

*I = interviewer; P16 = participant. Refer to DDM2020 dataset documentation for more information.*

1 I so yeah let's get started so erm you briefly told me by  
2 email erm which product you wanted to talk about could  
3 you just remind me what that is

4 P16 okay so the product as as a physical object the product  
5 is is simply a a hundred percent recycled plastic cup  
6 i've got one just here very boring looking  
7 but it looks just like the disposable cups that

8 I yeah

9 P16 you see elsewhere except maybe with a slightly greeny  
10 or bluey tinge

11 I mhm

12 P16 erm but really the the actual product is more than just  
13 the object itself it's the service we wrap alongside it  
14 and in this case this product and service is an example  
15 of other products and services that we could deliver  
16 erm using the same sort of system if you will and the  
17 system is that a bit like a rental or lease model we  
18 consider these to be our cups we don't want these cups  
19 to be thrown away or to go into some other waste  
20 manager's bin or or to er god forbid end up in the  
21 ocean or landfill you know we want these cups back so  
22 our our whole system is that we provide customers with  
23 the cups erm now initially that was done our business  
24 itself sold the cups and the waste management now  
25 actually what happens is we partnered with one of the  
26 world's biggest packaging companies they provide the  
27 cups we provide the waste management

28 I ok

29 P16 erm but the the two services are linked you we can't  
30 buy one without the other erm in in the hope to ensure  
31 that this product can be captured and recycled again  
32 and so so that's that's the sort of that's the product

33 I mhm

34 P16 but in in implementing that there are lots of sort of  
35 tricky decisions that had to be made er first off erm  
36 our our partner ((name)) who developed this cup as an  
37 as an individual he started his own his own business  
38 seven years ago and and and forced a and you know  
39 worked with some some manufacturers and got them to  
40 produce the first hundred per cent recycled pet cup now  
41 very silly that that was done by you know an innovative  
42 individual and not one of the countless large companies

43           that produced these cups cups of this type and were for  
44           some reason only dabbling in the sort of twenty thirty  
45           per cent recycled range and the reason for that was  
46           that they were making the decision that no one really  
47           you know that the the customers etcetera didn't care  
48           enough to demand you know that it wasn't worth the  
49           hundred percent recycled plastic and that they could  
50           through essentially deliberately poorly communicating  
51           how much recycled content they had in there they could  
52           say this contains recycled plastic and hope people  
53           assumed a hundred per cent rather than ten

54    I       yeah

55    P16     and so you know but the decision of going for a hundred  
56           per cent recycled plastic does come with its with its  
57           own caveats and and difficulties you have to be really  
58           you know careful about sourcing your material and  
59           keeping it at high quality

60    I       mhm

61    P16     and so that's you know that's a big part of the sort of  
62           you know the process of then capturing it erm and and  
63           of course the you know the other thing that's that's  
64           interesting for us about this sort of product is that  
65           generally people don't recycle thermoformed er plastic  
66           products at the moment even though they are recyclable  
67           as as our system proves you can take this and we can  
68           make this back into this but and it's it's PET which is  
69           in theory again one of the most recyclable plastics if  
70           you look at the recycling rate of plastic bottles  
71           people are recycling those left right and centre

72    I       yeah

73    P16     but they don't recycle these because of some really  
74           stupid reasons which is that waste managers don't have  
75           grinders that are set up for this weight of plastic so  
76           they don't bother erm and erm also that thermoforming  
77           does damage the plastic erm er polymer chains more than  
78           blow moulding in bottles so the the PET material in  
79           plastic bottles as well as being denser and thicker is  
80           also slightly high quality so generally everyone's just  
81           focused on recycling bottles

82    I       mhm

83    P16     but of course that means that masses of thermoformed  
84           packaging is going out onto the market that is entirely  
85           recyclable that is not being recycled

86    I       yeah

87    P16     erm and so obviously we had to design a system around  
88           trying to capture this material and feed it back into

89           these recycling processes and identify recyclers that  
90           would be able to process that material for us

91    I       yeah

92    P16     erm and so you know that was a things and no you know  
93           obviously lots of people pushed us on this journey to  
94           sort of go for oh well you know it's easier to go for  
95           ninety per cent recycled and ten per cent not to get  
96           for example the clarity because

97    I       yes i

98    P16     one of the other things is that the big breweries  
99           alright the the biggest consumers of these products are  
100          the are the major breweries and they have all sorts of  
101          stringent requirements around their branding and  
102          appearance in fact one of the brands has this obsession  
103          with what they call the the perfect pour and that's  
104          sort of summarised by being able to see all of the beer  
105          fill up in the cup and it all you know looks great and  
106          that's part of their whole branding

107   I       yep

108   P16     and of course that requires having perfectly clear cups  
109          which is quite easy with virgin plastic and

110   I       yeah

111   P16     harder and harder the more recycled plastic you go

112   I       yeah

113   P16     so in order to sort of in theory and some of the people  
114          that we initially partnered with in this project  
115          although we ended up cutting these partners because  
116          they didn't share the same environmental values that we  
117          did were quite keen to to to bend on that and to in in  
118          order to attract these these you know erm big customers

119   I       mhm

120   P16     whereas we thought well we don't like that we think  
121          that that compromised our message erm i actually also  
122          think that it would have in the long run devalued er  
123          well i know that it would have devalued our proposition  
124          to these clients because at the end of the day it is a  
125          much more effective story to consumers to be able to  
126          say this cup is a hundred per cent rubbish we haven't  
127          used any new plastic to make it we are taking waste  
128          from the world and we are making it into a new product  
129          that you know out of by then removing masses of waste  
130          in the process and that is a very easy you know very  
131          good and easy story to communicate and so that's why we  
132          thought that should be a cornerstone of all of our  
133          brand

- 134 I yeah you mentioned your environmental values would you  
135 say that the decisions you're making erm in this  
136 project are very much driven by your own personal  
137 values
- 138 P16 absa absolutely i mean at at the end of the day we you  
139 know we have we've got into this this industry and this  
140 way of thinking and doing things because not because  
141 this is the the sort of you know best industry for us  
142 to be in in terms of of making money erm or what it's  
143 because this is where we see that we can have the most  
144 impact
- 145 I mhm
- 146 P16 you know erm and scale of impact we could see that  
147 there was masses of this amount of waste going on with  
148 a relatively simple design solution to fix you know  
149 personally what i would prefer to be doing with my time  
150 and and almost what i started with was was designing er  
151 kind of fun luxury high end products out of recycled  
152 plastic but i wasn't going to reduce the amount of  
153 waste in the world by designing a few high end you know  
154 pieces of furniture
- 155 I yeah yeah
- 156 P16 for luxury stores and people's houses you know and so  
157 although that was fun and and satisfying and you could  
158 build in a really good sort of communication around it  
159 it didn't have the scale of impact that i'm looking for  
160 erm with this we're looking to to change how the whole  
161 industry operates we want to go first and of course be  
162 able to build our business off the back of that but  
163 ultimately i'm not interested in owning the idea of the  
164 circular economy i want to give all these giant  
165 companies that should have beaten us here first a kick  
166 into going why the hell didn't you do this first you  
167 know you had all of the resources you had all of the  
168 setup you know what stopped you
- 169 I yeah
- 170 P16 and we're going to show them that it works and then  
171 they will follow
- 172 I yeah and so is it right there's two of you working  
173 together on this
- 174 P16 well so there was it started out er it started out as  
175 two of us me and my business partner we're both product  
176 designers erm and we set up a sustainable design  
177 consultancy
- 178 I yeah

179 P16 which at the time we called the ((company name)) and is  
180 now called ((company name))

181 I mhm

182 P16 in our in our in our mission to erm build circular  
183 systems we came across a er a guy called ((name)) who i  
184 mentioned who was who developed the first hundred per  
185 cent recycled plastic cup and his company ((company  
186 name)) and actually he has a number of other companies  
187 he's beside that and we partnered with his organisation  
188 ((company name)) and have now formed a joint venture  
189 ((company name)) which is sort of amalgamation of our  
190 team so it is now myself ((name)) ((name)) ((name))  
191 ((name)) as our core team and then we have a network of  
192 other er contractors and advisors etcetera that we work  
193 with so we have somewhat grown since since then

194 I yeah okay and i guess where did the original idea come  
195 from was it the the two of you originally kind of how  
196 did that start the idea to do this product and this  
197 service i mean

198 P16 we were we were looking at erm we got approached by a  
199 client who was er well a prospective clients at the  
200 time but he then became a client who was selling wine  
201 in plastic bottles to the events industry and he was  
202 selling them in plastic bottles of course because you  
203 can't have glass on festival sites

204 I mhm

205 P16 and instead of and his full plastic bottles allowed a  
206 bar to serve an entire bottle of wine which is great  
207 for the bars of course because that's a high value sale  
208 in one go so it was a very good system and it had been  
209 working happily for years then blue planet came along

210 I mhm

211 P16 and all of the public suddenly became experts quote  
212 unquote erm in plastic and how bad plastic is and all  
213 of the festivals erm not having this sort of backbone  
214 to to really sort of invest in going well this is the  
215 best environmental option science says instead went to  
216 a what's the most popular option and so of course  
217 plastic was out and other materials are in regardless  
218 of whether it made sense or not and so his entire  
219 business was was under threat from this erm and so he  
220 came to us and said hey what can we do and we were  
221 looking at what do you want to redesign your packaging  
222 or do we actually need to show people that this this  
223 packaging is a is actually the best option now at the  
224 time his his bottle was did have some improvements to  
225 be made it it was multi layered material for a start

226           although it was PET which would in theory make it  
227           recyclable it actually had a erm nylon layer in it

228    I           right

229    P16       now quite understandably the nylon layer was that to  
230           keep his wine fresh because if you just had a pet  
231           bottle it doesn't form enough of an oxygen barrier  
232           oxygen gets into the wine ruins the wine after bout  
233           sort of eight months which meant that given that his  
234           his er work was seasonal he would sell wine one year  
235           and the way the festival business would work is they  
236           would order you know a lorry full of wine and return  
237           half of it so at the end of the season he would be left  
238           with quite a lot of stock that people have returned erm  
239           and he would then save that for next season but if it  
240           didn't last until next season it would all go off and  
241           it would all go to waste which is of course very  
242           environmentally friendly so at the time that was all he  
243           could do now we worked with him and we developed a  
244           solution that allowed him to and identified what he  
245           needed to do to make a hundred percent recycled plastic  
246           bottle with just PET

247    I           mhm

248    P16       and erm we did the research to to find out prove that  
249           that was possible told him about it and that's what  
250           he's moved towards erm so that he could then continue  
251           to sell his bottle interlinks we also alongside that  
252           did a lot more of building his confidence but also  
253           building communication material around why his wine  
254           bottles made sense we did a carbon comparison that  
255           showed okay well you guys think plastic bottles are bad  
256           but what about alternatives well here's the glass wine  
257           bottle of course it can be smashed and used as a weapon  
258           it's also very heavy erm you know all of these things  
259           it's also has a comparable recycling rates to PET  
260           bottles if not lower erm you know

261    I           yeah

262    P16       all of these things but you know the festivals and  
263           events weren't aware of that so er what we helped to  
264           provide was that communication for him and that in  
265           itself identified to us we thought well right there's  
266           this this miscommunication going on in these festivals  
267           they're grasping for an opportunity they know that  
268           there's masses of waste being produced on site and it's  
269           very visual at festivals right we produce the waste  
270           everywhere but festivals is one of the few places in  
271           your life as a consumer where the amount of waste that  
272           you produce is is viscerally you're viscerally  
273           confronted with it you know you go to Glastonbury and  
274           the floor is a sea of rubbish which given the fact that

275           it originated as a sort of hippie eco festival type  
276           vibe it you know doesn't feel like that erm so of  
277           course the festivals were clambouring for a solution  
278           and not just for wine bottles and so we thought well  
279           how can we help this

280    I       mhm

281    P16     and we looked at the solutions that were already in the  
282           industry reusable cups being a a good example erm we  
283           thought well what's you know what's going on and what's  
284           going on there

285           well reusable cups unfortunately again were one of  
286           those examples of a good idea but currently they were  
287           little more than greenwashing erm there were a few  
288           places doing it well this is actually erm it's not from  
289           shambala shambala festival represented a sort of beacon  
290           of how it how reusables could and should be done but of  
291           course they achieved that by being a relatively small  
292           festival with a fan base of diehard ecos and really  
293           understanding that you had unbranded generic cups that  
294           you return and get maximum use out of

295    I       mhm

296    P15     unlike everyone else that jumped on the reusable  
297           bandwagon that printed the set lists of their festivals  
298           on there and dated them twenty nineteen world cup and  
299           everyone kept them as souvenirs and

300    I       yeah

301    P16     reusable cup companies would celebrate that seventy per  
302           cent of their cups get taken home as souvenirs and i  
303           went so seventy per cent of your cups are single use  
304           then brilliant ((laughter from interviewer)) that looks  
305           like a really heavy single use cup

306    I       yeah

307    P16     anyway we saw those issues going on and we saw that  
308           there was a problem with with greenwashing a problem  
309           with not understanding er recyclability and the problem  
310           that the circular economy option was not being  
311           presented people have lost faith in recycling partly  
312           because the big recycling companies have failed to  
313           provi to to really to move and provide traceable  
314           accountable recycling and instead just focus on high  
315           volume erm the high value materials and ignore the rest  
316           plastics erm and we thought all right well you know  
317           someone's got to show that there is an alternative and  
318           also that there are multiple that that there is no one  
319           size fits all erm and of course reusable cups actually  
320           fits within the cir the concept of the circular economy

321    I       mhm

322 P16 erm but the idea that this cup could replace everywhere  
323 that these cups are used wasn't going to make sense and  
324 you know you could see that the fact that these have  
325 been around for fifteen years and they penetrated a  
326 small portion of the the festival and events markets  
327 and not into hospitals and dentist spaces because it  
328 practically it doesn't you know doesn't actually make  
329 sense anyway sorry that's a lot you might have some  
330 questions in between haha

331 I no it's interesting to hear so i guess i wanted to get  
332 to the decisions that you made and he started to tell  
333 me about some of the the kind of design related  
334 decisions that you needed to make in this project could  
335 you elaborate a bit on on what the kind of key  
336 decisions were

337 P16 okay another key decision branding right these cups  
338 generally they're a PR tool to the big brewers they  
339 provide these cups to festivals with their branding on  
340 them and that's how they communicate to all the  
341 festival goers whose drinks they're drinking and get  
342 their name out there and

343 I mhm

344 P16 while of course we can now argue the how valuable as a  
345 PR tool or disposable plastic cup is erm the key part  
346 about being a PR tool is having your branding clearly  
347 visible on the cup because for us if we want to take a  
348 clear cup and make it back into a clear cup we don't  
349 want it covered in ink

350 I yeah

351 P16 er that's that's not very good in fact covering it ink  
352 ensures that it can't be recycled back into food grade  
353 material you ensure that your PET becomes PET jazz  
354 which is incredibly low value and therefore ultimately  
355 absolutely destined for for landfill or incineration  
356 and quite cynically lots of brands would get cups like  
357 these they'd print their logo on them and they'd print  
358 please recycle me and all sorts of crap about you know  
359 put me in the recycling bin when of course in reality  
360 you could put in recycle bin as much as you wanted but  
361 it wasn't going anywhere erm that you'd like it to end  
362 up erm and and again that was a big battle for us  
363 because obviously we were a small you know we weren't  
364 the world's biggest producer of cups we were a nobody  
365 with a a big idea and we were trying to tell these  
366 giant companies that they couldn't slap their branding  
367 in full colour all over the cups erm that that was a  
368 terrible idea and that it was stopping them from from  
369 achieving any recyclability and of course they didn't  
370 want to hear that or rather their sustainability teams



371 and this is the interesting thing about working with  
372 these giant organisations is that they have a  
373 sustainability department you go and talk to the  
374 sustainability department they get it

375 I yeah

376 P16 okay they understand but the problem is they don't make  
377 any of the decisions unfortunately

378 I no haha

379 P16 they have little little to no effect on what happens it  
380 seems other than really the kind of the PR angle and  
381 you know just a bit of the press things they might  
382 direct to the please recycle me stuck on the bottle  
383 because that would be better communication but that  
384 seems to be as much sway they have the branding and  
385 team seems to have much more sway because they can just  
386 go absolutely no however far you've got through their  
387 branding goes nope that doesn't represent us we won't  
388 er things because that is so important to these big  
389 companies is their brand image so what we then had to  
390 start doing was trying to push them into embossing  
391 their logos onto the cups

392 I ok

393 P16 now this is quite difficult because one an embossed  
394 logo is not as visible

395 I yeah

396 P16 as any printed logo because of course you haven't  
397 changed the colour of the company you've just pressed a  
398 logo into the outside but we felt they looked rather  
399 classy but the other difficulty with that is that  
400 embossing requires making a mould tool to a new mould  
401 tool with that brand's logo etched in a mould tool  
402 costs twenty thousand euros to produce with that

403 I right

404 P16 erm and and that's for one cup type

405 I mhm

406 P16 so if they want half pint pint cups and cocktail cups  
407 that's sixty thousand pounds on just mould tools okay  
408 now of course for a giant consumer of cups long term  
409 they could buy into that you know it would actually end  
410 up producing a saving versus ink printing because once  
411 we put it into the mould then that's a one off cost and  
412 then we could keep making cups ad infinitum but of  
413 course they update their branding

414 I yeah

415 P16 they change the designs and logos etc and messaging so  
416 often that that doesn't work out that way and the other  
417 thing is that meant that small small events that  
418 previously could get a generic cup just have a a one  
419 off print on them on a few thousands they of course  
420 couldn't afford embossing so for anyone small we had to  
421 go well you know you've got to go unbranded cups and  
422 you know that's a big decision for events and clients  
423 to go right we're going to sacrifice our ability to  
424 communicate our our brand in order to have these  
425 recyclable cups and also difficult for us because of  
426 course it would be much better to be able to  
427 communicate what we were doing on the on the object of  
428 which we were doing it with and so obviously our  
429 ultimate holy grail was to develop a a solution that  
430 allowed us to put ink on the cups and then remove it  
431 something we have recently cracked

432 I ok

433 P16 so we found some companies that we are now looking to  
434 build a factory with that will allow us to remove ink  
435 from cups erm which will allow us to address this this  
436 this colossal problem add on but that was a that's been  
437 a sort of big big moment for us

438 I and are you able to do that with kind of more  
439 sustainable inks and and whatever product is used to  
440 remove it or

441 P16 yeah so the erm the company that one of the companies  
442 that we have got to develop it has managed to make the  
443 entire process using erm basically bi biological sort  
444 of erm removal agents that are all very sort of safe  
445 and non toxic and the inks there are various different  
446 types of things that you can use but it works with a it  
447 works with most standard standard erm types and  
448 printing processes erm so yeah we're it's it is it is  
449 very it is very flexible from our point of view and of  
450 course you know as we say at the moment any cup that is  
451 being printed currently that whole cup is going to  
452 waste now at the moment we've got a situation where  
453 okay we're we're having to remove the ink and that is  
454 being you know a very small amount of you know chemical  
455 contamination that will be removed from some water and  
456 whatnot but that we've now made the whole cup  
457 recyclable so there's a big big step

458 I great and how do you make decisions when you're working  
459 with your partners how do you go about deciding how far  
460 to take it and which options to go with

461 P16 well okay well i mean in terms of we we we sit down  
462 have a sort of board meeting and discuss and then  
463 usually the sort of you know decision comes down to

464 somewhat of a somewhat of a vote although we're all now  
465 very very much on on the same page which is that  
466 ultimately we we are very confident that the world is  
467 going to realise that this is a problem that needs  
468 solving

469 I yeah

470 P16 and that therefore that although people might say no to  
471 us no you're too expensive now no it's too complicated  
472 no it's too difficult that is a time related concern  
473 they they are saying no to us now but they won't say no  
474 to us in a year or in five years in a sense we are we  
475 are very confident that the planet needs saving haha  
476 and that these issues need tackling and that therefore  
477 we make the decision as to what we feel will put us in  
478 the best position possible to make the biggest and best  
479 environmental impact we don't make our decisions based  
480 on what will give us the best business because as i say  
481 at the beginning with these ink printed cups people  
482 would say can we can we just by your hundred per cent  
483 recycled plastic cups print our logo on them and throw  
484 them away ourselves we could we could have done that  
485 that would have made us lots of business it would have  
486 allowed us to grow one argument would be it would have  
487 allowed us to grow our business to a size that we would  
488 then be able to put added pressure to stop businesses  
489 doing that

490 I yeah yeah

491 P16 but we don't want to compromise on our values because  
492 we feel it's important to show that there is that there  
493 is a better way and we are confident that they if they  
494 don't come around on side now that they will eventually  
495 you know it's legislation consumer pressure is all  
496 mounting you know it's greta thunburg and the school  
497 strikes and extinction rebellion today and tomorrow  
498 there is only going to be more pressure

499 I yeah

500 P16 legislative or public you know and

501 I hopefully yeah

502 P16 and the problems and the problems aren't going away  
503 science shows us that the problems are there and that  
504 they're getting worse and you know predict and the  
505 trend of consumers and and the world waking up to the  
506 scale of these problems is that it seems very unlikely  
507 that while you know things continue to get badly that  
508 the consumer trend will suddenly get to a point where  
509 we decide to start ignoring it again um i'd say it  
510 would be it would be very hard for that to maintain a

511 situation because of course the damage is becoming ever  
512 more visible

513 I yeah no definitely i suppose there's a sort of slight  
514 distraction for some people this year with the pandemic  
515 but yeah it might have slowed a few things down but  
516 hopefully it'll it'll pick up again in terms of  
517 sustainability pressure yeah

518 P16 yeah i do i do think that although again you know we we  
519 sort of you know we feel that the pandemic does draw  
520 into focus the sort of the fragility of our world and  
521 our systems

522 I mhm

523 P16 and you know and also the sort of the fact that that  
524 big moves can be made you can make huge decisions to to  
525 sort of you know to change how you do things and how  
526 you operate in the face of an enormous challenge

527 I yeah definitely

528 P16 and those that rise to that will will do much better  
529 than those that don't

530 I yeah and so with the types of decisions you've been  
531 talking about for this project were there any decisions  
532 that were difficult that you didn't all agree on  
533 straightaway

534 P16 yes what i mean as i mentioned at the beginning is that  
535 we when we first set up this erm the rubbish project we  
536 actually had a number of other partners including a a  
537 waste manager in the UK and another businessman and erm  
538 they were much more interested in building a viable  
539 business

540 I right haha

541 P16 first

542 I yeah

543 P16 and then environmentalism second which is of course  
544 understandable one might say incredibly sensible erm  
545 but we were conscious that you know everyone is  
546 compromising on their values to get ahead and of course  
547 once you compromise on your values to get ahead you're  
548 then going to be worried about losing the business that  
549 you have if you make a change so we thought well we  
550 want to build something that we're happy with from the  
551 start that we can really believe in and whatnot and and  
552 not and not compromise and although that's going to be  
553 you know really difficult and we i mean we we did come  
554 to disagreement on that so much so that we were unable  
555 to move forward with those partners and we had to erm  
556 buy them out of the business erm

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PhD research

557 I yep

558 P16 but but you know it it was an important part of  
559 certainly our from our perspective erm yeah a key you  
560 know key element of of what we're doing we're here to  
561 make a difference

562 I and so with those of you who are now continuing to work  
563 together how does i guess responsibility work

564 who what are the lines of responsibility who takes the  
565 final responsibility for the decisions that you've made  
566 for the product

567 I well i mean in a sense i have been appointed CEO of the  
568 new of the new company i guess i guess that would be  
569 that would be me i don't you know i don't like to think  
570 of it like that

571 I yeah yeah

572 P16 i mean we more have you know we do we do generally work  
573 very hard to obviously of course we are at the stage we  
574 have we have quite a small team so

575 I yes

576 P16 it's relatively easy to come to a sort of a point of  
577 for now and and because we have a small team and our  
578 visions are very aligned

579 I yes yes

580 P16 that that we have you know that it has to be relatively  
581 easy to to come to sort of you know close decisions and  
582 of course we do have a sort of five man board so that  
583 works quite well from from a tiebreaker point of view  
584 as well

585 I ok yeah and then i guess talking more broadly because  
586 you you've had been been a designer and had the role of  
587 product designer do you feel that erm as a designer you  
588 have a responsibility to towards sustainability in your  
589 work

590 P16 absolutely my industry is a huge part of what's wrong  
591 with the world erm it that was actually the core reason  
592 why myself and my business partner ((name)) set up our  
593 first business

594 I yeah

595 P16 erm is that it became incredibly obvious during my time  
596 at university that people like myself had designed  
597 crappy systems

598 I yeah

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PhD research

599 P16 that produced waste it you know our whole my whole  
600 course was designed around we create products and  
601 solutions that people didn't really need

602 I yeah

603 P16 you're actually there really to design a need because  
604 that's what companies want right most companies that  
605 hire product designers okay they want me to come along  
606 and design a product that will make more people buy

607 I yes

608 P16 regardless of whether they need it or not you know if  
609 you're if you're a toothbrush company you know despite  
610 the fact that you've already made very good electric  
611 toothbrushes yeah on yeah you're gonna bring out more  
612 electric toothbrushes you're going to design new heads  
613 really regardless of whether they're any better at  
614 brushing your teeth or not

615 I mhm

616 P16 you're interested in producing more and more products  
617 because that's how you make money

618 I mhm

619 P16 and of course invariably these companies that were  
620 hiring you to produce things because we have a distinct  
621 gap between producers and recyclers or or disposes they  
622 don't they don't they don't want to or care you know  
623 get they don't care what the designer thinks about what  
624 happens to the product at the end because that doesn't  
625 affect them they're only interested in it flying off  
626 the shelves not where it ends up

627 I yeah

628 P16 now of course that is somewhat shifting more and more  
629 brands are thinking well it looks bad if all my  
630 products go to waste but really still the goal is you  
631 know designers create more and more sort of appealing  
632 products that get you to

633 I yeah

634 P16 (buy) something you don't need and of course these  
635 designers were failing to consider er how and what  
636 happens to their products and often failing to consider  
637 that sometimes you can design a solution to a problem  
638 without creating a product is that in fact you can  
639 design a better system that requires less products to  
640 do something that you need

641 I yeah yeah and and in your design career so far have you  
642 you've worked more with clients rather than working in

643 a role that's in house in a in a large company is that  
644 right

645 P16 yes so i i mean i've had i worked for erm a year for a  
646 company that er produced furniture out of recycled  
647 aircraft bits erm they were a small startup again

648 I yeah

649 P16 and then other than that i have spent my entire time  
650 being working for myself

651 I yeah yeah

652 P16 so i don't have an experience in one of these in one of  
653 these

654 I yeah sure

655 P16 large er design consultancies and obviously a lot of my  
656 friends from university that is where they ended up so  
657 i i am aware of what it's like to be there

658 I yeah and so i guess when you've worked with clients you  
659 mentioned a little bit at the beginning about trying to  
660 challenge the client and see whether that is what they  
661 really want what they say they're wanting or whether  
662 there's a more sustainable option do you feel a  
663 responsibility when you work with a client or have a  
664 client brief to to try and influence it towards  
665 sustainability

666 P16 oh absolutely i mean unequivocally our design  
667 consultancy was set up on that basis we won't work with  
668 you if your interest isn't in improving if your  
669 interest isn't in improving

670 I yeah

671 P16 the sustainability of your product

672 I right

673 P16 we weren't interested in making a product prettier or  
674 sell more unless the core focus was improving its  
675 sustainability characteristics so that it had a better  
676 environmental impact and then we were happy for it to  
677 be to be marketed

678 I yeah

679 P16 and for it to be sold so

680 I yeah

681 P16 that was a non negotiable elements

682 I uhu

683 P16 you know we weren't designing for for any other reason  
684 that that was the core purpose basically and generally  
685 it was designing for the circular economy so thinking  
686 about the materials that they use to make their product  
687 and the full lifecycle of that product throughout its  
688 use but also whether a system could be in place erm  
689 maybe even to replace the use of the product altogether

690 I so you haven't had you haven't found yourself in a  
691 situation where you've had to try and convince a client  
692 to do something more sustainable

693 because you've picked from the outset to work with  
694 people that already

695 P16 oh no i i we have abso we have absolutely because  
696 although they approached us as to saying you know we're  
697 interested in in some eco thing

698 I yeah

699 P16 obviously they're interested in the eco thing generally  
700 is from a PR angle and what they want

701 I right

702 P16 to do is the least amount of change yeah the most  
703 amount of positive PR value whereas while we're  
704 interested in is the most amount of environmental  
705 impacts regardless

706 I yeah

707 P16 erm and that's a really difficult one because

708 I mhm

709 P16 one of the really interesting things right is that  
710 companies are so focused on the things that the public  
711 notice that they sort of you know they they treat those  
712 like they're the biggest environmental problems so  
713 you'll have a company that's got that's consuming  
714 masses of energy and wasting masses of material and  
715 then they're coming to us and they're asking us whether  
716 they should be using plastic bags in their in their  
717 kitchens i'm like

718 I yeah

719 P16 forget that's not your environment it's that you know  
720 that represents such a tiny tiny element of your  
721 environmental impact you are only focusing on this from  
722 the point of view of a PR element

723 I yeah

724 P16 and not and therefore really missing the point about  
725 why you should be making environmental change



726 I yeah

727 P16 and in reality also it's a short sighted move right  
728 because while the public for now might be sated by your  
729 your thing because that's where their knowledge is  
730 their knowledge evolves as people become more aware of  
731 the topic and as someone like me shouts oi that's  
732 that's not on you're green washing and then of course  
733 the decision that you made looks bad and cynically  
734 paints you in the light of someone that was simply  
735 trying to pla put a plaster over when er you know  
736 really needed to rebuild the whole dam

737 I yeah so you're kind of using the PR argument kind of  
738 within that to convince them that they need to do the  
739 more sustainable thing because it's going to come out  
740 in the end

741 P16 oh absolutely you know we we do it we do understand  
742 that of course the value to these companies you know as  
743 i as i say you know they're there to make profit that's  
744 that's not a bad thing you know we can't that's what  
745 that's the whole role of business and in order to get  
746 profit they need to they need to be viewed er nice i  
747 think we do understand that but we think that it is we  
748 think it is a short sighted PR move

749 I yeah

750 P16 to do something that ultimately has no environmental er  
751 benefit but now is the flavour of the month

752 I yeah

753 P16 sort of for the public because of course the public's  
754 knowledge will change and evolve but you've implemented  
755 a system that might be hard to change the example i  
756 would use is supermarkets switching to paper bags there  
757 is mountains of scientific evidence that paper bags are  
758 not as good as plastic bags just ((inaudible)) takes  
759 you know they are take four times as much energy to  
760 produce they are six times as heavy and ten times as  
761 bulky so ten lorries of paper bags or one lorry of  
762 plastic bags the carbon comparison is insane so it it  
763 obviously doesn't make sense to use paper bags any big  
764 supermarket chain or company should know if you know a  
765 little bit of research found out because consumers  
766 don't know that at the moment

767 I yeah yeah

768 P16 so all of these you've got morrisons boots everyone  
769 going we've switched to paper bags me going haha well i  
770 mean you've pleased some customers now but how short  
771 sighted can you be to to to tackle the plastic waste  
772 problem while massively increasing your carbon

773 footprint and not thinking that at some point this is  
774 going to bite you in the bum

775 I mhm

776 P16 you know i don't know i think it's short sighted erm  
777 and it's certainly not the sort of advice i would give  
778 to my clients you know the co they come to us to to  
779 tell them how to get our advice on how they can design  
780 their product or or company to be more environmentally-  
781 friendly i'm not gonna suggest them a solution that's

782 I yeah

783 P16 or endorse or encourage or support a solution that  
784 frankly doesn't do that and

785 I yeah yeah

786 P16 is only designed to appear so

787 I and how do these conversations usually go with with  
788 clients or potential clients when you're trying to push  
789 them to take it that bit further

790 P16 it goes it varies one of the biggest difficulties is  
791 that innovation in these sort of areas especially when  
792 you look at packaging and and the production of  
793 products is that the we've got to a situation where  
794 most things are economically produced on vast scale  
795 mass production that that's how most things that people  
796 consume use packaging products are produced on an  
797 unfathomable scale and the problem with that is is that  
798 it means that to innovate you have to be one of these  
799 giant companies that are producing products on a fath  
800 you know unfathomable scale other wise it's very hard  
801 to develop and implement a new technology so so for  
802 example we got approached by a a company that make erm  
803 muesli ok and they make organic you know local muesli  
804 and they wanted to know what to do with their packaging  
805 because at the moment their packaging has a bit of  
806 plastic on it of course so to keep it fresh and so you  
807 know erm ((inaudible)) and it had you know like a sort  
808 of plastic sort of sealed bag and it was actually  
809 compared to other product alternatives you know very  
810 lightweight low energy to produce and being a kind of  
811 ldp thing inferior recyclable obviously ((inaudible))  
812 often doesn't get recycled but that's a problem with  
813 the recycling system and it's the same with card or any  
814 other packaging type to be honest erm but their  
815 customers obviously they felt their customers didn't  
816 want plastics and they were looking for an alternative  
817 erm and of course they're in a tricky situation where  
818 they can really only choose from the packaging the  
819 standard premade packaging types that are available  
820 because you know they don't have the facilities to

821 produce their own packaging they're just using off the  
822 shelf packaging and and branding it with their own  
823 thing so the only options they have available to them  
824 and this is the same for most small businesses are the  
825 generic stock options so unless a big company decides  
826 to go hey we're gonna produce a load of really good  
827 recycled or environmentally friendly stock option  
828 products that people can put their things in these  
829 small companies it it you know are often will find that  
830 hard to innovate or at least in certain spaces  
831 especially packaging

832 I mhm

833 P16 erm yeah and that that is the that is a big that is a  
834 big difficulty erm you know because it is very  
835 efficient to produce things that at a high volume er in  
836 things from an energy efficiency point of view you know  
837 big injection moulding machines and whatnot that are  
838 producing a product every half a second are actually  
839 very energy efficient compared to you know smaller  
840 batch production methods so it so it's not that mass  
841 production itself is bad the problem is is that the  
842 people who control mass production are these giant  
843 companies that are slow to move you know as as is  
844 evident in any industry large corporations are like  
845 tankers they are you know slow to turn around and for  
846 some reason despite all of their reems of cash  
847 difficult to you know they find it difficult to  
848 innovate as pointed out with my business part now  
849 business partner((name)) beating every other disposable  
850 cup manufacturer in the world to making a hundred per  
851 cent recycled plastic cup and that is madness it should  
852 not have taken some passionate individual activist to  
853 create this product when everyone else had the tools  
854 sitting around available to them but that is probably  
855 the the fundamental biggest problem is that we've got a  
856 really big problem that requires big people to go first  
857 and the people leading the way are little people and so  
858 the only way the only way of er making things work is  
859 when the little people get to drag the big people along  
860 with

861 I yeah

862 P16 by their ears and that is quite a quite a difficult  
863 scenario to engineer

864 I yeah definitely well that's' it's really interesting to  
865 hear the details of this this project and this cup  
866 those are all the questions i had was there anything  
867 else that you thought i might have asked about but  
868 didn't or anything you'd like to add

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PhD research

869 P16 hmm erm well i mean the other decisions i guess that we  
870 made was around what market markets to target

871 I yep

872 P16 er so i'll give you that i mean we basically we we  
873 chose the events industry kind of as i pointed out one  
874 because of the serendipity of having a client arrive in  
875 sort of that space but also because it was clear that  
876 as i mentioned because waste was very visceral at  
877 events there was much greater demand for a solution to  
878 this to these problems in that setting than there were  
879 in other settings that use the same product so  
880 festivals as a type of event were where it was most you  
881 know visual and therefore there was the most demand but  
882 there are actually a reem of other events from football  
883 stadiums to business conferences and also obviously  
884 other areas where those cups and products are consumed  
885 think erm airlines trains

886 I yeah

887 P16 hospitals you know in house cafeterias in businesses  
888 you know they're produced everyw they're consumer  
889 everywhere erm but of course we made the decision to  
890 start with the events industry erm although covid has  
891 somewhat changed the situation on that and we're now  
892 looking at the other at the other markets because of  
893 course events poof erm haha but er with the events  
894 industry because they they put the issue front and  
895 centre and also because festivals are actually almost  
896 the perfect testing ground or microcosm for for these  
897 sort of things because they are a temporary ecosystem

898 I mm

899 P16 they everything happens within this one controlled  
900 space but also that you design beforehand each year so  
901 you could make incremental changes and test a circular  
902 economy system in this in this wonderful sort of like  
903 you know trial safe trial space you know it's like a  
904 system you could establish over an entire country you  
905 get to test in this in this microcosm environment

906 I yeah

907 P16 and so that you know they represent quite an  
908 interesting opportunity erm to to sort of explore that

909 I yep and i guess as since we've gone back to decisions  
910 something i didn't ask is erm what for you is the most  
911 important decision related to this product in terms of  
912 the sustainability of it

913 P16 pfff i think that the most important decision for us in  
914 terms of the sustainability of it was committing to the  
915 idea that it is not just about making sure that people

916           bought a hundred percent recycled plastic cups because  
917           you know that is moving from where most people were  
918           which is er cups that were you know no recycled content  
919           or a small amount to getting them to a hundred percent  
920           recycled plastic cups some would consider a win

921    I        yeah

922    P16     you know we we've gone from a situation where they're  
923           consuming more and more virgin materials to a situation  
924           where no virgin material is being produced no new  
925           plastic is entering the world and the thing that is  
926           going to waste is plastic that was already going to  
927           waste erm however with you know i think that our most  
928           important decision was realising that you know we  
929           weren't happy with just that we felt that that was just  
930           half of the game and that we were committed to doing  
931           this much more complicated system of trying to get the  
932           cups back and it's very easy the concept of trying to  
933           sell a product

934    I        yeah

935    P16     you produce them all in one place and you send them out  
936           in in bulk to places that distribute them erm but once  
937           they've been taken to a venue and loads of people have  
938           used them and they've gone all over the place trying to  
939           get those produces back is is a really big challenge

940    I        yeah

941    P16     but making the decision that that was you know  
942           fundamental to to what we were doing and what we were  
943           trying to achieve and the story we were trying to tell  
944           and the example we were trying to set erm

945    I        yeah

946    P16     but that was you know that really that's really guided  
947           how how we've operated and the partnerships that we've  
948           tried to create and in in in fact it's moved us into  
949           this situation where we are now much more of a waste  
950           manager than a product supplier

951    I        yeah

952    P16     cos as i say recently we partnered with one of the  
953           world's biggest producers of packaging so we're no  
954           longer concerned with the making of the products other  
955           than that we are planning pushing on influencing them  
956           to make them

957    I        yeah

958    P16     out of hundred per cent recycled material or the most  
959           sustainable or renewable alternative erm we've moved  
960           very much our role is in that working out where the  
961           products go and how to get them back erm because that

962 is where we see is is the sort of the big issue or or  
963 challenge

964 I yeah so yeah so rather than just designing a product  
965 that's more sustainable in a certain way it's then  
966 about trying to take responsibility for the whole  
967 system and the whole kind of lifespan of the product

968 P16 yeah

969 I which which goes much beyond i guess what you must have  
970 been learning about when you studied design and the  
971 role of design

972 P16 yeah

973 I it's completely taken off in yeah going beyond that

974 P16 well i i think of it as i think of it very much as  
975 design erm

976 I mhm

977 P16 but just sort of you know design with a different  
978 purpose

979 I yeah yep

980 P16 and also so the other things is that i'm i am in a way  
981 designing a product i feel that the product is is a  
982 system and

983 I yeah

984 P16 it's a bit like having a rental product

985 I yeah

986 P16 if you will or the product as a service generally the  
987 reason you have products is not because you want the  
988 object it's because you are trying to achieve a  
989 function you don't want this cup because this is a cup  
990 you want it because it allows you to take a drink

991 I yeah

992 P16 and so really the best type of design is thinking how  
993 do i give someone the thing that they want not the the  
994 product that they're imagining that delivers it because  
995 you know that's not what we're looking for we want  
996 something that serves us a drink

997 I yep

998 P16 and thinking around that and thinking about that as the  
999 challenge allows you to be quite creative in your how  
1000 else could they have a drink and and someone for  
1001 example interestingly i'm not saying this is the best  
1002 er approach to the situation but an interesting example  
1003 of this is that they did one of the london marathons

1004            they had edible edible water so it's wrapped water in  
1005            this like edible bioplastic

1006    I            yep

1007    P16          so you could just eat this ball of water and you know  
1008            that's a rather interesting thing of what do people  
1009            want they want a method of of drinking not necessarily  
1010            the product

1011    I            yeah

1012    P16          that you associate it with

1013    I            definitely yeah i mean i've spoken to plenty of  
1014            designers who kind of aspire to this next level of  
1015            service or kind of taking control of the product  
1016            lifecycle and being more responsible for that but not  
1017            not many who've achieved it you know they have that  
1018            aspiration for either themselves if they're working at  
1019            a small scale or for the companies they work for to to  
1020            move in that direction but it's great that you've  
1021            actually you've actually decided right so this is this  
1022            is what we're doing we're gonna achieve this

1023            yeah so that that's really great

1024    P16          we sort of set it out as our sort of our you know our  
1025            hill to die on if you will with with the confidence  
1026            that you know this is one of the things i i bring this  
1027            back to i am you know ninety nine a hundred percent  
1028            confident that someone will do this er eventually

1029    I            mm

1030    P16          and so with that logic why not us now

1031    I            yeah yeah

1032    P16          it's you know why not us now the if we know that this  
1033            is where we want to be and you know you you go to  
1034            sustainability you know an ellen macarthur foundation  
1035            talk or what these things people hold this up as the  
1036            future where we want to go

1037    I            yeah yeah

1038    P16          in future well we have the technology to deliver the  
1039            future right now

1040    I            yeah

1041    P16          the only thing getting in our way is willpower and you  
1042            know i'm young i've got a lot of willpower so

1043    I            yeah

1044    P16          i figured let's go for that

Words only transcript of DDM2020 interview 15 17<sup>th</sup> August 2020 – Liz Cooper  
PhD research

1045 I great well thank you so much erm i don't wanna keep you  
1046 any long i'm sure you've got plenty to do

1047 P16 well actually i do i do have to shoot off in a but but  
1048 i have one final thing as a decision that's things the  
1049 other big decision that we've made is around plastics

1050 I mm

1051 P16 obviously as i as i said you know erm a couple of years  
1052 ago blue david attenborough came out with blue planet

1053 I yeah

1054 P16 and the whole world suddenly woke up to this issue  
1055 that's been an issue for ages

1056 I i know yeah

1057 P16 and they latched onto thanks to some some organisations  
1058 and whatnot including rather disappointingly greenpeace  
1059 erm who who created rather simplistic messaging now of  
1060 course simplistic messaging is the easiest type of  
1061 messaging to convey but the messaging stated very  
1062 simply that plastic is bad in all forms

1063 I mhm

1064 P16 and the problem with that is science isn't simple  
1065 science is complicated and sustainability is a science  
1066 and the that message has actually in my mind been quite  
1067 damaging because you've got people thinking about  
1068 plastic as a material as the enemy but plastic is  
1069 actually one of the most incredible materials that we  
1070 have to design with to create things with at our  
1071 disposal and what is wrong with plastic is how we are  
1072 using it

1073 I mhm

1074 P16 of course i no not disagree that plastic in the oceans  
1075 is a is a terrible thing and something that we should  
1076 not have but that is a waste management issue we  
1077 wouldn't want our oceans to be filled and floating with  
1078 all our food waste all of our glass waste all of our  
1079 aluminium

1080 I haha

1081 P16 it doesn't matter what the material is it shouldn't be  
1082 there

1083 I yeah

1084 P16 erm and so we had to make a decision that instead of  
1085 going along with the wave which is every environmental  
1086 organisation putting anti plastics as their sort of key  
1087 thing and all of these big businesses going we're gonna  
1088 be tough on plastic and go well no we're interested in



1089 environmental difference and if that you know making  
1090 environmental the biggest the right environmental  
1091 impact and if that means working with plastic if means  
1092 proudly working with plastic and explaining exactly  
1093 what we're doing and why and you know not being afraid  
1094 to in a sense be the be be the sort of people that you  
1095 know i mean people attack us they'll come to use and go  
1096 you know what are you you're calling yourself  
1097 environmentalists what are you doing making plastic  
1098 products and

1099 I right

1100 P16 we have the confidence that we have the science to  
1101 backup why we're doing what we're doing so i i don't  
1102 feel bothered by that but in in a sense i see it as a  
1103 fun challenge that you know if you really care about  
1104 this issue you should actually eventually come round to  
1105 my viewpoint because i'm trying to solve the same issue  
1106 that you are

1107 I mhm

1108 P16 and i have the science to show that this is the way of  
1109 solving it erm

1110 I yeah

1111 P16 and yeah erm you know i'm not afraid not afraid to tell  
1112 you that and to tell you that you know you're wrong in  
1113 thinking that plastic is bad because at the end of the  
1114 day my one of my worries with this whole anti plastics  
1115 movement is that you've got a huge amount of people  
1116 expending energy in trying to do a good environmental  
1117 thing that is being totally misdirected campaigning  
1118 against in some areas something that totally isn't a  
1119 problem or trying to inst install solutions that are in  
1120 face negative as i pointed out with the the paper bags  
1121 or paper straws you know the other lunacies bamboo  
1122 toothbrushes erm you know there there's a danger in for  
1123 me there's a huge part of the world that don't care  
1124 about the environment and aren't making any you know  
1125 any effort to change it

1126 I yeah

1127 P16 which you know if we've got twenty thirty per cent of  
1128 people you know who are caring about the environment be  
1129 def i definitely don't want them to be try proposing  
1130 and bidding for solutions that don't make sense you  
1131 know that's terrible we're we're screwed if that  
1132 happens erm you know we need the people that are  
1133 fighting for the environment to be fighting for  
1134 solutions that make sense and therefore we have to we  
1135 have committed to telling an uncomfortable truth and  
1136 not being afraid to you know have people misunderstand

1137            what we're doing and you know throw hate our way until  
1138            they get round to understanding why

1139    I        yeah interesting wow it sounds amazing that you're  
1140            you're doing all this with so much energy and yeah  
1141            making it work despite a pandemic and everything haha

1142    P16     yeah well i the pandemic is obviously has obviously  
1143            been bad in one sense it's shut down the whole events  
1144            industry which i mean for us actually it locks out we  
1145            had some really big deals with some rather large  
1146            breweries that it completely destroyed which was very  
1147            tragic erm but of course you know we're adaptive and  
1148            innovative we found you know found a way to stay alive  
1149            and to be honest it's given us the the time to focus on  
1150            improving our product offering and mission and focusing  
1151            on who we want to target and who we want to partner  
1152            with and while nothing nothing is is or not much not  
1153            much is is going on in that sense going we've built  
1154            we've built this partnership that i've i've mentioned  
1155            with this this big packaging producer

1156    I        mhm

1157    P16     and used the time to really focus on well you know it  
1158            doesn't matter that the world's not operating now it  
1159            will return to normality at some point and we need to  
1160            be ready to go with the best environmental solution  
1161            when that when that happens

1162    I        yep

1163    P16     you know this isn't the time to sit back and sort of  
1164            panic while the coronavirus is going on you know if  
1165            you've got things to do it's time to crack on

1166    I        yeah haha

1167    P16     so er disasters are opportunities you know as the end  
1168            of the day the last financial crash out of that came  
1169            airbnb and all sorts of other you know businesses that  
1170            lots of people in our industry will have been it will  
1171            have affected our competitors in etcetera so that will  
1172            if we are clever that presents a big opportunity erm  
1173            yeah and haha there's always a silver lining if you're  
1174            determined to go get it

1175    I        yeah well best of luck with it all and thank you so  
1176            much for for taking the time to talk to me today it's  
1177            definitely very interesting to hear this quite  
1178            different approach to to other people i've spoken to so  
1179            yeah thank you

1180    /end/