Zombie media vs. Vision-Driven Design

by Shaën Reinhart

EVALUATION BY NARRATION
Design Methodologie
Joëlle Bitton
Zürcher Hochschule der Künste
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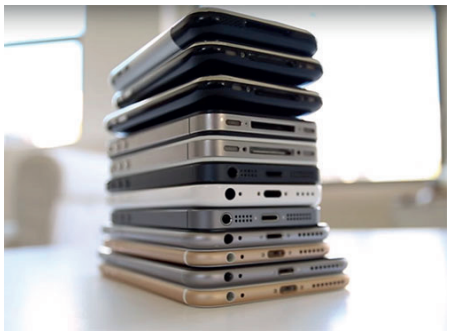
Zombie Media

As long as media already exists, there are always questions about consumption, the aging and the disposal of old media. In the constant cycle of replacing old media with new, a culture of the „assumption and expectation of a short-term forthcoming obsolescence“ was formed [1]. There will always be an even better and newer technology and will replace an older one. A planned obsolescence is therefore a logical conclusion of this cycle.

Planed Obsolescence

The first form of a planned obsolescence appeared in London in 1932 as an proposed solution to the great depression. Nowadays, however, the planned obsolescence takes place in completely different forms. The micropolitic form, which is probably most clearly visible to consumers, plays its part in the design of new media devices. For example, cables that are no longer compatible with newly purchased devices. As well as the planned bad quality of the products so they break faster.



1. iPhone generations

The Blackbox

Interesting is the example of the „blackbox“ that Garnet Hertz makes in his text about „Zombie Media“.

The blackbox symbolizes a technical device, which needs an input to make an output, for example a printer. The user can use the printer superficially, however, he would be completely unable to repair the printer if it would have any damage.

This example clearly reflects our current society. We live in a time where we are surrounded by technical devices which we use daily but have no idea of the technology behind it. If a device is broken, we simply replace it with a new one. This behavior is well-known and is clearly used; here too, the planned obsolescence plays a central role.

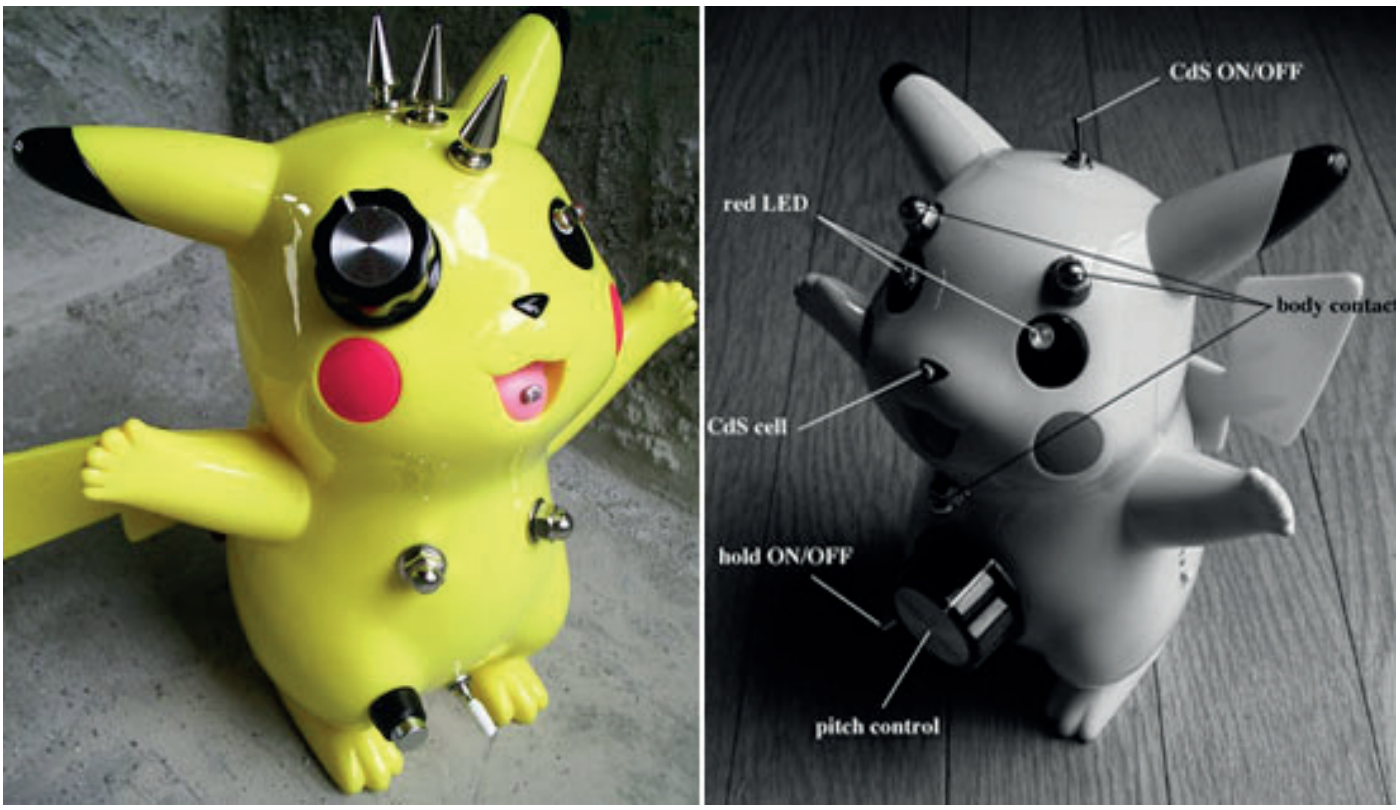
Technical things break apart daily, most of them are thrown away and then end up as dead media and in the worst case somehow poison the earth. Few are recycled into so-called zombie media and maybe build the „pseudo-historical objects from a speculative future“ [2].

2. Blackbox system

3. Broken blackbox system

4. Blackbox = Expert territory

5. Manipulated and bent by non-experts



6. Circuit bending Pikachu

Vision Of The Future

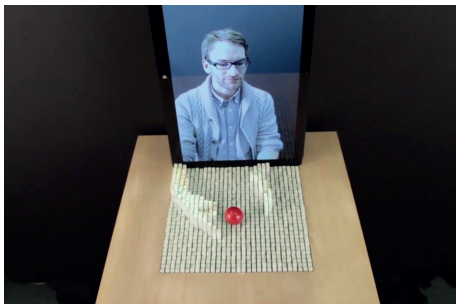
Hertz is convinced that the zombie media will be the future of tomorrow because the future is no longer on the screen but behind the screen or behind technology.

> The digital realm is an avant-garde to the extent that it is driven by perpetual innovation and perpe tual destruction. The built-in obsolescence of digi tal culture, the endless trashing of last year's mo del, the spendthrift throwing away of batteries and mobile phones and monitors and mice . . . and all the heavy metals, all the toxins, sent off to some god-forsaken Chinese recycling village . . . that is the digital avant-garde[3].

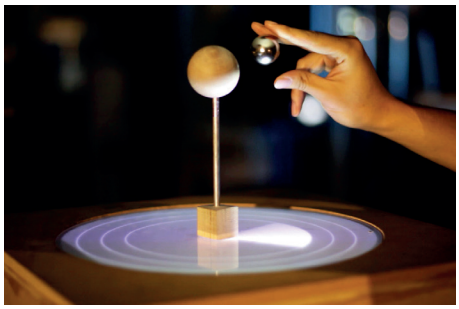
So we see that the two future visions of Hertz and Hiroshi Ishii intersect.

From GUI To MUI

Hiroshi Ishii's first text from 1997 is about his vision of tangible bits. He was convinced that the current solution of „drawn bits" on a rectangular screen offers very limited possibilities and therefore he created the vision of tangible bits to give an advantage of multiple senses and the multimodality of human interactions with the real world. He believed the use of graspable objects and ambient media will lead us to a much richer multi-sensory experience of digital information. [4]
So his first step was to get from today's graphical user interface (GUI) to a tangible user interface (TUI) where the users were able to interact with graspable objects and ambient media in physical environments.
In Ishii's second text of 2012, he extended his idea of tangible bits to material user interfaces (MUI), in which any object - regardless of how complex, dynamic, or flexible its structure - can display, embody, and respond to digital information.



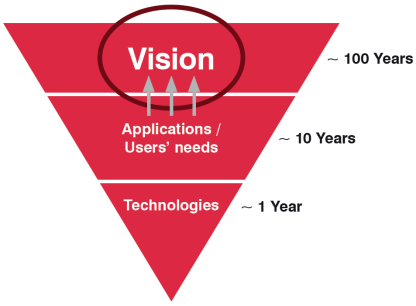
7. Tangible user interface



8. Levitating magnetic sphere

Vision-Driven Design Research

The vision-driven design explores concepts that are still many years away from realization but trying to lead in the envisioned direction. the idea is not to respond to user needs or market research, where technologies become obsolete in roughly a year and user needs change quickly, even applications becoming obsolete after 10 years. Vision design, on the other hand, is seen to have a more long-term strategy. Ishii believes a strong vision can last over a lifespan [5].



Conclusion

Ishii's vision is extremely interesting and inspiring, but his visionary concepts lack different perspectives on his subject. Considerations and consequences that his vision might possibly contain.

Ishii as well as Hertz try to unite the future with the present and the past, but with completely different approaches. Both „sell" their ideas as a dream of tomorrow, simply in different approaches. What I like about Garnet's text is that he is facing different aspects of his subject, besides, I really like his idea of recycling as a vision for the future.

References

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