

THE INTERNET OF THINGS AND HUMAN COMMUNITY IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19

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Human beings in urban environments today are surrounded by up to 5000 trackable objects, and the number of online capable devices in existence vastly exceeds the population of the world. As these devices communicate with one another through the Internet of Things (IoT), huge advances in customer service and business management are made possible. And, in the context of COVID-19, IoT linked devices have been utilized to diagnose, monitor, and define recovery protocols. The effectiveness of the IoT in the context of the pandemic, however, raises serious ethical considerations about what the world ought to look like after COVID-19: (1) who is responsible for or who ought to have access to the personal and health data that has come to define our existence? (2) how do we ensure that we perceive and treat human beings with dignity that is irreducible to data points when it is so efficient and profitable to ignore this difficult question? and (3) can we emerge after COVID-19 as a truly human community, or will we settle for the ease and comforts of the Internet of Things? Despite the nostalgia for a return to a pre-pandemic normalcy, the new world into which we are hurtling is forever changed by COVID-19 and its therapies; precisely what that change looks like is still in our hands.