

Useless Productions in a World Requiring Necessity (1320 Words)

Ways of Perceiving (M4X01559)

Keri Shaw (1703607)

In this text I shall explore:

- My observations of useless productions.
- My idealistic resolution to the problems created by these productions.
- A counter argument to the failure of my system.
- An exhibition as a final approach to move the world forward.

As a product designer I am confronted with sustaining this world. There have been many attempts to do this, from recycling to electric cars; but is it really working (Fischer and Dave, 2017)? My observations have lead me to several problems that I believe if minimised, and therefore controlled, would place us in better stead for maintaining this world and prolonging existence.

The first problem is the similar replication of products. Similar replication as I define it, or as Chris Bangle puts it “Difference in a world of sameness” (2013), is the production of a single type of product in many stylistic variants by a range of brands, with the intent to compete against each other for the subjective favouritism of the market, in order to make money. An example is provided below:

Figure 1



(Argos and Russell Hobbs, 2018)

The issue with this form of replication is providing a market with a range of products, consisting of a vast array of materials and manufacturing processes, in addition to the market discretion provided by this variety leading to numerous wasted products. When in reality, the function (Townsend, Montoya and Calantone, 2011, p. 374-377) is the same, and only one variation is required to maintain at least the current physical living standards of humans. Chris Bangle discusses a similar topic in a 'Creative Mornings' event (2012) - covering the question of: Are products currently being created for the sake of it, and what impact is this having on us both socially and environmentally?

This leads on to planned obsolescence, and how a factor implemented to simply cause premature breakage and prompt the user to purchase another product, is not only morally wrong, through giving the consumer minimal choice about their purchases, but wrong because it forces a potentially operational product into our bins. The text 'Optimal Durability vs. Planned Obsolescence in the Textbook

Market' (Peterson, 2014) covers the extent that companies are willing to go to, to ensure that customers will buy their products continuously to the point of defacing technical drawings and things that cannot be replicated.

Furthermore, identical replication (Figure 2), is the production of so-called 'Chinese knock-offs' (Khera, 2018) that aim to compete with products from established brands. They do this by attempting to undercut retail prices and in doing so sell larger quantities to make the same amount of profit. It can be seen however, that this usually ends in an un-standardised, inferior quality product, frowned on by most of the market (Economist, 2018).

Figure 2

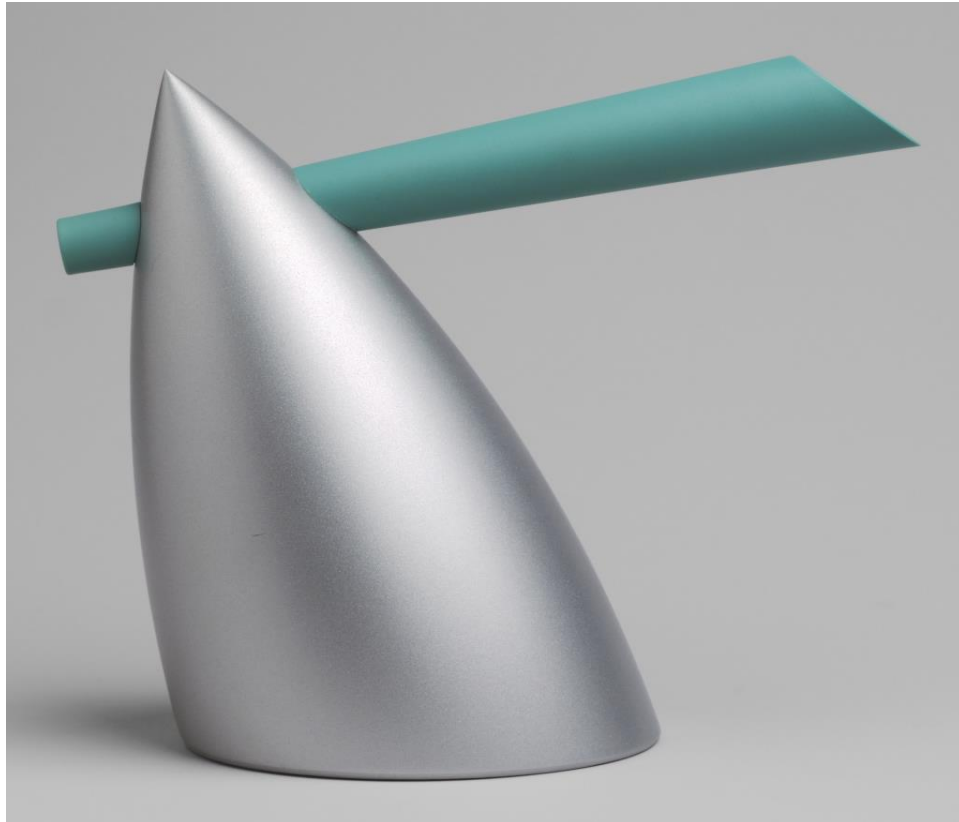


(Maxxus Bricks, 2016)

Finally, comes the production commercialised but functionless products. An example of this is the Hot Bertaa kettle (1987) by Phillipe Starck (Figure 3), whereby he has produced an obscure looking kettle in the attempt to create something unique and controversial. But in actuality, he has mass-produced a

product that only depreciates the operational aspects of the standard kettle and mankind, illustrated in a video by MrWaiteDT (2012) where he notes its poor functionality.

Figure 3



In reflection, to stay a constant in this world, the real change that we need to make in terms of sustainability should start with reducing the number and type of products that are being produced. This prevents wasting energy and resources in their production and attempted recycling, as well as the considerable number of products ending up in nature, and not being able to degrade. Therefore, my idealistic proposition to at least partially resolving the worlds sustainability issue, would be as a collective species to:

- Design the most effective device for its purpose, utilising the most accessible materials (that can be, or are recycled) and low energy processes in its production. The product should not consist of any planned obsolescence. Chris Bangle has similarly tried to optimise design seen in the BMW GINA, where he tried to integrate fabric within a cars body, to make it lighter, more flexible and easier to service (Etherington, R, 2008).
- The design and manufacture of the 'useless productions' (detailed above) should be lawfully banned, and the remaining products on the market should be the only type available until they have all been purchased, repurposed or recycled. Space-X are adopting a similar methodology, whereby nearly all waste shuttle material is reused (Anderson, 2017).
- The new product should be accessible to each household for free and be repaired by the local manufacturer if necessary, to offer confidence to the public concerning the products reliability, similar to companies such as Leatherman (2018) who offer 25 years warranty on their multitools.
- Finally, in the interest of furthering the world, new issues of the product should be released every three years with considerable developments and improvements. With the technology arrived at by a team of experts and the aesthetics by a public majority vote. This should be done in a structured way to build excitement and expectation for the new model (Ambler, 2016; InfoNewt, 2016).

Like many idealistic agendas this proposition has its inherent flaws such as being similar to Le Corbusier's 'machines for living in' (Morse, 2015) where people are unlikely to conform to a system developed by a single person, especially being a communist-like system that is closed and prone to implosion with collective aims but not always collective outputs, similar to that of Stalinism (Britannica, 2018). This regime could also fail because it is suggestive of restricting the cultural and emotional evolution of humankind which Ilchi Lee (2016) believes is the true value of being human, or because of

our capitalist society that thrives on providing goods or services for a profit, and responsively promotes consumers to have the newest and best objects to symbolise their status in society (O’Cass and Frost, 2002, p.67-88).

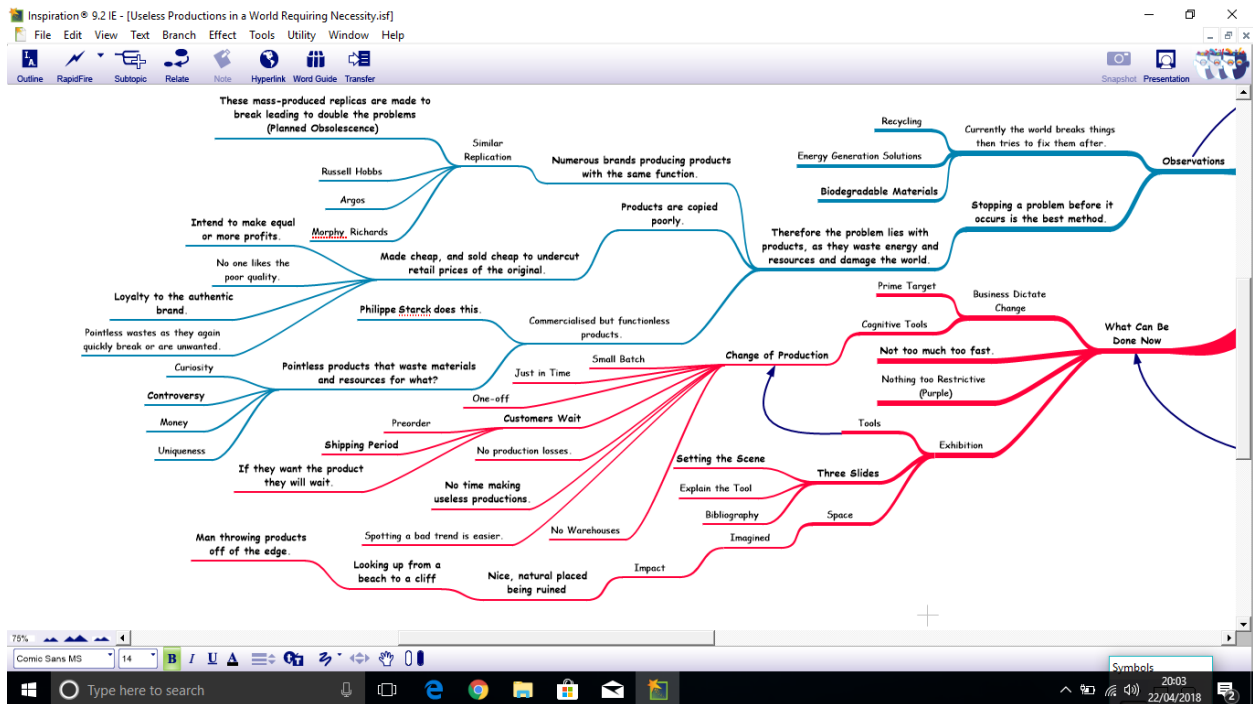
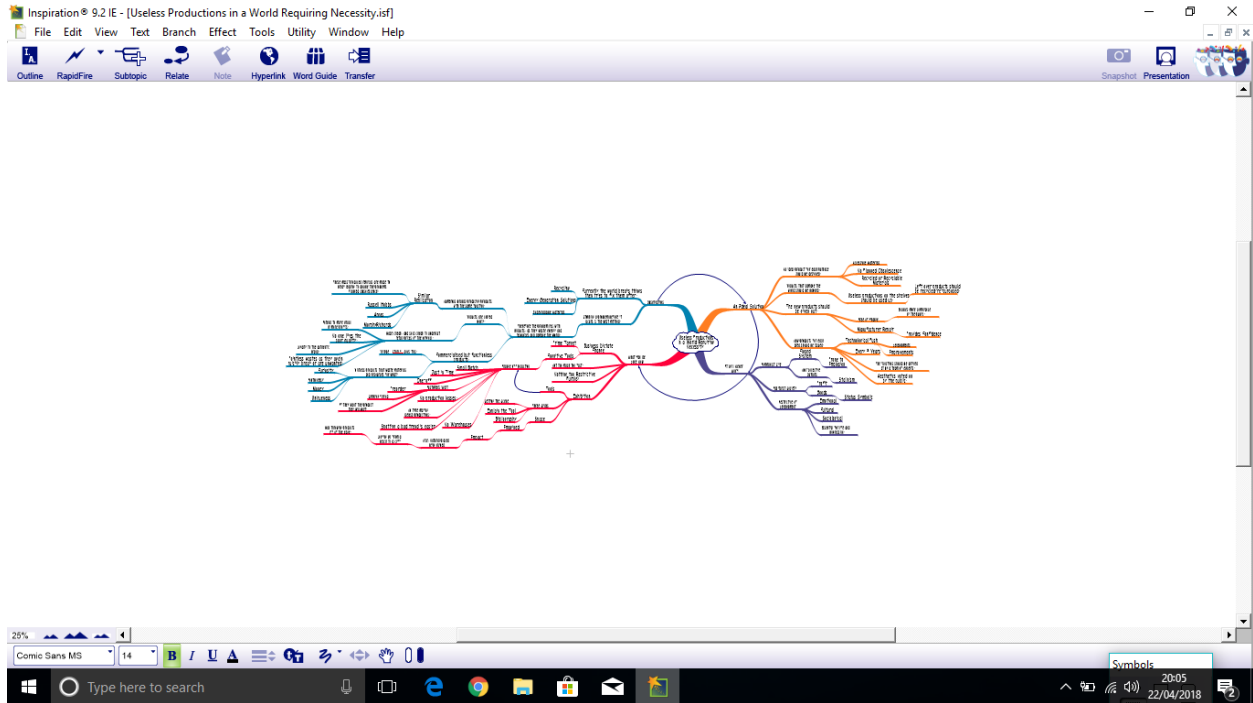
Reflecting on the possible problems faced by this proposal, I have established that the key to making every product count and reducing the creation of useless productions starts with the company designing them. Furthermore, an example of the power that they hold is the message encoded in their products (Lanir, L, 2018) i.e. Russell Hobbs: 'buy it, and take care of it' (signified) in the form of its abstract glossy colours, polished metal etc. (signifiers), verses Argos's: 'buy it, then buy another one later if need be' with its mostly one material and dull singular colour. So, changing a business’s approach to product production for the better could enforce a 'change in science' (Kuhn, 1962).

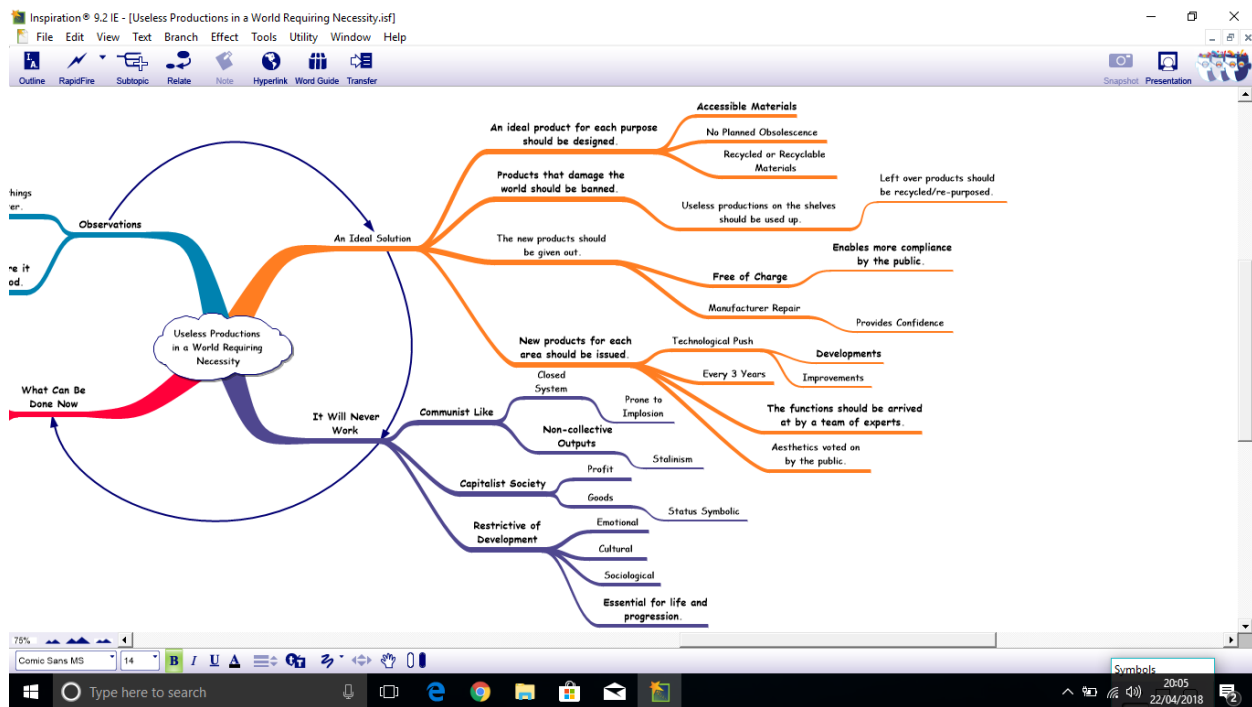
Therefore, as a result of the ideas discussed and argued above, I would like to propose a more feasible and world friendly movement than that which I previously arrived at, in the form of an exhibition to all of the leading companies across the world which will revolve around the term ‘change’. In this I will place the audience on an imagined beach looking up at a cliff where a man is throwing product after product into the sea. Whilst the first slide is being displayed, I shall set the location within the audience’s minds and lay down the context for the second slide. The second slide will illustrate the process in which I am proposing for companies as a form cognitive tool under and ethos of metadesign (Wood, 2007), for businesses to implement into their system in order to reduce the number of useless productions and promote a paradigm change (Kuhn 1962). My final slide will then display the bibliography for my main body of text.

I'm going to finish with a quote by Yves Behar (2015), “Design needs a new relationship with the world, one that is more focused on our planet's needs".

Appendix

Mind Map:





(Shaw, 2018)

Exhibition Talk:

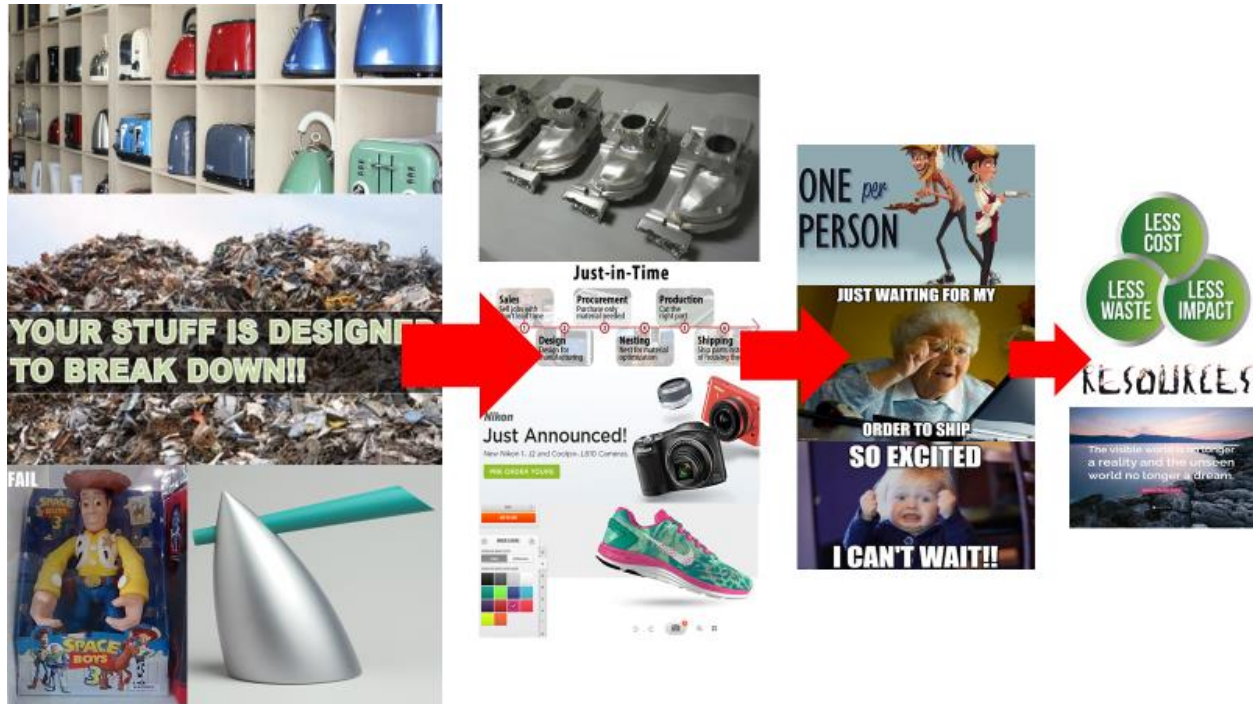
Slide 1:



You are on the beach looking up at a cliff and you see a man throwing product after product into the sea, what do you think of this? Is it a waste? Is it going to damage the environment?

Well, people often don't realise the true nature of the what's going on until the reality is 'literally' displayed in front of them in its rawest form. But now it is!

Slide 2:



Whilst we as a complex and rapidly evolving species are changing the style of our kitchen, going off of a toy, or upgrading our phones. Companies are producing millions of one product, after millions of another to tailor to this.

And I can't say "don't be human", "don't utilise your freedom or sociological culture that has been built up over thousands of years of change". But, I can say "companies; change the way you give the products to the people". Because if anything, this can reduce a problem that affects all of us so that we don't make a mess at all, rather than making a mess and partaking in the impossible venture of trying to clean up every last grain of dirt, whilst wearing away at the floor.

Therefore, I propose for all companies selling personal consumables to make every product count through embracing more - small batch, just in time, and even one-off productions. To offer products as they are required and not before they are required.

So, what's the catch? Well customers just have to wait, that's it. But this won't affect release dates as they can pre-order, customers have to wait for shipping from online market places regardless, so production days added onto this will be a small sacrifice. Besides, for in store purchases, if people truly want your products then they will wait, if not, then no products are just standing by for another customer to pick them up.

For you this means no time spent making useless productions, no warehouses, no production losses on products that you won't sell or will only sell at a reduced rate, spotting a loss in custom for a specific product will be easier, and finally switching production runs will be simpler.

But most importantly no wasted energy, no wasted resources, less rubbish... and a world for longer!

Slide 3:

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