



**Centro de Investigação em Sociologia
Económica e das Organizações**



Instituto Superior de Economia e Gestão
UNIVERSIDADE TÉCNICA DE LISBOA

S E M I N Á R I O C I Ê N C I A , T E C N O L O G I A E S O C I E D A D E

The Social Challenge of Disembedded Technology

Carl Mitcham

Colorado School of Mines / EUA

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According to economic historian Karl Polanyi, the modern economy is historically unique in the way it is disembedded from social relationships. Polanyi's concept of disembeddedness is also a useful construction for conceptualizing modern technology. The dialectic of advancing disembedding leading to social disruption and then socio-cultural reaction (a phenomenon closely related to sociologist William Fielding Ogburn's analysis of "cultural lag") is also manifest in technology-society relations. One of the most systematic philosophical efforts to understand and respond to the problematic of technology-society relations so understood has that associated with the pragmatism of John Dewey. But a review of Dewey's proposals, their failures, and the resulting development of alternatives has produced a spectrum of policies and discontents that at least in the United States continues a tradition of an only marginally effective management of technological change.

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