

Living with Coffee

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An exegesis submitted to
Auckland University of Technology
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters in Communications

February 2011

School of Communication Studies

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Abstract

The underpinning theme of this exegesis is to provide an overview of the conceptual foundations supporting the documentary 'Living with Coffee' which I produced. The main historical, theoretical and artistic perspectives that have contributed to this production will be explained and defended as the most suitable for my work on this documentary as it relates to fair trade. Fair trade, in particular the fair trade of coffee is the wider framework for 'Living with Coffee'. In summary, my work relied not only on technical and practical efforts of producing a piece of journalistic art but also on sound theory and research findings.

The intention of my documentary 'Living with Coffee' is to look into the following question: What effect does the 'café culture' and consumers' choices within it have on the coffee producers and could we sip our way to change? People who consume coffee have the power to change the lives of poor producers for the better. This documentary chose coffee as the commodity in question and analyzed its journey from its production by the coffee producers (or as often referred to in this piece, "cafeteros" a common name given to coffee growers in Colombia), to the places where it is traded and, finally, to those that consume it.

Background

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A History of Choosing Documentary

I decided on the creative work of documentary as a means of capturing and portraying what I wanted to say. As Barbash & Taylory (1997) explain, words or photos cannot provide the perception of authenticity that films can put on a screen. “Film language is the language of moving, seeing and hearing; more than any other medium or art form, film uses experience to express experience” (Barbash & Taylory, 1997, p. 1).

Documentary could simply be defined as the attempt to document real life (“Incentive”, 2010). It sits among other forms of visual expression and the interpretations are vast. My choice to use documentary came about a hundred of years after the first movie makers took that approach, and follows the choice of millions of producers since to use documentary to tell their story.

Some of the first films ever made could be classified as documentaries. They were snapshots of moments such as a boat departing, train arriving, documenting someone at work. Then, pre-1900, the fascination was of presenting an event. These brief movies were named ‘actuality’ films (Barson, Morris, Nash, & Campany, 2006). Then, in early 20th century, travel films were popular, opening the experiences of overseas travel, different cultures, exotic locations to all those that were interested. These clips were also called ‘scenics’ and proved popular. They did not involve “story-telling, narrative or staging” (Dirks, 2010, p. 1).

A movie of particular note that went further than a travelogue was *In the Land of the Head Hunters* (1914). This is a prepared film, which was shown as typical re-creation of a Native American’s life.

At this same time, Frank Hurley's, *South* (1919), which presented the unsuccessful expedition led by Ernest Shackleton in 1914 to the Antarctic, was introduced to the big screen. A documentary frequently noted to be prototypical is *Nanook of the North* (1922); portraying the day to day existence of Quebec Inuit families this documentary is held as a significant contribution to independent cinema but also has been called the first documentary, ethnographic and art film (Rony, 1996). It is described as a bookmarker for a period in time prior to the refinement of the definition of fiction and documentary (Rothman, 1998). It was a first in "theatrical documentary" that shed light on the movie maker in equal proportion to those being filmed. "Also impressive is the films's ominous lyricism, its precisely-wrought imagery and the rhythm of its storytelling" (Clotworthy, 1998, p. 1). It also gave new meaning to the term of "going on location" (Roston, 2010, p. 1).

The social role of documentaries grew increasingly popular in the 1930s. Different historical events encouraged artists and filmmakers to focus their attention on those who belonged to disadvantaged classes of society or on hot topics addressing political issues at the time. The Depression and the Wall Street Crash for example, were events that affected everyone in society and filmmakers, among many other artists, felt compelled to express their opinions through their art (Barson, et al., 2006).

During the period 1920s to 1940s propaganda movies also began to be produced to convince viewers of an argument. A well known example is *Triumph of the Will* (1935) by Leni Riefenstahl, a Nazi propaganda film. "Her Nazi documentaries were hailed as groundbreaking film-making, pioneering techniques involving cranes, tracking rails, and many cameras working at the same time" (BBC, 2003, p. 1). Similarly, Joris Ivens and Henri Storck, both from the political left, directed *Borinage* (1931), a piece which looks at coal mining in Belgium (Ji Hoon, 2009). In the 1940s the topics of conflict, ruin, lost aspirations, postwar rebuilding and the healing of society were often the focus of documentaries and reflected the challenges of that era (Yule, 1993).

Cinéma vérité (otherwise known as direct cinema) was the theme of the 1950s-70s. Through improvements in light, sound and camera technology this type of cinema made its mark. Cinéma vérité was an expression of freedom from traditional ties to studio productions which often previously involved a lot of equipment and many crew members. Reductions in crew members needed and the ability to shoot on location with portable, lightweight equipment were all advantages that the French New Wave embraced as they documented events as and where they happened. Robert Drew's films *Primary and Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment*, *Chronicle of a Summer* (Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin), *Harlan County, USA* (directed by Barbara Kopple), and *Golden Gloves* (Gilles Groulx) are some examples of direct cinema (Barbash & Taylor, 1997). Advances in technology undoubtedly made the filming of '*Living with Coffee*' a viable project. It was recorded on a simple Samsung recorder, using an easy to stow and carry tripod and a microphone that was well priced (for a student), yet adequate to capture the levels of sound needed. With this equipment I was able to film basic quality footage that was essential to the documentary. As it all packed away into a small backpack I was able to film in remote locations (coffee farms on isolated, steep slopes of Colombia, some accessible only by foot. Film crews laden with equipment (and many staff) would not have obtained the same results I achieved with relative obscurity and with unobtrusiveness.

Documentary became a political weapon in the 1960s and 1970s. It fought a hostile fight (particularly in Latin America) in opposition to capitalism and neocolonialism. Generations of movie makers and movie goers were inspired by one film in 1968, *La Hora de los hornos* (*The Hour of the Furnaces*) (Fernando E. Solanas and Octavio Getino). From 1966 to 1968 it was filmed secretly. Screenings started to take part in what was known as the 'dirty war' in Argentina. As films would question the status quo, discussions and debates on raised issues were encouraged in audiences that usually included revolutionaries, anarchists, and disadvantaged workers (Schroeder, 2008).

As much as I would like to think '*Living with Coffee*' was objective...it could be considered to be quite subjective and could easily fall into the broad grouping of documentary driven by political agenda or with activism agendas. It presents the reality that 'cafeteros' in Colombia

have experienced and unrepentantly campaigns for a better deal and resulting in a better quality of life for families that sell coffee for our consumption.

Activism in journalism had an outstanding representation in the works of John Pilger. Thirty-six years and some 60 documentaries later, he is still making challenging films and writing challenging articles. His films have won Academy Awards in Britain and the United States. In his own words: “It is not enough for journalists to see themselves as mere messengers without understanding the hidden agendas of the message and myths that surround it [the message]” (Pilger, 2009, p. 1).

With a decreasing number of companies managing the world’s media it is more and more important to have people like Pilger producing high quality documentaries, so that a diverse range of viewpoints have the opportunity to be expressed and considered by viewers. I feel that *‘Living with Coffee’* also falls into this much-needed category. It is important that the views of many un-influenced, unbiased, often small scale documentary producers reach our screens. The large multi-national media companies often by de-fault only present the vocal view of a few. “People themselves look for different points of view and information that documentaries provide, and which are not easily available from media that has strong ties with ruling global corporations” (Mercer, Speaker, 2009).

In 2010, the genre of documentary has become popular in traditionally box office cinemas. Examples of note include *An Inconvenient Truth*, *March of the Penguins* and *Super Size Me*. These documentaries show that over the last 20 years the essence of documentary movies has altered. For example Errol Morris’s *The Thin Blue Line* incorporated acting and re-creations and *Roger and Me* and *Bowling for Columbine* (Michael Moore) both clearly involved interpretation by the director. From traditional film footage, through to video and more recently, digital opportunities, documentary is a genre that continues to reinvent itself.

At this stage it is imperative to separate traditional magazine style current affairs and documentary. Current affairs programmes are more often than not constructed in a matter of days. On the other hand, a documentary can demand detailed investigation, and sporadic filming

(often over years). Documentary grasps a contemporary topic but often approaches it in a different way - rhythmical, thoughtful, pensive and sometimes previously untried (Yule, 1993).

Defining Documentary

John Grierson (writer, producer and director) enhanced the world of documentary in the United Kingdom during the 1930s. Grierson stepped up to give a definition and theory of documentary. He defined the art as a "creative treatment of actuality" (Corner, 1996, p. 17). This obtained a degree of reception; however it does raise questions regarding reenactments when used in documentary. Grierson's ideas of documentary were primarily focused on its ability to witness the real world, and that real was always preferential to fictional alternatives (for example in terms of actors, materials and scenes). He stated that film has the unique ability to look at life and select moments of it to be used in very creative and innovative ways (Grierson, 1979). *'Living with Coffee'* adopted Grierson's idea of using real content. Original material was captured to present the life of Colombian 'cafeteros'.

The option to use documentary, Grierson wrote, was not dissimilar to the choice of expressing oneself through poems instead of writing novels or fiction (Grierson, 1979). Creativity and imagination can also serve as evidence of the intricacies of reality. Images and sound of real circumstances can serve social education and information purposes. *'Living with Coffee'* is a piece of creative art depicting characteristics of real, authentic, current, living, social, financial, and political issues.

Conversely, in 2001, Bill Nichols (a highly esteemed film maker) stated that documentaries present the world as we know it rather than a replication of that reality. Essentially, this medium is able to deliver perspectives of our environment, perspectives that, even if elements were familiar to us, when presented differently, we are able to consider differently. *'Living with Coffee'* provides viewers from third world countries with an account of what life is like at the other end of the coffee production and trade chain. Viewers from developed countries can also see the reality of what cafeteros have to go through to provide lovers of coffee with their often

much appreciated final commodity. Finally, viewers can support their own opinions, make new ones, or inform their arguments from this piece of work which reflects a very current and highly debated topic. This is not only applicable for those experts in social development and economics, but for people, in general, who may or may not realize the implications of their consumer choices.

Documentaries also share some general conventions that help make them a form of art - a distinguishable genre among all forms of artistic expression. Documentaries do not rely only on actors but also on real people, going about with their daily 'real life' activities, as the main characters in a film. Points of view can be made using different images or cutaways. Resources available to the documentary producer include commentators to help interpret scenes, interviews, and real locations and people sounds (Nichols, 2001). *'Living with Coffee'* was made up of most of these elements. From conversations with the farmers, recording the sounds intrinsically linked to roasting coffee and the all familiar tap-tap as a barista makes an espresso through to film of growers working with their crops.

My documentary is a work of art that exposes some of the most unfavorable features of current dominant world economic trends, in which the balance of trading power leans toward the side of rich multinational corporations. Nowadays, as in the past, injustice provides artists with material that can be used to express points of view and opinions in a way that may appeal to all kinds of people. Other artists in the past have also used different ways of artistic expression to depict the impact of events (such as the great depression or the industrialization era) or social conditions in the lives of those most disadvantaged ("Making History", 2006). Third world labourers and the unemployed are the most disadvantaged under the current and increasingly global, some would say unfair, world economic system. My focus is on poor, usually uneducated, producers who are unaware of how valuable their product becomes when more powerful traders and transporters distribute it to different markets all over the world.

Coffee as a Commodity

As mentioned previously my chosen topic was the trade of coffee. The medium I chose to present my story was documentary.

Internationally approximately 25 million people grow coffee, enough to supply the world with its top ranking preferred stimulant beverage and the second most traded commodity. However, most of the world 'cafeteros' probably experienced what was commonly called 'the coffee crisis' of the late 90s and stretching into early 2000s. When coffee prices crashed in 2002, they were the lowest they had been in 30 years. "In 1997 the "c" price of coffee in New York broke US\$3.00/lb, but by late 2001 it had fallen to US\$0.43/lb" ("Economics of", 2010, p. 1). A report by Oxfam said that many producers failed to even meet the cost of production (Oxfam NZ, 2008). As prices dropped, coffee producers had to abandon their livelihoods. It was hard-hitting evidence of the defenselessness of coffee growers when exposed to the unpredictable fluctuating prices of the global market (Oxfam NZ, 2008).

This period saw incredible price falls, which was not good for coffee growing families in third world countries. Those that relied on income from coffee were unable to pay for basic health care, stopped sending their children to school, and struggled to put food on the table (Gresser & Tickell, 2002). This was the case in Colombia, where small cafeteros could not pay for costs inherent to production, as the money paid, mainly by large multi-nationals, for their coffee was not enough. Different shots and sequences in the film show this; in the same way, oral accounts and statements were also recorded, such as those of some representatives of the Colombian Coffee Federation, and help support this documentary's point of view regarding the impact the coffee crisis had on poor cultivators. Meanwhile, large international coffee brands have always continued to make impressive profits (Davidson, 1993).

Since about 1640 the political and economic power of corporations has crossed geographic boundaries but over the years the multi-national power and strength of these corporations has intensified. During the last 30 years these companies have forced changes to the world's agricultural structure. "The enormous power exerted by the largest agribusiness/food corporations allows them essentially to control the cost of their raw materials purchased from

farmers while at the same time keeping prices of food to the general public at high enough levels to ensure large profits” (Magdoff, F., Bellamy Foster, J., & Buttel, F. H, 2000).

If there are barriers many governments endeavor to remove them. Furthermore, international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have promoted liberal and deregulatory policies that have helped dominant corporations reach even the farthest markets. So either “directly through their own market power” or alternatively “through governments and the World Bank, IMF and World Trade Organization, they have changed the way food is grown and distributed around the world. The changes have had wonderful effects on their profits, while simultaneously making global hunger worse and food crises inevitable” (Angus, 2008, p. 1).

As a result, international brands are available to people all over the world, which they are increasingly encouraged to consume. Corporations even have the power through advertising and other initiatives to define, or suggest, what foods are “good for you” (Crowther & Kiymeth, 2006; Renard, 1999). The financial wellbeing of a nation, and therefore of all of those involved in production and trade areas as employers and employees, can be greatly affected when they do not comply or are unable to compete with the demands and often unfair international dominant trends and trade rules. “World trade rules have been developed by the rich and powerful on the basis of their narrow commercial interests. Rich countries and powerful corporations have captured a disproportionate share of the benefits of trade, leaving developing countries and poor people worse off” (Oxfam, 2010, p. 1).

The four giants of the global coffee trade are the brands - Sara Lee, Nestlé, Kraft and Procter & Gamble. Each individual brand has annual sales that reach US\$1 billion or in some instances more. Furthermore, each year, these companies purchase nearly 50% of the earth’s coffee beans. Gresser & Tickell (2002, p. 2) stated “Profit margins are high, Nestlé makes an estimated 26 percent profit margin on instant coffee whilst Sara Lee’s coffee profits are estimated to be nearly 17 percent”.

This would be good news if the benefits reached all those involved along the supply chain. However, in *‘Living with Coffee’*, as Linda Broom from Oxfam explains, large multinationals

have the power to force down prices paid to mainly small scale coffee farmers. With many growers receiving less than production costs, some poor coffee growers are essentially making the big companies' thriving trade possible. These entities, in combination, control more than half of the international Robusta and Arabica beans and are therefore able to apply substantial pressure to reduce what the coffee growers receive for their crop (Smith, et al., 1992).

Various problems within in the coffee trade can also be attributed to questionable policies of international organizations. IMF and the World Bank pushed under developed countries to explore growth through exports and to free their trade particularly through crops grown for direct sale. However, for a lot of these countries the rewards are not overly significant, becoming apparent as coffee, along with other produce (mainly agricultural) floods the international marketplace (Gresser & Tickell, 2002). *'Living with Coffee'* presents Vietnam as an example. This country was once an insignificant contributor to the coffee trade. These days, as they continue to grow huge amounts of Robusta coffee, they rank right after Brazil, the world's largest producer. Whilst this may be good for Vietnam it has had dire effects on other coffee growing countries (Crowther & Kiyemet, 2006). The hindered the livelihoods of more of the world's poor than it helped.

If poorer cafeteros are pushed to venture into cultivating other products, this may represent a great source of stress for them. First of all, they had to wait several years before their coffee trees started producing something. That labour could be meaningless, and uncertainty and frustration may be present when deciding how and what to grow next. Secondly, in many cases financial help would be needed, increasing their burden of debt. Thirdly, different knowledge and technical resources may also be required, as they explore new or different markets. It is very common in underdeveloped countries to see cultivators facing difficulties related to lack of financial credit, lack of technical knowledge or sources to get it, lack of information about international (and even national) markets' prices, and lack of protection against unfair trade (Gresser & Tickell, 2002). Moving into cultivating a new product is a decision that may involve high stress, great risk and uncertainty. Therefore, in many cases, when capitalism is imposed on the poor without the same resources as developed countries, poverty is perhaps inevitable.

As we hear in the news about the moves of large globally spread companies; changes to rules in the global marketplace and who can buy and sell what to whom and how, it is difficult to understand immediately how all of this may look at a community level. As Munck (2007, p. 33) clearly stated, "...the local level is falsely seen as somewhere calm and virtuous where the evil storms of neoliberalism can be kept at bay. But, in essence, the global and the local depend on each other to exist, there is no global other than in its local manifestations". However, the combination of these dynamics is exactly what caused the thousands of coffee growing communities to suffer in the early 1990s.

In recent years, the price of coffee has risen once again. However, in 2008, the looming global economic crisis began to hit commodity markets, and prices started to fall. Once again, the volatility of the coffee commodity market put the livelihoods of coffee producers in the balance

Over the last decade prices rose again, from a low of 45c US cents per lb in 2001 to \$1.42 in 2010 (International Coffee Organisation, 2010) however the market is still volatile and subject to extreme and rapid fluctuations. This was evident two years ago when the approach of an international recession cast a shadow on commodity prices which then began to plummet. This was another example of the vulnerability of the incomes of the world's coffee growers as they waited for the impacts without any means of defense (Commodity Online, 2008).

The increase in sales of fair trade products has seen an estimated growth of "22% year-to-year" (Fairtrade Labelling Organisation, 2010, p. 1). This shows that many of those buying coffee are concerned about the livelihoods of the people at the other production end of the supply chain. The consumer decision to buy fair trade products benefits an estimated "1 million producers and workers in 58 developing countries" (Fairtrade Labelling Organisation, 2010, p. 1).

Reynolds (2000) described fair trade as a movement that will encourage improved practices at the international level of commodity production and distribution. A fairer trading process, for the producer, of agricultural and non-agricultural products will develop under more favorable social and environmental conditions (Reynolds, 2000).

The fair trade concept provides knowledge of the international markets and approaches the aggressive global markets from a price basis (it competes in the same market and gains sales). It also provides an opportunity to bridge the North/South gap and to regain some of the 'agro-food system' ground back from multinational companies, some of which are renowned for dubious social and environmental practices (Reynolds, 2000).

The documentary '*Living with Coffee*' clearly demonstrates that fair trade encourages a relationship between producers and buyers based on dialogue and in which greater equity in trade is supported by mutual transparency and respect. Sustainable development and the rights of small, and often marginalized, producers are therefore protected in this way (European Fair Trade Association, 2006). Consumers supporting fair trade organizations are directly advocating for producers and supporting much needed changes in traditional international trade practices. Fair Trade products can be produced and traded in accordance with more equitable principles, and this can be verified by independent organizations using appropriate assurance systems (European Fair Trade Association, 2006). Moreover, as Nicholls & Opal (2005) stated: "the fair trade movement has, for many consumers, made "trade justice" a high value and desirable brand" (p. 35). This matters because when a consumer chooses a product that pays fairly to the producer who made or grew that product they are often making the difference between poverty and a sustainable way of life for that person or family. "Trade could help millions of poor farmers and workers in developing countries beat poverty, and change their lives for good" (Oxfam, 2010).

Derived from their general supposition developing ideas on the fair trade movement can be categorized into three areas. One presents fair trade as a programme to aid grass-roots clusters to build up organization and marketing capacity to counteract the not so positive effects of globalization. Another idea shows fair trade as another form of globalization that also provides access (unlike the neoliberal paradigm) to the payback in financial terms of global trade to players from the third world. The third idea presents fair trade as an undoing of the commodification of product, as on occasion various products include a focus on who grew the coffee, for example with stories about the growers on the packets they sell (Fridell, 2006).

The most important outcome fair trade brings for cafeteros is obvious when suddenly they get a buying price for their product three times higher than the one from their traditional buyers during the lowest times for coffee trade. There is also the added bonus of an easier lifestyle for cafeteros' (Coffee, 2008). Fair trade provides a premium to coffee growers. This is to be invested into projects that benefit the community, for example training, building schools, digging wells.

'Living with Coffee' focuses on the New Zealand market. Typically, in developed marketplaces such as ours (in New Zealand), North America and Europe, people have selected goods with little knowledge or interest in their origins, only recently have some begun to question why they pay less for some particular goods (Marshall, 1983). Increased publicity about unfair trade, sweatshops, labour rights and what conditions are like for many in poor countries, has brought a growing awareness. This has triggered a demand for more information relating to our purchasing decisions and demand for ethical options (Caldwell, & Bacon, 2005). International fair-trade has seen spectacular intensification in popularity and resulting point-of-sale choice. In 2010, TranFair USA reported that in 2009 sales of fair trade product saw growth in all countries. "Consumers spent a record €3.4 billion on Fair Trade products in 2009, an amazing 15 percent increase from the previous year" ("Fair Trade Global", 2010, p. 1). Today, fair trade is a global concept and in 2004 retail sales reached approximately \$1 billion. As *'Living with Coffee'* evidences many of the poor farmers have witnessed dramatic positive changes to their work and family lives as a result (Caldwell, & Bacon, 2005).

Fair trade coffee trade is operating within the context of a free and global market. Although many proponents of fair trade would like to avoid that competitive market, it has, found its place within it regardless. Starbucks' vice president of marketing, Scott Bedbury, noted that "consumers don't truly believe there's a huge difference between products," which is why brands must "establish emotional ties" with their customers..." (Klein, 2000, p. 1).

The way fair trade products compete on the market has to do with the additional information given to the consumer when he/she buys a certified product. Purchasers may be able to understand where these goods come from and the hardship involved in making them available. Certifications and labels, implemented and regulated by entities and policies testifying to the

qualities of the products (Renard, 1999), make the products easily identifiable and emphasize their point of difference. If consumers like to have the chance to promote improvements in living conditions for producers from underdeveloped countries, and the possibility to exert a power that may change economic and financial practices to make them more just, then fair trade products are the best choice. Fair trade social impact, more reasonable -for all parts involved in trading- distribution of profits, and potential power of consumers, are some of the qualities that help increase, to a fair standard, and make more competitive the value of a fair trade product (Luttinger & Diccum, 2006).

These qualities help fair trade products gain entry to different markets. Their appeal to consumers can be tested. These qualities also provide ways to advertise and encourage people to understand what the certifications and labels on these products mean, even if they eventually decide not to buy them. In this way, these products are likely to also have an educational impact. Producers and consumers, even if they live far from each other, become closer and can understand how things happen on the other's end of the chain/world. And fundamentally fair trade sees that the producer is paid fairly and has money for a dignified standard of living.

Nichol's Six Types of Documentary

The idea of doing documentary and the various types is vast in possibilities. In 'Representing Reality' (1991) and 'Introduction to Documentary' (2001) Bill Nichols proposes six types of documentary: Poetic; Performative; Observational; Participator, Reflexive and Expository.

I will explore each of these types and explain if and how '*Living with Coffee*' included elements of each approach. First featuring in the 1920s, the poetic were a transformation and response to earlier fictional movies, images were presented in patterns and associations. This is evident in the witness of an Amsterdam summertime shower in the 1928 movie *Rain* (Joris Iven). This film is described as poetic film with changing moods. It follows the transformation of sun drenched Amsterdam to the beginning of a shower with "rain drops in the canals and the pouring rain on windows, umbrellas, trams and streets, until it clears up and the sun breaks through once again" ("REGEN", 2010, p. 1).

Approaching documentary making with limited experience I initially held the belief or idea that my footage had to be strung together in an edit that reflected the chronological flow of events. It was both a relief and like a door of possibility opening when I realised that I could take a more creative, unstructured approach. Using pieces I filmed in the last days as an introduction, using particular content and using repetition of an idea, the documentary began to take shape. It was not unlike taking all the pieces of a puzzle, mixing them up (so you forget their original context or origin) and building a new picture.

Scientific and natural history are often described as expository. Documentaries of the expository type work to convince the audience of a particular perspective. They sometimes use strong commentary, subtitles and voiceover to firmly reinforce the view. *'Living with Coffee'* relied on elements of this (subtitles and narration) to advocate the ideals of fair trading.

High School (1968) can be described as our next of Nichol's types: observational. This type avoids interventions at all costs in an effort to modestly and instinctively capture the moment in time. A part of the footage I captured in Colombia occurred whilst following a TradeAid organised coffee tour. At times I was unable to influence the itinerary, the amount of time spent in particular locations or to demand "silence" whilst I filmed something I felt important to capture. As a result this footage in particular was very observational in nature as I turned the camera on and simply recorded what was happening.

Documentary described as 'participatory' is driven by a belief that movie making can change events that are being documented. Participatory-type filming places emphasis on the interface of the documentary maker and their filmmaker and topic. Moore's movies and *Chronicle of a Summer* (1960) would fit this category, however these movies also display a significant 'expository' angle. The Oxford Guide to Film Studies states "documentaries can never be wholly objective, they will always involve a greater or lesser degree of intervention on the part of the documentarist" (Izod & Kilborn, 1998, p. 428). I intentionally endeavored to keep myself removed from obvious interaction with my subject matter. However, in two instances in the film I am heard asking questions of the person being filmed.

The next type: reflexive, remind us that documentaries are representations. They urge viewers to query the genuineness of the film. An example of this is the 1929, *Man with a Movie Camera* by Vertov (Feldman, 1998). I find method intriguing but as a novice to the art of film making I did not explore the possibility of adding a reflexive theme to the documentary.

Lastly, documentaries which are 'performative' in nature emphasize subjective perspective. Described as experimental, unconventional and personal they sometimes incorporate enactments to help us see a situation through another's eyes. This provides a glimpse into their reality that we may not have been capable of prior.

1955's *Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais), is an example of a performative documentary. It features a subjective description of the Holocaust told by a survivor. To include this approach in '*Living with Coffee*' was imperative from my point of view. It is essentially the reality that the 'cafeteros' live that has to be understood to then motivate any form of change from the consumer. A strong example is that of a lovely Colombian woman: the documentary captures her working, as many women do around the world, in her 'cocina' (kitchen). Casually she remarks that, thanks to fair trade, they were able to purchase an oven and refrigerator. Her eyes light up when she says that because of this she is now able to prepare the meals more rapidly and that the food lasts longer in the refrigerator. A further example is that of a young lady from the coffee growing community of Fondo Paez. "For us this plant is sacred, we grow and sell it but at no point has anyone ever told us that 'this is the value of your coffee, it is important' it fills us with joy to know that others also value this plant," she said. I believe both of these examples which sit among many others throughout the documentary enable the viewer to see life from a different perspective than they may have held previously.

'*Living with Coffee*' displays throughout many elements of Nichol's six types of documentary: Poetic; Performative; Observational; Participator, Reflexive and Expository. Being able to experiment successfully with the different approaches added depth to my learning experience and also to the resulting documentary. Styles, formats, arrangement and composition continuously change and evolve. In 1997 Barbash & Taylor described these approaches as

constantly fashioned, tried, exhausted and reused. The art cradles a selection of various techniques, tactics, motivators, and often politically driven agendas. Speaking about influences that affect production, Grierson stated: “different qualities of observation, different intentions in observation, and, of course, very different powers and ambitions at the stage of organising material” (Grierson, 1979, p. 35).

A Personal Account

Context

I have always wondered where the products we consume come from. This is the case with coffee. I understood many people were involved in the process of bringing this cup of coffee I was drinking to my table. I find it fascinating to think how all the people involved in the coffee trade fit with each other in a seemingly complex process that. Trade between New Zealand and Colombia was the context in which I explored this supply chain. Colombia is also among the earth’s main producers of high quality Arabica coffee beans. When exploring the supply chain from the New Zealand consumer to producer, it made sense to focus on Colombia as a producing country.

My research involved a lot of reading in both academic and mainstream publications. I made time to view other films on coffee which included BlackGold (Marc, et al., 2005). I also found a number of books that explore the commodity, its trade and history (for example: Wickizer, n.d.; Luttinger & Dicum, 2006; and Wild, 2004). In addition, many nonprofit agencies have produced comprehensive pieces (for example: Caldwell, 2005 and Gresser & Tickell) which proved invaluable resources. Underpinned by this depth of knowledge and resource I set out with the goal in mind to deliver a film that gave strong argument to a trade concept that ensured coffee growers received a fair price for their product. Reading and learning through these books, journals, articles and films gave me a great background knowledge, prompted questions that could develop various subjects and opened my mind to artistic forms of presentation.

Prior to production

As I was intending to make a thesis with a creative component, in choosing the topic, I was advised by my supervisor to identify something that could hold my interest; he felt it essential that the topic had depth, as at the end of the process I would be exhausted by it. Coffee, international trade and the concept of fair trade was a good subject to select. In this respect, the intricacies and details of all of these topics were endless. From here I explored the concept – why did I want to make this documentary? How would I want the audience to respond?

‘Living with Coffee’ was primarily a specific look at two countries and cultures: New Zealand and Colombia. It could be considered a cross-cultural documentary. However, as my husband is Colombian, I speak Spanish and have a depth of knowledge and appreciation of Colombian culture. I did not feel out-of-depth or uncomfortable whilst filming there. Cultures of our world are becoming increasingly so entangled that one could even remain in New Zealand and be involved in cross-cultural filming. People are now more than ever living in multicultural environments where differences regarding, among many others, language, religion, economic status, or cultural background are not enclosed within geopolitical borders (Barbash & Taylor, 1997).

With hindsight it would have been useful to have some basic preparation and guidance in relation to filming techniques and what to put in place to ensure the best interview would have been useful. During the editing process I learned that I need not have spent the amount of time that I did fiddling with advanced functions on the camera. Trying to focus in on a subject whilst filming or panning the scenery resulted in some shaky shots that could not be used. It would have been more effective simply to film on a wide view, turn the camera off, move to a medium shot, turn the camera on and take a close up. However, I believe that the way a movie is “captured” can make a significant difference to the feel and style of the final product. “The conventions of shots, moves, and transitions are all laden with meanings of various kinds” (Barbash & Taylor, 1997, p. 95). This is what I was trying to achieve - something artistic and creative that reflected my talent but given my lack of experience it would have been best to stick to basic functions that I knew would work. The final product was successful generating a lot of interest and accolade

from movie makers through to those involved in the coffee industry, high schools studying fair trade and the general public (*Living with Coffee* was selected and screened as part of the Human Rights Film Festival in New Zealand and was also screened throughout Colombia at art cinemas).

I filmed over a time period of four years. Throughout the time I experimented considerably (as my knowledge and confidence grew, along with my curiosity). I captured material using the spectrum of shots, I played with placements and framing. I tried filming sequential pieces longer than 5 seconds. Not all of this material made it to the final edit, much was cut. I am a firm believer that you don't need some expensive and advanced equipment to film the best work (Merin, 2010, p. 1). Just as a brilliant photograph can be taken on a disposal camera, given the right circumstances an excellent piece of movie footage can be simply captured. Boring and irrelevant moments captured on state of the art equipment remain boring and irrelevant moments (Hampe, 1997).

Recording sound as it is in occurs naturally was also a challenge. The ultimate goal was to obtain something that is of sufficient quality and a close to the true and original sound as possible (Barbash & Taylor, 1997). One quickly becomes aware of unwanted voices laughing loudly, someone stacking boxes just out of frame. My microphone was of medium quality and did have a function that cut out off-putting sound outside of frame. This was a blessing.

Film schedule, treatment and script

Right from the start I decided on the type of shots required, and I thought about how I would go about getting this footage, the people I would speak to, and what those people would say. I also started to create a picture in my mind of how all of these elements would finally hang together as effective sequences. The fact that I filmed in New Zealand first and gained a lot of understanding on the issues involved from my interview subjects was an advantage. When I later travelled to Colombia and spoke with the 'cafeteros' I was able to ask much deeper and more probing questions. This ultimately served to lift the quality of the documentary content as a whole, and to put all of it into relevant contexts.

At the editor's desk (after a number of years of sporadic filming) I finally sat with nearly 40 hours of film. It all varied in relevance and level of usability. In the end it was a numbers game the fact that I filmed so much, was sufficient to forgive some errors in other footage, as ultimately there was enough good material to suffice. Not all of it was perfect but it was certainly adequate. This is important, because as Hampe (1997) explained, those producing documentaries should recognize, obtain and format the footage so that it underpins the message they wish to present. Random shots, unclear material or a poor basis for content are factors that will bring into question the integrity of a piece of work. A powerful script or message presented with poor visuals equals a product of dubious quality.

Post production

At last the filming was over, or so I thought, and the editing could begin. The idea of sitting in front of a computer and watching an editor hard at work beside me was appealing, but little did I realize that to get to that point I first had to go through a baptism of fire with endless log writing and translation of the footage (in Spanish and English, as the end goal was to produce two versions of the documentary – Spanish and English). This was then followed by the arduous task of transcript writing, rewriting and rewriting. From the first transcript of two hours the final documentary was only just over half an hour.

'Living with Coffee' was produced in two languages and included the usual array of baselines, subtitles, narrative and music.

There were many "let go of it" moments. Interview subjects that had given so much of their time and trouble and I didn't even end up using seconds of footage. Shots that I adored but found no home, angles or tangents I wished to explore but ended up confusing the documentary. I found a 'coffee blogger' in the United States who agreed to write a script and have it filmed (for free). It was like a graceful and artistic account of coffee as it holds its place in our everyday lives. I loved it. However I lacked the cut-away shots to underpin the script and his strong American

accent distracted from the documentary. So he was cut. I am still not sure if this was the right decision as he could have potentially been a strong thread throughout the documentary.

Originally my script looked very much like an 'order of events.' Therefore, it was a powerful breakthrough moment when I finally understood that my documentary did not need to take an 'in order of appearance' approach. One of my last interviews, therefore, became my opening shot - and my mind was freed from that stifling burden.

Interestingly, the initial (three years prior) ideas or visualization of the documentary was far from the reality of the final cut. We worked with what we had not with what I planned to film or what I thought I had. There was many a great comment that was ruined by disturbing background noise, or fantastic shot that was blurred or cut off important elements of the image, or moments I had captured in my mind but not on camera. As Hampe, 1997 commented the editing process is only possible with the real material and sound that was recorded. Despite the objectives of the producer an editor is limited and only able to use the footage you actually obtained.

Making it a reality

This project has not been without its challenges, which have included that of initially acquiring adequate funding. Encouragement to continue came from many sources, with the eventual generous backing of BP Wild Bean and Cerebos Greggs, which covered the cost of sound and music for the documentary.

A number of contacts who had expertise in different aspects of the venture warned of the prospective problems. Despite setbacks, discouragements, and endless loans, the venture proceeded, resulting in an effective and successful outcome. Welcome expertise was eventually forthcoming in the areas of voice over commentary, provided at no cost by Mike McRoberts of TV3.

Nearly five years after my enthusiastic entry into the project it was completed. During the process I had two children and worked part time to support them and my husband who was also

studying full time. I burnt out and ended up on anti-depressants for a time. As identified in the Australian Journal of Education, "... that an energy and drive to learn, work effectively, and achieve to one's potential is not sufficient to deal with academic setbacks or excessive study pressure and stress" "" (Martin, 2002, p. 1). In hindsight, I had taken on too much. I mention it here because that experience is an intrinsic part of the production of this documentary. I tried to cut corners and later paid the price; I tried to finish it faster but learned that good things do take time. I attempted to save on costs but soon realized that it is almost impossible to produce a documentary on a shoe-string budget (even though people are impressed with how little it cost me). The documentary is now finished and I am very pleased with it.

I agree with the writings in Cross-Cultural Filmmaking (1997) that described the journey of producing a documentary as something that can permanently alter the lives of those producing it and those involved in it. The sentiment that existed whilst capturing footage becomes evident when presented to the audience at the other end (Barbash & Taylor, 1997). Indeed the making of *'Living with Coffee'* was an enormous feat that became an invigorating obsession and indescribable relief on completion.

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