

DESIGNING THINGS, DESIGNING THINGS, DESIGNING THINGS AND WASTE.

While reading *Designing things* by Prasad Boradkar, I started thinking about the world of objects we love in, and how important they are for most of us. I watched a video of a TED talk of Boradkar where he was talking about the planned obsolescence. We live in a world moved by the consume, new things everyday and immediately.

In his talk, Boradkar introduces two quotes very different one from each other.

“Our big job is to hasten obsolescence. In 1934, the average car ownership span was five years; now it is two years. When it is one year we will have a perfect score” . (Harley Earl, 1955).

“We want to construct some kind of a machine that will last forever. It does not please us to have a buyers car wear out or become obsolete” (Henry Ford, 1922). I really wanted to analyze this two ways of thing, the first one, the consumerist one and the second one, a more responsible with the planet we live in.

“Our big job is to hasten obsolescence. In 1934, the average car ownership span was five years; now it is two years. When it is one year we will have a perfect score”. (Harley Earl, 1955).

Imagine to have a “perfect” object. This object never gets broken, and neither gets useless, it's always fashion. The factory that invented that product will sell it very good, everyone will want this “perfect” object that last for ages. But once everyone already have this object, this factory will need either to close or will probably lose benefits. In order to skip this, the industries make a think called planned obsolesce, “a situation in which goods are deliberately made or designed so that they do not last for a long period of time” (Cambridge *Dictionary* , 2016).

They are different ways to do that. The psychological obsolescence is when the object is non fashion, so people don't want it anymore, they want the new version. There is also a concept called death dating or contrived durability, where as Boradkar'(2010) explains, is when they design into the product the time is going to die. The planned obsolescence where the object is still in functions but it gets useful it's been created in order to keep going with progress as Boardkar'(2010) explained in a TED talks. When a new objects is invented, it's already known that they will make a better version of it in a certain amount of time. Boradkar(2010) also explain how in nowadays order to be creative and create new ideas, you have to create them as a waste, because in the society we live there is this need of constant renovation. We get tired of things and constantly need a new versions, better versions. A very good example of how this concept works is the iPhone. I found out in Wikipedia (2016) that the first iPhone was released the 29th of June 2007, and since then, a new better version it's been released every single year. The craziest thing is that they also make the gadgets of each iPhone different from the previous one so at one point, if you want to keep having an iPhone you will need to buy the new one because, if you have an iPhone 4 and your charger gets broken, they don't sell them anymore, you will need an iPhone 5 with the new charger and so on.

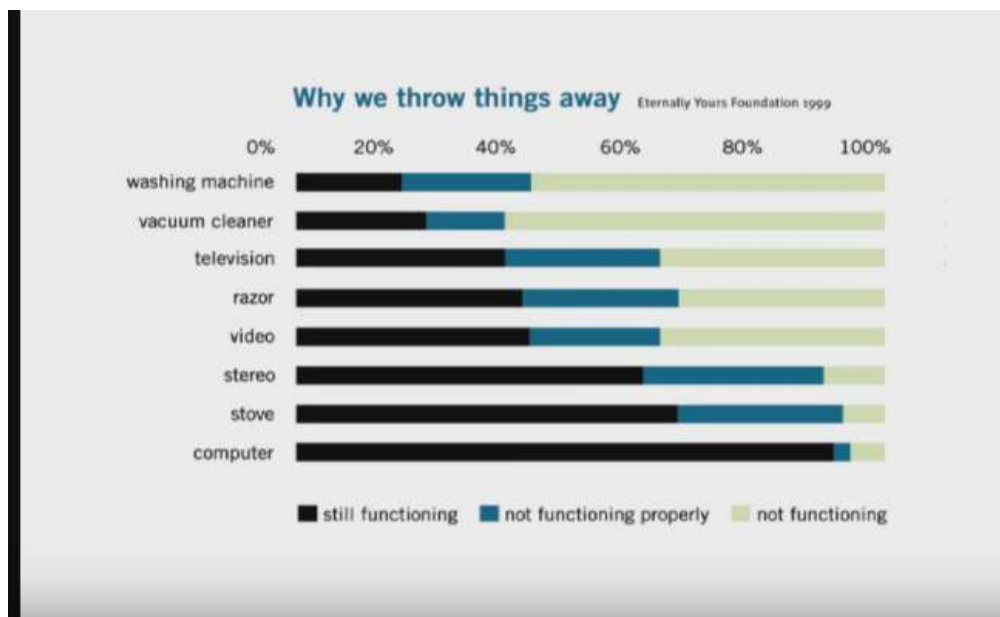
But it not only happens that things get useless, also they get broken, they are designed for this to happen. And why instead of replace them we don't try to fix them? Well, at the beginning of the talk Boradkar explains an anecdote with his broken printer and how when he tried to get it fixed the man of the shop explained him how it would be worth it to buy a new one. “I don't want a new printer, I already have one” Boradkar (2010) says. It's cheaper and more easy to replace things. And what happens when we replace things? Do this objects disappear? They create waste, so much waste.

Let's thing about everything we consume and decided to give away, it ends being waste, waste that will remain here years after we disappear, we are creating from our planet a container.



This photography from Chris Jordan talks about the American mass consumption. We consume in mass and this is the result.

In *The World Without Us* (2007) Alan Weisman talks about a world without humans, only objects and “natural” objects. In his conversations with scientists he discovered that polymers have not been in existence long enough for microbes to develop enzymes with which to break them down. (Weisman, 2007) What does this mean? These wastes will remain in the Earth ages, and all because everyday new things are created to replace things that still work, and they sell to use with the subliminal message that we need them.



This diagram I have taken from Boradkar(2010) TED talk shows the percentage of objects we replace even though they still work.

“We want to construct some kind of a machine that will last forever. It does not please us to have a buyers car wear out or become obsolete” (Henry Ford,1922).

What would happen if the things we do, would be the definitive one? A society with a controlled consumerism and where the culture of get the things fixed instead of replace them would be the one that works? And a society that doesn't succumb to the desire of the new. A society that minimize the waste.

When something created by the nature dies, it doesn't creates waste, in fact it creates life. Not like the products we design. “If the products we made would be like the nature things, and when they died they disappear, this will be a fantastic world to live in”. (Prasad Boradkar',2010). He was right, it would. It would be fantastic to live in a world of sustainable design. In ECO DESIGN, (1955) Joseph Duffy says that there is no excuse for not combining design innovation with concern to the environment, the choices that allow designer to “do the things right” are there. What would happen if we designers and industries started to do things with long-term time duration? There would be loses or gains? Janis Birkeland (2002) in her book, talks about the idea of start constructing long-life buildings. There will be the need to only build the building once in a while and the resources saving would be very big, explains Birkeland (2002). Also, economically will be rentable as “owners will gain by having an investment which continues to generate income for a long time The benefits are massive, with the incorporation of natural environmental systems would be an increase of healthy life and so on”. Birkeland (2002) It sounds idyllic, so then, why sustainable design is not an actual reality? Again, as Janis Birkeland (2002) says, the real estate developers are looking for to maximize short-term profits. The society of the right-now is what it has. For the same reason, if there's a better iPhone we want it, or if it's easier and cheaper to replace that printer we will do it (although this second printer will get broken eventually).

In 1967, Volvo released an advert demanding the throw-away-society and planned obsolescence. In this case, Volvo was announcing their next step as a car company, paper cars. Every week a new car, a paper one, so you can have a brand new car every single week. Things produced in mass with bad quality raw material are cheap.

THE RUNAGATES CLUB BLOG

This 1967 VOLVO print advertisement takes aim at a “throw-away society”

The Paper Car!
A logical next step in a continuing program of planned obsolescence.

At a time when people trade in their cars every two or three years, it's reasonable to assume that the next step might be paper cars.

We're living in a "throw-away" world. Why not have a car you can trade every month? Why not have a daily paper car for going out on the town and of course a plain black one for when you want to be serious?

You think the idea is crazy? Sure it is. But trading cars every couple of years is a bit crazy, too. And what difference does it make if you're a little crazy or a lot crazy?

Volvo. It's made of steel.

Volvo are built in Sweden on the premise that a good car should last longer than a good man. And while we realize that this is a radical departure from cars as you know them, the idea does have merit.

To make a car that lasts, you begin with more, thick steel.

Then you weld all the pieces together. The Volvo body is held together by almost 50,000 welds—any one of them strong enough to support the weight of the entire body.

Then to protect the body from the elements, you paint it six times—one coat of rustproofing, two primer, and three enamel, 50 lbs. of paint in all.

Then you undercoat the bottom of the body, then you seal the wheels, and then black glass.

Then you get in an engine that's un-sunk, about 22 miles to a gallon even with automatic transmission, a power, (Volvo runs away from every other car) and in five days (most of Volvo's going over 100,000 miles are begun).

Then what you've got is a Volvo. About as far away from a paper car, as other cars are from a Volvo.

A car "Road & Track" Magazine described like this: "Volvo makes more things just a little stronger than is absolutely required, uses better materials, more time testing the components to their limits than is absolutely required. The result is a car that is solid, practical, efficient and long lived—everything transportation really ought to be."

There is still something to be said for paper.

The kind with the green printing and the picture of a person in it. You can collect quite a bit by having a Volvo and keeping it a long time.

When the payments are up, start making payments on yourself. After a while, you may want so much money, you'll be able to afford to do something like this with some of it.

You could even buy some with some paper dollars.

VOLVO

Jack, R J (1967)

In fact, Boradkar(2010) explains in his talk that during the 60s, there also came out paper dresses, you didn't need to clean them as they disappear as you wear them.



"Souper Dress". American paper dress, 1967, based on Andy Warhol's Campbell's Soup Cans paintings. Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation

We live in a world of conformism. Every week Something new it's coming and we are ready to buy it, and make lines to buy it. Not only on objects but in everything. Fashion is another sector that it is dramatically affected. Fast fashion, is a reality. The documentary Fashion victims (Salvados, 2016) talks about this phenomenon, the mass production of clothes and sell for a very low price. Every month a new collection comes out. Every month they invent a new trend in order to sell new clothes and we accumulate and accumulate things.

It could be in the hand of the designers to make a dramatic change. It is possible to stop the waste, and to stop the end of natural resources by doing long-life objects. It's possible and it's economically talking possible as well.

Another solution is to adopt the minimal culture as a life style. Where is the need of change my phone every time a better one comes out? Or to have 20 trousers and pairs of shoes? To accumulate infinite stuff and then throw it away to make it become waste.. It will end being a world of objects and waste. Even when the human race disappear, the objects will be still here because it take ages for them to biodegrade. So instead of generate more objects that generate waste, why don't we stop and start living with what we already have invented? Why we don't stop thinking we need everything?

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