



Household experiences of drought in 2006

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Drought and the practice perspective

From “water customers”

- to the negotiation of consumer identities

From “demand constituted by decisions”

- demand embedded in routines of everyday life

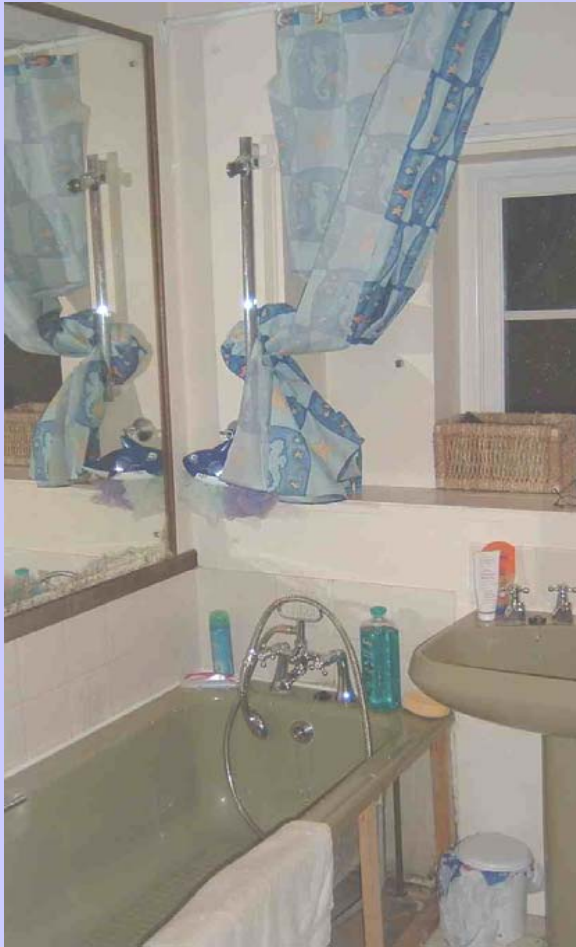
From “water choices in the home”

- how different options are structured

From demand and supply management

- to renegotiating roles and responsibilities

Complexities of practices



“I’ve got short hair, my husband has very short hair so 3 minutes power shower really doesn’t take long, the girls I would say longer because they’ve both got long thick hair...”

“My son is a roofer, so he spends half an hour in the shower in the evenings because he’s usually covered in dust and cement and stuff”

“Just speed in the morning, and I’m not one of those people that finds it relaxing soaking in a tub...my husband prefers the actual fierceness of the jets; you get a real water flow on it”

ROUTINE

Normal Saturday, family of four

4 morning showers (20 mins total)
4 teeth cleaning
2 washing machine loads
1 washing up bowl
5 buckets of water to clean up paint
2 evening showers (10 mins each)
Shaving
Drinking water
Cleaning kitchen
Washing floors
Drinking water
Watering house plants
Filling water filter
Filling kettle
Flushing loo

NON-ROUTINE

Very hot day, family to stay for summer hols

8 people using loos and showers in morning
3 washing loads (so family don't have to take dirty washing home)
Filled paddling pool with cold water using hosepipe
Filled old water bottles for fridge
Drinking lots of water
Spraying hosepipe for a short while
3 showers in the evening
Flushing loo
Cleaning teeth
Washing up
Filling water filter
Filling kettle

Interpretations of the current crisis

“Now this year, well apart from the press, I knew it had been dry because it had just not rained for such a long period prior to the summer and then the summer was particularly hot and the river levels dropped significantly and you could see it”

“When I was younger I remember the ‘put a brick in your cistern’, but I didn’t hear any of that this year so I feel as though rightly or wrongly, the water problems were greater in ‘76 than they are now”

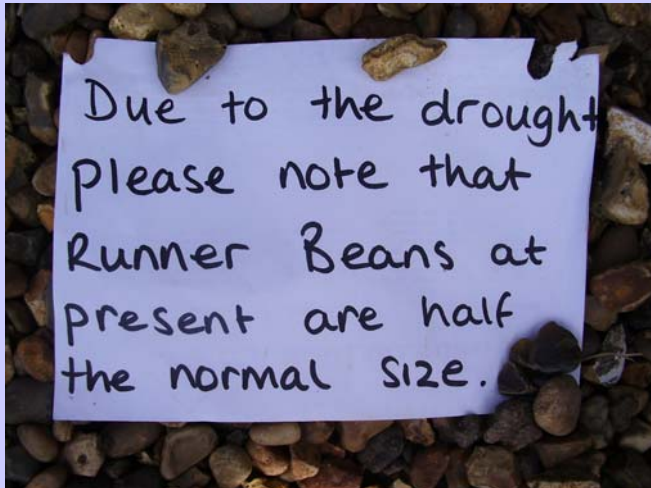
Interpretations of legitimate water use

“We try to be as sensitive with water as we can but it is very hard to gauge...”

Changing practices this summer



“I don’t worry about the lawn going brown, I think you just have to accept that these days...”



“We haven’t watered our flowers as much as we would have done...its given me an excuse to do less”

Looking behind peak demand

“When it was hot I had a sort of garden party so I wanted it to look nice...I shan't worry so much now”

“We did have a paddling pool up this summer in July, for the teenagers really, there was a lot of water went into that...we had family up visiting and it was a good way of entertaining a lot of younger people, they put chairs around the side and put their feet in and talked about life...”

“When you've got five or six little ones, paddling pools keep them busy for hours and keeps them cool of course when the weather is that hot”

Living with water stress and developing resilience



“I’ve got two water butts and I’m in the process of buying another and shower water will go into that...”

“We’re catching the water into the two blue containers that comes down from the sink...we even bought new proper washing liquid”



“That man next door, he’s laid pipes from his bath, they go down across the garden and all the water does his shrubbery, he’s got pipes going all over so definitely he saves his water”

Conclusions

- Water demand relates to deeply engrained habits and routines, but these are also subject to significant variation, and may be open to renegotiation.
- Consumer understandings of crisis and appropriate responses are shaped by interpretations of local water stresses, historical experiences, and messages and actions of water managers
- Meanings of legitimate water use or wastage are relative – consumers are careful but only under their own terms of reference
- Stories of living with stress and resilience show that consumers fulfil multiple roles in relation to water - as co-providers (rainwater for the garden), as environmental citizens (visible display of brown lawns), etc.