

Call for Papers for Vol. 11 (02/2009)

## **Network Ecologies: The Ethics of Waste in the Information Society**

- **Deadline for extended abstracts: May 1, 2009**
- **Notification of acceptance to authors: May 15, 2009**
- **Deadline for full articles: July 15, 2009**
- **Deadline for revised articles: August 15, 2009**
- **Publication: August 2009**

### **Introduction**

The (emergent) transnational network of organizing around environmental and social justice issues in the global networks of electronics production is arguably the most vital area of 'network culture' when it comes to broader ecopolitical concerns. Given the fetishization of dematerialization-through-technology of an earlier generation of cyberlibertarian theorizing, we consider these efforts to have significance beyond the already broad array of issues related to the toxicity of computers and its implications to workers, users, and the environment.

The contemporary environmental justice movement has already (and successfully) criticized conceptual frameworks that consider environmentalism a post-materialist luxury rather than a matter of survival, and made visible the 'colonialism' of a wilderness tradition that had underwritten territorial expansion across the US and in other parts of the world. Yet while its organizational dynamic already involves questions of historical and political epistemology, few people look to ecopolitics as a vehicle to advance broader causes of (cultural, economic, political, social) justice. Which is why, for this issue of IRIE, we would like to invite suggestions on how our new (and old) networking machines might become the pragmata of a new ecopolitics, true „matters of concern“ (Bruno Latour) of info-ethical reflection.

With this issue, IRIE, dedicated to the development of information ethics as reflexive practice and conceptual horizon, aims to engage the broad range of materialities involved in acts and processes of communication, information, and knowledge production. This includes, but is not limited to, the very instruments we employ, use, and discard in ever-shorter cycles of consumption, outpacing our efforts to develop appropriate mechanisms of disposal and recycling : from old television sets to LCD and plasma displays, from old disk drives to flash cards and RFID chips. Used locally, but designed, produced, and discarded across the world, the usage of these instruments – things - raises a host of questions whose technical and political questions are increasingly being explored, but whose info-ethical dimensions deserve greater attention as they may requires us to revisit cherished assumptions regarding the scope and desirability of information-societal developments as we know them.

Electronics activism has already defined an agenda of environmental and social justice, drawing on number of perspectives such as environmental debt, environmental and resource rights, political and social ecology, resource efficiency, and occupational health and safety. In addition to giving rise to concrete initiatives in the areas of fair production, procurement, and disposal, these activisms also encourage a re-appropriation of notion of sustainability. Since the UN 'Earth Summit' in 1992, sustainability has featured prominently in policy initiatives. And while for some, it has been discredited by its vagueness and widespread subordination to corporate visions of self-regulation it might be revitalized to refer to the outcomes of (inevitable) ecological distribution conflicts, encouraging ecopolitics to venture beyond consensus-oriented paradigms of environmental governance. Such broader ecopolitical perspectives (or network ecologies, the term we would like to suggest as an umbrella concept) can serve as an integrative idiom to combine important vectors of inquiry that open up more general descriptions of the contemporary conjuncture.

## Possible topics and issues

We therefore invite contributors to reflect on the question of a 'sustainable' information society from within an ecopolitical, info-ethical horizon. Suggested topics include:

- No single injunction to reuse or recycle will resonate across all net.cultures. What role do questions of translation, inter- and transculturality play in the articulation of new ecopolitical perspectives?
- Can info-ethics avoid the conceptual dead-end of a culture/nature divide in its exploration of a politics of nature by way of engaging process-oriented, procedural perspectives on political ecology? If so, how does it address questions of agency and accountability?
- What is the link between such network ecologies and aesthetic regimes, from postcolonial analysis of how 'we' have looked at nature to artists developing an ecopolitical aesthetics of disappearance?
- What role might the open, decentralized creation of hard- and software play in the creation of sustainable ICT infrastructures?
- The transnational networks of design, production, and disposal involve large numbers of migrant workers, often concentrated in export-orientated economic zones partially exempt from national (environmental, social) regulation. What role do questions of labor and the transformation of sovereignty play in the articulation of new ecopolitical perspectives?
- What role do ICTs play in other ecopolitical controversies (climate change, water, food security)?

## References

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### Organizations

- Good Electronics Network <http://goodelectronics.org>
- SACOM <http://sacom.hk/>
- Taiwan Environmental Action Network <http://www.iepanet.org/>
- Toxics Link <http://www.toxicslink.org/>
- Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition <http://www.eto toxics.org>
- Basel Action Network <http://ban.org/>

### Abstracts and Submissions

Potential authors must provide an extended abstract (max. 1500 words) by **May 1, 2009**. Abstracts may be submitted in the native language of the author though an English translation of this abstract must be included if the chosen language is not English. IRIE will publish articles in English, French, German, Portuguese or Spanish. The author(s) of contributions in French, Portuguese, or Spanish must nominate at least two potential peer reviewers. Abstracts will be evaluated by the guest editors. The authors will be informed of acceptance or rejection by **May 15, 2009**. Deadline for the final article (usually ca. 3.000 words or 20.000 characters including blanks) is **July 15, 2009**. All submissions will be subject to peer review. Therefore the acceptance of an extended abstract does not imply the publication of the final text (August 2009) unless the article has passed the peer review.

For more information about the journal see: [www.i-r-i-e.net](http://www.i-r-i-e.net)

### Contact

Please send your abstracts to the guest editors at:

Soenke Zehle: [s.zehle@mx.uni-saarland.de](mailto:s.zehle@mx.uni-saarland.de)

Matthias Feilhauer: [matthi@studio.info](mailto:matthi@studio.info)