

**Robots, Wind farms, and the internet:
The ethics of technology in a changing world**

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Keynote Summary

We live in an age where social, political and economic growth are all accelerating unevenly and faster than in any prior epoch. While these systems are massively influenced by the supposedly *neutral* role of technology on development, we know that there is nothing neutral about it. Technological advances are highly politicised in their strategic application in ‘solving’ the world’s problems. Logically it follows that engineering is a highly politicised activity, whether or not engineers of all types are conscious of the fact. The basic thesis here is that while engineering has contributed enormously to every aspect of human development, this has not always been to the advantage of the mass of the people. Outside the context of human purposes, engineering can have immensely negative effects. At issue here is the role technology should have in a world where Neo- Liberalism rules, the Neocorporate state is embedded, and many Multinationals have greater GDP than entire nations. In consequence, ecological destruction and greed are bringing the world to the edge of extinction. So the paper asks a simple question - what is the *social* role of engineering in this context?