

Valuable Endings: exploring and designing the aftermath of our consumption experience

Keywords: consumption; societal shift; off-boarding; circular economy

1. Workshop Organizer/s

Organizer Name	Email	Affiliation
Flora Poppelaars	f.a.poppelaars@tudelft.nl	Delft University of Technology
Prof.dr. Conny Bakker	c.a.bakker@tudelft.nl	Delft University of Technology
TBC		

Abstract (200 words max)

The start of our relationship with products is designed to be a rich experience providing joy and excitement with each new purchase. The ending of the product consumption cycle is however overlooked by designers and consumers¹. Product endings are broken away from the rest of the - until then - empowering consumption experience¹. Remediating this dissonance would be beneficial for consumers but also contribute to a Circular Economy where products are reused and recycled.

This workshop invites participants from all backgrounds to develop a vocabulary that is currently missing for product endings and generate design approaches to contribute to the creation of valuable and normalized off-boarding experiences.

No prior knowledge on sustainability or Circular Economy is required. You will leave with a new vocabulary of product endings and inspiring design approaches for 'off-boarding'. Our ultimate aim is to co-write a manifesto.

With this playful workshop, we want to convey endings as an exciting and inspiring part of the consumer relationship with products instead of its usual negative charge.

¹ Joe Macleod (2017) *Ends. Why we overlook endings for humans, products, services and digital. And why we shouldn't.*

2. Context of Workshop

The start of our relationship with products is designed to be a rich experience providing joy and excitement with each new purchase. The ending of the product consumption cycle is however overlooked by designers and consumers². Indeed, while the first phase of the relationship between the product and the consumer (i.e. the purchase/on-boarding) is designed to be inspiring and promising a better life to the consumer, the final phase (i.e. disposal/off-boarding) is ignored until the consumer is forced to act upon it.

The ending of products is broken away from the rest of the - until then - empowering consumption experience¹. Remediating this dissonance would be beneficial for consumers but also contribute to a Circular Economy where products are amongst other reused and recycled.

This workshop invites participants to (1) develop a vocabulary that is currently missing for product endings and (2) generate design approaches to contribute to the creation of valuable and normalized off-boarding seamlessly integrated within the consumer's relationship with products.

3. Planned Activities and Expected Outcomes

The **planned activities** are as follow:

- Introduction. The workshop will start with a *presentation* of the topic and challenge by Flora/Conny. It will present the current situation of endings in consumption and provide the (historical) social, economic and politic context.
- Handwritten break-up letter. The participants will then be asked to write a *break-up letter/postcard* to a product they detached themselves from (emotionally and/or physically). This individual exercise enables the participants to convey how/when/where the relationship with a product went south.
- Break-out sessions. After this exercise, groups of 4 to 5 participants will be made for the break-out sessions.
 - a. The letters will serve as an *icebreaker* for the break-out session as the participants will read them to group members. It will also allow participants to build a basis of how we experience and personify design, as well as start reflecting on the vocabulary used at the end of a product's life. This will make the participants aware of the lack of attention spent on off-boarding.
 - b. These insights will be used by the groups to create a *customer journey map* from the purchase to the retirement/disposal of a smartphone or laptop (as we expect everyone to have experienced the full life of at least one of these devices). Can participants map the feelings expressed in the various letters in the case of the life of a mobile device?

² Joe Macleod (2017) *Ends. Why we overlook endings for humans, products, services and digital. And why we shouldn't.*

Which interactions influence the ending experience?

- c. The visual customer journey map will provide a base to the participants to think about *design approaches* that could change off-boarding for consumers. What are current approaches used? What could be potential future ones?
- d. The participants will be invited to *apply the proposed design approaches* and explore how off-boarding could be a valuable part of consumption for consumers in the case of mobile devices.

- Plenary

- a. The groups will come back together to *share their insights* on off-boarding.
- b. We will then facilitate a *plenary discussion* on how off-boarding could be implemented. Relevant questions for this discussion are for instance: what is needed to realize these ending experiences? Who should start? How could this be normalized? How would the ending experience be characterized? Does it differ per product type? Should all products be consciously off-boarded or do we only want this for certain products? If we develop and normalize off-boarding, does that also change our purchasing behaviour?
- c. Our ultimate aim is to co-write a *thought-provoking manifesto* on off-boarding. Drafting the manifesto with the participants would contribute to developing the corresponding vocabulary as well as sharpening the points of discussions held during the workshop. We will finish the workshop with a short *wrap-up*.

The participants will leave the workshop with a new vocabulary of product endings, inspiring design approaches for off-boarding and the start of a manifesto as main **outcomes** of the half-day spent together. Ideally, participants will be enthused to think of and act upon their catalyst power as designers, researchers and consumers in a societal shift towards sustainable consumption. With this playful workshop, we want to convey endings as an exciting and inspiring part of the consumer relationship with products instead of its usual negative charge.

4. Intended Audience

Our intended audience is as diverse as possible to ensure the richness of the discussions and designs by bringing in insightful knowledge from design research and design practice from various sectors. We would love to welcome a maximum of 15 workshop participants to have 3 break-out groups with 4 to 5 participants.

5. Length of Workshop

The ideal length of this workshop would be a half-day to provide all the participants time to develop a vocabulary of off-boarding, propose design approaches, discuss the challenge and finally create an inspiring manifesto.

6. Space and Equipment Required

A studio-like space welcoming 20 people would be ideal to be able to move tables and/or chairs to have break-out sessions as well as plenary sessions. Preferably, the room would have a wall to expose the group results for the plenary sessions. In terms of equipment, we would need a projector or screen, flipcharts, colour sharpies, different shapes/colour post-its, and 3 recorders if possible. The organizers will bring other equipment and visuals (e.g., various stationery/postcards) to ensure a stimulating and creative session.

7. Potential Outputs

The manifesto draft resulting from this workshop will be further developed by the organizers and participants willing to actively contribute to it. Every participant will be acknowledged and will receive the finalised manifesto. A suitable dissemination channel will be identified by the participants and organizers.

On top of this, the handwritten letters, tangible traces and recordings of the conducted discussions, and the developed manifesto will be used as research through design to enhance design practices. This will result in a journal paper contributing theoretically to changing consumption by making off-boarding a valuable part of consumption. The paper will reflect on the used vocabulary and identified effective product interactions, and will present the design approaches for ending experiences proposed by the participants. Here again, every participant will be acknowledged.

About the Organizers:

Flora Poppelaars is a PhD researcher at the faculty of Industrial Design Engineering at Delft University of Technology. Her PhD focuses on the shift towards Circular Economy from a consumer perspective.

Dr. Conny Bakker is professor at the TU Delft, faculty of Industrial Design Engineering. Her research field is Circular Product Design and user centred sustainable design, which focuses on exploring the relationships between consumer behaviour, sustainability and design.