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Dara O'Rourke

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Dara O'Rourke : Shopping for Good (Boston Review Books) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Shopping for Good (Boston Review Books):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Good ideas on how to enact sustainable changesBy katarinaismAfter reading the book "Overdressed", I was compelled to find a book that proposed solutions to the problem of unethical manufacturing processes. This book, while simplistic in its language and explanations, is an excellent start to solving the problem, at least on the consumer's end.It talks about strategies consumers can use to find companies that practice sustainable manufacturing and sourcing, one of which is "Good Guide", a website and app created by the author that

ranks companies by their dedication to eco-friendly manufacturing, workers' rights, animal rights, etc. While other books focus mainly on why consumers should be concerned about how our spending habits affect the environment and the lives of those who make the goods we consume, this book primarily focuses on the "how"--how consumers can be more informed, how they can then translate those decisions into practice, and how NGOs (non-government organizations, such as human rights groups, environmental groups, etc.) can then use that information to enact change. The one problem acknowledged throughout the book is how to get enough consumers to change their habits, in order to cause a measurable change that businesses will notice. However, they bring up the idea of institutions, such as university apparel stores and others--making change through their commitment to purchase only ethically made products to sell. This is where I see the most potential--when I visited the university my husband attends and purchased a hoodie from their co-op store, the items were higher priced than I would expect even for a licensed product. However, when I went online and looked up the companies making these products I could see the difference in price was because these items were made by companies that pay their workers better wages and give them better benefits (Alta Gracia). If there had been cheaper items at the store that day, I probably would have selected the more inexpensive brand without thinking about it. However, because the pricier item was the only one available, I spent the extra money on the souvenir (which is well made and put to good use). If more stores would do the same, I think we would start seeing a measurable difference in how consumers behave. Next time I am likely to specifically look for that brand if I am purchasing clothing. Until then, though, this book is a good start for those interested in how to make a difference with their wallet. If enough people do it, the possibilities are endless.

"Buy local," "buy green," "buy organic," "fair trade" -- how effective has the ethical consumption movement been in changing market behavior? Can consumers create fair and sustainable supply chains by shopping selectively? Dara O'Rourke, the activist-scholar who first broke the news about Nike's sweatshops in the 1990s, considers the promise of ethical consumption -- the idea that individuals, voting with their wallets, can promote better labor conditions and environmental outcomes globally. Governments have proven unable to hold companies responsible for labor and environmental practices. Consumers who say they want to support ethical companies often lack the knowledge and resources to do so consistently. But with the right tools, they may be able to succeed where governments have failed. Responding to O'Rourke's argument, eight experts -- Juliet Schor, Richard Locke, Scott Nova, Lisa Ann Richey, Margaret Levi, Andrew Szasz, Scott Hartley, and Aurret van Herdeen -- consider the connections between personal concerns and consumer activism, challenge the value of entrusting regulation to consumer efforts, and draw attention to difficulties posed by global supply chains.

About the Author Dara O'Rourke is Associate Professor of Environmental and Labor Policy at the University of California, Berkeley, and cofounder and Chairman of GoodGuide, Inc., a database for safe, healthy, green, and ethical products based on scientific ratings. He is author of *Community-Driven Regulation: Balancing Development and the Environment in Vietnam* (MIT Press) and coauthor of *Can We Put an End to Sweatshops?*