Sounding Out a New Peru:
Music, Media, and Citizenship in the Andean Public Sphere

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Today, I want to talk about an informal kind of politics, what might be called a politics of publicity, or perhaps of public audibility. Rather than speaking of specific and overt attempts to frame politics in music, I want to suggest that the mediated circulation of music and musical ideology is a key mode through which publics in the Habermasian sense, that is, self-recognizing discursive communities, coalesce and become aware of themselves as social actors.[1] Publics exist in at best a tangential relation to formal politics. However, the process of collective worlding, of affective community building that occurs in and through the development of a public, is a critical basis of further action. It provides a ground from which political claims properly speaking can be made, and I think that as scholars we ignore the circumstances of their formation at our peril.

In contemporary Peru, a number of distinct publics are emerging around various ways in which to think new ideas about what it can mean to be "Andean," themselves informed by migration and socioeconomic change. I will briefly explore one aspect of such processes here, by suggesting how such publics are structured and animated by one kind of social actor: radio DJs. In general, I argue that DJs are central *agents* in media circulation and public formation, and not mere *conduits* through which information flows. More specifically, I want to describe their role in actively interpellating an emergent middle class, one in search of new models of identification that are both rhetorically "modern" and "cosmopolitan," and "Andean" and "rooted." And in so doing, I refer to only *one kind* of music, called *música ayacuchana*, which is an ostentatiously hybridized genre of Andean popular music, and which explicitly represents itself as a space of identification for the emergent class just mentioned.

My point of departure here is the idea of cultural citizenship as framed by Néstor García Canclini (García Canclini 2001). Under this rubric, I believe that he accurately describes the sociopolitical importance of artistic creation and consumption, as well a key basis upon which inclusion is embodied or enacted *outside* the political realm. In *Consumers and Citizens,* García Canclini describes how, within the fragmented space of globalized cities, solidarity and common bonds are increasingly fostered and expressed through coordinated acts of imaginative consumption, rather than face-to-face interactions. He suggests that democracies are only fully participatory to the extent that people are free to choose among options that they feel represent them and their subject position. This leads naturally to the suggestion that, as scholars of sociomusical practice, we need to analyze the way in which public space is made in which to identify emergent or marginal populations. However, two key caveats need to be registered. On one hand, an emphasis

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[1] For Habermas's initial formulation of his ideas about the public sphere, see Habermas 1989. For recent works that draw upon Habermas's work to describe the construction of publics in the sense I am discussing here, see Appadurai 1996; Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995; Calhoun 1992, 2002; and Warner 2002.

on the worlding performed via mediation needn't lead us to a stance of uncritical celebration: instead, we need to examine the ways in which the public identifications that circulate emerge, and become persuasive, with full attention to both the limits and possibilities they afford the imagination. This involves specifying, at the very least, the technologies, agents, and orders of discourse through which sites of identification come to circulate in the public sphere. More importantly, however, we need to see mediation as a process through which discourse communities and publics are built. That is, instead of seeing circulation and consumption as means of expressing already-formed, inherited identities, we need to examine the way that communities are actually constituted, and become self-aware in the ongoing experience of consumption itself.

In a place such as contemporary Peru, where the social order has been remade relatively quickly by migration and resultant change, this kind of imaginative work is particularly central in shaping social consciousness. The ideological perception that a white, privileged, coastal capital was irrevocably distinguished from the marginalized highlands, the bastion of impoverished, embarrassing, and backward Indians, has been somewhat undone with the emergence of a solid Andean bourgeoisie in Lima. At the same time, both sprawl and urban fragmentation make the cities ever more divided and unmanageable; truly public spaces in which to gather, and opportunities for gathering in them, dwindle accordingly. In such circumstances, which of course are not unique to Peru, mobile cultural practices thread through the cityscape, bringing people together in new kinds of imagined communities. And this is especially true for those such as second or later generation migrants, who rarely if ever return to their putative origins, and instead must seek the models of identification that come to them.

Música ayacuchana, as a musical idiom that links people across Peru, is one such model. Between 2001 and 2003, when I did fieldwork in Peru, it was one of two massively popular Andean styles on a national level. It is a hybrid migrant music of the kind that has become commonplace, perhaps even archetypal, in ethnomusicological discussions of global pop. It emerged in Lima, a music created by and for a youthful migrant population experimenting with the limits of earlier modes of identification. Its practitioners and supporters, raised in a world structured as much by access to global flows and media as traditional Andean folklore, attempted to frame a music that would suture Peru's historic ideological split between "Andean" and "modern." They self-consciously appropriated the semiotics of modernity, merging elements of traditional huayno and similar genres from Ayacucho and beyond, with traces of more cosmopolitan genres such as rock and balada. They also draw upon the instrumental of resources pan-Andean music, here correctly understood as a commodified and globalized Andean identification, and a kind of locally-grounded cosmopolitanism. In this sense, it appears as a kind of surrogate indigeneity for a certain sector of Lima's emergent second-generation middle class: moreover, with the rapid expansion of communications links between Lima and the highlands, it has become emblematic of an aspirational cosmopolitanism for listeners all over Peru.

Broad structural transformations, particularly Andean migration, have informed the success of *música ayacuchana* and the new possibilities for self-definition that it provides.

However, the effects of these transformations on collective consciousness, and on daily experience, do not arise directly from them, in a mechanical way. Media workers play a crucial creative role, in systematizing the possibilities suggested by broader social, economic, political, and technological changes – a role that is usually ascribed only to artists. By sorting and arranging objects in spaces such as broadcasts, mediators reshuffle old categories, create strange juxtapositions, and offer new modes of perceiving the world. In communicating these to a larger populace, they create a public space for experiencing novel visions of culture and society: they literally sound out new spaces of identification. Finally, inasmuch as these experiences are recognized as public and collective, they mobilize subjects into newly self-aware groups; in short, they concoct shared public frames of reference. Via the literal mediation of the social order in broadcasting and consumption, the materials that individuals use to construct a sense of self and group are selected, ordered, made available, and targeted to specific social sectors.

Thus, rather than simply representing existing social groups, the public circulation of music is an important way of organizing collectivities, especially in conditions of societal change. Again, today I will describe only one aspect of this process: the role of DJs, detailing how aspects of radio broadcasting frame the listening experience in ways that shape its meaning for audiences. Certain dedicated DJs, committed to música ayacuchana as an expression of their own subject-position, have been key in its success. And though the style itself was developed and is largely produced in Lima, the DJs who made it work, and whose particularities have been emulated and seeded around the country, emerged in Ayacucho itself, and that's where I turn to explore their activities.

Radio is central to life in Andean Peru: in general, wherever there are people in contact with a broadcast signal, there is *likely* to be radio sound. It accompanies work and leisure; it is used to ease the solace of time alone; and it provides a context for socializing. Surveys I conducted in Ayacucho showed, among almost one hundred fifty respondents, not a single listener averaging *less* than two hours of radio listening daily. Quantities of six or seven hours were not unusual, and up to *twelve* hours were reported. Via such regular contact with radio sound, listeners become aware of larger, ongoing social entities with a common stake in consumption, and a historicity that supersedes the moment of broadcast. In this way, radio has the power to make intersubjective publics from mere audiences.

However, it is not sheer exposure that has made radio so important in the dissemination of música ayacuchana. Rather, it is the way that its DJs place music within interpretive frameworks that make it speak. DJs are often referred to as media "gatekeepers," but the metaphor is not entirely apt (see also Ahlkvist 2001). They do not simply control flow, allowing or disallowing material to enter broadcast space. They sort items, and creatively structure listening experiences through their on-air performances. They surround music with discourse and other extra-musical sounds, using marked rhetorical styles and other devices to key listener responses. I would argue that these actions are particularly important for musics that, like música ayacuchana, are deemed to lack substantial content, and which are often dismissed as pop, or trivial fluff.

In part, it is the structure of the business in Peru that makes DJs into central musical agents. The independent, sometimes pirate, radio stations where *música ayacuchana* is broadcast are not controlled by top-down management. There are no central playlists or submissive links to record companies, as with most North American commercial stations. Usually they are run as side enterprises, by hobbyists and untrained professionals who do not rely upon them for a livelihood. This relieves them of the need to maximize profits, and most function as concessionaires; that is, they lease airtime to DJs. As a result, the personal attitudes and motivations of DJs have a weight and influence that they may *not* have elsewhere.

In conversing with *música ayacuchana's* key DJs, and in observing them at work, I found that they continually mobilized ideas about cultural citizenship to organize and justify their broadcasting choices. Most DJs were relatively young – under 35 – and their work ethic revolves around a desire to make the public sphere resonate with their experiences *as* contemporary Andeans (a word they actually use). They often invoked *música ayacuchana* as emblematic of their lived experience and their place in the world. One DJ in Ayacucho was especially articulate in making this point for her home city: "Huayno *is* a medium of communication. It's not a stone, not an object: it is the living Andean man. The business of disseminating values and culture is not just about nostalgia for the past, but about today, the modernity in which we live."

Such attitudes are rooted in a strong sense that *música ayacuchana*'s success is a triumph for Andean peoples more broadly. Having become a part of the public musical mainstream, the style is seen as a primary agent in reformulating a sense of inclusion, a means for young Andean listeners to revalue their heritage in a meaningful way. As stated by another DJ, "It's not seen anymore, like they say, with a complex: 'what will they say if I play huaynos?,' no?. Before, huayno was backward, for Indians, nothing good, you know, *criollo* discrimination, no?"

DJs accomplished their task in a fashion similar to the creators of the music itself: but instead of rhetorically connoting modernity and cosmopolitanism *musically*, they drew upon the conventions attached to particular *kinds* of broadcasting, in order to suggest the interpretive frames they required. They linked the style to existing indices of cosmopolitan musical practice in two specific ways – first, by manipulating established ideas about the proper *contextual* features of programming, and second, by shifting assumptions about appropriate *discursive and technical* features of broadcasting. I'll cover each of these separately.

The first, context, involved manipulating the connotations attached to two different aspects of broadcasting: radio band and time slot. Radio listening was largely understood via a distinction that organized listeners into two categories, opposed in parallel terms of race, class, and band. These sprung from *both* the technical nature of broadcasting, and hegemonic ideas about Andean peoples. With a line-of-sight signal, FM radio's reach is significantly limited in the broken terrain of the Andes: it usually runs into a mountain pretty quickly. In most cases, coverage is effectively restricted to the cities themselves. Thus FM programming was *aimed* at the cities, and carried broadcasting that was

perceived as sophisticated and worldly. The music presented there tuned listeners into a sphere of cosmopolitanism represented by coastal *música criolla*, bolero, rock, and later tropical music. AM programming carried huayno and other musics aimed at the *campo*, and this was largely restricted to a particular time of day: the hours between 4 and 7 AM. In the days before small transistor radios, it could safely be assumed that peasants did not haul radios to their fields and pastures, and could only be *reached* at these hours of the day.

Through long familiarity, these associations between genre, race, band, and time slot became normative, and listening habits were solidly molded around them as modes of musical categorization. In the early nineties, however, música ayacuchana's first DJ took advantage of changing technology to contest them. At this time, Ayacucho saw a sudden boom in FM broadcasting. A decrease in the cost of transmitters meant that dozens of hobbyists, aficionados, and small businessmen became radio impresarios virtually overnight, and there was a surfeit of broadcast space. As the FM dial expanded, Dolby records, the home label of música ayacuchana, hired local *rock* DJ Miguel Ángel Huamán, to promote their wares in a rented space – on the prestigious FM band. The show still aired in a slot from 4 to 7 AM, but it was an instant hit, and dispelled the myth that listeners of Andean music were isolated peasants outside the city. However, Huamán soon returned to rock broadcasting on the station Frecuencia A, where he held the prime daily slot ("*hora punta*") between 10:00 and 12:00 AM. This was understood as the time for greatest relaxation and fun, requiring the strongest music on hand, and he was hesitant about spinning música ayacuchana. But the station was sinking in an ocean of competitors, and Huamán made a daring move: he decided to distinguish Frecuencia A by returning to música ayacuchana (which was his real love anyway), *within* the prime midday slot. He dedicated the entire program to the style, hoping that the strength of his personality would overcome the incongruity. His conviction did waver:

> I'll tell you, I had that experience, that it wasn't right. Listening to música ayacuchana, it wasn't the right space; I mean I thought, 'this isn't the right space.' So many years I'd done this, I said '10 AM, huayno?' It doesn't fit, I said it myself, you know? So, I thought I'd be disappointed, but I said well, I've got to try, anyway.

His efforts quickly made Frecuencia A the number one music station in the city, much to the surprise of those stuck in hoary distinctions between Andean and modern listeners. Soon, the station converted entirely to *música ayacuchana*: and soon after *that*, a number of *other* rock stations did too.

In accounting for this success, Huamán is frank about the intentionality with which he manipulated the broadcast frame:

> Institutions, everyone was listening to Frecuencia A. I was pretty smart with my programming, you know, because I thought about it: how can I get an office to listen to me? So, I had a really nice style, I made

adjustments, that is, I made it so that you could listen to this music in a kitchen, or in an office. I tell you, I made myself sweet.

When Huamán alludes to a "sweet" broadcast style, he is indicating two large categories of practice that distinguish rock, salsa, and pop broadcasts from early huayno transmissions: technical sophistication and discourse style. Technical sophistication involves skills such as the ability to subtly crossfade one song into the next, taking care that transitions be imperceptible, in order to maintain a constant mood and flow. It also refers to more performative devices. On one occasion he lectured me on his mastery of a technique of which he is *particularly* proud. As he spins a track, he lets the opening, instrumental section unfold beneath some improvised banter. While he speaks, he deftly manages the small mixing board in front of him, frenetically raising and lowering the fader that controls the output level of the CD, matching volume with pauses in his repartee: this is no small feat, given the rapid-fire nature of his improvisations. As he speaks he remains aware of the song's progress, timing his narration flawlessly to end at the *precise* moment when the vocals enter. His ability to nail this spot every time is a great source of pride. As he described to me the importance of the technique, he physically underlined the point, holding up his index fingers and drawing them slowly together while imitating his own inspired babble, and sitting back in satisfaction when they met at the vocal introduction.

A related technical issue is the use of slick, prerecorded metadiscursive signaling devices: clips announcing the opening of the broadcast day and of individual programs; sound effects called *cuñas*, including female giggles, laser sound effects, and similar noises connoting energy and excitement; and noisy, energetic station identifications such as "La Caribeña: siiiii, suena!" These devices, in constant rotation, go a long way toward bringing the *sound* of the broadcast in line with the commercial broadcasting from which they are borrowed.

Most important, however, is the commercial discourse style that radio scholar Debra Spitulnik calls "the upbeat beat" (Spitulnik 1994). This language register performs fun and excitement, connoting a lifestyle, and life experience, that is oriented toward the leisurely world of middle-class consumption. Its use was a startling break from the somber, informative, public-service style broadcasting of earlier huayno presenters on AM radio. What this speech style conveys is, in Spitulnik's words, "a mood of optimism, prosperity, having fun, and being in touch with a wider modern world…[It] signals an imagined cosmopolitan community of affluence and excitement" (Spitulnik 1994: 315). In drawing upon it, DJs such as Huamán filled broadcasts with humorous asides, and flirted and jested on-air with callers. They wove elements such as station identifications, time checks, song titles, artist names, and advertising, into a constant patter, delivered in the smooth, slangy, and melodious manner of salsa or rock DJs. They used local idioms and toponyms, saluting specific listeners around the city, projecting their on-air avatars into spaces familiar to listeners – as in a hello to a friend, segueing from an ad for a bullfight: "Olé, olé, Rocío Cóndor, listening at Expreso Molina Unión!" They also mixed local *idiomatic* expressions with a national and international colloquial vocabulary,

suggesting their co-compatibility: "s*aludos al cuerazo*! *Sapachallan warmi*! *Ama waqaspalla*!" [Q: Lonely woman! Don't cry now!]

In a very specific but common subgenre of this speech style, they used evocations of romance to create an aura of intimacy, frequently building upon the content of the songs themselves. During the lead-in to the huayno *Tú eres ángel de mi vida*, Huamán drops his voice to its lower range and softens his tone, ending with a recitation of the opening lyrics themselves: "Also, a *saludo* to Sandra, Sandrita, where are you Sandra? Ah, there you are, a kiss for Sandra. And also to *you*, *un saludo para ti*, so you don't get sulky. And this *song* for you, for you with love: 'Tu eres ángel de mi vida, ángel de mis ilusiones.'" Here, by insinuating an anonymous romantic intrigue, Huamán allows listeners to be drawn imaginatively into his personal space, suggesting a rapport with his public that reinforces the program's aura of intimacy.

In short, música ayacuchana's DJs drew upon resources of humor, intimacy, and trendiness, to establish a recurring mediated space that people would *want* to inhabit for two hours each day. The goal was for listeners to feel a sense of rapport. To feel that they were spending time with a particularly cool and amusing friend, who probably had good taste in music. It was also to convince listeners that the broadcast was personally *relevant*. Drawing on a repertoire of linguistic skills and verbal signifiers, they communicated such elements with a mix of cosmopolitan signifiers and *local references*, such that listeners were reassured of both the program's worldliness, and its personal significance. In this way, by engaging with local audiences day after day, Huamán was able to make the public audible to itself, to encourage the perception that the program is identified with the community, and ties both to the "culture of cosmopolitanism."

Analyzing the efforts of key media actors, who channel the latent implications of broader shifts in meaningful ways, is a crucial task for those trying to understand emergent forms of social life. The formation of new publics and the emergence of a new social imaginary is more than the logical outcome of structural transformation. As I have described here, the success of *música ayacuchana* depended upon the way that its creators mobilized musical tropes of modernity, cosmopolitanness, and "Andeanness" for a coalescing social entity in search of identification. Its success is due, however, to skilled and devoted mediators, who used their technological and discursive abilities to establish public spaces in which to *experience* an Andean style as a statement about modernity, sophistication, and cosmopolitanism.

However, I would like to break with standard academic practice, and end with a caveat, instead of a strong point. The circulation of *música ayacuchana*, and its potential role as the ground of an emergent "Andean" identity could abet broader social movements, and it has clearly made a difference for some individuals. As a kind of surrogate indigeneity, the manner in which it represents the Andean world to its audiences *is* a direct challenge to sedimented perceptions of the region and its people. However, it is equally clear that, even as it provides an oppositional space of identification, it surrenders to a hegemonic logic whereby the local must become partly global – that is, western – in order to adequately represent a desirable subject position. And it is possible that, as a national

image of the Andean region becomes consolidated around a single discursive construction of "Andean" experience, this will drive other expressions of "Andeanness" to the periphery. For this reason, I remain highly ambivalent about the style's possibilities: but I do remain convinced that it is through understanding the *kinds* of negotiations involved in its circulation, that an insightful account of the potential *relations* between music, media, and social change can be constructed.

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