

Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY
Nelson, B.C. Canada

May 3, 2007

Title: Coffee, The Earth, and the Future of Civilization

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anonymous: For me the reasons we should be deconstructing our dinner is because our food is inescapably tied into globalized and industrialized food system, with very few exceptions.

anonymous: Our connection with the rural 15% of the population that is growing the food has been disconnected and a lot of the urban areas don't really know where the food comes from.

Jon Steinman: And you're tuned in to another weekly installment of Deconstructing Dinner, a syndicated radio program and Podcast produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia. I'm Jon Steinman.

It's been a long time in the making here on Deconstructing Dinner to air a feature on coffee, the second most valuable traded commodity in the world, second only to petroleum.

And so if coffee is the most valuable *agricultural* commodity on the planet, then deconstructing coffee is possibly the closest we can come to deconstructing humanity itself.

Coffee is constantly scrutinized for its human and social impacts around the world, but rarely do we examine the *environmental* consequences of a Tim Horton's Double Double; a Starbucks Cappuccino; or even an Organic Fair Trade Espresso.

I will say that there is no intention on this broadcast to undermine the significantly positive impact that the organic and fair trade movements have had on people and the planet. But we would be foolish to end our examination there. Because as we will learn today, the environmental and social impacts of coffee are far greater than anyone may imagine. And as the global population all too clearly recognizes now, the environmental impact of our presence on this planet is having more of a *human* impact than any fair trade rules or any international trade agreements.

On today's broadcast we will learn about the far-reaching environmental impacts of coffee, which among them, include an imminent and significant threat to three critical animal species on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia. And we will hear from Adam Tomasek of the World Wildlife Fund on this issue. We will also hear from Daniel Fourwinds, a pioneer in the organization and distribution of a coffee bean that claims to provide more money per pound to villagers than any other bean in the world, and does so with the least environmental impact. Daniel is the founder of Capulin coffee, and he spoke to me over the phone from Nayarit, Mexico.

We will also hear a segment produced here in Nelson, British Columbia featuring Benji Hansen, the owner of the Clean Bean Café; a roadside espresso stand that exclusively sells this Capulin

coffee, and is encouraging an even greater level of social and environmental change by not offering any take-out cups. An interesting idea for what is essentially a drive-thru coffee shop.

increase music and fade out

Before we hear from my first guest, I would like to first share some of my thoughts that arose throughout the preparation for today's broadcast. As was just mentioned a feature on coffee has never before appeared on this program. And I feel as though it's important to first justify *why* it's taken so long to do so given Deconstructing Dinner has now been on the air since January 2006, and given coffee is quite essential to many of our meals. And it's for two reasons. First off, when we think of social justice and human rights in relation to our food, coffee is I think undisputedly, the most recognized food and beverage product through which we can connect these issues. So it is *for* this reason, that attempts have been made to steer clear from featuring coffee, out of fear that we would forget that right here in Canada, agricultural products are *also* unfairly traded.

As a society we are still a long ways away from embracing the idea of fair trade carrots, fair trade grains, or fair trade beef. And the socially-responsible coffee campaigns have been *so* successful, that cafés all across the country are selling fair trade coffee, yet nothing else on the menu has been fairly traded such as the integral sugar so many of us place into a fresh brew.

And so that is one reason I've steered clear of coffee here on the program, and the second, is that coffee truly represents a window into the human condition. With a history so rich with happiness, sadness, blood, sweat and tears, exploring our connection to coffee is as I see it, exploring our connection to our planet, to each other and to ourselves, and with the endless issues to investigate following such an understanding, I had feared that any first show on coffee, would lead to the need to feature many more on the topic. And I can say that after putting today's show together, this will not be the last cup of coffee here on the program.

We live in a time right now that may very well be the most exciting and pivotal time in the history of humankind, given our long-standing dominion over this planet is literally crumbling beneath our feet. And the detachment we have allowed to exist between us and this earth is now recognized to be the greatest mistake we could have ever made. But as the mainstream media has so quickly pointed the finger, I for one do not observe that this mistake as rooted in our reliance on fossil fuels, nor rooted in capitalism, SUVs or travelling in airplanes, but rooted in our isolation from the natural world. And this has bred a level of selfishness that continues to spread from country to country, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. Coffee, as will become clearer during this broadcast, is a beverage that is founded upon this very selfishness and this greed as it was colonialism, slavery, and a relentless deforestation that brought coffee to where it exists today.

All over the world people sit down in homes, in coffee shops, in automobiles, seeking a moment of happiness, in a cup of coffee. But in a cappuccino, in a latté or an Americano, is a destruction that is incomprehensible. And so long as we justify our consumption of coffee because of how integral it is to our lives, then the accompanying human impact that is understood to extend to farmers will come back to impact *we*, the consumers, ourselves. And this, we are now too clearly aware of.

soundbite

When you last enjoyed a cup of coffee, did you ever consider that it may be endangering three animal species on the other side of the planet? Located on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia is

Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park where three of the world's most endangered large species are found - the rhino, the elephant, and the tiger. The park itself is home to roughly a quarter of the entire wild populations of Sumatran rhinos and elephants.

One of the most recent threats to the population of these animals has been the illegal cultivation of coffee, coffee that ends up here in North America. The Washington D.C.-based World Wildlife Fund has taken on this issue because as they state, the current rate of illegal forest destruction to grow this illegal coffee may lead to the local extinction of these species by 2010; not very long from now. The World Wildlife Fund released a report in January of this year 2007 titled "Gone In An Instant," and in it they document their investigation into which of the world's major coffee buyers are purchasing this illegal coffee.

So I spoke with Adam Tomasek, who leads the development of WWF's work in Indonesia and Malaysia. Adam joined the organization in 2001, and he spoke to me over the phone from Washington D.C.

Adam Tomasek: Our first inclination was to look at the impacts on this national park and see the three very interesting and unique species that called this park home - Sumatra Tiger and rhino and elephant and in particular among ninety or so other mammal species. And what we found was that coffee production or coffee-dominated agricultural systems run by small holding farm families was really causing them the major impact in deforestation within the park itself and unfortunately overlapping with the known distributions and home ranges of a lot of these big mammals.

JS: As the idea of illegal coffee may be new to some, Adam describes what makes this coffee so illegal.

AT: The term "illegal coffee" comes up and it's a confusing one I admit, because it's really illegally produced coffee. And the fact of the matter is, is that coffee that is being grown inside the boundaries of the national park is an illegal land-use, it goes against the legal framework around the national park itself. And therefore anything that is actually being produced inside of the park is termed as being illegal. Now this goes beyond just coffee; obviously there are other agricultural crops that are being grown in these small-scale farm systems but coffee really is the major commodity that is dominating these systems right now.

JS: With the cultivation of coffee dominating the destruction of this critical national park in Indonesia, Adam provides an illustration of just how much of this park has disappeared.

AT: Our Indonesian office has been working here in this park for well over a decade now. And through the various surveys in research in conservation programs that are being carried out, we were quickly concerned with the disappearance of forest cover. And through a series of estimates both done by ourselves and other colleagues of other conservation groups, NGO colleagues, and government officials, we were able to characterize the overall forest loss at about just about 30%. And that means that roughly a third of this national park has been either deforested or degraded in different ways over the past number of years. And this is quite concerning because we've seen an upward trend in the level of forest loss and this is something that we are continuing to refine because the data that is available is often one or two years out-of-date if it's from satellite imagery. And so we're actually still now refining that classification. But what we know right now is that about a third of the park has been deforested.

JS: We will shortly learn where this illegal coffee is ending up and which companies are purchasing these beans. But first, we learn more about the scope of this danger, that cappuccino's and lattes are presenting to these three animal species in the park.

AT: Within the three major species of concern - the tigers, the rhinos, and the elephants, if we first just look at the overall numbers of the species themselves, we're looking at about, a rough estimate of around forty tigers and that's about 10% of the population that's left on the island. And this is the only species of Indonesian tiger that's left – the Sumatran Tiger. So this really is the last remnant in terms of tiger's on the island.

From the perspective of the Sumatran Elephant, we're looking at right around 500 or so that exist and this is about 20% or so of the elephants that are found on the island. And then from the perspective of rhinos, again, it's anywhere between 15-25% of the rhinos. There's an estimate between 40 and 60 of the rhinos that are found in this park alone. So you have very significant populations of these three species found in this park and that really is one of the reasons why we were so concerned with this issue. I don't want to fail to point out that a number of other groups have also prioritized this park itself, this national park as a priority to the extent that the United Nations has classified it as a world heritage site.

JS: The Indonesian province of Lampung, where this national park is located is the primary area of coffee production in the country. And the pressure on the park is in large part due to the ease at which coffee can be grown and sold in the area. But as Adam describes this *kind* of coffee being grown there, we also learn that it is also the new energy drink craze that is fueling the destruction of this forest and these animal species.

AT: The coffee that is grown in this region in this part of Sumatra is Robusta Coffee. Now this is the variety that is often found in instant coffees, well it is actually preferred for instant coffees. But it is also used to blend in with the higher quality Arabica Coffee that is grown in other parts of Indonesia. Arabica is really the variety of coffee that most consumers in North America and in the western world are familiar with. It's the type of coffee that you go and purchase in coffee houses. It has good quality flavours. Robusta, on the other hand, is considered to coffee experts to be the little lower quality but higher caffeine content coffee so there's a lot more bang for the buck so to speak in terms of the caffination within this variety of bean.

And it's interesting that this part of the island of Sumatra is really the epicenter of the coffee trade for the entire country of Indonesia. Indonesia is the world's fourth largest producer of coffee but it's also the world's second largest producer of Robusta variety coffee. So it's extremely important to the economic of this part of the island, but nationally the trade is about 70% of the trade of coffee goes through the port that is 100 miles or so away from this very national park. So it's a real driver that is routed right in this part of the island.

JS: And you're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner, produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia. Today's broadcast is titled "Coffee, The Earth, and The Future of Civilization" – a pretty serious title for a show, but laying coffee out on the table so to speak and looking behind the mug, really does expose a window into ourselves.

We're presently listening to clips from my interview with Adam Tomasek of the World Wildlife Fund and their efforts to track the cultivation of illegal coffee on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia, where the rapid destruction of a protected national park is threatening the future survival of three key animal species.

The World Wildlife Fund published a report released in January 2007 that traced this very illegal coffee to the major international buyers, and Adam Tomasek explains why the organization chose to undertake such an investigation.

AT: As we started looking deeper into this problem we really didn't know where it was going to lead us. We knew it was a complicated issue and the more we looked the more confusing it was. The supply chain for coffee and in this region, even inside of the park and outside of the park or in neighbouring provinces, it's really similar to a spider web; but a disorganized spider web. One that has all sorts of different points along the supply chain where coffee is bought, sold, traded, and mixed together with coffee from other parts of the area or other regions. And then is traded through middle men and stored in warehouses and purchased by a variety of different groups from those warehouses. And then eventually taken to the provincial capital and that is where the port is located where it is all shipped out. And what we found through all this background research was that the international buyers were really the largest in terms of volume purchasers of the coffee. And so that directly led us then to focusing more on to who might be some of the players that could be involved in reversing or changing this current situation.

JS: To learn of *who* these international buyers are, we can quickly look back to our recent expose of Kraft Foods here on Deconstructing Dinner. Because the largest buyer of this illegal coffee is Kraft Foods, who, according to the WWF's data from 2005, are responsible for between 20-30% of the overall purchase of coffee from the region in question. Other major buyers that would be recognizable to Canadians are Nestle and Lavazza, who is a well-known supplier to restaurants and the Timothy's Coffee chain.

Following their research in 2005, the World Wildlife Fund addressed letters to all of the largest purchasers, and more detailed information on their responses will be linked from the Deconstructing Dinner website. But here's brief overview of these responses.

AT: As we went through the research and started to get a good handle for who was at the receiving end or the buying end of a lot of the coffee, we looked into how would we best communicate with these companies knowing that we're not coffee experts and knowing that they likely are not fully aware of the source of their products. And so what we did was we started just by sending a simple letter to the companies that we could easily identify, notifying them of the research that we've been doing. We provided them with a draft of the findings of the research at that point and time and asked for their comments; raising the point that we are confident in knowing that coffee that is being produced within inside the park is being mixed with coffee that is being grounded in other areas outside of the park. Which means that the overall coffee supply chain is really tainted; that there really isn't any level of confidence in purchasing coffee from this part of Sumatra.

The variety of responses that we got back from companies was interesting. Some companies have yet to actually respond. Others responded and thanked us for the letter but disagreed with the findings. And other companies like Kraft were very straightforward and very earnest in their response in terms of being concerned about the issue and offering to learn more from us about what we've been doing on the ground and the research and what we've been finding. But also to begin the dialogue about how we might be able to change the current situation.

JS: Again, more information on the responses received will be linked to from the Deconstructing Dinner website. And that website is cjly.net/deconstructingdinner.

Now that the letters have been sent, Adam describes the dialogue that has taken place since the issue was placed before the major buyers of this illegal coffee.

AT: Well there's been obviously a lot of dialogue. When the letters went in 2005 some of the responses didn't come in until toward the end of the year or the beginning part of 2006. And we've started to follow-up with some of them. With Kraft in particular, over the course of the last year or so, we had a number of meetings either at their headquarters in Chicago or here in Washington where I'm based, to really go into more detail about what the issues are and since sending that letter some of the new findings that we've been able to generate in terms of new areas of coffee production within the park or new entities be it traders or other companies being involved in, etc. We're just now at the point, over the past two months, we've concluded what we call the first multi-stakeholder workshop in Indonesia to address this issue of coffee trade. And there were a little over 160 participants who were there, most of them from different levels of Indonesian government, the National Park Authority itself.

The industry was quite strongly represented by trade associations, producer associations, traders themselves, some of the coffee recipients, the big international buyer companies as well as NGOs and others.

A part of this workshop was essentially a declaration and it was a declaration to bring about responsibility within the coffee sector, particularly in this region and within this park. And so we're now in the process of implementing that framework that we think can really change how coffee is produced and how the habitats of the tigers and elephants and the rhinos in this park can really be preserved and restored where possible.

JS: And again, we're currently learning about the steps now being taken to ensure the preservation of three key animal species in a national park in Indonesia, where the illegal deforestation for the cultivation of coffee is threatening their very survival. As Kraft is the major purchaser of this illegal coffee, Adam Tomasek of the World Wildlife Fund lists some of the immediate steps that companies need to now take.

AT: Well one of the most immediate needs is to have the major international buyers who buy in such large volumes really send the message down to through their supply chain - through their networks and traders and exporters and other groups that they're concerned about this problem. That it's unacceptable within the code of conduct, within their own business. That they want and demand verification of legality within the coffee that they're buying. A lot of companies have already done that and actually started to do that the first time they received the letter.

A second part to that is really that right now that the coffee harvest is ongoing in Sumatra. Really what we're focused on is bringing together these various groups – the international buyers, the government, the park authorities itself, conservation organizations like ourselves who have the infrastructure and staff on the ground, to be able to take advantage as soon as this coffee harvest season is done with. To start to put into place that framework around a verifiable chain of custody that would then be able to provide the coffee with the confidence that's needed and that's really requested by these companies that is being legally produced outside of the park itself.

JS: As mentioned earlier, the WWF predicts that at the current rate of forest destruction, the potential extinction of these animal species may come as early as 2010. And we hear more on these consequences should nothing be done to respond to this threat.

AT: Well, it's quite dire, I mean to be completely honest. The analysis that we've been working on most recently is showing that coffee production is increasing in a couple of extremely critical habitats for the Sumatran Elephants and the Sumatran Tigers. And if nothing changed, we could assure ourselves that what we'll end up with is fragmented sub-populations of these major species which will have obvious long term negative impacts on their viability and their reproduction. And that is something that was presented at this multi-stakeholder workshop in the sense that we can really start to look at in very fine detail, at the levels of fragmentation within certain areas that we know to be where our surveys have told us and have shown us, are some of the most important areas for these species. And if we don't address that now, the coffee that is being produced there is going to be responsible for the demise of these species.

JS: The report released in 2007 titled "Gone In An Instant" listed three major stakeholders who should take the lead in addressing this issue. But missing from the list was the consumer. And in closing out my conversation with Adam Tomasek of the World Wildlife Fund, I inquired into how consumers can become involved.

AT: As we have seen with other commodities, consumer pressure is a very powerful force and it can be a real tool for bringing about change. In our report the recommendations being focused on consumers because we really felt like we had to deal with the issues at hand in a very immediate fashion because of severity of the problems that we are finding. And the time it takes to mount consumer pressure is often a slower developing process than going directly to some of the known international buyers and roasters and government authorities themselves.

But in terms of recommendations, I think falling into line as we've seen with other commodities, where consumers have voiced their concern about where the products that they're consuming and they're purchasing are coming from directly to the companies, would be completely feasible and would be welcomed in this case.

The difficulty with Robusta coffee in particular is that it's rather ubiquitous with being caffeinated beverages. It can be found in instant coffees and a lot of caffeinated drinks, we know to be used in the growing market around the popular energy drinks and things like that. So I think that the consumers who are concerned about this issue – you know writing a simple letter, picking up the phone, giving a company a call if they're a regular consumer of one of these products. Or if they even have questions as to whether or not the product they're consuming does potentially contain this coffee from this region would be a great help to the overall cause.

JS: And that was Adam Tomasek of the World Wildlife Fund. The report titled "Gone In An Instant" provides a far greater background on this topic, and will be made available through a link on the Deconstructing Dinner website at cjly.net/deconstructingdinner. And you can learn more about the WWF on their website at wwf.org.

And to close out this segment, I will note that the Kraft products that this illegal coffee most likely makes its way into, consist of Maxwell House and Nabob, along with Nestle products such as Nescafe.

soundbite

And you're listening to Deconstructing Dinner. I'm Jon Steinman. I'd like to quickly pass along a reminder that this radio program *is* available as a Podcast for any listeners who are interested in downloading the show on a weekly basis to your iPods or portable music players. And information on how to do so can be found on our website.

The title of today's broadcast is "Coffee, The Earth and The Future of Civilization." In this next segment we will see how all three of these are connected. Located in the state of Nayarit in Mexico, is a coffee that presents a perfect illustration of where our food system has gone wrong. And is doing so by providing an alternative to the destruction that, in the case of coffee, has driven millions from their lands, has destroyed forests and wildlife around the world, and decreased the quality of coffee to a point where the difference in flavour is astounding. And having tasted this coffee myself, it is in no doubt, one of the most decadent coffees that I have ever tasted.

Located here in Nelson is a small roadside espresso bar that exclusively sells a coffee known as Capulin. This espresso stand is not only selling a coffee that provides an opportunity for significant social and environmental change, but is encouraging its own social and environmental change by refusing to provide take-out containers. Now this may not seem to be too absurd, but take into consideration that the espresso stand is on the side of the main highway running through the city, and is essentially a drive-thru coffee shop. And I'll leave that as a teaser, because we will hear more on this incredibly unique café at the end of today's broadcast. And first we will travel to the state of Nayarit Mexico where Capulin coffee originates.

Capulin is being distributed internationally with the hope that it will provide an insight into how and why the people upon whose lands the richest agricultural crop in the world is produced, are amongst the poorest people in the world and exactly how 'we the consumers', might exercise control over the resulting poverty and devastation.

The founder of this project is Daniel Fourwinds who based in Tucson, Arizona spoke to me over the phone from Mexico, about 30 minutes from the jungle where the village is located. Daniel discovered Capulin over 20 years ago while on vacation in the area. He's one of a growing number of people questioning the fair trade standard and the many labels now being associated with brands of coffee.

Daniel Fourwinds: Coffee was originally introduced as Arabian wine. It's very intoxicating when it is a natural processed coffee. And that's the real key and the real misunderstanding of people that would be concerned. We can just drop the people that aren't concerned. We're not reaching those people. They're not willing to pay more than the minimum price for coffee; they're not concerned about the environment; they're not concerned about the social order of what's going on behind their cup. My approach is always to the concerned, to the interested or the seekers. Now these people, the people that really want to make a difference on the planet have been, I would almost say "bought up" by these little tags that we have become accustomed to, such as shade grown, fair trade, equal exchange. These are all little words and labels that some company has grabbed.

JS: Coffee has become one of the most recognizable products that has a significant social impact around the world. But Daniel Fourwinds sees that the foundation for the environmental destruction, the poverty and hunger that plague global coffee growing regions is a result of a process that most coffee drinkers have probably never heard of. And this is what is known as water processing, a technique implemented by the industrial producers of coffee. And here we learn how the selfish pursuit of money has resulted in poorer quality coffee, poverty, hunger, environmental destruction, and now, the most pressing symptom of this destruction, climate change.

DF: Quality in coffee comes from the cherry, but then it depends on what was done to that cherry. This didn't happen before, let's say fifty years ago. About fifty years ago after the war, the corporations took over the largest drug industry on the planet. They were pretty much in control of it before but the big boys moved in. These folks have developed a process called "water processing" or what most coffees are, are café lavado, washed coffees. That means that someone picked the cherry, floated it in water. The problem is and the reason they use water is because bad fleet seeds float and as they use in many industries. And so they placed the coffee, unskinned, in water to float off the bad ones. But right now the bad ones are sticky and the good ones are sticky and the good ones and the bad ones stick together and the bad one will float off two or three good ones.

So the companies in their wisdom said, well let's ferment that sugar and then it's not sticky anymore. And this allows the bad beans to float free. Well, this eliminated the women who had processed coffee by hand. They didn't have to take the bad seeds out because the company floated them out.

In this floating process, your coffee basically goes through three major changes. One, the oils that are your flavour are solvented by the alcohol and so the bean comes out opaque, washed out. The sugars that traditionally would have been dried in are fermented so it makes the processing easier. And then the sugars that naturally would be sweet, are not dried into the coffee; they are fermented. And then the caffeine, which is a H₂O chemical bonding crystal, that's the way they extract caffeine in water. Well if you process your coffee in water, what happened to the fine alkaloids of caffeine? So what really takes place is consumer loss in the processing to make coffee cheap.

So now we have a major problem that arises in the villages is that the labour that normally went into coffee has been floated out and that's where the most serious devastation occurs because there's no work in the villages.

So anybody that really, I'm serious, really wants to take care of the jungle or has any social heart whatsoever must realize that by floating the labour out of the villages, you float the pay cheques, the salaries, the incomes, the food off of these people's table.

JS: And this is Deconstructing Dinner. Now having an understanding of what water processing is, Daniel further emphasizes how it's the very unemployment created by the industrial coffee industry that has led to the devastation of the jungle. His comments also introduce a recent topic discussed here on the program and that is why so many migrant workers coming to Canada are so willing to leave their families for upwards to eight months of the year.

DF: The devastation of the jungle is occurring because you have all the people unemployed. The connection is, is unemployed people cut trees because there's no cherries to work. They consume the animals and the birds. They consume everything like a blight upon the jungle. They don't want to do it, they don't want to starve. And most of them take the walk "a thousand miles to the frontier" not too lightly. They have to leave their families to send money home to maintain them because there is no work in the village. So it really isn't people coming in and buying up mass tracks of jungle. It's the jungle dwellers consuming the forest that people don't understand. That's the link between washed coffee and natural coffee.

JS: We are currently listening to segments from my conversation with Daniel Fourwinds of Capulin Coffee. Daniel spoke to me over the phone from Nayarit, Mexico.

It's been rather troubling for myself recently to open up a newspaper or check out a television newscast and witness the way the mainstream media is reporting on climate change. The tone that overrides much of the content is, "well how can we sustain our lifestyles, but do so with less of an impact." Adding to this discontent, there is little to no coverage on the topic of agriculture and food. How many newscasts have reported that the U.N. has discovered that 18% of all human-caused greenhouse gases originate from livestock. Instead the focus on much of the climate change debate is on energy, and alternative sources of energy. But we forget that the most sustainable energy is ourselves.

Capulin Coffee yet again presents a window back in time to the days before the advent of fossil fuels, and Daniel Fourwinds draws out a picture of the *human* energy that goes into producing this coffee.

DF: Originally, the caravans use to come in here on mules and bring out bags of gold. It was called "oro" gold. Why, because all the labour from the entire season went into it. The men picked the cherries and then they had to dry them for weeks in the sun. And when they were brittle they had hammered them with wooden mallets. Later of course the Burr Mill came in, but in the early days it was all done by hand. And so the beans were pounded and then they were whittled and cast into the air. And then the coffee was passed through the families, the elders, and the children, and the women. And they sat around and they took out the bad beans and the broken beans and the misshapen and miscoloured, and they selected the cream of the crop - oro. And they sold it and they survived on it.

But once the corporations came in and said, "Well, we don't want to have to pay for all that labour." That they applied the water process to eliminate the labour. And that was great for giving you all a cheaper cup of coffee. But it's not good for the consumer, it's good for the planet, and it's not good for the planet's caretakers in the village. So the only ones that really gain are your big multinational corporations.

JS: As the industrialization of coffee has led to such devastation in coffee growing regions, we of course cannot ignore that currently, coffee is distributed around the world, using fossil fuels. And Daniel comments on this concern.

DF: We have to start somewhere. The largest industry and most destructive industry on our planet is petroleum. We're shackled. Everyone is strung into petroleum. It's an environmentally disastrous product; but it's what we currently have. We can't get rid of it tomorrow or in a year or in two years or five years; we're still going to be addicted to petroleum.

But coffee, coffee is the second largest cash river on the planet. Imagine taking that flow and directing it directly into the poorest people on the planet. The wealthy always will end up. Our project is to expose how we can direct the money back into the village and let it trickle up from after feeding the people. This is taking billions of dollars directly out of corporate hands and putting directly into hungry people's tables.

And what we're suggesting is that if we had enough people that stopped supporting the water processed industry, I don't care what product it is, I don't care what label it has. If it was processed in water - if it wasn't naturally processed, the planet loses. The consumer loses because he has no quality in this product. The environment loses because the people in order to survive are consuming the jungle that we are talking about protecting. They're consuming the birds that we talk about protecting. But we go to Starbucks and we give Mr. Batarsucks our money - dollars. Not dimes - dollars. Imagine redirecting some of those dollars back to feeding people.

They'll stop cutting the trees. They will stop becoming foreign illegal aliens seeking work because they've been starved off their land. And then their land they have to sell and they of course have to sell cheap to the people that have the money. Well who has the money? All these multinational corporations, that's who has the money.

JS: And this is Deconstructing Dinner. On a financial level, Capulin coffee provides an income to the farmers and villagers that is enough to live on, a luxury that most farmers around the world are not afforded. Daniel Fourwinds claims that Capulin provides more money per pound directly to local villagers than any other coffee company on the Planet.

DF: Now with Capulin, we've been doing this for 23 years. We provide more money to a farmer, twice as much money as any coffee growers on the planet receive. Now that's a big, big stake. I'm going to say it again because it's really, really important that people understand. We are paying double what the commercial industry pays. That's our guarantee to the people. Whatever the water processes are paying, we're doubling. And we have done that now for 23 years. And our quality is unsurpassable. You can do it as well, and maybe every year if somebody did just what we did - took 100% fully matured cherries and turned them every day once or twice, piled them at night, covered them from the dew, re-spread them in the morning - tons and tons and tons and tons of cherries being done just as though you are only doing one pound. And this is what we offer in Capulin. The highest, most stimulating, sweetest leaf bitter coffee available.

JS: In closing out my conversation with Daniel Fourwinds, he ends with a comment that really could apply to anything it is we do here in Canada. That so long as we remain ignorant to where our food is coming from, such ignorance is, in and of itself, destroying the environment and destroying ourselves.

DF: People do what they do because they don't know. The quality in the cup of a 100% fully matured cherry that's been hand-processed, you can't do it any better. But you could do it as well. Somewhere on the planet there's going to be the best. But you can only really be the best if you have naturally processed that coffee. If you fermented it, floated it in water, and then sell it to the public under the fair trade label, or the equal exchange, or the bird-friendly, or the ... and they are all water processed coffees. They all strip the incomes from the village. They all force the villagers to survive off the land. Well how do you do that. Well you cut the trees. And if your wife gets sick you cut 10 trees and if your little girl gets sick too you cut 20 trees. And that's what people have to understand, is the destruction - social and environmental, is directly attributable to the water processing of coffee, aside from the millions and millions of gallons of water that are polluted by the process. It is the people attempting to survive after the season is over.

JS: And that was Daniel Fourwinds of Capulin Coffee. Daniel spoke to me over the phone from Nayarit Mexico and you can learn more about Capulin coffee on their website at capulin.com. And if you're interested in getting in touch with a Canadian distributor of the coffee who is actually based here in Nelson, there will be information posted on our website on how to do so.

So now we've explored where the Capulin coffee beans originate, but where do they end up. Well one place is located here in Nelson, British Columbia, and that is the Clean Bean Café. A newly established espresso stand that operates out of the back of a trailer. The coffee sold exclusively at the café is Capulin Coffee. But the real interest of this next segment is the social and environmental change that this café is encouraging, and it has nothing to do with the beans themselves. The Clean Bean Café is located directly beside the main highway running through the city, and is essentially a drive-thru coffee shop. But here's the scoop, The Clean Bean Café does not provide any disposable take-out containers - no take-out cups. Certainly a new approach

to take-out coffee service that I for one, have never seen. And here's a segment featuring the Clean Bean Café's Benji Hansen.

JS on highway: This probably has to be the closest interview that I have ever done to the radio station. We are literally one block away from the radio station here on the streets of Nelson. And I'm standing here beside what literally is a highway with Benji Hansen of the Clean Bean Café. And now that we have learned where the beans are coming from in Mexico we are not here on the streets of Nelson learning where the beans end up, in the mugs of people.

espresso machine sound

BH: I first encountered Capulin in Tucson, Arizona working at a vegetarian restaurant – the Oasis Vegetarian Eatery. I was a bartender there, it was an alcohol-free bar, so one of the main drinks I was able to serve up was espresso.

espresso machine sound

We happened to serve exclusively Capulin beans. Daniel Fourwinds was that man who happened to teach me the art of espresso, how to taste espresso. He turned me on to the character of Capulin, the origin of Capulin, and what makes it what it is.

guitar and singing

JS: One of your last customers came in and said that they come here for your energy. But you say that the energy isn't really coming from you but it's coming through the coffee.

BH: I guess the way I see and the way I feel it, it's the energy of the earth being uninterrupted because this coffee is Arabica Typica Trees are growing in the rain forest, in the jungle. Those are happy trees and they putting out happy cherries. Which got right in the middle of them, they got happy beans. And they got happy people touching these beans, working these beans by hand and with hand tools from turning with shovels the cherries as they dry in the sun to whittling, hauling and whittling the beans and then hand processing these beans. That to me is the most beautiful thing - the most beautiful bean I've ever encountered; the fact that it is considered from all the way from the earth to the separating table to the cup. It's uninterrupted love. And I just can't help but to be excited about it; I can't help but to love it.

JS: Now as Daniel so eloquently puts it, this coffee is social change in a cup. But in your little hut here, right on the side of the highway you have your own sort of level of social change that you're encouraging. And here we are standing as more or less a drive-thru espresso shop yet you don't offer any takeout containers.

DH: Shoot man, that's my conscience. I can't stand walking down the sidewalk seeing a paper cup that's been walked on, driven over on the street. It breaks my heart to know that cup was once, well it depends on how you break it apart, but the ink there's the petroleum products that have been used as a sealant and there's also the meat of trees laying there on the street. And I can't stand for that. And I can't stand to see it even in a trash bin let alone on the street. And there's no point, there's plenty of artisans making beautiful ceramic mugs - works of art. And even there's a good bit of vintage mugs out there too that are maybe looking for a home, sitting on the shelf at your local thrift shop.

JS: Well, see you have this collection of mugs here and you've referred to your mugs as your children and that here it is a mug orphanage. And I notice when people come up to ask for a coffee, that you contemplate what kind of mug you want to give them. What's going through your head when you're deciding which mug is going to be the best mug for your customer.

BH: Well, there are a few mugs here in my orphanage, if you will, have been handcrafted by local artisans. So number one, if they are going to stick around the trailer I might give them a special, one of those special mugs. If they are going to walk down the street, I may send them away with a more, more generic say mug. People are dropping off mugs all the time. I do appreciate the ones that have special markings. I have one with a Fozzy mug (glass clinking) that got The Muppet Show and he's got his finger, yeah just special mugs like that.

JS: You mention that people walk away with their mugs and I've been watching the people come up here, order a coffee, you put it in a mug, and then they walk away. I mean this is something no one ever sees anywhere. And I likened it in that the other day to going through the drive-thru at McDonalds and instead of you receiving your paper bag and styrofoam containers, you'd instead receive re-useable plates and they trust that you are going to bring those plates back. And the idea of that's almost absurd for most people that that would ever happen. But here you're letting people walk away with mugs.

DH: They're coming back. And if not, they must have found a good home. I trust that people won't just disregard a mug as something to be set and forgotten. Someone, somewhere, at some point in time is going to consider that mug; not just throw it into a trash bin. At least give it, like I say, to the local thrift shop and yeah, mugs have a life of their own. They're not easily tossed by the wayside.

JS: If you have people coming up here who see this as a take-out drive-thru espresso stand, what's the response from people when they recognize well there's no take-out cups? What kind of responses do you get?

DH: Oh, I've had an assortment of responses. Everybody seems to have responded in their own way but definitely taken aback, seemingly on the verge of frustration and then realization that, "oh, I like this idea. I don't have to throw something away." And most people, most often are more than pleased to take the ceramic mug. I've had probably three customers come and actually turn around and leave because I didn't have cups with lids. And that doesn't make me, yeah I can still smile and give out ceramic mugs and not even stop to consider buying paper cups.

JS: You use the words "slowing down." Can you talk about this idea of how your coffee stand is allowing people to slow down?

BH: It's a beautiful thing our friend the ceramic mugs. Numerous times folks pull up on their way through, maybe not from town, maybe from Castlegar, maybe going through on this highway and they're anticipate picking up their coffee and hopping back in their car. They realize there are so many ceramic mugs. They do, they stop, and on the verge of being upset they say, "well, maybe I can sit down and enjoy this coffee." It's a beautiful thing, people get to stop and enjoy themselves in the middle of the day and also feel good about the fact that they aren't throwing a cup away, just for convenience sake. It's a beautiful thing to be able to offer people that opportunity.

soundbite

JS: And this is Deconstructing Dinner, and that segment featured Benji Hansen of the Clean Bean Café in Nelson, British Columbia. You can find Benji's espresso trailer in the parking lot of Kas Restaurant on Highway 3A just down from Hall Street.

And for any Canadian listeners, restaurants or retail outlets wishing to get their hands on Capulin coffee, there will be contact info on our website on how to do so, and just look under the May 4th broadcast. There will also be some contact info for Benji Hansen should you want to learn more about his coffee mug revolution. And for any non-Canadian listeners, you can check out the website for Capulin coffee at capulin.com.

soundbite

To close out today's broadcast I wanted to quickly go through a brief list of some environmental impacts of coffee production that were not touched on during today's broadcast. The World Wildlife Fund has a great web page listing off some of these impacts, and this research is courtesy of Jason Clay, who for anyone who caught our July 20, 2006 broadcast titled "Shocking Sugar," you may remember his role in highlighting the environmental impacts of sugar cane cultivation and sugar production.

Jason Clay authored an excellent book titled "World Agriculture and Environment," published by Island Press. In it he highlights the most serious impact as being the deforestation that was just referred to on today's broadcast. Deforestation itself represents 20-25% of all human-caused carbon dioxide emissions. Of the 50 countries in the world with the highest deforestation rates from 1990 to 1995, 37 of them were coffee producers.

This has led to biodiversity loss, which from studies undertaken in Colombia and Mexico, indicate that full-sun coffee plantations support 90% fewer bird species than shade-grown coffee. But as he points out, the thinning or clearing of forests for even a shade-grown coffee is a major concern as considerable biodiversity is lost both above and below ground.

Soil degradation is yet another concern from coffee cultivation as following deforestation, the land is cultivated using practices that eventually rob the soil of its nutrients. These practices further lead to soil erosion, and eventually the land becomes useless, unless of course chemicals derived from fossil fuels are placed into the soil and are affordable to farmers.

Degradation of water quality was also touched on during today's broadcast, and Jason Clay's book expands on this by describing the process that occurs when the waste coffee pulp is dumped into rivers. When dumping this organic material into river systems, its decomposition requires oxygen and this lower oxygen level in the river systems then leads to fish kills. And with no fish in the rivers, the cycle of destruction continues from there.

A link to more information on the environmental impacts of coffee production will be made available on the Deconstructing Dinner website.

anonymous: Deconstructing Dinner is made possible by the generous support from Ryerson University's Centre for Studies and Food Security, and West Coast Seeds at phone number 604-952-8820. For more information on our supporters, please visit our website at cjly.net/deconstructingdinner.

ending theme

JS: And that was this week's edition of Deconstructing Dinner, produced and recorded at Nelson, British Columbia's Kootenay Co-op Radio. I've been your host Jon Steinman. I thank my technical assistant John Ryan.

The theme music for Deconstructing Dinner is courtesy of Nelson-area resident, Adham Shaikh.

This radio program is provided free of charge to campus/community radio stations across the country, and relies on the financial support from you, the listener. Support for the program can be donated through our website at cjly.net/deconstructingdinner or by dialing 250-352-9600.