



Shaping Technology / Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change (Inside Technology)

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Technology is everywhere, yet a theory of technology and its social dimension remains to be fully developed. Building on the influential book *The Social Construction of Technological Systems*, this volume carries forward the project of creating a theory of technological development and implementation that is strongly grounded in both sociology and history. The 12 essays address the central question of how technologies become stabilized, how they attain a final form and use that is generally accepted. The essays are tied together by a general introduction, part introductions, and a theoretical conclusion. The first part of the book examines and criticizes the idea that technologies have common life cycles; three case studies cover the history of a successful but never produced British jet fighter, the manipulation of patents by a French R&D company to gain a market foothold, and the managed development of high-intensity fluorescent lighting to serve the interests of electricity suppliers as well as the producing company. The second part looks at broader interactions shaping technology and its social context: the question of who was to define "steel," the determination of what constitutes radioactive waste and its proper disposal, and the social construction of motion pictures as exemplified by Thomas Edison's successful development of the medium and its commercial failure. The last part offers theoretical studies suggesting alternative approaches to sociotechnologies; two studies argue for a strong sociotechnology in which artifact and social context are viewed as a single seamless web, while the third looks at the ways in which a social program is a technology. Wiebe E. Bijker is Associate Professor at the University of Limburg, The Netherlands. John Law is Professor in Sociology at the University of Keele, Staffordshire, England.

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