COCA COMMUNICATIONS: TALES FROM THE BOLIVIAN COCA FIELD

Nadia Kate Butler

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Discipline of Anthropology, University of Adelaide

November 2007
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES...............................................................................................................................vi
LIST OF FIGURES............................................................................................................................vi
ABSTRACT.........................................................................................................................................viii
DECLARATION....................................................................................................................................x
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS...................................................................................................................xii
DEDICATION......................................................................................................................................xiv

## 1 DEVELOPING AN ECOSYSTEM OF COCA COMMUNICATIONS: INTRODUCING
CAST, SETTING AND PLOT.............................................................................................................1

Introduction: Where and Who? ................................................................................................. 3
Aims, Focus and Justification for the Research: What and Why? ................................................ 7
Theoretical Underpinnings of the Thesis: How to Conceptualise the Problem ....................... 12
  The Ecology of Coca Communications.................................................................................. 12
  The Political Economy of Coca Communications.............................................................. 14
  Capital and Habitus in the Coca Field ................................................................................. 15
  Contestations of Discourse and Hegemony in the Communicative Ecosystem................... 20
Yungueños in History and the World: Historical Relations of Material and Cultural Production .. 23
Relations of Coca Production, Exchange and Consumption: The Basis for a Communicative Ecosystem .............................................................................................................................................. 25
ICTs as Social Connectors in the Ecosystem of Coca Communications: Inclusions and Exclusions .............................................................................................................................................. 30
Radio Yungas: Social Networker and Platform for Cultural Production and Contestation........ 31
The Internet Telecentre: Tales of an Introduced Species ............................................................ 34
Developing the Ecosystem of Coca Communications: Development ‘Organisms’ and Environmental Adaptation .......................................................................................................................... 36
Methodology ................................................................................................................................. 38
  The Methodological Toolkit ................................................................................................. 40
  The Perils of Applied Anthropology..................................................................................... 41
  Reflexivity .............................................................................................................................. 43
Conclusion.................................................................................................................................... 44

## 2 YUNGUENOS IN HISTORY AND THE WORLD: HISTORICAL RELATIONS OF MATERIAL AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION..........................................................................................47
Cultural Plunderers – An Introduction......................................................................................... 49
Yungas as Material Battle-Ground: The Historical Fight for Control of the Sacred Leaf.............. 52
  A Brief History of a Prized Commodity, from Inca Landlords to Spanish Landlords ........... 52
Patterns of Land Ownership and Trade during the Hacienda Period and Implications for the Social Structure of Today’s Yungas ......................................................................................................... 54
Yungas as Cultural Battleground: The Creation of Cultural and Coca Discourses.................. 58
Cultural Implications of the System of Land Ownership and Trade of the Hacienda Era

Social and Cultural Changes after the 1953 Agrarian Reform

Ethnicity, Class and Division of Labour: The Triadic Legacy of the Spanish Conquest and the Campo-Pueblo Dichotomy

The Coca Leaf as Protagonist in the Creation of Discourse after the Spanish Conquest

The Struggle for Control of Coca and Discourse takes a Global Turn

The International Community joins the Struggle over Control of the Coca Leaf and Cocaine

The United States Declares War on the Coca Leaf and the Producers accept the Challenge

The Coca Leaf still stars in Twentieth Century Cultural Production

The Struggle over Material and Cultural Production continues in the Guise of Development

From Stick to Carrot: Waging War through Alternative Development

The Implications for Contemporary Development Organisations: A Continuation of Historical Local-Outsider Power Relations

Conclusion

3 RELATIONS OF COCA PRODUCTION, EXCHANGE AND CONSUMPTION: THE BASIS FOR A COMMUNICATIVE ECOLOGY

Introduction

Land Ownership as a Framework for Communicational Activities

Land Ownership in the Yungas: Personal Capital Accumulation in a Communal Environment

The Landed and the Landless: Ethnic, Class, Labour and Communicational Divisions

Labour Exchange As a Basis for Social and Communicational Exchange

Land and Social Capital become Labour Capital in a Yungas Political Economy of Labour

Nurturing Social and Symbolic Capital and Converting it to Labour

Division of Labour: Reproduction of Ethnic and Class Divisions within the Communicative Ecosystem

The Local Sindicato as a Communicative Forum Representing Communities and Individuals

Sindicatos as a Representative, Communicative Body For a ‘United’ Labour Force

Sindicatos as a Communicational Forum for Certain ‘Organisms’ in the Ecosystem of Coca Communications

The Coca Trade: Exchange and Distribution of Coca and Ideas

Social Networking in a Global Trade System

Tracing Trade Lines of Communication and Social Differentiation

Consumption as Social Interaction and the Communication of Meanings

Coca as a Medium for Social Interaction and Communication

Coca as a Communicator of Social Differentiation

Conclusion

4 ICTs AS SOCIAL ARTICULATORS IN THE ECOSYSTEM OF COCA COMMUNICATIONS AND BEYOND: INCLUSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

Introduction
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: Properties of the different communications media........................................................136
TABLE 2: Radio Yungas Weekday Programming............................................................................183

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: Resting before work during a faena; boy with radio. (Photos by author, March 2005)...Title Page
FIGURE 2: Sur Yungas community, with coca drying on the ground. (Photo by author, April 2005)..........................................................................................................................................1
FIGURE 3: Map of Bolivia, showing location of the Yungas of La Paz. (http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/resources/stamps/map%20bolivia.jpg) .................................................................5
FIGURE 4: Map of Chulumani and Irupana municipalities, with Chulumani sub centrales (Qhana and Pastoral n.d.:65)..................................................................................................................................6
FIGURE 5: View of Chulumani. (Reproduced with permission from Anita Butler, October 2004)...28
FIGURE 6: Patronal fiesta, Sur Yungas town. (Photo by author, June 2004)......................................29
FIGURE 7: Participant carrying wiphala during Radio Yungas’ 26th birthday celebrations, Chulumani. (Photo by author, July 2004). .......................................................................................47
FIGURE 8: Diagram of the coca field, showing habitus of coca producers and non-producers (campo/pueblo)..................................................................................................................................................67
FIGURE 9: Power Diagram. Response by survey participant to the question, ‘Who has the most power in your community? in the country? in the world? Could you draw a diagram illustrating this situation?’ (Ex-school teacher, Chulumani)........................................................................................................80
FIGURE 10: ‘Tío Sam’ diagram. Response by survey participant to the question, ‘Who has the most power in your community? in the country? in the world? Could you draw a diagram illustrating this situation?’ (Tertiary student, Chulumani)........................................................................................................81
FIGURE 11: Drawing of ‘the reality of the Yungas’, showing a foot covered in a United States flag, stepping on a frowning coca leaf. Drawn by a group of participants at the Pre-dialogue 2004, Movimiento Cultural Saya Afroboliviano. (Photo by author, May 2004)................................................................................82
FIGURE 12: Harvesting coca, with Chulumani in the background (top left), and a small Yungas community school and football field (bottom right). (Photo by author, March 2005)........................................................................89
FIGURE 13: Planting coca during a faena. (Photo by author, January 2004)...................................89
FIGURE 14: Coca drying on a kachi (slate patio). (Photo by author, April 2004)..............................90
FIGURE 15: Teamwork: Pulling the truck out of the mud on a Yungas road. (Photo by author, January 2005)...............................................................................................................................117
FIGURE 16: Bogged. (Photo by author, February 2004)......................................................................117
FIGURE 17: Travelling in the Yungas. (Photo by author, January 2004)........................................118
FIGURE 18: Stopping briefly to foreground the television in a Yungas community home. (Photo by author, June 2005).................................................................................................................................129

FIGURE 19: Graph: Responses by survey participants to the question: ‘What do you do if you need to communicate with a person in: 1) another community or town, 2) another city?, 3) another country?’........................................................................................................................................153

FIGURE 20: Radio Yungas Central Office, Chulumani. (Photo by author, June 2005).................................................................................................................................173

FIGURE 21: Map showing Radio Yungas’ coverage (Qhana and Pastoral n.d.:39).................................................................................................................................186

FIGURE 22: A Radio Yungas staff member being showered with confetti and adoration at the radio station’s 26th birthday celebrations, Chulumani, (Photo by author, July 2004).................................................................................................................................196

FIGURE 23: The ‘El Viajero’ booth, at la tranca, Chulumani. (Photo by author, June 2005).................................................................................................................................210

FIGURE 24: Listening to the radio whilst drying coca. (Photo by author, June 2005).................................................................................................................................220

FIGURE 25: Listening to the radio whilst peeling coffee beans. (Photo by author, June 2005).................................................................................................................................220

FIGURE 26: Baby guarding the radio while his parents weed the coca field. (Photo by author, April 2005).................................................................................................................................221

FIGURE 27: Boy with radio and popcorn in a Yungas community. (Photo by author, June 2005).................................................................................................................................221

FIGURE 28: Chulumani’s Internet telecentre, with sign reading: ‘The New Technologies in Everybody’s Reach.’ (Photo by author, June 2005).................................................................................................................................223

FIGURE 29: Making use of the telecentre. (Photo by author, February 2004).................................................................................................................................224

FIGURE 30: Coca leaves drying in a Yungas community. (Photo by author, June 2005).................................................................................................................................253

FIGURE 31: Homework time in a Yungas community. (Photo by author, March 2005).................................................................................................................................289
ERRATA – FIGURES DELETED DUE TO COPYRIGHT ISSUES

Page 5
FIGURE 3: Map of Bolivia, showing the Yungas of La Paz. (Reproduced from http://campus.udayton.edu/mary//resources/stamps/map%20bolivia.jpg)

Page 6
FIGURE 4: Map of Chulumani and Irupana municipalities, with Chulumani sub centrales (Reproduced from Qhana and Pastoral [n.d.] Nuestra Provincia. Qhana, Pastoral, La Paz: p.65).

Page 186
FIGURE 21: Map showing Radio Yungas’ coverage (from some years ago) (Reproduced from Qhana and Pastoral [n.d.] Nuestra Provincia. Qhana, Pastoral, La Paz: p. 39)
ABSTRACT

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in Bolivia’s coca-growing Yungas region, this thesis is concerned with how, on the most practical level, development projects might hold more relevance to the lives of their target groups than they have hitherto tended to do, as well as how the power imbalances that characterise the relationships between development organisations and local people may be understood and addressed. Beginning with the concept of ‘communicative ecology’ (Tacchi et al 2003) as a framework for exploring the multifariousness of communicative avenues and the interconnectedness of these within a system, I focus my analysis on the ecosystem of coca communications. I argue, however, that the concept of communicative ecology on its own has little meaning without adopting a political economy approach, which incorporates the work of attempting to understand the social and power relations that surround the production, distribution and consumption of resources, both material and cultural.

As a way of analysing the strategies and potentials of people within the ecosystem of coca communications, I utilise Bourdieu’s (1990) notions of field, habitus and forms of capital, where the coca field characterises itself by virtue of the fact that all those who are a part of it are linked in some way through the production, exchange and consumption of both the coca leaf, and the values, meanings and discourses that surround it. It is concluded that the ecosystem of coca communications is linked intrinsically to the coca production system, in that individuals and groups have differential access to, inclination to use, and success in influencing the discourse via different communicative media, depending on their situation within the coca field. This refers to land ownership, labour, organisational participation, exchange and consumptive practices, which is translated into a system of capital accumulation and exchange. The thesis argues that development organisations will do well to consider a given locality in these terms in order to facilitate the implementation of ICT projects that are relevant and compatible with local social and communicational systems, and further, that these organisations must reflect upon their own role as ‘introduced organisms’ within local communicative ecologies.
DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for photocopying and loan.

SIGNED:......................................................................................................................................

Nadia Kate Butler

November 2007,
University of Adelaide.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is the part I have most been dreading, for I am sure to omit someone who has helped me along in this journey. Nonetheless, I will begin by acknowledging, as is only right, the people who allowed me to stay in their towns, communities and homes, who permitted me to present my take on their story, despite all that has gone before, who welcomed me into their coca fields, their cafetales, their fiestas, their dance groups, their sindicato meetings, their lives. These are the people of the Chulumani and Irupana regions, Sud Yungas, Bolivia. I would like to extend particular thanks and cariño to my new Bolivian family, for accepting me with open arms and for graciously allowing me to steal their hijito. Elvira was the model mother; her cooking and the evenings shared watching Mexican telenovelas were a joy. Nano was the model brother - only annoying where necessary - and Cristóbal and the hoards of uncles, aunts and cousins made the whole experience worthwhile with their understanding and acceptance. Thank you to Ersilia for the stories and to Miguel for introducing me as his nieta.

I simply cannot name all the people who showed me hospitality and assisted in my research by agreeing to be interviewed, answering my incessant and amusing questions, and providing me with a unique insight into their lives. As such, I will name just a few. Thank you to my dear friends, neighbours, compadres and ahijados, Rubén, Mode, Nathali, Idel, Magdalena, Miguel, Virginia, Damariz, Yordi, Miguel(iito), Israel, Claudina and Don Loa, Arminda, Karen, Ana, Ana Bella, Toño, Blumensita, Freddy and Nancy, Flora and her family, Maria Elena, Maggi, Vivi, Rene and Lili, Vivi and Berna and ‘los Bernas’ - Luis, Henry and Dieguito - Teofila and Nelson, Geraldo, Eleuteria, Rosemeri, Madi, Ramiro, Basilia, Zenobio and family, Antonio, Sofia, Zenon, Vicente and Adelaida, Néstor, Lidio and Angel and their families, and all the Trapos. Thank you to Alfredo Poma as Sub-Prefecto and Dra Blumen Pedraza as Mayor of Chulumani for their support, and to Franz, Edwin and the rest of the team from ADEPCOCA for not throwing me out and for patiently explaining to me the way things are.

I owe gratitude to the tireless and multi-talented people of Radio Yungas, both staff and corresponsales, for allowing me to join their team and for teaching me so much about radio broadcasting, the good and the bad. Acknowledgement must go to Don Justo Carpio, for allowing me to step on board, and the same is due to the inexhaustible Ivonne van Pelt for allowing me to work with Panfluit. Thank you to Mauricio Canedo and the team from Creación for allowing me to work with them, in particular Maria Elena for her candour and her generosity of spirit. In La Paz, there are countless people who oriented me in my early days in Bolivia, giving me direction, suggestions, and ideas for my research. I cannot name them all, but wish to pay gratitude to Jaime Fernandez from the Department of Anthropology at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (UMSA), for affording me the backing of that institution and for facilitating my access to the university library, to Adalid Contreras for his insights, and to all the people from Qhana who made me feel welcome.

I particularly wish to acknowledge Alison Spedding, whose mind works several times faster than mine, and who has been incredibly generous to me throughout this process, answering my emails before I entered the field, inviting me to my first faena before anyone else had had the courage to take the risk, and lending me her library of reading material. The hours spent sitting outside, boleando and discussing the way of things were invaluable. She has also commented on sections of this draft, for which I am eternally grateful. I also wish to acknowledge the contribution of my anthropologist hermana Raquel Nava, who has commented on pieces of
work during the different stages of this endeavour and who has accompanied me with moral support. I wish her well on her own doctoral journey, which is only just beginning. Thank you mil veces to my first Bolivian family, the Navas, who welcomed me into their house in La Paz whenever I arrived on the doorstep, without any questions, and never asking anything in return.

My supervisors at the University of Adelaide, Andrew Skuse, John Gray and Jim Taylor have laboured through my many drafts (I apologise in particular for the earlier ones), offering invaluable insight and knowledge, and rarely communicating feelings of despair. Colleen Solley and Sharon Lewis, administrators par excellence, have provided support and smiles throughout the process, always offering advice and help far beyond what was demanded of them. I will never forget how Colleen did the impossible in standing up to the higher beings to make sure I was able to take that laptop away with me. Gratitude goes to the other staff and postgrads who have commented on my work during seminars, and over coffee, where the real stuff happens. The therapeutic venting sessions that occurred with my postgraduate colleagues and friends, about the process and the ideas, made the final days much more enjoyable. Special thanks go also to my dear neighbours Kim Hardie and Mehdi Zaboli. Kim proofread the final version of the thesis, Mehdi scanned copious photos on their scanner, obliging at whatever time I dropped in, and both of them made life at West Beach fun.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my family. My father, Alan Butler, and my mother, Jan Butler, both commented on the final draft, and my mother proofread the version that went to the printers, meaning that she read the thesis twice in the space of two weeks; more than most people could stomach. My sister, Anita Butler, undertook the tedious task of formatting and proofreading the bibliography. Beyond this, they have supported me throughout the entire process, and throughout my life, never questioning any decisions that I have made. They are daily sources of inspiration to me and it would certainly never have happened without them. The same goes for my dear grandparents Edna Jean and Ross Hector Macpherson, who I could always count on to be here and to help make Adelaide home again for a while. To Coco (Cristian) Mendoza, my number one ‘informant’, acknowledgement is due for his work as research assistant in Bolivia, carrying out interviews and recording data, and often acting as messenger between myself, La Paz and Holland, and in Australia, for Internet research and tape transcriptions. He is responsible for all the graphics and presentation of this thesis, except where another source is noted. He is also responsible for being my alegría on a daily basis. His strength of spirit, and ability to remain calm and happy, despite my thesis moods, is a constant source of amazement to me.
DEDICATION

To the people of the Yungas and their 
hoja sagrada.
And to my loving, inspirational and handsome grandfather, Ross Hector Macpherson, who stayed around just long enough to hold the final draft in his hands.
I would like it to go into your thesis, that we here in Bolivia want to industrialise the coca and export it to Europe, and other countries.

(Coca grower, Chulumani sector community)

This has to go into your PhD. People need to know, we’re not like that, bad – lots of people think we’re bad, lazy, we don’t do anything... but it’s not like that. If you want to give us something, we say thank you, but don’t lie to us.

(School Director, Chulumani sector community)