of them (p. 226). While intelligified objects drive consumption, markets can prioritize profit over public good as state oversight weakens. Governance should promote policies that test and experiment with technologies like augmented reality for societal benefit, encouraging designs that respect user autonomy rather than exploit persuasion.

Second, businesses continue to outpace traditional regulations. Verbeek cites companies like Google redesigning reality via smart systems (pp. 218, 223-224) with products like Google Glasses. He advocates ethical designing — "technologies of the self" (p. 226)—in which businesses self-limit themselves by making persuasive effects transparent and collaborating with stakeholders. Ethical design balances innovation with societal well-being, compensating for reduced state control.

Third, network environments blur public-private lines for Groups, risking surveillance as they mediate behavior (p. 221). With less state authority, regulation should empower communities to collaborate and co-define smart system uses, setting boundaries through dialogue and data collection in public spaces. Public collaboration fosters collective agency through participation,

while the opposite holds for a traditional and centralized government imposing strict bans or controls on its citizens.

Fourth, individual privacy and agency will continue to erode while increases in technological innovation expose more personal data, such as smart glasses (pp. 223, 224). Verbeek wants to equip individuals to help them navigate an intelligified world through "critical engagement" (p. 226) supported by education and tools like privacy controls rather than relying on fading state protections.

In conclusion, Verbeek rejects rigid control and unchecked freedom and recommends experimental governance. Verbeek believes markets and businesses will move toward ethical innovation, groups can gain co-design roles, and individuals can receive tools for critical interaction. As state power and influence fades in a rapidly evolving technological world, Verbeek's distributed and shared approach helps technology continue serving all parts of society while balancing innovation and governance across private and public spaces.

References

Verbeek, P. P. C. C. (2014). Designing the public sphere: information technologies and the politics of mediation. In L. Floridi (Ed.), *The onlife manifesto: being human in a hyperconnected era* (pp. 217-227). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-04093-6_21