LeBel, Sabine, York University, Canada

Cyberspace as Immaterial Containment: Theorizing Technology and the Environment

As the policy of planned obsolescence accelerates, the ecological impacts and the materiality of the personal computer continue to be subordinated under the discourse of the information revolution. This idea is reinforced by much of the literature in Cultural Studies focused on the immaterial aspects of the personal computer, such as online communities, organizing, and art. When the computer is theorized only as a technology that connects disparate global users through electronic networks and not also as a chunk of metal and plastic produced by equally disparate global workers, not only are the labour and production processes hidden but so are the ecological impacts of those processes. Drawing from the work of Martin Heidegger and Zoe Sofia, as well as risk society theory, this paper proposes to rethink how the personal computer is theorized as technology so that its materiality, including environmental impacts, are accounted for.