

COOP
DESIGN
RESEARCH

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M.S.C.
PROGRAM

EVERYTHING SUSTAINABLE

HOW SUSTAINABILITY AND ITS
VARYING INTERPRETATIONS CONVERGE
THROUGH DESIGNED OBJECTS

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ABSTRACT

Immersing in the domain of omnipresent notions and widely used buzzwords, the thesis analyzes the concept of 'sustainability' amidst its frequent appearances in various fields of study, in public conscious, and consumer culture. Its connotations within the fields make it challenging to understand the transformations of its meaning over time. While the concept has gained traction, the real-world practices and systemic changes necessary to address the looming crises of climate change remain largely unchanged. The aspect of reoccurrence highlights its widespread misinterpretations, each marked by rhetoric that in some way underscores the complexity of its meanings. Considering these facets, the thesis sets out by exploring the contested notion of sustainability: its historical semantics, contextual meanings and the adaptation/application in the form of tangible products.

The pursuit of sustainability through product development often remains confined within the boundaries of surface-level efforts when the ample usage of plastic is argued. The research therefore aims to explore the possible motivations behind the creation of industrially designed products, particularly when juxtaposed against the practice of their obsolescence. Under the framework of this thesis, several of these products are bound within limits of design at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm from the design discourses and are discussed through the lens of sustainable design in the context of the scrutiny of the concept. The thesis, thus, investigates how the established discourses reflect through products that bring design and most importantly, the act of design - design(ing) into the discussion of sustainability. The narrative then bridges sustainability through design by looking away from the professional design discourses towards everyday practices that add meaning and look beyond their intended life.