

## Follow the Thing

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For anyone concerned with the ethics of contemporary consumption I would strongly recommend becoming acquainted with the website <http://www.followthethings.com/> This is the project of Ian Cook a geographer based at the University of Exeter in the UK. The premise is clear. There are many reasons we might want to ethically audit the goods that we use everyday. We may be concerned about their environmental impact, we may have issues about the conditions of labour that were involved in their production, or we may just feel that a fundamental source of education is simply to know how things that we use everyday come into being. All of this depends on research that is dedicated to exposing commodity chains, that is the often incredibly complex and convoluted ways in which the goods we buy actually emerge. We are constantly hearing stories that show how little we actually know about these processes. An example recently was the contamination of meat products throughout Europe with horse meat. The extraordinary thing about this was perhaps less the contamination itself, something with a long if dubious history, but the fact that despite massive governmental and journalistic interests, for many weeks absolutely no one seemed able to find out what had happened and where.

For all these reasons we should welcome the presence of this website which is concerned to locate research that documents the processes behind the production of everyday goods and make this research available to much wider audiences. The examples range from fashion and groceries to electricals and tend to be quite fascinating stories in their own right.