Sorting

By arvo

We are certain that the same parameters that directly relate "resources" with "production", in any imaginable scenario, are perfectly applicable to this hobby. Why not? It is an activity that seeks to achieve a goal, consuming time and resources of all kinds, besides requiring a certain space for it. It seems a very simple recipe, but to keep things running smoothly some planning is absolutely required, which has to be founded on the very idea of ORDER.

In our case, this reflection came a bit late

......when we started to build in a more intense way, our only concern was to maintain or even improve the quality of our constructions, all other considerations had no place and the effort was concentrated exclusively on placing piece after piece.

Building in bed, which at first was funny and even endearing, began to be "mandatory" because boxes took up so much space, as they gained in height, that eventually they became the walls (literally) of our own prison. Moving between so many bricks was the closest thing to playing Tetris with the Gameboy in one hand and the paper roll in the other. Finding parts became an odyssey, a kind of act of faith that bore fruit of some strange statistical law. To come across "something" for the second time was so unlikely that the "parts remover" came to be permanently in our pockets (for fear of eternal loss) and rare was the occasion that, while looking for the lighter, our dear ad green fetish didn´t peep out.

Anyone who reads these lines will be more or less familiar with what we are talking about, ultimately it comes down to the unconscious and uncontrolled accumulation of material that, over the years, is common for most of us and it ends up impeding the construction until we abandon any initiative even before we attempt it.

And because of that, because many of us share this experience, we would like to tell you how we remedied this situation. How we approach it and how we solve it, creating a friendly and supportive environment, which speeds up and drives any project, giving us back those first feelings, those that we should never lose.

Origins

The first time we had the opportunity to see how LEGO order , sort and store parts in Denmark, we were blown away. Everything seemed to serve a much-studied logic, which of course ended up convincing us because the system seems so intuitive.

However, what was truly exciting was enjoying that

presentation which was really impeccable. The experience was illuminating, any excuse was good to look into that furniture and enjoy that "vision". Bright colours, matte or solids, arranged in perfect tonal harmony, ingenious grouping of shapes and sizes, classification by type, function or subject.

Fascinating ... we accept our fetish streak, but that raised our deviation to a superlative degree ... we loved it.

All this seemed beautiful at the time, though somewhat accessory, but we never imagined how it would be essential to continue building. Our volume of parts could still be considered modest and all the discomforts of the process were about to surface.

In any case, we take note of it all.

After that, it was impossible for us to look at our DIY kits without thinking with a certain sadness about the amount of money we had foolishly spent. Was it predictable? Can an expense like that be avoided? Probably not. Just as a collection evolves, so does the storage method, and to start from time 0 with a system that accompanies us throughout all the stages seems more than difficult.

It would not be much longer until we felt the first ravages. With so many parts around us it was impossible to build something comfortably, and it not only affected the way we played, but also the time we spent playing, getting smaller and of poorer quality. We had to do something about it, or we were doomed to suffer more and more, or worse, doomed to give up.

Searching...

Once we get to the "saturation point", i.e. the moment we literally prefer to mop the floor to building, we decided to take the plunge. Order.

We would park all our projects and would dedicate the time necessary to create a system as close as possible to that seen in Denmark. We would seek the most appropriate furniture and would equip it with elements and accessories to make it a capable, open and functional system.

Needless to say that we did not get any of these three qualities, but we had fun!

Finding a cabinet type drawer that suits our needs, it is not difficult. In fact nearly all serve, the offer is so wide that you can even afford to choose them to match your shoes. We chose to look for models with drawers that are not very high and not very deep.

By the very nature of the game, a drawer by itself is not much. You have to put "classifiers" in each of your drawers and whether they were in the form of honeycomb tray, in individual boxes, or simple dividers, finding them was no easy task. The dimensions of the one conditioned the other and we had to have a very clear idea of the elements we would use and their availability (stores cannot always guarantee a total supply)

......and when we say "very clear", we mean very, very, very clear. Why? Let's do numbers (they will be approximate, of course, as we will take certain measures for trays and boxes):

A more or less important part collection needs 8 medium size drawers to store them all. A typical drawer cabinet will have about 6 drawers, and in each of its drawers trays, boxes or separators would be organised depending on the look and feel we want to give to the system. For example,

Moulded trays: 2 per box. Total: 8x6x2 =**96 trays**

Individual Boxes: 15 per box. Total: 8x6x15 = **720 boxes**

Separators: 1 set per box. Total: 8X6 = **48 sets**

You have to be very sure about the option you choose. Spending is important and any misstep can leave you with empty pockets and a room full of useless "plastic".

In an effort to reproduce the system seen in Denmark, we chose a combination of trays and individual boxes. Unless

you can order from a factory, moulded trays with very specific measures (there are several companies that accept orders of this type) it is very difficult to find models with the required measures in a store. With two trays and 3 boxes per drawer we achieved something very similar to our initial idea.

Unfortunately this combination takes just under 70% of the available volume. Not much, but it's the most we could get after a lot of headaches. To reach a figure closer to 100%, it would be logical to choose the separators, since the only remaining space is occupied by each of the bands (separators) that make up the grid. However, a drawer with dividers presents a drawback which seems important, you cannot extract groups of pieces from the drawer, which is entirely feasible with trays or boxes (simply remove the corresponding tray or box).

The available moulded trays for parts are not too many, which is detrimental to the classification and storage possibilities, forcing us to mix in many cases different types of parts.

In any case, trying to dedicate a tray to each type of piece would have been naïve, it would take dozens of holes for each colour, so mixing types of parts was something we always had had in mind.

Sorting

It took us months to find the right setup and as many more to finish completing it (for example, we had to buy the boxes direct to factory, because we needed so many that no store could respond to our request). With the first phase completed, it was time for the second, "sorting".

We were never clear about what should have been the guidelines. Which characteristic should take precedence? What defines a group? What quality is more easily associated to a set of elements? What properties can we assimilate faster? What lingers longer in our memory? ...

... too much detail for a couple of guys who only wash at Easter and the festival of San Blas.

We never really cared to find a "logical" system, our main objective was not that. We only wanted to put it "out of the way" and if possible, to find something nice, cosy that would give us the our desire to play back.

With this hope we imposed a single premise, "the colour will prevail over any other property"

On the other hand, minifigures, "curved" pieces or Technic parts have been grouped occupying their own "thematic" space.

the wheels ... in their own cabinet, and then some.

For obvious reasons, we have been unable to maintain a fixed scheme in every colour, but we have tried to repeat certain configurations or groupings in order to establish a "rule" to expedite any search.

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Other smaller pieces have required an entirely different configuration from the rest, making it necessary to resort to other types of boxes for storage.

The "trans" pieces were the first to go into the new system and it is one of our favourite 'corners':

To give it some "finishing" we put a kind countertop on the furniture that we padded manually. It gives us an ideal surface to build on. The texture is really nice, and most importantly ... we can play quietly (no more nights of clandestine building!)

During the early days it was the change strange. We went from having a room/watering hole to a kind of "orphan" room, full of drawers and with no part in sight. It took some "exercises" to get used to the system but then we saw how fast we can now built, too fast, perhaps. What once required half a day

with preparations, staging, actual construction and "end of the party", was now only a matter of minutes. With everything at hand and with little effort to get the desired part, the constructions grew at such a fast pace that we barely had time to assimilate or question the design.

......it's funny, we had to "slow down" the process now that the times have been drastically reduced, trying to make the construction phase gets it proper role and leaving more room for phases like modification and considering alternatives or solutions.
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