

Cradle to Cradle

A New Way to Make Things By: William McDonough and Michael Braungart Why Written: The book examines the existing “cradle to grave” design and production methodologies and introduces a new paradigm of “cradle to cradle” where waste is eliminated, and products are designed for continuous reuse or recycling. As a result of the chapter, I read this week by Michael Braungart and William McDonough, I was inspired to consider how I could apply the Cradle to Cradle philosophy in my own design process.

It's for designers, industries, policymakers, and the public concerned with sustainability and the impact of production and consumption on the environment. The authors argue that the current industrial system, based on a cradle-to-grave model, is wasteful, often toxic, and unsustainable. This system depletes resources, generates pollution, and results in products that end up in landfills or incinerators. The status quo often sees waste as an inevitable outcome and environmental damage as an external cost, not borne by producers or consumers. Cradle-to-Grave defines this linear model based on raw materials being extracted, used in production, and finally disposed of after their useful lives, typically in landfills or incinerators. Cradle-to-cradle is a circular manufacturing model in which products are designed to either biodegrade safely or be fully recycled into new products, creating a closed-loop manufacturing process. McDonough and Braungart define “Monstrous Hybrids” as products that cannot be easily separated for recycling due to the combination of materials. A juice box made of layers of plastic, aluminum, and paper, for example, is a monstrous hybrid that is nearly impossible to recycle.

Consequently, these hybrids not only pose a challenge in terms of recycling, but they also contribute to the pollution of the environment. To prevent the creation of hybrid products, we should design products using the Cradle-to-Cradle methodology. We would create every component so that it can either be returned to the environment in a safe manner or be recycled into a new product. A quote from chapter 4 speaks volumes about our desire to live in an economically, equitably, environmentally, and elegantly prosperous world. "Waste equals food." "Being less bad is not being good." True sustainability requires a transformative approach rather than incremental improvements. These statements are compelling since they invite us to rethink our strategies for design, production, and consumption in more innovative and regenerative ways. (McDonough and Braungart, 2002, p. 92)

The tone and structure of the article are both critical and optimistic about future possibilities. It is educational, persuasive, and forward-thinking. This chapter develops its argument methodically by identifying the current system's problems. Using examples from the real world, it proposes solutions and illustrates its points. In this book, the authors make a compelling case for rethinking how we design, produce, and consume. Their arguments are well-presented and based on science and design principles. The authors emphasize that it is not only possible but also beneficial to both the economy and the environment as well.

References list:

McDonough, W. and Braungart, M. (2002) 'Waste Equals Food', in *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*. New York: North Point Press, pp. 92-117.