



Innovation: designing for a sustainable future

The designers role in sustainable development.

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Sustainability is a huge area and there's been a huge amount of progress from governments introducing new laws, from business introducing new policies and ways of manufacturing, even members of the public are aware of the issue and do what they can to buy green, but I think designers have a much bigger role than they have been taking up so far. Designers are actually under-selling themselves. I keep coming across designers saying 'well we don't have any influence', but what's the job of design other than to bring the latest thinking into a company, to inspire the developments of products. So I think designers have a much bigger role than they have done in the past and I hope more people will take that up when they think about becoming a designer.

Designers love to have a go when interpreting sustainability but their first instincts are not always the best. They'll take their standard design and say 'ah I made it in bio-plastic it must be better, or oh I used re-cycled aluminium to make it, but while looking at the material choice is often important there's far more to it than just that; looking at the production processes, looking at distribution; looking at the life; looking at the end of life; looking at how the user interacts with it; all those issues have the, are important for how the design gets carried out.

It's important to avoid being over-simplistic when you're carrying out sustainable design, and one of the things that we've been very keen to stress is the importance of doing the decent life cycle analysis of the total impacts across the life cycle. That way you can then prioritise where the big improvements can be made, what's going to make the most difference?