



Nobody was Dirty

challenging collective conventions of cleanliness

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Collective conventions

- Collective conventions, impalpable aesthetics that govern accepted ways of doing.
- To make consumption more sustainable the structural aspects of practices are more relevant than focusing on individual behaviour (Gram-Hanssen, ESA, 2007).
- Collective conventions hold potential to move practices away from intensive resource consumption in everyday life.



Cleanliness is a resource consuming collective convention

- Modern standards of cleanliness are a recent phenomena and go far beyond sanitation, guzzling water, energy and chemicals (Shove, 2003).
- Cultural expectations of cleanliness are not explicit, yet people have an intangible sense of a 'right' way of doing laundry, and presenting the self to others (Pink, 2005).
- People feel embarrassed to wear clothes smelling of body odour (Laitala, Klepp, & Boks, 2012).



How to intervene in collective conventions?

- Changing collective conventions contains exciting potential in enabling pro-environmental routines...
- But how can you influence collective conventions?
- I attempt to intervene into cleanliness expectations to save water, energy and chemicals.

Nobody was Dirty

- I engaged 31 participants to wear the same pair of jeans five days a week for three months without washing them.
- Installed an olfactory exhibition at The National Gallery of Victoria, where people could come and smell the jeans.





NOBODY'S WAS DIRTY

Like the New York Times, we can't even begin to understand the scale of the problem. The fact is, we're not even sure what the problem is. We're not even sure what the solution is. We're not even sure what the question is. We're not even sure what the answer is. We're not even sure what the problem is. We're not even sure what the solution is. We're not even sure what the question is. We're not even sure what the answer is.

In 1980, the first "green" clothing line was launched. It was a line of clothing that was made from natural fibers and dyes. It was a line of clothing that was made from natural fibers and dyes. It was a line of clothing that was made from natural fibers and dyes. It was a line of clothing that was made from natural fibers and dyes.

The biggest global companies for sustainable clothing are H&M, Zara, and Primark. They are the biggest global companies for sustainable clothing. They are the biggest global companies for sustainable clothing. They are the biggest global companies for sustainable clothing. They are the biggest global companies for sustainable clothing.

Expanding global brands' consumption through "ethical" marketing is the biggest global brands' consumption through "ethical" marketing. It's the biggest global brands' consumption through "ethical" marketing. It's the biggest global brands' consumption through "ethical" marketing. It's the biggest global brands' consumption through "ethical" marketing.

The responsibility for the problem is on the consumer. It's the responsibility for the problem. It's the responsibility for the problem. It's the responsibility for the problem. It's the responsibility for the problem.

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Gavin
 'I did have a few beer spills on them.'





Public engagement

- Christophe from France “ I experienced that stone-washed blue denim can be worn daily (16 hours a day, 7 days a week) for at least 6 months.”
 - Joel from England “We wash clothing far too frequently. When you multiply the amount of water used in each wash, the harmful detergents used in said wash, the electricity used to wash & dry, etc., just washing things half as often can have a monumental impact when you multiply that out by a wider population.”
 - KC from Canada “Not at all surprised and to be quite honest I get several wears out of my jeans before I wash 'em and, no, you can not tell the diff nor can anyone else. It is getting over the social conditioning that instructs people to wash every item of clothing after being worn once and to shower at least once a day.”
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Are we decision makers or cultural dupes?

- The insights into people and practices revealed by this intervention indicate that individual actions are compelled by collective conventions as much as by internal drive.
- But... that collective conventions can be brought into consideration by moments of contrast.
- I observed a continuum between mindful engagement and following collective conventions...
- ...between early adopters and mainstream – an

Credibility and visibility

- When influencing collective conventions credibility and visibility may be important.
- Visibility: how visible an alternative practice is.
- Credibility: how socially acceptable an alternative practice is.
- Which may be useful...



PROclaiming

- Information, public engagement, celebrity endorsement, social media and cultural events can all lend credibility to desired collective conventions.
- Potential in PROclaiming: injecting an environmental norm into collective consciousness.
- Message must have resonant truth.





Can collective conventions be shifted?

- Mindful engagement and collective conventions are not dichotomous: interventions mindfully engage early adopters, and then alternative practices are normalised through interpretation, application and repetition, to become accepted ways of doing.
- Active engagement of few can have wide implications. It is not yet clear the extent to which changes in niche groups can disseminate and take hold for larger populations, at least to the extent required for collective conventions to shift, and significant quantities of resources to be saved.

Impact?

- Even though this one idea about washing less garnered such varied and widespread attention, and included deep engagement with several individuals, whether or not the collective conventions of cleanliness have shifted to the extent needed to enable less laundry, or significant resource savings is unclear.





Potential in collective conventions

- Pending further practical examples that move beyond rational, incentive-based behaviour change.
- Collective conventions transcend practices, that any pro-environmental shift in one area will propagate to other everyday life actions.
- Collective conventions may prove to be an invigorated approach for sustainability, moving entire populations towards pro-environmental everyday lives.

Thank you

- Questions? Ideas? Comments?



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