

Planned Obsolescence

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1. Why does planned obsolescence exist?

To discuss why planned obsolescence exists, we have to narrow down to its origin—who conduct planned obsolescence. Obviously, the answer is all the firms producing commodities. One predominant factor to hold a firm is stable income or, more greedily, exponential economic growth. The simplest way to achieve this goal is selling much better stuff than that of competitor, and which essentially needs remarkable inventors and designers working for firm. However, if one of inventors is too brilliant to design a product which is too tough to last and function forever, not only the firm but all the firm concerned with the product will lose their market, that is, no more interest can be earned after the tough one have fully occupied the market. That will be a tragedy of economics. Hence, entrepreneurs secretly promised each others to set a definite expiration for their products, so that demands and market would exist forever. And it is why planned obsolescence exists.

2. Do you agree with the director's perspective about planned obsolescence? Why or why not?

I faithfully admit the problem pointed out by director, but I still consider planned obsolescence is essential. Here I will list some pros and cons of planned obsolescence and explain why I support it and my opinion to solve adverse effect brought by it.

Pros:

- (1) Planned obsolescence make our current economy flourishing.
- (2) Inventors and designers are motivated by it, because the more fancy or convenient products they invented or designed, the more money they earned. With their effort, boundary of technology could be pushed forward forever if demand still exists and resources are also enough.

Cons:

- (1) As much scholar had addressed, if the life cycles of products are still linear, planned

obsolescence will accelerate depletion of resources on our planet. Furthermore, dumping wastes to countries in Third World also causes problems about environmental racism we'd discussed last week.

(2) Marketing is emphasized on account of stronger competition brought by planned obsolescence. Corporations have to propagate the advent of their brand new product more frequently, even yearly. It means that more and more people work to produce nothing for human society, and what they do is only taking photos, recording advertisements, and showing these before people's eyes.

In the documentary, some people fighting against planned obsolescence addressed some concepts, such as cradle to cradle and décroissance. I respect their seizing the initiative and addressing prospective solution, but what comes out in my mind is rough idea which may attract environmentalists and capitalists. Besides, I don't recognize products with cradle to cradle will fascinate consumers who decide the way of market. As for décroissance, it must be devastated by people's inborn desire and greed.

"If economy exists, planned obsolescence cannot be avoided" and "Human's greed for better life would never vanishes" are my basic assumption. We can't force consumers to own a worse but more eco-friendly products. Likewise, no firms are willing to earn lower interests. However, if every component of products can be recycled and reshaped by the firm producing it, there's no need to extract so much ingredients from nature and to dump so much rubbish to poorer countries. This must be fascinating for environmentalists and capitalists, because of fewer deprivation from nature and lower cost for manufacture. However, the key point of this solution is the techniques to reshape the wasted products into new product. Hence, as inventors and designers are inventing or designing their new products, they should take ingredients and structures into consideration. Both of them should be easy to be reshaped and made by products of last generation. Adoption of new materials or manufacturing processes should be avoided.