Beyond the "deficit model": mapping ethical consumption discourses in Chile and Brazil.

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1. <u>Introduction</u>.

Recent years have seen an important increase in scholarly interest in ethical consumption (Barnett et al., 2011; Clarke et al., 2007; Harrison et al., 2005a; Lewis and Potter, 2011; Whatmore and Clark, 2008; Zick Varul, 2009) Much of this research, however, has focused mainly on exploring ethical and sustainable consumption discourses and practices in European and North American countries, leaving questions of how ethical consumption is interpreted and practiced in other parts of the world comparatively underexplored. Furthermore, countries in the so-called global South, where they are featured at all, are often seen as "backward" or "catching up" with practices in the global North. Ethical consumption in the global South is often portrayed through what might be described as a "deficit model"[1]: a discourse that defines ethical consumption discourse and practices from the global North (mainly US-UK) as the standard and then seeing how well (or not) people from other contexts measure up to that level (and then often bemoan the deficit in between). This is ironic given that by most measures, current lifestyles in the global North are far less sustainable than the global South. For instance, the per capita Co2

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[1] Our thanks to Dorothea Kleine for summarising our joint thinking in this term.

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footprint per year is 17.6tns in the United States, 11.7tns in Norway, 7.9tns in the UK, 4.2tns in Chile, 2.2tns in Brazil and 0.3tns in Kenya (World Bank 2013).

By exploring how ethical consumption is interpreted in Chile and Brazil, this paper provides rich empirical material to consider ethical consumption discourses and practices outside of the global North. In doing so, we support exploring ethical consumption

This paper continues on from previous work in which we analyzed in detail the institutional contexts and paths of developments of ethical consumption in both countries (Ariztia *et al.* 2013)[2]. In the paper we present here, we argue further that ethical consumption discourses are constructed differently at varying scales and contexts: more concretely, we describe how ethical consumption in Chile and Brazil is intertwined to at least two different scales, first, the space of ordinary ethics of consumption and second the more global scale of environmental problems and global justice. By describing how discourses relate to these scales we note some important differences between ethical consumption discourses as evidenced in our data from two global South contexts and those commonly portrayed in Northern ethical consumption literature. The paper thus contributes, firstly, to the as yet very limited empirical data on ethical consumption in the global South and secondly, robustly tests the theoretical framings, including framings of scale, which have so far dominated ethical consumption research but which ultimately have emanated from a limited, Northern-centric empirical evidence base.

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2 This research is based on work undertaken by the Choices Project, funded by the UK ESRC and DFID, which allowed our team of researchers from universities in UK, Chile and Brazil, and representatives from NGOs from each country to work together (see www.sustainablechoices.info)

Chile and Brazil provide interesting case studies with differences and similarities. They differ for instance in the size of their domestic market (17. 27 million Chileans whilst Brazil has 196.7 million inhabitants) and the size of the state/government expenditure (23% of GDP (Chile) vs. 39 % of GDP (Brazil) – IEF 2013). Also, in terms of their macroeconomic trajectory, whilst Chile has been considered the first neoliberal experiment globally (Harvey, 2005), Brazil continues to have a much larger degree of social intervention by the state. These differences, as we pointed out in our earlier paper focused on mapping the institutional contexts (Ariztia *et al.* 2013), influence the ways in which ethical consumption is enacted in these two countries, illustrating the important and hopefully unsurprising point that there is not *a single* different view of ethical consumption in the Global South, but *a plurality* of views.

Both countries have been hailed as emerging economies and growing domestic markets where part of the population, for the first time ever, has had access to goods that most consumers from northern countries take for granted. However, levels of economic disparity remain high, with high Gini indices of 54.7 for Brazil, and 52.1 for Chile (CIA, 2013). Growth in domestic consumption levels has put further pressure on natural resources in both countries, resources which are already being exploited by powerful export industries. As deforestation, air and water pollution and land degradation increase, both countries are having to face large scale environmental and social challenges with the added global threat of climate change.

In this paper, we empirically address these issues by presenting and analyzing a range of discourses related to ethical consumption in Chile and Brazil, drawing from data generated in 32 in-depth focus groups (179 participants in total) in both countries.

Specifically, we describe how ethical discourses in these two countries are enacted through different contexts. On the one hand, ethical consumption discourses are intertwined with everyday life routines and ordinary social and cultural reproduction. Simultaneously, some ethical consumption discourses we encountered were also connected with national and global level discourses on environment and global politics. Based on this, we argue that instead of drawing on national or regional boundaries to try to understand and delineate discourses on ethical consumption, it is more appropriate to map ethical consumption discourses in terms of their connections across scales and contexts, with each context linked to a different set of consumption practices as well as discursive and institutional settings. Theoretically, this aligns closely with a relational view of space (Massey 2005) which goes beyond a container view of countries and acknowledges the radical plurality of different time-spaces within say, one imagined national frame.

The paper is structured in the following way: The first section briefly describes our theoretical standpoint: in our critical engagement with the literature we approach ethical consumption as a mediated practice. The second section briefly discusses the methodology while the third section presents and analyses the ethical consumption discourses we found in both countries. We identify two main scales of discourse on ethical consumption: the localized scale in which ethical consumption is mediated by everyday life practices, and a second scale of linked national and global discourses on ethics and consumption. This leads us to radically challenge any neat global North/global South distinctions and show how discourses are globally interrelated and then transformed in dialogue with place.

2. Literature review.

Recent years have seen cross-disciplinary scholarly interest in exploring ethical consumption (for an overview please see: Barnett et al., 2010; Newholm and Shaw, 2007). For the purpose of our argument we can broadly identify two sets of literature. On the one hand, there is literature that has primarily focused on the figure of the ethical consumer as a person "*concerned with the effects that a purchasing choice has, not only on themselves, but also on the external world around them*" (Harrison et al., 2005b: 2).

Some scholars have explored how ethical consumption relates to a person's set of pro-social and pro-environmental values (Pepper et al., 2009) and high level of ethical awareness of social and environmental issues (Freestone and McGoldrick, 2008). Against this backdrop, and focusing on high income countries, scholars have mapped how ethical consumer values appear to be on the rise (Irving et al., 2002).

Authors have also situated ethical consumption in relation to the increasingly central role of consumption and consumer culture in the production of self-identities in contemporary societies (Giddens, 1991; Littler, 2009; Slater, 2011). In particular, by focusing on Northern so-called developed countries, authors have argued that consuming ethical goods is related to the increasing centrality of consumer choice in markets as a resource for self-identity production (Bauman, 2007). In this vein, some scholars have explored ethical consumption in terms of a new type of commodity activism through which the self is produced within the neoliberal, individualized economic sphere (Mukherjee and Banet-Weiser, 2012). In a critical vein, scholars have argued that ethical consumption

discourses and practices tend to reduce ethical political virtue to individual decisions in markets (Bryant and Goodman, 2004; Carrier, 2008, 2010). Finally, other scholars have explored the figure of the ethical consumer by analyzing how consumption and citizenship are not opposing concepts but emerge as connected spheres (Trentmann, 2007). In this vein, the political scientist Michelle Micheletti has coined the term *political consumerism* to describe "actions by people who make choices among producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional or market practices" (2003:3).

Mediating ethical consumption

There is however a second set of literature concerned less with the figure of the ethical consumer and focused more on how ethical consumption, as a practice and discourse, is mediated by multiple discourses, practices and institutional settings. This second group of literature often posit that the seemingly self-evident link between ethical consumption, choice and individual subjectivity appears insufficiently problematized at both the theoretical and empirical level (Adams and Raisborough, 2010; Barnett et al., 2005a; Clarke, 2008). In other words, ethical consumption needs to be examined as intertwined in ordinary practices and moral obligations (Adams and Raisborough, 2010), institutional and organizational settings (Barnett et al 2010, Ariztia et al 2013), infrastructure of provisions (Shove, 2003; Shove, 2010), global commodity chains (Cook et al., 2006) and/or class structures (Adams and Raisborough, 2008). Following the work of Barnett et al (2010), it can be argued therefore that to understand ethical consumption discourses and practices we need to bring into the picture the different "contexts" through which ethical consumption is enacted (2005b). These contexts are not understood only in terms of a medium that

influences consumers' decisions, but instead are defined as the very basic material through which ethics and consumptions are discursively linked. Two contexts appear as particular relevant for us at both theoretical and empirical level.

Firstly, one way in which ethical consumption is enacted relates to everyday life practices. Authors have explored how everyday practices of consumption cannot be separated from moral and ethical considerations (Miller, 2001). Here, consumption practices emerge as a central space through which moral boundaries are produced and negotiated in everyday life (Adams and Raisborough, 2010; Barnett et al., 2005b). Consumption is deeply embedded in the ordinary negotiations of moral value and logics of care (Popke, 2006) which often revolves around issues of household reproduction, family obligations and more generally the maintaining of intimate social relations (Miller, 1999).

Secondly, authors have also explored how ethical consumption is mediated by national and supranational institutional settings (Ariztía et al. 2013) as well as organizational and campaign discourses oriented towards politicizing consumption (Barnett 2010). More concretely, ethical consumption discourses appear as related to the deployment of practical actions and organizations that allow the mobilization of the ethical subject (Barnett et al., 2005b). Here, ethical consumption might be better understood in terms of organized efforts made by institutional actors (such as NGOs) to problematize ordinary consumption practices in terms of wider political and normative projects deployed through campaigning (Barnett et al., 2010).

Geographers have for example argued that ethical consumption discourses relate to imaginings of and caring about distant "others", which is part of what Doreen Massey (1994) calls a "global sense of place". The global South frequently appears in ethical

consumption discourses such as Fair Trade the place where the "other", the iconic producer, often imagined as suffering, is imagined to be living. In fact, debates in Geography related to ethical and political responsibility have often taken the view that caring at close proximity is more easily done while caring for distant others is more of a problem (Silk, 1998; Smith, 1998). Doreen Massey (2004) speaks about the Russian-doll geographies of care and responsibility, where the sense of responsibility for others is imagined as being strongest for family, local community, nation etc. all the way towards more abstract and distant imagined others. Some have argued that this loss of sense of responsibility can be overcome to a degree through increased knowledge of distant contexts, for example through a critical analysis of commodity chains (Castree, 2001; Cook et al., 2006; Hartwick, 2000). Pioneering projects such as Fairtracing.org or followthething.org, have tried to enhance knowledge and empathy with distant others along the value chain through the use of co-produced online content about the production process and labour conditions, which can be linked, via barcode or QR code, to a specific product and delivered to consumers on their mobile phones (Kleine 2008). This area of work helps to frame and problematize ordinary consumption in terms of global responsibilities (Barnett et al 2010).

While this literature has been very useful to portray a more complex picture of how ethical consumption practices and discourses are enacted, it has often relied, at least in its depiction of the consumer end, on empirical material from North America and Europe. In this paper we extend the discussion and the critical views expressed previously by providing empirical evidence on the ethical consumption discourses in two countries which are not part of global North. In providing this account, we want to emphasize a view from

the South in which it is not only identified as a site of production but also as one of consumption, where ethical discourses and subjects are mobilized. At a more theoretical level, we do so by following recent theoretical efforts to think ethical consumption as moving beyond the figure of the atomised ethical consumer, trying to grasp how ethical consumption is embedded and enacted through and within everyday practices, discourses and institutional settings (Barnett et al., 2010).

In concrete terms, we present data from Chile and Brazil, however the main focus of the analysis is not in comparing "national context" in Chile and Brazil such as, for example, the work of Zick Varul which compares UK and German ethical consumption discourses (2009) or the work of Dombos that links ethical consumption discourses with national identities (Dombos, 2008). Instead, while contextualizing discourses and practices embedded at the national scale, we also identify, in a logic of relational geography, several links to the cross-national and international scales, discourses which also co-constitute, for a sub-group of respondents, ethical consumption discourses as enacted in both countries.

3. Capturing multiple discourses in the global Souths

3.1. The case of Chile and Brazil

Chile and Brazil are experiencing a period of economic prosperity, with economic and social upward mobility for many, an extension of consumer buying power and alongside this, an increase in the access to consumer credit[3]. However, the two countries' political

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[3] For example, according to a new report from the World Bank Ferreira F H G, Messina J, Rigolini J, López-Calva L-F, Lugo M A, Vakis R, 2013, "Economic Mobility and the Rise of the Latin American Middle

and macroeconomic trajectories are quite distinct (see our previous paper, Ariztia et al 2013). Chile can be considered the first experiment in macroeconomic neoliberal reform (Harvey 2005). Guided by economists from the Chicago School, from the 1970s onwards the Pinochet regime deregulated the national economy and developed Chile as an export-oriented economy (Cademártori 2001). The post-dictatorship democratic governments, headed by a coalition of centre-left parties during 1990-2010, continued this policy. Faced with a limited domestic market of only 17 million consumers, Chilean companies have constantly been encouraged to find markets overseas and thus Chile's main export companies have had to respond to new requirements, standards and trends emerging abroad.

In contrast, Brazil has a much larger domestic market, active civil society and successive centre-left governments. Significant social and economic growth has pushed Brazil into being the seventh largest economy in the world with a GDP of U$ 2.52 trillion (CIA, 2013)) In contrast to Chile, the Brazilian state itself has played a much more prominent role in publically articulating ethical consumption discourses in tandem with NGOs (see Ariztia et al 2013).

In both countries, consumption is still a central matter of contestation between social groups, private actors and the state. Against this backdrop, there is a nascent but increasing literature in the two countries themselves concerning ethical consumption in the widest sense. Authors have described how Chile's export oriented economy has led to the introduction of environmental and social certification in forest production (e.g. Forest

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Class", (The World Bank, Washington DC): 'At least 40 percent of the region's households are estimated to have moved upward in "socio- economic class" between 1995 and 2010

Stewardship Campaign label) or the wine industry (e.g. Fairtrade Labelling International label) among some companies (Ariztía et al., 2009). In the domestic market, ethical and sustainable consumption has been increasingly developed by large companies, particularly through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) schemes. At the same time, studies have shown that Chilean consumers are slowly increasingly adopting ethical consumption practices and attitudes (Ariztía and Melero, 2013), a trend supported by NGOs such as Ciudadano Responsable[4].

In Brazil, in contrast to Chile, the state has played a much more prominent role in articulating ethical consumption in tandem with NGOs, as well as providing a legal framework and supporting sustainable consumption. Furthermore, in line with the Chilean case, the private sector has also increasingly taken up ethical consumption as part of their CSR schemes, assisted by ethical consumption NGOs such as Ethos Institute of Business and Social Responsibility and Instituto Akatu, the Brazilian partner NGO of the Choices project[5]. This relates to the observed increase in different forms of political consumerism, which in turn is linked firstly to the existence (in the case of Akatu since 2001) and creation of NGOs related to ethical consumption, secondly to the increasing visibility of ethical consumption issues in the Brazilian media (Barbosa et al., 2011) and thirdly to an increasing awareness of Brazilians (but not necessarily a visible change in actions) toward more sustainable and ethical forms of consumption (Akatu, 2005). Some important quantitative research on ethical consumption attitudes and behaviors has been done, notable the ethical consumption survey run biannually by Instituto Akatu since 2001, which in

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[4] The ESRC-DFID Choices project partnered with a local NGO, Cuidadano Responsable, and their blog (www.ciidadanoresponsable.cl) offers an excellent chronicle of this movement in Chile.
[5] For more on this please see our previous article: Ariztia et al 2013.

2012 was enhanced by questions on sustainable state procurement. However, there remains a significant gap where more qualitative research is needed, aimed at analyzing the discourses and meanings of this type of consumption in their local, regional, and national contexts and beyond.

3.2. Research design and fieldwork.

This paper is based on empirical material gathered in 32 focus groups conducted in 2012 in Chile and Brazil. The focus groups were designed to broadly address people´s understandings of ethical consumption in the context of their everyday life as well as in relation to more public discourses on the topic. The guide for the focus groups was jointly designed by the three-country project team and then used in Brazil and Chile. The themes chosen examined participants' understandings of the concepts 'ethical, sustainable, conscious, responsible consumption' and their views on individual and public purchasing criteria, inclusion of environmental and social criteria in individual and public purchasing, and reported environmental practices. For the purposes of this article we are just considering individual consumption discourses.

The main criteria used to recruit focus group participants in purposive sampling were gender, socioeconomic background, age and urban/rural location, in order to tap into a diversity of views. In total, 87 participants in Brazil and 92 participants in Chile took part

in the discussions. Participants were identified using purposive sampling and recruited using snowball sampling[6].

Transcripts were coded by three researchers using the qualitative software ATLAS.ti and emerging codes in open coding were subject to researcher triangulation. Then the team from the three countries agreed and defined a joint list of codes, including some verbatim codes in Spanish and Portuguese in order to capture the nuances and particularities of each context.

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[6] Given the vast size and regional diversity of Brazil, we tried to get a wider regional coverage and ran focus groups in northeast, centre-west, south and southeast regions. We conducted more groups in urban areas (12) where 74% of the Brazilian population is concentrated (IBGE, 2010) In Rio de Janeiro we also included four specific groups which we believed could contribute to a specific understanding of the theme due to their positionality: a group of organised conscious consumer activists who were participants of the Rede Ecológica in Rio; a group of black activists, which is one of the predominant, but often marginalised ethnic groups in Brazil; a group of artists; and a group of organic producers (from a relatively rural population with environmental concerns). As for Chile, nine focus groups took place in Santiago as the largest city in Chile. However to access views from the cities in other Chilean regions, we chose La Serena, in the north, and Concepción, in the south. While the majority of participants did not have a previous special relationship with ethical consumption, we also added a group with representatives from NGOs and small businesses based in Santiago that had a close relationship with ethical consumption.

4. <u>Ethical consumption discourses in Chile and Brazil.</u>

4.1 The meanings of consumption in Chile and Brazil

Among most of the respondents in Chile and Brazil, the concept of ethical consumption was little known, distant and not very precise. Indeed, when asked spontaneously, only few of the interviewees (often those with more formal education) were able to provide a clear definition. However, other terms such as 'sustainable consumption", "conscious consumption" (championed by Akatu in Brazil) and "responsible consumption" (championed by CR in Chile) were terms which participants were more familiar with and these were sometimes used interchangeably. Nevertheless, as we will show in this section, it is worth noting that besides the relative unfamiliarity with these concepts, participants in both countries clearly associated consumption practices with ethical considerations, thus showing a practical understanding of the issues surrounding ethical consumption.

On one level, Chilean and Brazilian respondents viewed ethical consumption in terms of ordinary consumption practices related to issues of health and well-being, responsibility and care for resources at the everyday household level. On a second level, ethical consumption and equivalent concepts were viewed by respondents in connection with a globalized concern with the impact of consumption on the environment and society.

4.2. Consumption and the everyday

Discourses which related ethical consumption with care and everyday reproductive family work were very common in the spontaneous responses of focus group participants. We identified at least two strands of discourse of this type. First, discourses that connected

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ethical consumption with overconsumption and discussions of quality, and second, discourses that related ethical consumption with health and food.

Overconsumption and Quality

In Chile and Brazil, frequently the first spontaneous responses to the topic of ethical consumption related to prudence and responsibility in household consumption practices. Ethical consumption in this sense is construed in terms of caring for oneself and ones family through prudent household management and choice of goods.

Regarding the links between consumption and responsible management of resources, in Chile one argument involves being reflexive and cautious, not engaging in overconsumption and not spending money on non-essential goods. Here, ethical consumption is linked to an argument at household scale, about the ability of 'sustaining' the family, making sure there is enough for the basic needs, especially amongst the less well-off. When asked to explain what "ethical consumption" meant for her, one woman explained:

"Consumption that is basic sustenance, everyday consumption. The things we actually need to live on. Basic sustenance. But we need to recognise what will be the consumption we will need: this pair of shoes- these we will need. The most important thing is that there is enough food. Not having lots of it, but making sure that these things are not missing.

Lower middle class elderly woman from Santiago, Chile

Ethical consumption was, in this sense, defined in terms of consuming what "is needed", partly because resources are scarce and this becomes a necessary strategy, but also as an

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implicit critique and resistance to the centrality of consumption and a system which constantly encourages the consumption of unnecessary things.

In Brazil, the concepts of 'ethical, responsible, sustainable and conscious consumption' were also associated with environmental care, and prudence in the use of resources such as water and electricity. In the so-called lower classes, these concepts were associated with not being too consumerist – resisting fashion obsession and peer pressure - which can lead to debt. Often participants associated sustainable consumption with a level of consumption in which the individual can 'sustain' himself and their relevant others.

[PI]: I have this sense that … I think people follow the fashion too much... end up buying, buying, buying and getting used to the impossible [level of consumption]... People have this shopping compulsion; for example, I have a friend that to be accepted in a certain group at school she has to have a certain brand of watch.

[P2]: It is difficult.

Lower class, urban, young adult woman, Northeastern Brazil

It is important to note, however, that while ethical consumption is understood in opposition to overconsumption, when asked about actual purchase practices, several respondents mentioned having difficulties avoiding overconsumption, this was particularly the case for the middle class respondents from Brazil.

Health and food.

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A second discourse that connects ethical consumption with the scale of individual and household everyday life relates to issues around quality and health in consumption. Making connections between food quality, health and ethical consumption was common in both countries. Among different socioeconomic groups, different groups often value different aspects in respect of what counts as quality and health.

In Brazil, for example, participant understandings of the terms 'ethical responsible, conscious and sustainable' consumption were closely related to consuming things that are safe and healthy, to themselves, families and the environment. It ranged from a holistic view on how care for the environment and its preservation would lead to a healthier, better 'quality of life' - a view for example advocated by a middle class artist from Rio de Janeiro - but also included views from those working close to the land, such as a low income organic producer from Rio who mentioned the impact of pesticides on water sources and the risk to health of fellow citizens living nearby.

An important factor were considerations about the quality of food and its impacts on individual and family health. In a majority of the focus groups participants reported that women were responsible for family purchases, something which has been confirmed in other studies in Brazil and elsewhere (Miller, 2001; Barbosa 2007). For some participants it was motherhood and the desire to care for the family that influenced their decision to buy organic.

In the case of Chile, respondents, particularly those who were in charge of family purchases (often women), associated food consumption with family health and being an ethical

consumer. In contrast to the cases in Brazil in which most evidence connecting food and ethical consumption related to middle class respondents and was associated with natural and organic food, in Chile issues about food and health were commonly raised in relation to general issues around healthy food - such as reduced-fat food- and alcohol consumption.

I consume things that are beneficial to me [and my body]. That's how I see it. I am not

going to consume things which will harm me. That's responsible consumption...

Young, urban, lower class female, Santiago del Chile

In terms of scale, here the micro-geography has moved from a household scale to the individual body. A central element here was the concern about ingredients, and nutritional information on food as well as issues around pollution and food ingredients.

. Compared with global North literature, we might identify some similar aspects while also some striking differences. First, in both countries ethics and consumption were spontaneously linked to family care and household reproduction, which was regularly defined as a central space and scale for being ethical. The obsession about health food and ones' family is commonly reported in Northern countries e.g. the US and has been used by some initiatives as the hook for ethical consumption discourses (see for example: O'ROURKE, 2012). Second, focus on too much consumption is less commonly reported in the empirical data in global North research with consumers while here it appears as a central concern of what is being construed as ethical. It is worth noting that in societies where rapidly growing consumer markets impact on previously more simple lifestyles, citizens might experience the expansion of consumption more directly or be more sensitive to "overconsumption" as they see it.

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4.3. National and global concerns around environmental and social awareness.

Speaking with a degree of necessary simplification, we can distinguish a second level of discourse on ethical consumption. This level of discourse involves identifying the impact of consumption on the environment and global social problems. It is thus a discourse that is much more closely aligned with global North and NGOs discourses on what ethical consumption means. Ethical consumption is mediated at this scale not so much by everyday life but relates to a more abstract spatial imagination of national and global scale consequences of consumption. Furthermore, in most cases in our research this level of discourse appeared less spontaneously and often only after we asked respondents to propose specific purchase criteria they might consider which went beyond price and quality. Key aspects mentioned were environmental and social consequences of consumption. .

Consumption and the environment.

In several cases, respondents linked personal consumption practices with global concerns about environmental problems. This type of discourses appears more strongly in middle class groups and was often accompanied by a more clearly articulated discourse and critique of a global consumer culture. One key idea was a critique of "useless" consumption - that is buying what one does not need due to compulsion or because of being pressured by advertising. This was a variation on the moral disgust and risk of debt expressed at overconsumption in the everyday and emphasised instead the negative consequences of

overconsumption for the planet's finite resources and human survival. A Chilean woman commented

[C]: I think this question of responsible consumption is a counterpoint to the question of

'accelerated' consumption [...]

[C]: You buy what you don't need, you think you need things that you don't need.

[T]: This form of exacerbated consumption impacts on the environment.

[C]: What I am trying to say is that these concepts emerged as a counterpoint to a form of

irresponsible consumption, without concerns, just following this compulsion that we have

nowadays to buy, buy, and buy, even what we don't need, and to be using too much

packaging without a thought for the rubbish it generates.

Middle class, urban participants, La Serena, Chile

In Chile, discourses connecting consumption and environment were more present among young college and university students, upper middle class professionals and activists (activists were only present in one specific focus group). Aspects mentioned included preserving resources for future generations, energy and water consumption and a preference for products from environmentally responsible companies.

It is worth noting that concerns about environmental consequences of consumption were connected to more general discourses about ethical and sustainable consumption at national and global scale. Discourses explicitly related to media reporting of political events. As one young man explained his commitment to ethical consumption:

"It goes hand in hand [and] in accordance with what was stated in Rio [Earth Summit] in '92, sustainability is about trying to enjoy [resources] today and preserve them so that future generations can also enjoy them. It goes hand in hand to be sustainable in one's consumption [...] Fundamentally, when I buy a product which implies clearing a forest that is not sustainable, because future generations won't be able to enjoy that forest, and apart from that will have fewer resources to produce oxygen and this ceases to be sustainable, in terms of economics, quality of life and health.

Upper middle class, urban, male adults, Santiago del Chile

In this example, this young man's discourse had clearly been influenced by the definition of sustainable development introduced by the Brundtland Commission Report (1987:27) which was used at the 1992 UN Conference for Environment and Development[7] which was held in Rio in neighbouring Brazil: *Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.* In 2012 a follow-up conference Rio+20 had been held and widely reported in the Chilean media.

Buying natural and organic products for environmental reasons was also mentioned, but mostly by participants in upper and middle class focus groups. However, we noted significant cynicism and distancing regarding the cost and availability of this type of consumption, mostly because of the affordability and access difficulties, even among these more affluent groups. These concerns were expressed, for example for the purchase of organic goods.

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[7] World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). *Our Common Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

H1: Of course, like with organic food, we can't all afford to buy tomatoes with no chemicals [in them], which do not have chemicals. They cost more. Buying such a product is not a top necessity for somebody from a lower class background, but sure, somebody with more money can buy it.

Young, upper class, adult female, Santiago del Chile

In regards to Brazil, it is worth noting that, with the exception of the plastic bag campaign which we will discuss below, the consideration of the impacts of consumption on the environment rarely arose spontaneously. It appeared unprompted only in the group of conscious consumers, organic producers and artists. Across all the focus groups only few participants were concerned with the environmental costs of transport, the use of water in production processes, buying environmentally friendly cleaning products and energy saving domestic appliances. In most cases, environmental issues appear as related to the impact of overconsumption on natural resources.

C: It is linked to water, energy, turning off the tap when brushing your teeth. It reminds me of older people, probably in your parent's house it was like this: our parents were conservationists. Preservationists - before that word existed. I remember my father going around the house turning off the lights.

[R]: This generation is the problem. They are extremely consumerists and are not conscious, unless we do our part - and the school too. The majority of them are selfish.

Urban, middle class, adult females, South of Brazil

In Brazil there were also a great number of spontaneous mentions, across groups from different class backgrounds, of the environmental impact of plastic bags use. This was

linked to a recent (2011) national scale government campaign on the issue and debates about the campaign itself and its impacts. This was partly due to significant media attention on this issue in national and regional television, radio and press.

[D]: If I go to the supermarket and it is heavy they want to put it into two bags and [I say] put it into just one. You don't need another bag. It is more rubbish.

Rural, lower middle class adult male, South of Brazil

Social impacts of consumption

Overall environmental consequences of consumption were more visible in the discourses than its social consequences on communities and producers. Regarding the social impacts of consumption, the only aspects mentioned without prompting which were connected with consumption were the product origin and it impacts on the national and local economy as well as the concern about labour conditions in the production of some goods.

Labour conditions in less economically developed countries are a common concern in Northern discourses of ethical consumption, (Barrientos and Smith, 2007; Cook and Harrison, 2007). In Chile and Brazil, focus group participants, especially from lower income groups in both countries, did however spontaneously mention the importance of prioritizing products sourced nationally.

When asked about reasons for this preference, one of the reasons given for the preference to buy nationally were, concerns about the social conditions (including sweatshoup labor) in production facilities overseas (in China in particular). In several focus groups, respondents suggested that Chilean products were better in quality than imported products (especially those from China) and that national production was an important

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source of jobs for Chilean workers. While some of this discourse may well have been motivated by social concerns for distant others, there clearly was also a general concern about jobs for Chileans in a globalized trading environment in an extremely liberalized and open national economy.

> *Many factories closed because there was not much [demand for Chilean shoes]. In*
> *Santiago they closed when all of the Chinese shoes came in.*
> **Urban, lower middle class, adult female, La Serena, Chile**

In Chile, the concern for producers and workers in other countries was mostly concentrated among upper middle class respondents, and focused in particular among those respondents who had an international experience, through travel or periods of studying or living abroad, of the Fair Trade movement and corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices.

Some of these discourses, however, were critiqued in terms of their impossibility of affecting further changes within the global capitalist system due to the lack of real choice. Some respondents also spoke about the complexity of these issues and the fear that too much worrying about these issues would result in paralysis. As one respondent from Chile put it:

> *F: And what about you?*
>
> *H1: My view is that no matter what, it's difficult to worry about everything, for each of*
> *these products, for each of these companies, because I believe all of these companies have*
> *some [labour] abuses going on and [eventually] you can't buy anything. Shoes from China,*

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from those little children [child labourers] and this question, and we can't worry about all

of that.

Young, urban, lower middle class male, Santiago del

ChileFG6_male&females_young_lowerclass_urban_SCL.

In Brazil, labour conditions were not mentioned at all in the definitions of sustainable, ethical, responsible and conscious consumption the respondents offered, which shows that these terms may be used in Brazil with no reference to such issues. Nonetheless, when asked what social criteria they would use when buying a product, the issue of labour conditions emerged without prompting. In the most general sense, using one's buying power to support the national or regional economy was the only social criterion mentioned spontaneously in all the focus groups. This was linked into spatial imaginations of different scales from local, to regional, national and even international, and a sense of responsibility for the regional and national economy.

In some cases, it was rooted in a political stance against foreign corporations or countries - mentions of China were common in Brazil as they had been in Chile. On the subject of origin, respondents consciously reported to have used their buying power to promote social change, both in terms of buying to support or by boycotting a specific product. This was also linked to how respondents believed foreign imports affected the national industry and consequently the job market. Moreover, similar to Chilean respondents, they doubted whether their individual buying decisions as consumers alone could make any difference.

All in all, this level of discourses on the environmental and social consequences of consumption often related to a more globalised space of connections and consequences of consumption. We noted in some groups what Massey (Massey, 1994) would call a global sense of place – an understanding of how local practices affected lives elsewhere, but also how far off processes affected the local place. Consumers were aware that their purchases could affect the lives of workers in China or Chile, but also had felt the impact of Chinese business practices on their own families' livelihoods:

[L]: At home we fight against it. For example, at the beginning of the year I bought a school bag for my daughter. We looked everywhere, and encountered many [bags that were] 'made in China' but carried on looking. I am not saying that I will never buy [something that is made in China] but we try to get away from it because what China is doing is absurd.

[J]: It must have been difficult to find something that is not from China.

[C]: Everything is.

[L]: It affects us directly. My husband makes these bags and the price of the ones from China made with slave labour put him out of business, so this impacts directly on our daily life.

Middle class, urban, adult female, South of Brazil

Interestingly, here a consumer and member of the new Brazilian middle class, is actually married to a producer (the bag-maker) and has seen the impact of fellow Brazilian' consumption decisions to buy the cheapest bags on her own family's livelihoods. This is a scenario one is much less likely to find in an ethical consumption focus group in the global

North, where few consumers are still linked directly to agriculture or clothes/shoe/accessories manufacture, which have formed the focus of much of the ethical consumption movements' social campaigns from Fair Trade to sweatshop labour. Arguably ethical consumption campaigning in the global South may be able to draw on such a two-way understanding of global trade links in a way that campaigns in the global North cannot.

Furthermore, a central element to note is the strong spatial imagination of the national scale impact of consumption, particularly in terms of labour conditions. This differs with traditional Northern societies' discourses of ethical consumption as linked with the imagination of a distant other, the producer, in other, poorer countries, particularly in Fair Trade.

5. Discussion

The discourses presented provide an understanding of how ethical consumption is construed in Chile and Brazil. Two main type of discourses emerge. On the one hand, in both countries ethical consumption is interpreted in relation to everyday practices of household reproduction. This is in alignment with Miller's arguments about the imbrication between all forms consumption and morality (2001). These discourses show that for most respondents it is very difficult to draw a line between taking care of themselves and their families and the ethics of buying and indeed not buying. Compared to Northern countries' discourses, this general concern with the morality of saving, prudence and consumption was much more prevalent than a discourse focused on specific types of products or ethical labels, which is familiar from global North ethical consumption discussions.

On the other hand, we identify a second type of discourse more in line with institutional and global discourses on ethical consumption, particularly with global campaigning. Here ethical consumption is also construed in terms of global environmental effects as well as labour conditions in production chains, expecially in China. In line with Barnett et al' work (2010), we described here how much these discourses are related to global discourses produced and circulated by NGO and institutional actors concerned with consumption. This second level is thus related to respondents' access to global public discourses on environmental issues and the costs of global capitalism. Being linked into these global discourses frequently coincided with respondents' having been to university and particularly having spent time abroad, opportunities which increasing numbers of Chileans and Brazilians now have access to. From this perspective, the prospect of an expansion in the market in Chile and Brazil for products marketed as "ethical" or "sustainable" looks particularly promising. However it is worth remembering, guided by our Chilean focus group results, that buying such products constitutes only a limited sub-set of ethical consumption practice. Given that "buying ethical/green products" has proven to have been in the global North, one of the aspects of ethical consumption most compatible with corporate growth plans and palatable to consumers, it is unsurprising that this aspect is set to become increasingly popular in Chile and Brazil.

6. Conclusion: Examining ethical consumption from the global south: exploring continuities and differences beyond the deficit model.

By analysing ethical consumption discourses from Chile and Brazil, we have shown how ethical consumption is enacted through different contexts in both countries. We might point to three further aspects by way of conclusion.

First, a central element is that differences are not necessarily most marked between global North and global South. In fact, it can be noted that many of the identified discourses are quite close to familiar Northern discourses (such as the concern for food safety and family health or the discourses that connect ethical consumption with global environmental problems). It is thus not possible nor sensible to draw a neat line between, for example, Latin American discourses and European ones. This is evident in different levels. Firstly, empirical material presented here supports traditional accounts of everyday consumption as central space of moral obligations and ethical decisions (Miller 2001). Both our material from Southern countries and the existing literature on Northern ethical consumption identify a similar primary geography of affect and care as described by Massey a powerful popular assumption of a "Russian doll geography" where it is somehow natural to have as one's central concern the concern about loved ones (one's "nearest and dearest" as the English phrase goes) and an incremental but somewhat secondary interest for distant others (Massey, 1994). There is however in our data also evidence of people expressing versions of Massey's own vision of an alternative "global sense of place", recognising the linkages (often characterised by uneven power relations) and co-constitutedness of places (Massey 1994, 2005). As more Chilean and Brazilians get the opportunity to travel, there is a good chance that this sense of interconnectedness might grow. At the same time, in line with

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Barnetts et al's work (2010), we found that ethical consumption discourses that were focused on global environmental problems or global justice were strongly related with people's involvement in public discourses and available campaigning and media reporting on ethical consumption.

Secondly, there are some important nuances and differences that can be noted between the discourses described here and those commonly portrayed in Northern ethical consumption literature. One particularly relevant element is the striking relevance of the ordinary ethics of consumption. In most cases, respondents associate ethics and consumption with everyday life household reproduction practices rather than with global issues. While this is in line with Northern literature, it can be noted that here we found clearly a different emphasis, for example an understanding of ethical consumption as prudent management of the household budget and the avoidance of debt – aspects commonly mentioned in both countries (but not so common in Northern ethical consumption literature). Against this backdrop, looking at our material we think it is necessary to further problematize definitions of ethical consumption by exploring in more depth people's own notions of consumption and morality. Our partner NGOs' commitment to alternative terms such as "conscious consumption" (Akatu in Brazil) and "responsible consumption" (CR in Chile) is a pertinent reminder of the possibility of alternative terminologies linguistically related to "conscience" and "responsibility", which invoke more personalised moral perspectives.

Thirdly, another difference between our findings and Northern literature is that everyday discourses of ethics and consumption appeared to be quite disconnected from the more global and standard narrative that links consumption with social and environmental

problems. Arguably, this is due to the more limited ethical consumption campaigning in public spaces in Chile and Brazil public space, in comparison to for example the UK where consumers from any background might be confronted with Fair Trade advertising when doing their weekly shopping. For example, every year in the UK media coverage of Fair Trade issues peaks during the annual Fair Trade Fortnight, when also shops highlight their Fairtrade certified products in store. With the possible exception of Instituto Akatu's biannual launch of the latest ethical consumption report for Brazil, there are few such regular media-friendly events in Chile and Brazil.

From our material, we noted that global discourses on ethical consumption were taken up and re-produced more by a certain type of respondents: e.g. middle class university students in Chile who had spent semesters abroad or upper class professionals who frequently take business trips to countries around the world.

In sum, more than radical differences in ethical consumption discourses between the global North and the global South we noted *among* our Chilean and Brazilian respondents different emphases and different levels of engagement with global discourses on ethical consumption. In Chile and Brazil, while discourses linking consumption and morality were common, links made to global scale discourses relating for example to the environment were less common and concentrated among more highly educated participants.

Future research, including our own, cannot be content with focusing on mapping differences between discourses from countries in the global North and South (maybe assuming that discourses somehow stop at national borders) but must further explore these differences, not just through country comparisons but through a twofold task. First, problematizing the concept of ethical consumption by taking time to examine the

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argumentations people present around the everyday links between consumption and morality. This will allow for a more nuanced co-constructed definition of morality. In this we also need to recognise the need to resist the narrowing down of ethical consumption to "buying more ethically". We need to remember that often, the lifestyle of the poor is more environmentally sustainable, even if they do not know that they could call it "sustainable consumption".

Finally, there is a great need to conduct a more fine-grained analysis of how different levels of discourses on ethics and consumption relate not just to the local, national or transnational scale, but to respondent characteristics and indeed relations of difference along class, education, age and urban/rural lines. Access to discourses, including to the transnational tropes of the ethical consumption discourse, varies across the lived realities of people in the multiple global Souths, including Chile and Brazil.

In contrast to this stand the environmental discourses which we encountered as linked to global discourses on environmental degradation; they transcended the national scale and moved to the global scale, and at the most sophisticated end even spoke about intergenerational environmental justice for future generations.

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