The Barriers and Pathways to Ethical and Sustainable Mobile Devices

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What are the current socio-structural, cultural, governmental, political, economic, and design barriers to the ethical and sustainable production of mobile devices? I will present a sociologically informed review of existing barriers based on my in-depth study of the hidden human and environmental costs of Apple's supply chain, including focus on how design impacts obsolescence, turnover, and waste. In addition, I will draw on interviews and fieldwork with researchers, activists, political stakeholders, and members of ethical companies to illustrate ways in which some are already pushing past these barriers to reconfigure the production of mobile devices; extend their lifecycle through design with repair in mind; and, efforts to teach consumers how to repair them. I will close by offering sociologically informed suggestions for how these barriers and design issues could be addressed on a larger scale.